Chapter Three
Theories of Hermeneutics
From Schleiermacher to E.D. Hirsch, Jr.

While the last chapter dealt with "myth" within the larger framework of "myth hermeneutics," this chapter takes up the second dimension of the thesis, i.e. "hermeneutics." It examines the theories of hermeneuticians from Schleiermacher to E.D. Hirsch, Jr. After going into the etymology and definition of "hermeneutics," this chapter discusses critically the theories of Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur and E.D. Hirsch. A note on Asthaus has been incorporated into the discussion of Schleiermacher. While Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Hirsch vehemently argue that the authorial intention is not only recoverable but should be the goal of any interpretative enterprise, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur, on the contrary, brush aside the role played by the authorial intention in interpretative endeavours, for they declare that texts are autonomous entities which are not tethered to their authors. This chapter examines issues like authorial intention and interpretation as "recreation" of the authorial intention, "prejudices," "horizon," "fusion of horizons," "hermeneutic circle," "fore-structures of understanding" and semantic autonomy.

Etymology and Definition: "Hermeneutics really came into its own in the 1970s and 1980s," states Leitch in American Literary Criticism from the Thirties to the Eighties (197). Initially, hermeneutics was known as an ancillary subject in the fields of philology, biblical exegesis and jurisprudence. However, the term gained currency and came into wider circulation after the publication of Heidegger's Sein und Zeit (1927), and its English translation Being and Time (1962), and Gadamer's Wahrheit und Methode (1960), and its English translation Truth and Method in 1975. These two highly influential works, along with the prolific writings of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas, among others, pushed hermeneutics to the centre stage. Today, hermeneutics is a term to reckon with not only in seminaries but in all institutes of higher learning, especially in the humanities.
An etymological analysis of the term "henneneutics" throws up important issues which, among other concerns, highlights its sacred origin. E.D. Hirsch observes that the term "henneneutics" "is cognate with Hermes, the messenger of the gods" (The Aims of Interpretation 18). Hermes had to be doubly proficient in order to transmit the message of the gods to the humans. "He had to understand and interpret for himself, what the gods wanted to convey before he could proceed to translate, articulate, and explicate their intention to mortals," declares Mueller-Vollmer in his introduction to The Henneneutics Reader (1).

This etymological and philological study brings up quite a few crucial issues for discussion. Firstly, henneneutics is an interpretative endeavour (for the Greek verb hermeneuein means "to interpret") ranging from translation to interpretation of obscure, ancient, sacred and literary texts. Secondly, this interpretative exercise takes place in and through the medium of language, and hence the primacy of language in all hermeneutical programmes. Thirdly, any interpretative task has to be situated within the horizon of the interpreter because understanding and interpretation are always "horizonal," i.e. they are from a given vantage point. Fourthly, understanding and interpretation are characterized by the reader's "presuppositions" and "prejudices," for understanding is always horizonal. Lastly, the hearer or the reader has to decode the message and transpose it to his/her own meaning system in the act of appropriation which completes the interpretative endeavour.

Under the rubric "six modern definitions of henneneutics," Palmer in Henneneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleienachner, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer (33-45) has provided a comprehensive definition of henneneutics taking into account its history and development. Firstly, henneneutics is interpreted as "the theory of biblical exegesis," wherein exegesis will refer to actual biblical commentary, while henneneutics will deal with the rules and methodological principles that underpin such exegesis. From a broader perspective, exegesis will concern itself with textual commentary while henneneutics will focus on the interpretation and application of a given text by situating itself in the present. In What is Structural Exegesis?, explicating
and at the same time marking off exegesis from hermeneutics, its counterpart, David Patte writes:

Exegesis aims at understanding the text in itself, while hermeneutics attempts to elucidate what the text means for the modern interpreter and the people of his culture. Exegesis and hermeneutics must be distinguished from each other despite the fact that the very foundation of exegesis is to lead to hermeneutics. (3)

Secondly, hermeneutics is interpreted as 'general philological methodology,' an umbrella term which ultimately subsumed biblical exegesis among other exegeses. Thirdly, hermeneutics is explicated as "the science of all linguistic undertaking." Thanks to Schleiermacher, the father of modern hermeneutics, hermeneutics witnessed a "Copernican revolution": from understanding a given text, hermeneutics shifted its focus to the understanding of understanding itself, thus leapfrogging from a variety of regional hermeneutics to a general hermeneutics. Fourthly, hermeneutics is decoded as "the methodological foundation of Geisteswissenschaften." Against the backdrop of positivism which held sway in the sixteenth century, Dilthey, wanting to place the human sciences on an equal footing with the natural sciences (Naturwissenschaften), saw in hermeneutics the foundation of all Geisteswissenschaften. Fifthly, hermeneutics is interpreted as the "phenomenology of existence and existential understanding." With Heidegger, there is yet another paradigm shift in the orientation of hermeneutics: from epistemology to ontology, i.e. understanding is conceived not in epistemological but ontological categories. Lastly, hermeneutics is interpreted as "the system of interpretation, both recollective and iconoclastic [i.e. restoration and reduction, or demythologization and demystification], used by man to reach the meaning behind myths and symbols."

Roy J. Howard in Three Faces of Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Current Theories of Understanding underscores the sharp differences between the earliest conceptions of hermeneutics and the modern rendering of the term:
Formerly, 'liermeneutics' referred to theory and practice of interpretation. It was a skill one acquired by learning how to use the instruments of history, philology, manuscriptology, and so on. The skill was typically deployed against texts rendered problematic by the ravages of time, by cultural differences, or by the accidents of history. As such, liermeneutics was a regional and occasional necessity—(sub)-discipline in theology, archaeology, literary studies, the history of art, and so forth. (xiii)

But today, liermeneutics is no more the handmaid of theology and jurisprudence. It has come into its own, and this quantum leap, asserts Howard, is "one of kind, and not merely of degree" (xiv). He proceeds to point out the two major stances of modern liermeneutics, particularly philosophical liermeneutics: "the rejection of a mono-methodological empiricism" and "the inescapability of subjective output while avoiding, for all that, a subsidence into psychologism" (xvi).

Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher: The hermeneutic theories of Schleiermacher represent a watershed in the history of the development of liermeneutics. Schleiermacher's outstanding contribution in the field of liermeneutics is his bringing together regional liermeneutics such as philological liermeneutics, biblical henneneutics and juridical liermeneutics under the common plank of general liermeneutics. "Schleiermacher is credited with," remark Gayle C. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift in their introduction to The Hermeneutic Tradition from Ast to Ricoeur, "taking the first steps toward establishing a, general hermeneutic methodology in contrast to a variety of regional hermeneutic approaches" (11).

Any discussion of Schleiermacher should include, at least in passing, his predecessor Friedrich Ast for he, along with Friedrich Wolf, not only stands at the threshold of the lienneneiitical movement, but has innienced a long line of theoreticians starting with Schleiermacher. The two lasting contributions of Ast are his conception and elaboration of the concept of the hermeneutic circle and his theory of understanding as reconstruction. "The basic principle of all understanding and
knowledge," asserts Ast, "is to find in the particular the spirit of the whole, and to comprehend the particular through the whole" (43).

Secondly, Ast’s articulation of the process of "understanding and explication of a work . . . [as] the reproduction or recreation (Nachlibilden) of that which is already formed" (46) has influenced a host of romanticist theoreticians in particular. Here understanding is seen as a reproduction and reconstruction of the authorial intention wherein the reader examines the creative process from the other end.

The influence of Ast on Schleiermacher is quite easily discernible, and Schleiermacher extends Ast’s theory of understanding as "reproduction or recreation." Ron Bontekoe, in "A Fusion of I lorizons: Gadainer and Schleiermacher," notes that "hermeneutics, according to Schleiermacher, is concerned with the reconstruction of the author’s intended meaning" (3). In other words, the process from the interpreter’s end sets the entire motion in reverse tracing all meaning back to auctorial intention (mens auctoris) and its reconstruction. This "reconstruction of the meaning," remarks Palmer, "consists of two interesting moments: the 'grammatical' and the 'psychological''' and adds that "the principle upon which this reconstruction stands, whether grammatical or psychological, is that of the hermeneutic circle" (Hermeneutics 86).

In one of his aphorisms on "General Hermeneutics," Schleiermacher declares: "Understanding a speech always involves two moments: to understand what is said in the context of the language with its possibilities [grammatical interpretation] and to understand it as a fact in the thinking of the speaker [psychological or technical interpretation]" (74).

However, he hastens to note that "these two hermeneutical tasks are completely equal" (75), and adds that "since complete knowledge [of the language in currency and of the author] is impossible, it is necessary to move back and forth between the grammatical and psychological sides" (76). Commenting on these two interrelated dimensions of interpretations, Graeme Nicholson observes, in Seeing
and Reading; that "the former [grammatical interpretation] is a scrutiny of the syntax and vocabulary of the text and of the language of the period in which it was written" and adds that "the latter is the grasp of the author's own inventions in their individuality as having motivated and created the individual work" (26).

Shedding light on the working of the psychological or technical approach, Schleiermacher clarifies that it involves the divinatory and the comparative methods and remarks that these two methods should not be separated. Explicating the former approach, he notes that "by leading the interpreter to transform himself... into the author, the divinatory method seeks to gain an immediate comprehension of the author as an individual" (96).

On the other hand, "the comparative method," notes Schleiermacher, "proceeds by subsuming the author under a general type. It then tries to find his distinctive traits by comparing him with the others of the same general type" (96). According to him, "the comparative [method] is based on the assumption that each person is not only a unique individual... but that he has a receptivity to the uniqueness of every other person" (96).

Weighing the respective claims of each method, Ricoeur adjudicates, notwithstanding Schleiermacher's assertion that the two methods are interrelated, that "the real project of hermeneutics is accomplished in this second type [psychological] of interpretation" because it addresses the issue of "reaching the subjectivity of him who speaks" ("The Task of Hermeneutics" 115).

Yet another significant but controversial aphorism of Schleiermacher is "to understand the text at first as well as and then even better than its author" (83). A clear exposition of this aphorism is found in Hermeneutics and Social Science wherein Zygmunt Bauman, underscoring the notion of detachment in perception, clarifies that "only from the vantage point of an outside observer does the tissue (of life woven by the author) become visible in its totality, so its exact plan can be drawn." And he adds that the interpreter "knows more purely and simply because he, unlike
the author, confronts the object as an object, from the outside, as a strange phenomenon" (31).

Schleiermacher took over from Ast the concept of the hermeneutic circle and couched it in his own terms: "Within each given text," he announces, "its parts can only be understood in terms of the whole, and so the interpreter must gain an overview of the work by a cursory reading before undertaking a more careful interpretation" (85). Though this going back and forth smacks of, at first sight, a logical incongruity for the entire process appears to be trapped in a vicious circle, Palmer argues, in Hermeneutics, that "somehow, a kind of 'leap' into the hermeneutical circle occurs and we understand the whole and the parts together" (87). Palmer's use of nebulous terms such as "somehow" and "leap" have their justification in Schleiermacher himself who, in the context of the "back and forth movement" between grammatical and psychological interpretations, bluntly states that "no rules can stipulate exactly how to do this" (76).

Looking at Schleiermacher's hermeneutical theories from a holistic perspective, Ricoeur comments that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is finely woven with the warp and woof of romantic and critical filaments, lie writes: "Schleiermacher's hermeneutical program . . . was Romantic in its appeal to a living relation to the process of creation, critical in its wish to elaborate the universally applicable rules of understanding" ("The Task of I Hermeneutics" 115).

The history of hermeneutics assigns a special place to Schleiermacher for his avowed mission to orient the task of hermeneutics towards understanding as such. Perhaps the best tribute to Schleiermacher has been paid by Dillhey, his successor and biographer. In "The Rise of Hermeneutics" taking into account Schleiermacher's contribution to the development of modern hermeneutics, Dilthey notes that "an effective hermeneutics could only develop in a mind where a virtuoso practice of philosophical interpretation was united with a genuine capacity for philosophical thought." And he declares that "such a one was Schleiermacher" (240).
Wilhelm Dilthey: Dilthey was a multi-faceted personality with varied interests and specializations. Highlighting the myriad-minded personality of this German philosopher, Wellek, in A History of Modern Criticism, writes:

- Wilhelm Dilthey was a philosopher who formulated a Lehensphilosophie ["philosophy of life"]... He was a psychologist... a theorist of historical thought who worked on a comprehensive Critique of Historical Reason... an extremely prolific and learned historian of ideas: of philosophy and theology... even of Prussian law... Dilthey wrote the most important German treatise on Poetics in the later half of the 19th century... (5: 320)

When it comes to the development of hermeneutics, Dilthey acts as a bridge between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He is a romanticist in the tradition of Schleiermacher insofar as he underscores "reconstruction" and congeniality with the author, and a precursor to philosophical hermeneutics when he underlines his brilliant insight into "historicality" (Geschichtlichkeit). Pointing out that "in some respects Dilthey has his feet in both centuries," Mueller-Vollmer in The Hermeneutics Reader observes that Dilthey's hermeneutics typifies "the watershed between the nineteenth-century theories... and those of the twentieth century which comprise philosophical hermeneutics and the methodological concerns of the social and historical sciences" (23).

Positivism held sway during Dilthey's times and as Ricoeur notes there was "the demand that the mind take as its model for all intelligibility the sort of empirical explanation current in the natural sciences" ("The Task of Hermeneutics" 117). It is against this backdrop that Dilthey's hermeneutical programme, particularly his endeavour to invest all human sciences (Geisteswissenschaften) with a methodology and an epistemology that would he as secure and respectable as those of the natural sciences (Naturwissenschaften), has to be studied. Jeanrond's analysis lights up Dilthey's stance: "He [Dilthey] experienced the humanities as being endangered by the rise and impressive self-understanding of the natural sciences who claimed that..."
they alone were able to yield objective insights into nature thanks to their superior methodology" (5 I).

Dilthey noted that while "explanation" is the cornerstone of the physical sciences, its antithetical correlate "understanding" is the watchword of the humanities. In Dilthey's words, "we explain [fiklaren] nature, but the psychic life we understand [Verstehen]" (qtd. in Jeanrond 52). The operation of these two processes are expounded by Thomas W. Gillespie in "Biblical Authority And Interpretation: The Current Debate in Hermeneutics": "The natural sciences seek to explain nature in terms of causality; the human sciences seek to understand the inner life of fellow human beings in terms of shared meaning." Gillespie adds, "Meaning for Dilthey is human experience known from within" (211-12).

"Understanding" and "explanation" need not be construed as exclusive and irreconciliable, with the former belonging entirely to the domain of the human sciences and the latter being confined to the physical sciences. Both these processes are operative in varying degrees in humanities and sciences. For instance, Ricoeur would attempt to bridge "understanding" and "explanation" as is evident in Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning. "Explanation" conies into operation in terms of structures, while its counterpart "understanding" comes into play when the focus is on the psychological, social and cultural forces which underpin the structures. Understanding needs to be complemented by explanation in order to complete the cycle.

Dilthey's hermeneutical enterprise stems from a fundamental aporia which is akin to Kant's transcendental question: How is historical knowledge possible? In "The Rise of Hermeneutics," he writes:

How can one quite individually structured consciousness bring an alien individuality of a completely different type to objective knowledge through... reconstruction? What kind of process is this, in appearance so different from the other modes of objective knowledge? (231)
Before delving into the operation of Verstehen, it is essential methodologically to clarify certain basic concepts along with the triad of "lived experience" (Erlebnis), "expression" (Ausdruck) and "understanding" (Verstehen). Firstly, Dilthey, being a philosopher of life, considered life itself "the datum of the human sciences" (Jeanron 52). His emphasis on life is highlighted by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi in his encyclopedia article "Wilhelm Dilthey": "A strict empiricist, he rejected any form of transcendentalism. There is nothing behind life, no thing-in-itself, no metaphysical ultimate or 'Platonic heaven of forms of which life is only a phenomenon, mutation" (2: 404). Dilthey's concept of understanding, the rallying point in humanities, stems from and is intimately related to life, and is a category of life.

Secondly, attention has to be paid to Dilthey's concept of "connectedness." "Life consists of parts of lived experiences," writes Dilthey, "which are inwardly related to each other. . . . Everything which pertains to mind is interrelated; interconnectedness is, therefore, a category originating from life" ("Draft for a Critique of Historical Reason" 151). His formulation of the hermeneutic circle which underscores the concept of "connectedness" is expounded by Jeanron who notes that "in understanding we begin by presupposing the connectedness of the whole which presents itself to us as a living reality, in order to grasp the individual in this context." Jeanron adds that "precisely the tact that we are living in the awareness of this connectedness makes it possible for us to understand a particular sentence, a particular gesture or a particular activity" (Theological Hermeneutics 52).

Thirdly, in Dilthey's epistemology, knowledge of the other is never immediate since we grasp the "other" through those signs or mediations which turn out to be objectifications or exteriorizations of the other's self. These "life expressions," particularly in their written forms, are our objects of understanding. In Hermeneutics and Social Science, Bauman clarifies that "the potential objects of our understanding are . . . expressions of the Spirit," and adds that "it is because they are expressions of the Spirit that we can understand them" (36).
Fourthly, Dilthey's definition of hermeneutics and his emphasis on language, especially the written word, need to be highlighted. In "The Rise ["Development" in some translations] of Hermeneutics," he writes: "orderly and systematic understanding of fixed and relatively permanent expressions of life is what we call exegesis or interpretation" (232). In the same essay, he observes that "the art of understanding centers on the exegesis or interpretation of those residues of human reality preserved in written forms" (233).

Lastly, Dilthey's historical character of knowledge which upholds the thesis that understanding is at once a personal and historical process has to be taken into consideration. According to Rossi-Landi, three principles stand out in Dilthey's historicism.' Spelling out these principles, he writes that "all human manifestations are part of a historical process and should be explained in historical terms." Secondly, "different ages and individuals can only be understood by entering imaginatively into their specific point of view," and lastly "the historian himself is bound by the horizons of his own age" (2: 405).

Underscoring the concrescence of the past, the present and the future, Dilthey in "Draft for a Critique of Historical Reason," advances the argument that "time is experienced as the restless progression, in which the present constantly becomes the past and the future the present" (149). In other words, history is, in the Diltheyan framework, the succession of the objectifications of the human mind or spirit, i.e. life-expressions which stem from "lived experience" (Ormiston and Schrift 15).

The stage is now set for a discussion of Dilthey's hemieneutic triad: experience, expression and understanding. "Lived experience" (Erlebnis) has a special meaning in Diltheyan terminology. Glossing the term Erlebnis, Macquarrie and Robinson, in Being and Time, append in a footnote that "an Erlebnis is not just any 'experience' but one which we feel deeply and live through" (72). Palmer in Hermeneutics notes that because it is a "lived experience" it is "prereflexive" and is intrinsically temporal and historical (111).
The second concept in the triad is "expression." According to Dilthey, "'life-expressions' … mean not only expressions which intend something or seek to signify something but also those which make a mental content intelligible for us having that purpose" (Mueller-Vollmer 153). Elucidating the term, Mueller-Vollmer points out that it refers to "a class of hermeneutic objects that carry a meaning independent from the individual who produced them and whose life-expressions they once were" (27). He adds that works of art, especially written expressions, were deemed by Dilthey to be the supreme form of expression (27).

Understanding (Verstehen) completes the triad. In "The Rise of Hermeneutics" Dilthey remarks that understanding is the "process by which an inside is conferred on a complex of external sensory signs. . . . Understanding [is] that process by which we intuit, behind the sign given to our senses, that psychic reality of which it is the expression" (23 1-32). Though there is an emphasis on empathy and "connatural understanding" (Truth and Method 212), Dilthey's epistemology should not be understood as psychologistic. Ormiston and Schrift point out that "Dilthey directs understanding toward the reconstruction of the historical product, whether it is an event or an object." They also point out that Dilthey expanded the perimeter of the hermeneutic circle so that the whole can include a range of phenomena such as "historical background, social customs, cultural and political institutions" (15).

Assessing Dilthey's contribution to hermeneutics, Palmer writes that "Dilthey renewed the project of a general hermeneutics and significantly advanced it." And commenting on the pivotal role he played in providing a thrust to philosophical hermeneutics by underscoring the twin concepts of temporality and historicality, he concludes that "he [Dilthey] laid the foundations for Heidegger's thinking on the temporality of self-understanding. He may properly be regarded as the father of the contemporary hermeneutical 'problematic'" (Hermeneutics 123).

Martin Heidegger If Schleiermacher achieved a major breakthrough by shifting the focus from regional to general hermeneutics which took up the
fundamental issue of understanding understanding itself, I leidegger revolutionized hermeneutics by replacing epistemology with ontology as the rallying point of hermeneutics. "If we can place the first movement from regional hermeneutics to general hermeneutics," writes Ricoeur in "The Task of Hermeneutics," "under the aegis of a Copernican revolution, we must place the second . . . under the aegis of a second Copernican reversal which will relocate the questions of method within the fundamental ontology" (120). According to Ricoeur, the Heideggerian paradigm shift takes up the question "What is the mode of being who only exists through understanding?" in place of the traditional, transcendental question in epistemology: "How do we know?" (120). Heavily underscoring the ontological character in Heidegger's philosophy, Marjorie Greene, in an encyclopedia article "Martin Heidegger," remarks that "he [Heidegger] has, on his own account, but one theme-- the quest for Being" (3: 461).

Discussing the fundamental shift from epistemology to ontology, Ormiston and Schrift note in their introduction to The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast To Ricoeur that "Heidegger turns hermeneutic analysis towards the question of Being." They write:

Hermeneutics is no longer directed toward discovering the epistemological foundations of the human sciences, or the methodological principles which lead to objective knowledge in the Geisteswissenschaften. Instead, emphasis is placed on the disclosure of the ontological conditions which underlie such knowledge or claims to knowledge. (15)

"Our aim in the following treatise," pronounces Heidegger in the opening page of Being and Time, "is to work out the question of the meaning of Being and to do so, concretely. Our provisional aim is the Interpretation of time as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being" (1). Macquarrie and Robinson, the translators of Being and Time, clarify in a footnote that Sein has been translated as "Being" while Seindes has been rendered as "entity or entities" (1). In other
words, entities or extants are designated as beings (with a lower case) which is set off from Being (with an uppercase), the focal point of all enquiry. Heidegger clarifies that "'Being' means the Being of entities" (Being and Time 26) and points out that "the Being of entities 'is' not itself an entity" (26). Although Being is the rallying point of Heidegger's hermeneutical inquiry, it can be reached only through beings or entities, the cardinal of these being the human being (Dasein).

George Steiner, in his monograph Heidegger, points out that according to Heidegger "philosophy is en route to the Being of beings, that is, to being with respect to Being" (32). It has to be noted that the pair "Being" and "being" is correspondingly related to "ontological" and "ontical." Macquarrie and Robinson, in a footnote, remark that while "ontological inquiry is concerned primarily with Being, ontical inquiry is concerned primarily with entities and the facts about them" (31). In this context, it has to be observed that in Heidegger's project understanding is ontological.

Heidegger's henneneutic phenomenology which inquires into Being is basically a phenomenological enterprise, and has Dasein as the focal point. Macquarrie and Robinson, in a foot note, write that sometimes Heidegger uses Da-sein (with a hyphen) which means "literally 'Being there'" (29). Heidegger insists that the world that human beings are in, along with temporality and historicality which govern man's existence, can and should never be bracketed (Husserlian "epoche") or suspended in the inquiry into Being. In a move to underscore the "worldly" and "historical" stance of Heidegger, Steiner writes in Heidegger that 'Dasein is 'to be there' (da-sein), and 'there' is the world; the concrete, literal, actual, daily world. To be human is to be immersed, implanted, rooted in the earth, in the quotidian mariner and matter-of-factness of the world" (81).

Heidegger demolished the sovereignty of the thinking subject in the process of knowing, and, by making man and the world exist alongside (to Heidegger man is In-der-welt-sein), he steered clear of the Cartesian dichotomy between the subject and the object. Articulating this idea, Mueller-Vollmer writes in The Hermeneutics
that "Heidegger grounds his concept of understanding no longer in the subject; he considers it no longer an attribute of the Cartesian res cogitans, the thinking I, but grounds it instead in man's 'Being-in-(he-world')" (33).

Heidegger welds together phenomenology and ontology. He explicates the term "phenomenon" as "that which shows itself in itself, the manifest" (51), and writes that "Phenomenology means ... to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself (58). Discussing the focus of ontology, he writes that "the task of ontology is to explain Being itself and to make the Being of entities stand out in full relief" (49).

The ontological content and focus of philosophy is Being, and the method which is used to inquire into and explicate the meaning of Being (the analytic of Being) is Phenomenology. Heidegger states that "only as phenomenology, is ontology possible" (60). He adds that "ontology and phenomenology are not two distinct philosophical disciplines among others. These terms characterize philosophy itself with regard to its object [Being] and its way of treating that object [phenomenology]" (62).

**Dasein** is the key factor in Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology because of all beings, man (Dasein) alone ex-ists or stands out in his quest for Being. In other words, of all beings man alone is in a privileged position to seek Being because he alone can question Being and articulate it in and through language. "He alone experiences existence as a problematic" and "(he actual existence of man, his 'human being' depends immediately and constantly on a questioning of Being" (Steiner 80). Secondly, man alone ex-ists, that is, he alone has the capacity to stand outside of himself, to "think Being" (Steiner 71). Heidegger remarks that "Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it" (32), and adds that "understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Bein" (32).

Since "'Being' means the Being of entities" (Being and Time 26), the human being has a vague, pre-ontological understanding of existence or Being. James R.
Watson writes in "Heidegger's Hermeneutic Phenomenology" that "the task of hermeneutic phenomenology as conceived by Martin Heidegger in Being and Time is to render explicit man's vague understanding of the meaning of his existence," and adds that "such a rendering constitutes what Heidegger calls 'Fundamental Ontology'" (30). Shedding light on "fundamental ontology" and "hermeneutic phenomenology," two related terms, he writes that "fundamental ontology is . . . the projection of that which is only vaguely understood about the meaning of existence in our everyday, uncritical, workaday world," and adds that "'Hermeneutic Phenomenology' is the name of the method employed in Being and Time to accomplish this projection" (30).

Heidegger, in Being and Time, throws into sharp relief the importance of fundamental ontology. "Fundamental ontology from which alone all other ontologies [i.e. other than Dasein] can take their rise", he writes, "must be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein" (34) because the crucial issue "of the meaning of Being in general" can be confronted only in and through Dasein (61) because of its "ontico-ontological priority" (34) over other beings.

Fundamental ontology is bound up with hermeneutics. The phenomenological study of Being (ontology) becomes a hermeneutic of existence because in the process of describing and understanding Being, it is interpreted. Palmer writes in Hermeneutics: "Ontology must, as phenomenology of being, become a 'hermeneutic of existence'... .This kind of hermeneutic ... lays open what was hidden; it constitutes the primary act of interpretation which first brings a thing from concealment [disclosure of beings]" (129).

Heidegger conceives understanding radically by moving away from the traditional epistemological grid and viewing it ontologically. Dasein is "primarily Being-possible" (Being and Time 183) whose possibilities and potentialities are disclosed in the world, and this "disclosedness" or "disclosure" is termed understanding by Heidegger. He writes that "the kind of Being which Dasein has, as potentiality-for-Being, lies existentially in understanding" (Being and Time 183) and adds that
"understanding is the existential Being of Dasein's own potentiality-for-Being; and it is so in such a way that this Being dis-closes itself what its Being is capable of (184). Continuing the thread of the argument, he remarks that "understanding... pertains... to Dasein's full dis-closedness as Being-in-the-world..." (186).

Since Dasein's possibilities are disclosed in the world, understanding is at once ontological and "worldly." "In understanding the world, Being-in is always understood along with it, while understanding of existence as such is always an understanding of the world," observes Heidegger in Being and Time (186). Consequently, "in making understanding 'worldly'¹, Heidegger 'depsychologizes' it" ("The Task of Hermeneutics" 122).

Heidegger's radical conception of understanding is enunciated and highlighted by Palmer in Hermeneutics: "He [Heidegger] went beyond previous conceptions in seeing understanding not as a mental but as an ontological process... as disclosure of what is real for man" (140). To sum up, Palmer contends that "hermeneutics is still the theory of understanding but understanding is differently (ontologically) defined" (130).

As the very title of Heidegger's work (Being and Time) adumbrates, the inquiry into Being takes place against the horizon of time. Heidegger makes it clear that "time must be brought to light- -and genuinely conceived- -as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it" (Being and Time 39). Joan Stambaugh in "A Heidegger Primer" throws considerable light on Heidegger's understanding of temporality. She does this by contrasting Heidegger's understanding of time with "the traditional theory of time... [which is] a series of novvs, some not yet present, some no longer present." In contrast, "temporality," she remarks with reference to Heidegger, "is conceived as the unifying activity of all three modes of time- -past, present and future" (82). When Dasein is viewed against the horizon of time, his being is temporal, and his possibilities are realized only temporally.

Glossing the term Auslegung (interpretation), Jeanrond, in Theological Hermeneutics, writes that "the concrete forms in which understanding works out its
possibilities Heidegger callsAuslegung (61). Linking interpretation to understanding, Heidegger remarks that "all interpretation is grounded in understanding" (195). In a move to flesh out this pithy statement of Heidegger's, Ormiston and Schrift note that "interpretation (Auslegung), as a possibility of understanding, is the working out, the laying out . . . of possibilities projected by understanding" and add that "interpretation is the articulation of what is projected in the understanding; it discloses what is already understood" (16). Heidegger rejects the notion of a presuppositionless understanding. He avers that "an interpretation is never a pre-suppositionless apprehending of something presented to us" (Being and Time 191-92), and adds:

Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having ["something we have in advance" i.e. Vorhaben, fore-sight ["something we see in advance" i.e. Vorsicht], and fore-conception ["something we grasp in advance" i.e. Vorgriff (191)

In other words, what we understand vaguely and pre-ontologically is disclosed by interpretation through the fore-structures of understanding.

Heidegger's assertion of a "pre-suppositionless apprehending" should not be misconstrued as approaching a text with preconceived ideas and notions, re. prejudices, as understood commonly. Ricoeur comments that "for fundamental ontology, pre-judgment is only understood as the basis of anticipatory [fore-] structure of understanding" ("The Task of Hermeneutics" 123-24). To couch it differently, interpretation is always based on a prior understanding or preunderstanding of something presented to us for apprehension.

Understanding and interpretation, along with meaning, constitute a triad. "Meaning," notes Heidegger, in Being and Time, "is that wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself" and adds, "that which can be Articulated in a disclosure by which we understand, we call 'meaning'" (193). Highlighting the nexus between understanding, interpretation and meaning, Ormiston and Schrift note that "Meaning (Sinn)... is articulated in the interpretive disclosure of understanding. Meaning is
articulated when something becomes intelligible as something." They add that "deriving its structure from the fore-structures of understanding, meaning is disclosed as the interpretation lays bare that which makes possible what has been projected - the Being of the there - Dasein" (17).

Significantly, only Dasein has meaning. In other words, meaning is an existentiale of Dasein. Heidegger notes that because meaning is interpreted in ontologico-existential terms, "all entities whose kind of Being is of a character other than Dasein's must be conceived as unmeaning essentially devoid of any meaning at all" (Being and Time 193).

A hermeneutic circularity underlies the triad - understanding, interpretation and meaning, and Heidegger declares that "in the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing" (195). Mapping out this circularity, Watson, in "Heidegger's Hermeneutic Phenomenology," writes that "ontological knowledge presupposes pre-ontological understanding and all interpretation presupposes previous understanding of that which is interpreted" (275). As noted earlier, the hermeneutic circle should not be construed as a vicious one that begs the question. Maequarrie, in his monograph Martin Heidegger, comments on the "hermeneutic circle":

> It is... a 'relatedness backward or forward' that is present in every act of interpretation, for interpretation could get started only if we already had some understanding of what is to be interpreted, whilst there would be no point in any interpretation unless our initial understanding were filled out, corrected and perhaps very much altered in the course of the interpretation. (9)

Language is yet another foundational aspect of Heidegger's hermeneutics, and it is considered an existentiale, and not merely a tool as in the conventional school of linguistics and language philosophy. Highlighting the pre-eminent position assigned to language, Ruediger Hermann Grimm, in "Introduction: Being as Appropriation," points out that "language, for Heidegger, is the 'house of Being' [Heidegger's phrase in "Letter on Humanism"]; Being speaks to man through
Heidegger's incisive remark in *Introduction to Metaphysics* throws into relief his ontological conception of language and at the same time sets him off from theoreticians who uphold the instrumentalist theory of language. Heidegger declares that "words and language are not wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are" (qtd, in Palmer 135).

Heidegger stands like a colossus in the history of hermeneutics. His signal contribution to hermeneutics is four-fold: firstly, he revolutionized understanding by making it ontological; secondly, he gave a decisive turn to the concept of the hermeneutic circle; thirdly, he convincingly argued that there is no presuppositionless or standpointless interpretation, and highlighted the fore-structures of understanding; and, lastly, he discarded the instrumentalist theory of language, and endowed language with an ontological dimension besides underscoring the importance of discourse (*Being and Time* 203) which is crucial to speech-acts.

Hans-Georg Gadamer: After Heidegger, the mantle of furthering ontological hermeneutics fell on his student Gadamer who advanced his own brand of hermeneutics known as "philosophical hermeneutics." Addressing the question "What is exactly philosophical about philosophical hermeneutics?," Carl Page, in "Philosophical Hermeneutics and its Meaning for Philosophy," writes that "the primary universalization embodied in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is the move from text to experience" (131) and adds that philosophical hermeneutics is engaged in inquiring into "the very possibility of coming to understand at all" (133). In the main, the key aspects of Gadamerian hermeneutics are the concepts of prejudice, tradition, horizon, fusion of horizons, linguistically and historicality.

It is a hermeneutical fact that no human being ever approaches reality or a given text with a blank or neutral mind (*tabula rasa*). As man is and operates within the perimeter of tradition and history, bound by the fundamental coordinates of time and space, he necessarily encounters reality with a certain bent of mind from a particular standpoint. "All understanding," assures Gadamer, "inevitably involves
some prejudice" (Truth and Method 239) and goes on to point out that "the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being" (245).

Notwithstanding the observation that the term "prejudice" has acquired a negative semantic connotation, Gadamer points out that "prejudice' certainly does not mean a false judgment, but it is part of the idea that it can have a positive and a negative value" (Truth and Method 240). He adds that the pejorative sense of the term is probably a vestige of the Enlightenment's apathy towards prejudice and, in its place, a glorification of the role of reason. Ted Petero in "The Nature and Role of Presuppositions; An Inquiry into Contemporary Hermeneutics" observes that "the Enlightenment viewed prejudice as judgment without basis or grounding in reality" (219). Therefore, it is to Gadamer's credit that he rehabilitates the term "prejudice" and gives it an interesting turn and fresh lease of life. Throwing light on the crucial role prejudices play in encountering reality, Petero observes that though "prejudice" and its cognates "presuppositions" and "prejudgments" have acquired different connotations in common parlance, "they basically denote the same phenomenon: a pre-articulated structure of beliefs which directs consciousness to perceive, organize, and meaningfully understand the objects and events it encounters" (211).

In Gadamerian hermeneutics, prejudices which stem from the historical tradition in which we stand, play a crucial role. Not only do they help man in apprehending reality by providing a grid, however contingent and provisional it may be, but also play a significant role in the fusion of horizons in the context of text-interpretation. Josef Bleicher, in Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique, observes that "Gadamer emphasizes that the process of text-understanding is always fuelled by the reader's pre-understandings and by his or her interests in participating in the meaning of the text" (65). What is of fundamental importance is that the reader should become aware of his prejudices in his encounter with the text, and should have the intellectual courage and even honesty to stake his prejudices and allow them to be challenged and, if need be, altered in the light of the
horizon of the text. Significantly, readers with different prejudices will encounter a
given text in potentially different ways based on their respective horizons.

Gadamer restores the pre-eminence of tradition in the face of a frontal attack
on it by the Enlightenment, "That which has been sanctioned by tradition and custom
has an authority that is nameless," asserts Gadamer, and adds that "our finite historical
being is marked by the fact that always the authority of what has been transmitted-
and not only what is clearly grounded- -has power over our attitudes and behaviour"
(249). The authority invested with tradition should not be interpreted as the oppressive
yoke of the past which cannot be shaken off. Petero clarifies that "tradition is
authoritative for us because our very historical finite being (and that is all the being
we have) is determined through it" (221),

In Gadamer's conception, argues Petero, tradition "is the very content and
fabric of relations to which we belong, the horizon within which we do our thinking"
(219). Gadamer is quick to dispel the misconception that tradition can only bring in
knowledge that is fossilized, and which is out of sync with the present. Conceiving
tradition in a dynamic manner, he writes that "to stand within a tradition does not
limit the freedom of knowledge but makes it possible" (Truth and Method 324).

Understanding is possible because both the text and the interpreter stand in
the stream of tradition which is paradoxically the same and yet different, and which,
significantly, cannot be totally objectified (Truth and Method 250). The text and
the interpreter belong to the same tradition insofar as they are characterized by "the
radical finitude and temporality of facticity" (Petero 220), and yet they are different
for they are situated in different horizons though within the same tradition. In other
words, tradition is actualized and individualized by different individuals belonging
to diverse horizons, and ultimately there takes place a fusion of horizons which
results in understanding.

Gadamer, along with Heidegger, jettisons the instrumentalistic conception of
language and gives language an ontological turn. Thus the question of language in
Gadamer and Heidegger is not so much epistemological as it is ontological. Against
In Gadamerian theory of understanding and interpretation, language plays a vital role. Gadamer conceives hermeneutics to be dialogical wherein discourse serves as the model. "The model which underlies the general hermeneutical approach is the model of the question and answer," notes Gadamer in "Religious and Poetical Speaking." In the same essay, he remarks that "the logical structure of dialogue must be the guideline for any research in hermeneutics" (87). Since both the text and the reader belong to language in an identical manner, the fusion of horizons is made possible. In other words, linguisticality not only discloses the world, but bridges people who are situated in different horizons through the girder of linguisticality.

In Gadamerian hermeneutics, the world is disclosed only in and through language. Gadamer emphasizes that "to have a world is at the same time to have language" (Truth and Method 401) and adds that "on it [language] depends the fact that man has a world at all" (401). Palmer clarifies this phenomenon as "the linguisticality of human experience of the world" (Hermeneutics 206).

Man is conditioned not only by linguisticality but by historically as well. Gadamer asserts, "History does not belong to us, but we belong to it" (Truth and Method 245). Expounding Gadamer's stand, Page writes:

He [Gadamer] is not only claiming that as a matter of contingent fact human knowers always begin from presuppositions furnished by a history of which they are largely unaware but also that the power of human understanding itself cannot, in principle, transcend such historical conditioning. (134)

In Gadamerian hermeneutics, interpretation and application, the three subcategories constitute a unified triad. "All understanding is interpretation," writes Gadamer, and adds that "understanding is already interpretation because it creates the historical horizon within which the meaning of a text is realized" (Truth
and Method 357). In the case of juridical and biblical hermeneutics, application (subtilitas applicandi) constitutes an integral aspect of understanding (sublilitas intelligendi) and interpretation (subtilitas explicandi), and hence Gadamer's assertion that "understanding here is always application" (275), for the application of the theona to a given situation (praxis) completes the hermeneutical process. "To understand, in the sense of knowing or explaining," notes Palmer in Hermeneutics, "already involves within something like an application or relation of the text to the present" (187).

Every interpreter brings his own horizon to bear on the text he encounters. He views the given text through (he grid of his preunderstanding and prejudices which stem from the tradition he stands in historically. Therefore, any interpretation is necessarily from the horizon of the interpreter, and it is not only inadmissible but impossible as well to shed one's prejudices in one's encounter with a text. "To try to eliminate one's own concepts in interpretation," Gadamer propounds in Truth and Method, "is not only impossible, but manifestly absurd. To interpret means precisely to use one's own preconceptions so that the meaning of the text can really be made to speak for us" (358).

It has to be noted that any interpretation is not only from the horizon of the interpreter but from the present times as well. Expounding this thesis, Palmer, in Hermeneutics, asserts that "the 'meaning' of the past work is defined in terms of the questions put to it from the present" (182). In other words, understanding brings into play a sustained dialogue between the past and the present.

Gadamer conceives interpretation as an interplay between the language of the interpreter and the language of the text which he faces. Because understanding and interpretation are always from the interpreter's horizon and his times, i.e. his Weltanschauung and the Zeitgeist, it implies that texts are understood differently by different readers situated in different ages and cultures. "Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way," asserts the Heidelberg philosopher, and adds that "the real meaning of a text… is always partly determined also by the historical
situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history” (Truth and Method 263).

In the same context, Gadamer argues that a reader or critic has to accept the hermeneutical fact that "future generations will understand differently what he has read in the text" (304) which implies that "there . . . cannot be any one interpretation that is correct 'in itself because every interpretation is concerned with the text itself" (358). As the interpretative horizon changes, "application," which forms the third element in the trilogy, leads to varying understandings depending upon the contexts of interpretation. James S. Hans notes that according to Gadamer "different readers always bring different contexts to the text which lead to varying interpretations that are not simply relative to the reader's own whims" ("Hermeneutics, Play, Deconstruction”3 10).

Interpretation and application are on-going processes, for new contexts and horizons call out for fresh interpretations and applications which should be relevant to the given conditions. Hence Gadamer's declaration that "the discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished" (Truth and Method 265). Shedding light on this declaration, Bontekoe, in "A fusion of Horizons," writes that "its [text's] future possibilities are determined rather by the contexts which its future readers will impose upon it in their efforts to come to grips with the text" (5).

According to Gadamer, understanding is not a passive and mechanical operation of reproducing the author's intended meaning in the romanticist tradition of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. On the contrary, Gadamer contends that understanding and interpretation are creative and productive processes. Arguing from a position which is diametrically opposed to the stances of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, he writes, "interpretation is probably, in a certain sense, re-creation," but hastens to clarify that "this re-creation docs not follow the process of the creative act, hut the lines of the created work which has to be brought to representation in accord with the meaning the interpreter finds in it" (Truth and Method 107). Highlighting the Gadamerian thesis that understanding is not re-cognitive in the romanticist sense,
Bleicher, in *Contemporary Hermeneutics*, notes that "the conception of an existence-in-itself of a text is . . quite incorrect and exhibits an element of dogmatism" and adds that "each appropriation [of textual meaning] is different and equally valid" (123).

The highpoint of Gadamer's theory of understanding is his hermeneutical concept of "fusion of horizons." Before delving into the concept effusion of horizons," it is mandatory to throw some light on the concept of horizon in Gadamer's lexicon. In the supplement to *Truth and Method*, captioned "Hermeneutics and Historicism," Gadamer asserts that "within the horizon of inquiry alone is understanding possible" (475).

"Every finite present has its limitations," argues Gadamer and adds that "we define the concept of 'situation' by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence an essential part of the concept of situation is the concept of 'horizon'" (Truth and Method 269). It has to be underlined that both creative and interpretive endeavours take place within the framework of a given horizon. Explicating the term "horizon," David Couzens Hoy, in *The Critical Circle: Literature, History and Philosophical Hermeneutics*, writes that "the term 'horizon' is an attempt at describing the situatedness or context-bound character of interpretation" (96).

However hard a reader may try, he can never completely become aware of his horizon and thematize it, for he is engulfed by his horizon and can never stand apart from it (Truth and Method 268-69). Since the writer and the reader are each anchored in his own horizon, there surfaces a gap between these two, resulting in "alienating distanciation" (Verfreindung). Alienation creeps in even when the gap between the two horizons is minimal. In stark contrast to romanticist hermeneuticians, who, through congenial empathy, call for transposition into the writer's subjective dimension to bridge this gap, Gadamer argues that this gap should not be bridged. Undermining "alienating distanciation," he contends that this gap or distance plays a productive and creative role since it leads to a creative tension between the "two
horizons," and ultimately this creative tension helps in the enlarging or modifying of
the interpreter's horizon through a sustained dialogical encounter with the text's
horizon.

Gadamer notes that "there is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged, because
it separates, but it is actually the supportive ground of process in which the present
is rooted." He adds that "hence temporal distance is not something that must be
overcome . . . the important thing is to recognize the distance in time as a positive
and productive possibility of understanding" (Truth and Method 264). Against this
backdrop, Anthony C. Thiselton in "The New Hermeneutic," writes that "Gadamer
believes that the very existence of a temporal and cultural distance between the
interpreter and the text can be used to jog him to awareness of the differences
between their respective horizons" (92).

Understanding takes place not when the reader transposes himself into the
subjectivity of the author and recognizes his original intention (mensauctoris), but in
a productive fusion of the horizon of the text and that of the reader. In this context,
Gadamer notes that "what is (ixed in writing has detached itself from the contingency
of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationships," and adds that
"normative concepts such as the author's meaning or the original reader's
understanding represent in fact only an empty space that is filled from time to time in
understanding" (357).

Gadamer's explication of the concept of "fusion of horizons" sets the tone
for a discussion of this hermeneutical process. "It is part of the hermeneutic
approach," writes Gadamer, "to project an historical horizon that is different from
the horizon of the present." He continues that this historical horizon "is overtaken
by our own present horizon of understanding. In the process of understanding there
takes place a real fusing of ilic horizons, which means that the historical horizon is
projected, it is simultaneously removed" (Truth and Method 273).

Methodologically, how does this fusion of horizons take place? The
interpreter, in the course of his sustained dialogue with the past, i.e. the horizon of
the text, is able to examine his prejudices and preunderstanding critically, and is able
to revise, if need be, his prejudices so as to relate and fuse his horizon with the
horizon of the text. Roy J. Howard, in Three Faces of Hermeneutics: An Introduction
to Current Theories Understanding writes that for the truth and meaning of the text
to emerge, "one must he prepared to face his own prejudices, his expectations of
meaning, to face the risk of their being exposed as groundless" (148). The logical
upshot of this encounter with the text is the fusion of horizons wherein there is
"according to Gadamer... [the reader's] material agreement with the text" (Jeanrond
65).

It has to be highlighted that the blending or fusion of horizons should not be
misconstrued as the flattening out or obliterating of those prejudices of the reader
which are not in harmony with the horizon of the text. This is tantamount to the
reader's meek submission to the horizon of the text and subtly proclaims the superiority
of the past over the present. Hoy, in The Critical Circle, rightly cautions us that "the
term 'fusion' is indeed misunderstood if it is believed .. . that the
fusion is a reconciliation of the horizons, a flattening out of the historical and
perspectival differences" (97). Hoy, further warning us of two other hermeneutical
red herrings, writes that the "fusion of horizons should not be confused, however,
with appropriating the past completely into one's own stance nor with knowing the
past as it was for itself (96).

Ultimately, that which makes possible the fusion of "our projectional horizons
and the horizons of the thing experienced" ("Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hermeneutic
Phenomenology" 9) is the fact that both the text and the interpreter are, in the words
of Palmer in Hermeneutics, "in a sense universal and grounded in being" (201). In
other words, the text and the interpreter alike, argues Emerich Coreth in "From
Hermeneutics to Metaphysics," belong to "the community of a common horizon"
(255). It is this fundamental hermeneutical condition which enables all understanding
notwithstanding the basic fact that we are separated by space and time, the coordinates
of history. Shedding light on the concept of the common horizon, Coreth writes that
"all temporal, intellectual, and cultural diversities join beyond centuries, in the broad community of human experience and knowledge, human destinies and human problems in which we meet and understand each other" (255).

Gadamer's rendering of the hermeneutic circle focuses on the dialogical relationship between the parts and the whole in the light of the circular movement between the horizon of the interpreter which specifically involves the reader's prejudices, and the horizon of the text. Using a broad framework, Gadamer points out that "the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole. Our task is to extend in concentric circles the unity of the understood meaning" (Truth and Method 259). In concrete terms, this would mean that there is a back and forth movement between the interpreter's prejudices on the one hand, and the text's meaning on the other.

Thiselton in "The New Hermeneutic" sheds light on the interaction between the reader and the text in the context of the hermeneutic circle:

The 'circle' of the hermeneutical process begins when the interpreter takes his own preliminary questions to the text. But because his questions may not be the best . . . his understanding of . . . the text may at first remain limited . . . even liable to distortion. Nevertheless the text, in turn, speaks back to the hearer . . . His initial questions now undergo revision in the light of the text itself, and in response to more adequate questioning, the text itself now speaks more clearly and intelligibly. (90)

Thiselton adds that as a result of this sustained dialogical encounter, the interpreter gains a "progressively deeper understanding of the text" (90), ultimately resulting in the fusion of horizons. Since the whole process hinges on the reader's intellectual openness and honesty to the challenges posed by the text, Gadamer suggests that "we [should] remain open to the meaning of the other person or of the text. But this openness always includes our placing the other in a relation with the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in a relation to it" (Truth and Method 238).
A stinging critique of Gadamerian hermeneutics comes to the fore in the long drawn-out polemical debates between Gadamer and Betti, Gadamer and Hirsch, and Gadamer and Habermas. In the dispute between Gadamer and Hirsch, the latter takes the former to task for conceiving understanding in an arbitrary manner which would only breed relativism and subjectivism, and put the whole hermeneutical project in disarray. Christopher E. Arthur, in "Gadamer and Hirsch: The Canonical Work and the Interpreter," presents the debate in a capsule: "Hirsch accuses Gadamer of disregarding the author's intention; Gadamer accuses Aristotelians like Hirsch of falsely denying the existence of presuppositions (as distinguished from pre-apprehensions) about a literary work in their own minds" (192). Writing in support of Gadamer, Hoy remarks:

[The] context of interpretation of the immanent text is the interpreter's context. This does not mean that the interpretation is arbitrary or subjective, since the interpreter's own context is itself conditioned by the tradition in which he stands, and the text is part of this tradition. Without paradox it can thus be said that the immanent text is both context-free and context-bound. (95)

The debate between Gadamer and Habermas highlights the sharp differences between philosophical hermeneutics on the one hand and critical hermeneutics on the other. Gadamer's conception of language and tradition, and philosophical hermeneutics' claims to universality are the questions at issue between Gadamer and Habermas. Bleicher, in Contemporary Hermeneutics, articulates the differences between them:

Their differences were more particularly concerned with the implications of, on the one hand, the nature of the 'fore-structures of understanding' and here especially with the status of language as its ultimate foundation, and with the justifiability of the critical stance vis-a-vis traditioned meaning which Habermas developed, on the other hand. (153)
The position of Habermas becomes clear when his conception of hermeneutics as propounded in "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality" is spelt out: "Hermeneutics refers to an 'ability' we acquire ... to 'master' a natural language: the art of understanding linguistically communicable meaning and to render it comprehensible in cases of distorted communication" (181). In other words, Habermas's avowed objective is the unmasking of the repressive and manipulative forces that sometimes underlie communication process.

Gadamer is charged with uncritically accepting the authority of tradition, and also for "his 'relative idealism' which regards language as the transcendental absolute" (Bleicher 155). Habermas argues that language and tradition are laden with ideological underpinnings which need to be unmasked through a "meta-hermeneutical awareness of the conditions for the possibility of systematically distorted communication" (qtd. in Ormiston and Schrift 21). According to Habermas, hermeneutics cannot do without this critique of ideology.

Highlighting the differences between the two, Georges De Schrijver, in "Hermeneutics and Tradition," writes that Habermas turns down Gadamer's "idealized concepts of historically and language, because they do not match with either the cruel facts of practical politics (Realpolitik) or the ideological language-game designed to provide a legitimation for their crime" (40). It was left to Ricoeur, among others, to effect a rapprochement between Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Habermas's critique of ideology ("Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology").

Paul Ricoeur: The hermeneutical journey from Schleiermacher to Ricoeur reaches a milestone with Ricoeur, whose hermeneutics of the text is, in part, a synthesis of the earlier theories of hermeneutics, especially those of Heidegger and Gadamer, and, in part, a genuine offspring of the eclectic mind of Ricoeur. The appeal of Ricoeur's project lies in its inter-disciplinary approach. "In Ricour's hands," remarks Lewis S. Mudge, "interpretation is always confronted with the perspective of 'counter-disciplines': psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, the history of philosophy..." (Essays on Biblical Interpretation 2).
How does Ricoeur gloss the term "hermeneutics"? In "The Task of Hermeneutics," he propounds the view that "hermeneutics is the theory of the operation of understanding of texts" (1). In almost identical terms, he observes, in *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, that "by hermeneutics we shall always understand the theory of the rules that preside over an exegesis, that is, over the interpretation of a particular text, or of any group of signs that may be viewed as a text" (8), and, in his "Preface to Bultmann," he specifies that "hermeneutics is the very deciphering of life in the mirror of the text" (53). The three milestones in the development of Ricoeur's hermeneutics are: the interpretation of symbols which he later enlarged to include the interpretation of texts, and the realization that "there was not only one hermeneutic, but two hermeneutics" ("From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language" 92), i.e. "recollective" and "reductive" or (he the "hermeneutics of the patent" and the "hermeneutics of the latent" which aimed at demystification (Thomas M. Seebohm 263).

In Ricoeur's project, text-interpretation turns out to be the paradigm for interpretation in general, and hence his focus on the hermeneutics of the text. In "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theology," he points out that his objective is to develop a "hermeneutics based on the problematics of the text" (155). This problematic revolves around four themes as enunciated in "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation": "(1) the text as a relation of speech to writing; (2) the text as a structured work; (3) the text as a the projection of a world; and (4) the text as mediating self-understanding" (130).

Since Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the text is bound, with the linguistics of discourse and speech-acts, it is essential to throw some light on the terms "discourse" and "speech-acts." Approaching discourse from both a formalist-structural perspective and a functionalist-pragmatic standpoint, Deborah Schriffin, in *Approaches to Discourse*, writes that discourse has often been understood in two different ways: "a structure, i.e. a unit of language that is larger than the sentence; and the realization of functions, i.e. as the use of language for social, expressive, and referential purposes"
(339). With regard to the ambience of discourse, David Crystal writes that it includes "a study of the factors [both linguistic and communicative competence] which facilitate linguistic interaction" (The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language(285).

At the outset, Llicoeur, borrowing the insights of Emile Benveniste, brings in a sharp distinction between the linguistics of language and the linguistics of discourse wherein the sign (semiotic system) and the sentence (semantic system) are the basic units respectively ("The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" 131). He makes it abundantly clear that his focus is the linguistics of discourse, and pays special attention to the transition from oral to written discourse, particularly those "traits of discourse [which] are significantly altered by the passage from speech to writing" ("The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" 130).

In Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning, he asserts that "discourse is the event of language" (9) and points out that "if all discourse is actualized as an event, all discourse is understood as meaning" (12). Elaborating the hermeneutics of the event and of discourse, Ricoeur, in "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text" (92) and in "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" (131) lists four characteristics which constitute discourse as an event. Firstly, discourse is realized temporally in actual time in contrast to the language system which is only virtual and outside of time. Ricoeur notes that Benveniste calls this the "instance of discourse." Secondly, discourse is self-referential, for any discourse can refer back to its speaker by means of personal pronouns. In "Creativity in Language," he clarifies that "the instance of discourse refers to a hearer to whom it is addressed as the second person. This I-Thou structure of discourse belongs to the semantic order and has no place in semiotic systems" (99). Thirdly, discourse refers to the actual world whereas in language as a system, signs are trapped and enclosed within the system. Therefore, "it is in discourse that the symbolic function of language is actualized" ("The Model of the Text" 92). Fourthly, in discourse there is an interlocutor. "In this sense, discourse alone has not only a
world, but an other—another person, an interlocutor to whom it is addressed" ("The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" 93). These four traits throw into sharp relief the transition from competence to performance, or the "movement of effectuation from language to discourse" ("The Model of the Text" 92).

As the next stage, Ricoeur elaborates the corresponding actualizations of these four traits with regard to spoken and written forms ("The Model of the Text" 93-97). Firstly, discourse, which exists as a fleeting event in the instance of discourse is fixed by writing, thereby leading to a dialectic tension between discourse as event and meaning. Secondly, discourse which is self-referential in the instance of spoken discourse and marked by an immediacy and a shared environment, becomes autonomous and public in writing. As Ricoeur puts it "the text's career escapes the finite horizon of its author" ("The Model of the Text" 95). Thirdly, discourse's actual reference to a world is realized differently in "event" and in "meaning." While the former is underlined by a shared environment between the interlocutors, the latter is characterized by liberation from the narrowness of the dialogical situation for meaning "frees its reference from the limits of ostensive reference" (96). Fourthly, the auditors in discourse vanish in the transition from speaking to writing, for in writing "an unknown, invisible reader has become the unprivileged addressee of the discourse" (97). Here it has to be noted that "meaning" surpasses and transcends the "event."

The transition from speaking to writing is underlined by distanciation or alienation (Verfremdung), which has wide ramifications with regard to text-interpretation, and Ricoeur remarks that "the text . . . is the paradigm of the distanciation in all communication" ("The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" 130). In the movement from speech to writing, Ricoeur points out that what is fixed in writing is "not the event of speaking, ImI llic 'said' olspaking |lhe piopositiunal content] where we understand by the said the intentional exteriorization constitutive of the aim of discourse . . . ("The Model of the Text" 93). In the transition from speaking to writing, is there any spill-over of meaning? In other words, can the
"meaning" pole retrieve the "event" pole completely? At this juncture, Ricoeur introduces the theory of speech-acts by J.L. Austin and John R. Searle.

Austin's How to Do Thin us with Words and Searle's Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language are noted for their original contribution in the Held of speech-acts. Searle in Speech Acts furnishes a comprehensive definition of "speech acts or linguistic acts or language acts" (4). He writes that "the production or issuance of a sentence token under certain conditions is a speech act" (16). Moving from generalization to particularization, he notes that "speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions . . . and so on," which includes abstract acts too "such as referring and predicting" (16).

After equating speech acts with performative utterances, Austin, in his Lecture IX, spells out the various dimensions of the performative utterance: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act. However, Searle, in Speech Acts, voices his dissatisfaction over Austin's distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts (23), and puts down four acts in contrast to Austin's three (25). Austin writes:

In saying something . . . we perform a locutionary act, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense. Secondly, we . . . all perform illocutionary acts such as informing, ordering, warning . . . i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also perform perlocutionary acts: what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading. (109)

Though the illocutionary act is built on the locutionary act, it should not be understood as "a consequence of the locutionary act," cautions Austin (114). With regard to the perlocutionary acts, he writes that the "response achieved or the sequel could be through locutionary or non-locutionary [non-verbal] means" (119).
Schriffin declares that "the illocutionary force of an utterance [is] the very bedrock of speech act theory" (347). This illocutionary force is conveyed verbally through indices like intonation patterns and the choice of the performative verbs, and non-verbally through gestures and body-language, particularly through facial expressions and the communicative context. These illocutionary acts are oriented towards the "reference" pole and "are essentially," according to H.G. Widdowson, "social activities which relate to the world outside the discourse" (Explorations in Applied Linguistics (138).

When speech is inscribed and fixed as writing, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts receive a setback and lose a good deal of their force. Austin notes that "these features of spoken language [ie. the variations in meaning through different intonation patterns] are not reproducible readily in written language" and adds that "punctuation, italics, and word-order may help, but they are rather crude" (74).

The movement from speech to writing engineers a three-fold distanciation. Ricoeur writes: "the triple distanciation introduced by writing [are]: (1) distanciation from the author; (2) from the situation of discourse; (3) from the original audience" (TheHermeneutical Function Distanciation" 134).

Since distanciation is expounded in the context of text-interpretation, methodologically it entails a discussion of Ricoeur's concept of atext. In "What is a Text? Explanation and Understanding," Ricoeur notes that "a text is any discourse fixed by writing" (106) and adds:

Fixation by writing takes the very place of speech, occurring at the site where speech could have emerged. This suggests that a text is really a text only when it is not restricted to transcribing an anterior speech, when instead it inscribes directly in written letters what the discourse means. (106)

It has to be noted that semantic autonomy is inbuilt in the text, and Ricoeur propounds the view that the text "produces a double eclipse of the reader and the writer," i.e.
"the reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading ['death of the author']" ("What is a Text?" 107).

In the context of alienation or distanciation engendered by the transition from speech to writing, the three-fold semantic autonomy of the text with regard to the authorial intention, the original situation of discourse and the original recipients needs to be elaborated upon. In "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," Ricoeur declares:

The essence of a work of... a literary work, or a work in general, is to transcend its psycho-sociological conditions of production and be open to an unlimited series of readings, themselves situated within different sociocultural contexts. In short, it belongs to a text to decontextualize itself as much from a sociological point of view as from a psychological one, and to be able to recontextualize itself in new contexts, (133)

Secondly, as a result of depsychologization and decontextualization, the text is open to virtually 'any' reader and to polysemous readings. "A written text," notes Ricoeur in Interpretation Theory, "is addressed to an unknown reader and potentially to whoever knows how to read" and adds that "this universalization of the audience" which calls for a plurality of interpretations is "the dialectical counterpart of the semantic autonomy of the text" (32).

In Ricoeurian hermeneutics, alienating distanciation is not looked upon negatively in a historicist manner as that which needs to be overcome or bridged. On the contrary, distanciation turns out to be the very condition of interpretation because it paves the way for semantic autonomy. Therefore, distanciation is no more alienating but "productive ... according to which the predicament of cultural distance would be transformed into a epistemological instrument" (Interpretation Theory 89). The concept of "productive distanciation" is eloquently articulated by Severino Croatto who argues in Biblical Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning that "the greater the distance, the more fertile the
potential for plumbing the depths of the 'reservoir of meaning' of a text." He adds that "from a 'historicist' point of view, this is astounding, because distance appears to be inversely proportional to accuracy with respect to the original meaning. But from the hermeneutic point of view, distanciation is a fertile, creative phenomenon" (35).

Ricoeur carefully avoids the dangers of adopting a rigid and extreme stance with regard to the fallacy of the authorial intention, and its obverse, the fallacy of the absolute text. He points out in Interpretation Theory that "de-psychologizing of interpretation does not imply that the notion of authorial meaning has lost all significance." Approaching the issue from the other end, he comes up with "the fallacy of the absolute text: the fallacy of liypostasizing the text as an authorless entity" (30). Similar to Hirsch's procedures of validation of interpretation, Ricoeur presents guidelines to arbitrate and adjudicate between multiple readings. He writes that "it is always possible to argue for or against interpretations, to arbitrate between them, . . . An interpretation must not only be probable, but more probably than another interpretation" (Interpretation Theory 79). This has prompted Gillespie to write that "Ricoeur seems to give back what he has taken away by his advocacy of semantic autonomy" (202). Thus Ricoeur skillfully avoids the extreme stance of the intentional fallacy and the fallacy of the absolute text.

When Ricoeur underlines the hermeneutical fact that any reading of a text is a production and projection of meaning, the Heideggerian stance is noticeable. Writing, points out Ricoeur, projects a world; it "pro-jects the outline of a new way of being in the world" (Interpretation Theory 37). Towards the end of the same book, he notes that "interpretation is the process by which disclosure of new modes of being . . . gives to the subject a new capacity for knowing himself" (94). It has to be underlined that (his pro-jection of a world leads to a new possibility of being-in-the-world within the Heideggerian framework wherein Das em is explicated as a being towards possibilities, and whose possibilities are disclosed in the world.
To Ricoeur, understanding, explanation and appropriation comprise a triad. While Dilthey arrogated explanation to the natural sciences, and understanding to the human sciences, Ricoeur brings about a rapprochement between Erklären and Verstehen. While Dilthey got trapped in an 'either-or' situation between explanation and understanding, Ricoeur fused the two and highlighted the dialectical relationship between them. While explanation is more concerned with the semiological system, understanding, on the other hand, focuses on the semantic system, and unless there is a grafting of the semantic pole onto the semiotic pole, interpretation will be incomplete. Ricoeur in "The Model of the Text" declares that "understanding is entirely mediated by the whole of explanatory procedures which precede it and accompany it" (116) and concludes the essay by remarking that "ultimately, the correlation between explanation and understanding, between understanding and explanation is the 'hermeneutic circle'" (117).

By trying to reconcile "explanation," the epistemological pole with "understanding," the ontological pole, Ricoeur attempts to weave together a hermeneutic fabric with the epistemological strands of Dilthey and the ontological strands of Heidegger and Gadamer. He develops this dialectic in two movements: From understanding to explanation, and secondly from explanation to comprehension wherein appropriation plays a crucial role. While the understanding pole is related to guessing, the explanation pole is linked to validation, and the back and forth movement (hermeneutic circle) between guessing and validation results in an interpretation which is "more probable than another interpretation" (Interpretation Theory 79).

The third element in the triad is existential appropriation, and without appropriation, declares Ricoeur, the understanding process is incomplete. Appropriation not only completes the triad but "culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently or simply begins to understand himself ("What is a Text?" 118).
Highlighting the dialectical relationship between distanciation and appropriation, he points out in *Interpretation Theory*, that "distanciation meant above all estrangement, and appropriation was intended as the 'remedy' which could 'rescue' cultural heritages of the past from the alienation of discourse" (89). Significantly, the positive spin-off of the concept of appropriation is that it renders contemporary the meaning of the text for the reader. Hence Ricoeur's statement that "above all, the characterization of interpretation as appropriation is meant to underline the 'present' character of interpretation" ("What is a Text?" 119).

 Appropriation or assimilation, the ultimate stage in the henneneutic process, furthers self-understanding by mediating between the text and the self. Morny Joy in "Rhetoric and Hermeneutics" comments that "for Ricoeur, any increase in textual understanding will also invite a concomitant growth in self-understanding" (279). From the Ricoeurian standpoint any interpretive activity is intimately related to self-understanding so that text-interpretation as well as other kinds of interpretation turns out to be a means, a detour to the whole issue of self-understanding. Hence Ricoeur's remark that "to 'make one's own' what was previously 'foreign' remains the ultimate aim of all hermeneutics" (*Interpretation Theory* 91). Joy concludes that "as promoted by Ricoeur, hermeneutics is a philosophy of self-understanding with far-reaching implications" (282).

E.D. Hirsch, Jr.: Two distinct trends stand out in the development of hermeneutics from Schleiermacher to Ricoeur. While one group avidly seeks to recover the author's intention, the other group stoutly denies both the possibility and the need for the authorial intention in text-interpretation. Arthur in "Gadamer and Hirsch: The Canonical Work and the Interpreter's Intention" throws into relief the differing stands of the intentionalists and the anti-intentionalists:

On one side of the issue stand the neo-Aristotelian critics who find that such a recreation ["a presuppositionless recreation of an author's intention"] is not only possible, but is the chief work of the literary interpreter. On the other side stand existentialist thinkers, such as
Hans-Georg Gaclamer, who find it impossible to reconstruct exactly any past thought, and who base their interpretive philosophy on present needs. (183)

Hirsch argues that auctorial intention which is determinate, sharable, self-identical and recoverable is the avowed objective of hermeneutics. He denounces any other antithetical stance that upholds the theory of semantic autonomy as breeding relativism and skepticism, and consequently undermining the entire hermeneutic endeavour. While Hirsch allies himself with Betti, Gadamer joins hands with Heidegger. Unlike Heidegger and Gadamer who underscore "historically" and "linguisticality"in understanding and contend that understanding and interpretation always take place from the vantage point of the reader's horizon, "Hirsch strives to guarantee the notion of the objectivity of interpretation by reviving the notion of the author's intention" and by "anchoring the chain of interpretation in the bedrock of the author's intention and the one right intention following from it" (The Critical Circle 5).

To Hirsch, hermeneutics is essentially philology, remarks Palmer in Hermeneutics. He points out that to Hirsch, "hermeneutics. .. [is] the rules of the modest yet foundational effort to determine the verbal meaning of a passage" (62) and adds that hermeneutics for him is "no longer the theory of understanding; it is the logic of validation" (64). Hirsch makes his stand quite clear when he states in Validity in Interpretation that "the interpreter's job is to reconstruct a determinate actual meaning" (231).

In "Objective Interpretation," Hirsch declares that "permanent meaning is, and can be, nothing other than the author's meaning" (Validity in Interpretation 216). He adds that the reader's prime objective is to recover this authorial intention. "The reader should try," he states in The Aims of Interpretation, "to reconstruct authorial meaning," and adds that "he can in principle succeed in his attempt" (8). Against this backdrop, P. D. Juhl, an intentionalist himself, remarks that "Hirsch's definition of verbal meaning in terms of the speaker's or author's intention is not an
analytic claim about our concept of the meaning of an utterance or of a literary work, but-rather a recommendation as to how we ought to conceive of it" (Interpretation: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary Criticism 42-43).

After declaring in unequivocal terms that the author's intention is the "original" meaning and the "best" meaning as well, Hirsch goes on to spell out the features of this meaning. He writes that verbal meaning which is "whatever someone has willed to convey by a particular sequence of linguistic signs" (Validity in Interpretation 31) is determinate and sharable. He states that "reproducibility is a quality of verbal meaning" and adds, "if meaning were not reproducible, it could not be actualized by someone else and therefore could not be understood or interpreted" (Validity in Interpretation 44). He also asserts that "verbal meaning is determinate" i.e. it is "self-identical and changeless" (Validity in Interpretation 46). Summarizing Hirsch's arguments, Madison notes that "'what an author meant' becomes for Hirsch an absolute object, a super-historical essence, a determinate, selfsame object accessible to [all] . . . provided only that they approach it scientifically" (The Hermeneutics of Post-Modernity 6).

After stating his basic premise, Hirsch launches a scathing attack against "three faulty positions": intuitionism, positivism and perspectivism for severely undermining objectivity and breeding relativism and skepticism in interpretation. Attacking the intuitionists and the positivists, he remarks that the former says that "the meaning is finally specified and made definite by a communion with the author's intention" while the latter states that "meaning is specified by a refined understanding of linguistic rules and norms" (The Aims of Interpretation 26). While intuitionism can promote "oracular, priestlike pronouncements" as well as "rebellious subjective individualism" (The Aims of Interpretation 21), positivism tends to confine itself to linguistic rules and norms.

"The positivist," Hirsch points out, "cannot explain how the same rules can sponsor quite divergent meanings and interpretation" (The Aims of Interpretation 34). Perspectivism rears its ugly head in the form of psychological and historical
skepticism. While psychological skepticism advocates that meanings differ because of divergent subjective standpoints, historical skepticism, on the other hand, contends that because authors and interpreters "stand at different points in cultural time and space" (The Aims of Interpretation 27), there is no stable, fixed meaning.

Hirsch also exposes the three historicist fallacies: "the fallacy of the inscrutable past"; "the fallacy of the homogenous past" and "the fallacy of the homogenous present-day perspective" (The Aims of Interpretation 39-41). In the same vein, he brushes aside the radical historicist view wherein "textual meaning changes from era to era" and the psychologists view wherein meaning "changes from reading to reading" (Validity in Interpretation 4). Clarifying Hirsch's stand vis-a-vis his detractors, Nicholson in Seeing and Reading, writes that Hirsch seems to reproach "literary scholars . . . such as T.S.Riiot and N. ITye, for whom historical facts about authors cannot be decisive in interpreting literary texts, owing to the autonomy of the art work" (220). Secondly, Hirsch hits out at "partisans of hermeneutics . . . such as Heidegger, Bultmann and Gadamer, who also tend to dismiss the author, but who do so out of a sense of historicity" (220). Thirdly, he lashes out at "partisans of relativism, who held that a text can be made to mean whatever a reader thinks, with no governing standard or norm" (220).

The highpoint of Hirsch's hermeneutics is his distinction between meaning and significance, and this issue has been mired in controversy. Hirsch declares that meaning is always authorial meaning and is determinate, recoverable and stable, while significance, on the other hand, is the contemporary dimension and relevance of this meaning which assumes different hues and shades depending upon the perceiver's frame of reference. In a crucial passage in Validity in Interpretation, Hirsch marks off meaning from significance:

It is not the meaning of a text which changes, but its significance....

Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence. . . .

Significance . . . names a relationship between (hat meaning and a
person, or a conception, or a situation . . . fit] always implies a relationship, and one constant, unchanging pole of that relationship is what the text means. (8)

Hirsch further clarifies that "meaning-for-an-interpreter can stay the same although the meaningfulness (significance) of that meaning can change with the changing contexts in which that meaning is applied" (The Aims of Interpretation 79-80). The comment of P.D. Juhl sheds light on Hirsch's statement: "A work may have one and only correct interpretation and yet be inexhaustible in that its significance . . . is in principle unlimited" (226).

Furthermore, Hirsch correlates meaning with interpretation, and significance with criticism, and asserts that readers should first be interpreters before donning the mantle of critics. To couch it in the form of a homology, interpretation is to criticism as meaning is to significance. In ctnvr words, the perception and discernment of meaning is interpretation while the application of this meaning to a given situation or horizon, i.e. significance, is the domain of criticism. Hirsch contends that interpretation is the prime concern of the reader, and this stance has prompted Leitch to remark that "in his project, he [Hirsch] was interested in interpretation, not criticism. . . . [To him] questions of fact and interpretation took precedence over questions of relevance and value" (American Literary Criticism 194).

After asserting that meaning is always authorial meaning and that it is the interpreter's mission to reconstruct and recover authorial meaning, Hirsch lays down some guidelines and procedures to assist in the process of validation. He admits that there are no clear-cut stipulations which will ensure the recovery of authorial meaning, but boldly states that guesses have to be hazarded. He makes it clear that "the aim of validation is to give objective sanction to a particular interpretive hypothesis and thereby to provide the only possible foundation for a consensus omnium with regard to the text" (Validity in Interpretation 169-70). Ultimately, he argues that "a validation has to show not merely that an interpretation is possible, but that it is the most plausible one available" (171).
Hirsch's validation procedures are identical to the procedures in the natural sciences. "An interpretive hypothesis," he contends, "is ultimately a probability judgment that is supported by evidence" (Validity in Interpretation 180) and adds that "the hypothetico-deductive process is fundamental to both of them [the sciences and the humanities] as it is in all thinking that aspires to knowledge" (264). In the face of divergent interpretations, the "logic of validation" narrows down the genre to which the text belongs through type-utterances and other procedures, and thus restricts the interpretive possibilities.

Hirsch has a legion of detractors. Firstly, his distinction between meaning and significance has come in for a frontal attack. Gillespie comments: "to limit textual meaning to 'sense is to foreclose in advance on the fullness of the . . . [text's] meaning. . . . Meaning may be more adequately conceptualized when it includes the interacting poles of sense and significance"(199).

Hirsch declares that an interpreter's avowed objective is the retrieval of auctorial meaning in its pristine form, and later it is left to the critic to apply this meaning to a given situation. When Hirsch insists that Marxist or formalist critics differ only in their criticism of a text and not in the interpretation of it (Aims of Interpretation 44), he makes his position vulnerable. When he argues that the interpreter should strive hard to recover authorial meaning, and then apply this meaning to a given context so as to derive significance, he assumes that an interpreter will approach a text without any presuppositions which is, from a Gadamerian standpoint, an impossibility for an interpreter is always in a horizon and cannot slough off his historically and linguisticality.

In other words, any interpreter is conditioned by the coordinates of time and space, and therefore his understanding and interpretation of a text are coloured by his presuppositions and prejudices. Against this backdrop, meaning and significance on the one hand, and interpretation and criticism on the other, cannot be dichotomized. To render it differently, meaning cannot be dichotomized from significance because meaning is its own significance from a given standpoint,
Secondly, Madison (26) and Bmimann (13) censure I lirsch for collapsing the vital differences between the humanities and the natural sciences. They both declare that Hirsch's advocacy of the hypothelico-deductive model as propounded by "the positive-style philosophers of science" (Madison 26) is not applicable in the interpretation of literary texts. However, Hirsch's validation procedures have found some limited favour with Ricoeur who argues that at least some broad guidelines should be stipulated to validate and adjudicate between different possible interpretations.

In sum, this chapter discusses the divergent views of the "intentionalists" and the "anti-intentionalists." While Schleierniacher, Dilthey and Ilirsch contend that the recovery of the authorial intention is the cardinal issue in interpretation, others like Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur uphold the semantic autonomy of texts. They argue that texts are freed from the tutelage of their authors, and, therefore, have "meaning" on their own which come into play in the dialectical encounter with readers who approach the texts from their horizons and from the present with preunderstanding, however provisional it may be. In stark contrast to the intentionalists who look upon distanciation as a negative factor which has to be overcome, the anti-intentionalists view distanciation as something productive, for it paves the way for a dialectical encounter between the horizon of the reader and of the text, eventually leading to a "fusion of horizons." Ultimately, the merger of these two horizons leads to the appropriation of texts by the readers, and this enhances their self-understanding.

These theories and insights will come into play in the interpretation of myths and texts. The following chapter will weave together the various theories of myth and hermeneutics within the framework of myth hermeneutics and literary hermeneutics, and this framework will eventually prove useful in the study of mythological novels.