



The Schleiermacherian Turn of Hermeneutics from Bible to Romanticism

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Abstract

This paper expounds the details of how hermeneutics took shape as a philosophical tradition out of a religious discourse of interpreting the Biblical meanings. And the major exponent who sets forth the principles and methods for giving rise to hermeneutics as a philosophical tradition with the romanticist orientation redirecting its focus of comprehension from the particularity of Bible to the generality of text is Friedrich Schleiermacher. Given the relatively minor contributions like that of Chladenius, Ast's and Wolf's in terms of the respective themes namely Sehe-Punkt, Geist, hermeneutical circle, Verstehen-qua-dialogue etc., it is particularly instructive to focus on Schleiermacher's underpinning the same themes at a higher level to see the historical-thematic growth of hermeneutics as a romanticist discipline. It will be argued here that the incorporation of the legacy of Biblical hermeneutics with the pre-Schleiermacherian Enlightenment philology as well as Romanticist philosophy provided Schleiermacher with the solid ground to erect the superstructure of his canonical Romanticist hermeneutics. Demonstrating this theoretical continuum from the Biblical through the Renaissance to the Romanticist hermeneutics constitutes the bulk of this essay, but the main thread through which that continuity remains unbroken is Schleiermacher's theoretical underpinnings. It will be shown here how the two dimensions of his hermeneutics namely the lingual nexus between author and his original public and the psychology of the author set a new direction of the discourse of interpretation defined by a shift from the specificity of religion to the generality of philosophy.

Keywords: Schleiermacher; Bible; Hermeneutics; Romanticism; Language; Authorial psychology

The medieval Biblical thought was characteristically hermeneutical, as the Biblical thinker always devoted himself to interpreting the divine word revealed onto the prophets, thereby the truth was always given by the Subject – the Author to the human mind to be hermeneutically cognized. Unlike the Biblical scholars, the Greek philosophers had no interest in interpreting the meaning given to them by a subject; they were, instead, subject themselves who wholeheartedly committed to cognizing the truth underlying the reality of the external world objectively given to them. The truth, the Greek philosophers were in search of was an authorless truth – the truth in itself underlying the essence

of reality impertinent to the existence of its author. So in the perspective of the medieval Biblical intellectualism, the major thrust to demarcate their philosophy from that of the Greeks was the latter's commitment with the truth without its author. The authorlessness of the truth made the Greek mind devote itself to the discourse of ἐπιστήμη leading to cognizing τὰ ὄντα rather than the hermeneutically cognized version of meaning of the truth. This distinction between Greek philosophy's authorlessness of the truth and Biblical thoughts' directedness to the Ultimate Author in order to interpret the truth is enormously important to understand the genuineness of Schleiermacher's contribution to the

development of modern hermeneutics as a philosophical tradition. In this portrayal of Schleiermacher as a hermeneutic philosopher, the most important factor is how to demarcate the subject-object philosophical binary of the knowing mind and the world to be known from the triadic hermeneutic nexus of the author, the text and the interpreter. Schleiermacher, being a philosophic-cum-hermeneutic subject takes the objective world of the philosophical binary equivalent to the objectively given text of the hermeneutic triad, but what still remains transcendent is the existence of the author. In this semantic equivalence between the text as a meaning-bearer object of human interpretation and the world as an object of human knowledge, the difference between the acts of interpreting and knowing lies in the fact that in case of the latter the authorial pertinence may be irrelevant whereas in case of the former the meaning is essentially objectified by an author.

Schleiermacher does not construe the discourse of his romanticist hermeneutics in the nexus of Greek philosophy's appeal to authority of *ἐπιστήμη* to cognize the truth of essential meaning of the reality of external world. Being aware of the nature of the authority appealed to in the Greek endeavor of epistemology, he begins the discourse of cognition with the backdrop of Biblical intellectualism wherein the genuineness of meanings is defined by the authority of the Ultimate Author. All of those ideations hermeneutically cognized are drawn upon the truth of the meanings put into them by God and communicated to the mortals in terms of the prophetic revelations. After this Biblical beginning of his hermeneutical discourse, he changes its mold while turning to the generalization of the hermeneutic question – how to get to the truth of meaning of any text subjectively authored in a culture. For him, text is an utterance of a subject no matter whether it is a spoken statement, a written text or a social phenomenon etcetera. In order to get to the truth of meaning of an utterance, an interpreter is required to make an intuitive leap to the author's mind who objectified the thought as a text. Schleiermacher's intuitive appeal to the author's mind, in order to truly interpret a given text, makes his hermeneutics romanticist. This act of romanticizing in the nexus of his hermeneutics, which replaces the Bible of the Divine Subject with a general utterance of an ordinary subject, is an act of philosophizing the whole discourse, as now Schleiermacher is going to make an appeal to his own intuition in order to get to cognize the truth of meaning of a given utterance. This act of romanticizing-cum-philosophizing makes him get seemingly close to the philosophers than the Biblical thinkers; and this work intends to expose this intellectual turning gear of the Schleiermacherian brand that alters the proceeding of hermeneutic discourse from Bible to romanticism. It argues that the direction of hermeneutics from Bible to a general text is not an automatic turn where it needs not to bother with shifting gears, instead it owes

all to the genius of Schleiermacher as regards the shift of the textual paradigm in the outset of the modern phase of hermeneutical tradition.

Biblical Backdrop of Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics

Etymology of Hermeneutics and its Biblical Orientation

Etymology of the term hermeneutics, like most of the other philosophical terms, lies rooted in the tradition of Greek culture and philosophy. One of the major logical treatises of Aristotle's *Organon* is titled as *Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας* (On Interpretation). The words *ἑρμηνεία* (interpretation), a noun and *ἑρμηνεύω* (to interpret), a verb both point back to *Ἑρμῆς* (Hermes), a Greek god 'from whose name the words are apparently derived (or vice versa).'¹ Being the messenger-god, Hermes had not only to transmit 'the messages of the gods to the mortals' but in addition he had also to render these messages 'intelligible and meaningful.'² Plato portrays Hermes as an entrusted ambassador to a foreign state whose job is to honestly deliver the messages he is commissioned for without any distortion and falsification.³ There are three different connotations of the words *ἑρμηνεία* and *ἑρμηνεύω* pertinent to the triadic role Hermes was supposed to play while mediating between the gods and the mortals via his prophetic job of bringing messages from the formers to the latter. The three connotations of *ἑρμηνεύω* are:

"(1) to express aloud in words, that is, to say; (2) to explain, as in explaining a situation; and (3) to translate, as in the translation of a foreign tongue."⁴

These connotations can be grasped pertaining to Hermes' triadic role being a messenger, which is to say, the messenger Hermes was an interpreter who first had to express aloud the divine messages to the mortals, then to explain them in order to make the mortals understand them and then finally the expression and the explanation would be futile if he were not to translate them from the divine language to the mundane one.

The primal connotation of *ἑρμηνεύω* is 'to express' which

1 Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 13

2 Joseph Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 11

3 One of the interlocutors of his dialogue, *Laws*, says: "If an ambassador or envoy to a foreign state behaves disloyally in his office, whether by falsification of the dispatch he is commissioned to deliver or by proved distortion of messages entrusted to him by such state, friendly or hostile, as ambassador or envoy, all such persons shall lie upon to impeachment of the crime of sacrilege against the function and ordinances of Hermes and Zeus." See Plato, *Laws*, trans. A. E. Taylor, Book XII, Section 941a

4 Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 13

shows that for the Greeks “to say” or “to express” means to interpret, as Aristotle, in *Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας*, defines spoken words as ‘the symbols of mental experience.’⁵ It implies when one speaks, one not merely expresses what is in one’s mind rather one, at the same time, interprets one’s mental experiences through certain words manifested as symbolic sounds. Hence, the act of speaking is itself a process of interpretation, which is highly significant in the perspective of revealed religions. The text of revealed religion is an oral transmission of meanings from the Divine form into the mundane words as in Bultman’s theology the scriptures are considered ‘kerygma, a message to be proclaimed.’⁶ The message is first given orally from God, through Gabriel, to the prophets; and then from the prophets to all human beings. The Divine message is not simply delivered through the prophets to the ordinary men rather its purpose is to make men understand its meaning – the task that is achieved by the intermediate role of the prophetic communication as interpretation, as Palmer judges while defining the task of Christian theology:

“Certainly, the task of theology is to explain the Word in the language and context of each age, but it also must express and proclaim the Word in the vocabulary of the age.”⁷

But interpreting a text is not merely to express it in words as it is rather far more complex than that. Hermes, being a messenger, was not merely supposed to convey the message from the gods to the mortals, rather he had also to explain it to them in order to make them appropriately understand it. This dimension of Hermes’ role as an explainer manifests the second connotation of the verb, *ἑρμηνεύω* as ‘to explain.’ In *Cratylus*, Plato identifies ‘interpretation’ with ‘explanation’ while exploring the meaning and explanation of certain divine names. At that point, Socrates judges that Hermes as an interpreter ‘has a great deal to do with language’ and that he is not merely a speaker rather ‘the contriver of tales of speeches.’⁸ It implies when one is to interpret a text, one does not have to simply describe it but one should explain it giving an additional account as an elaboration of its meaning. Through this elaboration, the interpreter is to lend a fresh perspective to the textual meaning and so makes the addressees understand it in the nexus of an extended explanation. In the light of this connotation of *ἑρμηνεύω*, one can understand the hermeneutical role of prophets as mediators between God and the ordinary human beings; the prophets are to be raised up among those ordinary men and at certain point of time they receive the divine message

from God and then they start educating them through certain explanatory acts in the context of their lifeworld. Owing to their role as educators and reformers, the Biblical prophets are portrayed in the text as the agents of prosperity and salvation for their addressees as Jeremiah 29:7 describes Joseph as such. With reference to Westermann’s commentary on Genesis 37-50, André LaCocque, while discussing the Joseph Story, notes that the Egyptians came to Joseph to acknowledge that he saved their lives and their prosperity whatsoever was because of him.⁹

The most germane connotation of *ἑρμηνεύω* is “to translate” as regards Hermes’ role as a mediator between the two worlds – the world of the gods and the world of the mortals. From men’s perspective, the former is an alien, foreign and un-intelligible world; and Hermes’ job is to make it intelligible for them. He cannot aptly accomplish the job without translating the divinely given meanings into the mundane language intelligible for their addressees. Translation is not only an act of finding synonyms and then juxtaposing them in a specific way, it is rather an act of interpretation by virtue of which the addressee becomes able to have a meaningful view of the translated meanings in his/her own language. This hermeneutical aspect of translation is absolutely pivotal pertaining to the universal appeal of the revealed religions in terms of their preaching that seemingly oppositional to their revelation in terms of a particular lingual medium to a particular individual belonging to a particular lifeworld. For instance, the Torah had been revealed from God on Mount Sinai to Moses, as the text is traditionally ascribed to him, originally in Hebrew. But for thousands of years Jew and Christian scholars have been translating the text in so many languages belonging to so many different cultures in order to make its addressees have their own view of the textual meanings. Hence, there have been several orders of translation-qua-interpretation: first, Moses, being an inhabitant of a specific lifeworld constituting its own cultural, social and historical horizon,

9 LaCocque notes: “...the Egyptians come to Joseph and acknowledge that he saved their lives (Genesis 47)...Westermann, who dates the story of Joseph from the time of Solomon, notes the prosperity of the pagans “because of Joseph,” and adds, “This occurs again only after the collapse of the state of Israel: ‘But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you in exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf’ (Jeremiah 29:7).” On this see André LaCocque and Paul Ricoeur, *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 368 and also see Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 69. This explanatory mode of the prophetic education as an extension of the revealed meanings is hugely prominent in Islam as well. Alongside the Qur’anic text, the extended corpus of the religious meanings in terms of Sunnah (the Prophetic acts) and Aḥādīth (the Prophetic sayings) plays a tremendous role in Islamic lifeworld. This explanatory task of the Prophet is endorsed by the Qur’an itself: “We sent a messenger from amongst you to convey Our message to you and cleanse you, and teach you the Book and the Wisdom.” (Baqarah 2:151).

5 Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, Part 1, Section 16a, Organon

6 Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 19

7 Ibid.

8 Plato, *Cratylus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, Sections 406b-408b

not only imparted the meanings to his direct addressees in Hebrew but he had to educate them accordingly as well; then the Hebrew speaking preachers taught the same text to the non-Hebrew addressees; and so on and so forth that they have made it finally a universally readable text all over the world.

Renaissance and Biblical Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is not simply a historically evolved tradition of western thought rather there have been certain themes interwoven together constituting it as a distinct philosophical sphere. It may etymologically be traced back to the Greek culture, but post the emergence of Christianity, the question of Biblical exegesis gave rise to hermeneutics as a genuine theoretical enterprise.

The Greek states would have Homer's and Hesiod's poetry as a part of their education curriculum, as Plato explicitly rejected them as such in *The Republic*.¹⁰ The Greek pedagogues had an awareness of how to interpret a literary text, though they were not possibly to have a sense of the term hermeneutics as it is known today. Aristotle, for instance, taught us, in *Art of Rhetoric*, how to dissect a literary work into parts, distinguish various literary forms and identify the effect of rhythm, period and metaphor;¹¹ but he still did not call this art hermeneutics. In technical terms, instead, the beginning of 'the most widespread understanding of the word hermeneutics refers to the principles of biblical interpretation' based upon the distinction between the exegesis of Bible and hermeneutics as a methodology of the exegesis underpinned by certain rules, theories and methods.¹² Throughout the medieval era, two methods were commonly used in interpreting the Bible namely (1) grammatical-historical and (2) allegorical. The former one was used in interpreting the Old Testament in the nexus of the New Testament and vice versa. This application of the method is based upon the view that both the scriptures are divinely revealed though in different epochs. The New Testament was revealed onto Jesus, the last prophet from amongst the Children of Israel; and so the scripture could be taken as an extension of the Old Testament containing the teachings of the previous prophets.¹³ One can interpret certain passages of the New Testament with reference to certain parts of the Old Testament settling as aptly as possible

the meanings intended by their original readers and their plausible deployment in interpreting the passages of the New Testament. The most crucial utilization of these Scriptures in their mutual interpretation is the Old Testament prophecies and their New Testament fulfillments. For instance, the Old Testament passages predict a royal 'birth of superhuman king of David's line who is both king and priest and divine.' The Biblical exegetes in majority have a consensus that the predicted superhuman son of David is Jesus Christ.¹⁴

Alongside the grammatical-historical procedure, the method of allegorical interpretation of Bible as imported from the Stoics had been of great worth, as 'it eliminated the conflict between religious texts and an enlightened world view.' The allegorical interpretation may be convenient both for gnostic and orthodox at the same time, as thereby one can expound equally contentedly either gnostic or agnostic interpretation of the Biblical meanings in terms of allegories and metaphors.¹⁵

The Renaissance nexus is very significant as regards the development of Biblical hermeneutics as a sphere of learning. During the period from 1545 to 1563, the Council of Trent firmly insisted 'on church authority and tradition on matters of' Biblical interpretation and thereby a conflict of views was to surface between the Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformers. Dismissing the qualifications of the church authority and tradition, the latter advanced the doctrine that the Holy Scriptures are 'perspicuous and self-sufficient' to interpret, therefore, the church is not required to be an authority to necessarily mediate the text to the ordinary people.¹⁶ In this regard, Dilthey and M-Vollmer both appraise Mathias Flacius Illyricus to be the most significant Protestant theorist who 'laid firm basis for the development of Protestant hermeneutics.' Having rejected the church as an authority in the matters of Biblical exegesis, 'he argued that if the Scriptures had not yet been understood properly, this did not necessarily imply that the church ought to impose an external interpretation to make them intelligible; it merely reflected the insufficient knowledge and faulty preparation of the interpreters.'¹⁷ Like Luther and Melancthon, Flacius also asserted about the Scriptures that they 'contained an internal coherence and continuity,' that is, an individual part of the Scripture 'must be interpreted in terms of the aim and

10 Plato, *The Republic*, Books III and IV, trans. Paul Shorey

11 Wilhelm Dilthey, *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Writings*, ed. & trans. H. P. Rickman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 250

12 Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 34

13 The view that the New Testament can interpret the Old Testament is old enough to be traced back to Augustine, who allegedly said: "...the New is in the Old contained, the Old is by the New explained." On this see R. Laird Harris, Swee-Hwa Quek & J. Robert Vannoy (eds.), *Interpretation and History* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1986), 57-66

14 *Ibid.*, 57-60

15 Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, 251-2

16 Both M-Vollmer and Dilthey mention this forceful reaction of the Protestant Reformers at that moment against the Catholic Church. On this see Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, 253-4 and K. M-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1985), 2

17 M-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader*, 2

composition of the whole work.¹⁸ This assertion of Flacius' appears to be an initial disposition of the hermeneutical circle – a canon of textual coherence and structural totality referred to as a methodological device in hermeneutical theory. With this device, a text is brought to one's understanding as a 'whole in relation to which individual parts acquire their meaning' and vice versa.¹⁹

The Rise of Schleiermacher's Romanticist Hermeneutics

The Pre-Schleiermacherian Hermeneutics

Schleiermacher was a pioneering figure in the tradition of hermeneutics who construed a hermeneutical theory in order to interpret any kind of text as an utterance. This hermeneutical approach was absolutely novel as compared to the classical tradition of Biblical hermeneutics wherein the object of interpretation had always been the Bible. Schleiermacher is accounted to be impacted by the lore of both Enlightenment and romanticist scholars. The former ones were 'to proceed everywhere from certain principles and to systematize all human knowledge' whereby 'hermeneutics became a province of philosophy'²⁰ through the import of meanings from this lore. As regards romanticism, Schleiermacher is himself a part and significant contributor of the lore. Therefore in order to understand Schleiermacher's hermeneutics aptly I would first have a view of those pre-Schleiermacherian hermeneutics, from both Enlightenment and romanticism, whose thoughts have been promulgated alongside that of his. I have chosen in this nexus three thinkers from both traditions namely – Johann Martin Chladenius (1710-1759), Friedrich Ast (1778-1841) and F. A. Wolf (1759-1824).

From amongst the Enlightenment philosophers, Chladenius is the most pertinent to the development of general hermeneutics of the Schleiermacherian brand. He takes hermeneutics as an 'art of attaining the perfect or complete understanding of utterances, whether they be speeches (Reden) or writings (Schriften). Being a hermeneutical theorist, Chladenius' positioning can be

defined by three factors closely interrelated namely – 'his concept of hermeneutics, his implied notion of verbal meanings, and his theory of the point-of-view (Sehe-Punct) concerning the historical writings.'²¹ His hermeneutics as an art of perfect understanding provides with two fundamental criteria to guarantee the attainment of the perfect understanding of a text. First, the perfect understanding of a text can be attained whenever one gets capable of grasping the intention of the author whereby one rethinks in one's mind of all that meanings the authorial words are meant to arouse in accord with 'the rules of reason and of the mind itself.' The meaning-intention is neither an expression of the author's personality nor his psychology rather it is related 'to the specific genre of writing' he intends to produce. Second, the rules of reason remain unchangeable for Chladenius and so they 'guarantee the stability of meaning and the possibility of its objective transfer through verbal expressions.' If an author construed a text in accord with 'the appropriate rules of discourse' whereby he presented the ideas clearly, then the textual words 'would give rise to a correct and perfect understanding: author and reader alike shared in the same rational principles.' Alongside these two criteria, one more hermeneutical factor of his theory is his notion of the point-of-view or perspective (Sehe-Punct) concerning the interpretation of history. For Chladenius, the same historical fact can be interpreted differently by different historians, that is, Chladenius does not take two different hermeneutical accounts of the same historical event as contradictory, as every historian understands the historical event in the nexus of his own perspective or point-of-view. He does not give care to the specter of relativity latent in his notion of the point-of-view, as he believes that in the face of different subjective interpretations of the same historical event there is always a possibility of judging the truthfulness of any hermeneutical perspective. When an interpreter places himself in someone else's perspective, he can compare what he perceives through someone else's account with what he can know with reference to other sources. Chladenius proclaims to derive this hermeneutical perspectivism concerning history from Leibniz's Optics. Yet M-Vollmer interprets this perspectivism in the nexus of Leibniz's Monadology wherein 'each monad always perceives the same universe, but from its own perspective and according to its own abilities.'²²

From amongst the romanticist thinkers, Ast was the most significant in terms of his profound impact on Schleiermacher's general hermeneutics. Ast was primarily a philologist whose magnum opus, *Grundlinien der Grammatik, Hermeneutik und Kritik* (Basic Elements of Grammar, Hermeneutics and Criticism) had been a major

18 Ibid. as well as Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, 254

19 Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics*, 2, 13, 258

20 M-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader*, 3-4. M-Vollmer is of the view that the Enlightenment thinkers, under the influence of Aristotle's *Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας*, took 'hermeneutics and its problems as belonging to the domain of logic.' Although there were certain theologian, jurists and philologists who 'would frequently allude to generally applicable principles and concepts in their works, it was not until the philosophers of the Enlightenment made hermeneutic problems their own concern that the discipline of hermeneutics came into being.' The contention was that like logic, hermeneutics rested on certain generally applicable rules and principles that remained valid for all those spheres of knowledge relying on interpretation. On this see his *Introduction to The Hermeneutics Reader*.

21 Ibid., 5-6

22 Ibid., 4-7

reference while Schleiermacher expounding his own views on hermeneutics. There were several notions in Schleiermacher's vastly generalized scheme of hermeneutics that had already been there in Ast's philology namely – 'the hermeneutical circle, the relation of the part to the whole, the metaphysics of genius or individuality' etcetera. The major thrust of Ast's hermeneutical theory is his concept of Geist. He does not take philology as merely a grammatical style of a work, he instead defines its basic aim as the grasping of 'the spirit (Geist)' of the age being revealed in the work. Philology is an attempt 'to grasp the outer and inner context of a work as a unity' in the nexus the Geist of the age the work is created in. The inner unity is the harmonious relation among the various parts of a work whereas the outer unity, being the source of the inner unity, is the unity defined by the Geist of the age. The pertinence of Geist to the meanings of a work gives rise to the significance of the role of language as a prime medium for the two-way transmission of the meanings between an authorial work and its cultural milieu. Ast believes that when an interpreter or reader comes across a text, he not merely grasps its meanings, he rather also understands the Geist of the authorial genius as well as the Geist of the milieu wherein the text is written. Therefore, the Astian brand of hermeneutics 'is the theory of extracting the geistige (spiritual) meaning of the text.' The understanding of this geistige meaning of 'unknown view points, feelings and ideas' of antiquity can possibly be attainable in case when all of these elements are bound up together in some primordial way in the nexus of the Geist of antiquity. His very notion of the Geist provides with the light to aptly locate Ast's concept of hermeneutical circle. According to him, when one comes across a text of antiquity, one can have a sort of twofold understanding of the text. On the one hand, one can understand whole of the Geist of antiquity revealed as such in the text; on the other hand, one can also grasp 'the Geist of an individual author' pertaining to its 'higher relationship to the whole' of antiquity. This hermeneutical circle defined by the mutuality of the authorial Geist as a part and the Geist of antiquity as a whole sets the task of hermeneutics - to clarify 'the relationship of [text's] inner parts to each other and to the larger spirit of the age.' Hence, Ast defines hermeneutics as a three-dimensional scholarly act namely - the historical, the grammatical or the spiritual (geistige). The historical hermeneutics helps one grasp a text 'in relation to the content of the work'; the grammatical hermeneutics helps one understand a text 'in relation to language' and the spiritual hermeneutics helps one grasp a text 'in relation to the total view of the author and the total view of the age. Semler and Ernesti, the two Enlightenment thinkers, had already respectively developed the first two alleged forms of hermeneutics. But the third one was an original contribution made by Ast to the rise of general hermeneutics that was

further extended by Schleiermacher.²³

Alongside Chladenius and Ast, the one that comes last in the league of the pre-Schleiermacherian hermeneutics is Wolf. He defines hermeneutical acts as a sort of dialogue between the author and the interpreter that takes its place at the spiritual level. The interpreter must have a talent of getting 'into the mental world' of the author, as this is for him the essential qualification for the plausible explanation of the text. Wolf believes that the understanding of a text is characteristically a two-fold enterprise: first, the interpreter is supposed to cognize the meaning of the text via a dialogical process between him and the author at the spiritual level; second, the interpreter has to share that meaning with others by explaining it to them.²⁴

Schleiermacher's Romanticist Hermeneutics

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is characteristically an eclectic mix of the hermeneutical theories before him with a creative touch of his own hermeneutical approach to the text.²⁵ He views hermeneutics as an 'art (Kunst) of understanding...the...discourse of another person'²⁶ designating the texts as utterances both spoken and written. The basis of his making the speaking/writing equation is the factor of thinking being the inner thread of both sides of the equation whereby hermeneutics becomes for him 'a part of the art of thinking' which manifests the philosophical nature of the lore.²⁷ Thinking is to form the core of the speaking-writing equation and language is the medium in which thoughts get 'real' and thereby the Schleiermacherian hermeneutics appears to be an art of interpreting an utterance pertaining to language and thought. Its two-dimensionality makes it a complex sphere of knowledge, as he relates it to various disciplines concerned with language and thought. On the one hand, thought relates all individuals through the mutuality of communication in the medium of

23 This whole discussion concerning Ast's contribution to the development of hermeneutics is based upon Palmer's analysis of Ast's major work, *Grundlinien der Grammatik, Hermeneutik und Kritik*, On this see Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 75-81

24 *Ibid.*, 81-2

25 In terms of the backdrop of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, Dilthey incorporates Winkelmann's interpretation of works of art, Herder's congenial empathy into the spirit of ages and people as well as the philological works of Herder's, Heyne's and Wolf's. Alongside all these contributions, Dilthey also includes the traditions of romanticism and German transcendental philosophy while interpreting the constitution of Schleiermacher's thought. See Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, 246-63

26 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism And Other Writings*, trans. & ed. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3. My idea of the speaking/writing equation gets consolidated with reference to Andrew Bowie's remarks on the same page: "... Schleiermacher often uses the term 'Rede' for both spoken and written language..."

27 *Ibid.*, 7

a shared language whereby hermeneutics as a corpus of knowledge of 'the whole of the historical life' takes the form of 'ethics.' On the other hand, hermeneutics is also rooted in physics, as Schleiermacher views language as something 'natural' growing with 'the differences of the human spirit... determined by the physical aspect of humankind and by the planet.' Further, hermeneutics is to unify both ethics and physics in terms of the two-dimensionality of thought and language – as a unitary phenomenon it leads to 'dialectic, as the science of the unity of knowledge.'²⁸

From the dimensions of language and thought, hermeneutics gets extrapolated to grammatical and psychological spaces respectively: interpretation is grammatical because the text is an utterance that is always a lingual expression; and it is psychological because it is an embodiment of the utterer's psyche. Schleiermacher's fifth canon describes:

"As every utterance has a dual relationship, to the totality of language and to the whole thought of its originator, then all understanding also consists of the two moments, of understanding the utterance as derived from language, and as a fact in the thinker."²⁹

As regards the grammatical and psychological factors of hermeneutics, this canon simplifies the matters well. Understanding the text as a speech (Rede) necessarily pertains to two moments – understanding words in the nexus of the language with all of its possibilities and understanding it as a fact in the psyche of the speaker in the context of lifeworld. The plausibility of interpretation of text relies upon the coherence between its grammatical and psychological moments so that neither is taken as 'higher' or 'lower'³⁰ in terms of its meaning import, instead both should be taken as equally important. Neither comes earlier or later in the act of understanding rather both should be applied to the text simultaneously in order to concretize the act. This simultaneity of the psychological and grammatical moments of a hermeneutic act is explicitly manifested in the sixth canon where Schleiermacher construes interpretation as 'a being-in-one-another of these two moments.'³¹ These qualifications of the act of interpretation lead to the notion of the hermeneutic competency of a reader – he shall be competent enough to analyze the speech linguistically as well as profoundly capable of reading people's mind, as he is required to aptly grasp the psychology of the author.³²

28 Ibid., 8

29 Ibid.

30 Schleiermacher firmly judges: "Both are completely equal, and it would be wrong to call grammatical interpretation the lower and the psychological interpretation the higher." See Ibid., 10

31 Ibid., 9

32 The tenth canon reads: "The successful practice of the art [of

Schleiermacher carries out the task of expounding the alleged 'grammatical explication' on the basis of first two canons:

First Canon: Everything in a given utterance which requires a more precise determination may only be determined from the language area which is common to the author and his original audience.

Second Canon: The sense of every word in a given location must be determined according to its being-together with those that surround it.³³

Demarcation of the meaning (Bedeutung) of a word from its sense (Sinn) is the gist of the whole notion of defining the dynamic lingual relationship between an author and his original addressees. Schleiermacher demarcates Bedeutung – the meaning of a word 'in and of itself' from Sinn – what one may think of a word to have a sense of it in a given context. The Bedeutung-Sinn distinction makes it viable for a word with a single meaning to have a range (Cyclus) of different contextual senses. And when an interpreter is to grasp the meaning of a word used by an author in the given text, he needs to direct his interpretation to the sense of the word in the context of language and life shared both by the author and his audience. Therefore, a hermeneutic procedure for dealing with the determination of the language-life context of meanings is a complex act that undertakes various factors of the cultural milieu an author belongs to. May be that is the reason why Schleiermacher judges that an interpreter understands the author better than he understands himself,³⁴ as the interpreter, while confronting certain hermeneutic problems, becomes aware of so many things of the authorial lifeworld in solving the problems of which even the author himself might have never thought.

Alongside the life-language context in the way of appropriately interpreting a text, an additional inner context is also available within the text as stated above in the second canon. That is to say, a word is always used in a statement being a part of the larger context of a passage or paragraph that composes a 'determinative linguistic sphere' providing with a nexus for grasping an appropriate contextual meaning of the word. Correspondingly, the whole text becomes a context with reference to which a given passage of the text can aptly be understood. It is possible that the application of the first canon without the second one, or the vice versa,

interpretation] depends upon on the talent for language and the talent for knowledge of individual people." Ibid., 11

33 Schleiermacher's whole discussion concerning 'grammatical explication' moves around these two canons, though there are fort-four canons in total in that section of Hermeneutics and Criticism out of which the remaining forty-two are used by him to explain these two. See Ibid., 30-59

34 On this see Ibid., 33

is of little import; and an interpreter needs to apply them simultaneously to get a better understanding of the text. When an interpreter does not sufficiently understand the meaning of a word in the context of the passage wherein the word occurs, he has to direct his attention to other paragraphs containing the same word in different contexts; or at times he has to refer to other works of the same author or even to the works of other authors wherein the same words occur obviously either with different qualifications or in identical perspectives. But ultimately all works and all authors belong to and 'remain within the same linguistic sphere.'³⁵

The Schleiermacherian brand of romanticist hermeneutics is identified by the grammatical-psychological mutuality trait being manifested in the authorial personae. An author, for Schleiermacher, is not merely a psychic reality, an ego to be labeled as a romantic subject, as a fixed substance, as little as is the "I" in Fichte's philosophy. Schleiermacher, instead, takes author as a subject who 'must be seen in the context of linguisticity as something fluid and dynamic, something mediated, an act from which the text originates.'³⁶ This authorial speech act coalesces the two facets of his persona: the intrinsic structure of his thought and the extraneous system of his language. The grammatical-psychological mutuality makes sure that an act of interpretation must simultaneously incorporate both characteristics of the author. The most significant notional level the grammatical-psychological mutuality works at is the nexus of hermeneutical circle. Schleiermacher describes the grammatical-psychological mutuality of hermeneutical circle in the twentieth canon of *Introduction to Hermeneutics and Criticism*:

"The vocabulary and the history of the era of an author relate as the whole from which his writings must be understood as the part, and the whole must, in turn, be understood from the part."³⁷

The accomplishment of the task of interpretation of a text is guaranteed by this 'apparent circle' manifested at two different levels simultaneously: language and history. At the level of language, an utterance or text one authors is found like a meaningful part in the generalized context of the whole vocabulary shared by the author and his original addressees as a medium of their mutual communication. The development of the whole vocabulary, in return, is the contribution of individual utterers and authors through their utterances and writings in totality. The same circle manifests at the level of history whereat the whole lifeworld of the milieu an author belongs to offers a generalized thought

context that backdrops the understanding of the individual thought of the author; and in return the whole history of the milieu is grown by the interweaving facts of the individual life of authors and utterers. The apparent separateness of these two generalized wholes of the vocabulary and the history or the language and the thought is merely theoretical while in practice of interpreting a text both of these moments work simultaneously, as the accomplishment of the task of interpretation of the text is guaranteed by the complementary relationship between the language and the thought. Schleiermacher takes every utterer or writer as a 'language-user' who always thinks in the historical nexus of the thought that has already traditionally been flourished in the lifeworld he belongs to. He calls such an individual thought 'inner speaking' plausibly communicated through the means of the whole vocabulary shared between the individual speaker and his addressees. Hence, the history of an epoch and the medium of language shared by the inhabitants of the epoch mutually offer a context as a whole in relation to which an individual text or utterance can be completely understood and vice versa.³⁸

The task of theorizing about the complete understanding remains unaccomplished for Schleiermacher till the attainment of the goal of technical interpretation concerning the author's style. As regards the complete understanding of author's style, the technical interpretation entails two methods – divinatory and comparative. Owing to his romanticist commitments, Schleiermacher construes the former as an intuitive method, which is to say, an interpreter, while interpreting a text, intuitively metamorphoses himself into the author of the text in order to immediately understand the author as a unique utterer and his style as a distinct phenomenon. Contrastingly, the comparative method makes an interpreter grasp the distinct style of an author through the comparison of his style with other authorial styles subsumed under a broader general category of the same authorships. Furthermore, Schleiermacher emphasizes the simultaneity of application both of divinatory and comparative methods, as the privation of comparison tends to affect divination making it 'fanatical' and the same is true for comparison if

38 Gadamer also discusses the eclecticism of Schleiermacher's contribution to the development of the notion of hermeneutical circle. He says: "Schleiermacher follows Friedrich Ast and the whole hermeneutical and rhetorical tradition when he regards as essential ingredient of understanding that the meaning of the part is always discovered only from the context, i.e., ultimately from the whole. This is, of course, truth of the grammatical understanding of any sentence as well as its setting within the context of the whole work, even of the whole of that literature or of the literary form concerned; but Schleiermacher applies it to the psychological understanding that sees every thought construct as an element in the total context of a man's life." On this see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode (Truth and Method)* trans. G. Barden and W. G. Doerpel (New York: Crossroads, 1957), 167

35 Ibid., 44-5, 51

36 M-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader*, 11

37 Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, 24

applied without divination.³⁹

Conclusion

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is the fruition of his historical turn from the conventional Biblical hermeneutics to romanticism. He is the pioneering figure in modern philosophical tradition of hermeneutics, as there are several themes – hermeneutical circle, the authorial psychology, divination etcetera - being found embedded in his theory that are still germane to the contemporary hermeneutics. He

39 Under the head of psychological explication, Schleiermacher construes the simultaneity of comparison and divination: "For the whole procedure there are, from the beginning, two methods, the divinatory and the comparative, which, though, because they refer back to each other, also may not be separated from each other." On this see Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, 92

demarcates from the classical philologists and hermeneuts in terms of his directedness to construing a generalized explicatory methodology applicable to all kinds of text rather than particularly Bible. This hermeneutical methodology is two-dimensional in scope: on the one hand, it indebted to the totality of vocabulary shared between an author and his addressees; and on the other hand, it draws upon the totality of thought of an era. A text being an utterance is interpreted as a part of the language-thought twofold whole following the modality of hermeneutical circle: the part contributes to constituting the Geist of the age both in terms of the vocabulary and the history and in turn the language-thought whole offers a context in relation to which the part can be understood. The most prominent romanticist theme in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is his notion of divination – interpreter's intuitive leap from his life-situation to the Geist of author in order to understand the textual meaning exactly close to the meaning the author had objectivized in the text.

