THE FATHER OF MODERN HERMENEUTICS IN A POSTMODERN AGE

A REINTERPRETATION OF SCHLEIERMACHER'S HERMENEUTICS

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Friedrich Schleirermacher is generally recognized as the father of modern hermeneutics. This means that hermeneutics as a science or, rather, as an art, of understanding as such originates from Schleiermacher. Before him, there were only specialized hermeneutics: philological, biblical, and legal. However, this also implies that, in this postmodern age, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics has become something *passé*, something safe to *aufheben* if not prudent to ignore. For it is widely believed to be a psychological one, which is doubly mistaken from a postmodern point of view: appealing to the myth of the given and being ahistorical.

This essay aims to challenge this position. Its central theme is that Schleiermacher's unique contribution to hermeneutics is neither his psychological nor his grammatical interpretation but his conception of hermeneutics as an artful movement between the two. Since the grammatical side is little contested, I shall focus on the psychological side, which, I shall argue, is neither pre-linguistic nor ahistorical as has so often been charged. My conclusion is that the predominately Gadamerian postmodern hermeneutics goes to the extreme in criticizing psychologism, the evil twin of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, while Schleiermacher's hermeneutics itself, properly understood, is a perfect antidote to both evils.

Is Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics Psychological?

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics consists of grammatical and psychological interpretations. The former understands "the discourse and how it has been composed in terms of its language," and the latter understands it "as a presentation of thought."[1] Given this well-known fact, we may wonder how people have come to believe that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is mainly psychological.

Heinz Kimmerle tries to provide an answer by presenting Schleiermacher's early manuscripts on hermeneutics. His conclusion is that, while Wilhelm Dilthey and Rudolf Bultmann are largely responsible for the propagation of the misconception of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, the misconception itself is to be attributed to Schleiermacher's student Friedrich Lücke. Lücke's edition of Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutics*, upon which Dilthey and Bultmann based their interpretations, includes only Schleiermacher's later manuscripts.[2] According to Kimmerle, however, those manuscripts reflect the later Schleiermacher's sorry surrender of his early insightful conception of hermeneutics as "closely oriented to the structure of language."[3]

Thus, Kimmerle sees his mission in including the early manuscripts into Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutics* as mainly restorative. It aims to render "the substantially convincing and positive thoughts in Schleiermacher's earlier sketches . . . accessible and, if possible, fruitful for current philosophical reflection on the phenomenon of understanding."[4] He believes that Schleiermacher's early linguistically oriented hermeneutics is compatible with Gadamer's hermeneutics. In his view, had

Gadamer regarded this part of Schleiermacher as of positive value for Gadamer's own problematic, it "could have been of direct benefit, especially in the conclusion of his [Gadamer's] book where language is considered as '[the universal] medium of hermeneutical experience.'"[5]

Such a distinction between the early and the later Schleiermacher, however, is an exaggeration to say the best. For the fact is that, from start to finish, Schleiermacher insists on the double character of understanding: psychological and grammatical. In his very first draft of 1809–1810, he claims that hermeneutics "proceeds from two entirely different points: understanding by reference to the language and understanding by reference to the one who speaks" (68). This view he maintains later in his "Second Academy Address" of 1829, where he argues that "full understanding requires both of these operations, and no interpreter can fully understand if he leans so much to one side that he is completely unable to make use of what the other side offers" (204).[6]

Kimmerle, of course, does not mean that the psychological dimension is completely missing in the early Schleiermacher and the grammatical aspect entirely disappears in the later Schleiermacher. What he does hold is that the psychological interpretation plays a merely subsidiary role in the early Schleiermacher, who is preoccupied with the grammatical one, just as the grammatical interpretation has only a supplementary function in the later Schleiermacher, who is immersed in the psychological one.[7] Such an assertion, however, directly contradicts Schleiermacher's own statement that "these two hermeneutical tasks are completely equal, and it would be incorrect to label grammatical interpretation the 'lower' and psychological interpretation the 'higher' task" (99). In some places, where Schleiermacher mentions one as higher than the other, what he has in mind is not the intrinsic priority of one over the other but the concrete circumstances in which such a ranking can be made.

First, it depends on who is doing the interpretation. If she is a linguistic expert, psychological interpretation must be lower. If he is a psychological genius, however, grammatical interpretation must be lower (see 99 note *). Second, it is relative to what text one is interpreting. If it is something predominately objective, such as pure history and commercial records, grammatical interpretation is higher. If it is primarily subjective, such as personal letters, however, psychological interpretation is higher (see 103). In these two cases, there is obviously no hint at all that Schleiermacher makes any general grading of one task as higher or lower than the other.

Third, we need to be aware of what interpretation is under way. When we are undertaking a psychological interpretation, where language is regarded exclusively as a means or organ by which a person communicates his thoughts, the grammatical one is seen as lower. When we are making a grammatical interpretation, however, where the person is regarded exclusively as occasions for the language to reveal itself, the psychological interpretation is regarded as lower (see 99). Since, as a matter of fact, there are more discussions of grammatical interpretation in his early manuscripts and more of the psychological one in his later ones, it might be concluded that the early Schleiermacher views the psychological one as lower and the later Schleiermacher sees the grammatical one as lower.

To have a proper understanding, however, we have to take into account Schleiermacher's more general view of these two interpretations. According to Schleiermacher, if we have complete knowledge of both the author and the language, the two interpretations could proceed in complete

independence from each other (see 161) and produce exactly the same result (see 100). Practically, however, because no such complete knowledge is available to any interpreter, the grammatical interpretation is inconceivable without the help of the psychological one, just as the psychological interpretation is impossible without the assistance of the grammatical one (see 161). Here "one must already know a man in order to understand what he says, and yet one first becomes acquainted with him by what he says" (56). Thus, when the grammatical interpretation looks to the author for an understanding of the language that he uses, the psychological interpretation is supplementary. Likewise, when the psychological interpretation turns to language for an understanding of the author who uses the language, the grammatical one becomes accessory (146–47). However, hermeneutics as a whole is neither the grammatical interpretation supplemented by the lower psychological one nor the psychological interpretation aided by the lower grammatical one. Rather, it is an art of moving back and forth between the two. The key is to know "when one side should give way to the other" (42) and where one can start and conclude the movement provisionally.[8] Since "no rules can stipulate exactly how to do this" (100), the interpreter, like an artist, makes these decisions through his feeling, which "must be the substitute for completeness" (77).

If Kimmerle's diagnosis is wrong, the task is left to us to see what causes the general impression that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is psychological. We may start with an analysis of Gadamer's response to Kimmerle's accusation that he ignores the role language plays in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. Gadamer acknowledges that language does play a certain role for Schleiermacher, even in his later manuscript. Grammatical interpretation provides something like Kant and Fichte's scheme, "an image by its very nature movable or adjustable."[9] The actual filling out of this movable scheme (language) with particulars (psychic items), however, is made by the author and thus the exact meaning of a text can only be detected by psychological interpretation. Since for Schleiermacher the proper goal of hermeneutics is not to identify a range of possible meanings but "to understand with precision some things and not others" (108), psychological interpretation is obviously more fundamental.

Ironically, Gadamer's view is shared not only by Schleiermacher's other critics like Palmer[10] and his more balanced interpreters like Paul Ricoeur,[11] but also by his sympathizers like the editor and English translators of his hermeneutic manuscripts. They all agree that the grammatical interpretation only circumscribes a sphere of possible meanings, while the psychological one determines the definite meaning. Kimmerle, the editor, argues that grammatical interpretation is:

> a part of the "construction" of particular applications of meaning from the universal sphere of a word which is "purely negative and marks out boundaries." So-called technical interpretation, on the other hand, seeks to ascertain the individual character of a word usage "positively," as it is dependent on the power and mode of speech of a particular person. (33)

On this James Duke and Jack Forstman, the English translators, agree. They both hold that there are two factors, the universal and the particular, operative in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. The grammatical interpretation deals with the former and the psychological one discusses the latter.[12]

This, however, is a misunderstanding. While Schleiermacher does hold that an adequate interpretation needs both to find the

general and determine the particular, he does not assign these two tasks respectively to the grammatical and the psychological interpretations. For him, both interpretations need to construct "something finite and definite from something infinite and indefinite" (100). Therefore, "grammatical interpretation is divided into two contrasting tasks. So is technical interpretation" (162).

In other words, grammatical interpretation has to determine the definite meaning from the context (as its second cannon dictates) in addition to locating the general linguistic sphere (as its first cannon requires).[13] Here, "the first cannon serves only to exclude certain possibilities. This second cannon, however, seems to be determinative, a 'jump' which must be justified" (127). Likewise, psychological interpretation needs to circumscribe the general view present in an author's total literary output in addition to identifying the delimited application of this unity to specific topics. Therefore, psychological interpretation also has two tasks: the one "is to discover the individuality of an author, and the other is to recognize with definiteness how this individuality is expressed" (162).[14]

Does Schleiermacher's Psychological Interpretation Appeal to "the Myth of the Given"

To claim that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as an artful movement between the grammatical and the psychological implies that both interpretations are possible. Yet it is believed that, while the grammatical interpretation remains insightful, the psychological one has become problematic. It appeals to the modern myth of the given, whose postmodern demythologization has now been complete. According to this myth, as Cornel West points out, "the justification of our employment of concepts, utterance of sentences, or intelligent use of words rests on non-linguistic awareness, that is, on special, felt, incommunicable qualities."[15] This perhaps can explain why Schleiermacher's sympathizers and his critics agree that the psychological interpretation is no longer tenable. They disagree only on whether Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is to be understood as primarily psychological or linguistic.

The most serious criticism of Schleiermacher's psychological interpretation for appealing to the non-linguistic consciousness is made by West. According to him:

> without non-linguistic consciousness or immediate awareness of the life-unity of the self—Schleiermacher's version of The Myth of the Given—there is no pantheistic metaphysics of individuality. Without his pantheistic metaphysics of individuality, there is no identity and commonality of human beings, hence no grounds for human understanding. So we are forced to conclude that without The Myth of the Given, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is in deep trouble.[16]

West here sees in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics a triple case of the myth of the given: interpretation is (1) an interpreter's incommunicable feeling (2) of an author's incommunicable feeling (3) through their shared incommunicable feeling of their commonality. It is to be noted that West's conclusion relies much more on his general sketch of Schleiermacher's conception of religion as residing in feeling (in contrast to knowing and doing) than on any detailed analysis of Schleiermacher's psychological interpretation itself. While it remains an open question whether Schleiermacher subscribes to the myth of the given in his conception of religion, I shall argue that it is not the case, at least in his hermeneutical discourse.

Let us start from (3) the so-called pre-linguistic feeling of the commonality between the interpreter and the author. Schleier-

macher does assume that "each person is not only a unique individual in his own right, but that he has a receptivity to the uniqueness of every other person" and "contains a minimum of everyone else" (150). While the uniqueness of both the author and the interpreter makes interpretation necessary, their commonality makes it possible. If the interpreter has everything in common with the author, there would be no need for interpretation to begin at all. However, if the author is completely foreign to the interpreter, the interpretation would not be able to start in the first place (see 180).

What is crucial here is that Schleiermacher never refers to the pre-linguistic feeling to justify either the mentioned commonality or the uniqueness. In fact, as Hans Frei perceptively notes, the word "feeling" is hardly mentioned in Schleiermacher's hermeneutical discourse:

> and this despite the fact that during much of the time he wrote on hermeneutics he was preoccupied with the notion of feeling as immediate self-consciousness. . . . In short, it seems unlikely that Schleiermacher in the *Hermeneutics* wanted to claim that one could describe a formal affinity between feeling and interpretation.[17]

For Schleiermacher, it is not the case that only after we have a pre-linguistic feeling of the unity as well as the individuality of the interpreter and the author can we begin to interpret a text. Rather, the very fact that we are interpreting and are willing to interpret shows de facto that we make this presupposition, even though we, as actual interpreters, may never have felt it or thought of it. In this sense, Schleiermacher says nothing different from Donald Davidson, certainly a hero for many in the postmodern project of demythologizing the Myth of the Given. According to Davidson, our very practice of interpretation presupposes the principle of charity that we have a wide range of agreements with the author. However, this principle is not something that we have to justify before we begin to interpret. Rather it is when we interpret that it "is forced on us: whether we like it or not."[18]

Now, let us examine (1), the view of interpretation as the interpreter's pre-linguistic feeling. At work here is the general tendency to reduce Schleiermacher's hermeneutics to divination: given that hermeneutics for Schleiermacher is essentially artful, it must be mainly psychological (for grammatical interpretation is scientific); the psychological interpretation must be mainly divinatory (for comparative method is historical); and divination must be identified with pre-linguistic feeling (for thinking with language is theoretical).[19]

Our earlier discussion has already shown that such a reduction is invalid. Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as an art is not merely or primarily the psychological interpretation but the dialectical movement between the grammatical and the psychological interpretations. Here we need to underline this point further in light of Schleiermacher's discussion of the two hermeneutical methods: divination and comparison. For Schleiermacher, while psychological interpretation needs divination, divination is not limited to psychological interpretation. For "it is certain that the grammatical side of interpretation cannot dispense with the divinatory method" (192), just as the psychological side cannot dispense with the comparative method. Moreover, Schleiermacher argues that divination has no priority to comparison. For "divination becomes certain only when it is corroborated by comparisons. . . . But comparison does not provide a distinctive unity" which is the unique task of divination (151).

We can understand Schleiermacher's hermeneutic methodology better if we remind

ourselves of the double task of both the grammatical and the psychological interpretations: to grasp the individuality and to discern the unity. As Karl Barth notes, the comparative method "relates to the individual side in the context of a grammatical or psychological whole," and the divinatory method "relates to the whole in the individual," and here "the equal validity and necessity of *both* methods is strongly urged."[20] Seen from this context, divination has nothing more to do with the pre-linguistic feeling than comparison does. It is a synthetic grasp of the whole based on the comparisons of the parts, just as comparison is an analytical thinking of the parts grounded on the divination of the whole. "For," Schleiermacher argues, "how can one gain the general view [*Anschauung*] except by joining together several partial views" that have already been understood, just as how can one understand the partial views except in terms of the general unity that has already been grasped (see 162)?

Finally, let us take a look at (2), the author's pre-linguistic feeling as the object of interpretation. This is related of course to Schleiermacher's distinction of the psychological interpretation as concerned with the author from the grammatical one as focused on language: how can an author in contrast to language be anything other than his pre-linguistic feeling? To answer this question, we need to be aware that, while psychological interpretation does understand a text with regard to its author, the author cannot be understood without his text. For, Schleiermacher asks, "how shall I know a person except from his discourse, specifically, from this text before me" (161)? Only from a person's writings can one learn his vocabulary, his character, and his circumstances (see 113). Thus the author in contrast to language is not the pre-linguistic feeling but the linguistic thinking. If Schleiermacher does have in mind his distinction between feeling, thinking, and doing in his hermeneutics as in his religious discourse, he makes it clear that his psychological interpretation is concerned with author's thinking. In this sense he makes a distinction between an author and a person: "a knowledge of a given person as such is not the aim of this side of our task, but a means of enabling us to master the author's activities and so of leading us to an objective consideration of his way of thinking" (207).

Thus, contrary to West's judgment, what is at issue here is perhaps "the relationship of language to thought or thinking to speaking" rather than "the status of pre-linguistic consciousness or non-linguistic qualities."[21] On this issue, Kimmerle is right in holding that the goal of Schleiermacher's psychological interpretation is to grasp the author's thinking rather than her feeling. The problem for Kimmerle is that, although the earlier Schleiermacher holds correctly that thinking and language are identical, the later Schleiermacher backs off. He

> no longer asks how the general language is individualized by the persons who use it or how the symbol of an individually constructed moral world is represented in it. Rather only the inner thinking itself is viewed as such a symbol, which is changed and further individualized in the external language.[22]

Now, if language essentially distorts thinking and thinking eventually evades linguistic grasping, the thinking process as the object of psychological interpretation remains "The Myth of the Given" in West's sense.

Kimmerle's position, however, cannot be substantiated by a careful reading of Schleiermacher's hermeneutic manuscripts, even the later ones which Kimmerle believes represent an undesirable shift in Schleiermacher's view of the relationship between

thinking and language. For Schleiermacher still holds that thinking and language are not only reciprocally indispensable but also mutually conditioning. In "the Compendium of 1819," he argues that thinking depends on language. For "a person thinks by means of speaking. Thinking matures by means of internal speech, and to that extent speaking is only developed thought" (97). At the same time, he also claims that language depends on thinking. For "every act of speaking is based on something having been thought" (98). This position is maintained throughout his more mature writings. In "Academy Addresses of 1929," he argues that "there is no thought without words. . . . But the reverse would also be true" (193).[23]

Kimmerle, of course, believes that his position is well-grounded. For it is Schleiermacher himself who, in his third manuscript of 1819, states that speaking is "the outside of thinking" and thinking "underlies a given statement" (97). From this, Kimmerle assumes, it can be reasonably concluded that the later Schleiermacher holds that "thinking and speaking are to be distinguished as ideal and appearance."[24] To understand what an author says we must go beyond language (the appearance) to grasp thought (the ideal). Yet, if Kimmerle's contention is true, we would have a hard time understanding Schleiermacher's statements that "thoughts and language are intertwined" (148) in the same manuscript and that "hermeneutics deals only with what is produced in language" (209) later in his fifth manuscripts of 1929.[25]

If so, we may ask, what does Schleiermacher mean by his assertion that language is the outside of thinking? Here, we should be aware, as Richard R. Niebuhr reminds us, that "it is just as important to say that speech is externalized thinking as to say that thinking is internal speaking."[26] In other words, the outside of thinking is not something without thinking, just as the inside of language is not something without language. Then what about his statement that thinking underlies a given statement? For Schleiermacher, to say this is as plain as to say that grammar underlies a given statement. It means that a given statement can be understood only when its thought is grasped and its grammar is comprehended. It does not mean, however, that there could be thinking outside of a given statement or grammar beyond a given statement.[27]

Now we can conclude that Schleiermacher's psychological interpretation has nothing to do with the pre-linguistic feeling, either with regard to the interpreter, or to the author, or to the commonality of the two. Of course, as we have seen in the preceding section, Schleiermacher does appeal to feeling in characterizing hermeneutics as an art. Feeling is necessary there because one has to deal with the double hermeneutic circle. Between the grammatical and the psychological interpretations, "the 'art' lies in knowing when one side should give way to the other" (42); between the divinatory and the comparative methods, the same art involves "a constant shifting from one method to the other" (190). Feeling is the interpreter's skill in judging the appropriateness about when to divine and when to compare, when to interpret grammatically and when psychologically, as well as when to start and when to conclude a hermeneutic task provisionally. It is clear that feeling in this sense is not pre-linguistic but, if anything, post-linguistic.

Is Schleiermacher's Psychological Interpretation Ahistorical?

Schleiermacher's psychological interpretation is criticized today not only because it is seen as appealing to the now demythologized myth of the given, but, more importantly, because it is regarded as ahistorical. In this respect, Hans-Georg Gadamer is certainly the most vehement critic. Gadamer

views Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as a project of ahistorical restoration, which:

> is as nonsensical as all restitution and restoration of past life. Reconstructing the original circumstances, like all restoration, is a futile undertaking in view of the historicity of our being. What is reconstructed, a life brought back from the lost past, is not the original.[28]

Particularly, Gadamer takes the following issues with Schleiermacher: (1) if the author's intention (or text's original meaning) has to be taken into account, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics would not be as universal as he claims. For the authority of texts is not all undisputed;[29] (2) even for those texts whose authors are known, we are not able to restore their original intentions. Understanding is always historically conditioned and, therefore, cannot be presuppositionless;[30] and (3) even if an author's original intention were known, it is not something that should concern us much in our interpretation. The goal of hermeneutics is not to understand the author but to explore the subject matter that the author deals with.[31]

First, it has already been clear that Schleiermacher does not mean his psychological interpretation as a general or universal hermeneutics. He realizes that there are not only cases to which only a minimum of psychological interpretation can be applied. There are also cases, myth for example, that are not subject to psychological interpretation at all because the author is unknown.[32] Hermeneutics as an art can be universal only because it tells us when to do the grammatical or the psychological interpretation, when to shift from one to another, as well as when to start and conclude an interpretation temporarily.

Second, when Schleiermacher asks interpreters to step out of their own mind and into that of the authors (see 42), he does not mean that interpreters should get rid of all their presuppositions. They only need to avoid what he calls "false presuppositions" (111, note **).[33] He urges that "the interpreter must guard against a personal bias, for or against" (62). False presupposition or personal bias should be restrained because they are the source of what he calls active misunderstanding.[34] Active misunderstanding "occurs when one reads something into a text because of one's own bias. In such a case the author's meaning cannot possibly emerge" (111). In other words, false presuppositions prevent us from seeing what an author says through the text, only letting her say what we want to hear.

Finally, we have to come to Gadamer's third and real difficulty with Schleiermacher. Gadamer believes that his view can best be contrasted with Schleiermacher's in light of the hermeneutic maxim they both embrace: to understand a text better than its author does. In a very interesting and informative essay, Otto Friedrich Böllnow distinguishes several meanings of the "better understanding" and the most significant among them are these two: as completing what is unfinished of the author's subject matter and as clarifying the background convictions that the author did not reflect on.[35] Now, for Gadamer, by the same hermeneutic maxim, while he means the former, Schleiermacher means the latter. In Schleiermacher, Gadamer contends, this maxim "does not refer to the understanding of the text's subject matter but simply to the understanding of the text—i.e., of what the author meant and expressed."[36] It is perhaps in this sense that Richard L. Corliss, in his attempt to reconcile Schleiermacher and Gadamer, concludes that they are pursuing two very different but not conflicting projects: Schleiermacher is interested in understanding and communication while Gadamer is concerned with critically assessing the

text and introducing conceptual innovations. In short, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics aims at explanation, while Gadamer's means to be creative.[37]

Gadamer's characterization of Schleiermacher as only interested in a better understanding of the author and not the subject matter, however, is one-sided to say the least. Schleiermacher unmistakably states that:

> even the finest historical reconstruction which we undertake in order to comprehend better a work of some author will achieve true excellence not merely because it clarifies the work in question but also because it enriches our own lives and the lives of others. Such enrichment is sublime, and it should be added to our consideration of works so that we do not produce trivialities which demean ourselves and our scientific labor. (207)

For Schleiermacher, to understand a foreign or an ancient text is not just to satisfy our curiosity for classical antiquity or foreign strangeness, but to make the things ancient and foreign available to enrich our own life. This point he makes even clearer in his discussion of translation, where he states that:

> just as our soil itself has no doubt become richer and more fertile and our climate milder and more pleasant only after much transplantation of foreign flora, just so we sense that our Nordic sluggishness, can thrive in all its freshness and completely develop its own power only through the most many-sided contacts with what is foreign.[38]

How can we understand a text better than its author does so that we can make innovations on its subject matter to enrich our own life? In Schleiermacher's view, we have to gain information "from various schools from the same period and from various periods of a given school in order to identify the common element amid the differences" (85). In other words, to have a better understanding of the subject matter rather than of the author:

> an author who has written in more than one genre is to be regarded as a different author in each case. . . . Conversely, a group of authors who belong to the same sphere, period, or school are to be regarded as a single author and used to explain each other. (85)

Such an understanding, by its nature, "is infinite, because in a statement we want to trace a past and a future which stretch into infinite" (112). The past of a subject matter that is obsolete and its future is yet to emerge for an author, useless and perhaps harmful for a better understanding of the author, are invaluable for a better understanding of the author's subject matter.

By this we do not mean, as Ron Bontekoe argues, that the difference between Schleiermacher and Gadamer evaporates on the issue of the better understanding.[39] Unlike Gadamer, Schleiermacher insists that we need a better understanding of the author which is very different from a better understanding of the subject matter. As we have seen, for a better understanding of the subject matter, Schleiermacher asks interpreters to trace the past and the future of a statement which stretch into infinite. In order to have a better understanding of the author, however, he urges that "it should not be assumed that compositions characteristic of our age or the sentimentality of our lyric poets were available to ancient authors. (Note: Therefore, an author is to be understood in terms of his own age)" (171).

In other words, to have a better understanding of an author, we have to avoid the usages of a word that no longer existed for the author or that have developed only later. Otherwise quantitative misunderstandings would occur. In this context, when Schleier-

macher asks interpreters to understand a text not as an isolated item but within the totality, he means the totality of the language that is available to the author and not the totality of language that can be traced into infinite past and future. In other words, only "the vocabulary and the history of an author's age together form a whole from which his writings must be understood as a part" (113); he also means the totality of this particular author's life and not that of a group of authors who belong to the same sphere, period, or school. An interpreter of a given text has to "consider how it actually developed from the unity and total context of this particular life" (206).

Thus, Schleiermacher, just like Gadamer, sees the ultimate task of hermeneutics as improving our understanding of the subject matter and enriching our lives. Yet for Gadamer, a better understanding of the author or of the author's particular understanding of the subject matter is irrelevant to such a goal. What emerges from our projection of our own fore-structure upon the text is enough. For Schleiermacher, because hermeneutics aims at a better understanding of the subject matter, it is necessary to have a better understanding of the author or of the author's understanding of the subject matter. No development of the subject matter and no enrichment of our life is possible without a true understanding of what the author says through the text, something foreign and strange to us.

In this context, we can appreciate Schleiermacher and Gadamer's different tastes in language. Gadamer prefers the written language, since:

> In the form of writing, all tradition is contemporaneous with each present time. Moreover, it involves a unique co-existence of past and present, insofar as present consciousness has the possibility of a free access to everything handed down in writing.[40]

In contrast, Schleiermacher favors oral language, since:

> a sentence orally delivered may always be supported by its Father and receives his protection, and that not only against the objections of one who thinks otherwise, but also against the intellectual stubbornness of one as yet ignorant, while written sentence has no answer to make any further inquiries.[41]

Gadamer correctly points out that, because of historical condition, an interpreter cannot understand the text as the author does. Yet Schleiermacher would like to add that, because of the impossibility of understanding a text as well as the author does, we can understand it better than the author does by being aware of many things that influenced his thinking but he himself was unaware of.[42] Gadamer insightfully asserts that understanding is fusion of horizons. Yet Schleiermacher would like to add that, in order for this to occur, there must be more than one horizon. Gadamer is reluctant to take the original meaning of the text into serious consideration and encourages free appropriations of the text. This, from a Schleiermacherian point of view, makes understanding more like the swallowing up of one horizon (the author's) by another (the interpreter's) than their fusion with each other. In this sense, the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher, the father of modern hermeneutics, is more appropriate in this postmodern age.[43]

ENDNOTES

1. F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986), p. 161 (Further references to this work will be indicated parenthetically in the main text). Within the psychological

interpretation. Schleiermacher further distinguishes between the psychological proper and the technical in his later manuscripts on hermeneutics (ibid., pp. 222–23). For its limited purpose, this essay will not elaborate on this sub-division.

2. See his "Editor's Introduction" to Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutics*, p. 40, and his "Hermeneutical Theory or Ontological Hermeneutics," in Robert W. Funk, ed., *History and Hermeneutics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 120.

3. Kimmerle, "Editor's Introduction," p. 33. Richard E. Palmer agrees on this point: see his *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. 91–94.

4. Kimmerle, "Editor's Introduction," p. 40.

5. Kimmerle, "Afterward" to his edition of Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutics*, p. 231.

6. For James Duke and Jack Forstman, therefore, throughout his work, Schleiermacher maintains that these two interpretations are inseparable. There is a shift only in emphasis and not in basic thought. See James Duke, "Schleiermacher: On Hermeneutics," translator's introduction to Kimmerle's edition of Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutics*, p. 11, and Jack Forstmann, *A Romantic Triangle: Schleiermacher and Early German Romanticism* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), p. 101.

7. Kimmerle, "Editor's Introduction," p. 34.

8. Forstman thus notes, "the art of hermeneutics consists in sensing the proper measure of each movement with respect to any given author." Jack Forstman, "The Understanding of Language by Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 51 (1968): 156.

9. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Problem of Language in Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics," in Robert W. Funk, ed., *Schleiermacher as Contemporary* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), p. 75.

10. Palmer agrees that Schleiermacher's "grammatical interpretation proceeds by locating the assertion according to objective and general laws; the psychological side of interpretation focuses on what is subjective and individual" (*Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, p. 88).

11. Ricoeur asserts that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as grasping the definite meaning of a text is completed only in the psychological interpretation. See his "Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics," *Monist* 60 (1977): 186.

12. See Duke, "Schleiermacher: On Hermeneutics," p. 4, and Forstman, *A Romantic Triangle*, p. 100.

13. The first canon is that "a more precise determination of a given text must be decided on the basis of the use of language common to the author and his original public" (*Hemeneutics*, p. 117); the second canon is that "the meaning of each word of a passage must be determined by the context in which it occurs" (ibid., p. 127).

14. In this aspect, Karl Barth, to my knowledge, is the only one who observes that, for Schleiermacher, on the one hand, the speech or writing of a person "is something individual, alongside other individual things, in a series or nexus, whether considered grammatically or psychologically. On the other hand it is itself a totality, unique, and complete, again from both angles, in language and in the author's life." *The Theology of Schleiermacher* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 181.

15. Cornel West, "Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics and the Myth of the Given," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 34 (1979): 71.

16. Ibid., p. 75.

17. Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 298–99.

18. Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 197.

19. For such a reduction of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as an art to divination, see H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, Second Revised Edition, 1989), p. 187 (where he says that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is "ultimately a divinatory process" which is "an aesthetic construct"); and Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher in Christ and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), pp. 85–6 (where he argues that one better understands hermeneutics as an art as one follows the psychological method in which the divinatory method is prior to the comparative one).

20. Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, p. 181.

21. For West's opposite view, see his "Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics and the Myth of the Given," p. 74.

22. Kimmerle, "Editor's Introduction," p. 36. Bruce D. Marshal concurs that for Schleiermacher thinking "is really distinct from and prior to language" and in this sense is "pre-linguistic." Bruce D. Marshal, "Hermeneutics and Dogmatics in Schleiermacher's Theology," *The Journal of Religion* 67 (1987): 20, 32.

23. See also his earlier discussion: "on the one hand, every man is in the power of the language he speaks, and all his thinking is a product thereof. He cannot think anything with great precision that would lie outside the limits of language. . . . Yet on the other hand, every freely thinking, mentally self-employed human being shapes his own language." F. D. E. Schleiermacher, "On the Different Methods of Translation," in A. Leslie Willson, ed., *German Romantic Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1982), pp. 5–6.
24. Kimmerle, "Editor's Introduction," p. 37.
25. In this sense, Kurt Mueller-Vollmer notes that the author in Schleiermacher's psychological interpretation is an authorial act which "constitutes itself in the creation of the work." Thus "even the purely intentional mental side of speech–speech as a mental phenomenon is not free from language." "Introduction" to *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1985), pp. 11–12.
26. R. R. Niebuhr, "Schleiermacher on Language and Feeling," *Theology Today* 17 (1969): 152.
27. Paul Ricoeur recognizes that there is no thought without speech, but emphasizes that "there is a specific distance between speaking and thinking, since we can translate one language into another and so express the same thinking in different manners of speaking" ("Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics," p. 183). Yet, for Schleiermacher, one's thinking cannot remain the same after being translated into another language: "Grotius and Leibniz could not write philosophy in Dutch or in German, at least not without becoming totally different people" ("On the Different Methods of Translation," p. 21).
28. Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 167.
29. Ibid., p. 197.
30. Ibid., p. 304.
31. Ibid., p. 193.
32. For an exploration of the myth in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, see Sabine Wilke, "Authorial Intent versus Universal Symbolic Language: Schleiermacher and Schelegel on Mythology, Interpretation, and Communal Values," *Soundings* 73 (1991): 411–23.
33. This false presupposition is similar to Rudolf Bultmann's prejudice (in distinction from presupposition), which should be rejected because it prohibits an interpreter from hearing what the text actually says, but only lets it say what one already knows. See his "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible," in *New Testament Mythology And Other Basic Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), pp. 145–53.
34. It is contrasted to the passive misunderstanding, which occurs unconsciously. For his discussion of the latter, see *Hermeneutics*, p. 111.
35. See Otto Friedrich Böllnow, "What Does It Mean to Understand a Writer Better than He Understood Himself," *Philosophy Today* 23 (Spring 1979): 16–28.
36. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 192.
37. See Richard L. Corliss, "Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics and Its Critics," *Religious Studies* 29 (1993): 363–79.
38. Schleiermacher, "On Different Methods of Translation," pp. 28–29.
39. For Bontekoe, it is the same hermeneutics of which "Schleiermacher lays the foundation; Gadamer completes the superstructure." Ron Bontekoe, "A Fusion of Horizons: Gadamer and Schleiermacher," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1987): 16.
40. Gadamer, *Truth And Method*, p. 390.
41. Schleiermacher, *Introduction to the Dialogues of Plato* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), pp. 15–16.
42. As pointed out by Böllnow, one of the conditions for "better understanding" is the impossibility of an understanding "as well as." For one can understand an author as well as the author does only when "everything that is willed and intended comes to its full definition." Yet then no better understanding is either possible or necessary ("What Does It Mean to Understand a Writer Better than He Understood Himself," pp. 21–22). Although in two places (*Hermeneutics*, pp. 69, 112) Schleiermacher refers Schlegel's version of the hermeneutic maxim as "to understand as well as and better than the author does," he has no use for the first half. His explanation of the maxim is that "since we have no direct knowledge of what was in the author's mind, we must try to become aware of many things of which he himself may have been unconscious" (ibid., p. 112). This amounts to saying that, since we cannot understand as well as the author does himself, we can understand him better than he does himself. Thus, in other places (ibid., pp. 64, 156, and 191), Schleiermacher drops the first part and expresses the maxim simply as "to understand an author better than he understands himself."
43. I would like to thank Professors Richard R. Niebuhr, Francis Fiorenza, and Terrence Tice for their comments on earlier versions of this essay.

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