Towards a Relational Hermeneutic: An Investigation in Historical Pragmatics with Special Reference to the Appropriation of Speech Act Theory in the Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics of Anthony Thiselton

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Abstract

This thesis exploits recent research in the field of pragmatics and the emerging field of historical pragmatics to make the case for a relational hermeneutic that can facilitate an integrated approach with the concerns of theology as these arise within the grammar of the biblical texts.

In the first part of the study the nature and status of language is shown to be central to the hermeneutic problematic. The interface of the philosophy of language with biblical and theological hermeneutics is investigated through critical discussion of Anthony Thiselton's appeal to speech act theory. It is argued that the trajectory in H. Paul Grice's philosophy of language is better able to elucidate the hermeneutic task. In particular, speech act theory struggles to account for the dialogical and conversational nature of discourse. In turn, this has serious consequences for Thiselton's attempt to integrate theology with his philosophical hermeneutics. It is argued that a theological account of language depends on priority being given to relational rather than institutional or even social considerations.

In part two a revised account of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is used as a basis for developing a relational hermeneutic. Consideration of Pierre Bourdieu's social anthropology and Erving Goffman's analysis of social interaction invite further revision in light of Pauline anthropology. This revised framework is better able to account for the logic of Paul's appeal to the cross and the participant role of the Spirit in 1 Cor. 1: 18-2: 16. Specifically, description of the theological horizon in Paul's discourse is essential within the terms of a relational hermeneutic and no special pleadings need be made. Finally, the implications for pragmatics as well as for theological and biblical hermeneutics are noted.

'A theoretical reflection on the understanding of language must break out of the narrow alley of the speech act theory in order to reach a vision of the dimension in which language and the religious thematic come together.'[1]

Wolfhart Pannenberg

'In the New Testament, especially in Luke-Acts and in Paul's theology...the public domain, or, for Paul, the body is perceived as part of "world" of interpersonal, inter-subjective discourse and human identity as relationally constituted.'[2]

Anthony Thiselton

'The person's orientation to face, especially his own, is the point of leverage that the ritual order has in regard to him; yet a promise to take ritual care of his face is built into the very structure of talk.'[3]

Erving Goffman

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[1] Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, 388.
[2] Thiselton, 'A Reappraisal of Work on Speech-Act Theory' in *Collected Works*, 147.
[3] Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, 40.

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Abbreviations

AP	Bartholomew, C. G., Möller, K. and Greene, C., (Eds.), *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* Volume 2 of the Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, Carlisle: Paternoster and Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
B	*Basileia: A Journal of Theology for Worshiping Churches*
BBS	*Behavioural and Brain Sciences.*
BLTP	Brown and Levinson Theory of Politeness.
CB.NT	Coniectanea biblica – New Testament Series, Lund
CP	Co-Operation Principle.
CP	McNeill, W, and Feldman, K. S., *Continental Philosophy: An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.
DNTB	Evans, C. A., and Porter, S. E., (Eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Downers Grove, Illinois and Leicester, England: Inter Varsity Press, 2000.
DP	*Discourse Processes.*
DPL	Hawthorne, G. F., Martin, R. P., Reid, D. G., (Eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Downers Grove, Illinois and Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
DS	*Discourse Studies.*
DTIB	Vanhoozer, K. J., (Gen. Ed.), Bartholomew, C. G., Treier, D. J., and Wright, N. T., (Assoc. Eds.), *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Baker and London: SPCK, 2005.
EuroJTh	*European Journal of Theology.*
FTA	Face-threatening Act.
GCI	General Conversational Implicature
HDTW	Austin, J. L., (Eds.) J. O. Urmson and M. Sbisà, *How to Do Things with Words*, Second Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.
HP95	Verschueren, J, Östman, J-O, and Blommaert, J, (Eds.), *Handbook of Pragmatics: Manual*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company Handbook of Pragmatics, 1995.

HP97	Verschueren, J, Östman, J-O, Blommaert, J, and Bulcaen, C., (Eds.), *Handbook of Pragmatics: Manual*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company Handbook of Pragmatics, 1997.
ISA	Indirect Speech Act
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature.*
JHC	*Journal of Health Communication.*
JHP	*Journal of Historical Pragmatics.*
JLSP	*Journal of Language and Social Psychology.*
JMF	*Journal of Marriage and the Family.*
JP	*Journal of Pragmatics.*
JPPR	*Journal of Philosophy and Phenomenological Research.*
JPR	*Journal of Politeness Research.*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament.*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies.*
Lang. Soc.	*Language in Society.*
L & L	*Language and Linguistics Teaching: Abstracts*
MP	Model Person.
MS.SNT	Monograph Series, Society for New Testament Studies, Cambridge.
NH	Thiselton, A. C., *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament.
NIDNTT	Brown, C., (Ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 Vols., Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation and Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975.
NIDOTTE	VanGemeren, W. A., (Ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 Vols., Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996.
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTS	*New Testament Studies.*
PC	*Pragmatics & Cognition.*
PH	Thiselton, A. C., 'Communicative Action and Promise in Hermeneutics' in (Eds.) R. Lundin, C. Walhout & A.C. Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999, 133-239.

PI	Wittgenstein, L., (Trans.) G. E. M. Anscombe, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1989.
PL	*Papers in Linguistics.*
PRS	*Perspectives in Religious Studies.*
PS	Thiselton, A. C., *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995.
RAT	Rational Action Theory.
RBI	Bartholomew, C. G., Greene, C., Möller, K., (Eds.), *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, SHS 1, Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000.
RSP	*Revue de Sémantique et Pragmatique.*
SAT	Speech Act Theory.
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature.
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series.
SHS	Scripture and Hermeneutics Series.
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology.*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series.
SPS	Society for Pentecostal Studies.
TB	*Tyndale Bulletin.*
TFH	Theory of Fields and Habitus.
TH	Thiselton, A. C., *The Two Horizons*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1982.
TLP	Wittgenstein, L., (Trans.) D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary.
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal.*

Introduction

Speech Act Theory, Biblical Interpretation and Postmodernism

> '*The dissolution of the traditional doctrine of Scripture constitutes a crisis at the very foundation of modern protestant theology.*'[1]
>
> Pannenberg

> '*I think I understand the crisis as our having to unlearn old interpretative habits because our interpretation is now no longer privileged and can no longer count on heavy cultural, institutional support. I think I understand the crisis as the problem of having to learn new habits of interpretation that do not feel very easy or congenial.*'[2]
>
> Brueggemann

0.1 Speech Act Theory in Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics: the Nature of the Challenge

What is now known as 'speech act theory' (SAT) originated with the work of Oxford philosopher J. L. Austin. Austin first presented what he called his theory of performative utterances in his 1955 William James Lectures at Harvard University. These lectures were published posthumously in 1962 under the title 'How to Do Things With Words'. Since Austin's seminal work on performative language and its systematisation in J. R. Searle's theory of speech acts, philosophers in the hermeneutic or Continental philosophical tradition have appropriated speech act categories in order to develop their own accounts of communicative action.[3]

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[1] Pannenberg, *Questions in Theology*, 1: 4.

[2] Brueggemann, W., ' A First Retrospect on the Consultation' in *RBI*, 343.

[3] Thiselton notes: 'From Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin through to John Searle and Jürgen Habermas, the most helpful term to describe the function of most utterances and most texts (although not all of them) is *communicative action*...' (Thiselton's emphasis). Thiselton, *PH*, 143. For an excellent summary of the wider influence exerted by SAT see Verschueren, *HP97*, 4-6.

Foremost among them are Jürgen Habermas,[4] Karl-Otto Apel[5] and Paul Ricoeur[6]. Each of these thinkers has appealed to the analytical tradition of philosophy of language as one important way of bringing to bear the axis of explanation to the way in which understanding takes place within the language event.[7] Apel and Habermas in particular have seen in SAT the resources for capturing this double perspective: intersubjective communication that entails presuppositions of reference and public criteria of meaning.[8] Finally, Thiselton has said that SAT 'offers not only a convincing approach to language, but also coheres closely...with the functions, effects and presuppositions of biblical texts.'[9] As he notes elsewhere: 'The growing edge of the current debate about the status and power of religious language has now moved firmly into the area of hermeneutical theory.'[10]

Reflecting this trend, SAT has become increasingly influential in the related fields of biblical and theological hermeneutics.[11] In addition, a number of substantial

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[4] Habermas draws on SAT to argue for the inherent rationality made possible by the practice of communicative action. See Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 294-326.

[5] Apel uses SAT as an integral part of his attempt to fuse the philosophical approach to language in both the analytical and hermeneutic traditions. In particular, he makes the case for First Philosophy on the basis of the communicative action model of SAT. See Apel, K-O, (Ed.) Eduardo Mendieta, *Selected Essays Volume One: Towards a Transcendental Semiotics*, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994.

[6] See for instance Ricoeur, (Trans.) K. Blamey, *Oneself as Another*, Chicago and London: The Chicago University Press, 1992, 40-55.

[7] As we shall see in the next chapter Habermas appeals to Searlean SAT as one way out of the meaning holism of the post-Enlightenment linguistic turn in German philosophy. More recently this defence of some sort of critical realism is used against the linguisticality in some expressions of literary theory and semiotic theory.

[8] In this context, Thiselton has iterated his desire to hold together scientific "method" and hermeneutical understanding. Thiselton, *PH*, 140.

[9] Thiselton, 'Biblical Studies and Theoretical Hermeneutics' in (Ed.) J. Barton, *The Cambridge Guide to Biblical Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 108.

[10] Thiselton, 'Language, Religious' in McGrath A. E. (Ed.), *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, 318.

[11] This can be best appreciated by indicating the number of dictionary entries SAT has now in the biblical and theological literature. Examples include: Thiselton's entry on 'Religious Language' in ibid. 315-319, esp. 318; Cotterell, P., 'Linguistics, Meaning, Semantics, and Discourse' in *DOTTE*, 1:

publications have appealed to SAT in one way or another to explicate the communicative grammar of the biblical texts and/or the hermeneutical situation that exists between text(s) and reader(s). Established scholars include Francis Watson[12], Nicholas Wolterstorff[13], and Kevin Vanhoozer[14]. Most recently, doctoral works majoring on the insights of SAT have been produced by Richard Briggs to develop a 'hermeneutic of self-involvement'[15], Timothy Ward, in order to articulate afresh the doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture[16], David Hilborn who draws on SAT to elucidate certain aspects of liturgical discourse[17], and Rob Bewley who utilises aspects of speech act philosophy in his discourse analysis of Mark's narrative

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134-160, esp. 145-147; Thiselton, 'Speech acts' in *Concise Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion*, 289-291; and Briggs, R., 'Speech Act Theory' in *DTIB*, 763-766.

[12] Watson, *Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994, 98-106.

[13] For more recent comments on SAT in his work in philosophical theology see Wolterstorff, N., 'True Words' in (Eds.) A. G. Padgett and P. R. Keifert, *But is it all True? The Bible and the Question of Truth*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006, 34-43; and 'The Promise of Speech-act Theory for Biblical Interpretation' in *AP*, 73-90. See also Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

[14] Vanhoozer has been a keen advocate of SAT for the task of theological interpretation of the biblical texts. For an example of a recent appropriation of SAT in his work see Vanhoozer, 'From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts: The Covenant of Discourse and the Discourse of Covenant' in *AP*, 1-49. See also his recently published collection of papers. *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics*, Leicester: Apollos, Inter-Varsity Press, 2002.

[15] Briggs, R., 'Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation: Toward a Hermeneutic of Self-Involvement', (Nottingham University PhD. 1999) now published under the title *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation*, Edinburgh and New York: T & T Clark, 2001. See also Briggs, 'The Uses of Speech-Act Theory in Biblical Interpretation' in *Currents in Research* 9, 2001, 229-276.

[16] Ward, Timothy, 'Word and Supplement: Reconstructing the Doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture' (University of Edinburgh PhD. 1999). See summary of thesis in *TB 52.1*, 2001, 155-159. This has now been published as Ward, *Word and Supplement: Speech Acts, Biblical Texts, and the Sufficiency of Scripture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

[17] Hilborn, David, 'The Pragmatics of Liturgical Discourse' (Nottingham University PhD. 1994). A revised version of the thesis is forthcoming from Paternoster Press under the title *Worship, Speech, and Action.* See also Hilborn, 'From Performativity to Pedagogy: Jean Ladrière and the Pragmatics of Reformed Works on Discourse" in *Nature of Religious Language*, 170-200.

Christology[18]. The wider field of linguistic pragmatics has also been represented by Stephen Pattemore's Relevance Theory analysis of the Book of Revelation[19]. What each of these scholars share in common is a desire to do justice to religious or theological language, especially in the biblical texts.

In view of the growing influence of SAT in the related fields of biblical studies and theology, the question is whether or not SAT represents the best model of language use or communicative action for the task of biblical and theological hermeneutics. This reflects a concern similar to one expressed by Pannenberg: 'A theoretical reflection on the understanding of language must break out of the narrow alley of the speech act theory in order to reach a vision of the dimension *in which language and the religious thematic come together*' (my emphasis).[20] In order for this fusion of interests to take place Pannenberg argues that two related tasks must be undertaken. The first concerns a critical approach to what he calls 'secular models of language'. On the basis of this 'critical assessment' the second task is to offer 'a radical reformulation of it (the model) in a theological perspective.'[21] Underlying Pannenberg's contention is a theological conviction, expressed in his appreciation for Gerhard Ebeling's belief that 'human language itself can be understood only in the light of God.'[22] Similarly, Bartholomew has said: 'How we think about language is a philosophical, and ultimately a religious, question.'[23] Therefore, the problem identified by this study is the absence of an adequate critical assessment of SAT in biblical studies or in systematic theology. More positively, this thesis will argue that

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[18] Bewley, Robert, 'Jesus in Dialogue: An Aspect of Markan Narrative Christology' (University of Cambridge D. Phil., 2004).

[19] Now published as Pattemore, S., *The People of God in the Apocalypse: Discourse, Structure and Exegesis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

[20] Pannenberg, (Trans.) M. J. O'Connell, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985, 388.

[21] Ibid. 392.

[22] Ibid. 392. Cf. Ebeling, 'Word of God and Hermeneutics', in (Trans.) J. W. Leitch, *Word and Faith*, Philadelphia, 1963, 305-332.

[23] Bartholomew, 'Before Babel and After Pentecost' in *AP*, 131-170. Bartholomew first articulated this conviction in Bartholomew, 'Babel and Derrida: Postmodernism, Language and Biblical Interpretation' in *TB* 49.2, 1998, 305-328.

a more coherent and integrated theological account of language is possible through a critical engagement with SAT and more recent accounts of linguistic pragmatics.

The method for achieving this revised engagement between the theological and the philosophical will be to focus on the interface of biblical and theological hermeneutics with SAT in the disparate writings of Anthony Thiselton. Bartholomew has paid tribute to Thiselton's service to theology, biblical studies and the Church in providing an understanding of many of the philosophical problems that have defined the Modern World. In particular, he commends Thiselton's conviction 'that thorough attention to philosophical hermeneutics will help the biblical text speak more clearly in its own right.'[24] Any attempt to engage with Thiselton's work presents significant challenges, primarily on account of its interdisciplinary scope: biblical studies (New Testament and Old Testament), systematic theology, linguistics, philosophy, hermeneutics and literary theory.[25] Selecting a point of entry or engagement with his work has been greatly assisted by the publication of a very recent collection of his prominent papers and book extracts on topics in hermeneutics.[26] Also included in the collection are a number of new essays and retrospectives. Two of these retrospectives in particular help to shape the way in which this study seeks to engage with his work as one way of investigating the relationship between the philosophy of language and theology.

Firstly, in a new essay Thiselton attempts to 're-situate' the role of hermeneutics for the twenty first century. The paper constitutes what he describes as a 'programmatic

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[24] Bartholomew, 'Three Horizons' in *EuroJTh* 5, 1996, 123. Bartholomew's sympathy with interdisciplinary approaches to biblical interpretation is integral to his involvement with the Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar. More recently, David Ford has paid tribute to Thiselton's commentary on 1 Corinthians. He notes, 'its author is not only a perceptive commentator on the text according to contemporary practices in the 'guild' of New Testament scholars but also, unusually, has a rich understanding of philosophy, hermeneutics and systematic theology.' D. F. Ford, 'Divine Initiative, Human Response, and Wisdom: Interpreting 1 Corinthians Chapter 1-3', Unpublished paper delivered at the Society for Biblical Literature, Christian Theology and Bible Group, Toronto, 24 November 2002, 2.

[25] Knowles too has made this observation. He notes that the density of Thiselton's style came in for considerable criticism when *TH* was published. For details see Knowles, op. cit. 4-5.

[26] Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

reappraisal'.[27] Of the three concerns that he believes were not dealt with sufficiently in his earlier works the first is the one of particular interest in this thesis: the challenge of relating the task of philosophical hermeneutics with that of theology. Thiselton puts the problem in these terms: '...how can we formulate theological hermeneutics without compromising the distinctive claims of either discipline, as if to make one wholly subservient to the other'? [28] The second retrospective essay concerns Thiselton's reappraisal of his own appeal to SAT for the hermeneutic task. Alongside his attention to the later thought of Wittgenstein, it has been his interest in the philosophy of SAT that provides us with his most consistent and critical engagement with the philosophy of language. It is in this essay that he also raises the hermeneutic potential in appealing to more recent developments in (linguistic) pragmatics.

In part one of the study we begin by identifying the way in which questions of language lie at the heart of the hermeneutic problematic before proceeding with a critical discussion of Thiselton's appeal to SAT. This prepares the ground for part two of the study in which we set out the elements of a relational hermeneutic in order to facilitate more successfully the integration of the religious or theological dimension of language. This reflects the order of things suggested by Pannenberg but it needs to be acknowledged that some theologians are hesitant as to the benefits to theology from this method of interdisciplinary inquiry. For instance, theologian John Webster ably represents a neo-Barthian position.

In a recent collection of essays he laments the 'absence of dogmatic exposition of the nature of Scripture' which, he argues, has given way to 'extensive and elaborate use' of 'philosophical accounts of the nature of interpretation, literary theory, or the sociology of texts, correlated rather loosely with doctrinal considerations and often, in fact, assuming the lead voice.'[29] Elsewhere, in comments on Eberhard Jüngel's theological method, Webster notes that the 'modes of speech which are canonised in Scripture prescribe both the procedure and the content of theology, and theology,

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[27] Thiselton, 'Resituating Hermeneutics in the Twenty-First Century: A Programmatic Reappraisal (New Essay)' in op. cit. 33.

[28] Ibid. 33. Cf. 36-39.

[29] J. Webster, *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001, 1.

accordingly, is not to be placed within or to receive its orientation from other worlds of meaning.' Webster also approves of Jüngel's development of 'critical readings of modern intellectual culture, in order to free theology from its tutelage to – for example – an ontology, a theory of language or an anthropology which would suppress the inner logic of Christian discourse and its theological *Sprachlehre*.'[30]

Webster's understandable concern is that theology will become relative or subordinate to our findings in philosophy and social science: 'a soft correlationism chastened by a bit of Barth, a sparkling but Christianly not very specific conversation which has lost the rough edges of the gospel.'[31] His comments underline the extent of the challege and remind us of Thiselton's own dilemma of how to conceive of the relationship between philosophical hermeneutics and theology. However, whilst there is force to Webster's concerns, theology and biblical interpretation do not take place in isolation from wider reality. As Alister McGrath asserts: 'A scientific theology is a public theology...I am resolutely opposed to the intellectual and cultural isolationism which seeks to disconnect Christian discourse and debate from that of the world around us.'[32] In hermeneutics, as well as in philosophy more generally, the nature and status of *language* is at the centre of an intellectual struggle that has raged for more than a century.[33] In significant and important ways questions of language continue to be central to what is commonly referred to as 'postmodernism'.

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[30] Webster is alluding to the following extracts of Jungel's works: E. Jüngel, '"Meine Theologie" – kurz gefasst' in *Wertlose Wahrheit. Zur Identität und Relevanz des christlichen Glaubens. Theologische Erörterungen III*, Munich: Kaiser, 1990, 1, 6; *Christ, Justice and Peace. Toward a Theology of the State*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992, 7ff.; and 'Die Freiheit der Theologie' in *Entsprechungen. Gott – Wahrheit – Mensch. Theologische Erörterungen*, Munich: Kaiser, 1980, 12-17. Webster, *The Possibilities of Theology: Studies in the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel in his Sixtieth Year*, 3-4.

[31] Webster, *Word and Church*, 6.

[32] McGrath, *Science of God*, , London and New York: T & T Clark, 2004, 156.

[33] As Harrison notes: 'Philosophical discussion of language...has been almost conterminous with philosophy itself'. B. Harrison, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, London: Macmillan, 1990, ix.

0.2 Postmodernism and the Hermeneutic Task

As a theologian and biblical scholar Thiselton's career has coincided with the emergence of (Western) postmodernism. Notoriously difficult to define, he identifies three major movements or traditions of postmodernism.[34] Each has a theological or religious correlate in terms of an identifiable 'idol'. Firstly, Thiselton characterises American postmodernism as a problem of contextualization in which the idol of the self or the community becomes the primary criterion of interpretation. Secondly, and more constructively, European postmodernism places an emphasis on the capacity of the human heart to self-deception exposing the idol of the infallibility or sufficiency of human reason. There is a less constructive tradition within European postmodernism sometimes itself disguised as a bid for freedom: the surrender to 'difference' and despair at finding any common or acceptable criteria for human polity.[35] This tradition of postmodernism is related closely to what Thiselton calls literary postmodernism. Literary postmodernism celebrates the death of the author resulting in the instability of texts and their meaning. The idol in this case is the linguistic system and the failure of ethical concern for the other. In this context, Vanhoozer draws attention to the way in which the postmodern turn is expressed as a critique of knowledge on the basis of language, ethics and aesthetics.[36] More generally, he argues that postmodernism is characterised by a 'taking apart' in which 'belief systems are being deconstructed'. He continues:

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[34] Thiselton, 'Can the Bible Mean Whatever We Want it to Mean?, 18-26. Vanhoozer has rightly said that, in contrast with the notion of 'modern', 'No such consensus exists...with regard to the term "postmodern".' Vanhoozer, *Postmodern Theology*, xiii. He does however provide this definition: 'Postmodernism is...best construed as an "exodus" from the constraints of modernity, as a plea to release the other, as a demand to let particulars be themselves rather than having to conform to the structures and strictures of the prevailing theological or political system.' Ibid. xiv. Amongst a plethora of books on theology and postmodernism see also G. Ward (Ed.), *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997; D. Marmion (Ed.), *Christian Identity in a Postmodern Age: Celebrating the Legacies of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan*, Dublin: Veritas, 2005 and: J. D. Caputo and M. J. Scanlon (Eds.), *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

[35] Thiselton, op. cit. 21.

[36] Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics*, Leicester: Apollos, 2002, 20-22.

> 'The deconstructor, like an inquisitive boy who disassembles things to see how they work, pries apart worldviews in order to expose their inner workings and their rhetorical ploys. What the postmodern discovers behind various worldviews are political interests and power levers. For these postmodern disbelievers in knowledge, philosophy is not about truth but about power, rhetoric and ideology.'[37]

It is against this intellectual climate that the interpretation of the Bible must take place and, in his quest for 'criteria' in interpretation, Thiselton's hermeneutic strategy stands in opposition to the anarchic or nihilistic expressions of potmodernism.[38] Alongside appeal to the later Wittgenstein, SAT furnishes him with (linguistic) criteria by which to assess texts as instances of communicative action. In the following Thiselton captures succinctly what is at stake for biblical and theological hermeneutics: 'How we read, understand, interpret, and use biblical texts relates to the very identity of Christian faith and stands at the heart of Christian theology'.[39]

0.3 Thesis Outline

Part one of the thesis is concerned with identifying the way in which Thiselton has appealed to SAT for his understanding of the hermeneutic task. In chapter one we begin by exploring the linguistic turn in philosophy and the implications of this for Thiselton's considerable emphasis on the philosophy of language. We shall see that alongside his interest in SAT, Wittgenstein's later thought proves formative. In chapter two we introduce the philosophy of SAT, explain its relationship to pragmatics, including more recent developments in historical pragmatics, and discuss three prominent ways in which Thiselton appropriates some of SAT's central insights. Historical pragmatics can be understood as the application of pragmatics to the study of written texts. In Chapter three we discuss SAT in more critical terms identifying the more prominent concerns raised by leading theorists in the field. In particular, it

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[37] Ibid. 19.

[38] In this respect Thiselton has Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard in mind. Thiselton, op. cit. 18-21.

[39] Thiselton, *NH*, 2.

is argued that SAT fails to elucidate the relational nature of ordinary speech; in terms of hermeneutic theory, SAT struggles to account for two horizons. In chapter four we continue to press the disjunct between the complexity of a given speech situation and the limited explanatory power of SAT. Importantly, the notion of relational reality is introduced. The phrase 'relational reality' is preferred to 'social reality' because it avoids the reductionist connotations of 'social reality' and does not, therefore, prejudice wider theological presuppositions concerning the speech and hermeneutic situations. This sets the context for part two of the study and the development of a relational hermeneutic.

In part two we develop a relational hermeneutic as a means for interpreting the specifically relational dimensions of a given stretch of discourse. The phrase 'relational hermeneutic' emphasises the relational considerations involved in people's communicative behaviour and the constraints upon them in their choice of utterance. Relational hermeneutics can therefore be viewed as a model of discourse (text) interpretation that draws on the resources of pragmatics in its broad sense. Developments in the field of pragmatics have led to an increasingly broad interdisciplinary approach to questions of contextual meaning. As a case study for such a hermeneutic we will be investigating Paul's extended 'word of the cross' in 1 Cor. 1: 18-2: 16. Drawing on a revised version of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness (BLTP), we will assess Paul's kerygma of the cross in terms of face-threatening behaviour. It is argued that this provides a more natural point of contact with anthropology than the Austinian notion of performative and, consequently, provides a better (empirical) basis for integrating theological concerns.

Politeness theory, with its notion of the face-threatening act (FTA), is introduced in chapter five. The BLTP puts forward a simple formula with which to calculate the weightiness or seriousness of a given FTA. Building on the social anthropology of Erving Goffman, the BLTP proposes a relational model of pragmatics to elucidate the principles underlying social behaviour. This recovery of a common anthropology provides the framework in which to investigate the interface of theology with philosophy. In chapter six we introduce Paul's extended word of the cross as set out in 1 Cor. 1: 18-2: 16 as an instance of face-threatening behaviour. Following

suggestions put forward by Ken Turner, in chapter seven a number of important revisions are made to the original BLTP formula. Particular importance is attached to the social anthropology of Pierre Bourdieu. In chapter eight the revisions of chapter seven are refined further in light of Pauline anthropology. In chapter nine the revision of the BLTP formula is completed with an analysis of the participation framework for Paul's word of the cross. Presuppositions concerning the theological significance of events in the world are set along side assumptions about the agency of God's Spirit as a party to the content of Paul's discourse. These theological topics arise from within the text itself and the implications of a theological pragmatics is explored further in the final chapter by way of a discussion of the doctrine of illumination. The implications for Thiselton's hermeneutics are also noted.

Part One

On the Appropriation of Speech Act Theory in the Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics of Anthony Thiselton

Chapter 1

Language and Hermeneutics: The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy and Thiselton's Appeal to the Later Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Language

'*Being that can be understood is language.*'[40]

Gadamer

'*Our modern considerations concerning the nature of exegesis are heavily influenced by the epistemological and hermeneutical preoccupations of the schools of our own day for whom language has become the foremost study in the whole effort to understand how man understands.*'[41]

Martin

1.0 Introduction

There are two parts to this chapter. Firstly, we need to understand the way in which language is central to the hermeneutic problem and, secondly, to set out how Thiselton has responded to the linguistic turn in hermeneutic philosophy. This second task prepares the way for a detailed examination of his appropriation of SAT in the next chapter. We will see that a recurring theme of Thiselton's disparate works is his long-term commitment to Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language. This is of relevance to the development of this thesis in two related ways: firstly, it clarifies the way in which Thiselton appeals to SAT[42] and; secondly, the anthropological turn in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein anticipates more recent research on the

[40] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 474.

[41] Martin, 'Spirit and Flesh in the Doing of Theology' in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 9, 2001, 9.

[42] It is important to acknowledge that from the perspective of linguistic pragmatics it is not immediately evident how Wittgenstein's philosophy is compatible with the more theoretical nature of Austinian and Searlean accounts of SAT. However, we will fail to understand the particular way in which Thiselton appropriates speech act categories if we neglect his hermeneutic agenda.

relationship between ordinary language and the field of social anthropology.[43] Therefore, this chapter functions propaedeutically for the investigation that follows in the remaining chapters.

1.1 The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy

According to Cristina Lafont, the so-called linguistic turn in hermeneutic philosophy can be traced to J.G.Hamann's critique of Kant's philosophy of consciousness: 'We can see the *leitmotiv* of Hamann's metacritique in his claim that "reason is language, logos," or that "without the word, neither reason nor world"...this theme recurs systematically in the tradition that extends down to Heidegger and Gadamer.'[44] The insight that reason itself is already linguistic in structure represented a shift in philosophy that has dominated Western philosophy since the late nineteenth century. Pure reason is therefore a fiction because our historically conditioned language mediates the thoughts in our head with the 'objective' extra-linguistic world. This critique of reason also displaces the transcendental subject of consciousness. As Wittgenstein would later remark, 'I cannot use language in order to get outside of language'.[45] Thus, 'For both Heidegger and Wittgenstein it is language which demonstrates and structures the things of one's world...'[46]

Lafont's contention then, is that the linguistic turn in German philosophy questioned the privileging of consciousness, which, in turn, led to the idea that reason itself is relative to the contingencies of natural languages. Reason cannot be extracted from the 'actual and historical conditions of its existence'.[47] The failure to apprehend the

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[43] For instance, in chapter seven we will see how Bourdieu's development of Wittgenstein's anthropological turn provides important insights that facilitate an intellectual space in which the traditional concerns of hermeneutic philosophy can be more readily realised within a relational account of pragmatics.

[44] Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999, 5. Lafont refers to this formative stage in German language philosophy as the 'Hamann-Herder-Humboldt tradition' or 'triple-H tradition' for short. Ibid. x.

[45] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, 54.

[46] Thiselton, *TH*, 36.

[47] Lafont, op. cit. 3.

historicality of the human agent leads to confusion about the very nature of reason, exemplified in Hamann's critique of Kant's *a priori/a posteriori* distinction: language is both transcendental and empirical.[48] Language itself is already structured in history and in the tradition of a given people group. As Lafont puts it, language is 'the channel for transmitting a particular fore-understanding of the world'.[49] The relativising consequences of Hamann's metacritique are worked out most famously in Humboldt's linguistic reflections. In particular, Humboldt suggested that different languages entail different worldviews: a theory that has become best known through the anthropological linguistics of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf.[50]

This linguistic relativity represents the point of contact with Gadamer's philosophy of history: 'The linguisticality of understanding is *the concretion of historically effected consciousness* (Gadamer's emphasis).'[51] Gadamer explains:

> 'Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of a tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naïve assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic approach to project a historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present.'[52]

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[48] Ibid. 10.

[49] Ibid. 12. Georgia Warnke has characterised 'horizon' as a 'projection of meaning' generated by the reader's 'expectations and assumptions'. See Georgia Warnke's introduction to Apel, *Understanding and Explanation*, xiv. In Gadamer's thought these 'projections of meaning' constitute the reader's 'prejudgments' or 'prejudices' and, as Warnke notes, 'they are the basis for his insistence on the importance of (historical) tradition.' Ibid. xiv. Gadamer refers to authority and tradition as 'the point of departure for the hermeneutical problem' and he argues that if 'we want to do justice to man's finite, historical mode of being, it is necessary to fundamentally rehabilitate the concept of prejudice'. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 277.

[50] Developing the work of his teacher Edward Sapir, Whorf based his theory of linguistic relativity primarily on his work with the Hopi Indians. See Whorf, 'The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behaviour to Language' in (Ed.) John B. Carroll, *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1956, 134-159.

[51] Gadamer, op. cit. 389.

[52] Ibid. 306.

In Gadamerian terms, a given horizon is the boundary of 'historically effected consciousness' (*wirkungsgeschichliches Bewusstsein*[53]) and this is the 'central problem of hermeneutics'.[54] Importantly, it is Gadamer's philosophy of language that proves decisive for his defence of the authority of tradition. Lafont explains the position as follows:

> 'If language is responsible for world-disclosure, and thus for the constitution of the beings that can "appear" in this world, this constitution obviously predetermines what can and cannot be predicated meaningfully of those beings. Hence it predetermines the possible truth and falsity of our beliefs about them...the "constitution of meaning" inherent in the linguistic world-disclosure determines the "essence" of beings, *what* they are. In this sense, it is the final court of appeal for our knowledge about them. It is thus the originary, which nothing within the world can contradict, for it is the very possibility of the intraworldly. To precisely this extent, it is a "happening of truth" (Lafont's emphasis).'[55]

It is within the logic of this view of language that Gadamer is able to defend the normative status of prejudices in the shaping of our understanding. Thus for Gadamer prejudices are a 'source of truth'.[56] For Gadamer this does not denote truth in any scientific sense. He is not interested primarily with cognitive knowledge or truth of 'what is the case', but rather with the 'appropriation of a superior meaning'[57], by

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[53] Commenting on the English translation of this term Thiselton quotes Gadamer: 'This change from the active (effective) to the passive (effected) denotes "a consciousness that is double related to tradition, at once 'affected' by history and itself also brought into being – 'effected' – by history and conscious that it is so."' Thiselton, 'Reception History' in *Collected Works*, 291. The quote is from Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xv.

[54] Ibid. 307. Grondin has observed that 'Gadamer's achievement consists in having shown how the historicity of being pertains to understanding our historically situated consciousness and the human sciences in which that consciousness expresses itself.' Grondin, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 8.

[55] Lafont, op. cit. 108-109.

[56] Ibid. 109.

[57] Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, 264.

which he means an experience or knowledge of the "Thou". In a discussion on the function of parables Thiselton provides the following explanation for the role of language in the coming together of different horizons:

> 'Gadamer points out that when language brings a new 'world' into existence, the hearer who enters this world becomes aware of new horizons of meaning. But these necessarily differ from the horizons of understanding which have hitherto marked the extent of his own world. Thus, to begin with, two different worlds stand over and against each other, each with its own horizon. Yet the peculiarity of horizons is that their positions are variable, in accordance with the position from which they are viewed. Hence adjustments can be made in the hearer's own understanding until the two horizons come to merge into one. A new comprehensive horizon now appears, which serves as the boundary of an enlarged world of integrated understanding.'[58]

There is a distinct moral or ethical trajectory in Gadamer's hermeneutics and it is his insistence on the need to listen to the 'Other', the one with whom I am engaged in dialogue. Indeed self-understanding is only possible within the terms of the conversation. Gadamer observes that 'understanding involves a moment of "loss of self".'[59] This 'loss of self' can only happen within the game or play of language, of conversation. The target is again the status of Modernism's 'objectivistic' subjectivism. According to Gadamer, Heidegger's ontological 'turn' represented a break with the transcendental schema; that is, the 'objectifying operation of consciousness'.[60]

However, there is a significant and important lack in Gadamer's philosophy of language. One of the major concerns in the philosophy of language is to understand the way in which language patterns the physical world. According to Habermas the hermeneutic tradition has failed to provide a coherent theory of reference. He goes so

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[58] Thiselton, 'The Parables as Language-Event' in *SJT*, 1970, 445.

[59] Gadamer, 'On the Problem of Self-Understanding' in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 51. Gadamer acknowledges the theological presuppositions underpinning this insight.

[60] Ibid. 49-50.

far as to describe this failure as the 'Achilles Heel' of hermeneutic philosophy.[61] The 'failure' has its origins in an ideological difference with the Enlightenment and what Thiselton refers to as a 'rejection of Cartesianism, a defense (sic) of community, tradition, and a history of effects'.[62] Further, Thiselton explains that philosophical hermeneutics 'resists being misrepresented by being netted within the prior agenda of a "method" dominated by the question, Is this approach foundationalist or anti-foundationalist?'[63] Notwithstanding this suspicion of system, Thiselton expresses the concern of those like Habermas who have sought to challenge the relativising trend in Romanticism's critique of reason: 'A key issue which hermeneutics faces in the wake of Gadamer and Ricoeur concerns the possibility and role of metacriticism: *can we critically rank the different criteria by which we judge what counts as meaningful or productive effects of texts within this or that context in life?* (Thiselton's emphasis)'[64]

The linguistic turn in hermeneutical philosophy has had important implications too for biblical and theological hermeneutics.[65] For instance, Robert Funk's notion of kerygma as 'language event' owes much to the linguistic turn mediated by Heidegger.[66] Bartholomew's insightful engagement with Derrida's reading of the Tower of Babel narrative is also representative of an attempt to provide an account of

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[61] Habermas, 'Hermeneutic and Analytic Philosophy' in A. O'Hear (Ed.), *German Philosophy*, 422.

[62] Thiselton, *PH*, 212.

[63] Ibid. 212-3.

[64] Thiselton, *NH*, 5-6. Thiselton pursues this concern in his critique of the intra-linguistic theorising of the movement inspired by Heidegger's linguistic turn known as the 'New Hermeneutic'. Thiselton, 'The New Hermeneutic' in *New Testament Interpretation*, 323-324.

[65] In his discussion of the 'New Hermeneutic' Thiselton identifies an interest in the performative nature of textual language seeing important similarities with Fuchs' notion of *Sprachereignis* ('language-event') and Ebeling's notion of *Wortgeschehen* ('word-event'). Both have their origin in Bultmann's hermeneutics. See Thiselton, 'The New Hermeneutic', 312; 330 n47. Cf. Fuchs, E, *Zum hermeneutischen Problem in der Theologie: die Existentiale Interpretation*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1959, 281-305 and Ebeling, G, *Word and Faith*, London: SCM Press, 1963, 325-332.

[66] Commenting on Paul's first letter to the Corinthians Funk observes that ' the questions of factions, *sophia*, the crucified Christ, election, and faith are bound up with the question of language. Language precisely not in the sense of words but in the sense of event.' Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology*, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966, 283. Cf. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ¶34.

language from a biblical perspective.[67] He writes: 'We live on the other side of the linguistic turn in philosophy, and the question of language and translation is central to postmodernism *and* to the Tower of Babel narrative...One could argue that the Christian Bible is enclosed in a 'language *inclusio*' with Babel in the Old Testament and Pentecost in the New Testament.'[68]

John Milbank has defended the Christian background to the linguistic turn in early Romantic linguistics. In particular, he understands this linguistic turn as 'the Christian critique of both the antique form of materialism, and the antique metaphysics of substance'.[69] Not surprisingly, therefore, Milbank accepts the general philosophical findings of postmodernism's 'radical linguisticality': 'signs make us and we can never step outside the network of sign making.' Theology, defined as the metaphysics/metasemiotics of relation rather than of substance, alone can save us from this 'mystical nihilism'.[70] According to Milbank, the difference between theology and Derrida's sceptical postmodernity is operative at the 'metasemiotic' level. Whereas postmodernity's interpretation of signified absence is characterised by 'necessary suppression, betrayal or subversion', theology's conception of the Trinity allows for 'a peaceful affirmation of the other, consummated in a transcendent infinity.'[71]

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[67] Bartholomew, 'Babel and Derrida' in *TB* 49.2, 1998, 305-328.

[68] Ibid. 316-317. For instance, in his commentary on Acts 2: 9-11 John Stott writes: 'Ever since the early church fathers, commentators have seen the blessing of Pentecost as a deliberate and dramatic reversal of the curse of Babel. At Babel human languages were confused and the nations were scattered; in Jerusalem the language barrier was supernaturally overcome as a sign that the nations would now be gathered together in Christ, prefiguring the great day when the redeemed company will be drawn 'from every nation, tribe people and language' (Gen. 11: 1-9; Rev. 7: 9). Besides, at Babel earth proudly tried to ascend to heaven, whereas in Jerusalem heaven humbly descended to earth.' Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 68. F.F.Bruce makes a similar observation in his commentary on Acts. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977, 64.

[69] Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 97. See also Graham Ward's chapter on 'Sprachphilosophie from Hamann to Humboldt' in Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 35-52.

[70] Milbank, op. cit. 112.

[71] Ibid. 112-113.

Introducing this thesis Milbank states that 'theology should recognize the primacy of linguistic mediation' and he sets out 'to develop a theory of human being as linguistic being which participates in the divine linguistic being'.[72] In all this, however, there is no 'flesh', no real point of contact with the world or with others except through the mysticism of language. Even Milbank's Christology is reduced to a linguistic construct: the 'poetic figure of Jesus' is 'essentially a linguistic and poetic reality'.[73] This approach is in contrast with the emphasis found in Thiselton's understanding of language. Recently he has reiterated a point often made:

> 'Without embodied agents, or "speaking subjects", we set in motion a docetic reduction whereby we transpose "the word made flesh" back into un-embodied word again. Sign-systems without their *use* by agents imply a docetic theology without the incarnation or without prophets and apostles who bear witness and communicate through life and embodied word...the conceptual grammar of "believe", "expect", "think", "understand" and "love", collapses in upon itself as empty and silent without the "backing" of human behaviour that gives it its currency.'[74]

In the same way that we will affirm Gadamer's emphasis on the relational foundation of meaning, Milbank's thesis is of value for its affirmation of theology's understanding of the Trinity as the relational (and necessary) horizon of ultimate meaning. However, their accounts of the linguistic turn neglect the real world context of language and therefore fail to provide any account for how language actually functions, the very conditions for the possibility of meaningful discourse. Commenting on the linguisticality of postmodernism more generally Thiselton observes: 'Postmodern theories of signs and language cannot offer, and do not wish to offer, criteria for the 'right' meaning of a text. Indeed texts become 'textures' created

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[72] Ibid. 2.

[73] Ibid. 3.

[74] Thiselton, 'Postmodernity, Language and Hermeneutics' in Thiselton, *Collected Works*, 680. This relational turn is anticipated by Bartholomew's reference to the work of Al Wolters: 'A. Wolters, in an unpublished paper ('Creation, Worldview and Foundations', 1997), suggests that a breakdown in communication and not the development of different language is in view in Gn. 11.' Bartholomew, op. cit. 313n.

out of which *readers* find a moving situatedness within a prior linguistic world. We *make* our meaning, just as we *make* our god.'[75]

The failure to acknowledge the findings of any empirical linguistic data calls into question the ultimate value of any conclusions that are based on the nature and character of language. Given Habermas's assertion that the hermeneutic tradition is fundamentally compromised by its inadequate account of meaning, it is important to say something about Thiselton's own approach to this problem. He takes from both Gadamer and, more importantly, Wittgenstein what he believes are the relatively stable anchors provided for by the 'public domain of inter-subjective life'.[76] Further, he maintains that the 'attempt to hold together the social conditioning of criteria of knowledge with respect for rationality in the public would remain...a prerequisite for constructive hermeneutics.'[77] As we shall see, for Thiselton 'criteria of knowledge' includes an appeal to some version of realism.

It is the focus on the importance of language and life world that gives such prominence to the thinking of Wittgenstein in the philosophical hermeneutics of Thiselton's *TH*.[78] Whilst his interest in Wittgenstein does not pre-date his interest in SAT, Searlean SAT in particular represents an attempt to bring some systematisation

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[75] This comment comes within the context of Thiselton's critique of Don Cupitt. Thiselton, *PS*, 86.

[76] Whilst Thiselton contrasts Wittgenstein's understanding of meaning with that of Rorty and Fish, this seems to be on the basis of a common anthropology ('common behaviour of mankind') that transcends the boundary of any given speech community. See Thiselton, *NH*, 540-546. In Thiselton's recent essay cited above on 'Postmodernity, Language and Hermeneutics' the susbstance of his deliberations in *NH* are not developed further. See also Thiselton's short section on 'agency and embodiment' in which Wittgenstein is again invoked to make the point about language games and forms of life: 'A language-game is "the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven". Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, I §7 quoted in Thiselton, 'Postmodernity, Language and Hermeneutics' in *Collected Works*, 678. Cf. Thiselton, 'Thirty Years', 1565.

[77] Ibid. 1566.

[78] Writing in the introduction to *TH* Thiselton states that 'it is in the chapter on Wittgenstein that I believe my most distinctive work is to be found, partly in my comments on the significance of Wittgenstein for hermeneutical theory, and partly in my use of his writings to clarify conceptual problems in the New Testament itself'. Thiselton, *TH*, xx. Cf. ibid. 47.

to the notions of language games and forms of life.[79] However, Thiselton's appropriation of SAT is never to the exclusion of Wittgenstein's hermeneutic sensibilities so it is important for the development of this thesis that we identify the prominent features of Thiselton's engagement with the later work of Wittgenstein and its philosophical importance for an elucidation of the two horizons.

The later philosophy of Wittgenstein and the ordinary language philosophy of SAT placed a new emphasis on the pragmatics of meaning and, as Turner notes, the pragmatic turn 'entails a greater rapprochement of analytical and continental (European) schools of philosophy'.[80] This is just what we find in Thiselton's appeal to Wittgenstein. He writes:

> 'Meanwhile I remained concerned to draw equally on the Anglo-American tradition of philosophical analysis and on Continental European traditions. I viewed Wittgenstein as a key figure who combined the incisiveness and rigour which largely characterized British analytical philosophy with the Continental suspicion of exclusively rationalist method and with a deeper concern about human subjectivity and life worlds. In Wittgenstein this was formulated in terms of "forms-of-life" and "language games".'[81]

Along with Oxford philosophy, Wittgenstein's emphasis on language games and forms of life represents the first attempts to outline the pragmatics of interpersonal meaning from within the analytic tradition.[82]

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[79] Thiselton explains that his interest in Wittgenstein followed his commitment to the importance of speech acts for what he calls 'a biblical and theological account of language'. Thiselton, *PH*, 144. Further, Thiselton tends to invoke the later Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophy for similar purposes. In fact there is little sense at all in Thiselton's work that there is any significant discrepancy between the approach of the later Wittgenstein with that of Austin and Searle. Thiselton's interest in the respective philosophies of language is to elucidate the hermeneutic problematic.

[80] Turner, 'W_x' in *RSP* 13, 2003, 55.

[81] Thisetlon, 'Thirty Years', 1560-1561.

[82] Wittgenstein, *PI* I § 23. Similarly, Heidegger observes: '*The existential-ontological foundation of language is discourse or talk* (Heidegger's emphasis).' Heidegger, op. cit. ¶34.

1.2 Some Further Comments on the Importance of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy of Language for Thiselton's Hermeneutics

The following extract taken from *TH* is indicative of Thiselton's appeal to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language:

> 'In elucidating how Wittgenstein's philosophy of language relates to hermeneutics, therefore, it has also become clear that there are two fundamental weaknesses in Bultmann's hermeneutics, which at bottom turn on the same difficulty. First of all, a sharp dualism between fact and value cannot be sustained against the given ways in which language actually operates in life. Secondly, any attempt to reject the "this-worldly" dimension of the language of revelation and to substitute individual self-understanding for public tradition and history raises insuperable problems for hermeneutics. For the very grammar of the concepts involved is embedded in a history of events and behaviour. It is part of the grammar of the concept of "God" that he is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob (Exod. 3: 6).'[83]

Within this short paragraph Thiselton makes three important observations that he repeats on many subsequent occasions. Firstly, he draws attention to the importance of how language actually functions in the world. This is at once both an affirmation of ordinary language philosophy and empirical linguistic research. Although there are few references to actual linguistic pragmatic research findings in his writings, there is clearly a favourable disposition to such evidence being used for the task of hermeneutics. Secondly, Thiselton takes issue with Bultmann's attempt to demythologise a tradition on the basis of an individual existential judgment. This would constitute a direct contravention of the hermeneutic respect for both history and tradition. Further, the failure to adequately engage with the grammar of the particular biblical text (language game) in view is to effect a sort of hermeneutic foreclosure.

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[83] Thiselton, *TH*, 385. We shall have cause to revisit this critique when we look at the important role Austinian and Searlean SAT plays in the discussion of self-involving language. For his most recent comments on the philosophical failings of New Testament scholarship and Christian theology see Thiselton, 'Reappraisal of Work on Speech-Act Theory' in *Collected Works*, 137.

And thirdly, Thiselton is able to assert the theological meaning of a word like 'God' on the basis of how it was used and understood within the history and tradition of the biblical authors. As he says: 'It is part of the grammar of the concept "God" that he is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob'. In Wittgenstein's later philosophy Thiselton finds the very sorts of argument that are at once sympathetic to the humanism of hermeneutics and which provide the intellectual arguments and ideas to challenge those approaches or ideologies that seek to undermine or subvert the hermeneutic task.

What we see is that Wittgenstein's philosophy of language proves important for Thiselton in at least three ways. Firstly, it provides him with something approaching a framework in which to discuss meaning. With the publication of *NH* it becomes clear that Thiselton views the neo-pragmatism of Rorty as a major threat to the integrity of responsible hermeneutics. He rejects Rorty's reading of Gadamer and also resists Rorty's 'hermeneutic' reading of Wittgenstein's later thought.[84] In *TH* Thiselton provides what amounts to one of his more explicit comments on epistemology:

> 'Public human behaviour provides the currency of meaning for many theological assertions; but this is not to say that these theological statements can be translated into statements about man without remainder. We cannot invoke a referential theory of meaning as a basis for hermeneutics. But we are entitled to ask whether the language of the New Testament carries a referential dimension of meaning...questions about reference remain an important part, even if not the major part, of hermeneutical inquiries.'[85]

An intellectual struggle over the philosophical importance of some version of realism persists in the world of biblical and theological hermeneutics. Along with this

[84] See for instance Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton University Press, 1980, 317. Cf. Thiselton's assessment of Rorty in Thiselton, *NH*, 393-402.

[85] Thiselton, *TH*, 124.

interest in ontology goes the need for an adequate theory of knowledge. Both Austin and especially Searle share a commitment to philosophical 'realism'.[86]

Secondly, Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (*PI*) represents a shift away from the concerns of *a priori* formal or ideal language to *a posteriori* reflections on language function. According to Peter Winch, the difference between the earlier formulations of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (*TLP*) and the later philosophy of *PI* is, in part, one of perspective. In the *TLP* what needs explaining is the object to which a linguistic fact refers: 'A picture is a fact'.[87] It is the object of a proposition that must be determined for meaning to have purchase. In *PI* this order is reversed: rather than identifying facts in the world, the focus shifts to a description of how a word is used, from a description of the discourse within which it arises: 'What has to be accepted, the given, is – one might say – forms of life.'[88] Winch says that '*in* that use we see the kind of relation between name and object that here is in question and there is nothing more to say about the object than we can say in our descriptions of the use of the word.' (Winch's emphasis)[89] Winch does not view *PI* as a complete repudiation of the *TLP* but as a development of the problem set in a wider context, the context not of formal or ideal language but of ordinary language. Winch comments: 'We have to look, not for what lies hidden *beneath* our normal ways of talking, but for what is hidden *in* our normal ways of talking.'[90] In all this there is something like a

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[86] Searle maintains that a rejection of realism threatens the integrity of 'epistemic objectivity, rationality, truth, and intelligence in contemporary intellectual life'. He continues: 'It is no accident that the various theories of language, literature, and even education that try to undermine the traditional conceptions of truth, epistemic objectivity, and rationality rely heavily on arguments against external realism. The first step in combating irrationalism...is a refutation of the arguments against external realism and a defense of external realism as a presupposition of large areas of discourse.' Searle, *Social Reality*, 197. Elsewhere he states: 'I accept the Enlightenment vision. I think that the universe exists quite independently of our minds and that, within the limits set by our evolutionary endowments, we can come to comprehend nature.' Searle, *Mind, Language and Society*, 4.

[87] Wittgenstein, *TLP*, 2.141. Wittgenstein introduces his picture theory of reality at 2.1: 'We picture facts to ourselves'.

[88] Wittgenstein, *PI*, II xi, 226.

[89] P. Winch, 'Introduction: The Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy' in Winch, P. (Ed.), *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, London: Routledge, 1969, 19.

[90] Ibid. 19.

demythologising of philosophy going on, a change of method that has far reaching implications not just for Platonism but also for how we proceed with linguistic investigations.

With the shift in perspective that Winch describes, Wittgenstein provides us with a more naturalistic method for investigating how language relates to the world. Whilst Wittgenstein retains his insistence that this relationship can only ever be 'shown', this showing happens not by appeal to the picture theory of propositions but, rather, when we pay attention to what people do with language in a particular language game. From this Thiselton takes the idea that each language game must be interpreted on its own terms: the particular case. Only then can we discern the logical grammar by looking to see how words are actually used. In turn, this explains Thiselton's resistance to hermeneutic foreclosure. This principle is particularly important for those expressions of human activity that do not fall within the remit of the natural sciences ('normal' discourses).

In the history of ideas of twentieth century analytical philosophy this marks a move away from formalism, structuralism and the modernist preoccupation with system and method. This emphasis within Wittgenstein's philosophy helps Thiselton avoid any sort of reification of language: 'The classification achieved by Wittgenstein...is to show that the influence of language on thought is not merely a matter of vocabulary-stock and surface-grammar, but of how language is *used*.'[91] On this basis Thiselton can draw attention to the fallacy of attributing a particular worldview or disposition to a people group on the basis of a given syntactical or verbal characteristic of a language. Thiselton articulates the relationship between practice and language in much more anthropologically astute terms:

> 'Once a language is "adapted to the characteristic pursuit of its users," it hands on an inherited tradition which then makes it easier or more difficult for a later generation to raise certain questions, or to notice certain aspects of life. This is part of the problem of language that occupied the attention both of Heidegger and Wittgenstein in their later thought. Both of these thinkers, each

[91] Thiselton, *TH*, 138.

in his own distinctive way, underline the close relationship of language to human life, and the force of habit which given uses of language exemplify and hand on...This is why Wittgenstein also stresses...the linguistic significance of "training". He observes, "One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature...and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it. A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." Fresh vision can come only when we are able to reverse certain habits of thinking which are perpetuated by the ways in which we use language.'[92]

The importance of this anthropological reflex within humanism and the hermeneutic tradition presents some important questions about its compatibility with SAT. We shall revisit this particular issue in the two next chapters but, as we shall see in part two, the basis for a revision of Thiselton's appeal to pragmatics is already present within his own attachment to the relevance of Wittgenstein's later thinking.

In summary, Gadamer's hermeneutic project arises out of a series of philosophical commitments. It shares with Romanticism a suspicion of Kantian reason and the systematising tendencies of the Enlightenment. Truth, as with understanding generally, is conditioned historically. It resides in tradition and is recovered on the basis of a dialogue or 'conversation' with the past or with the other in whom I am engaged. Further, this conversation is informed by an awareness of our own prejudices and pre-understandings. Most importantly, reason is subject to critique on the basis of a linguistic turn, characterised by Lafont (and Rorty) as the doctrine of meaning holism. It is this sort of linguisticality that inspired the architects of the so-called 'New Hermeneutic' and, more recently, the 'Radical Orthodoxy' movement associated with John Milbank. Taking his lead from the generation after Gadamer, especially Ricoeur, Habermas and Apel, Thiselton seeks to overcome the worst excesses of holism by taking more account of the rational or cognitive function of language emphasised within certain traditions of analytical philosophy. This rapprochement of understanding with explanation takes place within a certain understanding of how language actually functions. Thus the terms in which Thiselton

[92] Ibid. 137.

makes his philosophical moves are from within the philosophy of language and, more specifically, Thiselton's concerns with hermeneutics, philosophy and grammar converge in the suggestive philosophy of Wittgenstein's later work and, more importantly for our main concern, SAT.

Chapter 2

Speech Act Theory and its Uses in Thiselton's Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics

> '*We arrive at the conclusion...that the word alone, in isolation from its context, is not the primary bearer of meaning, but a stretch of language which many linguists and philosophers call a speech-act.*'[93]
>
> Thiselton
>
> '*...the Bible is no less transformative than a substantial bequest from a will or the receipt of a love-letter. These are speech-acts.*'[94]
>
> Thiselton

2.0 Introduction

In *TH* one of the grounds on which Thiselton defends the need for philosophy in New Testament scholarship is in the task of assessing another scholar's interpretative presuppositions and strategy.[95] Accordingly, Thiselton acknowledges the dialectic between philosophy and theology that has characterised the history of Christian theological scholarship. In this context, he cites Gerhard Ebeling's observation: 'For theology the hermeneutic problem is ...today becoming the place of meeting with philosophy.'[96] If Ebeling is right, an assessment of Thiselton's hermeneutic theory

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[93] Thiselton, *TH*, 129.

[94] Thiselton, *Can the Bible Mean Whatever We Want it to Mean?*, 7-8.

[95] In *TH* Thiselton gives five reasons why studying philosophy is important for hermeneutics. One reason is to understand the philosophical commitments of a given theologian or biblical scholar. Thiselton, *TH*, 4.

[96] Ebeling, *Word and Faith*, England: SCM, 1963, 317 quoted in Thiselton, *NH*, 4. Similarly, Helmut Peukert argues that a theory of communicative action provides the locus for the meeting of theology and the theory of science. Peukert, H., (Trans.) J. Bohman, *Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology: Toward a Theology of Communicative Action*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1984, xxiii.

provides the ideal opportunity to explore one way in which philosophy and theology interface. Our investigation explores the way in which he appeals to speech act theory to advance the hermeneutic task. To what extent does SAT really represent 'firm and charted linguistic ground'?[97] Does this philosophical framework help or hinder biblical interpretation? It is to these questions that we now turn.

2.1 Speech Act Theory: From Austin's Theories of Performatives to Historical Pragmatics

Before we look in detail at three ways in which Thiselton has drawn on speech act categories we need to understand the sort of theory that is in view. As we noted in the introductory chapter, what is referred to in the hermeneutics literature as SAT originated with the seminal work of J. L. Austin. The dominant philosophy in the Oxford of Austin's time was analytical philosophy.[98] Within the analytical tradition the elucidation of truth, how it is that the mind patterns reality, was being worked out through the workings of formal language. This approach can be traced back to the pioneering work of German mathematician Gottlob Frege. Frege distinguished between the meaning of a given utterance and the way in which it is used; that is, he allowed for the thought of a proposition without consideration of its truth-value (the name or symbol for an object).[99] Austin pursued the implications of this move within an analytical tradition that remained preoccupied with the logical analysis of

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[97] Thiselton employs this phrase to refer to the insights of Austinian SAT. Thiselton, 'Parables as Language-Event' in *SJT* 23, 1970, 437.

[98] Also commonly referred to as Anglo-American philosophy. According to Thiselton, analytical philosophy 'characteristically denotes a rigorous examination and clarification of logical forms which might have become obscured by sentences of natural language.' Thiselton, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion*, 8.

[99] Thiselton has underlined the significance of this point recently. 'Wolterstorff's proposals about performing "one action by performing another distinct action" remain fundamental for speech-act theory...' Thiselton, *PH*, 147. Frege distinguished between the proposition or sense and the assertive force or meaning of that proposition. Frege, 'On Sense and Meaning' in *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic and Philosophy*, 159.

assertions.[100] In opposition to the prevailing positivism of the 1930s, he concluded that many utterances are not concerned primarily with making true or false statements:

> 'The constative utterance, under the name so dear to philosophers, of *statement*, has the property of being true or false. The performative utterance, by contrast, can never be either: it has its own special job, it is used to perform an action. To issue such an utterance is to perform the action – an action, perhaps, which one scarcely could perform, at least with so much precision, in any other way.'[101]

Utterances (sentences in naturally occurring language) of declarative form do not just state what is or what is not the case they actually *do* something. For instance, the making of a promise, a wedding vow or inviting someone to dinner all effect some sort of change in the world.[102]

Austin therefore drew a distinction between utterances that achieve some change in the world and utterances that simply state or assert facts: the former he called 'performatives' and the latter he called 'constatives'. Whilst it makes little sense to assess a performative utterance for its truth-value, it does make sense to question its success and to clarify how such utterances can go wrong. Performatives work not primarily on truth conditions but on what Austin called 'felicity conditions'.[103] He gives the example of naming a ship explaining how certain so-called felicity conditions must be in place for the performative utterance of naming to be successful.

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[100] Bertrand Russell's essay entitled 'On Denoting' is considered a paradigm of the early analytic method. Russell, 'On Denoting' in (Ed.) R. C. Marsh, *Logic and Knowledge: Essays 1901-1950*, London: Unwin, 1988, 39-57.

[101] Austin, 'Performative-Constative' in (Ed.) Caton C. E., *Philosophy and Ordinary Language*, Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1963, 22. For a useful summary of Austin's 'thesis' see Levinson's 'Survey Article' in *Language and Linguistic Teaching: Abstracts*, 13.1, 1980, 5-24, esp. 6.

[102] Searle talks in terms of a world-to-word direction of fit in contrast to the word-to-world direction of fit associated with semantic investigations. Searle, 'A Taxonomy of Speech Acts' in *Expression and Meaning*, 3-4.

[103] Austin, *HDTW*, 14.

There must be a ship or boat needing to be named, the person naming the vessel must be the appointed person for the task, there must be witnesses, a bottle of Champagne and so on. If any of these felicity conditions is missing then the naming of the vessel might fail to come off or 'misfire'. Austin identifies three categories of felicity conditions:[104]

1. There must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect and/or the circumstances and persons must be appropriate, as specified in the procedure.
2. The procedure must be executed correctly and completely.
3. Often, the persons must have the requisite thoughts, feelings and intentions, as specified in the procedure, and if consequent conduct is specified, then the relevant parties must so do.

Violations of the felicity conditions under categories 1 and 2 will lead to the performative failing to come off. A violation of the conditions under category 3 lead to what Austin calls an 'abuse'. When an abuse occurs the performative is effective but it has been performed insincerely or infelicitously. The case of apologising or, better, promising illustrates well this sort of situation: for instance, when someone promises to be at a particular place at a particular time but, in fact, has no intention of honouring the commitment. In such a case a promise has been made but the lack of sincerity constitutes an abuse.

In view of these considerations Austin concludes that some utterances are special: in performing them an action is achieved. As we have seen, Austin initially contrasted this with the idea that statements simply assert or deny facts. Within this schema performatives depend upon conventions linked to institutional procedures. Crucially, statements are assessed for their truth conditions and performatives are assessed for their felicity conditions. However, as Austin's argument develops, the so-called *special theory*, this neat dichotomy between performatives and constatives, gives way to a *general theory* of illocutionary acts in which performatives and constatives are simply sub-categories. Furthermore, Austin acknowledges that it proves too difficult

[104] Ibid. 14-15.

to maintain the idea of the performative as a special class of sentences identifiable on syntactic or pragmatic criteria alone. His later understanding was to distinguish between explicit and implicit performatives. Importantly, implicit performatives now include most, if not all, utterances. What we now need to clarify is the exact way or ways in which making an utterance can also be understood as an action.

Austin says that there are three ways in which an utterance does something.[105] He therefore distinguished the following elements:

1. The locutionary act stands for the utterance of a sentence with determinate sense and reference. The locutionary act is further divided into three more 'acts': the phonetic act (uttering noises), the phatic act (uttering words with a certain construction), and the rhetic act (uttering words with a certain meaning).
2. The illocutionary act stands for the action performed in the saying of a sentence by virtue of the conventional force associated with it.[106]
3. The perlocutionary act stands for the effects on the audience brought about by the performance of an illocutionary act. These 'effects' will be particular to the context of utterance.

It is important to see that 'speech act theory' concerns itself with the second act: the illocutionary act. After all, 'to perform a locutionary act is in general...also and *eo ipso* to perform an *illocutionary* act.'[107] Austin believed that it could be studied apart from the semantic concerns of the locutionary act.[108] Thus the elucidation of the

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[105] Ibid. 94-108.

[106] With the realisation that most, if not all, utterances represent a sort of action, Austin's interest focused on the sorts of 'force' an utterance might carry or exhibit. Austin believed that a taxonomy of performative verbs would go a long way to capturing the range of possible forces.

[107] Austin, *HTDW*, 98.

[108] In practice it has not proved so easy to isolate the different acts. This has proved especially difficult when it comes to the relationship between the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. We will revisit this problem in chapter three but, briefly, instead of maintaining the locutionary/illocutionary distinction Searle analysed the speech act into the illocutionary act and the propositional act. See Searle, 'Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts' in *Philosophical Review* 77, 1968, 405-424. Cf.

illocutionary act is what compliments the traditional analytic concern with sense and reference and introduces a new emphasis within the philosophy of language.[109] Austin's aim was to isolate all the possible actions that can be performed by language and, in doing so, provide an elucidation of what he described as the 'total speech act in the total speech situation'.[110]

The very phrase 'speech act' has become shorthand for the illocutionary act and it is, in general terms, this phenomenon that Thiselton and other hermeneutic theorists, biblical scholars and theologians have in mind when they appeal to 'speech act theory'. Austin's pupil J. R. Searle has most influentially mediated this theory of speech acts to the wider intellectual community.[111] Along side Searle's development of Austin's work we must also place the equally influential tradition represented by H. Paul Grice.[112] Grice takes Austin's notion of 'up-take' to develop an analysis of meaning on the basis of a speaker's intentions. We will be returning to these developments in the next chapter. At this point it is enough to indicate that Grice's approach to meaning proved seminal for two major research traditions in pragmatics: Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory[113] and Brown and Levinson's Politeness

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Searle, *Speech Acts*, 31-33. In his extended essay on Speech Acts Searle's revised taxonomy of the speech act is as follows: utterance acts (Austin's phonetic and phatic acts); propositional acts (referring and predicating); illocutionary acts (promising, warning, blessing and so on); and perlocutionary acts. Ibid. 24-25.

[109] Against postmodern readings of Austinian speech-act theory, it was not Austin's intention to undermine or call into question the importance or validity of the semantic task. Rather, he was developing the philosopher's understanding of meaning in natural or ordinary language.

[110] Austin, *HTDW*, 148.

[111] Searle takes Austin's general theory and uses it as the basis for his theory of speech acts. However, Searle does not change fundamentally the insights that are already present in Austin's work. The novelty in Searle's work lies in his wider philosophical project and these matters will be explored as they arise in the course of this study. For a recent incisive and impartial assessment of Searle's approach to SAT see Briggs, *Words*, 43-63.

[112] Most of Grice's important work has been reissued in Grice, H. P., *Studies in the Way of Words*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

[113] Sperber, D. and Wilson, D., *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.

Theory[114]. Both these theories came to prominence in the late 1980s and have dominated subsequent debate in what originated as speech act philosophy and are now studied within the discipline of linguistic pragmatics or, simply, pragmatics.

2.1.1 Pragmatics

Although he rarely uses the term 'pragmatics', Thiselton's interest in linguistics has concentrated on the relationship between meaning and context. Reflecting back on the concerns highlighted in his article on semantics and New Testament interpretation he notes that 'everyday vocabulary is used with a particular contextual logic'.[115] In other words, meaning, what words are *doing*, will be shaped by the particular features of the speech situation. Since the 1970s SAT has been studied as part of the branch of linguistics called pragmatics.[116] The study of pragmatics originates in the semiotic theory of Charles Morris. The following definition has proved seminal:

> 'In terms of the three correlates (sign vehicle, designatum, interpreter) of the triadic relation of semiosis, a number of other dyadic relations may be abstracted for study. One may study the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable. This relation will be called semantical dimension of semiosis...the study of this dimension will be called semantics. Or the subject of study may be the relation of signs to interpreters. This relation will be called the pragmatical dimension of semiosis...and the study of this dimension will be named pragmatics.'[117]

Morris's tripartite division of semiotics into syntax, semantics and pragmatics has helped to shape the method pursued in analytical linguistics. Despite initially suffering an ambiguous relationship with the central concerns of philosophy and

[114] Brown, P. and Levinson, S. C., 'Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena' in Goody, E. N. (Ed.), *Questions and Politeness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, 56-289 and reissued with corrections, new introduction and new bibliography as *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

[115] Thiselton, 'Thirty Years', 1562.

[116] See for instance Jerrold Sadock's article in *HP95*, 53-73.

[117] Morris, C., *Foundations*, 6.

linguistics, since the 1970s pragmatics has become a growing field of research.[118] In particular, Austin's work on speech acts and Grice's work on the logic of conversation have, in the words of Verschueren, 'provided the frame of reference for the consolidation of the field of linguistic pragmatics.'[119]

In the introductory chapter of his 1983 text book, *Pragmatics*, Stephen Levinson provides detailed accounts of the most significant topics covered by analytical pragmatics: deixis, conversational implicature, presupposition, speech acts and conversational structure.[120] Within this schema pragmatics is a relatively narrow field addressing those instances of sentential meaning not accounted for by traditional truth-conditional semantics. Understood in these terms, pragmatics is one part of a shared project working towards a general linguistic theory. Within this expanding discipline of pragmatics SAT has generated a great deal of interest and has become an important discipline in its own right attracting attention from the pragmatic traditions of continental Europe, Britain and America.[121] It has also proved to be a source of interest to scholars working in related fields including hermeneutic philosophy, literary theory, and, of course, biblical and theological interpretation.[122]

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[118] Leech and Thomas, *Encyclopedia of Language*, 173. *The Journal of Pragmatics* and *The Handbook of Pragmatics* are indicative of this trend.

[119] Verschueren, *HP95*, 3. Both philosophers presented their ideas as their William James' Lectures at Harvard University: Austin in 1955 and Grice in 1957.

[120] Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 1983. Levinson has subsequently revised his understanding of how pragmatics relates to semantics. See Levinson, *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*, Cambridge Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 2000.

[121] Confusingly, 'Pragmatics' is not a term actually found in the work of Austin or Searle.

[122] Pragmatics is the so-called Gricean sense has been of interest to a number of scholars working in the field of biblical interpretation. Briggs has taken some trouble to outline the more prominent contributions. Of particular importance has been the work of South African scholar J. G. Du Plessis. See for instance, 'Some Aspects of Extralingual Reality and the Interpretation of Texts' in *Neotestimentica* 18, 1984, 80-93; 'Pragmatic Meaning in Matthew 13: 1-23' in *Neotestimentica* 21, 1987, 42-56; 'Why did Peter Ask his Question and how did Jesus Answer him? Or: Implicature in Luke 12: 35-48' in *Neotestimentica* 22, 1988, 311-324; and 'Speech Act Theory and New Testament Interpretation with Special reference to G. N. Leech's Pragmatic Principles', in (Eds.) P. J. Hartin and J. H. Petzer, *Text and Interpretation: New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991, 129-142. Further works cited by Briggs include J. E. Botha, *Jesus and the Samaritan*

In an introductory article for *The Handbook of Pragmatics* Verschueren provides the following simple definition of pragmatics: 'Pragmatics does not deal with language as such but with language use and the relationships between language form and language use...using language involves cognitive processes, taking place in a social world with a variety of cultural constraints.'[123] As we continue to set the context for this study of SAT we need to see that along with the general rise of interest in all things linguistic, written texts also became pieces of data susceptible to linguistic analysis and, according to Dirk de Geest, 'literary research has undergone a fundamental shift in orientation, from a basically text-oriented (i.e. syntactic and semantic) towards a more context-oriented (i.e. pragmatic) approach'.[124] Developments in literary theory, hermeneutics and reception theory have been indicative of this trend.[125]

Closely related to the concerns of literary pragmatics is the movement known as post-structuralism. Post-structuralism represents another important intellectual development and it has brought new perspectives on the interpretation and analysis of biblical texts. In noting the important corrective post-structuralism represents, Willems writes: Post-structuralism restored the value and the meaningfulness of the social processes that produce the texts, and denied the reality of the abstract linguistic

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Woman: A Speech-Act Reading of John 4: 1-42, NovTSup LXV, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991a; and 'Style in the New Testament: The Need for Serious Reconsideration' in *JSNT* 43, 1991b, 71-87. Briggs, 'The Uses of Speech-Act Theory in Biblical Interpretation' in *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 9, 2001, 229-276.

[123] Verschueren, *HP95*, 1. In this article Verschueren provides a historical perspective on the field of pragmatics and explains the recent trend in convergence of the analytical and Continental traditions. See Verschueren, *HP95*, 4-6.

[124] De Geest, *HP95*, 351. Dirk de Geest's overview of literary pragmatics questions whether there have been any serious attempts to 'integrate' research findings in linguistic pragmatics with literary studies. Whilst Thiselton's application of SAT to the task of biblical interpretation is by no means the only exception to de Geest's generalisation, it represents a significant example within the field of biblical and theological hermeneutics.

[125] Habermas, 'Hermeneutic and Analytic Philosophy. Two Complementary Versions of the Linguistic Turn?' in (Ed.) Anthony O'Hear, *German Philosophy Since Kant*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 423.

system, taken to be a theoretical fiction'.[126] Thus Thiselton's eclectic appeal to the philosophical hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer and the ordinary language philosophy of Wittgenstein, Austin and Searle must be understood within a wider cultural and intellectual pragmatic turn. In terms of historical pragmatics, a given piece of New Testament text provides a potentially valuable stretch of data for engaging with a given sociolinguistic model. In turn, biblical scholarship has generated a wealth of linguistic and historical data for supplementing any pragmatic model.

2.1.2 Speech Act Theory, Written Texts and Historical Pragmatics

Thiselton's appeal to SAT for the hermeneutic task represents a growing trend in biblical studies and literary theory to appropriate synchronic models of communication to understand the ways in which texts function. White's comments are indicative of the sort of reasoning behind appeals to SAT. He writes:

> 'Literary critics have been attracted to speech act theory for two primary reasons. First the theory has opened the possibility of a functional approach to literature which is less encumbered with metaphysical presuppositions than previous theories of criticism...Secondly, speech act theory offers the means to orient the reader away from various formalisms which detach the text from its historical and social matrix, toward its concrete context, without engulfing it once again in the psychological, social and historical conditions of its production.'[127]

As instances of communicative action it has become increasingly difficult to argue that written texts do not share many of the features of real time speech.[128] Further, in

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[126] Willems, *HP95*, 512.

[127] White, 'Introduction: Speech Act Theory and Literary Criticism' in *Semeia* 41, 1988, 2.

[128] In this context Sandy Petrey's comments are apposite: 'While Austin never did for the literary what he did for the constative – proclaim the speech-act character of what was originally excluded from speech-act theory – those of us who have ignored his strictures about literature are respecting the spirit

view of wider social, anthropological and hermeneutic considerations it also proves more difficult to draw a sharp distinction between the notions of synchrony and diachrony.

In addressing whether it is legitimate to appropriate SAT for the analysis of written texts Briggs has set out two ways in which the model might be used in relation to biblical texts.[129] Firstly, there are recorded instances of communicative action between human agents within a narrative stretch. As we shall see below Thiselton discusses Isaac's blessing of Jacob as a case in point. According to Briggs this is an example of SAT being used as an exegetical tool. Secondly, SAT can be used as a 'reconceptualization of exegesis' to explicate the effects of a text on the reader. Briggs calls the first sort of appeal to SAT 'speech act criticism' and locates the second sort of appeal to SAT within the field of biblical hermeneutics.[130] Reflecting this general trend of interdisciplinary projects, the field of pragmatics has recently seen the introduction of a new journal dealing specifically with the interface of pragmatic theory and textual interpretation: *The Journal of Historical Pragmatics.* 'Historical pragmatics' is the name, coined by Andreas H. Jucker editor of *JHP*, given to the discipline that subjects diachronic instances of speech/text to pragmatic analysis. Such an analysis will include the nature of rhetoric which, as we shall see, is of considerable importance in the Corinthian correspondence. [131]

More simply, Sell takes the term 'historical pragmatics' to be the study of the 'communicative use of language' with special reference to written (literary) texts.[132] In view of the growing awareness of the historically shaped nature of communicative

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of his writings as we ignore the letter.' Petrey, *Speech Acts and Literary Theory*, London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1990, 53.

[129] Briggs, 'Uses of Speech-Act Theory' in *Currents in Research* 9, 2001, 236-238. See also Briggs' extended discussion of the question in Briggs, *Words in Action*, 73-102.

[130] Briggs, 'Uses of Speech-Act Theory' in *Currents in Research* 9, 2001, 237. Cf. Briggs, *Words in Action*, 103.

[131] For further details see Fitzmaurice, 'Some Remarks on the Rhetoric of Historical Pragmatics' in *JHP* 1: 1, 2000, 1-6.

[132] Sell, op. cit. 2.

meaning he argues that literary pragmatics is 'continuous with the pragmatics of communication in general'. Further on he explains:

> 'Communication can indeed be thought of as interactive, and literature as communicational in this sense...literary writing and reading can be seen as uses of language which amounts to interpersonal activity, and which can thereby result in a change to a status quo. Approached in this way, pragmatics in general, and not least the pragmatics of literature, will carry a strong echo of the Greek root *pragma* ('deed').'[133]

Sell's work reflects the increasing rapprochement taking place between the field of pragmatics and hermeneutics. The nature of our investigation is captured very well by the recent introduction of this phrase: 'historical pragmatics'.

2.2 Three Uses of Speech Act Theory in Thiselton's Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics

2.2.1 Speech Act Theory and the (Supposed) Power of Words

In 'The Supposed Power of Words' Thiselton appeals to SAT in order to challenge a faulty theory of language in Old Testament scholarship.[134] The essay is a paradigm of Thiselton's appropriation of semantics and the philosophy of language to resolve some long held misunderstandings about the workings of natural language. Interpretations of Old Testament passages that employ imagery about the power of words, God's Word in particular, lead to conclusions that cannot be sustained by advances in modern linguistics. Whilst this article would have had a much greater impact when it was written in the early 1970s, it marks an important moment for the interface of philosophy and hermeneutics. In the introduction to its re-publication Thiselton writes: 'I continue to view this article as one of my more lasting

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[133] Ibid. 4.

[134] Thiselton, 'An Initial Application and a Caveat: "The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings"' in *Collected Works*, 51-67 (Originally published as 'Supposed Power of Words' in *JTS* vol. 25, 1974, 283-299).

contributions to varied issues of biblical interpretation, and as one of the earliest uses of speech-act theory on the part of biblical specialists.'[135] The list of eminent Old Testament scholars who are the target of Thiselton's critique include W. Zimmerli, W. Eichrodt, E. Jacob and G. von Rad. In respect of the particular problem in view, these scholars build on the earlier studies of O. Grether and L. Dürr.[136] Recovering the details of these works is not as important for our purposes as the nature of the philosophy of language with which they were working. However, we do need some sense of the problem presented by the texts themselves.[137] The problem concerns an assessment of how the ancient Israelites (and other ancient near East religions) viewed the power of the spoken word. Thiselton comments:

> 'Several modern writers betray a fascination for analogies drawn from military weaponry. Zimmerli, following Grether, compares the word in Old Testament thought to a missile with a time-fuse. Eichrodt insists that words, once spoken, remain effective or even dangerous "for a long time, like a long-forgotten mine at sea, or a grenade buried in a ploughed field". Edmond Jacob speaks of 'a projectile shot into the enemy camp whose explosion must sometimes be awaited but which is always inevitable...Other writers speak explicitly of bullets, torpedoes and charges of high explosive. It is alleged in the words of Procksch, that in Hebrew thought "the word appears as a material force which is always present and at work." As Dürr repeatedly expresses it, the word is *kraftgeladen*; it operates as a power-laden force which irresistibly

[135] Ibid. 51. As Thiselton himself acknowledges, his own critique of the biblical theology movement followed Barr's much earlier semantic critique of word studies found in the works of Old Testament commentaries. Although surprisingly late, Barr's study represented something of a wake up call to biblical scholars in terms of needing to take account of developments and advances in linguistic semantics. With the advent of SAT and more recent developments in linguistics the field of pragmatics is equally prominent. See Barr, J., *Biblical Language*, 107-160.

[136] Thiselton, op. cit. 53-54.

[137] From the OT these include Jer. 1: 9-10; Jer. 5: 14; 23: 29; Isa. 55: 10,11 and supremely the creation narrative of Gen. 1 iterated in Ps. 33: 9 and related ideas are expressed in 104: 7; 106: 9; 147: 18. From the NT we find prominent verses like Heb. 4: 12 or Eph. 6: 17b. Thiselton also reviews the way in which the gospels depict Jesus' ability to effect changes in the world from merely issuing a command or uttering a word of forgiveness. Again there are clear allusions to the creation narratives. Ibid. 54-55.

achieves its end. Gerhard von Rad sees it as "an objective reality endowed with mysterious power".'[138]

Thiselton exposes what amounts to an uncritical linguistic anthropology reflecting the linguistic relativity of Romanticism and the later Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, both of which were discussed in the last chapter. Thiselton makes it clear that the approach of Old Testament scholars is also followed in New Testament scholarship.[139]

The particular linguistic problem under investigation is the nature of the relationship that holds between words and objects. The Hebrew word '*dābār*', capable of meaning both 'word' and 'thing', has encouraged a particular approach to language and linguistic anthropology. The argument goes like this: if Hebrew makes little or no distinction between word and object then it makes sense to suppose that they believed words possess intrinsic power. As one commentator put it: 'objects in all their material solidity have been taken up into the word'.[140] Following modern linguistic understanding, Thiselton makes the simple point that in fact there is no natural relationship between word and the thing designated. Rather, the relationship between word and thing is arbitrary. In a trivial sense then, the linguistic code is conventional.[141] Thiselton maintains, *pace* von Rad, that this is not a 'Western' cultural view but a linguistic fact. The desire to reify language in various ways has, as Thiselton notes again, been challenged by ordinary language philosophers like Wittgenstein and Gilbert Ryle. As Thiselton continues with his revised account of the function of language in the Ancient Near East he allows two assumptions to go

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[138] Ibid. 53.

[139] He cites R. Bultmann and E. Stauffer in this respect. Ibid. 54.

[140] Rad, G. von, *Old Testament Theology* vol. 2, Edinburgh, 1965, 85 quoted in Thiselton, op. cit. 56.

[141] According to Avramides, the arbitrary relationship that holds between linguistic symbol and object designated is 'conventional' in a trivial sense. Further, all modern linguists subscribe to this use of the word 'convention' to describe a given linguistic system. The word 'convention' is also used in a more technical sense by those linguists who maintain that utterance meaning is primarily a matter of convention against those linguists and philosophers who argue that meaning is primarily a matter of a speaker's intentions. For an introduction to this important topic see Avramides, 'Intention and Convention' in (Eds.) Bob Hale and Crispin Wright, *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, 61ff.

unchallenged: firstly, people who wrote the biblical texts did indeed hold certain primitive notions of word power; and secondly, these primitive notions were shared by the surrounding religions. Nothwithstanding these assumptions, Thiselton believes there is an alternative way of dealing with the evidence.

Thiselton's argument rests on the identification of 'four weaknesses, misunderstandings or mistakes' on which the traditional view rests. Firstly, he draws on semantic theory to explicate the way in which the Hebrew word '*dābār*' has been used and abused. Behind the word/object confusion is a now discredited form of word study much beloved of nineteenth century linguists. Whilst sometimes of limited value, the method was to trace the etymology of the word and then to draw conclusions about its 'real' meaning when it occurs in a text or passage.[142] Secondly, Thiselton draws attention to the agency behind the words. When we pay attention to the passages in which it appears that there are magical properties attached to words we see rather that there is a theological issue at stake: that is, the identity and status of the one who is speaking. Yahweh's words are endowed with power precisely because he is Yahweh. The power does not reside therefore in a word as such but in the God who utters the word. Thiselton concludes: 'To explain such passages in the light of a particular view of language is to direct attention to the wrong thing.'[143] However, if we can explain the majority of these passages in theological terms rather than in simply linguistic terms what do we do with those passages that deal with the words of human beings?

Thirdly, and most importantly for our purposes, Thiselton appeals to the grammar of speech acts to explain apparently magical or powerful words spoken by human agents. The principle attaches to words spoken by human agents including kingly and prophetic utterances. Thiselton selects the particular examples of blessing and cursing which he describes as 'prime examples of what J. L. Austin called performative language, namely, a language-use in which "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action". It is "an 'illocutionary' act, i.e. performance of an act

[142] Barr's work effectively marked the end of the line for this method of interpretation.

[143] Thiselton, op. cit. 61.

in saying something as opposed to performance of an act of saying something".'[144] For such an act to be 'felicitous' or 'happy' the appropriate felicity conditions need to accompany the utterance. The effectiveness or 'power' of the illocutionary act comes not from any physical causal power or effectiveness (later transposed into the language of 'persuasive rhetoric'), but from the presence of the necessary felicity conditions. Firstly, in the words of Austin: 'There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect'.[145] In many societies baptism or the handing down of a sentence in court are recognised and accepted conventional procedures that result in certain conventional effects. Secondly, as Austin explains, 'the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate'.[146] To illustrate this point consider again the case of baptism. Baptism, in Austin's sense, is a conventional procedure and has a conventional effect when the appropriate felicity conditions are met: that there is a candidate for baptism, that the appointed person is conducting the baptism and so on. We can think of other conventional activities such as conferring a degree, knighting someone or handing down judgment in a court of law. Thiselton summarises the significance of Austin's analysis of the performative utterance:

> 'First, in performative utterances we have an example of the power of words in which word and event are indeed one, but not on the basis of some supposedly primitive confusion between names and objects. Neither ancient nor modern society depends on mistaken ideas about word-magic in order to support the belief that words do things. Second, blessing and cursing constitute special examples of this principle. Acts of blessing in the Old Testament rest on accepted *conventions*; on procedures or institutions accepted within Israelite society, and usually involving conventionally accepted

[144] Ibid. 62. The quotes are from Austin's *HTDW*, 6, 99 respectively. It will be noticed that Thiselton appeals freely to both Austin's special theory (the initial distinction between performative utterances and statements (constatives)) and his general theory (in which the distinction is relinquished in recognition that all utterances do something).

[145] Austin, *HDTW*, 14.

[146] Ibid. 27.

formulae. They are effective, in most cases, only when performed by the appropriate person in the appropriate situation (Thiselton's emphasis).'[147]

Citing the celebrated story of Isaac's blessing of Jacob (Gen. 27: 1-40), Thiselton locates the supposed power of the blessing not in some primitive beliefs about word magic but rather in the illocutionary force given to certain speech acts like blessing. Austin's account of performatives, and subsequently illocutionary acts, provides Thiselton with one solution to the problem of why it was Isaac could not revoke the blessing. Simply, there was no conventional procedure for the withdrawal of a blessing. A comparison is made with baptism: there is no mechanism for un-baptising someone. A number of questions arise from Thiselton's speech act proposals and we will address each of them in the next section.

The fourth weakness or misunderstanding of language that Thiselton addresses concerns the tendency amongst scholars to reduce the function of language to what, in the context of this paper, Thiselton characterises as 'dianoetic' or 'dynamic'. In this context he appeals once again to Wittgenstein's sensitivity to the plurality of uses to which language is put: 'The functions of words are as diverse as the different functions of a row of tools...We are not obliged to choose one of only two alternatives; namely that a word is *either* "a vehicle used for purposes of intellectual self-expression...conveying an intellectual idea" or "an objective reality endowed with mysterious power", "a material force".'[148] This final concern with what Thiselton sees as a crude dualism in utterance types completes his case for a revision of 'the traditional view about the supposed power of words in the biblical writings'.[149] He is of course right to question the view of language taken up uncritically in earlier accounts of biblical scholarship and theology and his discussion begins to engage with many areas of concern to linguists and philosophers of language. If his work on word magic focused on the structure of conventional uses of language, later work with SAT addressed the existential implications of language function.

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[147] Thiselton, op. cit. 62-63.

[148] Thiselton, op. cit. 65-66.

[149] Ibid. 66.

2.2.2 Speech Act Theory and the Logic of Self-Involvement

Perhaps the most significant idea arising from Thiselton's interest in SAT is that of 'self-involvement'.[150] According to Thiselton, SAT provides a corrective to the existential accounts of language in the Neo-Kantianism of Kierkegaard, Barth and, especially, Bultmann.[151] Contrary to the German liberal tendency to separate issues of faith from issues of history or the dualism of Russellian logical analysis, the speech act approach to language use helps us to understand how the reflexive nature of language identifies the speaking agent, his or her relationship to others and states of affairs in the extra-linguistic world. If the analysis of blessing and cursing rested on Austin's special theory with attention given to particularly 'strong' examples of conventionalised or institutionalised speech events, then Thiselton's treatment of existential uses of language appeals initially to an early appropriation of Austin's general theory in the work of Donald Evans.[152] Of the many hundreds of articles on the topic of SAT, Evans' is the only title with a specifically biblical and theological focus that makes it onto the standard speech act bibliographies.[153]

Evans' engagement with ordinary language philosophy was with a view to elucidating the task of theology. In this respect his purpose is consonant with our attempt to develop an account of language that facilitates a better understanding of the religious dimension of language. Following a period in which positivism had held sway in the English-speaking world, Evans believed that theology needed 'a new logic'.[154] This

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[150] See Thiselton, *NH*, 272-312.

[151] For Thiselton's comments on Bultmann see Thiselton, *NH*, 275-276.

[152] D. D. Evans, *The Logic of Self-Involvement: A Philosophical Study of Everyday Language with Special Reference to the Christian Use of Language about God as Creator*, London: SCM Press, 1963. Evans had been a student of Austin.

[153] See for instance Verschueren, *Speech Act Theory: A Provisional Bibliography with a Terminological Guide*, Reproduced by the Indiana University Linguistics Club, May 1976, 20.

[154] Evans is careful to define his use of the term 'logic' which, following Gilbert Ryle, he takes as 'informal logic' in the sense that utterances themselves carry with them certain strong implicatures and entailments that are an essential part of the communicative act. The sense in which Evans uses the term 'logic' would now be the domain of linguistic pragmatics; itself the successor of Austin's work on performatives and ordinary language philosophy. Evans, *Logic*, 13-14, 14n.

use of the word 'logic' approximates to Wittgenstein's notion of 'grammar'. This 'logic' would follow from the nature and structure of natural language. It is in this sense then, that Evans, like Thiselton, appealed to developments in the philosophy of language for the task of biblical hermeneutics. And for Evans, a theological investigation of 'ordinary language' starts with biblical language.[155] He recognised that a certain amount of ground clearing was necessary if theology was to discover a 'framework within which theologians can *dis*agree intelligibly'.[156] For instance, we appreciate Thiselton's engagement with Bultmann within the terms of Evans' comment that any 'adequate philosophical study of existential self-involvement in religion requires a thorough (and prior) examination of linguistic self-involvement.'[157] For Thiselton this notion of self-involvement 'echoes Calvin's contention that knowledge of God and of ourselves remains inseparable; and it reflects Bultmann's claim that "Every assertion about God is simultaneously an assertion about man, and vice versa".'[158]

Evans explicitly distances himself from those followers of Wittgenstein who view language 'as something to be divided up into language-games which are each self-justifying and autonomous'.[159] In other words, biblical language, or indeed the discourse of any text or tradition, cannot claim immunity from the normal or universal standards of rationality. In the context of biblical texts this rational discourse is that of theology: 'Questions of theological truth are not replaceable by questions concerning the internal logical "grammar" of biblical language. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the latter questions should be answered first. That is, before we ask, "does the Creator-God in whom Christians believe actually exist?" we should ask, "What does "God the Creator" mean in biblical language?"'[160] In these few comments we can see how Evans' approach anticipates the trajectory of Thiselton's own method. Once the philosophical analysis has been adequately dealt with then we

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[155] Ibid. 17.

[156] Ibid. 21.

[157] Thiselton, *NH*, 260.

[158] Ibid. 275.

[159] Evans, op. cit. 21.

[160] Ibid. 21.

are left with findings on which to base any subsequent theological discussion: that is, theology is invoked after philosophy. However, it is also important to see that for both Evans and Thiselton philosophy is pursued as a means to an end.

As a case study for his investigation in the logic of biblical language Evans looked at the Genesis creation narratives. Despite looking similar in terms of its surface grammar to a sentence like 'Jones built the house', the grammar of an utterance like 'The Creator made the world' is quite different. In the second sentence, so the argument goes, there is an implied level of self-involvement carrying some important consequences in terms of behaviour in the public world.[161] According to Evans, the assertion 'the Creator made the world', spoken in what he calls the 'biblical context', can be assessed for its commissive, behabitive, verdictive and, of course, assertive or expositive implications:[162] 'A man acknowledges his status and role, and he expresses his feeling or reverent exaltation, when he says, "The Creator made the world" – if he says this in the biblical context.'[163] This stands in contrast with a constative like 'Jones built the house', which leaves us, as it were, uninvolved. Accordingly, neither the discourse of revelation nor the register of religious language can be adequately assessed in simple semantic terms. In fact, Evans characterised both types of utterance as 'self-involving': 'theology needs an outline of the various ways in which language is self-involving – and, more generally, an outline of the various ways in which language is an activity.'[164]

Evans' investigation in the notion of self-involvement is supplemented by his further notion of 'onlook'.[165] He defines 'onlook' as 'a substantive for what it is to 'look on x as y'.[166] Whilst onlooks cannot be reached on the basis of argument alone neither are they arbitrary or unwarranted. For instance, Evans suggests that a person might legitimately adopt a biblical onlook based on the evidence for the historical Jesus and

[161] This 'implication' is wider than the more narrow analytic concepts of 'presupposition' and 'implicature'.

[162] For Austin's definition of these terms see Austin, op. cit. 151-164.

[163] Evans, *Logic*, 13.

[164] Ibid. 14-15.

[165] Ibid. 124-141.

[166] Ibid. 125.

on his or her own Christian experience.[167] According to Thiselton, in the context of 1 Cor 2: 16 Paul's use of the term '*nous*' (often translated as 'mind') might be best translated as '*stance, attitude,* or *outlook*'.[168] Self-involvement inevitably entails these sorts of consideration. More recently, Richard Briggs has transposed Evans' notion of 'onlook' into the register of 'construal'. According to Briggs, construal and reconstrual are at the heart of the grammar of Christian belief. The reason for this, Briggs explains, is that 'construals establish certain institutional frameworks which depend both on foundational brute fact and on continued interpersonal accreditation for their ongoing existence'.[169] The presupposition of brute fact makes all the difference to a rightly understood act of construal. This contrasts with acts of construal without context or without warrant. In other words, 'construal is not an end in itself' but, rather, 'a mediation between the construer and what is construed'.[170] The issue of construal is a question about what would ever count as a good reading or an acceptable reading. Briggs argues that this is the most important question that speech act approaches raise. In this context he records David Kelsey's comment: 'theologians...do not appeal to some objective text-in-itself but rather to a text construed as a certain kind of whole having a certain kind of logical force'.[171] It is precisely this 'logical force' that Evans attempted to clarify.

The novelty of Briggs' work lies in his proposal to utilize this notion of construal within the framework of institutional facts. He proposes a spectrum of construals from the flat-assertive construal (weak construal) all the way along the line to the autonomy and regional role of the community as determinative of an appropriate construal (strong construal). Consequently, 'accepting all reading involves construal does not foreclose the question of constructivism'.[172] The conclusion appears to be that whether a construal is 'good' on any particular occasion will need to be assessed carefully on a case-by-case basis drawing on all the available evidence. Thus it is that

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[167] Ibid. 265.

[168] Thiselton, 'Time and Grand Narrative' in *Collected Works*, 744.

[169] Briggs, *Words*, 286.

[170] Ibid. 288.

[171] Ibid. 125.

[172] Ibid. 123.

Briggs states that 'admitting the notion of construal into one's interpretive investigation does not foreclose questions of historical commitment, fact-stating language, existential address or reception history'. He continues, 'Rather it foregrounds them and insists that illocutionary force must be considered appropriately in each case'.[173] In the midst of rather more formal developments in illocutionary theory this notion of construal represents something of a hermeneutic corrective. Following Searle's approach to the construction of social reality Briggs defends a non-reductive (theologically as well as philosophically) construction-based epistemology.[174]

Searle's distinction between 'illocutionary force indicators' and 'proposition indicators' is of considerable importance to Thiselton's engagement with a range of philosophical and theological issues.[175] In particular, he sees in Searle's notion of directions of fit a corrective to the logical fallacy of existential approaches to biblical interpretation: '...linguistic description reflects or portrays prior states of affairs in the word-to-world language; whereas world-to-word language in principle can bring about change to the world to match the uttered word, of which promise is the clearest paradigm.' [176] This for Thiselton, and subsequently Briggs, is where SAT can aid the hermeneutical task and how it differs significantly from postmodern or neo-pragmatist readings. According to Briggs, Evans' great achievement was to provide an account of biblical language in such a way as to retain its cognitive and functional aspects'.[177] 'We cannot identify ourselves except with reference to others', he explains, 'and God-talk works itself out within the framework of the logical grammar of God's being one of those others. Thus creedal language is irreducibly self-involving'.[178]

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[173] Ibid. 123-4.

[174] Ibid. 141.

[175] Searle introduces these concepts in Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, 30ff.

[176] Thiselton, *NH*, 294f.

[177] Briggs, op. cit. 166.

[178] Ibid. 209.

2.2.3 Speech Act Theory and the Particular Case of Promising

It is in his discussion of promise that we see most clearly Thiselton's attempt to provide an account of language in which the 'religious dimension of language comes into view'. He appeals again to Searle's analysis of the illocutionary act – this time to elucidate the theologically significant category of promise.[179] The notion of promise resonates richly with emphases found in Christian theology and Hegelianism concerning the teleological nature of history. The future tense is integral to a right understanding of the grammar of Christian theology: 'Christian eschatology as the language of promise will then be an essential key to the unlocking of Christian truth.'[180] In this instance, the way in which Thiselton appropriates SAT is more in keeping with Wittgenstein's approach to language games than to Searle's Enlightenment vision: 'Christian theology offers a distinctive hermeneutic that steers between the Scylla of modernity and the Charybdis of postmodern scepticism to seek to establish a hermeneutic of *trust* – or, more precisely, *a hermeneutic of promise* (Thiselton's italics).'[181] Therefore, in *PH* Thiselton attempts to allow a theological understanding of promise to determine the way in which he appropriates Searle's theory of the illocutionary act.[182] Pannenberg's Christology[183] is relevant in this respect: 'Jesus fulfills the hopes of the peoples because with his activity the fulfilment of the promises of Israel begins...only in the way in which Israel's eschatological promises have been fulfilled in Jesus in an anticipatory way is the longing that moves humanity fulfilled in its real sense.'[184] Theologically, we understand humanity's response to divine promise primarily through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Christology is therefore decisive for a true understanding of

[179] Thiselton, *PH*, 223f.

[180] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 41.

[181] Thiselton, *PH*, 222.

[182] Ibid. 223-239.

[183] Christology is the branch of systematic theology that deals with the person and work of Jesus Christ: in dogmatic terms, the second person of the Trinity.

[184] Pannenberg, *Jesus God and Man*, 207.

divine promise as this shows itself in the biblical texts.[185] Thus the historical referent Jesus represents the particular case in which the concrete events of history coincide with the ideal not just of hermeneutics but also of theology itself.[186]

Thiselton proceeds to set out five reasons for connecting this theological understanding of promise with an illocutionary account.[187] Firstly, the illocutionary act of promise presupposes 'institutional' facts, which in turn presuppose 'brute' facts. Here he iterates his commitment to the presupposition of extra-linguistic states of affairs and the public criteria of meaning:

> '...just as there could be no "institutional" facts of dollars or pounds sterling in the bank without paper or electronic signals, so there could be...no covenant without the history of events surrounding Moses, Israel, David, and the Patriarchs; no Lord's Supper without the crucifixion and the Last Supper; no ratification by blood without a sacrificial system and the violent death of Jesus. *Promise* presupposes *institutional facts*; but institutional facts can count as a basis for operative illocutions...only if at the end of the line certain "*brute facts*" (Searle) or states of affairs have occurred or occur in the extralinguistic world.'[188]

Secondly, but problematically, an illocutionary act of promise need not necessarily rest on the presence of any lexical occurrence of the verb 'promise'. In other words,

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[185] In this context Francis Watson has also argued that the biblical understanding of Christology demands that we take theological interpretation seriously in the task of hermeneutics. Watson, *Text*, 221-293.

[186] Theological anthropology is realised and shown in the public space through the man Jesus because in him theology and anthropology coincide. Considerations such as these lie behind the choice of selecting 1 Cor 1: 18-2: 16 as a case study for our revised model of communicative action.

[187] Thiselton, *PH*, 231.

[188] Ibid. 232. It needs to be noted that some commentators reject the later philosophical claims made for SAT by Searle's systematisations. For instance, Stephen E Fowl rejects Thiselton's critique of Rorty on the basis of a Searlean reading of SAT. Instead he takes Austin's original programme to be a more 'therapeutic' treatment of language. Fowl, 'The Role of Authorial Intention in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture' in (Eds.) J. B. Green and M. Turner, *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids and Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2000, 76n.

there will often be cases of promissory illocutionary acts where there is an absence of the corresponding illocutionary verb. Whilst Thiselton acknowledges this as 'a long-standing problem in speech-act theory', he does little more than adumbrate the various attempts to provide taxonomies of verbs within each of Searle's five basic functions of language: assertives, commissives, directives, declaratives and expressives. He appeals to Austin's notion of 'implicit' speech act rather than discuss the details of indirect speech acts. As we shall see in the next chapter, the problem of indirection in ordinary language raises significant problems of theory construction for SAT.[189]

Thirdly, Thiselton appeals to the ethics of speech action implicated in Searle's account of the illocutionary act: 'Acts of promise bring to light most clearly the commitments and responsibilities of agents of promise within an intersubjective, public, extralinguistic world of ethical undertaking and address.'[190] Against Cartesian individualism, the biblical texts place a great deal of importance on faithfulness and the ethics of speech.[191] Under this rubric of ethics mention needs to be made of an important insight concerning his philosophy of history provided in *NH*. Thiselton outlines how the notion of promise helps to subvert any attempt to fragment the temporal dynamics of the hermeneutical process: '*divine promise shapes both the nature of reality and how the present is to be understood.* (Thiselton's emphasis)'[192] Elsewhere Thiselton has drawn attention to the way in which temporal considerations are integral to central questions of anthropology.[193] Fourthly, the act of promising is 'a very strong illocutionary act'. Following Searle, Thiselton maintains that some speech acts do not just 'count as' (or are construed as) illocutions, but are constituted such by the institutional context.[194] This is a big claim and we shall argue that it is

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[189] For instance, Dorothea Franck's criticism is indicative of unease with the predictive power of SAT. Franck, 'Speaking About Speech Acts' in *JP* 8, 87.

[190] Thiselton, *PH*, 234.

[191] Ibid. 235.

[192] Thiselton, *NH*, 606 .

[193] Thiselton, 'Time and Grand Narrative?' in *Collected Works*, 740. We will return to these considerations in chapter seven when we discuss the interface of pragmatics and anthropology in the suggestive work of Bourdieu.

[194] Ibid. 236-8.

problematic on theological grounds as well as raising some considerable challenges for the SAT framework.

Fifthly, and finally, the act of promise is indicative of the transformative power of language.[195] Thiselton claims: '*promise* provides a paradigm case of *how language can transform the world of reality.*' (Thiselton's emphases)[196] He bases this 'transformative' analysis on Searle's notion of 'direction of fit' in which he observes: '...(1) sometimes (for example, in assertions) language can reflect the world (that is, the world or reality remains the controlling test of the truth of speech); while (2) at other times (for example, in effective promises) language can bring the world of reality into a closer match with what has been written or spoken (that is, the words remain the controlling test of whether the promise has been performed of fulfilled).'[197]

Importantly, Thiselton appeals to this notion of transformation in his commentary on Paul's word of the cross in 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 5. Again, inter alia, we shall argue in chapter six that to attribute the power of transformation to a particular construal of language action preempts the particular case; that is, the social and situational character of the speech situation under consideration. The issues raised here are important because Thiselton believes that this illocutionary analysis goes to the heart the gospel: 'Two kinds of speech-act may bring the world into conformity with the purposes of God.'[198] Directive illocutions correspond with the law and commissive illocutions correspond to the grace of the gospel. Thus: '*Promise* provides the covenantal ground on which transformation by the gracious action of God ultimately depends.'[199] Yet, as we will see, there is no real attempt to explicate this process of transformation.

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[195] ibid. 238-9.

[196] Thiselton, 'More on Promising: "The Paradigm of Biblical Promise as Trustworthy, Temporal, Transformative Speech-Acts" (1999)' in *Collected Works*, 129.

[197] Ibid. 129 Cf. Thiselton, *NH*, 31-35 and 294-307; Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 3-8.

[198] Ibid. 129.

[199] Ibid. 129.

In these five ways Thiselton comes closest to addressing the central challenge posed by this study: how or in what ways does SAT elucidate the hermeneutic task in relation to theology? It has also become clear that Thiselton has transposed SAT into his own distinctive hermeneutic account of communicative action. His analysis of promise illustrates one way in which a theological hermeneutic might be approached as he brings together the philosophies of history and language with his own ethical and theological convictions. The task now is to subject SAT to critical analysis in light of the hermeneutic task and more recent perspectives in pragmatics.

Chapter 3

Critique of Speech Act Theory in Light of the Hermeneutic Task and Developments in Linguistic Pragmatics

> *'To understand a text is to come to understand oneself in a kind of dialogue.'*[200]
>
> Gadamer

> *'There are many types of meaning that are not directly 'visible' or literally 'said': presuppositions, implicatures, indirect speech acts (Searle 1975). In addition to what is literally asserted, implicit meaning is so important in language use that it has been identified as the topic par excellence of pragmatics...'* [201]
>
> Verschueren

3.0 Introduction

We noted in the introductory chapter how SAT has been appropriated in a number of recent studies arising from biblical, theological and general hermeneutic concerns. Surprisingly, none of these scholars provide much in the way of a critical assessment of the theory. In an extended review of Nicholas Wolterstorff's work on *Divine Discourse* we see clearly how Thiselton views the philosophical significance of SAT.[202] Although Wolterstorff's work represents a philosophical contribution more specifically to the doctrine of scripture, Thiselton remains appreciative of Wolterstorff's appeal to SAT for at least the following reasons:

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[200] Gadamer, 'On the problem of Self-Understanding' in H-G Gadamer, (Trans. and Ed.) D. E. Linge, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, California: University of California Press, 1977, 57.

[201] Verschueren, 'Pragmatics', in (Ed.) P. Cobley, *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics and Linguistics*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, 87.

[202] Thiselton, 'Speech-Act Theory and the Claim that God Speaks: Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Divine Discourse*' in *SJT*, 97-110.

- Wolterstorff's philosophical defence of the author;[203]
- his defence of a designative theory of meaning;[204]
- his appeal to SAT to elucidate the nature of speech and, more widely, the practice of communicative action;[205]
- the way in which Wolterstorff identifies the potential usefulness of pragmatics (in this case SAT) for the task of interpretation;
- the way in which SAT draws attention to moral responsibility associated with an illocutionary analysis of agency (including as it does the important notion of *stance*[206]); and
- the conceptual clarity brought to bear on traditional appeals to the problematic category of 'revelation' and Wolterstorff's suggestion of bringing to bear a so-called 'second hermeneutic' within which he proposes the notion of 'double-

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[203] Against Ricoeur and the more radical tendencies in Derrida's earlier writings, Wolterstorff argues that the written word of texts must be approached on the basis of what he calls a 'dialogue utterance situation' rather than a 'distanciated text situation' and he asserts that there 'are no logical reasons for using different criteria for the interpretation of speech-acts in oral discourse and 'textual sense interpretation...' Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 141, 149. Elsewhere Wolterstorff explains: 'Authorial-discourse interpretation is interpretation aimed at discerning what the speaker or writer said – that is to say, which illocutionary act he or she performed.' Wolterstorff, *AP*, 82f.

[204] This is the corollary of Wolterstorff's defence of authorial-discourse interpretation and is set within his critique of Hans Frei's narrative interpretation. Thiselton, op. cit. 108-109.

[205] In relation to this, Thiselton makes much of Austin's original distinction between the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. He writes: 'I have argued many times that Paul's reservations about rhetoric in 1 Cor 2: 1-5 are based not only in socio-historic factors about the competitive, applause-orientated, achievement-culture of all but the best first-century rhetoricians in Graeco-Roman culture, but the use of causal power, rather than 'institutional' or 'gospel' power, to influence addressees.' Ibid. 103. See also Thiselton, 'Authority and Hermeneutics: Some Proposals for a More Creative Agenda' in (Eds.) Philip E. Satterthwaite and David F. Wright, *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, 130-141.

[206] Thiselton, 'Speech-Act Theory and the Claim that God Speaks: Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Divine Discourse* in *SJT*, 103. The question of stance is closely related to Briggs' work on construal and the hermeneutics of self-involvement. See Briggs, *Words*, 286. The associated notions of what Thiselton calls 'habituated attitude' or 'disposition-to-act' anticipate this study's appeal to Pierre Bourdieu's work on the habitus. We will return to these important topics below.

agency' to account for the way God might be understood to have appropriated the illocutionary acts of a human author.[207]

In these various ways it is the appropriation of SAT that shapes Wolterstorff's approach to hermeneutics generally and to biblical hermeneutics in particular. Each of these positions is close to Thiselton's own views on the merits of SAT. However, Wolterstorff draws on SAT in only the most basic conceptual sense. For instance, in *Divine Discourse* he provides only the briefest of comments on the inadequacy of what he calls expressionist or romanticist approaches to the philosophy of language (as if these represented the only other significant models of linguistic usage) before appealing to Austin's analysis of SAT as the basis for his own understanding of speech action.[208] In equally non-critical terms he appeals to Searle's analysis of constitutive rules and institutional facts to make the point that one sort of utterance can *count as* another sort of action.[209] As noted above, Wolterstorff goes on to extend this principle in order to interpret the biblical texts for what he calls the 'authorial discourse' of God.[210]

This provides a good example of the way in which philosophy is appropriated to defend a particular theological position. But there is always a risk involved to which Briggs alludes in the conclusion of his appropriation of Searle's theory of speech acts to develop his 'hermeneutic of self-involvement'. He states: '*In so far as* such a philosophy of language does justice to the workings of language, then one may be

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[207] Ibid. 104-106. See also Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 202-222. Cf. Wolterstorff, *AP*, 84.

[208] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 75-76. Even this brief incursion into the nature of the speech situation demands a fuller account of Searle's philosophy of the construction of social reality. We will return to this in chapter 4.

[209] Ibid. 80-94. See also Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, 198-239.

[210] This is the central thesis of *Divine Discourse*. For a more recent summary and defence of this theory see Wolterstorff, 'The Promise of Speech-act Theory for Biblical Interpretation' in *AP*, 83-84. For a critical response to Wolterstorff's argument see Mary Hesse's short paper 'How to be a Postmodernist and Remain a Christian' in *AP*, 91-96. Hesse identifies as problematic the uncritical retention of Frege's theory of propositions, entailing as it did his idealism of 'sense' as a model for the locutionary act. Ibid. 92-93. This criticism will be developed in chapter 4.

justified in offering a hermeneutic of self-involvement as something of an advance on other models...'[211] And here 'workings' denotes the use or function of language in communicative action. Any attempt to articulate a philosophical theology or theologically sensitive hermeneutic will be successful to the extent that any given model or frame of philosophy can elucidate firstly the nature and structure of communicative behaviour and, secondly, the nature and structure of the theological horizon.

As well as his appeal to Austin and Evans, Thiselton appeals increasingly to aspects of Searlean SAT and whilst this is done judiciously and with an eye on a much larger hermeneutical canvas, there is still little by way of argument or critical engagement. This is surprising when we consider the hundreds, if not thousands, of articles dealing with topics arising from Austin's work. The ongoing 'conversations' concern a wide range of philosophical and linguistic questions. And at least since the early 1980s the following assessment from within the field of pragmatics has been in the public domain:

> 'There are some compelling reasons to think that speech act theory may slowly be superseded by much more complex multi-faceted pragmatic approaches to the functions that utterances perform'.[212]

3.1 Illocutionary Criteria, Construal and the Problem of Indirect Speech Acts

At one point Levinson makes the point that 'a scalpel cuts deep just because it is thin.'[213] He uses this metaphor to point out that a narrow focus of attention can often make more of an impact in an area of thought than taking a broad view. In the discourse of pragmatics the question of indirect speech acts (ISAs) would require a thesis in its own right. However, within the context of hermeneutics and SAT this

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[211] Briggs, *Words*, 295.

[212] Levinson, 'Pragmatics', 278.

[213] Levinson, *Presumptive Meanings*, xiv. Levinson makes the remark in the context of his analysis of one particular aspect of Grice's work on implicatures. He contrasts his development of Grice's pragmatics with Sperber and Wilson's work on Relevance Theory.

level of analysis is lacking and it is important to raise the sorts of issues that have contributed to a gradual turn to other more finegrained pragmatic accounts of communicative action. In his 1980 review article on the state of SAT, defined as a theory of illocutionary force, Levinson sets out Austin's original thesis that speech acts are irreducible to matters of truth and falsity. Whilst he draws attention to Searle's systematisation of Austin's work, he sees the basic ideas as distinctively Austinian.[214] Thus: '...*thesis* as a theory that proposes to handle illocutionary force in an entirely pragmatic way, using the notion of necessary and sufficient conditions (felicity conditions) on appropriate usage, is a position identified with both Austin and Searle in particular.'[215] Levinson proceeds to outline what he calls 'antithesis': the idea that illocutionary force can be reduced to syntax and semantics.[216] In view of this being a quite different sort of project we need not stop to pursue the details except to note that Levinson remains unconvinced.[217]

Much more importantly, Levinson addresses a central problem for both thesis and antithesis: ISAs. Presented with an ISA how does thesis discriminate the relevant felicity conditions to identify and/or predict the type of illocution that has been performed or uttered. Briggs has articulated the practical implications of the problem in the field of biblical interpretation: '...many interpretive disputes in biblical interpretation are concerned with precisely this question of how to take an uncontested locution and read it as an illocution'.[218]

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[214] Examples of Searle's systematisation include his proposals for a general typology of felicity conditions and the notion that there are just five primitives for language action. As an aside Levinson wonders whether Searle's systematisation 'is responsible for the loss of some of the social and interactional insights to be found in Austin's work.' Levinson, *L & L*, 13.1, 1980, 7.

[215] Ibid. 7.

[216] Levinson summarises the argument in these terms: 'That every sentence has an 'illocutionary force' is accounted for by the guaranteed presence of an underlying or overt performative clause, which has the peculiar property of being true simply by virtue of being said...The particular 'felicity conditions' on different speech acts are simply part of the meaning of the implicit or explicit performative verbs, capturable in terms of entailment or sematic presupposition.' Ibid. 8.

[217] Ibid. 12.

[218] Briggs, *Words*, 101.

Thiselton and Briggs address this question in terms of what they call 'the problem of criteria': criteria of vocabulary or grammar by which to identify a given speech act.[219] They both concede that a speech act can be performed without the requisite performative verb being present. Briggs puts the case in the following terms: '...it is the speech act which we are seeking in the text, and not the occurrence of particular words. However, a knowledge of standard performative verbs and their general illocutionary force is a major clue to what kinds of acts we are looking for, although not necessarily where we might find them.'[220]

Dorothea Franck has recorded her scepticism about this sort of 'post hoc' classification. She writes:

> 'Speech act classifications (unless they are self-fulfilling announcements on performative expressions) are post hoc categorizations, which are disputable and revisable. Different people (participants, analysers, etc.) arrive at different interpretations...Understanding utterances as actions means ascribing certain intentions to the speaker, and/or understanding the sequential implications of the utterances. Such an understanding of their essential, interactive consequences, however, does not imply that we have to actually classify the utterance of a particular speech act out of our finite list...What do we actually get to know by applying a speech act analysis to a given piece of talk? The use of a rough taxonomy...does not seem to deliver exciting insights. But if we take it as (part of) a descriptive exercise, to answer the question: 'What is done here by this speaker? (and vice versa: 'What is the hearer's uptake here?'), according to what is accessible to me, the analyser, and if we then try to reconstruct the reasons leading to that particular interpretation, such an exercise could sharpen our awareness to some aspects of the interaction.'[221]

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[219] For instance see Briggs, op. cit. 98-102; and Thiselton, 'More on Promising' in *Collected Works*, 125. For Thiselton's most recent comments on the question see Thiselton, 'Reappraisal of Work on Speech-Act Theory' in *Collected Works*, 138-139.

[220] Ibid. 102.

[221] Franck, op. cit. 91.

Franck allows for an illocutionary analysis as one part of the interpretive process. In this sense Thiselton and Briggs are engaged in a legitimate exercise. Indeed we might construe speech act analysis as one more layer of semiotic description. The weaker point here is simply that it is not the most interesting sort of analysis, neither is it in some sense foundational or primitive to the interaction event. Further, as we shall discover, it does not easily facilitate hermeneutical or theological description. More seriously, the problem of ISAs represents a more fundamental problem for SAT as a viable model of pragmatics.

Although Thiselton and Briggs acknowledge the problem of ISAs, there is no serious engagement with this as a theoretical problem. Consequently, there seems to be little appetite for asking whether interpretation of discourse is best served by illocutionary analysis.[222] Indeed Thiselton's appropriation of Wolterstorff's idea of 'count generation', Evans' notion of 'on-look' and Briggs' development of this as an act of construal would suggest that the *theoretical* implications are not fully worked out. Against the sorts of position taken up by Thiselton and Briggs Levinson argues that the notion of an ISA only makes sense if 'one subscribes to the notion of literal force, i.e. the view that illocutionary force is built into sentence form'.[223] There are two parts to this hypothesis:

(a) Explicit performatives have the force named by the performative verb overt in the matrix clause.[224]

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[222] Given Briggs' engagement with the SAT of Searle in particular, it must be assumed that there is at least tacit agreement with Searle's account of indirection in illocutionary utterances. For Searle's response to ISAs see Searle, 'Indirect Speech Acts' in *Expression and Meaning*, 30-57 (originally published in (Eds.) Cole and Morgan, *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol. 3, New York: Academic Press, 1975, 59-82).

[223] Levinson, op. cit. 12.

[224] For instance Allan notes, 'Definitions of illocutions are an extension of the semantics of the key verb naming the illocution.' Allan, 'Speech Act Theory – An Overview' in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 4130. This raises the question of so-called 'illocutionary force indicating devices' or IFIDS. The most obvious candidate is, as Levinson suggests, the presence of a verb in the matrix clause that names the illocution. For a summary of how these have been identified see ibid. 4130-4131.

(b) The three major sentence types in English, imperative, interrogative and declarative, have the forces traditionally associated with them, namely ordering, questioning and stating respectively.[225]

The problem comes when one of these two rules fails to match a sentence with its illocutionary point. Levinson lists the following simple sentences each having the potential further illocutionary force of an imperative request to close the door:

1. I want you to close the door.
2. I'd be much obliged if you'd close the door.
3. Can you close the door?
4. Are you able by any chance to close the door?
5. Would you close the door?
6. Won't you close the door?
7. Would you mind closing the door?
8. Would you be willing to close the door?
9. Hadn't you better close the door?
10. May I ask you to close the door?
11. Would you mind awfully if I was to ask you to close the door?
12. I am sorry to tell you to please close the door.
13. Did you forget the door?
14. Do us a favour with the door love.
15. How about a bit less breeze.
16. Now Johnny, what do big people do when they come in?
17. Okay, Johnny, what am I going to say?

In the right context each of these sentences might constitute a request to close the door. The challenge for anyone holding to a doctrine of ISAs is, in view of b) above, to explain the mechanism by which the literal force of the sentence is calculated given that the sentences listed are assertions or questions rather than imperatives.[226] Two

[225] Ibid. 12.

[226] The irreducible pragmatic dimension of sentences 13-17 proves too much for the literal force hypothesis without some notion of conversational implicature.

prominent solutions have been proposed to deal with the problem.[227] One solution is to suggest that the indirection is more apparent than real.[228] The argument is to treat the sorts of sentences listed above as simply idioms for 'I hereby request that you close the door'. In other words, taken as a whole they are semantically equivalent to the literal force of the speech act requesting that the door be closed. The idiom theory for dealing with ISAs is rejected by both Levinson and Searle. Instead, Searle appeals to a version of inference theory to deal with the problem of recovering the literal force of the ISA. This inferential model brings together what he calls 'mutual background information, a theory of speech acts, and certain general principles of conversation'.[229]

According to Levinson, inference theory accounts have the following properties:

(i) The literal meaning and the literal force of an utterance is computed by and available to participants (Searle's schema relies on his version of speech acts for dealing with this property);

(ii) there must be an inference-trigger, that is, some indication that the literal meaning and force are conversationally inadequate in the context and must be repaired by some inference (Searle's approach relies on Grice's notion of the co-operative principle of conversation);[230]

(iii) there must be specific principles or rules of inference that derive indirect force (Grice's theory of conversational implicature);[231]

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[227] Allan includes what he calls 'morphological IFIDS marking clause-type and politeness levels in Japanese and other oriental languages'. He also includes 'syntactic IFIDS like word order and clause-type (mood)'. However, he acknowledges that 'In most utterances, the recognition of an illocution requires reference to cooperative conditions and/or the context of utterance.' Allan, op. cit. 4131.

[228] This is the approach taken by Sadock. For further details see Sadock, J, *Toward a Linguistic Theory of Speech Acts*, New York: Academic Press, 1974 and Sadock, J, 'The Soft Interpretative Underbelly of Generative Semantics' in (Eds.) Cole and Morgan, *Syntax and Semantics,* Vol. 3, New York: Academic Press, 1975.

[229] Searle, op. cit. 35. Searle appeals to Grice to supplement his own approach to SAT.

[230] Ibid. 46-47.

[231] Ibid. 46. Dascal argues that Searle's appeal is to the notion of 'implication' rather than to Grice's more pragmatic notion of conversational implicature. Dascal, 'Speech Act Theory and Gricean Pragmatics: Some Differences of Detail that Make a Difference' in (Ed.) S. L. Tsohatzidis,

(iv) there must be pragmatically sensitive linguistic rules, that allow, for example, *please*-insertion to be governed by indirect force.[232]

Let us look briefly at how Searle works this out for the ISA 'Can you pass the salt?' uttered by X to Y in the context of a dinner party. The following is what he describes as a 'bare-bones reconstruction' of the steps necessary for Y to interpret the X's utterance:

> Step 1: Y has asked me a question as to whether I have the ability to pass the salt (fact about the conversation).
> Step 2: I assume that he is cooperating in the conversation and that therefore his utterance has some aim or point (principles of conversational cooperation).
> Step 3: The conversational setting is not such as to indicate a theoretical interest in my salt-passing ability (factual background information).
> Step 4: Furthermore, he probably already knows that the answer to this question is yes (factual background information). (This step facilitates the move to step 5, but is not essential).
> Step 5: Therefore, his utterance is probably not just a question. It probably has some ulterior illocutionary point (inference from steps 1, 2, 3, and 4). What can it be?
> Step 6: A preparatory condition for any directive illocutionary act is the ability of H to perform the act predicated in the prepositional content condition (theory of speech acts).
> Step 7: Therefore, X has asked me a question the affirmative answer to which would entail that the preparatory condition for requesting me to pass the salt is satisfied (inference from Steps 1 and 6).
> Step 8: We are now at dinner and people normally use salt at dinner; they pass it back and forth, try to get others to pass it back and forth, etc. (background information).

Foundations of Speech Act Theory: Philosophical and Linguistic Perspectives, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, 333.

[232] Levinson, op. cit. 15.

> Step 9: He has therefore alluded to the satisfaction of a preparatory condition for a request whose obedience conditions it is quite likely he wants me to bring about (inferences from steps 7 and 8).
> Step 10: Therefore, in the absence of any other plausible illocutionary point, he is probably requesting me to pass him the salt (inference from steps 5 and 9).[233]

Searle suggests that this strategy can be applied to most, if not all, ISAs. He draws attention to the fruitfulness of such an approach to the case of commissives and the illocution of promise.[234] Supplemental suggestions are made to resolve puzzles to do with the syntax of ISAs. In this sense his primary interest is linguistic or grammatical in nature. Further, these subsequent discussions concentrate on isolated abstracted sentences viewed only from the perspective of the speaker. However, it is important to note that Searle is already obliged to supplement his theory of speech acts with Grice's theory of communication and with wider anthropological concerns in the form of a participant's background knowledge. Indeed arguing for a similarity with the epistemology of perception, he explicitly rejects the paradigms of analytical philosophy or linguistics to explain sufficiently the phenomenon of ISAs. He writes:

> 'The question, How do I know he has made a request when he only asked me a question about my abilities? May be like the question, How do I know it was a car when all I perceived was a flash going past me on the highway? If so, the answer to our problem may be neither "I have a set of axioms from which it can be deduced that he made a request" nor "I have a set of syntactical rules that generate an imperative deep structure for the sentence he uttered".'[235]

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[233] Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 46-47. For an up-dated analysis of an ISA see Allan, op. cit. 4132-4134.

[234] Ibid. 54-56.

[235] Searle, op. cit. 57.

Finally, in the case of directives Searle notes that politeness is a 'chief motivation' for indirectness.[236] This move implicitly appeals to the relational considerations in interaction.

What is the importance of this discussion of ISAs in the context of this chapter? It is important for several reasons. Firstly, our brief foray into ISAs raises what is a major theoretical problem for philosophers and linguists who hold to a literal force hypothesis concerning speech acts. Indeed the complexities involved in describing a simple abstracted sentence like 'Can you pass the salt?' alert us to the much more difficult task of dealing with stretches of naturally occurring discourse. Secondly, it raises questions concerning the differences that hold between Searle's approach to speech act philosophy and Grice's theory of meaning and communication. Thirdly, and implicitly, Searle's concession to the role of politeness invites a relational turn in pragmatic theorising.[237] The problem of ISAs and other theoretical concerns relating to SAT can be approached through a comparison between the pragmatics of Searle and Grice. In particular, Searle's theory of speech acts fails to provide an adequate account of the dialogical structure of communicative action.

3.2 Meaning and Use: Two Approaches to Resolving Wittgenstein's Legacy

One of the puzzles at the heart of SAT is the extent to which pragmatic factors shape the meaning of utterances. In general terms this problem continues to be played out

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[236] Ibid. 48, 54.

[237] In this context Jurgen Streeck has also offered a critique of Searle's theory of speech acts from the perspective of sociolinguistics. He proposes five principles for dealing with speech acts as interactional phenomena. These are: the irreducibility of interaction, the interactive constitution of meaning, the interactive construction of communicative units, the indefiniteness of shared understandings and the reflexive relationship between speech act and social context. Streeck, 'Speech Acts in Interaction: A Critique of Searle' in *DP* 3, 1980, 133-154, esp. 145 –151. He concludes in this way: 'If one bears in mind that any exclusive speech act approach to speech acts in discourse is bound to fail, there remains a natural place for their investigation, but only within a larger framework of interaction analysis.' Ibid. 152.

as the interface between semantics and pragmatics.[238] Both Searle and Grice reject Wittgenstein's 'meaning as use' slogan associated with the method known as linguistic philosophy and both attempt to maintain the distinction between semantics and pragmatics. Further, both philosophers implicate the importance of semantics as somehow integral, if not basic, to the communicative function. However, their understanding of 'use' is different: Grice emphasises speaker's meaning (Austin's perlocutionary act) and Searle emphasises the illocutionary act.[239] Grice addresses speaker's meaning in terms of his specialised notion of non-natural meaning ($meaning_{nn}$).[240] He provides the following definition:

'U meant something by uttering x' is true iff, for some audience A, U uttered x intending:

1. A to produce a particular response r
2. A to think (recognize) that U intends (1)
3. A to fulfil (1) on the basis of his fulfilment of (2).

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[238] For an overview of the central issues concerning the relationship between semantics and pragmatics see Turner, 'Semantics vs. Pragmatics' in *HP*, 1997, 1-23. For a recent take on the relationship between semantics and pragmatics see Heusinger and Turner, '(By Way of an) Introduction: A First Dialogue on the Semantics-Pragmatics Interface' in Heusinger K., and Turner K., (Eds.), *Where Semantics Meets Pragmatics*, 2006, 1-19. Turner's work on indicative conditional sentences is illustrative of the sorts of relevant investigations in this area of linguistic theory. According to Turner, because such sentences do not constitute fact stating discourse a consideration of them prompts a revision of our current understanding of the relationship that exists between semantics and pragmatics. Turner, 'The Future of the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface(s)' in Bode, C., Domsch, S., and Sauer, H., (Eds.), *Anglistentag München*, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2003, 7-25.

[239] Vanhoozer notes the different traditions in speech act approaches as represented by Grice and Searle. However, his analysis does not take into account actual instances of discourse to support the philosophical defence of Searle's position on the priority of the illocutionary act. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?*, 243.

[240] By 'non-natural meaning' Grice is referring to the intention of a person to communicate something or other to another person with the additional intention of producing some response or other. Non-natural meaning contrasts with natural meaning as for instance clouds 'mean' rain. Grice, 'Meaning' in *Studies in the Way of Words*, 213-214.

In analytical pragmatics the phenomenon of special interest to Griceans is the implicature, especially the conversational implicature: particularized and generalized.[241] Searle, on the other hand, keeps the focus on the type of speech act: 'talking is performing acts according to rules'.[242]

So whilst both philosophers are united in their diagnosis, they approach the problem in quite different ways. Searle argues that the answer is provided by his account of SAT.[243] Grice more modestly claims to have made some 'tottering steps' towards a solution.[244] Grice's theory, based on his approach to the analysis of conversation, rests on heuristics such as the Principle of Co-operation (CP), so-called 'maxims of conversation' and his powerful pragmatic inference trigger, the conversational implicature. It might be noted as an aside that Grice's notion of implicature proves a powerful means for explaining various tropes of language and goes some way to meeting Mary Hesse's concern that SAT fails to provide the basis for an adequate hermeneutic tool for interpreting biblical texts.[245] In the context of literary texts Sell observes: 'Fiction's disregard of specific and episodic truth is not a suspension of the cooperative principle, but an implication of truths of other kinds: general truth and moral truth.'[246] In this context a comment from Gadamer is worth recording because it anticipates the way in which Grice insists on analysing meaning in terms of a speaker's intentions. This move will be of central importance as we move from a

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[241] Ibid. 24-40.

[242] Searle, *Speech Acts*, 22.

[243] Ibid. 149.

[244] Grice, op. cit. 4.

[245] Mary Hesse's critique of Wolterstorff's appropriation of SAT rests on her observation that Austin and Searle uncritically assimilate Frege's theory of propositions for locutionary speech acts. She writes: 'The problem occurs as soon as one asks about the status of the classic tropes of language (metaphor, metonymy, irony, etc.). Are these speech acts locutionary or illocutionary? In other words, are they to be accorded prepositional truth-values or not? In the strict Fregean interpretation, espoused for example by Searle, these tropes are illocutions with no truth-value. But in all serious natural language texts, and pre-eminently in Scripture, metaphor and the other tropes are pervasive. No theory of interpretation that neglects them can be adequate for biblical hermeneutics.' Hesse, M., 'How to be a Postmodernist and Remain a Christian: A Response to Nicholas Wolterstorff' in *AP*, 93. Cf. Wolterstorff, N., 'The Promise of Speech-act Theory for Biblical Interpretation' in *AP*, 73-90.

[246] Sell, op. cit. 7.

speech act model of language to a more recent relational account based on politeness theory.

In the preface to his book '*Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*', Jean Grondin relates a conversation he held with Gadamer. Grondin wanted to hear from Gadamer what he thought to be the universal claim or aspect of hermeneutics. Gadamer apparently answered that the universal claim of hermeneutics is 'in the *verbum interius*'. Just what is the '*verbum interius*' and how does this capture the universal claim of hermeneutics? How is this proposition squared with Gadamer's belief that 'everything can be expressed in real language'?[247] Gadamer meant to say that there is always a gap between what is said and what a speaker wants to say. This is not the same as saying there is some private or psychological state that is incapable of being expressed in language. Rather it is the recognition that the coming to speech of language is always incomplete or provisional in some important sense. It is the task of hermeneutics to understand the Other despite the limitations of language. Paul Ricoeur puts it well when he says, 'at the centre of the problem is not the statement but the utterance, the act of speaking itself, which designates the speaker reflexively.' He continues, 'Pragmatics, therefore, puts directly on stage the "I" and the "you" of the speech situation.'[248]

Returning to Searle's response to Wittgenstein's treatment of meaning, we note that Searle bases his critique of linguistic philosophy on three fallacies: the 'naturalistic fallacy fallacy'[249], the 'speech act fallacy'[250] and the 'assertion fallacy'[251]. For instance, the speech act fallacy 'consists in explaining the meaning of a word in terms of the fact that its use (in present-tense indicative sentences) characteristically serves to perform a certain speech act.'[252] Searle's theory is an attempt to supplement

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[247] Grondin, (Trans.) J. Weinsheimer, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Yale: Yale University Press, 1994, xiv.

[248] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 40.

[249] Searle, op. cit. 132-136.

[250] Ibid. 136-141.

[251] Ibid. 141-146.

[252] Dascal, op. cit. 326.

traditional semantics with a formal account of illocutionary logic.[253] However, Dascal argues that Searle's SAT is incomplete for three reasons: firstly, as a matter of empirical fact, people do not always say what they mean; secondly, as Searle himself has acknowledged, even literal meanings are never context free; and, thirdly, the theory is not able to discriminate between literal and non-literal utterances. In view of these sorts of consideration Grice rejected Searle's thesis that '...speech acts of the illocutionary sort (are) conventional acts, the nature of which is to be explained by a specification of the constitutive rules which govern each such act, and on which the possibility of performing the act at all depends.'[254] Rather than rules Grice appeals to the analysis of conversation and his notion of maxims underpinned by the CP. Grice's theory is not analytic; rather, as Dascal observes, it generates 'suggestions'.[255]

Whilst Searle and Grice were concerned to maintain a distinction between the contributions of semantics and pragmatics, in his desire to formalize the use of language Searle has, Dascal argues, done just what he set out to disprove – that is, he collapses meaning into use:

> 'Speech act theory seeks to treat what it calls 'use' by means of strict rules, which can be formalized into a precise illocutionary logic. It seeks to demonstrate that use can be treated as rigorously as meaning has been...that it is not a matter of an indefinite number of vaguely defined language games.

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[253] Allan sees this project as a fusion of the Fregean (formal language) and ordinary language traditions. He continues: 'The program is...to extend the Fregean tradition's formal semantics of sentences by adding a formal theory of illocutionary types together with a characterization of illocutionary success (identifying particular illocutions) and satisfactory correspondence between U and states of affairs in the world spoken of.' Allan, op. cit. 4135. According to Searle and Vanderveken: 'Just as propositional logic studies the properties of all truth functions...without worrying about the various ways that these are realized in the syntax of English...so illocutionary logic studies the properties of illocutionary forces...without worrying about the various ways that these are realized in the syntax of English...and without worrying whether these features translate into other languages. No matter whether and how an illocutionary act is performed, it has a certain logical form which determines its conditions of success and relates it to other speech acts.' Searle and Vanderveken, *Illocutionary Logic*, 2.

[254] Grice, op. cit. 19.

[255] Dascal, op. cit. 331.

But it may have gone too far in its reduction of use to meaning thereby proving rather than disproving the slogan it originally opposed'.[256]

Dascal represents the different approaches of Searle and Grice in the following way:

Searle	*Grice*
Monological	Dialogical
Formal	Informal
Conventional	Non-conventional
Grammatical model	Non-grammatical model
Constitutive rules	Heuristic rules, presumptions
Implication	Implicature
Semantic	Pragmatic (?)

The impact of this comparison will be clear when we recall how Thiselton appeals to Austin's notion of the illocutionary act, especially as this has been developed in Searle's account of speech acts.[257] In one place Wolterstorff defines the illocutionary act simply as 'what our fellow human beings *said* with their words' (Wolterstorff's emphasis).[258] A cluster of (philosophical) commitments or beliefs attaches to this appeal:

i. the belief in a 'conventional' account of meaning with the corollary that
ii. a clear distinction can be made between the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act;
iii. the belief that the illocutionary act can be studied in abstraction from the wider discourse;
iv. the optimistic belief that we can identify an illocutionary act in the first place.

[256] Dascal, op. cit. 333. In his review of Dascal's analysis Turner agrees that 'Searle and Grice distinguish between meaning and use in two, incompatible, and sometimes inconsistent, ways...' Turner, *Linguistics* 33, 1995, 1058.

[257] Of course we can add to the list Wolterstorff, Vanhoozer and Briggs.

[258] Wolterstorff, 'The Promise of Speech-act Theory for Biblical Interpretation' in *AP*, 82.

In Dascal's schema each of these positions is allied to what is perhaps, in view of Gadamerian hermeneutics, the main obstacle: Searle's *monological* account of speech acts.

3.3 Dialogue or Monologue: Does Speech Act Theory Really Elucidate Two Horizons?

We can see from Dascal's analysis of the two approaches that he regards Grice's model as dialogical in nature as opposed to Searle's tendency to treat speech act analysis in a monological way.[259] The monological tendency in Searle's SAT is particularly problematic for hermeneutics. The very foundations of the hermeneutical approach lie in the topos of the hermeneutic circle and the ethical emphasis on understanding oneself in relation to others.[260] By contrast, Grice's approach to the use question begins with the assumption of a dialogue or, more helpfully, a conversation. According to Grice, what a person *means* in a given speech situation can only be *inferred* against a set of conversational assumptions. Speech acts are, therefore, irreducibly pragmatic.

Edda Weigand's extended review of Tsohatzidis' volume on speech acts makes the point (a number of times) that a semantic account of SAT 'represents a monologic theory of single speech acts as if we communicate by adding one independent speech act to another.' She continues: 'The key for communicative language use is the Dialogic Principle considering the individual speech acts as interrelated and mutually dependent on each other...We do not have only one type of action, the illocutionary one, we have initiative acts and reactive ones.'[261] And rejecting the formal approach

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[259] Levinson has observed that the 'interactional emphasis (on what the recipient(s) of an illocutionary act must think or do) in Austin's work has unfortunately been neglected in later work in speech act theory'. Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 237. Cf. Austin, *HTDTW*, 109-120. In an earlier study Justin Hughes was also critical of this'monological' tendency in SAT. He proposed a revised analysis on the basis of 'group speech acts'. Hughes, 'Group Speech Acts' in *Linguistics and Philosophy* 7: 4, 1984, 379-395.

[260] For a brief history of the distinction made between explanation (*Erklären*) and understanding (*Verstehen*) in hermeneutic philosophy see Apel, *Understanding and Explanation*, 1-8.

[261] Weigand, *PC* 4, 1996, 383.

to SAT Weigand concludes: 'It is pragmatics from the very beginning, the total speech act as Austin told us. There is no place for an abstract notion of language as sign system in the field of language action. Our unit from the very beginning is the total action game'.[262]

But does Weigand go far enough in her criticism? She suggests that what is needed is a dialogical theory of speech acts. What does this look like and does it prove any more successful? Levinson addressed this question directly in an article dating back to 1981.[263] According to Levinson, concerns about the viability of a speech act model of dialogue come into sharper focus when a conversational context is envisaged. Levinson identified the following assumptions present in typical speech act models of dialogue:

i. There are unit acts, speech acts, which are performed in speaking.
ii. Utterances are segmentable into unit parts – utterance units – each of which corresponds to a unit act.
iii. There is a special procedure that will assign unit acts to utterance units, or at least there is a function whose domain is the set of possible utterance units and whose range is the set of possible speech acts.
iv. Conversational sequences are primarily regulated by a set of sequencing rules stated over speech act types.

In contrast Levinson argues that a speech act theory approach to natural conversation is wrong for the following reasons: '(D)ialogue has no syntax, speech act types are not the relevant categories over which to define the regularities of conversation; there exists no other finite alphabet over which to define the regularities; and there are no concatenation rules of general application even if there were such an alphabet.'[264]

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[262] Ibid. 383.

[263] Levinson has addressed these questions critically. Levinson, 'The Essential Inadequacies of Speech Act Models of Dialogue' in *Possibilities and Limitations of Pragmatics*, 473-492. The substance of this paper is also published as Levinson, 'Some Pre-Observations on the Modelling of Dialogue' in *DP* 4.2, 1981, 93-110.

[264] Ibid. 475.

One by one Levinson proceeds to address the assumptions as set out in the speech act theory model of dialogue. The first assumption, that there exist unit acts that are identifiable as corresponding to specific utterance units, is challenged by the problem of ISAs. We have already seen how this represents a serious challenge to the illocutionary force hypothesis. However, it is worth reiterating two points. Firstly, utterances can perform multiple acts and this, in large part, is actualized by the place a given utterance occupies within the conversational sequence. Secondly, Levinson observes that a communicative action is 'composite' of a piece of behaviour and a set of intentions.[265] Indeed the 'multiplicity of acts' is more correctly understood to be the assignment of more than one intention to the utterance. According to Levinson, intentions can be hierarchical, can be a precondition of a further intention and, more problematically still, on occasion a single utterance can signal any number of perlocutionary intentions. Allan points out that 'Speech acts must be interpreted with attention to their context and to their function *as an integral part of social behaviour*' (my emphasis).[266] Further on, in a discussion of speech acts and discourse, he says: 'In real life, people do not use isolated utterances: U functions as part of a larger intention or plan.'[267]

Levinson provides the example of a man turning to his partner at a party that he is not enjoying and saying, 'It's getting late Mildred'. In response Mildred might be able to reply in any one of the following ways:

It's only 11.15 darling
But I'm having such a good time
Do you want to go?
Aren't you enjoying yourself dear?

What this demonstrates, according to Levinson, is the way the perlocutionary act is foregrounded over and above the illocutionary act. This represents another significant

[265] Ibid. 477.

[266] Allan, op. cit. 4132.

[267] Ibid. 4137.

problem for SAT, based as it is on a distinction between the illocutionary and perlocutionary act with the theory itself invested in the illocutionary act. In turn it constitutes a major problem for Thiselton who relies on it to defend the non-manipulative nature of Paul's presentation of the cross in 1 Corinthians. Verschueren notes:

> 'Because of the unpredictability of (perlocutionary) effects they were left out of (post-Austinian) theorizing about speech acts on the assumption that they were not essential for an understanding of the language *system*. Yet, whenever actual instances of language *use* are at issue, they cannot simply be left out. Even if a specific effect is rarely clear at any given moment of uttering, *the goal-orientedness of verbal behaviour is such that the behaviour itself is defined by it* (my italics).'[268]

In other words, the illocutionary act is a means to an end and it is the end or goal that offers the best explanation of human nature. This is why Brown and Levinson talk in terms of 'rational agents'. Our rationality tends to be dictated by the character and quality of our relationships.[269] Moreover, even if the illocutionary act was in some way extended to account for the perlocutionary act there are potentially limitless perlocutions being performed in the course of a given speech event. This brings us to the second working assumption of a speech act account of dialogue: there are identifiable utterance units corresponding to unit acts. Levinson summarises the difficulty thus: 'Utterance units...are very variable, ranging from sets of sentences through sentence fragments to single lexemes, non-verbal actions or even silence. Which unit is the relevant unit for speech act assignment cannot be determined in advance, for utterance units seem to be identified on functional grounds'.[270]

Assumption three says that there exists a specifiable function or procedure that will assign utterance units to unit acts (speech acts). Again, notwithstanding the great problems already identified, the stumbling block remains the 'prevalence' of indirect

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[268] Verschueren, 'Pragmatics' in *Semiotics and Linguistics*, 85.

[269] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 64.

[270] Levinson, op. cit. 479-80.

communication. Two proposals have been made to resolve the problem for the SAT position. The first strategy, as we have already seen, has been to defend a literal meaning hypothesis.[271] This has proved difficult to sustain in view of the widespread phenomenon of indirection in communication. A second move has been to posit the idea of conversational postulates or illocutionary force conversion rules; something Searle himself rejects.[272] But again the task of setting out in advance some mechanism by which an adequately accurate prediction can be given seems to be a lost cause. Levinson provides the following as an example:

A: I could eat the whole of that cake.
B: Thanks. It's quite easy to make actually.

He comments: 'B (correctly) interprets A's remark as a compliment on the cake she had baked, but not by virtue of any general rule of the sort 'saying that you can eat the whole of X counts as a compliment on X'...The understanding of such utterances is not based on some huge set of ad hoc conventional rules for constructing and interpreting indirect speech acts,' argues Levinson, 'but some small but powerful set of general principles of inference to interlocutors' communicative *intentions in specific contexts*' (my emphasis).[273] Thus the illocutionary force conversion rules approach fails 'to recognize the important role of context in determining the acts or intents that are assigned to utterances...'[274]

The final assumption states that sequences of utterances are regulated by conventional sequencing rules stated over speech act types. Searle takes up Austin's notion of convention as somehow integral to an explicit illocutionary act. This notion of convention is pressed into service even for those speech acts that would not be

[271] See also Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 263ff. Levinson explores this move under the label 'literal force hypothesis'. Whilst conceding that such a hypothesis might be able to salvage some version of speech act theory he doubts whether it will be forthcoming. On this he appears to have been proved right.

[272] Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 31-2.

[273] Levinson, *Possibilities and Limitations of Pragmatics*, 481-2.

[274] Ibid. 482.

categorised as 'conventional' in the sense of a recognised ceremony.[275] The idea here is to simplify the translation of dialogue sequencing by converting utterances into 'a statement of regularities in sequences of acts'.[276] In light of linguistic analysis of so-called 'adjacency pairs' it was thought that a simple act performed and reciprocated characterized the nature of dialogue. However, a closer analysis of actual conversation sequences soon dispels this notion. Any type of utterance is liable to follow an initiating or trigger utterance. In any event, as Levinson reminds us, what acts are actually being performed will depend on the particular language game or field within which it is embedded.

The linguistic notion of 'topic' is another feature of conversation for which SAT makes no attempt to account. Indeed SAT says nothing interesting about propositional content because it fails to explain how the context of a given utterance is related to the utterance. In other words, SAT has not taken up the implicit anthropology of Wittgenstein's later thought. Recall Thiselton's discussion of blessing and cursing makes no attempt to connect the linguistic analysis of the performatives 'to bless' and 'to curse' with a description of how such blessing and cursing actually took place in the Ancient Near East. At best, SAT aims to provide a theory of communication based on the finite number of human activities performed by speaking. How these acts are actually put to work under variation in discourse topic is not addressed. Levinson suggests that conversational 'coherence' is not rule-based at all but, rather, goal-based intentional behaviour. Back in 1981 Levinson foresaw that an adequate account of dialogue would be found 'within some general theory about the nature of inter-personal interaction'.[277] He continues:

> 'For interaction, verbal and otherwise, is based on an interlocking of goals or objectives in a way that generates sequences of highly co-ordinated inter-

[275] Bruce Fraser distinguishes between speech acts that are ceremonial (roughly equivalent to Austin's original performatives) and those which are 'vernacular'. Vernacular speech acts are any other speech act type. See Fraser, 'An Examination of the Performative Analysis' in *PL*, 7, 1974, 1-40. Bach and Harnish distinguish conventional from non-conventional speech acts. Bach and Harnish, *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979.

[276] Levinson, op. cit. 482.

[277] Ibid. 487.

dependent acts...Crucial to such a theory would be the ability of interactants to reconstruct the hierarchical plans or goals of other interactants, and thus the ability to respond to goal-structures...The multiplicity of acts (or perlocutionary intents) that can be achieved by a single utterance, the indefinite nature of utterance units, the context-sensitivity of act (or goal) assignment, and the *strategy*-based rather than rule-based nature of sequencing constraints, the nature of topic, can all be given some natural characterization along these lines.'[278]

The German Catholic theologian Helmut Peukert is alert to the problems associated with speech act approaches and he too acknowledges the significance of Gricean concerns as they seek to foreground what Peukert calls the 'pragmatic dimensions of the text'.[279] He states: 'A pragmatic study that considers texts as linguistic actions in communicative situations must then investigate what function the text should have for the reader according to the intention of the author...Only a theory of texts based on such an explanation of the dialogue process can give an account of the problems that inevitably arise in speech-act theory.'[280] Peukert's point is a prerequisite for the sorts of concerns raised by Pannenberg that we noted in the introductory chapter.

Hermeneutics must attend to the activity of dialogue between two horizons. Indeed, what we are after is an account of the relational possibility of three horizons or, perhaps, multiple horizons.[281] Leech and Thomas maintain that as soon as pragmatics puts the speaker's role on the linguistic agenda 'it is difficult to exclude the addressee, since the utterance has meaning by virtue of the speaker's intention to produce some effect in some addressee. In this sense, 'Grice's formulation of meaning...is fundamental to pragmatics.'[282] In order to provide an account of the total speech situation or, in Grice's terms, $meaning_{nn}$, we must attempt to elucidate utterances in

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[278] Ibid. 487.

[279] Peukert, *Communicative Action*, 107.

[280] Ibid. 105-106.

[281] In chapter nine we shall pursue this suggestion in relation to the speech situation of 1 Corinthians and Goffman's notion of a participation framework.

[282] Leech and Thomas, op. cit. 185.

dialogue. As we have seen, one thing that empirical lines of investigation have already indicated is that the vast majority of utterances occur in the flow of conversation sequences which are themselves 'embedded' in certain speech events or language-games. Accordingly, Leech and Thomas state:

> 'In all, the domain of pragmatics is to be identified with a SPEECH SITUATION including not only the utterance (what is said), the utterer (speaker) and utteree (addressee), but the shared knowledge of these interactants both particular (about the immediate situation) and general...Clearly, to be exhaustive, contextually shared knowledge must include whatever information has been derived, whether by inference or by direct decoding, from what has been said already. In this sense, pragmatics ultimately presupposes a discoursal setting.'[283]

Despite more recent attempts to defend the ability of SAT to account for the complexities of conversational sequencing, SAT faces some considerable problems.[284] These include: the widespread phenomenon of indirection in communication; the inherently dialogical nature of communication as established by conversational analysis; the problematic of attempting to isolate the illocutionary act from the perlocutionary act; and the findings of cross-cultural field work. In the next chapter we continue to explore the implications of Searle's philosophy of speech acts for Thiselton's hermeneutics.

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[283] Ibid. 186.

[284] Christian Brassac has attempted to rescue a speech act analysis of conversation by discriminating between seven components of a speech act: the illocutionary point, the mode of achievement, the prepositional content conditions, the preparatory conditions, the sincerity conditions, the degree of force and the degree of sincerity. He explains that these components are 'the primitive notions of the theory, the concept of a speech act being derivative'. Brassac, 'Speech Acts and Conversational Sequencing' in *PC* Vol 2(1), 1994, 191-205.

Chapter 4

The Priority of Relational Reality: A Critical Look at Thiselton's Appropriation of Searle's Notion of Institutional Facts

4.0 Introduction

In his critical discussion of SAT, Harrison captures exactly the sort of concern to be addressed in this chapter: 'I suspect that the beginning of wisdom so far as promising is concerned may be to see that 'promise' is not the name of a kind of action, or even of a *practice,* in the sense in which, say, urn-burial or crop-rotation are *practices*, but the name of a species of moral relationship between persons.'[285] It is this idea of the moral or 'contractual' relationship between persons that the SAT analysis fails to account for. Harrison's remark resonates much more closely with the hermeneutic tradition. For instance, in *PH* Thiselton writes:

> 'Whereas Descartes presupposes an isolated, individual self, hermeneutics presupposes an interactive, relational, intersubjective self. Whereas the Cartesian legacy focuses on a thinking self abstracted from history, hermeneutics focuses on the whole self, an agent who experiences, understands, and performs actions, embedded in time and in historically conditioned developing traditions and pre-given "worlds".[286]

This is a quite different description of the hermeneutical challenge than the one assumed by SAT. The puzzle in Thiselton's work is the way in which he holds the two together. Take, for example, the following comments in which he attempts to ground an account of theological reality within Searle's notion of institutional facts:

> '...in the context of the New Testament and of Christian theology *covenant* provides a specific paradigm of the broader role of 'institutional facts' that provide foundations for valid illocutionary acts. Among these, promise claims

[285] Harrison, *Philosophy of Language*, 178-179.

[286] Thiselton, *PH*, 134.

special status as a speech act in the context of covenant. The Epistle to the Hebrews expounds covenant and mediation as 'guarantees' of promissory commitment and appropriate consequences in life.'[287]

Due to the importance of institutional considerations in Thiselton's appeal to SAT it is necessary for us to look in more detail at the place it enjoys in Searle's wider philosophical project. This will help to sharpen the issue from a theological perspective.

4.1 Searle's Theory of the Construction of Social Reality

Since Searle published his seminal work on speech acts he has continued his philosophical project with work on the philosophy of mind, the construction of social reality and, more recently, he has turned his attention to the problems of consciousness and rationality. His work on speech acts remains an integral part of these disparate interests and in this section we will be interested in the way he outlines the nature of social reality starting with his notion of constitutive rules. Not only has his work on social reality provoked a great deal of interest across the social sciences, it also continues to qualify the scope of his original theory of speech acts and the place it has in a general theory of communication. According to Searle we can begin to understand the construction of social reality with three basic conceptual building blocks: collective intentionality, including the so-called 'Background'[288], the

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[287] Ibid. 146. The details of the proposal are captured in the following: 'The nature of declaration or proclamation more explicitly as promise occurs where proclamation is enacted in the context of covenant, as happens in the act of "solemnly proclaiming (Greek, *kataggellete*) the Lord's death" (1 Cor. 11: 26) by sharing in "the cup" as "the new covenant [ratified] in my blood" (Greek *to potērion hē kainē diathēkē...en tō emō haimati*, v. 25). This pre-Pauline tradition goes back to the earliest time as an apostolic tradition traced back to Jesus, while the link between promise (Greek noun, *epaggelia*, verb *epaggellomai*) and covenant (*diathēkē*) abounds in the Epistle to the Hebrews...' Thiselton, 'More on Promising' in *Collected Works*, 120-121. In particular, the register of *diathēkē*, *bebaios*, *epaggelia* and *ischuei* each share something important with the notion of 'institutional facts'. Ibid. 121.

[288] Searle first appealed to the idea of background assumptions in his paper 'Literal Meaning'. Searle, *Expression*, 117-136.

assignment of status functions and the notion of constitutive rules of the form 'X counts as Y in context C'.[289] We will look at this notion of constitutive rules first.

4.1.1 Constitutive Rules and the Theology of Language

Searle distinguishes between what he calls 'brute' facts from 'institutional' facts.[290] The former identify states of affairs in the physical world. The latter describes any state of affairs that has come about as the result of 'constitutive' rules of the form 'X counts as Y in context C'.[291] For instance making marital vows in the context of a legitimate wedding service counts as getting married. The existence of a mountain or a tree is not altered by human involvement or observation and thus constitutes a 'brute' fact. That John is married to Mary represents an institutional fact. It is a state of affairs that exists within a 'network' of constitutive rules, which are conventional by nature and presuppose brute facts.[292] Appropriating Searle's work on constitutive rules, Thiselton argues that the utterance 'Jesus is Lord' 'express both factual or institutional truth and self-involvement'.[293] He continues: 'To ascribe 'Lordship' to someone who cannot rightfully exercise it, is from the linguistic viewpoint empty or logically arbitrary and from the theological viewpoint 'idolatrous''.[294] In developing a theological understanding of language we need to follow something like Vanhoozer's suggestion to let 'the "discourse of the covenant" (Scripture) inform and transform our understanding of the "covenant of discourse" (ordinary language and

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[289] For an account of how Searle introduces these so-called building blocks see Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, London: Peguin Books, 1995, 13-29.

[290] Ibid. 27f.

[291] According to Kasher, the constitutive nature of illocutionary acts precludes the possibility of such acts being conventional. See Kasher, 'Are Speech Acts Conventional?' in *JP* 8, 1984, 65-69.

[292] For a more cautious thesis on the role of truth see Briggs, *Words*, 203-215.

[293] Thiselton, *NH*, 284. What Thiselton calls the logic of self-involvement also allows him to make important theological points. In an interesting discussion on the relation between 'atonement language' and 'participation language' in the writing of Paul Thiselton maintains that 'facts' about the atonement are what make meaningful any talk about participation in Christ. Thiselton, *NH*, 300-3.

[294] Ibid. 284.

literature)'.[295] Is appeal to institutional facts helpful for elucidating the relationship that exists between communicative action and Christian theology?

Thiselton has argued that Luke's Christology is communicated indirectly by the various speech acts that Jesus performs in the public domain.[296] Whilst there is a clear allusion to Wittgenstein here, the detailed analysis is in terms of the felicity conditions of these acts as they relate to Jesus' institutional authority.[297] For instance, he argues that only someone with the requisite authority can pronounce the forgiveness of sin or calm a storm. At first sight this is a plausible and seemingly important insight. But is it right? Notwithstanding Thiselton's desire to do justice to the emphasis in Lukan theology on history and the 'public domain', did Jesus' messianic authority rest on 'institutional' authority? According to Searle, brute facts are logically prior to institutional facts. Brute facts are simply facts about the physical structure of the world: mountains, oceans, trees and, finally, particles of some sort. Searle assumes that all causes in the world are properly attributable to the laws of physics and so he argues that in 'that one world there is a continuous line from the fact that hydrogen atoms have one electron, to the fact that the Second World War began in September 1939'.[298] In this manner he identifies four moments on the way to the construction of social reality:

- The development of living systems out of carbon-based molecular systems
- The development of nervous systems out of more simple organic forms

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[295] Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 161.

[296] See Thiselton, 'More on Christology' in *Collected Works*, 99-116. In the new introductory paragraph to this reissued essay Thiselton writes: 'By 1994 I came to see increasing points of relevance between biblical studies and speech-act theory, but this approach also points to connections between Luke's Christology and certain conceptual problems that have dogged modern theology since the time of Lessing and Kant. I should like to regard this work as a significant and original contribution to a long-standing debate. It also combines my four key inter-disciplinary interests of biblical studies, philosophy, language-functions and Christian theology.' Ibid. 99. Against the shared assumptions of first century Judaism the pragmatic phenomenon of 'implicature' would probably have proved a more helpful framework. It would capture the inherent ambiguity in Jesus' Messianic discourse.

[297] Ibid. 100. Cf. Thiselton, *NH*, 286.

[298] Searle, 'Speech Acts, Mind and Social Reality' in *Speech Acts, Mind and Social Reality*, 15.

- The development of consciousness and intentionality in certain forms of nervous systems.
- The development of institutional reality out of collective intentionality

From this process of evolution human beings have the ability to assign status functions and these functions are themselves interrelated. This in turn is built on the idea that there are two types of reality in the world: 'observer-independent objects' (i.e., brute facts) and 'observer-relative or observer-dependent objects' (i.e., institutional facts).[299] In order to make use of this framework for biblical and theological hermeneutics it needs to be explained how and in what way God's agency and facticity are introduced. Is God a special type of 'brute' fact and, if so, what is the relationship of this fact to a so-called institutional fact? Or is it adequate in theological terms to assess matters such as divine promise or forgiveness in terms of institutional facts: facts that rely on collective intentionality to assign status functions of the sort X counts as Y in context C? Consider how Searle expresses the puzzle that motivated his inquiry into the construction of social reality: 'There are portions of the real world, objective facts in the world, that are only facts by human agreement. In a sense there are things that exist *only because we believe them to exist* (my emphasis).[300]

Issues to do with divine promise and forgiveness presuppose the world but they are not logically dependent on the physical world. Indeed the opposite is the case: the author of Genesis asserts that the physical world (Searle's 'brute' facts) is logically dependent on the *fiat* of God's word.[301] An account of Divine-social reality would need to susbstitute (human) collective intentionality with the (Trinitarian) collective

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[299] Ibid. 15.

[300] Searle, *Social Reality*, 1.

[301] The divine *logos* is understood in christological terms in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel. A similar theological tradition is reflected in the Synoptic Gospel narratives of the calming of the storm. See Mark 4: 39-41 (Cf. Matt. 8: 23-27, Lk. 8: 22-25). Whenever the biblical texts confront us with the authority of God's word or the authority of Jesus' word this is less a comment on the language as such as on the status of the one doing the speaking. The same can be said of other instances of significant prophecy or blessing. We need to ask who is doing the talking. For a more detailed discussion of this topic see Thiselton, 'Supposed Power of Words', *JTS*, 1974, 290-293.

intentionality of God. Appeal to Searle without adequate qualification would be to risk compromising the particular case of biblical or theological hermeneutics and constitute a category error. The logic of covenantal discourse is not susceptible to the secularist analysis represented by Searle's philosophy. Indeed any framework that does not take account of God will, in biblical terms, be idolatrous. Simply put, the 'brute' fact of theology is God. For this reason there are obvious theological grounds for resisting strongly the claim, made by Briggs and Thiselton, that the lordship of Jesus should be categorised as an institutional fact in the sense envisaged by Searle.[302]

Within the terms of Searle's argument the reason for this may be stated as follows: the actual 'knowledge' or data on which the status function the Lordship of Jesus (where X is the person of Jesus and Y is the status function of Lord) is attributed is not something that is dependent on the collective intentionality of society. Searle explains that the 'central span on the bridge from physics to society is collective intentionality, and the decisive movement on that bridge in the creation of social reality is the collective intentional imposition of function on entities that cannot perform those functions without that imposition.'[303] Within the terms of the New Testament narrative the person known as Jesus of Nazareth died on a cross. This is an observer-independent fact. That Jesus of Nazareth was alive again three days later is another observer-independent fact. Finally, notwithstanding some collective recognition or confession of Jesus' status as Lord, this status is of an irreducible theological nature.[304] Thus, within the terms of the New Testament, even if there were no collective consciousness, Jesus would still be Lord. For an individual to view Jesus as 'Lord' might be an act of construal, but its truth or otherwise is not determined or affected by an institutional commitment or an act of construal. Searle's account of social reality makes an important contribution to our understanding of how we move from speech acts or language games to the institutional fact of society but Thiselton asks too much of the model in appropriating it as a hermeneutical tool for

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[302]Briggs states: 'following Searle we would want to say that confessional statements of the form 'Jesus is the Christ' *create* institutional facts (emphasis mine). Briggs, op. cit. 211. See Searle, *Social Reality*, 32-37 for a summary of the model envisaged.

[303] Searle, op. cit. 41.

[304] See, for instance, Acts 2: 36.

elucidating the communicative actions of Jesus as theological discourse. The point is not that there are facts that can be rightly termed 'institutional'; rather, the concern lies with the attempt to reduce the novelty and 'otherness' of theological categories to system.

In a recent essay, Josef Moural identifies a contradiction in Searle's approach to the development of institutional facts.[305] At points Searle suggests that these always arise as part of a conscious representation. At other times he appears to maintain the opposite idea; that there is a natural evolution of institutional facts within the 'Background'. However, from Moural's brief analysis, backed up by an appeal to concurring comments from Robert M. Harnish, he concludes that in view of these discrepancies Searle's theory is ripe for a 'thorough critical revision'.[306] Whilst this may or may not be a fair assessment (as evidenced by his argument), Moural's proposals are of interest. Of particular interest is his suggestion that Searle provides a 'static' rather than a 'genetic' description of the ontology of institutions.[307] In other words, Searle provides an account of how the world is in relation to what Moural calls the 'configuration of acceptance units types' rather than providing an understanding of how it is that these configurations change.[308] This calls into question Searle's aim to provide a unified theory of ontology; that is, of providing an account of how a theory of institutional facts can be integrated with the physical realm. The unified model thus requires a robust account of the genetic process of institution emergence and evolution. It is possible that the basis for a revision in Searle's account of social reality exists already in his notion of the Background.

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[305] Moural, 'Searle's Theory of Institutional Facts' in (Eds.) G. Grewendorf and G. Meggle, *Speech Acts, Mind and Social Reality: Discussions with John R. Searle*, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 2002, 271-286.

[306] Ibid. 278.

[307] Ibid. 279.

[308] Ibid. 279.

4.1.2 Searle's Notion of the Background

Although Searle strives for more conceptual rigour, it is in the notion of the Background that he comes closest to grappling with the hermeneutic notion of *understanding*. At an early stage in his discussion of the Background Searle acknowledges common cause with the thought of the later Wittgenstein, and the thinking of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.[309] Searle's acknowledgment of Wittgenstein's work in this context is of special interest. In chapter one it was noted that Wittgenstein's later thinking provided Thiselton with a natural bridge between analytical philosophy and hermeneutical philosophy. In a French context Bourdieu also draws on the analytical tradition to bring conceptual clarity to his work in social anthropology.[310] As Searle addresses the role of the Background he too begins to make common cause outside of his usual analytical tradition.[311]

The problem, as Searle sees it, is to provide an explanation for how it is that people can 'relate' their behaviour to institutional facts, governed as they are by constitutive rules, when they either do not know the rules or are not following them consciously or unconsciously. Accordingly, the thesis of the Background is this: 'Intentional states function only given a set of Background capacities that do not themselves consist in intentional phenomena...I have thus defined the concept of the "Background" as the set of nonintentional or preintentional capacities that enable intentional states to function.'[312] Searle is careful to explain more precisely what he means by the problematic scope of 'enabling', 'intentional states', and 'function'.[313] Of the three concepts 'enable' is perhaps the most difficult to explain.[314] Importantly, Searle's

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[309] Searle, op. cit. 132.

[310] We will explore the work of Bourdieu in more detail below when we address the relational model of face work.

[311] For instance Searle mentions related concerns within the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Searle, op. cit. 132.

[312] Ibid. 129. It is this aspect of the notion that has prompted the most criticism.

[313] Ibid. 130.

[314] Searle provides an extended discussion on Background causation in which, importantly, he rejects any explication of the relationship between institutions and human behaviour that does not adequately take account of the Background. Ibid. 137-147.

use of the word 'enable' means something different to models of causation favoured by the social sciences: whether that be mental causation or physical causation (behaviourism). Searle also means something different to models of causation favoured by cognitive science. For instance, if the Background were thought of intentionalistically then there would be no requirement to posit a Background. Alternatively, if there are no rules as such then the explanatory power of invoking a Background becomes redundant. On this point Searle is critical of the implication of Wittgenstein's reasoning that our acting is 'ungrounded'. Searle also rejects the idea that rational decisions are made in any conscious observance of rules or principles and the idea of brute causation: the latter model being both non-intentionalistic and not rational. He is therefore insistent that there must be some degree of causation between the rules of our institutions and our behaviour. He states: 'The key to understanding the causal relations between the structure of the Background and the structure of the social institutions is to see that the Background can be causally sensitive to the specific forms of the constitutive rules of the institution without actually containing any beliefs or desires or representations of those rules.'[315]

Searle believes that the Background is a functional structure that parallels, but is not determined by, the intentional structure of the underlying constitutive rules of the institution in question. The Background, made up of knowledge and skills fit for life in society, is learned and developed within the flow of life. Searle maintains that 'in learning to cope with social reality, we acquire a set of cognitive abilities that are everywhere sensitive to an intentional structure, and in particular to the rule structures of complex institutions, without necessarily everywhere containing representations of the rules of those institutions.'[316] In the end it is the mechanism of the Background that explains the behaviour and, according to Searle, 'the mechanism is explained by the system of rules, but the mechanism need not itself be a system of rules.' He concludes, 'I am in short urging the addition of another level, a diachronic level, in the explanation of certain sorts of social behaviour.'[317]

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[315] Ibid. 141.

[316] Ibid. 145.

[317] Ibid. 146.

This final point is of considerable importance. Searle's account of the communicative agent whilst being 'secular' is able to accommodate or is open to what he calls a 'diachronic level' in the formation of the social being. In his more recent work on human rationality Searle argues the case for 'free will'. He says that a 'gap' exists at three points in the process from decision making to an on-going intended activity. Thus there is this 'gap' between 'the deliberative process and the decision itself', between 'the prior intention and the actual initiation of the action', and between 'the causes in the form of the prior intention to perform the action and the intention-in-action on the one hand, and the actual carrying out of the complex activity to its completion, on the other'.[318] Something similar to Searle's account of what it means to be a rational agent forms an integral assumption in Brown and Levinson's model of politeness.

The need to account for the Background arises from the simple empirical observation that most utterances betray an enormous gulf between the given semantic content and the literal meaning. We discussed a similar problem in relation to indirect speech acts. However, Searle concedes that indeterminacy in meaning is 'radical' in even the simplest utterances. He gives the example of the verb 'cut'. To understand the difference between the idea of 'cutting a cake', 'cutting the grass' or, we might add, the idea of being 'cut to the heart' presupposes a great deal of background information to satisfy the so-called conditions of satisfaction.[319] In this way other phenomena covered by linguistic pragmatics such as the logical ambiguity of the connective 'and' or the use of the conditional 'if, then' construction are dependent for their literal meaning on contextual data and, in more general terms, the Background. As Searle says, people have a level of knowledge 'about how the world works' and a 'certain set of abilities for coping with the world'. Again, these abilities 'are not and could not be included as part of the literal meaning of the sentence'.[320] In hermeneutical terms, these abilities cannot be unconnected from issues arising from tradition, prejudice and temporal processes. Clearly, considerations of language have forced us to ask questions about a much wider range of cognitive and social phenomena to do with

[318] Searle, *Rationality in Action*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001, 62-3.

[319] Levinson's analogy of Rembrandt's sketch will be recalled. Levinson, *Presumptive Meanings*, 2-3.

[320] Searle, *Social Reality*, 131.

being human. Searle's own interest in language has been replaced by an obsession with 'certain general structural features of human culture'.[321] On this point Searle's appeal to Bourdieu is also significant.

Searle identifies at least seven elements or functions of the Background. These are:

1. The Background enables linguistic interpretation to take place. This makes the point that even in the simplest utterances we need to bring to bear Background capacities.
2. The Background enables perceptual interpretation to take place; that is the Background provides us with a frame of perception that allows us to see things for what they are, to perceive objects or things as, say, chairs, tables or trees. In this connection, Searle cites Wittgenstein's famous example of the duck/rabbit. According to Searle, 'the role of the Background in facilitating linguistic interpretation and the role in facilitating perceptual interpretation, are extended to consciousness generally.'[322]
3. The Background structures consciousness. The functions of linguistic and perceptual interpretation come together to provide what Searle calls an 'aspect of familiarity'. Accordingly, all 'non-pathological forms of consciousness are experienced under the aspect of familiarity'. The Background provides us with the categories by which we experience the world aspectually.[323]
4. Temporally extended sequences of experiences come to us with a narrative or dramatic shape. Searle calls these sequences 'dramatic' categories by which he means that the Background provides us with an understanding of how events and things behave or act over time. Typically, we know the 'narrative shape' of going to a supermarket.[324]
5. Each person has a set of motivational dispositions, and these will condition the structure of their experiences. This is a disarmingly simple feature of the Background with far reaching implications. Searle asks us to imagine the

[321] Ibid. 3n.

[322] Ibid. 133.

[323] Ibid. 133.

[324] Ibid. 135.

differing ways a person who has an obsession for Oriental rugs will experience a trip, for instance to Old Jerusalem, compared to someone whose primary interest lies with architecture. In this way, beliefs and desires help to structure experience. We shall return to this point when we explore the theological anthropology that emerges from the discussion of face work in light of Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians.

6. The Background facilitates certain kinds of readiness. By this Searle means that given a particular context we will have certain expectations of what to expect. People are ready for a certain sort of experience if they go to work or go to the cinema. If this readiness is subverted in some way this can be very unsettling. The pathos in the gospel accounts is, in part, due to the lack of readiness in first century Judaism for the type of Messiah represented by Jesus of Nazareth.
7. The Background disposes people to certain sorts of behaviour. This appears to be a more general point about an individual's personality type. However, we may take this on a more technical level so as to develop the notion of a theological anthropology, by which I mean a biblically conditioned understanding of human nature.

Searle does not claim that this is an exhaustive list but it is sufficient to characterise what he hopes to denote by the notion of Background. The Background performs a number of important theoretical jobs. First it makes clear what Searle calls the radical indeterminacy of meaning betrayed by even the simplest utterance. Secondly, the Background draws attention to the cognitive as well as the social dimensions of pragmatics; that is, Searle continues to explain how his different projects are parts of a general theory of meaning. And, thirdly, as far as this study is concerned, it underlines once again the limited scope of a theory of speech acts.

4.2 From Social to Relational Reality

From a theological position any unified theory of ontology will have to take account of the agency of God (the divine).[325] An important part of this study is to elucidate the nature of the relationship that holds between text and reader, between the communicative agency of God and the communicative agency of human beings. In an attempt, then, to provide a framework in which to understand (biblical) discourse we propose to replace Searle's notion of 'social' reality with a theologically informed 'relational reality'.[326] It might be possible to view the concept of relational reality as an additional but necessary layer or level of ontological description. Of course the idea of relational reality in this new sense can also entail the social dynamics of interaction and the temporal horizons of hermeneutic theory without foreclosing questions of a theological nature.[327] What remains unsatisfactory is the attempt to explore this theological dimension of human identity and relationship within an institutional framework that forecloses the wider hermeneutical questions.[328] Searle denies that the question of God's existence has any bearing on what he calls the 'Background presupposition' of science and he locates his own approach to

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[325] In Christian theology this dualism is resolved in the person and work of Jesus Christ. See for instance Paul's comments in 2 Cor. 5: 17-21.

[326] Briggs begins to make this sort of move when he notes that institutional facts begin to raise 'questions of morality, or ethical obligation'. Briggs, op. cit. 59.

[327] In a discussion of Jauss' reception theory (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*) Thiselton describes the relationship that exists between reader and text as an 'interaction'. Thiselton quotes approvingly from Jauss: 'The dialogical character of the literary work...establishes why...understanding can exist only in a perpetual confrontation with the text.' Jauss, H-R, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982, 21. Thiselton goes on: 'It is not enough to establish past "facts" about the text once-and-for-all; it requires successive engagements with successive readers to bring out its potential meaning in interaction with a series of horizons.' Thiselton, 'Reception History' in Thiselton, *Collected Works*, 293.

[328]For reasons similar to the ones provided here we must also question the assumptions underlying Horrell's sociological treatment of the Corinthian correspondence. Drawing on the work of Berger and Luckman, and Anthony Giddens, Horrell suggests that Pauline Christianity is understood best in terms of what he calls '*a symbolic order embodied in communities*' (original emphases). Horrell, *Corinthian Correspondence*, 54.

philosophy as 'beyond atheism'.[329] In maintaining the unity of the universe on the basis of the causation of physical particles without remainder Searle's version of Modernism is not one with which hermeneutics can easily find common ground. In wanting to hold together the tasks of 'explanation' *and* 'understanding' Thiselton is identified with a quite different philosophical perspective.[330]

There is no question that Thiselton would want to distance his own thinking from Searle's Enlightenment project. There is a clear trajectory even in Thiselton's appeal to speech act philosophy for an account of the speech situation that is at least compatible with the grammar of the biblical texts. In the case of Isaac's blessing of Jacob, the very act of blessing presupposed the Network[331] or, to use Bourdieu's term, the 'field' of the Abrahamic covenant, which in turn depended on the third horizon of Yahweh's agency. In Wittgenstein's terms, the invocation of Yahweh was part of the logical grammar of uttering a blessing. Thiselton is right to draw our eye from any temptation to reify language and to consider the quality and character of the one who is speaking. In this sense the very fact of language always carried with it a theologically determined meta-pragmatics. Thus Thiselton draws out the importance of the speaker's status and the wider covenantal habitus of Israel and by doing so provides a challenge to explore the relational nature and structure of speech acts.[332] As Thiselton himself recognises, divine speech is different in kind to the utterances of human agents: not on the basis of the linguistic code, but on the basis of the status of the one speaking or participating in the discourse. We will continue to argue that two

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[329] According to Searle, even if God did exist it would be incorrect to view this as supernatural. There is only what is natural. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society*, 33-7.

[330] Thiselton, *PH*, 141.

[331] Searle's notion of the Network is used to explain the way certain activities or words are given meaning by their relation to other words in the same semantic field or activity field. Searle's commentator Fotion gives the following definition: 'The Network...is composed of an almost indefinite number of Intentional states or claims that nest individual mental states and/or claims and, thereby, help give them meaning...it is only when these states and/or claims are properly nested that we can determine their condition of satisfaction (success).' Fotion, *Searle*, 118.

[332] The ability to speak is integral to being made in the image of God. The Babel narrative stands as a reminder to the judgment that hangs over idolatrous uses of communicative action. See Genesis 11: 1-9.

important elements are missing from Thiselton's account: a proper treatment of the relationship between social anthropology and language use and, secondly, a proper treatment of the social and situational character of the biblical speech situation. Without addressing these aspects of the hermeneutical task, appeal to illocutionary logic is premature.

4.3 Post Script: Comments on Thiselton's Retrospective Essay on Speech Act Theory

Any assessment of Thiselton's appropriation of SAT must now take cognisance of his most recent remarks on the subject. In the introduction to his recent retrospective on SAT Thiselton reiterates his commitment to the value of philosophical hermeneutics: 'I remain fully convinced of the value of speech-act theory for a variety of issues in the philosophy of language and in hermeneutics.'[333] The next proposition is somewhat perplexing in light of the consistent enthusiasm for the merits of SAT for the task of hermeneutics, biblical interpretation and theology. He continues: 'On the other hand, in response to those who are sceptical about its achievement I readily concede that it provides only one approach among others.'[334] The juxtaposition of these two comments is perplexing for these reasons: firstly, nowhere does Thiselton specifically engage with these sceptics. Consequently, we have no argument as such for the cogency and validity of SAT *as* philosophy or as part of linguistic theory. Secondly, he 'concedes' that SAT represents just one approach among many others. He says that 'while I call upon speech-act theory as one major explanatory tool for transformative texts, other strategies and functions take their place alongside speech-acts, thereby demonstrating that speech-act theory is only one tool among many others.'[335] But we need to ask, 'approach' to what? What is the function or purpose in view and what are the 'many other approaches'?

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[333] Thiselton, 'Reappraisal of Work on Speech Act Theory' in Thiselton, *Collected Works*, 131.

[334] Ibid. 131.

[335] Ibid. 69.

The answer to these questions is summarised in a short extract republished in his most recent collection of essays.[336] The many other 'tools' include texts that function as 'narrative worlds' and interpretative strategies that seek to 'understand the mind, life-processes and life-world of a text's author' or, put more simply, 'interpersonal understanding'. To these other two 'tools' Thiselton adds Jauss' notion of 'horizon of expectation' (*Erwartungs-horizont*) to elucidate the interpretative status of the reader. Thiselton defines 'horizon of expectation' in the following terms: 'Every reader brings a horizon of expectation to the text. This is a mind-set, or system of references, which characterizes the reader's finite viewpoint amidst his or her situatedness in time and history.'[337]

Whilst each of these 'tools' is at the service of hermeneutics, there is no sense of how they fit together in any coherent way. The logic of Thiselton's approach is that SAT has little or nothing to say about interpersonal understanding, horizons of expectation and narrative worlds. But given the sort of philosophical and linguistic project represented by SAT it is not clear why Thiselton views these other 'tools' as somehow discrete topics within the field of philosophical hermeneutics. For instance, Searle maintains that 'speaking or writing in a language consists in performing speech acts of a quite specific kind called "illocutionary acts".'[338] Similarly, Austin hoped to provide an account of the 'total speech act in the total speech situation'.[339] Thiselton's appeal to the philosophy of SAT is at odds with its aim to provide some sense of overall cohesion and unity. In *TH* his appeal to Wittgenstein's later thinking is made in order to secure a metacritical understanding of language and meaning. It would be reasonable to believe that his appeal to SAT offers some sort of refinement or development to Wittgenstein's approach. But this is not what we find. Thiselton is quite content to allow that SAT takes its place with other hermeneutic 'tools'.[340]

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[336] Ibid. 69-74.

[337] Ibid. 72. Cf. Thiselton, 'Reception History' in Thiselton, *Collected Works*, 293.

[338] Searle, 'The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse' in *Expression and Meaning*, 58.

[339] Austin, *HDTW*, 148.

[340] This would suggest that texts, including fiction, are subsumed by the topic of ordinary language philosophy. Searle argues that even fictional discourse is parasitical on 'real' illocutionary acts. See Searle, op. cit. 58-75.

There is no question that each of these 'tools' represents an important element of the hermeneutic task. Neither would Thiselton necessarily resist some attempt to integrate them as attempted in this thesis. However, this process of integration has not been satisfactorily resolved. Has Wittgenstein's talk of 'language games' and 'forms of life' prompted this need for different 'approaches' and different 'tools'? I suspect this is part of the answer, although Thiselton's underlying humanist convictions are perhaps more decisive in his resistance to totalising claims of theory.[341] More seriously, having taken from Wittgenstein his method of description and attention to the detail of surface grammar, he fails to elucidate the way in which language use does actually reflect forms of life. This absence of anthropological description is apparent in the three case studies outlined in chapter two: the supposed power of words, the nature of self-involvement and the occurrence of promise within the biblical texts as a specifically theological category. The methodology of linguistic philosophy is an abstraction that actually separates what was the fundamental intuition of SAT: an account of meaning must hold together questions of linguistic form with the context in which it occurs.

In respect to the anthropological trajectory of Wittgenstein's work, Pears observes: 'Even those who are satisfied with internal criteria still feel the need to ask external questions, like "What advantages do we get from our practices?"' He continues: 'This pragmatic question is there to be asked, whether it belongs to philosophy or not. It is, of course, the kind of question that is excluded from philosophy by the line of

[341] For instance, in *Truth and Method* Gadamer takes considerable care to explicate the influence of the humanist tradition on hermeneutical theory and to identify the way in which the methods of natural science and inductive logic threatens the integrity of the project associated with the important German concepts of '*bildung*' (culture), '*sensus communis*', 'judgment' and 'taste'. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 9-42. The humanist tradition, as mediated especially by Gadamer, goes a long way to explaining the scope of the intellectual interests brought to bear on Thiselton's hermeneutics. See for instance Thiselton, *NH*, 142-172. See also Thiselton's analysis of the posthistory, influence and reception of 1 Cor 2: 6-16 in Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 276-282. Surprisingly, in view of Thiselton's attention to pre-understanding and the importance of bringing to bear a hermeneutic of suspicion he nowhere provides a critical assessment of humanism as this comes to expression in philosophical hermeneutics. For instance, in Thiselton's latest collection of papers there is not one reference to humanism in the index. Thiselton, *Collected Works*, 816.

demarcation that Wittgenstein drew around the subject...It is...arguable that the pure philosophy of Wittgenstein needs anthropology at least as an appendix. Certainly, it is not surprising that he found it hard to maintain the line between the two disciplines.'[342] Thiselton's failure to supply an anthropological 'appendix' to his philosophy of language helps to explain why we feel that theology has not been adequately integrated with his hermeneutic theory. As Sell has put it: 'any theory of communication presupposes a theory of human beings'.[343] He continues:

> 'On the one hand, human beings and their communicative interaction are affected by their historical positionality. Their knowledge, ideology and very identity are to no small extent social constructions. On the other hand, although they are social beings, they are not social beings pure and simple. Existentially speaking, they are actually all the same, quite irrespective of which society they belong to. Birth, reproduction, death, both primary and secondary needs, social bonding – these basics are important in everybody's life, even though they are perceived and experienced in different ways within different cultures.'[344]

It is this theory of human being, of anthropology, that needs to be teased out so that we can evaluate the character and quality of human relations. But, crucially, some account of communicative action must be given that can show the organic link between utterance and anthropology, language use and language user. Thiselton's concern for 'interpersonal meaning' and 'horizons of expectation' are integral to the very structure of language use. We noted in chapter one how Thiselton takes from Wittgenstein a theory of meaning resting primarily on the judgment of others. Further, this emphasis within a 'public' account of meaning suggests that it is the relational nature of language games, the forms of life, which capture best the hermeneutic concern. It is precisely these concerns for the 'other' of language and the

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[342] Pears, op. cit. 510.

[343] Sell, op. cit. 15.

[344] Ibid. 15. Sell's opposition to historical determinism is also shared by Oliver O'Donovan in his critical remarks on the place of historicism in hermeneutic theory. See O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 155.

anthropological structure of the communicative agent that undermines the on-going value of SAT and frustrates attempts to integrate properly a theological account of language. It is time now to turn to part two of the study in which we develop a pragmatic model of communicative action that is consonant with the notion of relational reality.

Part Two

Towards a Relational Hermeneutic

Chapter 5

From Speech Acts to Face Threatening Acts: Introducing the Brown and Levinson Theory of Politeness

Bill: *Once upon a time in China, some believe, around the year one double-aught three, head priest of the White Lotus Clan, Pai Mei, was walking down the road, contemplating whatever it is that a man of Pai Mei's infinite power contemplates - which is another way of saying "who knows?" - when a Shaolin monk appeared, travelling in the opposite direction. As the monk and the priest crossed paths, Pai Mei, in a practically unfathomable display of generosity, gave the monk the slightest of nods. The nod was not returned. Now was it the intention of the Shaolin monk to insult Pai Mei? Or did he just fail to see the generous social gesture? The motives of the monk remain unknown. What is known, were the consequences. The next morning Pai Mei appeared at the Shaolin Temple and demanded of the Temple's head abbot that he offer Pai Mei his neck to repay the insult. The Abbot at first tried to console Pai Mei, only to find Pai Mei was inconsolable. So began the massacre of the Shaolin Temple and all sixty of the monks inside at the fists of the White Lotus. And so began the legend of Pai Mei's five-point-palm-exploding-heart technique.*

The Bride: *And what, pray tell, is the five-point-palm-exploding-heart technique?*

Bill: *Quite simply, the deadliest blow in all of martial arts. He hits you with his fingertips at five different pressure points on your body. And then he lets you walk away. But after you've taken five steps, your heart explodes inside your body, and you fall to the floor, dead.*[345]

Kill Bill Volume 2

[345] David Carradine and Uma Thurman, 'The Legend of Pai Mei' from the original soundtrack of the Quentin Tarrantino film *Kill Bill Volume 2*.

5.0 Introduction

Having subjected SAT to a critical discussion the proposal now, to borrow Pannenberg's phrase, is to make this discussion 'the starting point for a radical reformulation of it in theological perspective'.[346] The next constructive step towards a relational hermeneutic is to introduce Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness (hereafter BLTP). In the last section of his retrospective on SAT Thiselton turns his attention briefly to the possible benefits of politeness theory for hermeneutics. As ever he is open to the possibilities afforded by more recent research in pragmatics. As far as politeness theory is concerned he anticipates three ways in which it might prove fruitful for hermeneutics. Firstly, as a theory it takes seriously the intersubjective nature of social space; secondly, it 'coheres with the later Wittgenstein's valid observation about *public criteria of meaning* and "private" language'; and, thirdly, it 'accords with' Gadamer's notion of "conversation". In respect to this third point Thiselton comments that the notion of "conversation" has 'the capacity to draw upon pre-conscious commonalities and differences that transcend each individual speaker's conscious "ideas" at particular moments.' Further, Gadamer's notion 'can take us further than the sum of the individual participants' "lone" ideas.'[347] These comments published in 2006 capture succinctly the sorts of considerations that underpin the criticisms made of SAT in this chapter. In particular, the inherently relational and interactional nature of communicative action is acknowledged; the philosophical importance of Wittgenstein's later thinking is retained and mention of Gadamer's notion of 'conversation' anticipates Gricean pragmatics and emphases found in the social anthropology of Pierre Bourdieu.

Whilst reserving judgment prior to any extended study on the possible benefits of politeness theory to the hermeneutic task, Thiselton can foresee the value of an approach that resists moving 'too readily towards exclusively intra-linguistic concerns, as well as those that focus too narrowly either upon authors alone or upon readers alone.'[348] Once again he sees parallels with Wittgenstein's anthropological

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[346] Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, 392.

[347] Thiselton, 'Reappraisal of Work on Speech-Act Theory' in *Collected Works*, 148.

[348] Ibid. 149.

interest in 'forms of life'[349] and the 'common behaviour of mankind' as the 'system of reference by means of which we interpret our unknown language'.[350] And, again, this comment from the *Zettel*: 'What determines our ...concepts...or the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action'.[351] Importantly, it is this tradition in Wittgenstein that anticipates developments in pragmatics since SAT. Brown and Levinson concede that politeness theory has the potential to subsume 'just about every facet of the social world' and, further, to prompt a 'fundamental reconceptualization from cross-cultural perspective'.[352] In response to these comments Thiselton is quick to acknowledge the common ground with hermeneutics and its interest in the dialectic between the universal and the local. Further, although Thiselton allows that politeness theory might constitute a 'supplement' to his own appeal to SAT, what has become clear is the need for a thorough revision of the place of SAT in any hermeneutical theory. Thiselton's 'tentative glance' in the direction of politeness theory provides the perfect link with his own work in pragmatics and the appeal to pragmatics being proposed as a development of his speech act approach.

The BLTP marked a seminal moment in politeness research.[353] Interest in the phenomena is now multi-disciplinary. Christie outlines a number of diverse research interests that draw on models of politeness. For instance Sirota (2004) appeals to politeness theory to assess the behaviour of children with autism spectrum disorders[354]; Strauss (2004), supplements the notion of 'cultural standing' in anthropology with Brown and Levinson's model of politeness[355]; Jameson (2003)

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[349] Wittgenstein, *PI* I §23.

[350] Ibid. §206.

[351] Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, §567.

[352] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 47-48.

[353] Linguist John Gumperz says that the reason for the interest generated by the BLTP is the way in which it proves 'basic to the production of social order, and a precondition of human cooperation...any theory which provides an understanding of this phenomenon at the same time goes to the foundations of human social life'. Gumperz, 'Foreword' in Brown and Levinson, op. cit. xiii.

[354] Sirota, K. G., 'Positive politeness as discourse process: politeness practices of high-functioning children with autism and Asperger Syndrome' in *DS* 6 (2), 2004, 229-251.

[355] Strauss, C., 'Cultural standing in expression of opinion' in *Lang. Soc.* 33 (2), 2004, 161-194.

uses politeness theory to predict the causes of conflict within a particular medical care context[356] and Felson et al. (2003) use politeness theory as an analytical tool in their study of domestic violence in the United States and Korea[357]. In response to the growing interest in the field the *Journal for Politeness Research* (*JPR*) has been launched as a forum for interdisciplinary research interests and projects. In his editorial to the first publication Christie sets out the specific aims of the journal. He writes:

> 'Our aim is to foster the advancement of theories of politeness; to further the development of methodologies for describing and explaining politeness phenomena; and to broaden our understanding of social and cultural phenomena by publishing reports of empirical studies across cultures, languages, and interactional contexts that are based on rigorous methodologies deriving from sound models of politeness.'[358]

At present there is little engagement with the pragmatics of politeness in biblical scholarship.[359] Given the substantial weight of research being generated from within the field of linguistics this is likely to change. In terms of making an original contribution we need to explore further how its underlying anthropology invites religious or theological description so that, crucially, we develop a relational hermeneutic that rests on both the insights of philosophy and theology. In view of the thesis set out in the introduction, it will be argued that the religious dimensions of

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[356] Jameson, J. K., 'Transcending intractable conflict in health care: An exploratory study of communication and conflict management among anesthesia providers' in *JHC* 8 (6), 2003, 563-581.

[357] Felson, R. B., Ackerman, J., and Yeon, S-J, 'The Infrequency of Family Violence' in *JMF* 65 (3), 2003, 622-634.

[358] Christie, *JPR*, 1, 2005, 1-7.

[359] Thiselton's brief comments in his recent retrospective on SAT remain one of the very few references in the biblical hermeneutics literature. See Thiselton, *Collected Works*, 147-149. The following works in Old Testament scholarship are notable exceptions: Miller, C. L., *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 55, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996 and Revell, E. J., *The Designation of the Individual: Expressive Usage in Biblical Narrative*, Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996. Within New Testament scholarship see A. Wilson, 'The Pragmatics of Politeness and Pauline Epistolography: A Case Study of the Letter to Philemon' in *JSNT* 48, 1992, 107-119.

language can only be properly described when linguistic and anthropological considerations are held together.[360] For instance, there is an implicit appeal to religious anthropology in Goffman's notion of face and it is Goffman's work in particular to which the BLTP appeals. Whilst Brown and Levinson have little to say about religious anthropology in their cross-culture fieldwork, they do acknowledge that any notion of face will be the 'subject of much cultural elaboration'. They note further that 'notions of face naturally link up to some of the most fundamental cultural ideas about the nature of the social persona, honour and virtue, shame and redemption and *thus to religious concepts*...(my emphasis).'[361] In chapter seven the particular interactional systematics under investigation will be the interface of anthropology and the grammar of 'religious concepts' as this arises from within the text of Paul's utterance of the cross, especially 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 16. The task in this chapter is to introduce the central ideas and argument in the BLTP.

5.1 Background to Politeness Theory: Indirect Speech Acts and the Gricean Legacy

Politeness theory first came to prominence with the original publication of the BLTP in 1978.[362] One justification for Brown and Levinson's work on the phenomenon of politeness had been the recognition of the inherently social nature of speech action reflecting cross-cultural variations.[363] However, it was the problem of ISAs that provided the real momentum for the BLTP. Brown and Levinson explain:

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[360] In this context Pannenberg has observed: 'If theologians are not to succumb to self-deception regarding their proper activity, they must begin their reflection with a recognition of the fundamental importance of anthropology for all modern thought and for any present-day claim for universal validity for religious statements'. Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, 16.

[361] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 13.

[362] Published first in Goody, E. N. (Ed.), *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. The majority of the material to be found in the reissue of 1987 was published as part of the series *Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology*, volume 8.

[363] Ibid. 48. Allan observes that 'All major speech act theorists have ignored cultural diversity, leaving it to empirical studies...There is much ongoing research into illocutions which touch on politeness concerns, because it is so very important to avoid inadvertently causing offense in social interaction, especially when H is from another culture.' Allan, op. cit. 4136. In this respect see Rosaldo, 'Ilongot Speech Acts', *Lang. Soc. II*, 203-237.

'When we first wrote, the major justification for the bifurcation of the theory of meaning into semantics and pragmatics was the basic Gricean observation that what is 'said' is typically only a part of what is 'meant', the proposition expressed by the former providing a basis for the calculation of the latter. In this perspective, *indirection*, together with related kinds of mismatch between the said and the unsaid, is a central phenomenon, and has received much technical attention. But why does the phenomenon exist at all? It was that motivational question that our politeness theory was specifically designed to answer.'[364]

We outlined some of the problems relating to ISAs in chapter three. Suggested reasons for the prominence of indirection in communication include the following:[365]

i. 'Clash of goals'. Leech and Thomas provide the example of a doctor who needs to communicate some bad news without appearing uncaring or inhumane.

ii. 'Instrumental rationality'. This happens when a speaker believes he or she will get a more favourable response as a result of an indirect approach.

iii. The speaker wishes 'to say and not say something simultaneously'. Leech and Thomas explain that in this situation the speaker employs indirectness to say one thing and imply another, leaving him/herself an 'out' in case of reprisals.

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[364] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 49. More recently, field work conducted in Israeli society casts some doubt on the universality of the claim linking indirectness with politeness. For details see Blum-Kulka, S., 'Indirectness and politeness in requests: Same or different?' in *JP* 11, 1987, 131-146; Blum-Kulka, 'You don't touch lettuce with your fingers: Parental politeness in family discourse' in *JP* 14, 1990, 259-288; and Blum-Kulka, 'The metapragmatics of politeness in Israeli society' in R. Watts, S. Ide and K. Ehlich, (Eds.), *Politeness in Language: Studies in its Histories, Theory and Practice*, Berlin: Mouton do Gruyter, 1992, 255-280.

[365] Leech and Thomas, *Encyclopedia of Language*, 193-4. See also the introductory chapter to a recent collection of papers on the phenomenon of indirection in communication from the perspective of anthropology. Hendry and Watson, 'Introduction' in *An Anthropology of Indirect Communication*, esp. 1-5.

iv. 'Interestingness'. The suggestion here has been that indirectness can be used for rhetorical success or to appear more interesting.

v. Finally, and most significantly, the most powerful explanation of indirectness in communication has been the case for politeness.

Grice responded to this question by positing what he called a co-operative principle (CP). The metaphysical CP is an inferred consequence of a phenomenological investigation and it provides a theoretical explanation for the high success rate in mutual understanding. In particular, it says that people tend to observe a number of tacit rules of conversation: what Grice terms conversational maxims. To recap' briefly, Grice's approach has prompted two major movements in linguistic pragmatic research: relevance theory and politeness theory.[366] Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory seeks to explain all communication on the basis of Grice's maxim of relevance, while Brown and Levinson treat deviations from Grice's maxims as prima facie evidence for polite strategies inferred from conversational implicatures.

5.1.1 Some Philosophical Problems with the Gricean Legacy

There is not the space to deal with the many criticisms and proposed revisions generated by research in politeness but it is worth raising some of the more important philosophical puzzles that will continue to persist in linguistic theory. In the introduction to their 1987 reissue Brown and Levinson address various attempts to revise aspects of their original essay. Given the prevalence of Grice's philosophy of language in modern pragmatics it is perhaps not surprising that this philosophical basis continues to provoke debate.[367] To be clear about the extent of the Gricean in-

[366] See Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1986. For a shorter summary of their thesis see Sperber and Wilson, 'Précis of Relevance: Communication and Cognition' in *BBS*, 1987, 10, 697-754.

[367] They review several proposals regarding the detail of Grice's CP and concede only that their original account may have been 'somewhat under-described'. They continue: 'Instead of deriving the details of linguistic form directly from face-preserving strategies as we attempt, it may be better to let the mechanisms of generalized conversational implicature get us half-way...We can do this by showing how the details of the linguistic forms, and specifically their semantic structure, invite certain general

put, all that Brown and Levinson continue to claim is what they identify to be 'at the heart of Grice's proposals': '...that there is a working presumption by conversationalists of the rational and efficient nature of talk. It is against that assumption that polite ways of talking show up as deviations, requiring rational explanation on the part of the recipient, who finds in considerations of politeness reasons for the speaker's apparent irrationality or inefficiency.'[368]

More recently, Richard Watts has offered some critical remarks concerning the on-going viability of this Gricean framework.[369] He describes the Gricean inspired BLTP as fundamentally pre-postmodern; the substantial point being that its claim to universality is not sufficiently sensitive to the local dimension of 'social work'. Strangely, he retains aspects of the Gricean legacy in his appeal to relevance theory. He argues that Grice's maxim of relation (be relevant) is enough to elucidate the cognitive environment of the speech situation, a pre-requisite for explaining the mechanics of implicatures.[370] He argues that this cognitive dynamic is needed to supplement any account of politeness phenomena.

The second aspect of Gricean pragmatics that has come in for criticism relates to Grice's analysis of communicative meaning on the basis of a speaker's intentions. The idea here is that 'the intentions of actors are reconstructable by observers or recipients of actions'.[371] As we have seen, Brown and Levinson propose what they call 'rational means-end reasoning' to deal with this.[372] They acknowledge that the Gricean framework has been accused variously of 'conceptual impossibility, psychological implausibility and cultural bias'.[373] The charge of conceptual impossibility concerns the apparent infinite regress involved in the recipient of an act

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inferences independently of face considerations...we can then let face considerations take us to the more specific polite implicatures'. Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 6.

[368] Ibid. 4.

[369] Watts, *An Introduction to Politeness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 203-212.

[370] Ibid. 208-209. Mark Jary has also proposed a fusion of relevance theory with politeness theory. See Jary, 'Relevance theory and the communication of politeness' in *JP* 30, 1998, 1-19.

[371] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 7.

[372] For an outline of their version of rationality see ibid. 64-65; 87-91.

[373] For details see ibid. 7.

having to calculate what the sender reckoned the recipient would reckon the sender would reckon (and so on, *ad infinitum*) the recipient might infer from the communicative behaviour in question. One solution has been to elucidate the nature of shared or mutual knowledge 'on which the inference of communicative intention seems to rely'.[374]

The second charge of psychological implausibility has been met by the development of 'simple heuristics' in the field of psychology and by research in AI programmes that offer 'some support' for the viability of the sort of Kenny Logic used in the original BLTP.[375] Despite these encouragements they concede that the model faces an as yet unresolved problem. This concerns the assumption that understanding takes place by 'running a logic of practical reasoning backwards' as a means of 'reconstructing speaker's communicative intentions'.[376] This remains a 'conceptual mystery' because although the logic fails, the evidence from conversational analysis suggests clearly that participants to a conversation do indeed infer intentions from a speaker's actions.

It is perhaps in this desire to formalise the communicatve event that we feel most strongly the dialectic between system and life-world. Certainly it is here that the postmodern mind is most suspicious of any claim to universality or totalising philosophy, something too that Thiselton and philosophical hermeneutics has resisted. We also sense this tension between the very register employed in the BLTP. Consider Brown and Levinson's appeal to Durkheim's comments about the 'sacred' nature of personhood,[377] Goffman's similar terminology or Brown and Levinson's own description of primitive society as 'primordial chaos of self-seeking individuals'[378]. Alongside terminology that would not be out of place in Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians the desire for formalism and predictive models can almost seem like

[374] Ibid. 8.

[375] For definition and discussion see ibid. 87-90. 'Kenny logic' is based on ideas put forward by the philosopher A. J. Kenny concerning the practical logic of inferences. For details see A. J. Kenny's 'Practical Inference' in *Analysis* 26, 1966, 65-75.

[376] Ibid. 8.

[377] Ibid. 1.

[378] Ibid. 47.

another world. But the point is this: communicative action or interactive systematics betrays this endemic selfishness and angst to such an extent that it is, literally, predictable.

More recently, Levinson has argued for the need to rediscover the potential importance of Grice's notion of 'generalized conversational implicatures' (GCIs) or, in his own terms, 'presumptive meanings'.[379] By way of introduction he asks how it is that we can interpret so successfully a minimalist sketch by Rembrandt. He says this: 'here's the miracle: from a merest, sketchiest squiggle of lines, you and I converge to find the adumbration of a coherent scene...'[380] In this work Levinson develops Grice's notion of conversational implicature to account for the ways in which pragmatics interfaces with semantics and with syntax: hence the use of the word 'generalized' (invariant) to describe the sorts of implicatures under scrutiny. In particular, he claims that certain linguistic structures (Utterance-type meanings) entail preferred interpretative meanings. In this way semantics does not represent a different level of representation to pragmatics. Rather, semantics and pragmatics retain their own contribution but operate on the same level of representation. This new approach represents a departure from his earlier work on pragmatics in which sentence meaning was viewed as the domain of semantics and utterance meaning the topic of pragmatics.[381] Further, Levinson argues that any theory of communication (or of $meaning_{nn}$) must include three levels of analysis: the code (or expression meaning), utterance-type meaning (such as generalized conversational implicatures), and speaker meaning (or utterance-token meaning).[382]

Whilst Levinson's focus is narrower, there are clearly points of connection with what Searle is attempting to elucidate by the Background and the problematic of how rule based institutions can be related to the evolutionary development of certain cognitive and social competencies and abilities. Levinson, too, wrestles with the relationship

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[379] For instance, see Levinson, *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 2000, 22-27.

[380] Ibid. 2-3.

[381] Ibid. 8-9.

[382] Ibid. 22-23.

between the rule-governed nature of language and its actualisation in communicative action. What he claims to have achieved is the idea that pragmatics is much more of a piece with linguistic structures than is generally acknowledged. He even suggests that 'underlying presumptions, heuristics, and principles of usage may be more immune to cultural influence simply because they are prerequisites for the system to work at all'.[383] In this respect, Searle's integrated philosophies of language, mind, social reality and rationality would tend increasingly toward the same conclusion. Both approaches resist postmodern trends in semiotics by defending the idea that universal rational processes are discerned in (culture specific) linguistic usage.

Finally, the Gricean account of communicative meaning must meet the charge of cultural bias. As one linguist puts it, 'the Gricean view of communication is nothing but our own folk-theory canonized as philosophy'.[384] Similar criticisms of Searlean SAT have also arisen in cross-cultural studies.[385] In response to various counter examples to the Gricean framework Brown and Levinson allow only that 'these facts argue for a slight shift in emphasis in the relative importance of what is said vs. what is implicated or attributed, a shift tied to the hoary sociological distinctions, variously conceived, between communities where positional status is emphasized and those where persons are treated as 'individuals'.[386] Once again any theory construction will involve a continual dialectic between the universal and the local, each refining our understanding of the other. It was this refining of theory that has led them to reject the framework of SAT. Looking back on their original 1978 model of politeness they distance themselves from their reliance on SAT concluding:

> '...speech act theory forces a sentence-based, speaker-oriented mode of analysis, requiring attribution of speech act categories where our own thesis

[383] Ibid. xiv

[384] Ochs, 'Clarification and Culture' in (Ed.) Schiffrin, *Linguistic Applications*, Washington, D. C. 1984, 335.

[385] A good example of this remains Rosaldo's work amongst the Illongot Indians and her subsequent critique of Searle's claim to universality for his account of promissory speech acts. Rosaldo, 'The things we do with words: Illongot Speech Acts and Speech Act Theory in Philosophy' in *Lang. Soc.* 11, 1982, 203-237.

[386] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 9-10.

requires that utterances are often equivocal in force. The alternative is to avoid taking such categories as the basis of discourse analysis, choosing other more directly demonstrable categories done in conversational analysis, and then to give a derivative account of the intuitions underlying speech act theory.'[387]

Whilst their proposed model of politeness has generated considerable interest, much of it critical, there is a consensus that polite behaviour of one sort or another is indeed a cross-cultural phenomenon. The issue is not whether the BLTP represents a fruitful line of inquiry or not – it does – but how exactly to construct a relational model of pragmatics. Consequently, developments in the BLTP have, *inter alia*, centred on the need for flexibility in the model to account for local variations in the character of interpersonal discourse. Following Searle, Wittgenstein, Levinson and Thiselton, we continue to make the assumption that universality is operative at some level. The proposal here is that a revised model of the BLTP, entailing as it does assumptions of universality and sensitivity to the social, historical and political implications for any notion of 'face' might provide biblical and theological hermeneutics with a useful dialogue partner. Brown and Levinson specifically claim to have produced 'an ethnographic tool of great precision for investigating the quality of social relations in any society'.[388] We turn now to an outline of the central aspects of the original BLTP.

5.2 Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness

Brown and Levinson claim that their theory of politeness makes a significant contribution to a number of related fields all of which have had a direct bearing on our critical assessment of SAT. Firstly, in the field of sociolinguistics they have argued for a switch in emphasis from the identity of the speaker (monological account of speech action) to a focus on what they call 'dyadic patterns of verbal interaction as the

[387] Ibid. 10.

[388] Ibid. 57. In this reissue Brown and Levinson are more modest about the claims for their model. Two factors in particular need further elucidation for the success of the BLTP: a more detailed analysis of the particpation framework of a given speech situation and a more in-depth understanding of the given cultural setting and the implications for the variable 'R'. Ibid. 12.

expression of social relationships; and from emphasis on the usage of linguistic forms, to an emphasis on the relation between form and complex inference'. Secondly, they argue that the gap between what is said and what is 'implicated' can be explained in terms of politeness. In this way concern for the representational function of language needs to be placed along side concern for the social functions of language. Thirdly, they claim to make an important contribution to the fields of sociology and anthropology on the basis of their analysis of the interactional basis of the social world – including cross-cultural phenomena. Additionally, they claim that 'ritual' can be assessed in terms of rational action and that this represents a challenge to a prominent tradition in Durkheimian sociology.[389] We argue that it is precisely this sort of 'non-theological' description and data that invites theological comment and reflection.

Before turning to revised accounts of politeness we need to set out briefly the main features of the BLTP. They begin the introduction to the reissue of their 1978 theory of politeness with a quote from the sociologist Emile Durkheim: 'The human personality is a sacred thing; one dare not violate it nor infringe its bounds, while at the same time the greatest good is in communion with others.'[390] Herein lies the intuition that underpins Brown and Levinson's appropriation of Gricean pragmatics for the elucidation of what they describe as 'the foundations of human social life and interaction'.[391] Politeness might seem a relatively anodyne notion with which to attempt such a grand project. However, 'politeness' is used in a more technical sense to capture the phemonenon by which interaction seeks to avoid what Goffman calls

[389] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 2-3.

[390] Durkheim E., *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 299 quoted in Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 1. The context in which this comment was made, 'religious life', is of particular interest and importance for the trajectory of this thesis. However, it is important to acknowledge with Neil Thin that for Emile Durkheim 'god is (in part) a euphemism for society'. Thin, 'Indirect Speech: Heteroglossia, Politeness and Rudeness in Irula Forest Festivals' in (Eds.) J. Hendry & C. W. Watson, *An Anthropology of Indirect Communication*, ASA Monographs 37, London and New York, 2001, 212.

[391] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 1.

the 'virtual offence'.[392] The virtual offence is the presupposition of a potential for aggression that politeness seeks to disarm.[393] Brown and Levinson explain:

> 'By orienting to the 'virtual offence', an offender can display that he has the other's interests at heart. Equally, a failure to orient to the virtual offence counts as a diplomatic breach. Thus is constructed a precise semiotics of peaceful vs. aggressive intentions...which in assigning such momentous significance to what are often trivial substantive acts requires a constant vigilance over the manner in which social interaction is conducted. This semiotic system is then responsible for the shaping of much everyday interaction, and in so shaping it, constitutes a potent form of social control.'[394]

They base their account on general strategies 'for interactional behaviour' on 'the idea that people engage in rational behaviour to achieve satisfaction of certain wants'.[395] Fasold notes that in contrast to rule-oriented accounts of politeness offered by those like Leech and Lakoff, Brown and Levinson attempt to explain politeness by appealing to 'more fundamental notions of what it means to be a human being'.[396] The anthropological profile is characterised very simply as being rational and having face wants. We will explore what exactly this means shortly. Deriving a theory of politeness from anthropology makes it conceivable that some sort of cross-cultural theory might be achievable. Whilst talk of universal human nature might sound a little ambitious, the BLTP at least holds out the hope of finding some common ground between different speech communities and, equally important for hermeneutics, across time.

The BLTP posits a Model Person (MP) possessing both positive and negative face. The notion of 'face' is taken from the work of social interactionalist Erving

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[392] Goffman, *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order*, New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1971, 138ff.

[393] Ibid. 1.

[394] Ibid. 1-2.

[395] Fasold, *Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 160.

[396] Ibid. 161.

Goffmann. Goffman defined face as 'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for himself.' [397] Goffman also claims a level of universality for this notion of face. Whilst we might be interested for example in Paul's discourse with Corinth, it is important to recognise too that there will be much that is common to every speech situation. In this way the notion of 'face' helps us to hold in tension the dialectic that exists between the universal and the particular. According to Goffman, face provides us with the sort of data on which to base any account of human nature: 'underneath their differences in culture, people everywhere are the same'.[398] He provides the following explanation:

> 'If persons have a universal human nature, they themselves are not to be looked to for an explanation of it. One must look rather to the fact that societies everywhere, if they are to be societies, must mobilize their members as self-regulating participants in social encounters. One way of mobilizing the individual for this purpose is through ritual; he is taught to be perceptive, to have feelings attached to self and a self expressed through face, to have pride, honor, and dignity, to have considerateness, to have tact and a certain amount of poise. These are some of the elements of behavior which must be built into the person if practical use is to be made of him as an interactant, and it is these elements that are referred to in part when one speaks of universal human nature.'[399]

Goffman's position here does not bind him to a 'strong' version of universality. It is enough to acknowledge that underlying the plurality of cultural contexts are certain almost structural elements of socialization. For Goffman, the notion of 'face' is initiated and maintained within a network of 'moral rules' and applied within the 'ritual' of social interaction.

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[397] Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*, New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1967, 1.

[398] Ibid. 44.

[399] Ibid. 44-45.

MPs are also deemed to be rational agents; that is, they 'choose means that will satisfy their ends'. In the BLTP rationality is defined as 'the application of a specific mode of reasoning...which guarantees inferences from ends or goals to means that will satisfy those ends.' They continue: 'Just as standard logics have a consequence relation that will take us from one proposition to another while preserving truth, a system of practical reasoning must allow one to pass from ends to means and further means while preserving the 'satisfactoriness' of those means...'[400] Finally, it is in the interest of MPs to satisfy each other's positive and negative face. The BLTP therefore makes the following two assumptions about all 'competent adult members of a society':

1. 'Face', the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting in two related aspects:
    i. Negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition.
    ii. Positive face: the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.

2. Certain rational capacities, in particular consistent modes of reasoning from ends to the means that will achieve those ends.[401]

Brown and Levinson provide the following model as an example of how positive face operates in the speech situation:

H wants some persons (namely a_1, a_2, a_3...) to want the corresponding set of H's wants (w_1, w_2, w_3...).

[400] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 64.

[401] Ibid. 61. According to Searle, 'The greatest single difference between humans and the rest of the animal kingdom as far as rationality is concerned is our ability to create, recognize, and act on desire-independent reasons for action'. Searle, *Rationality*, 32.

Let a_1 = set of all the classes of persons in H's social world.

a_2 = set of all persons in H's social strata.

a_3 = H's spouse.

Let w_1 = H has a beautiful front garden; H is responsible and law-abiding.

w_2 = H has a powerful motorbike and a leather jacket.

w_3 = H is happy, healthy, wealthy, and wise.

They say of this model:

> 'These particular facts are obviously highly culture-specific, group-specific, and ultimately idiosyncratic. Nevertheless there do exist (in general) well-defined areas of common ground between any two persons of a society. If they are strangers it may be reduced to an assumption of common interest in good weather or other such safe topics; if they are close friends it may extend to a close identity of interests and desires. Still, however well-defined these areas are, to assume that (say) I am in the set of persons who will please you by commenting on your clothes is to make an extremely vulnerable assumption, one that may cause affront. It is largely because of this that attention to positive face in a society is often highly restricted.'[402]

The assumption that people possess face leads to the idea that certain types of action or situation have the potential to be face-enhancing. Other actions or situations can threaten our positive or negative face. Utterances that threaten face are called face-threatening acts (FTAs). As a rule it is in the interests of a MP to maintain their own face and the face of any interlocutors. However, face-threatening utterances, like Austin's performatives, turn out to be more prevalent than it might at first appear. Any sort of request is, in the usual course of events, a threat to negative face. Equally, any comment or utterance that expresses a difference of opinion or that carries an implicit rebuke or put down is a threat to positive face. In general MPs who are functioning in a rational way will try to avoid or mitigate the seriousness of these threats to face. Politeness, sometimes referred to as 'face-work', is the name given to

[402] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 63-64.

these sorts of strategy. Referring to this MP as a 'cardboard figure' Brown and Levinson want to know how such a person would use language.[403] They express the specific problem in view in this way:

> 'Our initial problem derives from the observation that, across cultures, the nature of the transaction being conducted in a verbal interchange is often evident as much in the manner in which it is done as in any overt performative acts...As we began to formulate an account for our intial problem, we saw that it suggested a solution to some further problems. For instance, it is observable that in many languages...when formulating a small request one will tend to use language that stresses in-group membership and social similarity...When making a request that is somewhat bigger, one uses the language of formal politeness (the conventionalised indirect speech acts, hedges, apologies for intrusion, etc.). And finally, when making the sort of request that it is doubtful one should make at all, one tends to use indirect expressions (implicatures). The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for criticisms, offers, complaints, and many other types of verbal act. What these related problems seem to share is a strategic orientation to participants' 'face', the kernel element in folk notions of politeness...Our overall problem, then, is this: *What sort of assumptions and what sort of reasoning are utilized by participants to produce such universal strategies of verbal interaction*' (my emphasis).[404]

The key point for our investigation into the religious dimension of language is the organic link that the BLTP makes between anthropology and language, between the character and make-up of the human person and their communicative behaviour. Indeed the grand claim of the BLTP is to provide 'an ethnographic tool of great precision for investigating the quality of social relations in any society'.[405] The claim that this model has universal applicability means that it should, in principle, be helpful

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[403] Ibid. 58.

[404] Ibid. 57.

[405] Ibid. 57. Brown and Levinson concede that the model requires fine tuning in certain respects if it is to fulfil the claim to be a tool of 'great precision'. Ibid. 12.

in elucidating instances of discourse across cultures and, be extension, across time. In this it shares with the philosophy of SAT an assumption of universality.

Brown and Levinson provide the following as an example of the sort of question they anticipate being resolved by their model: 'caught between the want to satisfy another MP's face wants and the want to say things that infringe those wants, what would our rational face-endowed being do?' This conflict of interest between the desires and wants of self on the one hand and, on the other, the desires and wants of self to maintain good relations with others has far reaching implications for the sorts of issues raised in theological anthropology and related concerns in hermeneutic theory. Brown and Levinson believe that a 'dyadic model of two cooperating MPs (potentially with an audience)' proves to be successful in accounting 'for just those peculiar cross-cultural regularities in language usage.'[406] Wants and Desires in the public space are characterised by the notion of 'face'. As we continue to understand the scope of the BLTP we need to explain the importance of this notion as an integral part of the model's anthropological data.

5.2.1 Face

'Face', and with it the idea of 'losing face', is what Brown and Levinson identify as 'the kernel element in folk notions of politeness'.[407] They continue:

> 'face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to *in interaction.* In general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face *in interaction,* such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face. That is, normally everyone's face depends on everyone else's being maintained, and since people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten other's face, it is in

[406] Ibid. 58.

[407] Ibid. 57.

general in every participant's best interest to maintain each other's face...' (emphasis mine)[408]

We make sense of 'positive face' in the context of the honour/shame culture of Corinth. In this context Barton records the following definition of 'honour': 'the value of a person in his or her own eyes (that is, one's claim to worth) plus that person's value in the eyes of his or her social group...'[409] Consequently, any utterance that compromises or threatens the in-group culture of honour threatens positive face. Paul's recovery of the cross as divine wisdom, his redefinition of 'spiritual' in light of the cross, and his refusal to extend value to 'impressive speech' all had the potential to threaten the positive face of sections of the church situated within a hierarchical Greco-Roman honour/shame society.[410] In the Gospel traditions Jesus makes numerous threats to face, indeed his radical call to discipleship has far reaching implications for positive and negative face.[411] Further, such extreme threats to face indicate the radical or revolutionary nature of the earliest Christian communities. Simply put, a model of pragmatics that can provide a predictive framework for how these social-anthropological considerations are reflected and challenged by Paul's discourse holds out the promise of a more integrated approach to the hermeneutic task, in terms of language, interpersonal meaning and horizons of expectation.

Importantly, the notion of face is both personal and relational. It is a concept that attempts to capture the nature of personhood as this comes to expression in social

[408] Ibid. 61.

[409] Barton, 'Social Values and Structures' in *DNTB*, 1129. According to Barton, honour can be viewed as 'ascribed' and 'acquired'. Honour is ascribed by virtue of one's social status: birth, class, wealth etc. and honour is acquired 'on the basis of what one has done, especially one's achievements in the ongoing competition for status and reputation so characteristic of Greco-Roman society'. Ibid. 1129. Cf. Barton, S. C., 'Paul's Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth' in *NTS* 32, 1986, 225-246; and Horrell, *Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 65.

[410] For an extended discussion of the relationship between first century Corinth and the Roman Empire see Horrell, op. cit. 64-73.

[411] For instance the German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer memorably describes the call to discipleship as a call to die. See, for instance, Bonhoeffer, (Trans.) R. H. Fuller, sixth complete edition, *The Cost of Discipleship*, London: SCM Press, 1959, 37.

interaction. In this sense face is a product of our place within a network of relationships. It is conditioned 'in interaction'. For this reason it must be central to the hermeneutical task. How do I see myself and how do others see me? What must I do to maintain or enhance or repair my public standing? What happens to face in different fields of social practice? These very personal concerns will not only shape the way I present myself to the world but will also determine, to a greater or lesser extent, how I interpret the other whom I encounter. In hermeneutical terms, 'face' is symptomatic of pre-*understanding* and horizons of expectation.[412] The BLTP represents an important way into understanding these tasks: a description of the 'principles that lie behind the construction of social behaviour'.[413] Further, Brown and Levinson 'identify message construction (the cross-level structure of the total significance of interactional acts) as the proper datum of the analysis of strategic language use.' They continue, 'And since we see interaction as at once (a) the expression of social relationships and (b) crucially built out of strategic language use, we identify strategic message construction as the key locus of the interface of language and society.'[414] All this adds up to a clear rationale for pursuing an exercise in sociolinguistics or 'applied pragmatics'. Politeness theory is an exercise in applied

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[412] In Searle's schema this corresponds to the Background and in social anthropology pre-understanding has been analysed in terms of the habitus. Levinson describes Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* as 'a structure of dispositions that generates tendencies to act and interpret in certain ways'. Levinson, *Presumptive Meanings*, xv. We shall return to the topic of the habitus in our discussion on Turner's proposed developments to the BLTP.

[413] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 84. According to Bourdieu, social science must also take into account that the social world is something that is always being constructed by human agents 'but also that it aims...to describe the social genesis of the principles of construction and seeks the basis of these principles in the social world.' Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, London: Routledge, 2004, 467. In other words, in describing the quality of human relationships we must also attempt to discern the nature, structure and origins of relational reality.

[414] Similarly, Theissen has written: 'Human experience and behavior can be objectified in texts...The interpretations that determine our experience and behavior are structured in communicable sign systems – works of art, rites, and institutions, for example – but above all in texts. Later generations can tell from them what interpretations of world and of self once determined psychic life. This is true not only of the great literary and philosophical texts but also of the texts of "lesser people". The New Testament goes back to social levels and groups that otherwise remained mute.' Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*, 3.

pragmatics that promises much: a tool for 'describing...the quality of social relationships.'[415] In this sense the BLTP offers a model that takes up Harrison's challenge to view a speech act like promising as a 'species of moral relationship between persons'.[416]

Clearly the notion of 'face' is not a thing in the world as such: it shows itself in the event of social interaction. Of course it is no less 'real' for that, but its nature and structure is understood within the space opened up by what we are calling 'relational reality'. In other words, something like a notion of face matches up with our experience of the social world and contributes something important to our understanding of why social interaction proceeds as it does. We might not be able to 'see' face but we can see its effects and we experience it in our daily lives. Paul employs a very similar sort of inductive argument in the distinction he makes between behaviour governed by the 'flesh' and behaviour characteristic of the new (symbolic) order of the Christian community informed by the Spirit.

According to Goffman, human nature is realised in the ritual order of any given community or grouping. Furthermore, in order for a grouping to function in any sort of co-operative way there needs to be what he calls a self-righting dynamic of equilibrium. For instance, in the ordinary course of events the goal of face-work is to sustain one's own place within the community whilst at the same time protecting the face of others. However, it would be a mistake to assume that this 'ritual equilibrium' is ethically neutral. Goffman observes that face-work relies on ambiguity, tacit messages, inferences and falsehood. In one place he writes: 'Whatever his position in society, the person insulates himself by blindness, half-truths, illusions, and rationalizations.'[417] What Goffman suggests is that the maintenance of face often takes priority over issues of truth or honesty. It is this insight that begins to provide an explication of the anthropology of communicative action; that is, the nature of relational reality as evidenced by the interaction order. Communicative action is more than simply doing things with words. If universal human nature shows itself in

[415] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 55.

[416] Harrison, op. cit. 178-179.

[417] Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, 43.

the universal phenomenon of interaction ritual and if it is the case that dishonesty is an integral part of such rituals, then the structural or systemic corruption of our communicative strategies again becomes manifest in the speech situation. This is not a failing in linguistic competence but in linguistic practice: what people actually do with words.

The genius of Goffman's contribution is the way in which he draws our attention to those elements of communication that are not explicitly stated. In other words, he helps us to focus on the inferred elements of interaction – the implicatures and what he calls 'expressions given off'.[418] This provides us with a register for what Gadamer was calling the verbum interius. These things are the very stuff of 'face', the presentation of the self in everyday life. Given the important claims that rest on these pragmatic elements of the speech situation, its intrinsic character and prevalence, no account of the relationship of theology to the function of language will be adequate if they are neglected. It is precisely against the background of anthropological data to which Goffman draws our attention that we are better able to articulate a theological understanding of anthropology. In other words, theological anthropology is given a greater degree of definition when viewed against a background of the sort of anthropological description represented by interaction ritual.

5.2.2 Face-Threatening Acts

The BLTP maintains that certain linguistic acts are intrinsically face threatening. This approximates to another intuition held by Gadamer. For instance, these are comments made on the topic of 'tact':

> 'One can say something tactfully; but that will always mean that one passes over something tactfully and leaves it unsaid, and it is tactless to express what one can only pass over. But to pass over something does not mean to avert one's gaze from it, but to keep an eye on it in such a way that rather than knock into it, one slips by it. Thus tact helps one to preserve distance. It

[418] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, London: Penguin Books, 1990 (1959), 16.

avoids the offensive, the intrusive, the violation of *the intimate sphere of the person*' (my emphasis).[419]

The BLTP provides an explanatory model or framework in which to understand how and why tactfulness takes place. In the BLTP schema the language of 'tact' and 'tactlessness' is transposed into the language of face-threatening behaviour or, simply, 'face-work'. Such acts are termed as face-threatening acts (FTAs).[420] The choice of utterances we make when we are involved in conversation determine the extent to which a comment, or series of comments, constitutes an FTA. The attempt to limit the amount of FTAs we perform, and to 'soften the blow' of an FTA when we do make one, is what the BLTP calls 'politeness'. Further, when an FTA is performed any accompanying redressive action intended to soften the impact is either termed positive politeness (if the FTA threatens positive face) or negative politeness (if the FTA threatens negative face). Brown and Levinson set out five ways in which a speaker can approach an FTA. If she decides to do the FTA she has a choice to go 'on record' or 'off record'. If she chooses to make the utterance on-record she then needs to decide whether she will make the utterance without redressive action (baldly) or with redressive action appropriate to whether the FTA threatens negative face or positive face. This can all be illustrated in the following way:

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[419] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 16.

[420] Brown and Levinson deflect the possible criticism so ably made against SAT that FTAs could be taken as abstracted one off utterances or sentences. On the contrary, argue Brown and Levinson, sequencing itself is often only explicable with reference to the presence of face threatening behaviour. For these reasons they concede that FTAs might more properly be viewed as face-threatening intention (see Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 232-238). They conclude: 'face-preserving strategies may lie not only behind well-defined conversational structures like remedial interchanges (including frozen conventional exchanges that had original rational sources) but also behind the apparently repetitive and redundant replays of such exchanges that are generated by fine and delicate adjustment of the balance of mutual face respect.' Ibid. 238.

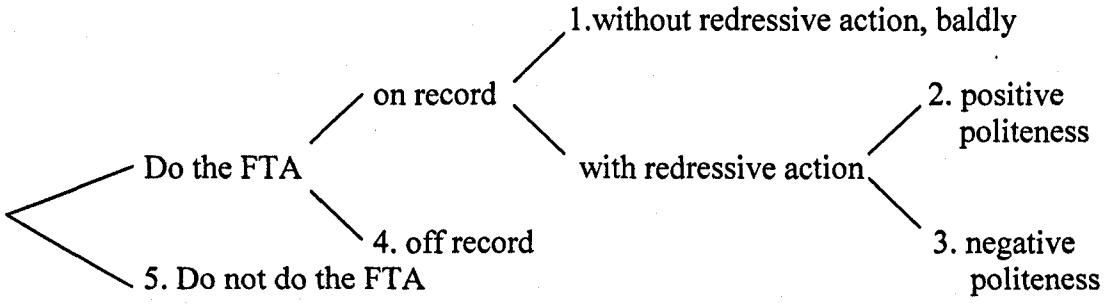

Figure 1 Possible ways of doing FTAs

Brown and Levinson summarise the payoffs of a given strategy in this way:

> On record: clarity, non-manipulativeness, responsibility
>
> On record
>
> *minus redress* (strategy 1):
>
> S ignores FTA aspect of x
>
> *plus redress*: payoffs as follows:
>
> *Positive politeness* (strategy 2): S can pay H positive face
>
> *Negative politeness* (strategy 3): S can pay H some negative face
>
> Off record (strategy 4):
>
> S not responsible
>
> S gives H option to satisfy *more* of H's negative face than in negative politeness[421]

In Gricean terms the nonconventional and off record performance of an FTA will depend much more heavily on the generation of implicatures if 'H' is to be able to determine the meaning of the utterance(s).[422] Implicatures are inferred when one or

[421] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 75.

[422] Again, there are similarities here with Goffman's treatment of 'tact'. He explains: 'Tact in regard to face-work often relies for its operation on a tacit agreement to do business through the language of hint – the language of innuendo, ambiguities, well-placed pauses, carefully worded jokes, and so on. The rule regarding this unofficial kind of communication is that the sender ought not to act as if he had officially conveyed the message he has hinted at, while the recipients have the right and the obligation

other of Grice's conversational maxims are violated. For example, the following comment might constitute an indirect request for some babysitting: 'I would love to see the new Bond film but I'm having trouble finding someone to look after the children.' We could then imagine any of the following scenarios:

A. I would love to see the new Bond film but I'm having trouble finding someone to look after the children.
B. That's a pain.

Scenario 1

In scenario 1, B can choose to respond to the literal meaning of the utterance and either ignore of fail to pick up on the additional implicature that the FTA of a request is being made.

A. I would love to see the new Bond film but I'm having trouble finding someone to look after the children.
B. Well that's no problem – I could have them.
A. Oh, I didn't mean for you to do it...

Scenario 2

In scenario 2, B can make the inference that an FTA has been made. In turn he or she risks performing an FTA in response. She potentially threatens A's positive face, attributing to him the initial FTA of a request for help. She also threatens her own negative face but has the potential to enhance her own positive face. A can mitigate the serverity or weightiness of the inferred FTA by denying that such an FTA was intended.

A. I would love to see the new Bond film but I'm having trouble finding someone to look after the children.

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to act as if they have not officially received the message contained in the hint. Hinted communication, then, is deniable communication; it need not be faced up to. It provides a means by which the person can be warned that his current line or the current situation is leading to a loss of face, without this warning itself becoming an incident.' Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, 30.

B. I'd love to help but I've got so much work on at the moment my evenings are all taken up.

A. Oh, I didn't mean for you to do it...

Scenario 3

In scenario 3, B again infers that a request has been made obliging her, in turn, to make some sort of response. In this instance she chooses to perform the FTA of a refusal to assist with the babysitting. The strength or 'baldness' of this FTA is mitigated by the redressive suffix 'I'd love to help' followed by an explanation of why she must decline to help. Again A can mitigate his own loss of positive face by distancing himself from the inferred or implicated FTA.

A. I would love to see the new Bond film but I'm having trouble finding someone to look after the children.

B. Have you asked Mary?

A. That's a thought

Scenario 4

In this fourth scenario, B's response is ambiguous. Either she has taken A's comment literally and is simply offering a helpful suggestion or she has acknowledged the request and chooses to go 'off record' with her FTA of refusal. This strategy manages to preserve A's positive face and, at the same time, also protects her own positive and negative face.

5.2.3 Calculating the Seriousness of a Face-threatening Act

Such strategies are of course common place and are motivated by a desire to preserve the positive face of the person performing the FTA whilst at the same time providing the hearer with the option of not taking up the implicature if it constitutes too much of a threat to negative face. However, of most importance is the way in which agents orient their talk around relational, rather than strictly communicative, considerations. The detail of any given utterance(s) will depend on a range of social, anthropological and historical factors relative to the particular speech situation. The BLTP provides

us with a context sensitive equation for calculating the so-called 'weightiness' or seriousness of a given FTA. In assuming a common anthropology at a basic level the theory claims to be able to account for cross-cultural politeness phenomena. The original formula looks like this:

$$W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$$

W_x stands for the indeterminate weightiness of the FTA, D (S,H) stands for the value that measures the social distance between speaker and hearer, P (H,S) stands for a measure of the power that H has over S, and R_x stands for the value that measures the degree to which the FTA_x is rated an imposition in that culture.[423] According to Brown and Levinson, D represents a 'symmetrical social dimension of similarity/difference within which S and H stand for the purposes of this act' and that P is an 'asymmetrical social dimension of relative power...'[424] Further, Brown and Levinson point out:

> 'We are interested in D, P, and R only to the extent that the actors think it is mutual knowledge between them that these variables have some particular values. Thus they are not intended as *sociologists'* ratings of *actual* power, distance etc., but only as *actors'* assumptions of such ratings, assumed to be mutually assumed, at least within certain limits' (Brown and Levinson's emphases).[425]

Each of these social variables are given a much more in-depth treatment by Brown and Levinson who concede their theory of politeness 'subsumes just about every facet of the social world'.[426] We will revisit the actual workings of the model when we address the specific speech situation of 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 16. It is enough to note

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[423] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 76.

[424] Ibid. 76-77. 'D' and 'P' stand in a similar relationship to the notions of solidarity and status. For an early discussion of these issues see Brown and Gilman, 'The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity' in *Styles in Language*, 253-276.

[425] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 74-75.

[426] Ibid. 47.

at this stage that, given the ontological complexity of any given speech situation, the BLTP begins to provide the theorist with a manageable framework in which to make sense of the disparate elements that touch upon the choices people make in discourse.

Chapter 6

Historical Pragmatics and Relational Reality: Paul's 'Word of the Cross' as Face Threatening Act(s)

6.1 Introduction to Paul's Word of the Cross

As a test case for our relational hermeneutic we draw on the so-called 'word of the cross' in the opening section of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1: 18-2: 16). It represents a particularly fruitful case study in the application of hermeneutics informed by pragmatics. For instance, James Dunn notes that '1 Corinthians has been...a testing ground for different hermeneutical techniques and theories.'[427] Of particular interest for our purposes have been the sociological analyses of scholars like Gerd Theissen and Wayne Meeks; the speech act insights (sometimes classified under literary or rhetorical analysis) afforded by Thiselton and Alexandra Brown; and in respect to the role of the Spirit, the hermeneutical significance of a passage like 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16.[428] Further, the letter provides rich pickings for investigating the beginnings of one unique 'form of life'[429]: the early church in Corinth. This investigation proves important not only for the on-going life of the church but also for a wider understanding of the interface between religion and society. Secondly, and more specifically, the style or mood of this piece of correspondence is particularly susceptible to an exercise in historical pragmatics along the lines of our relational hermeneutic.[430]

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[427] Dunn, J. D. G., *1 Corinthians*, London: T & T Clark, 2003 (1995), 10. It is also worth mentioning that Culpeper views such hermeneutical strategies as themselves 'politicised' activities. Commenting on what he calls 'linguistic criticism' he adds: 'Patterns of transitivity, presupposition and modality tend to be the main focus of analysis in this area, since they are regarded as crucial in conveying particular views, assumptions and value judgments by means of language.' Semino and Culpeper, 'Stylistics' in *HP*, 1995, 516.

[428] See for instance, Stuhlmacher, 'The Hermeneutical Significance of 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16' in (Eds.) Gerald F. Hawthorne and Otto Betz, *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament*, 328-347.

[429] Wittgenstein, *PI,* II xi.

[430] For instance, Peter Cotterell and Max Turner have classified 1 Corinthians as 'conversational' in character. Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 64.

Taking 1 Corinthians in discourse terms presents us with an important shift in terminology. Rather than simply referring to Paul's correspondence as 'text' we can view it as utterance or a series of utterances. Cotterell and Turner define utterances as 'representations of definite acts of communication given in particular contexts by specific people, for definite purposes, and this matrix of properties is determinative for at least some levels of their meaning.' They continue: '(1 Corinthians) has...the character of an utterance and not that of a contextless sentence...Paul's letter forms part of an on-going conversation between Paul and Corinth.'[431] Further on they adumbrate the importance of Grice's CP and suggest that the conversational maxims 'may be helpful in interpreting biblical conversations.'[432] Put simply, they note: 'We are searching for the meaning of what Paul expressed when it is understood as the record of an (admittedly lengthy) contextualized utterance.'[433] In hermeneutical theory the particular character of Paul's Corinthian correspondence calls into question the sharp distinction sometimes made between utterances and written texts. As Cotterell and Turner observe, 'there can be no measure of semantic autonomy granted by the mere act of writing.'[434] In taking the author, text and context seriously we also move beyond the methods of structuralism and the New Hermeneutic of Fuchs and Ebeling.[435]

6.2 Corinth

At the time of Paul Corinth was an international port serving as a gateway to Europe, Africa and Asia. According to Fee it was the third most important city in the Roman Empire.[436] Larger than Athens, excavations show that the city wall was 6 miles long. Its population is estimated to have been between 150,000 and 300,000. In addition there were up to 460,000 slaves. Engels provides a virtual tour of what the ancient

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[431] Ibid. 64.

[432] Ibid. 266.

[433] Ibid. 64.

[434] Ibid. 65.

[435] Thiselton has recently reaffirmed his belief in the importance of the world behind the text. See Thiselton, *AP*, 97-120, esp. 107-111.

[436] Fee, G. D., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, 5.

visitor may have seen and experienced.[437] Architecture reflected its Greek and then Roman history. Of particular importance was the temple of Athena. Restored by the time of Paul, it was one of the oldest in Greece. Reflecting Roman hegemony, a large temple had been built in the early part of the first century to house the imperial cult. Paganism of one sort or another was well represented in various sanctuaries and temples. This concentration of pagan worship, accompanied as it was by prostitution, had given the city a reputation for immorality and vice.[438]

6.2.1 The History of Paul's Missionary Activity

A record of Paul's missionary activities in Corinth is provided in Acts 18: 1-17.[439] Paul was with the community for eighteen months and during this time he ministered to people from almost every section of Corinthian society: from the very poor in the slave class to the affluent and, possibly, very wealthy like Erastus.[440] Although the church community would have been modest in size (somewhere between fifty and hundred), it therefore represented a spectrum of Corinthian society. Converts to the church included Jews like Crispus (Acts 18: 8), the Godfearer Titius Justus (Acts 18: 7), Romans like Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18: 2) and, of course other Greek gentiles. The large Jewish community in Corinth and the strategic importance of the city would have made it an attractive location for Paul's missionary activity.[441] Furthermore, with the city's proximity to the Isthmian Games and its tourism Paul would have had a ready market for his tent making business.[442]

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[437] Engels, D., *Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, 13.

[438] Paul himself makes reference to this. 1 Cor 7: 1. In this connection the temple to Aphrodite with its prostitution would have been of particular significance.

[439] For a summary of the biblical and secondary literature charting this mission to Corinth see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 19f.

[440] Archaeological evidence might have confirmed the social status of the Erastus of Corinth mentioned by Paul in Rom. 16: 23. For comment on the possibility see Ibid. 9.

[441] Ibid. 17ff.

[442] Engels, op. cit. 112. In a more recent study Welborn suggests Paul's artisan activity concerned the making of 'stage properties'. Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1 – 4 in the Comic-Philosophical Tradition,* T & T Clark International/Continuum Imprint 2005. In his review of

6.2.2 Genre of Paul's Letter in its Original Situation

As we continue to set the scene for our given piece of linguistic data we need to turn briefly to the question of Paul as letter writer. Given the importance of 'authorship' and the increasingly technical analyses of this topic it is incumbent on us to at least acknowledge this growing field of interest. E. Randolph Richards provides us with this description of Paul writing his first letter to the Corinthians:

> 'I have suggested that, for a letter such as 1 Corinthians, we imagine Paul sitting in the living room of an apartment, with the noise of the Ephesian street below filtering in through the window. With Paul is Sosthenes, who is joining in writing the letter. A secretary is seated nearby, a tablet on his lap. Other team members drop by to visit, listen and comment on occasion. Paul is seated on a chair with a few scrolls in a bag beside him and notebooks scattered about him which contain the material they had been honing for weeks. Paul is also referring to a few tablets full of new notes specific to the problems they are going to address with their letter.'[443]

In this short narrative Richards draws our attention to a number of salient matters concerning first century letter writing. In particular, our attention is drawn to the role of secretaries, co-authors and the trouble taken to produce any sort of significant document for public consumption. This should not take away from the person and work of the apostle Paul but it does help us to see that such 'utterances' were not simply the product of lone agents. In fact, the communal nature of the enterprise is a helpful reminder of how communicative acts are the product of a network of relationships and influences.

Welborn's work Thiselton comments: 'Understandably, if this is valid, Paul uses metaphors drawn from the world of the theatre and amphitheatre (1 Cor. 4:8-13; 2 Cor. 11:1 – 12:10; Phil. 3:12 – 4:3).' Thiselton, 'Review' in *JTS*, Vol. 57, 2006, 277-279.

[443] Richards, E. R., *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection*, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2004, 58.

Letter writing conventions throw light especially on the opening greetings and the farewell. More relevant has been the research carried out into the role and importance of rhetoric. Rhetorical analysis has, according to Dunn, 'given the sense of a living dialogue, in which Paul bent his argument in different directions and gave it different nuances in order to render his appeal more effective to different interests and individuals.'[444] Again, commenting on 1 Cor 1-4 Litfin argues that 'the rhetorical interpretation makes complete sense of the entire section'.[445] What we therefore see unfold in 1 Cor 1-4 is a defence of the wisdom of the cross against the wisdom of rhetoric: theological rhetoric against the rhetoric of eloquence. L. L. Welborn had already anticipated the importance of rhetoric in his analysis of 1 Cor 1-4. According to Welborn, the 'real problem addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4 is one of partisanship'.[446]

Whilst the political nature of this discourse is apparent, it would be wrong to suggest any neat division between what is political and what is theological. In his word of the cross Paul challenges the validity of the power struggle on the basis of the political implications of Jesus' crucifixion. What is really at stake is not just the question of Paul's status according to the judgment of rhetorical proficiency and fluency but the status of all human beings and, especially, all members of the body of Christ. In other words, if members of the church are left to make judgments about each other on the basis of some prior human system of value and prestige then the liberation announced in the gospel is threatened. This anticipates Paul's appeal to the power of the Spirit not on the basis of status but rather on the basis of the essence and ethic embodied by the crucified one. This insight is therefore apocalyptic in nature reflecting as it does the revelatory nature of Christian wisdom.[447] The apocalyptic character of this wisdom is confirmed by Paul's appeal to the Spirit's decisive role in the believer's

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[444] Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 25.

[445] Litfin, D., *St Paul's Theology of Proclamation: 1 Cor 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 10.

[446] Welborn, 'On the Discord in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Ancient politics', *JBL* 106, 1987, 89-90.

[447] For instance, Brown notes how Paul's anthropology is inherently apocalyptic. Brown, *The Cross and Human Transformation: Paul's Apocalyptic Word in 1 Corinthians 1-2*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995, 6.

epistemology (1 Cor 2: 13). Indeed 'having the mind of Christ' means that epistemology and ontology are two sides of the same coin (1 Cor 16).

6.2.3 Context for Paul's Word of the Cross

We have seen that the BLTP views politeness as the mitigation of threat to face. Every person possesses face and some (utterance) acts are intrinsically face threatening. In other words, face is something that is enhanced, sustained or threatened in the everyday cut and thrust of social interaction. Of course certain forms of aggressive or demeaning talk are intrinsically face threatening but do not often have long term consequences. They are seen as aberrations of the normal flow of our social lives. Every now and then, however, we are presented with a new idea or new way of being in the world. Even in socio-anthropological terms Paul's utterance of the cross represented a complex and far-reaching example of an FTA. Brown expresses the relational force of Paul's discourse in these terms: 'In 1 Corinthians 1-2, Paul strikes at the heart of schism in the church. His principal weapon is the Word of the Cross (1: 18); with it he breaches the barriers of ego and ideology – even Christian ideology – that divide believers in Corinth.'[448]

The more traditional phrase 'word of the cross' is taken from Paul's own words in 1 Cor 1: 18.[449] The verse captures succinctly the propositional content of Paul's FTA and 1 Cor 1: 19-2: 5 consitutes an explanation of this initial assertion. Of course switching our model from 'speech act' to 'FTA' might be construed as re-running the same old fallacies of assuming distinct 'unit acts' strung together without an adequate explication of the total speech situation.[450] Paul's discourse strategy is to encourage

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[448] Ibid. xvii.

[449] According to Brown, Paul's discourse in this section employs what she terms as 'apocalyptic language'. She distinguishes this from apocalyptic genre although she maintains that the theological 'perspective' is 'essentially the same'. She provides the following simple definition to capture Paul's purpose: 'the perspective characterized by expectation of a future reign of God, confirmed by present revelatory experience.' Brown, op. cit. 13.

[450] In this context Brown and Levinson suggest that 'some strategies for FTA-handling are describable only in terms of sequences of acts or utterances, strung together as outposts of hierarchical plans.' Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 233.

the Corinthian church to realise and practice a new ethic based on their relational identity, marked by baptism and the experience of the Spirit, in Christ. In other words, the re-iteration of the message of the cross has as its telos a renewal of Christ-like behaviour and knowledge. Brown makes a similar point: 'Paul calls for an integration of epistemology and ethics, of knowing and acting "according to the cross" without which there can be no genuine Christian existence.'[451] The term 'utterance' is preferred for the reasons set out by Max Turner: in linguistic circles 'utterance' refers to a sentence made in real time.[452]

We noted in chapter three the problems associated with attempting to identify an actual speech act within the flow of a conversation. This remains the case for the biblical texts which themselves exist within the flow of an on-going relationship with God and with the wider community past, present and future. Notwithstanding Verschueren's observation that the discourse itself creates the context, Goffman has observed that in practice it is difficult even to isolate an autonomous stretch of discourse, influenced and shaped as it is by the intertextual character of our social lives.[453] We need to be clear then, that whilst Paul's utterance of the cross is an FTA of supreme theological importance, it is situated within a wider 'hierarchical conversational plan' that involves multiple FTAs. We therefore need to set this plan within the general bounds of its relational context: firstly, Paul makes an appeal for unity among the believers in the church (1 Cor. 1: 10); secondly, it is widely accepted that 1 Cor 1: 10-4: 21 consitutes an 'identifiable section' dealing with some sort of

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[451] Brown, op. cit. 167.

[452] Max Turner defines an utterance as 'particular, and contextually defined, communicative use of language, of whatever length (from the briefest exclamation to a book-long speech, or more) and whether written or spoken.' Turner, M., 'Utterance Meaning' in *DTIB*, 828.

[453] Given the various caveats with which we hedge our understanding of what constitutes context, Goffman also warns us against the bluntness of categories such as 'conversation', 'talk' or 'discourse'. He observes that the 'question of substantive unit is one that will eventually have to be addressed, even though analysis may have to begin by blithely plucking out a moment's talk to talk about, and blithely using labels that might not apply to the whole course of a conversation.' Goffman, *Forms of Talk*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981, 131.

power struggle at the heart of the church community;[454] and thirdly, this appeal too must be situated within the context of a pastoral relationship forged during an extended missionary visit of some eighteen months[455] and extending for several years thereafter.[456] Whilst factionalism clearly represented a challenge to the integrity of the community, Thiselton is keen to stress the theological character of 1 Corinthians over and above even the pressing ecclesiological concerns thrown up by factionalism and a range of other ethical matters. As he puts it, '*a reproclamation of grace and the cross to Christian believers takes centre stage*' (Thiselton's emphasis).[457] In other words, the cross of Christ is the theological bedrock of Paul's letter. In this way, Thiselton's perspective helps us to see the centrality of Paul's utterance of the cross within the context not just of this letter but also of Paul's vocation as an Apostle.

The occasion for the letter can also be assessed in historical terms. The letter can be understood as Paul's reponse to the following:

1. Oral reports of discord brought to Paul from Chloe's people (1 Cor 1: 11).
2. A prior letter written from Christians at Corinth to Paul seeking clarification on certain matters of behaviour and conduct (1 Cor 7: 1).
3. A desire for a visit from an unwilling Apollos (1 Cor 3: 5-7; 16: 12).
4. Encouragement from the visit of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor 16: 17-18).

The relational nature of these 'conversational' promptings are reflected in the facework (relational work) of the opening greeting and closing farewell of the letter.[458]

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[454] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 107. Cf. Mitchell, M. M., *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, Louisville: Westminster/Knox, 1992, 65-111.

[455] For a succinct summary of this missionary visit see Thiselton, op. cit. 19f.

[456] Ibid. 29-32.

[457] Ibid. 34.

[458] See 1 Cor 1: 1-3 and 1 Cor 16: 21-24. For a discussion on the issues surrounding the unity of 1 Corinthians see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 36-41, esp. 40.

6.3 Transformative Speech Act? Thiselton and Alexandra Brown on the Status of Paul's Word of the Cross

Thiselton's commentary on the Greek text of 1 Corinthians has become a standard work. It is a massive project that is notable not only for the breadth of his scholarship and engagement with previous works and monographs but also for his inclusion of the post-history of interpretation of certain prominent passages like 1 Cor 2: 6-16 and his ongoing attempts to integrate his wider hermeneutical interests, especially SAT.[459] For instance, he invokes SAT to elucidate the scope of 'rhetoric' when making an assessment of Paul's discourse strategy. Preferring the term 'rhetoric' to 'argument' Thiselton observes that the notion of rhetoric 'keeps in view an address to the whole person: reason, emotions, desires, attitude, will, and action; not simply the addressee as mere mind.'[460] He notes too that this approach coheres with Paul's use of the term 'σώμα' ('body') to denote human selfhood in the public domain.[461]

Crucially, Thiselton approves of the term 'rhetoric' when it emphasises the importance of tradition and matters of truth in the extra-linguistic world – supremely the cross.[462] In these ways both tradition and reason play an integral part of Paul's argument and it is this more complex notion of rhetoric that enables Thiselton to talk in terms of 'transformative speech acts'. At this point Thiselton endorses Alexandra Brown's performative analysis of Paul's word of the cross. Briefly, he identifies three ways in which Brown's approach is correct: firstly, he agrees with her that Paul's

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[459] One reviewer comments: '...this is a commentary where speech-act theory, theology and historical research combine to provide a well-rounded interpretation of the letter...' Jones, Ivor H. *JTS* Vol. 53: 1, 2001, 232. More generally, David Ford has made this compliment: 'it (the commentary) summarizes a huge amount of previous scholarship and theology; it pays attention to the reception of the letter in Christian theology over the centuries...and its author is not only a perceptive commentator on the text according to contemporary practices in the "guild" of New Testament scholars but also, unusually, has a rich understanding of philosophy, hermeneutics and systematic theology.' Ford, 'Divine Initiative', 2. In this context see also Thiselton's paper 'Speech-Act Theory and 1 Corinthians', *SBL Greek Language and Linguistics Sections*, Philadelphia: SBL, 1996.

[460] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 41.

[461] Ibid. 41.

[462] Ibid. 42. Cf. Thiselton, 'The Meaning of σάρξ in 1 Cor 5: 5: A Fresh Approach in the Light of Logical and Semantic Factors,' *SJT 26*, 1973: 204-228, esp. 216-218.

word of the cross has illocutionary force in that it is able to transform 'perceptions and realities *in* the very utterance of this proclamation;'[463] secondly, Thiselton agrees that this re-performance of the Gospel corrects an earlier 'misfire' of the message as a result of which the church had been left with an erroneous understanding of God's purposes in the cross; and, thirdly, the notion of an illocutionary act 'presupposes epistemological truth claims.'[464]

There is also a polemical and ethical side to Thiselton's appeal to speech act categories in 1 Corinthians. The polemical basis of his appeal to SAT concerns the importance of extra-linguistic presuppositions as integral to Paul's whole preaching strategy. This contrasts with more postmodern appeals to SAT that neglect the semantic (propositional) component or to the pragmatism of Rorty's appeal to the local at the expense of universal criteria of meaning.[465] In more ethical terms, Thiselton argues that in employing a mode of discourse that can be characterised as transparent speech-action, Paul's apostleship is not, *pace* Wire, so much about status or power but about being a 'transparent agency through whom the crucified and raised Christ becomes portrayed through lifestyle, thought, and utterance'.[466]

Whilst Thiselton acknowledges the importance of both epistelography and rhetoric, he argues that these interests must not neglect the specifically theological nature of Paul's concern in writing.[467] Thus he identifies the importance of the scriptures and the Judaeo-Christian tradition of theology in supporting the rational nature of Paul's argumentation and rhetoric. Furthermore, he again cites the work of Brown who 'brings together Paul's communication of the transformative power of the

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[463] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 43.

[464] Ibid. 43.

[465] Ibid. 42.

[466] Ibid. 45. Cf. A. C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990. In this work Wire argues that 1 Corinthians represents a power play between Paul's bid for power as an apostle against the power interests of the local women prophets in Corinth. Commenting on Wire's so-called 'new' rhetoric, Thiselton notes that there is a tendency for rationality to become 'merely instrumental reason in the service of prior interests.' He continues: 'A. C. Wire perceives such manipulative rhetoric as part of Paul's own strategy.' Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 50.

[467] Thiselton, op. cit. 50.

proclamation of the cross with a concern for epistemology and an exposition of performative speech-acts.'[468] It is here that Thiselton argues for the distinction made by both Austin and Searle between the illocutionary and perlocutionary speech act. Thiselton associates the latter with '*sheer causal (psychological or rhetorical) persuasive power*' (Thiselton's emphasis).[469] By contrast the illocutionary act depends for its effectiveness '*on a combination of situation and recognition*' (Thiselton's emphasis).[470] In view of our conclusions in part one about the ultimate failure of SAT to elucidate the speech situation, any appeal to the notion of an 'illocutionary act' must be qualified carefully. Two questions are raised: (i) on the basis of what criteria does Thiselton insist on the category of illocution? And (ii) which utterance is in view? There are no clear connections made by Thiselton between his attachment to a model of philosophy (SAT) and real world discourse (actual linguistic markers in the biblical text).

Alexandra Brown's work on Paul's so-called 'performative' word of the cross is the most detailed discussion of 1 Cor. 1: 18-2: 16 from the perspective of Austin's speech act approach. She writes: 'Paul's proclamation of Jesus' death...has what Austin calls "performative force" to effect in the minds of its hearers the transformation it narrates...I believe the theory does have value for enhancing our understanding of the Word of the Cross as a functional, indeed transforming, agent of the discourse as a whole.'[471] Brown articulates well the theological and ethical implications of this 'word'. She describes its effect to 'dislocate common worldly conventions, including conventions about power.'[472] However, she struggles to explain how such a dislocation could take place or why such 'conventions' exist. Without some attempt to describe the anthropology of social interaction it is not clear how the word of the cross differs to normative human behaviour and, also, what might be involved in the envisaged transformation. So whilst her insight is suggestive for a pragmatic analysis of Paul's discourse, she risks a reification of Paul's language. As we have seen this is

[468] Ibid. 51. Cf. 146-148.

[469] Ibid. 51.

[470] Ibid. 51.

[471] Brown, op. cit. 16.

[472] Ibid. 153.

the failure of speech act analysis: it neglects the extent to which language is something that people use to express their life-world and accomplish specific interactional goals. Any assessment of Paul's utterance of the cross will need to take into account the total speech situation. Further on Brown says: '...it is Austin's sensitivity to the transformative interaction of language with society, his recognition that words have power to do things within certain conventions...that will be most useful for interpreting Paul's Word of the Cross as an apocalyptic speech act.'[473] Sell expresses something similar:

> 'Communication can be thought of as a semiotic process by which people try, at least ideally speaking, to negotiate a balanced, and even shared view of that entity. In doing so, they inevitably open themselves to the possibility of mental re-adjustments, whose scope can range from the merely very minimal to the absolutely all-embracing. Directly or indirectly, these mental goings-on can also lead to actions of a tangibly physical kind, and ultimately may even contribute to changes in an entire communal thought - and life – world.'[474]

Both Sell and Brown are right to identify the political power of discourse but we must be careful to avoid two related errors in our analysis: firstly, Brown's use of the word 'transform' already pre-judges the complex historical, anthropological and theological processes at work and; secondly, she comes close to suggesting that words possess power.[475] Against any temptation of this sort Bourdieu comments:

> '...symbolic power does not reside in 'symbolic systems' in the form of an 'illocutionary force' but that it is defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it, i.e. in the very structure of the field in which *belief* is produced and reproduced. What creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting

[473] Ibid. 20.

[474] Sell, op. cit. 4.

[475] We should recall Thiselton's critique of certain Old Testament theologies. See Thiselton, 'Supposed Power of Words', op. cit.

the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief (Bourdieu's emphasis).'[476]

In other words, any inherent power of language will be determined by a whole series of sociological and relational factors.[477] Whilst Brown acknowledges the importance of the total speech situation at Corinth, she fails to provide an account of how social interaction is organically related to the life-world or *Sitz im Leben* of the church. Although she rightly draws our attention to the idea that Paul is doing something with his utterance of the cross, in relational terms this 'utterance' is better understood as an intrinsically face-threatening act. As a face-threatening act we begin to see how Paul's preaching of the cross is an offence not just to the Corinthians in their own particularity but also to the Corinthians as members of the present 'world order'.[478] In this way politeness theory coheres more closely with an understanding of anthropology.

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[476] Bourdieu, P., *Language & Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, 170.

[477] David Hilborn makes a very similar point in the context of his discussion of pragmatics of liturgy. In theological terms he points out that 'the operativity of worship resides not in specific words or phrases but in the power of God to mediate his scriptural Word through the mouth of the preacher in language suited to each particular service of worship'. Hilborn, 'From Performativity to Pedagogy' in *Nature of Religious Language*, 194. Cf. Ibid. 178f.

[478] Thiselton takes the phrase του αιωνος τουτου of 1 Cor 1: 20 to mean something like 'of this world order'. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 165.

Chapter 7

System and Life-World: Revisiting the Brown and Levinson Theory of Politeness in Light of Social Anthropology, Hermeneutics and the Biblical Speech Situation of 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 16

7.0 Introduction

Ken Turner analyses the BLTP on four levels: the level concerned with the choice of appropriate output strategies; the level concerned with decisions about higher and intermediate strategies; thirdly, the level that is concerned with the calculation of risk to the participant's face; and fourthly, what Turner describes as 'the level that is concerned with the speaker's perception and assessment of the situated relationship'.[479] In order to calculate this assessment the BLTP puts forward three social variables: P, D and R. Turner's article concentrates on the BLTP claim for these three variables: 'three sociological factors are crucial in determining the level of politeness which a speaker (S) will use to an addressee (H)'.[480] Turner describes this as the 'engine' of the BLTP and it finds expression in the BLTP formula introduced in chapter five. Here is a reminder of what it looks like:

$$\mathbf{W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x}$$

This formula constitutes the engine of the BLTP because if there is any thing wrong here then each of the other levels of the theory will also be compromised. Turner argues that it represents a serious under analysis of the social nature of the speech situation. As we shall see the logic of his position comes very close to Thiselton's remarks about the need for systems to take full cognisance of life-worlds.[481] In effect

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[479] Turner, K., 'W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x': Notes Towards an Investigation', *RSP*, 13, 2003, 48.

[480] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 15.

[481] Alongside his long-held appreciation for Wittgenstein's notions of language games and forms of life, in *NH* Thiselton underlines the way in which the hermeneutical task challenges the a-historical tendencies in the theory construction of social sciences. Thiselton follows Habermas in arguing against the 'disastrous splitting apart of system from lifeworld.' Thiselton, *NH*, 607. Thiselton's discussion of the hermeneutical critique of purely synchronic, a-historical, theorising runs from 604-611.

this is precisely what Turner argues and he is obliged to take a hermeneutic turn in order to make the case. At this point the bridge connecting Turner and Thiselton is not SAT or even Gricean pragmatics but Wittgenstein. In this next section we follow the format of Turner's recent discussion of the BLTP formula. We begin with an assessment of the BLTP social variables D, P and R, with special reference to the speech event of Paul's word of the cross.

7.1 'P': The Status of Power in Paul's Utterance of the Cross

Paul's claim for the intrinsic power of the cross is stated clearly in 1 Cor. 1: 18: 'For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.' Given the postmodern suspicion of any claims to power or authority, the 'traditional' reading of Paul's discourse has been contested. Consequently, it has become increasingly important to define the sort of power envisaged in the Corinthian correspondence. Josef Moural believes that Searle's theory of institutional facts rests on two related insights: the formula 'X counts as Y' and power.[482] In this context Moural defines power in the following way:

> '...in general, the creation of a new status function confers some new power of the sort that cannot exist without collective acceptance...If X is a person, it is he or she who acquires power; if X is an object, it is the user of the object (who can now do things which he or she could not do solely in virtue of X's intrinsic structure). Power here is to be understood here in a very general sense of shaping the area of one's possibilities: it covers any form of what one is able, entitled, expected or required to do within a certain framework defined by collective acceptance.'[483]

In chapter four we argued that any notion of social reality that rests solely on the collective community fell short of the logical grammar of biblical theology. While it

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[482] Moural, op. cit. 271.

[483] Ibid. 274. In Searle's notation this is expressed as follows: We accept (S has power (S does A)). Searle, *Social Reality*, 104, 111.

certainly offers some important insights for a 'static' account of social reality, it is less helpful in capturing the genetic phase of an emerging institution, the non-institutional or the conversational. Therefore, in Brown and Levinson's original understanding of power (the variable 'P'), 'P(H,S) is the degree to which H can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of S's plans and self-evaluation'.[484] As we shall see, the nature of power and the exercise of power is of central concern to the context of Paul's correspondence with Corinth and, especially, in his word of the cross in 1 Cor. 1: 18-2: 5.

Nigel Biggar has described a church as a 'political entity...a society whose members' actions need to be coordinated toward the achievement of common goals and in which the distribution of power will tend to become unjust, by default or by design, unless corrected.'[485] In more dogmatic terms, Paul's understanding of power must be understood in the light of his theology of the cross and the operative agency of the Spirit. But this is to anticipate a state of affairs that is far from self-evident. For instance, some feminist readings of 1 Corinthians have viewed Paul's discourse as itself a form of authoritarianism.[486] However, such critiques, of which Wire's is indicative, might have more legitimacy when applied to subsequent appropriations of the source text. In this respect Bourdieu's Marxist critique of power language notes the ways in which a particular language or set of linguistic practices emerge through history to become the dominant or legitimate language. Thompson continues:

> 'This dominant and legitimate language, this *victorious* language, is what linguists commonly take for granted. Their idealized language or speech community is an object which has been *pre*-constructed by a set of social-historical conditions endowing it with the status of the sole legitimate or 'official' language of a particular community (author's emphasis).'[487]

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[484] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 77.

[485] Biggar, 'Power and Powerlessness' in Atkinson, *Pastoral Ethics*, 152.

[486] Thiselton and Brown separately draw attention to particular feminist concerns. Prominent among these is Antoinette Wire's critique of Paul's (ab)use of power to curtail the activities of women prophets. See Wire, A.C., op. cit.

[487] Thompson's introduction in Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 5.

Whilst this critique operates on the linguistic level, for instance the colonial hegemony of English or French, it is also relevant to the intra-linguistic ideological codes or semiotics of politic behaviour. This latter perspective, especially, falls squarely within the task of hermeneutics. Of course, linguistic practices can overcome other practices for positive reasons as well as more negative or oppressive reasons. And even when a 'legitimate' language emerges for the right sort of reasons the quality and character of the community may not embody the original ideals or virtues of the primitive or source speech community. Finally, and in a related way, a dominant language or tradition will be reinterpreted and re-iterated to reflect the particularity and contingency of history.[488]

Turner argues that the appeal made by the BLTP to the notion of power is in need of further refinement. In particular, he suggests that their definition of 'P' is too general for the analyst to examine the claims of universal applicability.[489] Whilst he is appreciative of Lukes' concern to bring to bear what he calls a three-dimensional view of power in any given situation of (potential) conflict, Turner suggests that at the very least the BLTP needs to be revised to reflect the fact that there are different currencies of power.[490] The idea is expressed in the following notation:

$$W_x = D(S,H) + P_1/P_2/P_3(H,S) + R_x$$

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[488] Thiselton anticipates this phenomenon with his concern for the textual posthistory or 'wirkungsgeschicte'.

[489] Turner, op. cit. 49.

[490] Lukes' talk of different dimensions of power reflects his belief that the speech situation can be assessed on the basis of increasingly complex frames of interpretation. He argues that any analysis of power will be insufficient if it focuses simply on the behaviour manifest in a given conflict situation on the basis of *subjective* interests (one and two dimensional analyses of power). A three-dimensional view of power will also take account of wider social forces and institutional practices. For further details see Lukes, S., *Power: A Radical View*, London: Macmillan Press, 1974, 15-24. The sort of concerns raised by Lukes' work will be dealt with in more detail when we come to consider the social anthropology of Bourdieu later in this chapter.

The numbering indicates the differing currencies of power or, in Lukes' terms, the different dimensions of power operative in any given interaction. The slash indicates that more than one dimension may be operative at the same time depending on a speaker's ability to assess a given interaction. In historical pragmatic terms, adding a fourth dimension aims to capture the potential for a diachronic interpretation of power; that is, to mark the move to a retrospective assessment of a given speech situation (attempted synchronic analysis) and also to the 'live' nature of the current hermeneutical situation (attempted diachronic analysis):

$$W_x = D(S,H) + P_1/P_2/P_3/P_4(H,S) + R_x$$

Turner also proposes to express the formula in terms that reflect Brown and Levinson's suggestion that each variable (P, D and R) 'can be measured on a scale of 1 to *n*, where *n* is some small number'.[491] When these considerations are added to each variable the formula looks like this:

$$W_x = D^{1-n}(S,H) + P_1^{1-n}/P_2^{1-n}/P_3^{1-n}/P_4^{1-n}(H,S) + R^{1-n}{}_x$$

Even within this framework 'P' is in need of further definition. This is the reason for Turner's appeal to the work of Dorothy Emmet.[492] Emmet outlines five classifications of power: power as causal efficacy; power as creative energy; power as personal influence; ritual power (including performatory utterances); and legal power. Importantly, what this list indicates is that it is much more difficult to decide under which rubric exactly we might place Paul's discourse. It could be understood in terms of power as causal efficacy. This might include an observable change in the physical world or, more relevantly, 'psychological pressure or manipulation, providing people with motives for choosing x rather than y'. Thiselton interprets this in terms of perlocutionary force. However, in view of our discussion in chapter three, it is often difficult, in practice, to distinguish adequately between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Appeal to one's authority or to the interlocutor's better

[491] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 76. They suggest further that 1-7 should suffice. Ibid. 287.

[492] See Emmet, D., 'The Concept of Power' in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. New Series* Vol LIV, 1958, 1-26.

judgement is all part of the prior illocutionary point; in this case, an appeal to recover the wisdom of a crucified Christ. Neither, of course, does it follow, *pace* Brown and Levinson, that if a given discourse strategy is face-threatening that it must be due to the face wants of the speaker.

The power exercised by Paul might also be regarded as creative energy. Turner explains that this might cover the discovery of a new religious insight or inspiring a community of people to common action.[493] In 1 Corinthians Paul iterates his belief that his primary vocation is to be a preacher of the gospel (1 Cor. 1: 17). And indeed the proclamation of the gospel did not simply represent a speech act in any institutional sense, but assumed a new turn in relational reality. In his letter to the Galatians Paul provides us with an important insight into his own understanding of the origin (genetics) of his message (Gal. 1: 11-12). Further, this 'gospel' was the basis of, and inspiration for, a new praxis of unity in mind and purpose (1 Cor. 1: 10).

Paul's exercise of power might also be assessed under the notion of power as personal influence. Paul describes himself as 'an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God' (1 Cor. 1: 1). Notwithstanding Thiselton's conclusion that this constitutes a claim to low status, Paul's apostolic status is nevertheless the subject of some dispute.[494] This 'struggle' becomes inevitable by Paul's own understanding of the nature of his vocation: 'called by the will of God'. In power struggle terms this looks like a non-negotiable position. In the course of the Corinthian correspondence Paul will, at certain points, indicate his own 'moral strength of character'. He explains to the Corinthians: 'I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified' (1 Cor. 2: 2). Thiselton attributes this emphasis of Paul's as part of a deliberate strategy not to present himself as a professional rhetorician. In this sense we might interpret Paul intentionally rejecting what Bourdieu calls cultural and symbolic capital.[495] According to Thiselton: 'the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ excluded its being treated as a market commodity tailored to the tastes and desires of

[493] Turner, op. cit. 50.

[494] See P. W. Barnett, 'Apostle' in *DPL*, 45-51, esp. 49.

[495] Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 14.

market consumers...He (Paul) would earn his keep as a tentmaker and *proclaim the cross of Christ* (Thiselton's italics).'[496]

Paul identifies his own influence, such that it was, with the content of his proclamation and his authority as apostle. Taking Bourdieu's line it could be argued that Paul's strategy is to establish a different sort of capital, one in which he as apostle acquires an important stake. In the emerging field of the early church a whole new system of capital is operative, centred on a set of criteria associated with a crucified Messiah and the ethics of humility and love. To rephrase Paul's testimony, the capital of the professional rhetorician or the wealthy patron ceases to count as capital in the body of Christ. Indeed to live *as if* these things retained their value is to misunderstand the very field that one hopes to inhabit.

Meeks observes that Paul makes claims to personal authority in a number of different ways. Firstly, he claims a unique relationship to the Corinthian church as their founder (1 Cor. 4: 15).[497] This common history is implicit in the narrative recollections of his initial visit to Corinth (1 Cor. 1: 26 - 3: 17). In the early chapters of his second letter to the Corinthians Paul takes the trouble to record his 'experiences, travels and plans' and the divine comfort he received in the face of afflictions of one sort or another. Given the various difficulties faced by the Corinthians themselves, Paul is able to draw attention to the way in which his life is lived out in solidarity with them. Accordingly, what this indirect speech does in terms of a power play is to set up a 'dialectical structure of weakness and power'. Meeks describes this dialectic as: 'homologous with his (Paul's) central affirmation about Christ: that he was crucified and raised by God from the dead. Through Paul's scheme of double imitation the apostolic career becomes a mimesis of Christ and thus a fit paradigm by which to test what is an authentic mode of authority in the church.'[498] In making the case for the priority of relational reality Meeks' observation is of considerable importance. The theological horizon of Paul's discourse is 'shown'

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[496] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 21.

[497] Meeks, W. A., *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983, 123.

[498] Ibid. 124.

in the revolutionary way in which Paul configures existence in light of the Jesus event.

Paul's potential power claim can also be assessed under Emmet's subcategory of 'charismatic' qualities.[499] He reminds the Corinthians that although he himself was an unimpressive orator, his message was accompanied 'with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (1 Cor. 2: 4). When Paul identifies the source of this power in God (1 Cor. 2: 5) the implication again is that Paul's gospel and Paul's pastoral 'appeal' has divine backing. In his letter to the Galatians Paul similarly makes the connection between the proclamation of a crucified Christ and power.[500] In the context of the interaction dynamics of an emerging theological consciousness it is not inappropriate to attribute to Paul's discourse this currency of power. On a close reading of his argument here and elsewhere Paul is making a direct link between a certain understanding of the gospel and the efficacious work of the Spirit. In terms of a New Testament hermeneutic the role and agency of the Spirit proves decisive. We will return to this dimension of a revised and situated BLTP formula in chapter nine when we address the nature of the participation framework of Paul's word of the cross.

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[499] Theissen notes that Max Weber first borrowed the term 'charisma' from the New Testament. Theissen, (Trans.) M. Kohl, *Social Reality and the Early Christians: Theology, Ethics, and the World of the New Testament*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993, 20. It has subsequently featured in sociological theory to which Emmet's study is evidence. It also figures as part of a sociological assessment of power in two New Testament studies: J. H. Schutz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, MS.SNT 26, London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975; and B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles*, CB.NT 11, Lund, 1978. Meeks' important work on the social setting of Pauline Christianity draws on both these studies for an understanding of governance in the Pauline churches. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 111-139.

[500] Gal. 3: 1-5. Commenting on verse 4 Longenecker suggests the sense of the verse is along the following lines: 'Have you had such remarkable experiences?' In the context of verses 3 and 5 he links 'experience' in a positive way with the presence of the Spirit. Longenecker, *Galatians* in *WBC*, 104. Cf. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994, 386-387.

Two more categories of power are delineated by Emmet's taxonomy: what she terms 'legal power' and 'ritual power'. Under the former category, legal power, she includes the legal capacity of persons and authorities. The idea of legal power shares similarities with Searle's work on the construction of social reality, especially his notion of 'institutional facts'. We have already argued that the notion of 'institutional facts' sits uneasily with the grammar of theology. In an established theocracy talk of legal power would not be out of place. However, what we see in the Corinthian correspondence is the negotiation of roles and of socialisation into a new way of being in the world that pre-dated a static institutional understanding. 1 Corinthians provides us with a case study on the genetics of a new expression of relational reality. As such it provides fertile ground for any description of the effects on the social and anthropological order. Paul's strategy is to redefine the very foundations of human identity and relationship.[501] Alexandra Brown says of 1 Corinthians: 'Here we encounter a text that is fundamentally concerned to promote a new way of *being* in the world, namely, a way characterized by unity and reconciliation, by eliciting a new way of *knowing* "according to the cross"'(Brown's emphases).[502]

Of greater relevance to the Corinthian context is what Emmet calls 'ritual power'. Under this category she lists the following possibilities: causal efficacy in a magical sense; performatory utterances; institutionalising of the charismatic power of grace; and expression and canalising or channelling of corporate sentiment.[503] For our purposes 'corporate sentiment' can be understood in terms of the church community. The problem however is this: Paul is addressing a situation where there exists an on-going struggle for the operative corporate sentiment. This was a church community characterised by 'divisions' (11: 18), 'jealousy and quarreling' (3: 3), 'arrogant people' (4: 19), 'boasting' (5: 6), 'grievances' and legal proceedings between members (6: 1) and 'disorder' (14: 33). In order to defend some notion of

[501] It is the transforming nature of the gospel that represents a direct challenge to the strategies of radical reader-response theory. As Thiselton explains it is not the response of the audience that determines the message; rather, it is the response of the audience that determines their identity. Thiselton, op. cit. 16.

[502] For this reason Brown uses the category of 'apocalyptic' to identify the genre of Paul's discourse in 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 16. Brown, op. cit. 12.

[503] Emmet, op. cit. 54.

collaborative approach we need to keep Paul's introductory remarks in sight: 'To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours' (1: 2). For Paul, the common ground for questions of identity, membership and practice is always the same: Jesus Christ. As Thiselton has observed, Paul produces a christological response to a political and ecclesial problem.[504] It is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that provides the only possible basis for cohesion among believers. Paul's word of the cross cannot properly be described or classified as ritualistic.

Whilst the foregoing discussion has proved of some worth by indicating the complexity of an apparently straightforward concept like 'power', none of Emmet's categories really capture the dynamic of Paul's utterance of the cross. Clearly, Paul is making a power claim for his word of the cross and by extension Paul's own power status is involved. But the force of Paul's argument is precisely not that this word of the cross is part of his own self-evaluation or even of his own plans. Indeed even the very source of the power is the powerlessness of the cross. According to Paul, God chooses to transform the conditions of relational reality through an event of supreme powerlessness.[505] Paul asserts that this expression of power not only acts as a corrective to human aspirations of power and achievement but also is, for the church body, the very possibility of relationship with God and, consequently, between human beings. In the words of Schrage, for Paul the cross is 'the foundation of *transformed existence*'.[506]

Not only does Turner's contribution highlight the underanalysis of the BLTP definition of P, it draws attention to the way in which power is an 'essentially

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[504] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 118.

[505] For a similar perspective see Tomlin, G., *The Power of the Cross: Theology and the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther and Pascal*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999, 100.

[506] Schrage, W., *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 7/1-3, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, and Zürich and Düsseldorf: Benziger Verlag, Vol. 1, 1991, 165 quoted in Thiselton, op. cit. 153n.

contested concept'.[507] He continues: 'P is a category such that its identification is subject to multiple criteria; the criteria are relative and the relative importance of the various and multiple criteria is unsettled and open to dispute and furthermore this is recognised by the users of the category and is held by them to be compatible with the admission that what is at stake is one category, interpreted variously and multiply, and not merely a multiplicity of overlapping categories.'[508] The point is that P is rarely a stable variable mutually assumed between the members of the participation framework. Once this is conceded, and certainly the evidence from Paul's discourse to the Corinthians would suggest as much, then the BLTP needs revising. Importantly, the BLTP needs revising in two ways: firstly, it needs revising on its own terms along the lines suggested by Turner; and, secondly, in theological terms, it needs revising from the perspective of Paul's Christology.

In defending Paul's discourse strategy against Foucault's hermeneutic of suspicion, Tomlin explains that 'Paul's appeal for imitation is in fact an appeal to imitate his voluntary *surrender* of relationships based on social, spiritual or intellectual power or privilege.' Tomlin concludes: 'Paul's *theologia crucis* presents a vision of community life which resists claims to power by modelling itself on the self-giving and powerlessness of Christ, and the social self-lowering of his apostle (Tomlin's emphasis).'[509] However we understand power, for Paul everything is determined according to the wisdom of the cross. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that neither Brown and Levinson's instrumental notion of power or even Emmet's thoughtful taxonomy captures the power play involved in the word of the cross.

7.2 'D': Social distance (and Affect) in Paul's Utterance of the Cross

In the BLTP 'D' stands for the perception of social distance between S and H. According to Brown and Levinson: 'D is a symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference within which S and H stand for the purpose of...an act'.[510] In

[507] Turner, 'W_x', 51.

[508] Ibid. 51.

[509] Tomlin, op. cit. 99.

[510] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 76.

particular, D is measured by the regular and frequent exchange of positive politeness. Barton cautions that any evaluation of social values (here, the scope of D and P) in relation to Paul's discourse will count for little without a sense of how social values and structures played out in Judaism and the Greco-Roman world.[511] Fortunately, research data is extensive, especially in relation to 1 Corinthians. For instance, we know that Greco-Roman society was hierarchical in which people 'were valued according to certain socially recognised criteria of worth'. Amongst these criteria Barton lists 'birth, social class, ethnic origins, gender, education, wealth, rank, physical or intellectual prowess, patronage and personal achievements on behalf of the common good'.[512] In contrast, Paul views the church as a new socio-political entity in which all have a common identity in Christ. Indeed his pastoral appeal reminds a large section of the community of their humble origins: Consider your own call brothers and sisters: not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth (1: 26).[513] And to the 'stronger' element Paul reminds them of their common cause with, and responsibility to, the 'weak'.[514] Barton writes: '(Paul's) letter shows that this church in the Roman colony of Corinth reflected the social competetiveness and sensitivity to status that permeated Roman society, and it did so in a quite acute and complex way by virtue of the fact that it brought together into a new society people who would normally have been social rivals or even socially segregated from each other.'[515]

In view of the social tensions characterised by factionalism and the presence of discord, the cross is specifically invoked to challenge and resolve the causes of social distance within the community. Dunn writes: 'Those who made Christ crucified their standard...opted for an alternative value system which (should have!) turned upside down customary notions of honour and shame and prestige...Hence this should also be the yardstick by which they measured their own responsibilities towards one

[511] Barton, 'Social Values and Structures' in *DNTB*, 1128.

[512] Ibid. 1128.

[513] For a summary of the importance of this verse for studies on the social status of Paul's converts see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 25-27.

[514] See, for instance, Paul's discussion of meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8) and his reprimand for abuses at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11: 17-22).

[515] Barton, op. cit. 1129.

another (8: 11), the model for their own conduct as it was for Paul.'[516] For Paul, the implications of the cross should be determinative for the nature and structure of the field of the church. Paul's Christ centred anthropology represents and presupposes a direct challenge to the causes of social distance. There is an anticipation of a new social order in Christ and Paul's discourse reflects what Brown refers to as an 'apocalyptic disclosure'.[517] Whilst we do get an insight into the vulnerability he experienced when he first came amongst the community (2: 3), Paul's apocalyptic understanding of the collective 'body' means that the nature and extent of D is qualified in important ways by the relational framework of the new church.[518] In terms of linguistic clues for this new understanding of the social we can point to his familiar use of the term *αδελφοι* (brothers) to reflect this new-found solidarity in Christ.

In the Greek context *αδελφοι* denoted familial ties and this is precisely the force of Paul's use of the term. Commenting on its occurrence in 1 Cor. 1: 10 and 11, Thiselton explains:

(i) 'within the same Christian family tensions and estrangements are inappropriate;
(ii) that fellow believers deserve the mutual loyalty and respect which belongs within one family; and
(iii) that the implicit rebuke has been softened through the signal of a bond of affection.'[519]

Brown and Levinson suspect that lower classes have a higher degree of solidarity marked by positive politeness. Conversely, the further up the class system the social system is 'constructed in a stern and cold architecture of social distance, asymmetry

[516] Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 104.

[517] Brown explains that 'without using the apocalypse genre, Paul adopts and adapts the essential theological perspective of that genre, namely, the perspective characterized by expectation of a future reign of God, confirmed by present revelatory experience.' Brown, op. cit. 13.

[518] Paul's theology does not mean that he disregards many social conventions of interaction.

[519] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 114-5.

and resentment of impositions'.[520] This intuition seems to have some basis in the context of the Corinthian church where the face-threatening nature of Paul's discourse is felt more keenly by the strong: those who consider themselves 'wise' and 'spiritual'.

According to Turner, the perception of social distance is subject to another related variable 'A' (affect). Briefly, affect concerns the subjective feelings and perceptions an individual holds towards another person. For instance, do I like them? Do they prompt in me good feelings? Do I feel at ease in their presence? Following Slugoski and Turnbull, Turner proposes adding A to the calculation of the weightiness of a given face-threatening act.[521] In view of Paul's own comments (2: 3-4), issues to do with affect may well prove an interesting and important line of inquiry for understanding the interactional dynamics of Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church. Consequently, the revised formula now looks like this:

$$W_x = D^{1-n}(S,H) + A^{1-n}(S,H) + P_1{}^{1-n}/P_2{}^{1-n}/P_3{}^{1-n}/P_4{}^{1-n}(H,S) + R^{1-n}{}_x$$

7.3 'R': Paul's Situational and Cultural Ranking of his Utterance of the Cross as Threat to Face

We will recall that the BLTP states that 'R is a culturally and situationally defined ranking of impositions by the degree to which they are considered to interfere with an agent's wants of self-detemination or approval (his negative- and positive-face wants)'.[522] Their definition continues:

> 'In general there are probably two such scales or ranks that are emically identifiable for negative-face FTAs: a ranking of impositions in proportion to the expenditure a) of services (including the provision of time) and b) of goods (including non-material goods like information, as well as the expression of regard and other face payments)...For FTAs against positive face, the ranking

[520] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 245.

[521] See Slugoski and Turnbull, 'Sarcasm, banter and social relations' in *JLSP* 7, 1988, 101-121.

[522] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 77.

involves an assessment of the amount of 'pain' given to H's face, based on the discrepancy between H's own desired self-image and that presented...in the FTA. There will be cultural rankings of aspects of positive face (for example, 'success', 'niceness', 'beauty', 'generosity'), which can be re-ranked in particular circumstances...And there are personal (idiosyncratic) functions on these rankings; some people object to certain kinds of FTAs more than others.'[523]

The importance of this cultural and situational ranking can be illustrated with two quite different examples. Currently, in parts of Western Europe innocent questions about 'home' country put to some economic migrants or asylum seekers can constitute an extreme threat to positive and negative face. In BLTP terms, it has the potential to threaten 'H's own desired self-image' and might have serious implications for 'goods' and 'services'. In first century Palestinian Judaism the notion of a crucified Messiah was unthinkable and propagation of the idea could lead to execution for blasphemy (Acts 7: 54ff.). For Paul, this belief had to be revised in light of his encounter with the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus. In this context, Welborn's recent study has reinforced the cultural and situational shock represented by Paul's proclamation of the cross. Associating himself with the cross places the apostolic witness firmly with an event that stands over and against acceptable standards of judgment and taste in the world. Welborn argues that the category of 'fool' carries with it a reference to the theatre: 'Because...in the cross of Christ God has affirmed nothings and nobodies, he [Paul] is able to embrace the role of the fool as the authentic mode of his own existence. Paul's appropriation of the role of the fool is a profound...manoeuvre, given the way that Jesus was executed.'[524]

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[523] Ibid. 77-78.

[524] Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1 – 4 in the Comic-Philosophical Tradition, JSNT* Supplement Series 293, Edinburgh: T & T Clark International/Continuum Imprint 2005, 250. Notwithstanding reservations about Welborn's rejection of belief in the unity of 1 Corinthians, Thiselton is appreciative of Welborn's new perspective on the interface of the cross and apostolic suffering with social and cultural estimations of these values. Thiselton, Review, *JTS*, Vol. 57, 2006, 277-279.

The point is simply that a certain amount of cultural and situational knowledge is required in order to assess the ranking of a given FTA. Turner claims that 'if R-values are crucial to the computation of perceived social relationships, then their determination becomes *the* major site of research and analysis'.[525] He concludes that the ethnographic detail required to assess the ranking of a given FTA might prove overwhelming.[526] However, to provide some theoretical manageability he appeals to Bourdieu's strategy of prefacing any description or analysis with the words 'everything takes place as if...' According to Turner this operates like a logical quantifier to reduce the ontological burden of the task to the 'liability of the epistemological'.[527] In respect to this suggestion Verschueren's observation is apposite: 'Reduction suspends the existence of the world, not because it would be doubted, but because it is unimportant for the philosophical endeavours which have to concentrate not so much on the known as on the act of knowing, the manner in which knowledge of the world comes about...'[528] Turner's proposal changes the BLTP formula notation 'R' to: '$^{as\ if}R^{1-n}{}_{x}$' where, as noted above, the numeric superscript indicates some pre-determined numeric scale.[529] Suitably revised to inflect this suggestion the BLTP formula now reads:

$$W_x = D^{1-n}(S,H) + A^{1-n}(S,H) + P_1{}^{1-n}/P_2{}^{1-n}/P_3{}^{1-n}/P_4{}^{1-n}(H,S) + {}^{as\ if}R^{1-n}{}_{x}$$

The question remains: can a unified ontology reduce specifically theological considerations to a model or theory of social reality along the lines suggested by Searle, as we saw in chapter four, or by the BLTP and Turner's proposed revision? To the extent that 'R' is a 'situationally' determined variable we can, with caution, respond positively. It would also be disingenuous to suggest that the realisation of an utterance or series of utterances does not reflect cultural considerations as well. From

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[525] Turner, K., op. cit, 55.

[526] Ibid. 56.

[527] Ibid. 56. Bourdieu in turn takes the idea from Vaihinger. See Vaihinger, H., *Philosophy of 'As If': A System of the Theoretical Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind.* 2nd Edition, London: Routledge quoted in Turner, K., op. cit. 56.

[528] Verschueren, *HP*, 404.

[529] Turner's pessimistic conclusion is that this variable will remain 'something of a methodological and epistemological black hole in the BLTP...' Turner, K., op. cit. 56.

a theological perspective these moves become more acceptable when the term 'social' is transposed into the register of relational. Again, the importance of this switch in register does not foreclose the nature of the speech and hermeneutical situations. For this reason a proposal put forward by Locher and Watts is worth consideration.

Locher and Watts are appreciative of the advances made by the BLTP. They comment: 'It provides a breadth of insights into human behaviour which no other theory has yet offered, and it has served as a touchstone for researchers who have felt the need to go beyond it...it is clearly in a class of its own in terms of comprehensiveness, operationalizability, thoroughness and level of argumentation.'[530] There is a 'but'. In view of Goffman's understanding of 'face', Locher and Watts propose to extend what they see as the unnecessarily restrictive scope of the BLTP: 'politeness is only a relatively small part of relational work and must be seen in relation to other types of interpersonal meaning.'[531] In consideration of the BLTP, Goffman's approach to face, the social anthropology of Bourdieu and empirical data they draw the following conclusions. Firstly, they prefer the term 'relational work' to 'face-work' on the basis that 'human beings do not restrict themselves to forms of cooperative communication in which face-threatening is mitigated'. In their schema every social encounter (every 'mask' (face) we put on) betrays its own form of relational work. Secondly, they maintain that 'no utterance is inherently polite'. Rather, politeness is something that can only be determined in the particular case. Thirdly, on the basis of a distinction between politeness$_1$ (intuitive understanding of politeness in any given social encounter) and politeness$_2$ (metapragmatic notion employed by the BLTP), they suggest that every encounter is assessed for its relational character using politeness$_1$. They say: 'If the researcher is interested in the "polite" level of relational work, the focus should be on the discursive struggle over what constitutes appropriate/politic behaviour.'[532]

The term 'relational work' is attractive to our proposed framework of relational reality and Locher and Watts make some substantive points that cohere with our

[530] Locher and Watts, 'Politeness theory and relational work' in *JPR* 1, 2005, 9-10.

[531] Ibid. 10.

[532] Ibid. 28-29. See also Watts, *Politeness*, 2003 for an extended treatment of these positions.

consideration of Bourdieu's social theory and our subsequent discussion of Paul's anthropology. In Thiselton's resistance to hermeneutic foreclosure there is also something appealing about a case-by-case analysis of a given speech situation. However, what the BLTP intuits is an assumption of universality at some level of anthropology. We noted Roger Sell's comment that whilst people and contexts may differ in many ways there is much that is the same between people. We can have it both ways on this one. We can 'borrow' the notion of 'relational work' and make it subordinate to the superordinate notion of relational reality, whilst retaining the equally insightful idea of the FTA. This way we can retain the intuitively important idea that the person is a sacred thing along side the corporate identity implicated by the term 'relational work'. Further, we can concede that every situation represents its own unique features, whilst holding on to the belief that many things remain the same.[533]

7.4 Bourdieu's Notions of the Field and the Habitus

So far we have discussed Turner's suggested revisions to the original BLTP social variables in the light of Paul's FTA of the word of the cross. However, the novelty and importance of Turner's proposals lies more especially in his appeal to the social anthropology of Pierre Bourdieu. It is this wider social and anthropological frame that represents a more realistic 'assessment of the situated relationship'.[534] Ultimately, Turner makes each of the BLTP original variables relative to Bourdieu's notions of the field and the habitus.

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[533] In his discussion of the R-value Turner notes this tension between what he calls the ethnographic and the philosophical and he notes: 'The torch that the BLTP picks up from the ethnography of speaking is precisely the emphasis on the importance of relational meaning with respect to, or instead of, referential meaning...' Turner, K., op. cit. 54.

[534] Ibid. 1. Within biblical studies and theology there are very few engagements with Bourdieu's work. One example has been Berlinerblau's appeal to Bourdieu's notion of 'doxa' as a corrective to certain accounts of the use of ideology in the Old Testament. 'Doxa' approximates to the habitus. It draws attention to the ways in which an author's own worldview is conditioned by his or her historical situatedness. Understood in this way it is problematic to attribute more extreme forms of eccentric or novel ideology. See Berlinerblau, Jacques, 'Ideology, Pierre Bourdieu's Doxa, and the Hebrew Bible' in *Semeia* 87, 2000, 193-214.

7.4.1 The Field

Turner appropriates two concepts from Bourdieu in order to elucidate further the nature and scope of the W (weightiness or seriousness) factor for a given face-threatening act $(FTA)_x$. In response to the charge that the BLTP (like SAT) falls prey to the 'Occasionalist Illusion', Turner draws upon Bourdieu's notion of 'field' (*champ*).[535] According to Turner, this illusion results in an unjustified concentration on the immediate situation in which an utterance is made without due attention being paid to the wider context of what Wittgenstein calls a 'life form'. Turner defines 'field' as 'a space of relations' in which 'the employment of this notion underscores the relational, as opposed to substantivist, nature of the theory of which it is a part'.[536] Again, the influence of Wittgenstein is apparent in Bourdieu's allusion to the related notion of 'game' to explicate his application of 'fields'. Bourdieu writes: 'The theory of fields – and which could be called the 'plurality of worlds' – will end with a consideration of the plurality of logics corresponding to different worlds, that is, to different fields as places in which different kinds of common sense, different commonplace ideas and different systems of topics, all irreducible to each other, are constructed.'[537] In this way, any given utterance (and the W factor thereof) is bracketed within the social space of a field. Importantly, Bourdieu observes that 'the notion of field presupposes a break with the realist representation that leads us to reduce the effect of the milieu to the effect of direct action as actualized during an interaction'. He continues: 'It is the structure of the relations constitutive of the space of the field that governs the form that relations of visible interactions may take and the very content of the experience that agents may have of them'.[538]

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[535] According to Gadamer, it is the *sensus communis* with its interest in the local 'circumstances' rather than the universal proofs of reason that provides the more appropriate framework for elucidating 'the moral and historical existence of humanity'. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 22-23.

[536] Ibid. 11.

[537] Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, Cambridge: Polity, 1990, 110.

[538] Ibid. 192.

This notion of 'field' coheres with Webster's concern that due attention be paid to the particular case or regional nature of biblical and theological interpretation. Accordingly, he writes that 'linking understanding and use encourages Christian theology to shake itself free of its investments in an anthropology focussed on acts of interpretation, and to give much more attention to locality, to the field within which interpreters and their acts have real depth and extension'.[539] The sensitivity to the relational and participatory framework of a given utterance or act of interpretation within the field not only provides us with the opportunity to invoke theological categories but also requires it. In his treatment of the meaning of σάρξ in 1 Corinthians 5: 5 Thiselton observes: 'Paul enters the horizons of the Corinthians only in order to transform them. Thus our language-games [Wittgenstein's term] are placed, once again, within...the framework of the message of the cross. And this, in turn, conditions once again the logic of their terms.'[540]

7.4.2 The Habitus

The BLTP represents an attempt from the side of linguistic pragmatics to integrate the representational and social functions of language. This is a worthy cause. It seeks to indicate the sorts of social pressures on linguistic production. However, another clear aim of the original model was to introduce to the field of sociology a 'satisfactory theory of action'.[541] This is controversial ground in sociology and, amongst many others, Bourdieu is critical of any version of so-called 'rational action theory'.[542]

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[539] Webster, *Word and Church*, 60; cf. 71. Webster is concerned that this emphasis on so-called 'use' may lead to a victory of ecclesiology over theology. He writes: '...an anthropology of the uses of the interpreting community is still an anthropology, and more is needed. The ecclesial co-efficient is graspable only within a larger field, a field defined above all not by Christian or church use but by the presence and activity of God.' Ibid. 61. However, when sufficient attention is given to the speech situation, the threat to face and the participation framework in particular, the 'presence and activity' of God's Spirit comes to the fore. In other words a careful description of the speech situation of 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 16 helps to elucidate the grammar of theology.

[540] Thiselton, 'The Meaning of σάρξ' in *SJT* 26, 1973, 216.

[541] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 84.

[542] Bourdieu has said that 'individual finalism, which conceives action as determined by the conscious aiming at explicitly posed goals, is a well-founded illusion: the sense of the game which implies an

Turner joins the debate on Bourdieu's side arguing that despite best intentions the BLTP still falls victim to the subjectivist illusion. Turner explains that the illusion '...makes the individual agent entirely responsible for the rational selection of individual strategies to perform facework and it thus forgets that rational strategy selection is not always a matter for individual responsibility (nor is it always rational) and that the repertoire of strategies is not the same for all classes of individuals.'[543]

To challenge this illusion Turner appeals to Bourdieu's concept of the habitus.[544] The habitus proves difficult to define. By it Bourdieu is attempting to capture the processes of socialization that are themselves constitutive of what we call the social world. Sociological analysis fails to describe adequately this social world when it forgets that society is something that is being generated through history by people who themselves are historically conditioned. In this forgetting, people can easily become 'objects' of study by social scientists. Bourdieu writes:

> 'To speak of habitus is to include in the object the knowledge which the agents, who are part of the object, have of the object, and the contribution this knowledge makes to the reality of the object...all knowledge of the social world, is an act of construction implementing schemes of thought and expression...the principle of this structuring activity is not...a system of universal forms and categories but a system of internalised, embodied schemes which, having been constituted in the course of collective history, are acquired in the course of individual history and function in their *practical* state, *for practice...*' (Bourdieu's emphasis) [545]

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anticipated adjustment of habitus to the necessities and to the probabilities inscribed in the field does present itself under the appearance of a successful 'aiming at' the future.' Wacquant, L., 'Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu', *Sociological Theory* Vol. 7, 1989, 43-44. Cf. Jenkins' critical comments on Bourdieu's opposition to rational action theory (RAT). Jenkins, *Bourdieu*, 72-74.

[543] Turner, op. cit. 61.

[544] Ibid. 61. For a critical introduction to the habitus see Jenkins, op. cit. 74-84 and 91-99.

[545] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 467. Cf. Bourdieu, (Trans.) R. Nice, *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, 56.

Elsewhere Bourdieu provides this explanation of the habitus:

> 'Habitus is both a system of schemata of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices. And, in both of these dimensions, its operation expresses the social position in which it was elaborated. Consequently, habitus produces practices and representations which are available for classification, which are objectively differentiated; however, they are immediately perceived as such only by those agents who possess the code, the classificatory schemes necessary to understand their social meaning. Habitus thus implies a "sense of one's place" but also a "sense of the place of others".'[546]

It is also important to see how this attempt to account for the historically conditioned nature of the social self brings us back to issues that remain foundational for understanding the hermeneutic problematic. For instance, in hermeneutic philosophy the idea of the 'life-world' approximates to Bourdieu's notion of the habitus.[547] Thiselton explains that the life-world 'yields routine patterns which we scarcely notice because we take them for granted'.[548] The habitus can therefore be understood as sharing important similarities with the German humanist tradition. For instance, in *Truth and Method* Gadamer takes considerable care to explicate the influence of the humanist tradition on hermeneutical theory and to identify the way in which the methods of natural science and inductive logic threaten the integrity of the project associated with the important German concepts of '*bildung*' (culture), '*sensus communis*', 'judgment' and 'taste'.[549] *Bildung* or culture includes further important notions such as 'memory'[550] and 'tact'[551]. It is on the basis of these sorts of ideas

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[546] Bourdieu, *Other Words*, 131. There are points of contact with aspects of the habitus and what Ernst Fuchs calls '*das Einverständis*' or 'common understanding', even 'empathy'. See Fuchs, *Marburger Hermeneutik*, 171-181, 239-243 and Thiselton, 'New Hermeneutic', 311.

[547] On the topical structuring of the lifeworld see Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 31.

[548] Thiselton, *NH*, 609.

[549] See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 9-42.

[550] Gadamer notes that 'keeping in mind, forgetting, and recalling belong to the historical constitution of man and are themselves part of his history and his Bildung.' Gadamer, op. cit. 15.

Gadamer defends his notions of prejudice[552] and of tradition[553]. Here is another passage on the way in which the habitus takes account of the temporal process or, better, historically effected consciousness:

> 'The principle of historical action...is not found in a subject who would confront society in the manner of an object constituted in externality. It resides neither in consciousness nor in things but in the relation between two states of the social, that is, between history objectified in things, in the form of institutions, and history incarnate in the body, in the form of that system of durable dispositions I call habitus. The body is in the social world but the social world is within the body.'[554]

It is because of this social and historical situatedness that Bourdieu suggests that it takes something like a 'second birth' in order to transition to a new habitus.[555] What certain appropriations of SAT and other objectified models of social action fail to appreciate is that people's practices and behavioural patterns are developed and established over long periods of time to the extent that these ways of being in the world are now firmly 'embedded' in the social identity of a given person or people group. Bourdieu puts it succinctly when he defines the habitus as 'embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history'. Further, it is 'the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product.'[556] The realisation that a person's habitus is something that is learned at a subconscious level over a long period of time is suggestive of why Paul's preaching and pastoral example had seemingly hit up against such resistance and misunderstanding. No doubt this is why his pastoral discourse is marked heavily by the familiar indicative/imperative structure and addresses a wide range of practical concerns, including sexual relations (1 Cor. 5:

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[551] Gadamer defines 'tact' as 'a special sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them, for which knowledge from general principles does not suffice.' Ibid. 16.

[552] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 265ff. Cf. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 9f.

[553] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 280f.

[554] Ibid. 190.

[555] Bourdieu, *Logic*, 68.

[556] Ibid. 56.

1-13; 7: 1ff.), conduct at the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11: 17ff.), and attitudes towards litigation (1 Cor. 6: 1-8).

Taken together with the notion of fields, the habitus provides the anthropological appendix needed for Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Bourdieu's concerns are not unrelated to the humanism of hermeneutic philosophy and, perhaps more surprisingly, Pauline anthropology. As we will see, Paul's discussion of the 'body' shows remarkable understanding for the ways in which questions of identity are closely tied up with relational networks, beliefs and practices. In one place Bourdieu says:

> 'Practical belief is not a "state of mind", still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of institutional dogmas and doctrines ("beliefs"), but rather a state of the body. Doxa is the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense.'[557]

However, it would not be the whole picture if we left the discussion there. If in some respects there is a coincidence of interest between Bourdieu's anthropology and the anthropology in Paul's writings then in other respects they differ considerably in terms of their respective beliefs about human agency and wider reality.

Sell argues that human agents' 'relative autonomy and co-adaptability' is a prerequisite for meaningful communication. Further, it enables people 'to distance themselves from their own immediate context, to empathise with somebody whose context is different, to weigh the two contexts and their life-worlds against each other, with a change to the status quo as one possible outcome.'[558] In turn this principle means that 'the process of communicative flux from historical state to state is not completely predictable, because not completely determined.'[559] Determinism affects two quite different traditions. For instance Sell criticises traditional linguistic pragmatics for being overly fixated on synchrony to the detriment of wider historical

[557] Bourdieu, *Logic,* 68.

[558] Sell, op. cit. 16

[559] Ibid. 16.

processes that allow for a state to become a process. He claims that a method that fails to be sensitive to this dynamic of the process risks viewing the human agent as 'passively robotic, socially conditioned to understand and behave in certain fixed ways.'[560] In this context he reserves special criticism for Claude Lévi-Strauss and his appropriation of linguistics for his programme of cultural anthropology:

> 'Lévi-Strauss's seminal error was ignoring the following words of Saussure himself: "Language (*langue*) is not a function of the speaker; it is a product that is passively assimilated by the individual [...]. Speech (*parole*), on the contrary, is an individual act. It is wilful and intellectual"...No matter whether the structured system be that of language, the psyche, society or culture, human beings operate it, and are not to be conflated with it.'[561]

Sell is appreciative of the position taken by Raymond Tallis. Tallis argues for a proper dialectic between what Sell refers to as 'positioned structuration' with 'elements that are more arbitrarily personal'.[562] Sell explains: 'In this way he offers precisely the philosophical grounding needed for a pragmatics that is sensitive both to contexts in their full historical inflection and power of influence, and to the human dynamism by which, in communication, they are jostled together and changed.'[563]

Sociologist Richard Jenkins is also critical of Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction and social reproduction for being overly deterministic. He says: 'It fails to allow or account for social change at the level of the system and does not allow for meaningful agency or process at the individual level. It is ahistorical. In general, it is a self-perpetuating, mechanical model of society which sits ill with observed reality.'[564] The following extract from Bourdieu's discussion of the classificatory

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[560] Ibid. 16.

[561] Ibid. 16.

[562] Sell, op. cit. 16. Cf. Tallis, R., *Enemies of Hope: A Critique of Contemporary Pessimism, Irrationalism, Anti-Humanism and Counter-Enlightenment*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997, 228.

[563] Sell, op. cit. 16-17.

[564] Jenkins, *Bourdieu*, 118. Behind this determinism Jenkins identifies an inherently objectivist view of the world in Bourdieu's writing. Despite his best intentions to transcend the dualism of subject and object, Jenkins maintains that Bourdieu conflates ontology with epistemology and remains stuck inside

systems of socialization provide some justification for the position taken by both Sell and Jenkins:

> 'Thus, through the differentiated and differentiating conditionings associated with the different conditions of existence, through the exclusions and inclusions, unions (marriages, affairs, alliances etc.) which govern the social structure and the structuring force it exerts, through all the hierarchies and classifications inscribed in objects (especially cultural products), in institutions (for example, the educational system) or simply in language, and through all the judgements, verdicts, gradings and warnings imposed by the institutions specially designed for this purpose, such as the family or the educational system, or constantly arising from the meetings and interaction of everyday life, the social order is progressively inscribed in people's minds.'[565]

Notwithstanding the helpful way in which the habitus helps us to see the limitation in dichotomies of subject/object and individual/society, it cannot be the case that there is no place for rational action theories. The trick is to qualify carefully any appeal to a given theoretical model. In view of this tension in social theory and cultural anthropology, Bourdieu's notion of 'struggle' provides some sort of theoretical register with which to convey this unresolved tension.[566] Bourdieu says that 'commonplaces and classificatory systems are the stake of struggles between the groups they characterize and counterpose...' And so, in 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 5 we might view the stake of struggles to be on one side the classificatory systems *indicated* by what is deemed 'wise' or 'spiritual' and, on the other, the classificatory schemes implicated by Paul's word of the cross. Importantly, it is the occasion of

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the old paradigm of Modernism. Ibid. 91. See also Margolis's criticism of Bourdieu's commitment to the structuralism of binarism. Margolis, 'Pierre Bourdieu: Habitus and the Logic of Practice' in (Ed.) Shusterman, *Bourdieu*, 66-67.

[565] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 470-1.

[566] On a micro level the notion of struggle accords with Verschueren's observation that politeness is not primarily about harmony but more about conflict. Verschueren, 'Whose discipline? Some critical reflections on linguistic pragmatics' in *JP* 31, 1999, 875.

'struggle' or conflict between Paul and the church that provides the community with the opportunity to transform.[567]

In Bourdieu's schema this idea of 'struggle' alerts us to the nature of the habitus because it is only when we experience some threat or disruption to our practices that we recognise them for what they are.[568] Within the terms of theological anthropology the word of the cross stands over and against the existing classificatory systems of the 'flesh' or, in Bourdieu's terms, the embodied practices and beliefs that characterise the habitus of the members in the Corinthian church. Bourdieu observes: 'Only through the struggle do the internalised limits become boundaries, barriers that have to be moved.'[569] Paul's word of the cross was (and remains) an FTA precisely because it stands against the condition of the human being in its 'fleshliness'; that is, in Bourdieu's analysis, engaged in a struggle for 'power', 'domination', 'strength' and 'control'. These values are easily compatible with the honour-shame culture of a city impressed by status and celebrity. To borrow another phrase from Bourdieu, 1 Cor 1: 18-2: 5 represents 'the evocative power of an utterance which puts things in a different light'.[570]

We have indicated the way in which Bourdieu's social anthropology can make an important contribution by raising concerns more traditionally associated with the hermeneutical problematic. Whilst agreeing with Turner that such considerations qualify the extent to which an MP is 'free' to choose strategies, the inclusion of the field and the habitus to our relational hermeneutic cannot imply a surrender to social,

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[567] It is notable that the gospels are characterised by Jesus' struggles with various groupings: the religious order, the crowd, the political order and the spiritual order of the demonic. It is only against these various 'struggles' that Jesus' identity and his mission are understood.

[568] There are associations here with what field linguists call 'culture shock': the experience of adapting to a new culture and/or language.

[569] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 480. Francis Martin also talks in terms of conflict. He writes: 'We need only to read...the intensity of [Paul's] exhortation in chapters 6 and 8 of the letter to the Romans, the exhortation in Ephesians 4: 17-24 and elsewhere to see that for Paul and the whole Christian tradition the moment of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the beginning of real conflict between the new life of God and the old life of the flesh.' Martin, op. cit. 5.

[570] Ibid. 479.

cultural or historical determinism. This point also stands against any incipient holism, including the historical ontology of the Hegelian tradition and its vestiges in Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics. Within the limits of space all we can do is raise this as a caveat with a proposal to qualify our understanding of the habitus accordingly.[571] As we shall see, some considerable support for this suggestion is provided in Pauline anthropology.

In light of Turner's suggestion to incorporate the notions of field and habitus within the calculation of W_x, the BLTP formula needs to be revised along the following lines:

$$W_x = \{_{Habitus}[_{Field}D^{1-n}(S,H) + A^{1-n}(S,H) + P_1{}^{1-n}/P_2{}^{1-n}/P_3{}^{1-n}/P_4{}^{1-n} + {}^{as\ if}R^{1-n}{}_x]\}$$

Recalling Thiselton's comments about a range of tools or approaches to the hermeneutic task, we see how a revised model of the BLTP brings each of these disparate elements together: the grammatical, the horizons of expectation and interpersonal meaning. Turner now modifies the original BLTP to include not only the context of field but the field itself must be understood against a particular 'habitus'. From the perspective of theology this wider socio-historical and anthropological context needs to be situated within the world understood as in some fundamental way to be constituted by a certain sort of relational reality. It is important to point out that relational reality as it is being proposed in this thesis has implications for both the field and the habitus. In dogmatic terms, Webster describes the hermeneutical situation as 'an episode in the history of God's relation to humanity in his works of creation, salvation and perfection.' He continues: 'That history...is a history which is essentially twofold: a history of God's acts, acts which in turn evoke, sustain and bring to their final telos human acts; these human acts are truly human

[571] Indeed this is precisely where a comparative study of Searle's notion of the Background with Bourdieu's notion of the habitus might result in some fruitful research. For an overview of Searle's notion of the Background see Appendix A. In this thesis further qualification will be supplied when we consider Pauline anthropology in the next section.

precisely in glad consent to the shapely givenness of reality, including their own human reality.'[572]

Turner concedes that a theory of fields can only be worked out in what he calls an 'empirical application'.[573] Whilst Theissen's sociological study of 1 Corinthians does not draw on the conceptual framework provided by Bourdieu, his work was seminal for appropriating the tools of social science for the task of biblical interpretation. Before turning our attention to the quite different anthropology of Paul's writings we turn to the way in which Theissen has argued for what he calls a plausibility basis for the emergence of Christianity in Corinth.

7.5 Rationalising the Emergence of the Field of the Corinthian Church in terms of Gerd Theissen's Sociological Plausibility Basis

In Bourdieu's terms, Paul contends for the social or, better, the relational space of a new field. The emergence of a new field is, according to Bourdieu, characterised by a power 'struggle' for the economic metaphor of 'capital' afforded by the particular field.[574] The terminology of Bourdieu's model is apposite for the Corinthian situation. Thiselton has described carefully the complex socio-economic status of first century Corinth. Paul's cruciform kerygma presents an alternative social arena in which something new is at stake for those involved and those who would be involved. Whilst to evoke Marxist categories might be anachronistic, the notion of 'struggle' does foreground the inherently political dimension of the emerging Christian community. It also reflects well the lower social status of the majority of the community. The enormity of the challenge in Paul's address is this: how does someone re-learn his or her way of being in the world? As we have already noted, Bourdieu himself comes very close to employing New Testament categories to explain the possibility when he says: '...one cannot enter this magic circle (field) by

[572] Webster, *Word and Church*, 64.

[573] Turner, K., op. cit. 59n.

[574] Theissen refers to this sort of discussion as 'conflict theory'. Theissen, *Social Reality*, 278.

an instantaneous decision of the will, but only by birth or by a slow process of co-option and initiation which is equivalent to a second birth.'[575]

Bourdieu's view of social change owes more to Marx and the idea that societies are controlled by the material conditions of existence. In sociological terms this alerts us to the importance of the church as a community of people who have committed themselves to what Bourdieu would call the 'practical belief' demanded of their allegiance to the Pauline gospel. However, Bourdieu also argues that powerful discourse, in and of itself, is not sufficient to move a person from one belief system with its associated way of being in the world to another.[576] In part, Bourdieu takes this line because he is inherently suspicious of the idea that people can change their habitus by a conscious rational strategy. How is it then that Paul's face-threatening utterance of the cross is an integral part of initiating and sustaining the integrity of the church community? It is worth pressing further this apparent disjunct between the emerging field of the Christian church on the one hand and, on the other, the existing fields and habitus of first century Corinth.

Gerd Theissen has argued that a sociological exegesis of Pauline Christianity is able to establish what he calls a 'sociological plausibility basis' for Pauline Christology.[577] The value of Theissen's work is that it does provide some sociological explanation for why anyone in Corinth might have been attracted to Paul's message. According to Theissen, the plausibility basis of Paul's *kerygma* can be understood in terms of the positive connections that held between certain aspects of Paul's Christology and social changes at work in the Roman Empire. Theissen proposes a plausibility basis for what he calls 'position Christology' and 'participation Christology'.[578] We have already drawn attention to the idea that Corinth represented a city of increasing opportunity. As Theissen notes, 'social mobility is an urban phenomenon'.[579] Status

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[575] Bourdieu, *Logic*, 68. Cf. John 3: 5-6. Of course, the biblical allusion should not lead to the conclusion that Bourdieu is in any sense implying an irreducible theological space – quite the opposite.

[576] Ibid. 68

[577] Theissen, op. cit. 187-201.

[578] Ibid. 189ff.

[579] Ibid. 190.

inconsistency and market forces of sorts provided slaves in particular with the prospect of advancement. Paul presents Jesus as a slave turned master, an executed criminal turned Messiah, and a cause of scandal turned into divine wisdom. Summarising the argument for a plausibility basis for position Christology Theissen identifies 'real processes of advancement in Roman-Hellenistic society' as the key. He continues: 'Faith in the exalted Lord is an offer of advancement loyalty for everyone. It demands only loyalty – neither works nor achievements. It leads to radical status dissonance, for the position of the Christian before the world can be diametrically opposite to his status before God. Faith gives in a single act what is otherwise the improbable outcome of a process spread over generations.'[580]

In terms of Paul's 'participation Christology', Theissen argues that the image of 'body' is particularly helpful in identifying a plausibility basis. Drawing on the widespread appeal to the political 'body' or cosmic 'body' in Hellenistic philosophy he concludes that the philosophical appropriation of the metaphor itself has a plausibility basis in Roman-Hellenistic society.[581] Briefly, Roman society was held together by the ruling class loyalty to Caesar. As long as this held, it mattered little how the lower classes faired. Into this sociological picture Paul's participation Christology offered to the middle and lower classes a new sense of solidarity. Importantly, Theissen notes that this was a 'new unity which did not yet exist, but which was in the process of evolving'.[582] Thus, for those outside the ruling elite 'incorporation in the body of Christ offered integration for all...'[583] He continues: 'Christology of the early congregations should not merely be seen in correlation with mobility and integration but also shows unmistakable links with social conflicts. The crucifixion itself is the expression of a conflict with the ruling class.'[584]

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[580] Ibid. 196.

[581] Ibid. 197.

[582] Ibid. 199.

[583] ibid. 200.

[584] Ibid. 200. This sort of dynamic was evident in Irish politics in the wake of the 1916 Easter Rising. The British executed Patrick Pearse, the prime mover of the Rising, and a number of the other leaders after an ineffective armed revolt. Whilst the Rising itself did not receive much popular support, things began to change quickly in the aftermath of the executions. This process was something Pearse himself had predicted. Caulfield, M., *The Easter Rebellion*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1995, 285.

It is also important to mitigate the starkness of the utterance of the cross with the context of Paul's wider teaching. In this sense, the promised privileges and status advancement entailed by the proclamation of the cross function to some extent as redressive action on the part of Paul. In other words, the weightiness of the FTA is mitigated by the attendant facework of both the implications of position Christology and participation Christology. In terms of the text, we see Paul's participation Christology worked out in his familial use of the title '*αδελφοι*' (1 Cor. 1: 10) and in his associated appeal to unity (1 Cor. 1: 10). Paul does not simply employ the metaphor of the body uncritically. In 1 Corinthians 12 especially he is careful to transform the rhetoric into something truly liberating and inclusive.[585] According to Thiselton, Paul takes 'this ideological rhetoric' 'to turn it upside down, just as he turns a status system upside down in 1: 18-2: 5.'[586]

In similar terms, Theissen notes that in Paul's use of body language 'regard for the weakest member becomes the criterion for the unity of the body.'[587] Further, the Stoic image of body includes, *ab initio*, the entire human race. For Paul body terminology is reserved for the small groups of Christians: 'Here a new bond is created by way of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism binds together "Jews and Greeks, slaves and free" (1 Cor. 12: 13). The Lord's Supper brings together rich and poor (1 Cor. 11: 17ff.).'[588] So while a plausibility basis is helpful in determining one aspect of the genetics of a new speech community, there is also present something quite new in terms of human polity. Elsewhere Theissen sets out what he calls six 'basic axioms shared by the interpretative community of the early Christians.'[589] These are (i) the personal charismatic axiom; (ii) the eschatological axiom; (iii) the conversion axiom; (iv) the axiom about the kerygma of suffering; (v) the integration

[585] For full summary of background to the cosmopolitical metaphor of body see Thiselton, op. cit. 990-994.

[586] Ibid. 993.

[587] Theissen, op. cit. 199.

[588] Ibid. 198.

[589] Ibid. 259.

axiom; and (vi) the change-of-position axiom.[590] The value in Theissen's work lies in his sensitivity to the 'social dimension' of 'the basic texts of the Christian faith' and, on this basis, his work provides useful data with which to discuss Bourdieu's notions of fields and habitus. Indeed he identifies the early church's relationship to Jesus as being 'the center of the early Christian faith'.[591] However, his work remains unnecessarily reductionist and there is some justification for heeding Martin's caveat concerning Enlightenment pre-understanding.[592]

Following Pannenberg, we retain the conviction that any proposed model of communicative action must exhibit theological as well as philosophical integrity. For Pannenberg this 'point of contact' takes place within a proper analysis of anthropology. As we continue to map out the nature of the particular case of Paul's utterance of the cross we turn now to a consideration of Pauline anthropology. The importance of this move can be understood in two ways. Firstly, we take seriously the specific relational understanding (anthropology) that governs Paul's discourse; and secondly, this anthropology represents something uniquely theological.

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[590] For the details of these axioms see ibid. 259f.

[591] Ibid. ix.

[592] According to Martin, one characteristic of fleshly exegesis is the Enlightenment prejudice in theology that rules out the possibility of God's direct involvement in the world. Martin, 'Spirit and Flesh', 18. In this context an observation made by Poythress is apposite: 'It is fashionable in theological circles to hope that maybe some way may be found to make intelligible the idea of divine revelation in the Bible by stretching the frameworks for interpreting human communication that have grown up from the Enlightenment.' Poythress, *WTJ* 50: 1, Spring 1988, 63.

Chapter 8

Some Further Refinements to our Understanding of the Situated Relationship: Pauline Anthropology and its Implications for the Notions of Face and Habitus

> '*The genuine reality of the hermeneutical process seems to me to encompass the self-understanding of the interpreter as well as what is interpreted.*' [593]
>
> Gadamer
>
> '*In Jesus Christ the Word was made flesh; Cartesian Protestantism threatens to turn flesh back into abstracted word again.*'[594]
>
> Thiselton

8.0 Introduction

Turner's criticism of the BLTP 'engine' emphasised the need for what amounts to an extensive revision of the situated relationship envisaged by any instance of social interaction. This has been helpful because it has pulled together a number of themes in the investigation so far. For instance, it has constituted a further rapprochement of analytical linguistics with the wider concerns of philosophical hermeneutics.[595] Further, we have been able to show how the limitations of an appeal to SAT need not deter us in improving on models of explanation. Finally, we have seen how Wittgenstein's anthropological turn continues to make a valuable contribution to the on-going task of understanding. However, Turner's analysis fails to engage with one important strand in the BLTP and that surrounds the question of anthropology proper.

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[593] Gadamer, 'On the Problem of Self-Understanding' in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 58.

[594] Thiselton, *PH*, 145.

[595] In this context Turner notes, 'it is interesting to notice that the switch from referential to relational meaning has already been recommended in 'mainstream' analytical philosophy'. The reference here is to Rorty. Turner, K., op. cit. 55.

In this context we recall Sell's comment noted in chapter four above: 'a theory of communication presupposes a theory of human beings.'[596]

To Turner's proper treatment of the social we need therefore to extend our anthropological understanding in the light of the evidence of the New Testament texts themselves. In terms of non-theological anthropology the BLTP does provide some good leads. This is particularly in relation to their so-called MP. It will be remembered that the MP is a rational agent with both positive and negative face wants. This model proves surprisingly fruitful for this problematic. In particular, the notion of face as a 'sacred thing' is suggestive of further reflection but represents a very 'thin' description of the human person. In this sense it provides an excellent opportunity to 'lay theological claim' to the anthropology of the BLTP.[597]

The BLTP makes a fairly strong assumption that human rationality, oriented as it is to the demands of face, is simultaneously self-centred and also other-centred. It is the negotiation of these wants and desires that can be analysed in terms of the data arising from interaction. The force of this point should not be lost. It means that the very structure of everyday communicative action is marked by relational values and commitments that are always already shaped by a life-world. In this sense we need to bring to bear a hermeneutic of suspicion on the sorts of goals and strategies that are employed in social interaction. It is potentially any manifestation of communicative action - not on the basis of the linguistic system but on the basis of the use to which language is put. Here again Pauline anthropology helps to elucidate this question. The term καρδία ('heart') denotes the hidden motivations of a person which, in turn,

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[596] Sell, op. cit. 15.

[597] Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, 21. Pannenberg reminds us that theological anthropology (the image of God and the sinfulness of humanity) may shed a special light on any empirically derived anthropological phenomena: 'The aim is to lay theological claim to the human phenomena described in the anthropological disciplines. To this end, the secular description is accepted as simply a provisional version of the objective reality, a version that needs to be expanded and deepened by showing that the anthropological datum itself contains a further and theologically relevant dimension.' Ibid. 19-20. Similarly, Theissen notes that the 'psychology of religion is more than an application of general psychology'. Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 3.

can be characterised as 'fallible' and 'deceptive'.[598] In general terms, Sorg explains that καρδία denotes the centre of the spiritual life: 'The most significant instances of *kardia* in the NT occur in those passages which speak of man's standing before God. The heart is that in man which is addressed by God. It is the seat of doubt and hardness as well as of faith and obedience.'[599]

Although Thiselton follows Theissen in drawing attention to the way the word might capture Freudian ideas of the unconscious, it is enough to claim that the term draws attention to the hidden longings or motivations of the human agent. Negatively, as Sorg notes: '"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?" Jeremiah's complaint (17: 9) voices the view of the NT also. No man can understand his heart, let alone change it. Man without God lives under the power of sin, which has taken up its abode in his heart and from this vantage point enslaves the whole man.'[600] Consequently, this notion of 'heart' has implications for both the notion of 'face' and Brown and Levinson's theory of rationality in two ways: firstly because in biblical theology there is already an articulated critique of the terms on which the ritual of social interaction takes place; and, secondly, because this critical understanding already qualifies the character of rationality. This leaves the theologian with an unwelcome problem: the texts themselves are products of systematic interaction and as such are susceptible to the same analysis. Positively, the BLTP analysis gives us a framework in which to make a comparative study of different instances of communicative action and social interaction. For instance we can ask questions like: 'What does the face-work (or the relational work) entail in this

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[598] Thiselton, 'Time and Grand Narrative?' in *Collected Works*, 744. The word occurs in 1 Cor. 2: 9, 4: 5, 14: 25 but is an integral part of his anthropology in his other letters, especially Romans. For a survey of its semantic range in the New Testament see Sorg, T 'Heart' in *NIDNTT*, 180-184.

[599] Sorg, *NIDNTT*, 2: 182. Behind the understanding of the heart in the New Testament is the established anthropology of the Old Testament. To describe these two conditions of the human heart the prophet Ezekiel appeals to the imagery of 'stone' and 'flesh'. Chisholm explains that 'Ezekiel used the expression "heart of flesh", in contrast to "heart of stone", to describe Israel's renewed allegiance to the Lord in the eschaton...In this case the heart is viewed as the seat of one's moral life and volition, stone symbolizes spiritual insensitivity, and flesh signifies spiritual receptivity...' Chisholm, *DOTTE*, 1: 778.

[600] Ibid. 2: 183.

context?' A careful understanding of this view of the human person challenges the reticence in much of social theory to address humanity in its essence. But there is warrant or justification for such a move in the BLTP and, more importantly, in the life-world of the New Testament. In addition to the word καρδία there are three further terms in Pauline anthropology that help to provide a theological horizon or frame for the BLTP notion of face. The first of these terms is σωμα ('body').

8.1 σωμα

In one of his discussions of Pauline anthropology Thiselton begins to make the sorts of connections with Wittgenstein's anthropology that is lacking from his treatment of SAT. For instance, whilst affirming the importance of the human mind and rationality, he draws attention to the importance attached by the biblical tradition to the physical and bodily life.[601] In this context Paul's notion of σωμα (body) carries particular significance.[602] According to Thiselton, it 'denotes human beings in the context of their *relationality* to others, both in terms of *reciprocity* and *time*.'[603] Further, Thiselton appeals to Ernst Käsemann's understanding of σωμα in which it 'denotes *human beings in terms of their actions, especially communicative actions in the public domain and in relation to others* (Thiselton's emphases).'[604] Thiselton continues:

> 'This interaction in the spatial and temporal dimensions of the everyday world would *define a human being as having temporally significant responsibility for the disposition, public stance and action for which he or she is accountable in the future*, as having a *history within a community* of other human persons

[601] Thiselton, op. cit. 727.

[602] Udo Schnelle argues for a clear distinction to be kept between anthropology (human essence) and ethics (human action or behaviour). According to Schnelle's interpretation of Paul, human essence 'is not defined by doing but only by relationship with God.' Schnelle, U., (Trans.) O. C. Dean Jr., *The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teachings of Jesus, Paul and John*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996, 112. Cf. Wibbel, 'σωμα', *DNTT*, 232-238, esp.234-238.

[603] Thiselton, op. cit. 740.

[604] Ibid. 741.

> which allows for *address and response in reciprocity*, and also a destiny in which love for others does not become obsolete' (Thiselton's emphases).[605]

This definition is not unrelated to aspects of Goffman's understanding of 'face' as 'a sacred thing'[606], Gadamer's notion of 'tact'[607] and Bourdieu's habitus. Importantly, as with face, σωμα is not primarily concerned with the individual (monological SAT) 'but as a human person in the everyday world of relationships "in his ability to communicate", and in the public domain.'[608] In this short discussion of σωμα Thiselton manages to recapitulate a number of consistent emphases within his hermeneutical theory: Austin's concern for speech action and Wittgenstein's concern for public criteria and interpersonal meaning. Further, within the terms of Thiselton's discussion of σωμα the temporal nature of human existence is also emphasised. When we talk about relational reality we must take account of this. And of course this was an important emphasis in Bourdieu's notion of the habitus. However, whereas Bourdieu's approach is irreducibly social, Paul's anthropology is irreducibly theological; that is, of or pertaining to God. Wibbing puts it succinctly: 'the body is the concrete sphere of existence in which man's relationship with God is realized'.[609] Reflecting this perspective, Schnelle attempts a definition of σωμα that fits not only with Paul's preaching and pastoral teaching but also with his habitus:

> '(C)orporeality is the very place where faith acquires visible form...The autonomous self no longer takes possession of the body of the believer, because God himself established the body as the place of his glorification...Human corporeality is the very place where indicative and imperative merge into a unity, because that is where the new essence is tested

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[605] Ibid. 741.

[606] According to Goffman 'face is a sacred thing' because it picks out the human self in its social particularity and because it is something that can only be maintained within what he calls a 'ritual order'. Goffman, *Interaction*, 19, 31.

[607] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 16.

[608] Thiselton, op. cit. 742.

[609] Wibbing, *DNTT*, 1: 236.

in faithful obedience (cf. Romans 6). Those who withhold the body from the Lord withhold themselves from him entirely.'[610]

It is in this sense that Schnelle says action follows essence.[611] Paul's appeal to σωμα language connotes something quite specific: the individual body is transposed into the notion of a collective body on the basis that the collective body is identified with the body of Christ: 'For just as the body is one and has many members, all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ' (1 Cor. 12: 12).

As already noted, the privilege of participation in Christ is one way in which the face-threatening nature of Paul's utterance of the cross is mitigated. The final redressive action concerns the logic of Paul's appeal to the resurrection of the body – the body that is identified with the church. Schweizer comments: 'The body of Christ is precisely the Church in which Christ moves out into the world. The preaching of the Gospel by the Church is the answer to cosmic anxiety'.[612] In these ways Paul's anthropology is two steps removed from the subjectivism of the MP assumed by the BLTP. In BLTP terms we would say strategies are indicative of the character of our social relationships. Paul's strategy has to do with his perception of his relationship with and to God and, in consequence, his vocation to be an apostle of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1: 1). This is not something that can be captured simply by an appeal to Bourdieu's field but also raises some interesting questions concerning the ways in which the religious identity is embedded in historically conditioned forms of life.[613]

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[610] Schnelle, op. cit. 57.

[611] Ibid. 5-6.

[612] Schweizer, E, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I-IX (Ed.). G. Kittel (Trans.) G. W. Bromiley (of *Theologisches Worterburch zum Neuen Testament* (Ed.), G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, 1933, 74), 1964, 74.

[613] In his critique of the French Catholic church Bourdieu talks in terms of the 'clerical field'. It is an incisive critique of the institutional church but as an 'institutional' (social) analysis it would fail to account for the extent of the anthropology involved for the earliest Jewish Christians. His assessment is a salient warning to any church that settles for the institutionalisation of the charismatic and everything that goes with it: clerical hierarchy, canon law and liturgy. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 107-116, esp. 116. As we will see, Paul rests his gospel on the actuality of Christ's person and work and the power of the Holy Spirit.

8.2 σάρξ

Secondly, face is suggestive of Paul's use of the word σάρξ ('flesh') to characterise the person who is still governed by the self.[614] Thiselton summarises the meaning of Paul's use of the term like this: '...fleshly life is life lived in pursuit of one's own ends, in independence of God or of the law of God, in contrast to living in accordance with the direction of the Holy Spirit.'[615] The notion of flesh applies equally to Jew and Greek in their hostility to the divine wisdom revealed in the cross of Christ. According to Thiselton: 'The three terms ψυχικος (2: 14), σαρκινοις (3: 1), and σαρκικοι (3: 3) all draw their semantic nuances from their mutual interaction with one another within a single semantic field in which the term of major contrast to all three is *pneumatikos, spiritual* or *pertaining to the Spirit.*'[616] In this context, Thiselton talks in terms of the 'revolt of the *sarx* against the *pneuma*...the independent action of the *sarx*...'[617] Schnelle explains that for Paul this dualism or distinction is historical rather than metaphysical.[618] He writes: 'Because there is no human existence outside the flesh and God's activity with humankind is carried out in the flesh, the flesh appears to be the place where human beings either persist in their self-centredness or through the power of the Spirit let themselves be placed into the service of God.'[619]

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[614] See Thiselton's entry on 'flesh' in *DNTT*, 1: 671-682. See also Francis Martin's useful discussion of the relevance of this term for hermeneutical theory. He identifies its pejorative use first in Paul's letter to the Galatians in which Paul uses it to characterise those members of the church who have reverted to the law (Gal. 3: 3). Martin, op. cit. 4-6.

[615] Ibid. 681.

[616] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 292.

[617] Ibid. 293.

[618] Elsewhere Schnelle says that 'as the fundamental neutralization of sin's power through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred in a unique historical event, so concrete incorporation into this event of salvation also occurs in a unique historical event: baptism...Death to sin does not result in a substantial change in a person; baptism effects no ontological transformation. Rather, the new reality of freedom from sin stands under an eschatological proviso and must prove itself historically.' Schnelle, op. cit. 74-5.

[619] Ibid. 63.

According to Schnelle, the realm of the flesh in Paul's thought is reserved for those who are self-sufficient.[620] And 'self-sufficiency' here means that such people 'build on their own abilities and make their knowledge the measure of what is rational and real.'[621] Similarly, Martin offers the following definition: '"Flesh" is the innate drive of the human personality toward self-aggrandizement and self-preservation. It is the direct result of man's alienation from God and the consequent disorder in his being.'[622] Whilst the BLTP presents us with evidence of the first proposition, Paul's anthropology once again assumes a decisive theological content offering the possibility of a 'radical development' of the non-theological anthropology of the BLTP. This propositional content of Paul's discourse shows itself in Paul's discourse strategy. The strategy is to move the church from thinking with the flesh to thinking with the Spirit. Again the point is simply that any analysis of Paul's facework must elucidate the grammar of his anthropology.

Martin's notion of exegesis according to the flesh draws on Paul's formative experience in his dealings with the Corinthian church. Martin writes:

> 'The most obvious way that flesh interferes with our understanding of the text comes from our self seeking. The Corinthian Christians were described by Paul as being 'fleshly' or 'fleshy' because there were jealousy and quarrels among them. It was precisely because they insisted on trying to understand divine things according to the flesh that Paul preached to them the only remedy for such blindness, the word of the cross. Self-seeking impedes understanding most obviously because the whole order of reality has been inverted and the self has been placed at the center. From this warped perspective it is impossible to understand even that reality that is available to the ordinary functioning of our mind, much less divine reality.'[623]

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[620] Ibid. 60.

[621] Ibid. 61.

[622] Martin, op. cit. 5.

[623] Ibid. 10.

This reflex for self-seeking also results in ignorance of our 'true state', 'sloth' and 'prejudice'. By 'prejudice' Martin has in mind the hermeneutical notion of pre-understanding. He rightly links this in with the hermeneutical circle (spiral): 'in the successive acts of understanding, there is a change of level within the mind and therefore a correspondingly different inner horizon.'[624] Whilst he acknowledges the term 'pre-understanding' is not intended to convey anything negative, he suggests that religious prejudice is often 'harmful': 'I mean that kind of mindset derived from an uncritical acceptance of the cultural and intellectual vehicle of our tradition, which prevents us from really hearing what the text is saying'.[625]

Secondly, Martin cites the prejudice or pre-understanding of our critical methods as itself in need of a 'second reflection'. Here he has in mind the influence of Enlightenment philosophy. In particular, he identifies the Enlightenment insistence on a Newtonian account of the universe.[626] A universe that cannot admit of an intervening God has far-reaching consequences for theology. In this respect Martin traces the successive works of Albrecht Ritschl[627], Johannes Weiss[628] and, most

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[624] Ibid. 14.

[625] Ibid. 14. The practical outworking of this principle is felt most keenly in efforts to promote ecumenism. Thus: '...it may be said without doubt nearly 90% of the differences that separate us do not come from the text itself but from the uncritical approach we all take because we are attached to a particular way of looking at reality which we have too easily associated with our tradition.' Ibid. 14-15.

[626] Martin's thesis is indicative of an Enlightenment trend rather than a detailed analysis of the relationship between rationalism and liberal theology. For instance, see McGrath's comments on the thinking of A. B. Ritschl. McGrath, *Modern German Christology*, 82-83.

[627] Ritschl transposed Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God into an ethical ideal. Ladd puts it like this: 'Under the influence of Ritschlian theology, the essence of Christianity was interpreted as a pure spiritual-ethical religion, which was proclaimed by and embodied in the life and mission of Jesus. The Kingdom of God is the highest good, the ethical ideal.' Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 5. Cf. McGrath, op. cit. 82-87.

[628] Whilst Weiss could criticise Ritschl for the anachronistic appropriation of Enlightenment categories, he rationalised the uniqueness of Jesus' teaching on the kingdom in terms of Jesus' belief in the imminent end of the world. Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, 133. Cf. 84-96; 129-131. For summary of the significance of Weiss's work see McGrath, op. cit. 102-104.

importantly, Albert Schweitzer[629]. Martin believes that Modern theology has oscillated between these two interpretations: the ethical and the eschatological. He comments:

> 'What lies at the heart of this complete divergence concerning the views of Jesus?' It is the Enlightenment view which holds that God cannot work directly in this universe. Therefore, no matter what Jesus might have thought, there is no way that he could have been preaching, in a way intelligible to us, that God would act directly in this world. Once the notion that God can act in this world is dismissed, then the kingdom of God can only be either an ethical ideal available to the resources of human beings or a totally unreal and fantastic ideal which can only make sense for those who think of a cataclysmic end of the world. The critical evaluation of this prejudice requires a total rethinking of the nature of divine causality in its relation to the Christian life.'[630]

Having identified these Enlightenment presuppositions concerning the nature of the physical universe, he turns his attention to what he terms 'contextually limited exegesis'. And here Martin has in mind the various approaches of historical criticism. He argues that this prejudice ignores 'the fact that any text, and most especially the biblical text, transcends its immediate context'.[631] He continues: 'It is neither the product of sociological forces...nor is it an "ideology"...Human communication, like human freedom, is always relativized by its context, but it is never exhausted by its context. Communication, like freedom, is an action of man's spiritual nature and

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[629] In his work *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* Schweitzer argues that Jesus' message was irreducibly eschatological. As Martin comments, for Schweitzer a viable system of Christian thought must start from this understanding. Martin, op. cit. 18. Similar prejudices are apparent in Gerd Theissen's sociological theory of early Christianity. In particular, his approach betrays a dualism between faith and history characterised as a distinction between 'discipleship of the earthly Jesus and faith in the kerygmatic Christ', Synoptic Gospel tradition versus Pauline tradition. Theissen, *Social Reality*, vii.

[630] Martin, op. cit. 19.

[631] Ibid. 26.

there always [is] a transcendent dimension.'[632] In developing the tasks of explanation and understanding Martin argues that an appropriation of a text's meaning requires a new sort of hermeneutic; one based not on what he calls an exegesis of the flesh but now one based on an exegesis of or with the Spirit. Within this exegesis of the Spirit we become aware of a final prejudice: that 'all our knowledge of divine things comes from the reading of the Sacred Text'.[633] According to Martin, 'Our basic knowledge of divine things comes from the work of revelation in a way which is absolutely unique to the Holy Spirit's activity'.[634] We will return to the role of the Spirit in the last chapter.

8.3 εἰκών

More positively, Paul appeals to the notion of εἰκών ('image') to capture the correspondence of Christ to God.[635] This is perhaps the nearest thing to a New Testament corollary for the anthropology of face.[636] As Schnelle puts it: 'In the Christ event God was interpreting himself'.[637] In other words, Christ shows us what humanity in the image of God looks like. For Paul, for the earliest Christian communities, and for millions of Christians subsequently, the person of Jesus Christ has been the touchstone of what it means to be truly human. Let us recall Brown and Levinson's own comments: 'notions of face naturally link up to some of the most fundamental cultural ideas about the nature of the social persona, honour and virtue, shame and redemption and *thus to religious concepts*...(my emphasis).'[638] If, in anthropological terms, face is seen as primarily a product of the social, Paul's desire is to transform the church into the image of Jesus Christ, to have the face of Christ. This

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[632] Ibid. 26.

[633] Ibid. 29.

[634] Ibid. 29.

[635] 1 Cor. 15: 49. Cf. Romans 1: 23; Colossians 1: 15.

[636] For instance Schnelle says that in 'the relationship between God and Jesus Christ the *Eikwn* concept is to be comprehended as both an ontological and a relational term. In the relationship between Christ and believers, however, *Eikwn* always appears as a purely relational term.' Ibid. 101.

[637] Schnelle, op. cit. 39.

[638] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 13.

originates in considerations of a relational nature and, also, comes to expression in relationship.

Shults has recently underlined the centrality of relationality to theological anthropology: that is, to Christian self-understanding in terms of human nature, sin and the image of God.[639] In other words, human understanding of theology demands the double reflex of self-knowledge and knowledge of God.[640] Again, this coheres with comments made by Thiselton when he says: 'In the New Testament, especially in Luke-Acts and in Paul's theology...the public domain, or, for Paul, *the body* is perceived as part of "world" of interpersonal, inter-subjective discourse and human identity as relationally constituted.'[641] Furthermore, what Shults describes as the 'philosophical turn to relationality' has had a significant impact on the doctrine of the Trinity.[642] As we saw in chapter three, this is something Thiselton attempts to address in his appeal to the grammar of the illocutionary act of promise.

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[639] Shults, F. L., *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality*, Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2003, 11. Knowles wonders how Thiselton might respond to Shults' recent work on theological anthropology. Knowles, 'Grammar of Hermeneutics', 387. The suggestion is that Shults' work might contribute the anthropological lack in Thiselton's work. Certainly, Shults' commitment to Pannenberg's theological anthropology and his advocacy of interdisciplinary scholarship would find approval from Thiselton. More than that, I suspect that Thiselton would approve of Shults' attempt to ground the relational turn in philosophy within a theology of the Trinity. It is in this notion of relationality that much clearer points of contact between nontheological and theological anthropology can be established. In other words, the relational turn coheres with the theological assumptions already present in the linguistic turn of nineteenth century German thought.

[640] This hermeneutical insight is set out most clearly in the opening chapter of Calvin's Institutes: 'Nearly all wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.' Calvin, *Institutes I* 1: 35.

[641] Thiselton, 'A Retrospective Reappraisal of Work on Speech-Act Theory' in *Collected Works*, 147.

[642] In this respect, the theology of Colin Gunton is especially relevant. See for instance his opening chapter on 'Trinitarian Theology Today' in Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 1-15. Gunton observes that 'the conceptual and philosophical revolution...centres on the doctrine of God, who now comes to be understood as a communion of three persons – not individuals – in mutually constitutive relations with one another...the doctrine of God has important implications for other, indeed all, aspects of human life and the being of the world.' Ibid. 11.

A hermeneutic bridge between the theory of communicative action and New Testament anthropology is provided by the BLTP appeal to a MP: human beings in their essence. In light of Pauline anthropology, a revised account of face provides the additional theoretical resources to address theological anthropology: the image of God and humanity in its sinfulness. In Paul's terms, sin relates primarily to some sort of breakdown or defectiveness in humanity's relationship to, and with, God. This discussion takes place within the contrast between those who are ruled by the flesh and those who have come under the law of the Spirit.[643] Finally, and constructively, Paul's anthropology provides us with a new model of face: the εἰκών of Jesus Christ. In theory construction terms, mitigating the threat to Christ's face becomes his new criterion for what counts as polite behaviour. It is against this anthropological habitus that Paul's appeal to the Spirit must be understood. Turner's final suggested revision to the BLTP formula once again provides the necessary data with which to engage the theological horizon. In discourse terms, the final horizon shows itself in the participant role of the Spirit. It is to this topic we now turn.

[643] Francis Martin uses Paul's notion of 'flesh' to describe any act of interpretation done apart from the work and agency of the Spirit. Martin, op. cit. 1. See also Webster's discussion on the sinfulness of the human reader and the implications of this for the hermeneutic situation in Webster, *Word and Church*, 78f.

Chapter 9

Two Horizons? Revising the Speech Situation of Paul's Utterance of the Cross in terms of Goffman's Participation Framework

> *'By the very nature of things, the Pauline letters serve chiefly not as theological, but as pragmatic, documents; nonetheless, they are full of theological presuppositions, assertions, and reflections of a kind that allow us to describe them theologically.'*[644]
>
> Fee

9.0 Introduction

In attempting to map out the field, 'the space of relations', presupposed in 1 Cor 1: 18-2: 16 we are left with a puzzle: just how do we understand the Spirit's role within the relational space assumed and revealed in Paul's discourse? McGrath helps to articulate the problem when he writes:

> 'A scientific theology does not endorse a metaphysically inflationary account of reality, but insists that whatever account of reality we offer must represent a proper response to both our encounter with reality and the categories which that reality itself imposes upon us as we seek to represent and explain it. Metaphysics is not the precondition of any engagement with the world, but its inferred consequence.' [645]

In this chapter we look in some more detail at the significance of the Spirit for our understanding of the nature of relational reality and the implications of this for our understanding of the hermeneutic task. A distinctively theological hermeneutics will be a hermeneutic that takes account fully of what Thiselton calls 'a transforming

[644] Fee, *Empowering Presence*, 827.

[645] McGrath, *Science of God*, 245. For a definition of metaphysics that is consistent with the methods of science see ibid. 234-245.

process' in which 'the Spirit, the text, and the reader engage'.[646] Our point of entry is again our ongoing discussion of the BLTP formula. Following Turner, we have revised the scope of P, D and R, incorporated Bourdieu's theory of fields and the habitus (TFH) and, in turn, subjected this non-theological account of the speech situation to the anthropology that emerges from Paul's own writings. The final task is to revisit the dialogical designates 'S' (speaker) and 'H' (hearer). In hermeneutical terms, these correspond to the two horizons.

Our concern has been to draw on the resources of historical pragmatics so that we can begin to integrate more adequately hermeneutics with the horizon of theology. In Pannenberg's terms, this means articulating 'a vision of the dimension in which language and the religious thematic come together'. In the opening section of this chapter we bring to bear Erving Goffman's important notion of a 'participation framework' as one way in which our conception of the speech situation of Paul's word of the cross might be reworked. This, it will be argued, facilitates a description of the speech situation in which appeal to theology or additional horizons not only makes more sense but is also required of the text's own grammar.

9.1 On the Nature of the Participation Framework: The Inadequacy of the Designates 'S' and 'H' in Earlier models of Pragmatics

In their 1987 retrospective Brown and Levinson are more modest about the claims for their model. Two factors in particular need further elucidation for the success of the BLTP: a more detailed analysis of 'S' and 'H' and a more in-depth understanding of the given cultural setting and the implications for the variable 'R'.[647] We noted the importance of 'R' in chapter seven. In this section we turn to a reappraisal of the designates 'S' and 'H'. Whilst the recovery of the dialogical nature of communicative action takes us beyond the monological tendencies of SAT, it soon becomes apparent that the notion of dialogue itself proves less than adequate. As far back as 1981 Searle conceded the limitations of SAT in explicating genuine dialogue or conversation. In a revised essay entitled 'Conversation' he writes:

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[646] Thiselton, *NH*, 619

[647] Brown and Levinson, op. cit. 12.

> 'Traditionally, speech act theory has a very restricted subject matter. The speech act scenario is enacted by its two great heroes, "S" and "H"; and it works as follows: S goes up to H and cuts loose with an acoustic blast; if all goes well, if all the appropriate conditions are satisfied, if S's noise is infused with intentionality, and if all kinds of rules come into play, then the speech act is successful and nondefective. After that, there is silence; nothing else happens. The speech act is concluded and S and H go their separate ways. Traditional speech act theory is thus largely confined to single speech acts. But, as we all know, in real life speech acts are often not like that at all. In real life, speech characteristically consists of longer sequences of speech acts, either on the part of one speaker, in a continuous discourse, or it consists, more interestingly, of sequences of exchange speech acts in a conversation, where alternatively S becomes H, and H, S.'[648]

Levinson specifically cites the failure of SAT to provide a proper analysis of the concept of 'hearer'. And according to Levinson, 'many issues in philosophy of language turn on a proper analysis of the categories of participant role that underlie the phenomena of deixis.'[649] In the conclusion to his paper Levinson states the position even more clearly: 'Since person deixis is at the heart of all the deictic systems of natural languages the concepts of participant role are fundamental to an understanding of the context dependence of meaning, and constitute the very

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[648] Searle, 'Conversation' in *(On) Searle On Conversation*, 7. Notwithstanding his appreciation for the challenge represented by the notion of 'conversation' Searle continues to argue for the value of his speech act analysis. For the details see Searle, 'Conversation Reconsidered'. Ibid. 137-147. Cf. Rodica Amel's critique of Searle's approach to speech acts and conversation: Amel, R., 'The Constitutive Rule of a Round Table: On *(On) Searle on Conversation*' in *PC* Vol. 2(1), 1994, 167-190.

[649] Levinson, 'Putting Linguistics on a Proper Footing: Explorations in Goffman's Concepts of Participation' in (Eds.) P. Drew and A. Wootton, *Erving Goffman: Exploring the Interaction Order*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988, 164. Levinson defines 'deixis' or 'indexicality' in the following way: 'Deixis concerns...the way in which utterances are semantically or pragmatically anchored to their situation of utterance, by virtue of the fact that certain key words and morphemes have their reference fixed by various (temporal, spatial, participant role and social) parameters of the speech event.' Ibid. 163. Cf. Levinson, *Pragmatics*, 54-96; Sell, op. cit. 17.

foundations of pragmatics.'[650] Why is this? Levinson gives four reasons for the importance of deixis to linguistic theory:

i. Deixis introduces an irreducible context-dependence into the nature of meaning.
ii. In so doing, it also introduces an irreducible element of subjectivity.
iii. It may be seen ontogenetically to be the source of reference in general; and
iv. it has a pervasive influence on many aspects of language structure and meaning.

For these reasons deixis cannot be understood without a proper understanding of 'footing' or 'participant role'.[651] Not only will these insights further qualify the analytical merit in the dyadic tendencies of SAT but also, and more specifically, it shows the need to transpose the logic of 'self-involvement' into the logic or grammar of participant roles.[652] This is because participation frameworks come before (are logically prior to) idealist reflections on the self or the ego. Whilst there is not the space here to develop the idea, Goffman's 'participation framework' might provide a more fruitful dialogue partner for Thiselton's interest in the literary feature of polyphonic voices than the 'dyadic' model of S and H in SAT or the two horizons of Gadamerian hermeneutics.[653]

9.1.1 (S,H): Goffman's Notion of 'Footing'

Goffman employs the notion of 'footing' (Levinson's 'participant role') in order to capture the behavioural shifts that a participant to a conversation will make in order to reflect the evolving nature of a conversational encounter.[654] Footing is determined by

[650] Levinson, *Erving Goffman*, 222.

[651] Ibid. 163.

[652] Arguing for the failure of SAT to adequately account for more complex interpretative problems Michael Stubbs has also proposed drawing on Goffman's notion of the participation framework. See Stubbs, 'Can I have that in Writing Please? Some Neglected Topics in Speech Act Theory' in *JP* 7, 1983, 479-494.

[653] See especially Thiselton, *PH*, 172-182.

[654] See Goffman's seminal article 'Footing' in *Forms of Talk*, 124-159.

more than simply the linguistic content of an utterance. It will also be marked by paralinguistic activity such as intonation, stance, posture, and volume. Goffman explains that a 'change in footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance...participants over the course of their speaking constantly change their footing, these changes being a feature of natural talk'.[655] Within 1 Corinthians there are clearly junctures in the text when Paul is altering his footing to mark topic or mood shift. In the first two chapters Paul moves from greeting (1: 1-3) to thanksgiving (1: 4-9) to appeal (1: 10-17) to an account of the cross (1: 18ff.). Goffman has some simple but insightful observations to make about greetings and farewells: 'Greetings provide a way of showing that a relationship is still what it was at the termination of the previous coparticipation, and, typically, that this relationship involves sufficient suppression of hostility for the participants to drop their guards and talk.'[656]

On the interactional significance of farewells he writes: 'Farewells sum up the effect of the encounter upon the relationship and show what the participants may expect of one another when they next meet.'[657] And he concludes: 'The enthusiasm of greetings compensates for the weakening of the relationship caused by the absence just terminated, while the enthusiasm of farewells compensates the relationship for the harm that is about to be done to it by separation.'[658] In a footnote to these remarks Goffman provides further detail:

> 'Greetings...serve to clarify and fix the roles that the participants will take during the occasion of talk and to commit participants to these roles, while farewells provide a way of unambiguously terminating the encounter. Greetings and farewells may also be used to state, and apologize for, extenuating circumstances – in the case of greetings for circumstances that have kept the participants from interacting until now, and in the case of

[655] Ibid. 128.

[656] Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, 41.

[657] Ibid. 41.

[658] Ibid. 41.

farewells for circumstances that prevent the participants from continuing their display of solidarity. These apologies allow the impression to be maintained that the participants are more warmly related socially than may be the case. This positive stress, in turn, assures that they will act more ready to enter into contacts than they perhaps really feel inclined to do, thus guaranteeing that diffuse channels for potential communication will be kept open in the society.'[659]

Over and above epistolary convention, including any additional theological encoding, Goffman's comments on greetings and farewells underline their relational importance within the 'ritual' of the interaction or expressive order.[660]

Goffman also draws attention to the ways in which participation frameworks can be transformed.[661] This happens when conversations are 'laminated' by shifts in footing. An example of this sort of transformation might be to assume the voice of another, to act in an ironic way, to make an innuendo, collude or whatever. Paul's utterance of the cross is attempting to achieve a transformation of the current participation framework of the church in Corinth on the basis of an embedded piece of teaching on the meaning and relevance of the cross. Further, Goffman alerts us to the ways in which the phenomenon of 'embedding' feature in our discourse. For example, in 2: 1-5 Paul narrates the past invoking what Goffman calls an 'embedded animator who is an earlier incarnation of the present speaker'; that is, the so-called ''I' figure of narrative' from whom the animator may seek to distance him or herself.[662] In shifting to the role of narrator the role of the audience also changes to that of 'story listener' and this change in footing is, according to Goffman, a common phenomenon in conversation.[663] Finally, Goffman says that a speaker changes his or her footing when

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[659] Ibid. 41-42n.

[660] Ibid. 42f. For specific commentary on the opening verses of 1 Corinthians see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 55-105, esp. 55-56, 81-84. For more general and introductory remarks on openings in Paul's letters see O'Brien. P. T., 'Letters, Letter Forms' in *DPL*, 551-552.

[661] Goffman, 'Footing', 153.

[662] Ibid. 149-150.

[663] Ibid. 151. Of course this observation is highly significant for any analysis of parables or homiletics

he or she reports the words of another. An instance of this happens in Paul's recording of conversations with members of Chloe's household (1: 11-12).

Although Goffman distinguishes between a conversation context and a so-called 'podium event', he recognises that each speech event will have its own unique participation framework.[664] In appealing to Goffman's analysis we are clearly claiming an extension of its scope. Whilst 1 Corinthians did not constitute a typical face-to-face conversation, it might be viewed as somewhere between a conversation and a podium-type event.[665] This discussion has been played out in the relationship between epistelography and rhetoric. Thiselton notes how some scholars have construed Paul's letters as primarily rhetorical speeches, while others have sought to lay more emphasis on the epistolary nature of the texts. As Thiselton argues we can view both approaches as helpful in taking account of the whole nature of the communicative event.[666]

It is in recognition of this phenomenon of footing that Goffman argues for the inadequacy of any assessment of the speech situation that depends only on the primitives 'S' and 'H'.[667] Thus Goffman explains that the designation 'S' 'conceals' what he calls 'complex questions of production format' and that 'H' potentially stands

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[664] Levinson distinguishes between 'speech event' and 'utterance event' arguing that the latter more specifically picks out a moment in conversation or speech in which the participants are 'live'. Speech event might include conference contexts where a delegate may strictly speaking be a participant but absent from the room at the moment of the utterance under analysis. Levinson, *Erving Goffman*, 178.

[665] For Goffman's remarks see *Forms of Talk*, 140. 'Podium' is a particularly apposite term in relation to the Corinthian correspondence. Dunn notes that archaeological evidence from Corinth has revealed within the city centre a prominent *bema*, a 'platform-like podium', in the centre of the *agora* (market place). The *bema* was used for 'public proclamations and speeches'. Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 16. It is not improbable that some in the church first heard Paul's gospel there, in which case, Paul's subsequent letters are rejoinders to that initial speech event.

[666] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 44. Cf. 49

[667] By the time Keith Allan was writing an overview of SAT for the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* in 1994 not only was he providing this revised account of S and H, he also introduces the speech act 'as an aspect of social interactive behaviour'. Furthermore, his analysis is punctuated with references to Grice and politeness theory. Allan, *Language and Linguistics*, 4127-4138.

for 'a complex differentiation of participation statuses'.[668] For the reasons listed briefly here Goffman identifies the three ways in which the traditional role of 'S' can be understood and three ways in which 'H' can be understood. We turn first to the designate 'H'.

9.1.2 'H'

Goffman analyses the role of H under three distinct statuses: firstly, a so-called 'ratified participant'. This is a participant who has an official status within the context of the discourse/conversation. Secondly, a 'bystander' is a person who 'overhears' a social encounter to which he or she has no official status as a participant. Such a person is designated 'eavesdropper' in Turner's revised BLTP formula.[669] Thirdly, Goffman draws a distinction between an official or ratified participant and the 'addressee'. The addressee is the person or persons to whom the speaker is specifically addressing his or her remarks. Goffman notes that 'the relation(s) among speaker, addressed recipient(s), and unaddressed recipient(s) are complicated, significant, and not much explored'.[670] Within this 'not much explored' dynamic he outlines further elements of many social encounters: '"byplay": subordinated communication of a subset of ratified participants; "crossplay": communication between ratified participants and bystanders across the boundaries of the dominant encounter; "sideplay": respectfully hushed words exchanged entirely among bystanders.'[671]

It is important to see how a text like 1 Corinthians can be ostensibly written to a community and, yet, exhibit aspects of these phenomena. Dunn has observed that the

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[668] Goffman, 'Footing', 146. Goffman provides his detailed reasons for moving beyond the folk categories of S and H at 129-130.

[669] Turner, K., op. cit. 57. In another more literary context Sell wonders about the intention of the author to address more than the ostensive audience: 'To what extent are these eavesdroppers already written into the text?' Sell, op. cit. 18. Clearly, subsequent generations of Christians have construed themselves as already addressed by the Paul's words. The notion of 'eavesdropper' takes on an additional significance in our description of the hermeneutical situation.

[670] Goffman, op. cit. 133.

[671] Ibid. 134.

insights afforded by rhetorical analysis have 'given the sense of a living dialogue, in which Paul bent his argument in different directions and gave it different nuances in order to render his appeal more effective to different interests and individuals.'[672] If Goffman's account of interaction sheds some conceptual light on how we approach the speech situation of 1 Corinthians it is also suggestive for how we might begin to describe the post-speech community or hermeneutical situation of subsequent readings or performances of the text.

At issue for some in Corinth was the question of Paul's status and authority as an apostle (1 Cor. 1: 11-13 (Cf. 2 Cor. 10: 10; 13: 2-3)). In Goffman's terms this must have meant that for some in the church at least Paul was not a ratified participant in the role he was claiming for himself. In other words, there were some who were struggling to accept the participation framework assumed by Paul's discourse. Thus even if Paul intends to address some members of the community as ratified participants to the encounter, they may not choose to listen on Paul's terms. Equally, the pastoral and theological directives addressed to the church are not all addressed equally to the whole community. In this sense there will inevitably be moments of "byplay" even if these are not marked in purely linguistic terms. More significant is the recognition that the letter itself might be conceived as an expression of subordinated conversation to what Goffman calls the 'instrumental task at hand'; in this case, living out what it means to belong to the body of Christ, the Christ who was crucified.

In summary, the terms outlined by Goffman, 'ratified participant', 'eavesdropper' ('over hearer') and 'addressee', provide us with a register for differing levels of 'participation status' for 'H' within which we can further analyse shifts in footing. For instance, the 'H' of Paul's word of the cross might be classed as a ratified participant whose footing or participant role shifts to addressee, someone who can be successively admonished, encouraged, warned, and so on. Further, the term reserved for all those identified in any gathering is 'participation framework'. Commenting on the two notions 'participation status' and 'participation framework' Goffman writes:

[672] Dunn, op. cit. 25.

'The same two terms can be employed when the point of reference is shifted from a given particular speaker to something wider: all the activity in the situation itself. The point of all this, of course, is that an utterance does not carve up the world beyond the speaker into precisely two parts, recipients and non-recipients, but rather opens up an array of structurally differentiated possibilities, establishing the participation framework in which the speaker will be guiding his delivery.'[673]

9.1.3 'S'

We turn now to clarify the new designations for the canonical 'S' of the speaker or, what Goffman calls, the 'production format' of a particular utterance. Goffman proposes that a distinction be made between 'animator', 'author' and 'principal'. Animator refers to the fact that a particular person makes an utterance. In a trivial sense this is what is in view when we use the term 'speaker'. In the case of 1 Corinthians the 'animator' may well be what Richards refers to as the 'reader/performer', the one who carries the letter to the church community.[674] Further, this alerts us to a further aspect of the production format: the various paralinguistic cues and expressions that this sort of animator may have brought to the reading/performing event.[675] However, we might want to emphasise the authorial nature of 'S' as the person who has made an intentional selection of the words that are uttered. It is not sufficient to identify the author with Paul alone. It might also include at least three, if not more, people: Paul, Sosthenes, a secretary and other members of Paul's missionary team. In this context however, it might be as well to

[673] Goffman, op. cit. 137.

[674] Richards sets out in diagrammatic form the possible framework for the production and performance of 1 Corinthians. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*, 228.

[675] Thiselton also comments on the potential importance of the performance or reading of Paul's letter. In this regard he cites the much earlier work of J. Weiss for whom Paul's text was specifically shaped for 'public reading aloud'. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 44. Cf. J. Weiss, 'Beiträge zur paulinischen Rhetorik', in *Theologische Studien: Bernhard Weiss zu seinem 70 Geburtstage*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897, 166-167.

view the secretary as some sort of intermediate animator.[676] Authorship draws our attention to the fact that 'S' is, to a greater or lesser extent, engaged in rational behaviour. This reminds us of Grice's contention that illocutionary meaning needs to be analysed in terms of the author's intentions.[677] By contrast, when we think of conventional speech acts we are in the social space of institutions: marriage ceremonies, baptisms and so forth. In one sense then, Paul, Sosthenes and perhaps other collaborators are, collectively, the author of 1 Corinthians. In another sense too, Paul and his team are reiterating something that they themselves have received.[678]

The idea of 'principal' might prove more satisfactory. According to Goffman the 'principal' is someone 'whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say...one deals in this case not so much with a body or mind as with a person active in some particular social identity or role, some special capacity as a member of a group, office, category relationship, association...some socially based source of self-identification.'[679]

In the context of Paul's apostolic vocation, he claims to speak on behalf of God. Further, as principal, Paul is the one who, in the context of his letter, sets, or attempts to set, the terms and conditions of the participation framework; that is, the role he identifies for himself determines the capacity in which 'H' or the audience are able to

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[676] Paul's own comment at the end of the letter (16: 21) would suggest that he usually opted for some sort of secretarial assistance. Richards argues that a secretary's duties were on a spectrum ranging from transcriber to composer. The exact role of any secretary Paul may have had access to can only be guessed at although Richards argues persuasively that it would have been unlikely for a secretary to have composed a letter bearing Paul's name. Richards, op. cit. 92-3. As he notes elsewhere, the 'role played by the secretary depended on how much control the author exercised at that particular moment in the particular letter, even shifting roles within the same letter.' Ibid. 80.

[677] The ethical imperative to respect the integrity of the author represents an important tradition within hermeneutical theory and has, most recently, been defended by Kevin Vanhoozer. See, for instance, Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?*, 43ff.

[678] In 1 Cor 15: 8. Paul relates his own encounter with the risen Jesus: 'Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me'. Cf. Acts 9: 3-9.

[679] Goffman, op. cit. 144-5. Further, Goffman says that on occasion this will mean that the person concerned speaks not on behalf of 'I' but of 'we'.

participate. Within the rhetoric of his letters we witness the creation of a new sort of participation framework.[680] To reflect this new approach to the designates 'S' and 'H' the BLTP formula needs to be revised. It now looks like this:

$$W_x = \{_{Habitus}[_{Field}D^{1-n}\ \textbf{((animator, author, principal), (+/- ratified, +/- eavesdropper, +/- addressee))} + A^{1-n}\textbf{((animator, author, principal), (+/- ratified, +/- eavesdropper, +/- addressee))} + P_1{}^{1-n}/P_2{}^{1-n}/P_3{}^{1-n}/P_4{}^{1-n}\ \textbf{((+/- ratified, +/- eavesdropper, +/- addressee), (animator, author, principal)} + {}^{as\ if}R^{1-n}{}_x]\}$$

Before we attempt to map the details of Paul's utterance of the cross onto this formula we must first complete the final considerations of the speech situation along the lines suggested by Goffman.

9.2 Footing Analysis of Paul's Utterance of the Cross

The footing adopted by Paul at the start of his letter is that of apostle. However, within this novel participation status he makes multiple subordinate shifts in his footing. The topic of the cross is introduced in verse 17 in response to the reports Paul has heard from 'Chloe's people' (1 Cor.1: 11) concerning the 'discords' that have appeared in the life of the church.[681] Although debate continues as to the exact nature of these divisions, there is a consensus that a significant number of the Corinthian community have become attached to a certain sort of 'wisdom' and 'spirituality' that, in Paul's mind, deviates significantly from the 'wisdom' and ethic that proceeds from a correct understanding of the cross. At stake for Paul is what it means to be spiritual. In Bourdieu's terms, this constitutes a current cause of 'struggle' within the community and with the wider church as mediated by Paul's

[680] Whilst Searle offers us a static account of social reality, Paul's 'word of the cross' reconfigures the social order in light of the crucified and risen Christ. This, in part, is why an analysis of the New Testament church is so important to our understanding of the way(s) in which new beliefs and practices emerge.

[681] Thiselton suggests the terms 'discords' to translate Greek ερισδες. For further comment on verse 11 see Thiselton, op. cit. 120-1.

apostolic discourse. His utterance of the cross in 1: 18-2:16 sets out the epistemological basis for a cruciform understanding of Christian spirituality.

As we can see from the analysis above, Paul 'laminates' his discourse with a series of shifts in footing. In fact we can identify as many as fourteen such shifts. If we consider our particular 'moment' of text, following Goffman's proposals on footing we can divide it up in the following way:

1. Paul invokes the cross (1: 18).[682]

The explicit identification of the cross as the means by which God has revealed himself represents the scandal against which all human criteria of what counts as 'wise', 'powerful' or 'spiritual' must now be reckoned. Commenting on the stance taken up by Paul in this verse Thiselton notes that Paul points away from himself and deliberately rejects the role of a professional rhetorician. Rather, the 'power of the gospel lay in an utterly different direction, and to treat it as a commodity to be offered in a competitive market by manipulative rhetorical persuasion would be precisely to empty it of its power'.[683] In the context of Roman colonialism Paul's stance towards the values of the much-prized art of rhetoric must also be seen as a political gesture.[684] Even if this was not his primary focus his later comments in 2: 6-7 can leave us in no doubt as to the value Paul attached to both Greek and Roman notions of wisdom and learning. Thiselton captures Paul's pastoral concern well when he says that 'the use of σοφια, *wisdom*, at Corinth had misdirected attention to issues of status and human

[682] Thiselton translates 'ο λογος' as 'proclamation' to capture the force of Paul's preaching event. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 153-4.

[683] Ibid. 21. Cf. 1 Cor 2: 1.

[684] In this context Sherratt's summary is instructive. She explains that in Rome rhetoric 'grew to grand proportions. If the Greeks had exalted the truth, the Romans were concerned with power and influence. It was less the truth content of a statement that concerned them than how to persuade an audience that a statement was the truth. Hermeneutics therefore shifted from principally being preoccupied with issues of truth and unravelling this from the text, to issues of audience and effect. Cicero had it that rhetoric was a higher art than philosophy; Brutus declared that although intelligence was the glory of man, it was eloquence that was the lamp of that intelligence.' Sherratt, *Continental Philosophy*, 34.

achievement rather than to wisdom as a sheer gift of God given in and through Christ.'[685]

2. Paul appeals to the prophet Isaiah[686] and in doing so continues to point away from himself but now directs his addressees attention to the authoritative precendent of Scripture (1: 19). According to Thiselton, Scripture provides Paul with his pre-understanding of the nature of God and the nature of wisdom.[687] Accordingly, Paul's reading of the Old Testament is an integral part of his own Jewish identity and, consequently, his habitus, against which the emerging field of the Christian church must be understood. Thiselton provides four ways in which Paul draws on the Old Testament:

i. Paul cites scripture in the same way that a classicist or rhetorician appealed to some classic 'authority'.
ii. He usually quotes from the LXX but sometimes he quotes from an unknown minority tradition.
iii. He sees the scripture 'actualised' in his own situation.
iv. He sometimes lifts OT references to God as 'Lord' and applies them to Christ.

Thiselton notes that Paul's citation of OT scripture is always pertinent to the context in which he writes. The parallelism in the quote from Isaiah informs our understanding of the sort of wisdom that Paul has in mind. The nouns σοφων and συνεσιν denote a wide semantic range from people who posses a practical knowledge through to the learned and the 'shrewd' or 'streetwise'.[688]

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[685] Thiselton, op. cit. 224.

[686] Cf. Isaiah 29: 14.

[687] For an extended discussion of the semantic scope of the LXX Greek terms for wisdom and the Hebrew parallels see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 161-162. Cf. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 52ff.

[688] Thiselton, op. cit. 160-162.

Thus, this kind of footing is indicative of a complex network of inter-textuality that is integral to understanding the nature of Paul's particular habitus of belief and practice. A good example of the importance of this phenomenon is provided by Stuhlmacher's discussion of the hermeneutical significance of 1 Cor 2: 6-16 in which he argues that Paul's utterance on the Spirit needs to be understood as a development of Israel's wisdom tradition.[689] Importantly, Stuhlmacher's thesis cannot be understood with reference to 1 Cor 2: 6-16 alone. Indeed the cogency of his position rests on what we might call 'inter-textual echoes' or 'discourse deixis'[690], the evidence for which is provided by a variety of different linguistic markers. For instance, the important appeal to 'wisdom' and, as in this verse, the citation of the Old Testament. The discourse deixis also helps to frame the scope and the nature of what we are calling relational reality. Paul understands the cross against precisely this unfolding story of God's relationship with the Jews recorded in the Old Testament.

3. Paul's address to Corinth at this point widens to take account of any manifestation of human wisdom or intellect and in doing so Paul claims a position of transcendence (1: 20). The cross has passed a judgment on the full scope of worldly wisdom and sets God's 'wisdom' apart. Paul is therefore drawing universal conclusions from the particular case of the cross. If the topic or frame within which these disparate moments of 'footing' occur is the problem of divisions in the church, then Paul is saying, in effect, that the cross makes nonsense of internal human struggles for status or celebrity on the basis of worldly manifestations or standards of wisdom, learning or disputation. In apocalyptic or revelatory terms the cross begins to identify and define the wisdom, power and values of the new world order. It is in this context that Alexandra Brown analyses Paul's 'Word of the Cross' in terms of a 'performative speech act'.[691]

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[689] Stuhlmacher, P., (Trans.) C. Brown, 'The Hermeneutical Significance of 1 Cor 2: 6-16' in (Eds.) G. F. Hawthorne and O. Betz, *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of E. Earle Ellis for his 60th Birthday*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, 339.

[690] Sell, *JHP* Vol 2 #1 2001, 17.

[691] Brown, *The Cross*, 14-20.

Paul continues his critique of 'wise words' (σοφια λογου)[692] (1 Cor 1: 17) with a series of rhetorical questions (1: 20). Paul's point is simply that God's wisdom is not just different by degree to human wisdom but is different in kind. To make appeal to philosophy or rhetoric as a means of somehow accessing God's purposes is to make a fundamental category error. The cross of Christ (1: 17) as an expression of divine power needs no apology from an external source, especially not the intellectual elite of the Roman Empire. Its transcendent status enables its proclamation to be heard afresh through history. The character of commentary and interpretation may shift with new hermeneutical situations, intellectual trends and methods of interpretation but the intrinsic power of the cross to challenge, frustrate, inspire and transform will persist.

4. Paul shifts his footing to that of narrator (1: 21). This narration is pedagogical in character as Paul presents his own hermeneutic on the significance of the Jesus event. But this pedagogy is not simply cultural or social reproduction nor is it a transmission of power and privilege in any conventional sense.[693] Rather, Paul's hermeneutic is liberating precisely for those members of society who have no stake in the power and patronage of Rome. Paul is attempting to redefine the participation framework of relational reality.

5. Paul shifts his footing to present tense 'first person plural' and thereby implies a collective authority or solidarity for his theology of the cross (1: 23-25).

6. Again Paul shifts his footing to a face-threatening narrative mode mitigated to some extent by the social deixis marker 'αδελφοι' of verse 26 (1: 26-30). This narrative mode entails both time deixis and place deixis which, as Sell notes, 'set the sender

[692] This relatively simple Greek phrase proves extremely difficult to translate in a way that conveys the import of Paul's discourse. Pogoloff suggests 'sophisticated speech' and Thiselton decides on 'clever rhetoric'. In any event the phrase contrasts with the 'Word of the Cross' of verse 18. Pogoloff, S. M., *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians*, SBLDS 134, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992, 109; Thiselton, op. cit. 145.

[693] For an introduction to Bourdieu's sociology of education see Bourdieu, 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction', in (Ed.) R. Brown, *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change*, London: Tavistock, 1973 Cf. Jenkins, Bourdieu, 103-124.

(Paul), the receiver (the Corinthian church) and the worlds and people under discussion within temporal and spatial relationships'.[694]

7. Paul shifts his footing again in his appeal to the authority of the prophet Jeremiah (1: 31).[695]

8. Paul shifts his footing back to narrative mode (2: 1-5).

9. Paul shifts his footing back to present tense first person mode (2: 6-7).

10. Paul shifts his footing back to narrative mode (2: 8).

11. Paul shifts his footing by appealing to the authority of the prophet Isaiah (2: 9).[696]

12. Paul shifts his footing to narrative mode (2: 10a).

13. Paul switches to present tense commentary mode (2: 12-15).

14. Paul appeals again to the prophet Isaiah (2: 16).[697]

Embedded in the discourse are four appeals to Old Testament prophecies, five instances of narrator mode, and appropriation of the first person plural for present tense comment. As Goffman explains, a change in footing affects both production format and the nature of the participation framework. Once the scope of the participation framework is marked out we are in a position to extend our analysis of footing to include the rest of the W_x variables: the habitus, the field(s), power, social distance, affect, and the cultural 'ranking' attached by each participant to the significance of Paul's utterance of the cross.

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[694] Sell, op. cit. 17.

[695] Cf. Jeremiah 9: 23-24.

[696] Cf. Isaiah 64: 4; 65: 17.

[697] Isaiah 40: 13.

As we begin to look at Paul's discourse we become aware of the complexities not only of the rhetoric but also of the dynamic nature and structure of the participation framework; that is, we are sensitised to the relational structure of the interaction. Importantly, this includes an understanding of how the utterance reflects the theological commitments entailed by the discourse. The context of the participation framework, as it unfolds in Paul's discourse, provides us with at least the following elements: the social situation that has given rise to Paul's letter in the first place, the importance of history or the world behind the text (the real world reference to Jesus' crucifixion), the importance of authority (appeal to the scriptures), the appeal to a shared experience (the narration of the initial proclamation of the gospel and its effects) which in turn foregrounds the 'other' of the community to which Paul is writing, and the appeal to the person and work of the Spirit which draws our attention to the final horizon of God's own facticity.

Firstly then, in dialectic between the local and the universal, an elucidation of the participation framework is an important way of reconfiguring the hermeneutical situation and facilitates a multi-layered analysis of a given text. Within this 'layered' approach to the hermeneutic task it becomes more evident at which points and on what basis we are forced to invoke a theological horizon. Secondly, there are strong grounds for arguing that the assumption of divine presence within the participation framework, especially the appeal to the Spirit in 2: 6-16, provides an important counterpoint to the perennial historicist problem within the hermeneutic tradition. Thirdly, we retain the integrity of the hermeneutic task by following the methodology of descriptive anthropology rather than some prior 'theological' frame or 'picture'. Finally, in synchronic terms we can assess the participant status of all those who stood in some sort of relation to Paul's word of the cross. By extension we have a framework in which readers through history can be assessed in multiple roles or 'statuses'. We can utilise the notions of 'by-stander', 'eavesdropper', ratified/non-ratified participant etc. and further analyse the nature of these differing levels of participation in light of the relational shifts that occur in footing. In Paul's logic, the wisdom of the cross is determinative for the participation framework of the church community. As McGrath has observed: 'A theology of the cross treats the cross as the centre of all Christian thought in that from its centre radiate Christian statements

on ethics, anthropology, the Christian life and so on. The doctrines of revelation and salvation, so easily detached from one another, converge on the cross.'[698]

9.2.1 The Spirit as Participant to Paul's Utterance of the Cross

In view of the complexity of the speech/hermeneutical situation we have revised our understanding of both 'H' (the participation framework) and 'S' (the means of production format). Under each of these rubrics we are obliged to provide some sort of explanation for the participation status of 'God' and, especially, 'Holy Spirit'.[699] In this context Paige has observed: 'Out of Paul's engagement with the Corinthian church comes some of the most significant theological reflection on the Spirit in the NT.' In the footnote to this assertion Paige adds: '...the 1 Corinthians material is seminal for the relationship of the Spirit to the church, to Christ, and to the witness of the Christian gospel.'[700] However, Paige makes clear that the notion of 'Spirit' was a contested concept. He argues that the struggle between Paul and the Corinthian church over the identity of the Spirit was most probably a reflection of the Corinthians' own pre-Christian pagan ideas of pneuma. The word used for an intermediary divine spirit was δαίμων.[701] Paige concludes that pneumatikos had 'nothing to do with "divinity" or "spiritual" in pre-Christian pagan Greek'. He continues:

> 'If, then, the Corinthians had adopted and understood the term pnuema as a kind of daimon, we may postulate that in analogous fashion they understood Paul's use of *pneumatikos* to mean *daimonios*, 'divine'...Hence those at Corinth who styled themselves *pneumatikoi* thought of themselves as *daimonion* – semi-divine, inspired, specially favoured by God. But his gifting was obviously not understood by the Corinthians as for service to others, for

[698] McGrath, *DPL*, 192-193.

[699] Commenting on Barth's doctrine of the Trinity Alan Torrance writes: 'the triune God becomes knowable through the triune event of God's Self-disclosure and our participation within this.' Torrance, A., 'The Trinity' in (Ed.) John Webster, *Karl Barth*, 73.

[700] Paige, T. P., 'Spirit at Corinth: The Corinthian Concept of Spirit and Paul's Response as Seen in 1 Corinthians', University of Sheffield PhD, 1993, 32, 32n.

[701] Ibid. i.

that would be thought of as demeaning, especially for someone from a middle to high social level.'[702]

Consequently, by 'confusing the *pneuma theou* with the *daimones*, the Corinthians have re-interpreted part of the Christian message.'[703]

Notwithstanding the doctrinal framework of Trinitarian theology, the identity and status of the Spirit continues to be a cause of considerable debate within New Testament scholarship. In his own detailed discussion of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians Thiselton engages in a critical evaluation of James Dunn's pneumatology. Alongside his appreciation for Dunn's scholarship, Thiselton expresses two reservations. Firstly, he takes issue with Dunn's appeal to the language of 'supernatural', 'miraculous' and 'spontaneous' to describe elements of the church's experience. Secondly, against Dunn's hesitancy to attribute Trinitarian assumptions to Paul, Thiselton appeals to the more prominent interpretations of the patristic age to defend the belief that Paul's writings contain 'the foundations of a Trinitarian *theology* or *ontology*.'[704] Distinguishing the term πνεύμα from contemporary uses in Hellenistic literature, Thiselton concludes his commentary on 1 Corinthians 2: 11 as follows: 'Paul's use of the phrase τό πνεύμα τό έκ τού θεού, *the Spirit who issues from God*, thus stands in semantic opposition or contrast to *the spirit of the world*...The divine Spirit comes from 'beyond' to impart a disclosure of God's own "wisdom".'[705]

At this juncture, Peter Stuhlmacher's reflections on the hermeneutical significance of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corintians 2: 6-16 are of particular interest to our investigation.[706] He expresses his thesis in these terms: 'In 1 Cor 2: 6-16 we are indeed presented with a theory of knowledge shaped by the wisdom traditions of Scripture, the Jesus-

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[702] Ibid. 308.

[703] Ibid. 287.

[704] Thiselton, 'Reception History' in *Collected Works*, 287-288.

[705] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 263.

[706] Stuhlmacher, 'The Hermeneutical Significance of 1 Cor 2: 6-16' in *Tradition and Interpretation*, 328-347.

tradition, and the Christian experience of the Spirit.'[707] Together these elements conspire to transform human existence. So for Paul the emphasis on historical embodiment is vindicated in the experience and witness of his own life. In the opening section of 1 Corinthians (1: 1-4: 21) Stuhlmacher argues that Paul is exhorting his interlocutors to imitate his example. If Jesus Christ had been the embodiment of God's wisdom, Paul now mediates the possibility of this practice in a life transformed by the revelation of Christ that he first received on the Damascus Road.[708] In the register of the later Wittgensteinian, this constitutes the showing of theology.

Ability to receive the wisdom of the cross comes at precisely the point of least resistance – when, in the words of Stuhlmacher, people 'have suffered the loss of every item of knowledge and advantage, which prior to their encounter with the gospel was their security and pride (cf. Phil. 3: 7ff. with 1 Cor 1: 26-29; 2: 1-5, 3: 18-23)'.[709] In the language of politeness theory, the demands of face are in conflict with the word of the cross. Whereas the cross speaks to those of low status and little strength, face is the social construct that claims a certain standing in the community. Face is prey to variables that are themselves subject to half-truth and even untruth whilst the wisdom associated with the cross presupposes complete loss of face. The Holy Spirit reveals this counter-intuitive 'wisdom' or way of being in the world. Stuhlmacher grounds the epistemological basis of Paul's argument in 1: 18-2: 16 within the wider Jewish wisdom tradition: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Prov 1: 7). Following von Rad, Stuhlmacher points out that 'Knowledge of God and turning to him are the starting point for knowledge of all the ordinances in life which is the theme of wisdom'.[710] In this way, faith or a relational reality conscious of God's involvement is not a block to knowledge but, rather, the very possibility of a practical wisdom for daily practice. According to Stuhlmacher, seen in this way 1 Cor 2: 6-16 is nothing less than the New Testament commentary on Prov

[707] Ibid. 338-339.

[708] Ibid. 339.

[709] Ibid. 339-340.

[710] Ibid. 341.

1: 7 and parallels. Stuhlmacher understands the content of 1 Cor 2: 6-16 to be a 'faith theory of knowledge'.

Stuhlmacher's thesis linking Israelite wisdom tradition with the teaching of 1 Cor 2: 6-16 is of significance to the extent that it represents an integral part of Paul's utterance situation. As such it helps to illumine our appreciation of Paul's meaning in 1 18-2: 16. It does this in at least two ways. Firstly, it helps us to see the continuity in Paul's word of the cross with his Jewish identity. Secondly, it helps us to appreciate the relational nature of wisdom. Wisdom is something that attaches to a person: Jesus Christ. Commenting on 1: 21 Thiselton notes that against an Old Testament context 'the wisdom of God' can be understood in a number of related ways: a transformative wisdom which reverses the value systems of the world, as God's self-disclosure, as a prophetic critique of instrumental reason and as God's grace freely given.[711] Biblical wisdom is a property of God's character and agency in the world.

In other words, the participatory role of the Spirit has ontological as well as epistemological implications for the speech situation. According to Calvin, the Spirit makes 'efficacious' the word of the text which, in turn, points us to the Christ as set out in Paul's writings and in the New Testament generally. The role of the Spirit is the difference between remaining contained by the 'natural', the particular anthropological parameters of the given habitus, and being enabled to appropriate all that attaches to the anthropological characteristics of Jesus Christ. Importantly, Calvin's framework here follows closely the logic of 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 16, understood as it is against the wider intertextuality of the New Testament.[712] Thiselton too follows this general principle: '...we share with Calvin our principle in translation and exegesis that normally "the spiritual refers to the man whose mind is directed by...the Spirit," while the ψυχικος is one whose *anima* is "bound up with

[711] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 168-9.

[712] Calvin, *Institutes*, I.ii, 580-583.

nature," i.e., motivated by things *on an entirely human level* (Thiselton's emphasis).'[713]

Thiselton's preferred translation of 'ψυχικος' as 'entirely human level' can now be given a more detailed anthropological analysis on the basis of 'face', Bourdieu's notion of habitus and Paul's own anthropological understanding. Consequently, ψυχικος need not necessarily carry a negative assessment of the person's state of being. The point is simply this: the Holy Spirit as distinct participant within the logical grammar of Paul's discourse in 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 16 brings something unique and additional to the participation framework of relational reality. Therefore, any account of the relational reality presupposed and projected by Paul's extended utterance of the cross must explicate the identity of the Spirit. We will rehearse in outline the way in which the participation role of the Spirit shows itself in Paul's discourse.

Firstly, Paul makes a claim for a certain kind of wisdom that is not his own but rather is made known through a revelation: a secret wisdom from God (2: 7) revealed by the Holy Spirit (2: 10). Paul understands his own role to be an animator of a message sourced by the Spirit who mediates the mind of Christ (2: 16).[714] Secondly, the epistemological role of the Spirit is premised on the agency of God the Holy Spirit. 'S' (the production format) must be approached on the basis that Paul believes, presupposes, that the Holy Spirit has revealed to him the content of his communicative action, the proclamation of the cross. Neither is this a purely psychological state or cognitive belief. In 1 Cor. 2: 4-5 Paul writes: 'My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.' The 'demonstration' (αποδειξει) of verse 4 must be understood in

[713] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 284. The quotes are from Calvin's own commentary on 1 Corinthians. Calvin, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 61.

[714] Levinson also raises the particular problem of relating participant role to incumbency in an example he gives of a Tamil priest addressing a young woman possessed by a ghost. Levinson explains that the example 'makes the point that in certain circumstances one can be clear about who the speaker is without being clear about whether the speaker is acting as *relayer* or *author*'. Levinson, *Erving Goffman*, 199-200.

terms of an experience of the Spirit. In this context Moltmann's observation is apposite: 'There are no words of God without human experiences of God's Spirit'.[715] Paul's appeal to the Holy Spirit is then an appeal to a shared experience of a particular kind of power at work when the word of the cross is preached. So it is that Gordon Fee argues that Paul uses the terms 'power' and 'Spirit' interchangeably on the basis that the first century believer would have 'assumed the Spirit to be manifested in power'.[716] The Spirit's participation role as 'power' makes sense against the background of our detailed discussion of the habitus and the need for something like a 'second birth' to make possible the transformation of an individual or collective habitus. The 'transformational' effect of Paul's utterance of the cross is dependent on the power of the Spirit as experienced by the new believer.

Any investigation of this text along the lines proposed by Turner must give due weight to Paul's assumptions about power. For Paul, power entails the paradox of power through weakness. The foolishness of the cross lies in its otherness to prevailing attitudes about the nature of power, a principle vindicated by the intimate link with the Spirit's activity in bearing witness to the wisdom of the cross. As we have seen, this analysis of the Spirit's role also has an important bearing on the social variables of D and A. But is it sufficient to characterise the participation role of the Spirit simply in terms of illumination, power or experience? Thiselton understands the Spirit to 'work *through* human understanding' (Thiselton's emphasis).[717] At best this gives to the Spirit the role of illuminator. At worst this seriously underplays the role of the Spirit as he shows himself within the participation framework of 1 Cor. 2: 6-16 and elsewhere in the New Testament.

In an exhaustive study on the Spirit in Paul's writings Fee's central thesis is that the Spirit is nothing less than the presence of God. He makes the case for this on three grounds: firstly, the Spirit's agency is expressed in personal terms; secondly, Paul's

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[715] Moltmann, (Trans.) M. Kohl, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, London: SCM Press, 1992, 3.

[716] In this context Fee cites 1 Thess 1: 5; 1 Cor 2: 4; Gal 3: 5; Rom 1: 4; Eph 3: 16; 2 Tim 1: 7. Fee, *Empowering Presence*, 35-36.

[717] Thiselton, *TH*, 92.

description of the Spirit draws on verbal phrases that demand personal agency and; thirdly, the Spirit is sometimes the subject of a verb or implied activity that elsewhere is attributed either to the Father or to the Son.[718] Thus even if we can agree with Stuhlmacher that 'Paul applies to the Corinthians the very same faith cognition that brought illumination to him on the Damascus road', within the participation framework of Paul's utterance of the cross we need to attribute the dignity of personhood to the Christian experience of the Spirit.

While Paul does not address the exact nature of the Spirit's agency, given the content of 1 Cor 2: 10-16 especially, it is a strong implication of his discourse that Paul understands the Spirit in personal terms. To draw out the full implications of the Spirit's role in this extended FTA we need to make reference to the habitus of a devout first century Jew like Paul.[719] Only then will we be able to describe the total speech/hermeneutical situation of Israel's history and theology as this relates to understandings of the Spirit.[720] Of particular relevance here must be the recognition of an established tradition that accepted an important link between divine wisdom and the agency of the Spirit.[721] Reading 1 Cor 1: 18-2: 16 in light of this frame emphasises the inter-mutuality or, better, inter-dependency of Paul's word of the cross and the accompanying appeal to the Spirit. The benefit of an analysis along the lines adumbrated by Goffman and the revised BLTP is that we begin to see how an awareness of, or presupposition of, the Spirit's presence shows itself in the very structure of Paul's discourse. The hermeneutic potential of SAT does not force us to take account of the total speech situation to the extent that this is necessary.

Finally, the hermeneutical significance of the Spirit's participatory role should not be lost. For instance Webster argues forcefully that what 'determines the hermeneutical situation, and thus the acts of human agents in that situation, is the presence and

[718] See Fee, op. cit. 829-831.

[719] On Paul's Jewish presuppositions see the short article by Segal A. F., 'Paul's Jewish Presuppositions' in Dunn, (Ed.) *St Paul*, 159-172. In particular, Segal argues that Paul's writings constitute the best primary source for first century Pharisaism.

[720] For a helpful introduction to this theme see Moltmann op cit. 39-57.

[721] For a summary of the relationship between the wisdom tradition and the Spirit see Alexandra Brown, op. cit. 59-63.

activity of Jesus, the 'revealedness' of God.'[722] According to Webster, this 'presence' must qualify any hermeneutic strategy that emphasises 'historical remoteness' or the need for 'some kind of correlation between the strange biblical world and the realities of contemporary experience'.[723] Rather, the '"time" of the hermeneutical situation does not, as it were, radiate backwards or forwards from the interpreter's self-presence; Jesus' givenness as the risen one constitutes it as the now where he speaks as Word and is to be heard.'[724] Webster's theological concern is given some considerable justification by the nature and structure of the participation framework in 1 Cor 1: 18-2: 16 and the 'showing' of the Spirit's participatory role. Fee has observed: 'By the very nature of things, the Pauline letters serve chiefly not as theological, but as pragmatic, documents; nonetheless, they are full of theological presuppositions, assertions, and reflections of a kind that allow us to describe them theologically.'[725] When the participant role of the Spirit is taken together with the constituent elements of the BLTP revised in terms of the competing fields of the Corinthian church community, the habitus of the participants' anthropology and the specific cultural and situational estimation of the utterance of the cross we have an ideal case study in the pragmatics of theological discourse. So when we attempt to map on to the formula the findings of exegesis and interpretation of 1 Cor. 1: 18-2: 16 we can begin to see how our relational hermeneutic fits together:

W_x (the perceived *relational* seriousness of Paul's utterance of the cross (1: 18-2: 16)
= (an assessment of which is made on the basis of the following sorts of consideration)
{**Habitus** (Paul's own social history as a first century Rabbi + the social world of the Corinthian believers)
[**Field** (the emerging Jewish/Gentile sect whose belief and practices are based on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Particular emphasis is laid on the nature of wisdom (1: 25), power (1: 18) and spirituality (2: 13).

[722] Webster, *Word and Church*, 69.

[723] Ibid. 69.

[724] Ibid. 70. For a discussion on the relationship between the risen Jesus and the Spirit see Moltmann op. cit. 65-73.

[725] Fee, op. cit. 827.

$\mathbf{D}^{1\text{-}n}$ (understood by Paul to be radically mitigated by the solidarity of his participation Christology. In apocalyptic terms the amount of social distance should be 0. In the social reality of Corinth the scale will be higher depending on the individual's socio-economic status) ((Paul, Sosthenes, the Spirit (including OT witness) as **author, animator and principal**), (the Spirit, members of the Corinthian church, subsequent recipients of Paul's utterance of the cross as **+/- ratified, +/- eavesdropper, +/- addressee**))

+ $\mathbf{A}^{1\text{-}n}$ (as with D, A must take account of Paul's participation Christology. From the perspective of those addressed by Paul's FTA strong feelings are (potentially) operative synchronically and diachronically. For Paul this has been radicalised in the community ethic of love (1 Cor. 13). The ranking of those addressed in Corinth and subsequently will vary to the extent that they are in sympathy with Paul's message and mission) ((Paul and Sosthenes as **animator, author, principal**), (the Spirit, members of the Corinthian church, subsequent recipients of Paul's utterance of the cross as **+/- ratified, +/- eavesdropper, +/- addressee**))

+ $\mathbf{P_1}^{1\text{-}n}/\mathbf{P_2}^{1\text{-}n}/\mathbf{P_3}^{1\text{-}n}/\mathbf{P_4}^{1\text{-}n}$ (where the different currencies of power reflect the complex nature of the interface of the human and the spiritual in and through time) ((the Spirit, members of the Corinthian church, subsequent recipients of Paul's utterance of the cross as **+/- ratified, +/- eavesdropper, +/- addressee**), (Paul, Sosthenes, the Spirit (including OT witness) as **animator, author, principal**)

+ $^{\text{as if}}\mathbf{R}^{1\text{-}n}{}_{\mathbf{x}}$ (will reflect the cultural attitude towards crucifixion and Paul's claim for its theological significance. Paul anticipates the value of R in universal terms: a stumbling block for the Jew, 'foolishness' for the Greek.)]}

Clearly, the detail included is far from comprehensive. However, it is indicative of the issues that require consideration. However, we have attempted to take up Turner's proposal and put a new-look and much revised BLTP to work on a seminal section of ancient text. It provides the next step towards elucidating Paul's utterance of the cross theology of the cross in its 'total speech situation'. A more dogmatic hermeneutic will want to take account of the relational implications of trinitarian theology (Father (1: 3), Son (1: 3) and Spirit (2: 11)) such that the relational reality that shows itself in this discourse is the revelation (participation role of the Spirit) that a crucified Christ (presupposed event concerning the Son) constitutes divine wisdom

(according to the will of God the Father). Further, this takes place in the physical world understood to be a created world entailing everything presupposed by the FTA, especially the crucifixion (and resurrection) of Jesus. Thus while the emphasis remains on a relational account of the discourse, presuppositions concerning brute facts in the world remain integral.

The appeal for a new dignity to be attributed to the Spirit does not protect us from complex hermeneutical puzzles. For instance, why, if the Spirit is present, do so many at Corinth struggle to understand the wisdom of a crucified Messiah? A framework for addressing this sort of concern suggests itself from our discussion of the habitus, the hermeneutic insights into historically effected consciousness and, especially, Paul's theological anthropology. In short, we can agree with Thiselton that a robust theology does not obviate the need for careful exegesis and an informed appreciation of the hermeneutic event.[726] The method followed in this study has sought to hold these two tasks together. However, in the final chapter we will look in more detail at the implications of our reworked participation framework of Paul's extended word of the cross for theological hermeneutics. In particular, we are interested in hermeneutical significance of the Holy Spirit. We will revisit the relationship of theology to hermeneutics in Thiselton's work by addressing the doctrine of illumination. In view of the relational and, therefore, transformational effect of the Spirit's work, it becomes less clear how Thiselton can persist with a hermeneutics/theology distinction.

[726] Webster acknowledges this when he says that 'the Bible in no way eludes the historical and cultural entanglements of all texts'. Webster, op. cit. 72.

Chapter 10

Recovering the Third Horizon: the Implications of the Full Participant Role of the Spirit for the Relationship between Theology and Philosophical Hermeneutics

> *'...a Christian view of language will need to take creation and history seriously and the problem of the 'fall' of language, as well as Pentecostal presence in language.'*[727]
>
> Bartholomew
>
> *'It is the wind in the words that comes over us, not one more grudging echo of us, but a word from out beyond, and the world begins again...'*[728]
>
> Brueggemann
>
> *'In a co-operative shared work, the Spirit, the text, and the reader engage in a transforming process, which enlarges horizons and creates new horizons.'*[729]
>
> Thiselton

10.1 On the Relationship Between Theology and Philosophical Hermeneutics in Thiselton's Thought

We saw in the introductory chapter how hermeneutics represents the field of intellectual inquiry in which philosophy and theology somehow meet or interface. We will frame this topic within the terms of Thiselton's own comments on the matter. For instance, whilst Francis Watson and Kevin Vanhoozer have each invested their efforts in defending an explicitly theological hermeneutic, Thiselton has been more

[727] Bartholomew, 'Babel and Derrida' in *TB* 49.2, 1998, 328.

[728] Brueggemann, W., 'Biblical Authority: A Personal Reflection' in (Eds.) W. Brueggemann, W. C. Placher & B. K. Blount, *Struggling with Scripture*, Westminster: John Knox Press, 2002, 25.

[729] Thiselton, *NH*, 619.

hesitant to subsume hermeneutics in the cause of theology. He has recently returned to this issue and poses the dilemma in the following way:

> 'The very question about theological hermeneutics poses a dilemma. If hermeneutics is genuinely theological, might not this hermeneutical approach become merely subsumed within, and subservient to, some prior system of theology? Yet, conversely, if hermeneutics is permitted to remain an authentic freestanding, transcendental, independent discipline, in what sense does it still give serious priority to its status as explicitly *theological* hermeneutics?'[730]

His response runs as follows:

> 'I have often wished that both *The Two Horizons* (1980) and *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (1992) had embodied a more *explicit*, rather than *implicit*, Christian theology. Yet how could I have achieved this in the face of Schleiermacher's contention, with which I fully agree, that the kind of hermeneutics that *would best serve* theology for the good of theology itself would be a transcendental, independent, critical, discipline? It must successfully resist reduction and domestication into a merely "instrumental" hermeneutics that would merely be servant to the system of theology that it came about to affirm as "right" (Thiselton's emphases).[731]

These comments express how he understands the puzzle: having to choose between an independent hermeneutic discipline or simply recognizing the need for any interpretative frame to put itself in the shoes of the one seeking to be understood. And here 'putting oneself in the shoes' means inhabiting the theological worldview that is attempting to be understood. Thiselton cites a number of prominent theologians who would hold this latter position. They include, Karl Barth and T. F. Torrance.[732] In defending theological interpretation, Francis Watson, Kevin

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[730] Thiselton, 'Situating the Explorations' in *Collected Works*, 8.

[731] Ibid. 8. Cf. Thiselton, 'A Reappraisal of Part VII' in *Collected Works*, 802f.

[732] For Thiselton's assessment of the position held by Karl Barth and T. F. Torrance towards the question of theology and hermeneutics see also Thiselton, *TH*, 85-114, esp. 88-92.

Vanhoozer, Christopher Seitz and Walter Moberly have each argued against the possibility of an innocent or 'objective' reading. On this point at least Thiselton is agreed.[733]

In *PS* Thiselton describes the way in which some theologians have drawn on the conceptual categories of theology and of philosophical hermeneutics to defend the idea that an act of reading as encounter leads to (some sort of) transformation. He comments: 'Some writers, among whom may be included Bultmann, Fuchs, Ebeling and Funk oscillate between working out this principle (the need to view an encounter with the text as in some sense transformational) as one of Christian theology, and as a principle demanded by purely philosophical hermeneutics.'[734] Leaving aside the question of whether or not it is possible to make such a clear cut distinction between Christian theology on one side and the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics on the other, the point of the comment is again to draw attention to the need for theology, as it were, to co-exist with philosophy. In his recently completed doctoral thesis Robert Knowles argues that Thiselton's approach to hermeneutics constitutes a unified whole in which theology is not simply invoked at the end of the hermeneutic task, but rather, it is already present at the inception of the theory construction process. He concludes: 'The unification of hermeneutics occurs when philosophy and theology come to unity.'[735]

Whether or not Knowles is quite right to say that Thiselton's hermeneutic strategy constitutes a unified theory is a moot point.[736] What has become clear is that Thiselton's way of doing theology is one in which the wider humanist project, in this case the hermeneutic tradition, continues to provide the intellectual context. Even when he appeals outside this tradition, as with SAT, he remains confident in the

[733] Thiselton, 'Resituating Hermeneutics' in Thiselton, *Collected Works*, 38.

[734] Thiselton, *PS*, 64.

[735] Knowles, op. cit. 384.

[736] For instance Bartholomew writes of 'Thiselton's avoidance of a unified hermeneutic'. Bartholomew, 'Three Horizons', *EuroJTH* 5: 2, 1996, 132.

possibility of uniting the aims of theology and philosophy in the hermeneutic task.[737] In any event, the question is not so much whether or not Thiselton invokes theology at the start, middle or end of the hermeneutic task, but rather, what is the quality of this theology. When Bartholomew asks about the nature of the third horizon in Thiselton's work he is asking for a more critical account of how or in what ways invoking theology makes a difference to hermeneutic theory.[738] In Pannenberg's words, how does theology 'transform' non-theological anthropology?

For his part Thiselton believes that any attempt to formulate a distinctively theological hermeneutic must address the following four areas. Firstly, he draws attention to one of the central concerns of theological anthropology: '...the role played by theological claims about the effect of human fallenness on the capacities of human reason, judgment, wisdom and understanding, in undertaking hermeneutical explorations or proposing hermeneutical advances.'[739] Secondly, he cites the role of Gadamer's notion of dialectic in approaching a given 'abstracted' problem. Elsewhere Thiselton explains in more detail what this means. It refers to Gadamer's resistance to unnecessarily objectifying a problem in abstraction from a dialectic or dialogue with a given text in which the reader asks questions of a text and allows him or herself to be questioned by the text.[740] It is in this dialogue that Gadamer is making his ethical appeal to listen to the other. This constitutes an openness to the truth of tradition. Thiselton says: '...dialectic is dynamic, and is rooted in the contingent dialogue of hermeneutical understanding, without yielding to mere fragmentation or coherence. It offers a primary resource for theological hermeneutics that may avoid collapsing each side of the dilemma (theology or hermeneutics) into the other.'[741]

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[737] See especially Thiselton, *PH*, 223-239 reissued as 'More on Promising: "The Paradigm of Biblical Promise as Trustowrthy, Temporal, Transformative Speech-Acts" in Thiselton, *Collected Works*, 117-129.

[738] Bartholomew, op.cit. 133.

[739] Thiselton, 'Resituating Hermeneutics in the Twenty-First Century' in *Collected Works*, 38.

[740] Thiselton, 'Reception History' in *Collected Works*, 292.

[741] Ibid. 38. See also Thiselton's comments in his recently written reappraisal of his work in the area of hermeneutics, history and theology. In this essay he again draws attention to Gadamer's notion of dialectic. He writes: 'Due respect for particularity and contingency remains the hallmark of hermeneutics, and if respect for particularity and history operates interactively with a search for

Thirdly, Thiselton believes that a theological hermeneutics must provide some account of the relationship between belief and practice. In philosophical terms he takes this principle from Wittgenstein and in theological terms the idea is taken from Paul's anthropology of the body (*sōma*). Thiselton writes: 'Explorations that co-jointly take full account of hermeneutical actualisation and a dispositional account of belief yield not an abstract, closed, belief-system, but regular patterns of contingent linguistic and extra-linguistic action that motivate both critical reflection and self-involving language, stance and action within the public world of everyday human life.'[742] Fourthly and finally, Thiselton again underlines the need for any theological hermeneutic to be aware of a text's reception history impinging upon both the influence by, and influence upon, their reading and use; that is, effect*ive* history and effect*ed* history respectively.[743]

Whilst all four of these aspects affect the hermeneutic task, points 1 and 3 relate directly to theological anthropology whilst 2 and 4 represent general hermeneutic method. Surprisingly, given the importance of the doctrine of illumination in Christian hermeneutics, Thiselton makes no mention here of the role of the Holy Spirit.[744] In *TH* he does address the role of the Spirit as part of an extended discussion of the relationship between theology and hermeneutics.[745] He concludes his discussion on the Spirit with the following:

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theological coherence, we might hope for a hermeneutic that leaves room for an "open" system within which cross-currents of diverse motivations and conflicting voices contribute to ongoing understanding.' Thiselton, 'A Retrospective Reappraisal of part VII' in *Collected Works*, 803.

[742] Ibid. 39.

[743] Ibid. 39.

[744] For instance, elsewhere he has described the interpretation of Scripture as a shared activity involving the reader, the text and the Spirit. Thiselton, *NH*, 619. For further comments on his understanding of the Spirit in Pauline thought see Thiselton, 'Reception History' in Thiselton, *Collected Works*, 287-304. Again, there is little attempt to address the question of illumination or the hermeneutical significance of the Spirit.

[745] Thiselton, *TH*, 85-114, esp. 85-92.

> 'We may conclude, then, that the Holy Spirit may be said to work through human understanding, and not usually, *if ever, through processes which bypass the considerations discussed under the heading of hermeneutics*...far from suggesting that the problem of hermeneutics can be bypassed, considerations about the Holy Spirit serve to underline the legitimacy and importance of this subject' (my emphasis).[746]

In light of the four considerations outlined above the claim amounts to this: firstly, the Holy Spirit encourages 'openness to tradition' as a general principle of interpretation and, secondly, the Holy Spirit works through our attempted reconstruction (diachronic interpretation) of successive historical readings of a text (the history of effects of a text and historically effected consciousness). It is enough at this point to raise two questions raised by Thiselton's position. Firstly, what difference would it make to the hermeneutical situation if the Spirit were not present or not 'working through' a particular person's understanding? Secondly, what is the logic of Paul's extended 'word of the cross' in 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 16 in regards to the agency of the Holy Spirit? These questions are prompted by an unease with an apparent disjunct or contradiction in Thiselton's approach to biblical and theological hermeneutics. On the one hand there is, for instance, meticulous detail and comment given on the trans-contextual critique of the cross in Paul's theology. This critique addresses humanity not only in its 'wisdom' but also in its inherent 'fleshliness': Paul's word of the cross stands as an 'adversary', 'telling us what we do not want to hear'. On the other hand, we have hermeneutic theory that teaches us to embrace the full experience of the history of a text's reception and to 'dialogue' with tradition as a general principle of interpretation.

On the face of it there appears to be some warrant for Bartholomew's suggestion that there is a latent immanentism in Gadamerian hermeneutics that betrays itself in Thiselton's hermeneutics as something approaching a faith-nature dichotomy.[747] Notwithstanding his extensive writing on Pauline theology, the suspicion is that Thiselton's commitment to philosophical hermeneutics has introduced a naturalism

[746] Ibid. 92.

[747] Bartholomew, op. cit. 132.

into the equation that is unwarranted by the New Testament texts. It is in this sense that Bartholomew's concerns about the role of the third horizon are, at the very least, worth investigating. In view of our discussion of the participation framework of 1 Cor. 1: 18-2: 16, especially 2: 6-16, we will consider Thiselton's position from the perspective of the doctrine of illumination.

10.2 The Holy Spirit and the Doctrine of Illumination

The importance of illumination has been the subject of a number of articles coming from Pentecostal, Catholic and Evangelical traditions. By way of some sort of working definition for this notion of illumination we could do worse than to borrow Francis Martin's comments on the Spirit. He writes:

> 'Life and activity according to the Spirit...is characterized by two things. First, the body of sin is being rendered inoperative (see Rom. 6: 6). Secondly, the mind is being transformed so that the person knows himself to be not only thinking about divine things but in living touch with them.'[748]

From the Pentecostal tradition William J. Pankey's comments on hermeneutics are typical:

> 'What is needed...is a methodology that is critically sound and "experientially" alive. In order to accomplish this goal we must embrace the best of grammatico-historical-syntactical method which is the reasonable use of our God-given capabilities. Likewise *we must acknowledge our utter dependence on the Holy Spirit's role in illuminating the Biblical text* (Pankey's emphasis).'[749]

From a Catholic perspective the French theologian Ignace de la Potterie has written on the significance of illumination and inspiration in the *Dei Verbum* formulation of

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[748] Martin, op. cit. 7.

[749] Pankey, W. J., 'The Place of the Holy Spirit in the Exegetical Process' in *B*, 1988, 8.

Vatican II.[750] Specifically, de la Potterie provides commentary on chapter III of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, number 12 describing how Holy Scripture should be interpreted. It runs to three paragraphs. The first paragraph deals with the importance of historical-critical exegesis, the second with what he calls 'the criteria for a Christian and ecclesial exegesis; and the third paragraph, containing three sentences, begins with a sentence that addresses 'the theological principle and specific norms that must guide the believing interpreter of the Scriptures'.[751] It reads as follows:

> 'But since sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the same Spirit in which it was written [*sed, cum Sacra Scriptura eodem Spiritu quo scripta est etiam leganda et interpretanda sit*], no less attention must be devoted to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, taking into account the tradition of the entire Church and the analogy of faith, if we are to derive their true meaning from the sacred texts.'

It is the opening clause that de la Potterie takes as his theme and the principle that he believes has been neglected in the years following the Council.[752] His paper traces the principle back to the patristic tradition of St. Jerome and, especially, to Origen's notion of the 'spiritual meaning'.[753] He finds in Origen a commitment to the relational necessity of the Spirit in the act of interpetation: 'Such understanding calls for the interpreter to participate in the action of the Spirit, the sense of the Church.'[754] He concludes his discussion of Origen and Jerome in the following way:

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[750] De la Potterie, S.J., 'Interpretation of Holy Scripture in the Spirit in which It Was Written (*Dei Verbum* 12c)', (Trans.) L. Wearne, in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives: Twenty-Five Years after (1962-1987)*, 3 vols., (Ed.) R. Latourelle, New York: Paulinist, 1988, 1: 220-266.

[751] Martin explains that 'exegesis is that activity by which we seek to understand the meaning of the Sacred Text on its own terms and to impart this to others. Exegesis in this sense differs from hermeneutics, which is theoretical reflection, both philosophical and theological, upon the practice of exegesis.' Martin, op. cit. 2.

[752] De la Potterie, op. cit. 221. Cf. Martin, op. cit. 7.

[753] De la Potterie, op. cit. 223.

[754] Ibid. 226.

> 'The relationship between the "object" of the *Scriptures* and the "subject" of the *interpreter* is not the only one, for there is also another "subject" on the Scripture side: the figure of the sacred writer. Further, the action of the Spirit is exercised in both. And, lastly, there is a special relationship between the word of God in the text of the Scriptures, and the personal Word of God incarnated within history, that is, Christ, the Word made flesh. We must...speak of the "unity of object and subject," but this also entails the unity of christology and pneumatology, the unity of sacred writer and interpreter, the unity of the persons of the sacred writer or the interpreter or the Spirit, but also of the letter of the Scriptures and the Spirit. Thus, we can see that here we are faced with various complex relations and tensions between exteriority and interiority, and the fact that they operate through these different elements means that any analysis is particularly difficult.'[755]

De la Potterie argues that this patristic heritage provides the frame or field of theological thought in which to make sense of *Dei Verbum.* In a careful analysis of the paragraphs relating to exegesis and interpretation he shows that the Council locates the actual act of interpretation only in the clause that introduces 'the specific principles of Christian interpretation'.[756] This raises perennial questions about the relationship of historical exegesis to specifically 'spiritual' interpretation. According to de la Potterie, it would be wrong to construe the relationship in terms of two separate or distinct levels. He prefers the image of two concentric circles so that 'although the work of criticism certainly obeys its own laws, the Christian exegete practices such work within a larger context (the second circle) and in a broader perspective, toward which he remains constantly open.'[757] It is the second circle that we have described in terms of relational reality, implicated by the particular character of the participation framework of Paul's extended discourse of the cross. In this context Martin argues that because our true humanity is only realised through the

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[755] Ibid. 232. Referring to 'many of the great Fathers of the church' Martin writes: 'They sought out the treasures of the text in order to bring people in living contact with the reality and majesty of our Lord, Jesus Christ.' Martin, op. cit. 3.

[756] De la Potterie, op. cit. 238. Cf. ibid. 235-237.

[757] Ibid. 234.

'redeeming work of Jesus Christ', the on-going agency of the Spirit not only frees us from the fleshly elements of prejudice but also frees us to pursue the exegetical and interpretative tasks.[758] Consideration of texts like 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16 furnish the Council with the related notions of subjective and objective interiority; that is, the operation of the Spirit on the human agents involved in the hermeneutical situation and the operation of the Spirit on (in) the actual texts of Scripture.[759]

This has important implications for the hermeneutical situation and the problem of historicism:

> 'Outwardly, the writer of old and the interpreter of today are unacquainted, and are very far removed from one another in space and time; even so, the conciliar text emphasizes the fact that for both of them it is "the *same* Spirit" (*eodem Spiritu*) who is at work, which must obviously create a deep communion, a mysterious unity, between them, going far beyond the barriers of their respective characters and cultural milieu, and the very different historical circumstances in which the two of them move. The Spirit undoubtedly brings them together, and unites them.'[760]

Crucially, it is this relationship of Scripture to, and with, the Spirit that de la Potterie describes as 'another dimension': 'This other dimension is their relationship to the Holy Spirit...'[761] By extension, this other dimension shows itself within the discourse of Paul's word of the cross. In hermeneutical terms, the religious dimension comes into view to the extent that the participation framework of ecclesial and Christian speech and hermeneutical situations take cognisance of the Spirit's agency. It is precisely in the relational *verbum interius* of which Gadamer speaks, or transposed into the conciliar conception of subjective and objective interiority, that we begin to really glimpse Pannenberg's desire for an account of language 'in which the religious dimension comes into view'. According to Vatican II, it can only be glimpsed 'in the

[758] Martin, op. cit. 31-32.

[759] De la Potterie, op. cit. 242-247.

[760] Ibid. 244.

[761] Ibid. 247.

Spirit'. This is the correlate of having the 'mind of Christ'. It is at once both an epistemological and ontological status.

De la Potterie provides a fascinating insight into the deliberations of the Council. He explains that in the penultimate draft of *Dei Verbum* the formula for the interpretation of Scripture emphasised three elements: the unity of Scripture, Tradition and the analogy of faith.[762] Correctly, in de la Potterie's view, concern was expressed that this line was overly influenced by a 'posttridentine perspective' and 'too strongly tinged with a legalistic mentality'. This prompted a call for a recovery of the mission of the Holy Spirit.[763] In light of the success of this relational turn, de la Potterie looks back with some regret that this principle has received little attention. He concludes by posing a series of questions that have an important bearing on our discussion and, in particular, on our assessment of Thiselton's success in integrating theological concerns with his hermeneutical appeal to SAT.

Firstly, de la Potterie calls for serious consideration of the 'hermeneutic function assigned to the role of the Spirit'.[764] Secondly, he believes that the Christian exegete should at least be aware of the Enlightenment presuppositions of the historical critical method. Thirdly, and more generally, he calls for an awareness of 'the philosophical deficiencies in modern exegesis'. He continues: 'the historical method is too often seen as the only possible exegetical method, so that there is a risk either of stifling any interest in the theological and spiritual significance of the Scriptures, or of fostering a sort of fear, or even contempt, of this significance.'[765] Fourthly, in light of paragraph three of *Verbum Dei*, he asks: Is sufficient attention given by exegetes to the whole meaning of the biblical text? This question relates to questions of intra-textuality, canonicity, and the specifically spiritual meaning of the texts. Fifthly, de la Potterie calls for a critical assessment of the epistemological status of exegesis. His

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[762] Ibid. 251-252.

[763] Ibid. 252.

[764] Support for de la Potterie's position has come from fellow Catholic theologian Francis Martin who, as already noted above, distinguishes between a hermeneutic of the flesh and what he calls a 'critical hermeneutics of the Spirit'. Martin, op. cit. 1.

[765] De la Potterie, op. cit. 256.

suggestion appears to be that every act of interpretation rests on some act of faith or, we might say, worldview. He says that this 'is maybe the precise point on which one of the greatest ambiguities or misunderstandings exists today'.[766]

A similar concern to clarify the nature of the participant role of the Spirit is found in the evangelical tradition. For instance Walter Kaiser writing in the Reformed tradition of Warfield and Hodge is careful to distinguish between the original work of inspiration with the on-going work of illumination.[767] In the same tradition Vern Sheridan Poythress states: 'God's Lordship is the necessary presupposition not only of interpretation of the Bible but interpretation of all human communication.'[768] Furthermore, like de la Potterie, he remains sceptical of any attempt to make divine revelation intelligible 'by stretching the frameworks for interpreting human communication that have grown up from the Enlightenment'.[769] Roy B. Zuck also expresses a concern for the important role of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics: 'the Holy Spirit needs to be much involved in the process of a believer's efforts to comprehend and interpret the Bible.'[770] Likewise, Mark Husbands argues that a dogmatic reading of scripture is founded on the 'belief that the presence and work of the Spirit is that which enables scripture to be for us a fitting witness to the reality and presence of the risen Lord.'[771] Jan Veenhof argues that it is the work of the Spirit alone that allows us to speak of a theological hermeneutic:

> 'The Spirit is the One who bridges the distance between the past and the present and lets us see and meet Jesus, the Son of God, sent by the father, and in Jesus the Father himself. That is the greatness of the work of the Spirit, that

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[766] Ibid. 257. Cf. Thiselton's discussion of the hermeneutic turn in Watson, Vanhoozer, Seitz and Moberly in Thiselton, 'Resituating Hermeneutics' in *Collected Works*, 38.

[767] Kaiser, 'A Neglected Text in Bibliology Discussions: 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16' in *WTJ* 63.2, Spring 1981, 301-319. Perhaps not surprisingly, Kaiser's analysis of 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16 represents a sustained defence of the Princetonian approach.

[768] Poythress, 'God's Lordship in Interpretation' in *WTJ* 50: 1, Spring 1988, 63. Cf. Poythress, 'Divine Meaning of Scripture' in *WTJ* 48, Fall 1986, 242-301.

[769] Ibid. 63.

[770] Zuck, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics' in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June 1984, 129.

[771] Husbands, 'Spirit and the "Use" of Scripture: Hermeneutics and Divine Action', 12.

in all reflection about hermeneutical questions in connection with the Bible comes to us as a surprising and overwhelming reality'[772]

Veenhof's discussion of the Spirit's role in hermeneutics also supplies a specifically relational understanding in keeping with the scope of what we have termed 'relational reality': '...the work of the Spirit must be described in terms of relation and interaction. According to this view man is brought by the Spirit to a new situation, characterised by his relation to God.'[773] Further, Veenhof takes this principle from 1 Corinthians 2: 10-16. Of particular importance in this context are the epistemological implications of the Spirit's role. Indeed, according to Veenhof, it is here that 'the Cartesian subject-object scheme is broken'. He continues: 'For the object of that knowing – the things of the Spirit – is that which determines the knowing human subject. The man who knows by faith stands in the reality, in the field of operation of the Spirit, and is in his knowing fully dependent on that operation. This object remains always subject!'[774] He provides the following succinct summary of his position: '...by the Spirit, and only by the Spirit, we learn to hear and – in a certain measure – see God in Scripture, as he in Christ will be our, my God.'[775]

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[772] Veenhof, 'The Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics' in (Ed.) N. M. de S. Cameron, *The Challenge of Evangelical Theology, Edinburgh: Rutherford House*, 1987, 115.

[773] Ibid. 116.

[774] Ibid. 117. In this context Veenhof acknowledges his debt to T. F. Torrance. Torrance makes the following remarks on the nature of theological epistemology: '...the given Object of our knowledge is actively at work in our knowing of it creating from our side a corresponding action in which our own being is committed. That is why theological thinking is essentially a spiritual activity in which we are engaged in a movement that corresponds to the movement of the Spirit and indeed participates in it. It is a form of kinetic thinking in which the reason does not apprehend the truth by sitting back and thinking ideas, but in an act or movement in which it participates in what it seeks to know. Thus in order to know Jesus Christ, the eternal Word become flesh, the truth of God in historical happening, we must know Him in a way apposite to that divine becoming and happening, in space and time, and therefore *kata pneuma*, as St. Paul said. This is what Kierkegaard used to call "the leap of faith", but it would be a grave misunderstanding to think of this as a blind or irrational movement, for it is the very reverse of that.' Torrance, T. F., 'The epistemological relevance of the Holy Spirit' in R. Schippers (Ed.), *Ex auditu verbi. Bundel voor G. C. Berkouwer*, Kampen, 1965, 282f.

[775] Veenhof, op. cit. 119.

Veenhof recovers the force of the Reformation emphasis on the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* to challenge the Enlightenment emphasis on the sufficiency of human reason: 'It is not the autonomous man who decides from out of himself to know and to understand. The knowing is here embedded in being known.'[776] It is in the question of illumination that the concerns of hermeneutics and theology most properly converge; that is, in this interface theological hermeneutics finds its telos. As Veenhof puts it, 'the true understanding realises itself in relation to God.'[777] Crucially, this is a relational dynamic that comes into view only when we move beyond a dyadic model of communicative action:

> 'This relation belongs from a methodological point of view to the 'previous understanding' (*Vorverständnis*) of the interpreter. And just here I should like to place the function of the Spirit in the process of interpreting and understanding. This corresponds with the nature of the work of the Spirit as Founder of relations *par excellence*...the Spirit founds the relation between me and others. Men, fellow believers of mine participated in the making of the Bible. They experienced God. They have testified it. And they have described it. All that belongs to the one, great event of the acting Spirit. But that acting of the Spirit goes on. I come in touch with the Bible, *via* the proclamation of the Gospel or *via* other causes, and anew the Spirit comes into play to connect me with God in Christ, *via* the Scripture and via the men who come to the Word in the Scripture. So the Spirit places me in a *Ich-Du* relation, which God will maintain with men. This relation is brought about in the knowledge of God in Christ, which itself is owed to the illumination of the Spirit...Illumination, revelation, knowledge are therefore 'relational' just because they are existential.'[778]

Dale Brueggemann has provided a detailed overview of the historical significance of illumination for theology including a biblical theology of the doctrine. He argues that 'pneumatological fulfillment of the promise of illumination provides most of the NT

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[776] Ibid. 118.

[777] Ibid. 120.

[778] Ibid. 120-121.

data on the doctrine'.[779] Warning against 'noetic nihilism', Brueggemann appeals to Ephesians 1: 17-19 to explain (i) that the source of illumination is God; (ii) the nature of illumination is 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation'; (iii) the target of illumination is 'the eyes of your heart'; and (iv) the goal of illumination is 'that you may know him better'.[780] Against the dangers of what he calls 'noetic hubris' Brueggemann draws our attention to the dangers of spiritual elitism and to a wrong sort of emphasis on Pentecostal or Charismatic empiricism. He concludes his paper with what he calls 'a practical theology of illumination' in which he outlines some of the important implications that flow from a developed theology of illumination. In devotional terms, the place given to illumination will change the nature of how we understand the acts of studying and reading the biblical texts.[781] In ecclesial terms, Brueggemann argues that illumination is central to hermeneutics, exegetical and biblical theology, systematic theology, apologetics and homiletics. The following comments are indicative of his concerns:

> 'Instructors and textbook authors on hermeneutics should devote renewed attention to the necessity for and nature of illumination. Texts and syllabi should engage modern epistemological assumptions in the light of the Creator-Creature distinction, the noetic effects of sin, illumination, and the perspicuity of Scripture...An assertion that illumination is necessary followed by an entire course or text that fails to integrate it denies by action what was stated by proposition.'[782]

On the place of illumination in exegetical and biblical theology he writes:

> 'Stuhlmacher's complaint about the lack of attention to the hermeneutical implications of 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16 could be repeated for most of the key passages dealing with illumination. Commentaries treating such passages should, to the degree that content guidelines allow, develop the devotional,

[779] Brueggemann, D. op. cit. 13.

[780] Ibid. 18.

[781] Ibid. 24-26.

[782] Ibid. 26.

> hermeneutical, and homiletical implications of illumination passages...Augustine, Calvin, and Owen always found a way to maintain a spiritual tone when treating the wonderful things in [God's] law" – so should today's scholars.'[783]

And, finally, this recommendation for the task of systematic theology: 'Treatments of the Doctrine of Man should deal with the relationship of illumination and the image and likeness of God that the Fall marred and salvation restores.'[784] Our present investigation in historical pragmatics invites precisely this concern. A proper treatment of the participation framework forces us to take seriously the participant role of the Spirit along side the traditional concerns of theological anthropology. Whilst the findings of our investigation in historical pragmatics in respect to the doctrine of illumination resist Thiselton's attempt to distinguish the hermeneutic and theological tasks, an attempt has been made to follow Thiselton's belief that we should hold together text, Spirit and reader in the event of biblical interpretation.[785] By paying attention to the text in its historical particularity we are unable to treat hermeneutical and theological elements as anything but a necessary part of the whole. Indeed, it is an implication of our revised account of relational reality that the Spirit, acknowledged or not, is always already a participant to the conversational event. In other words, any pragmatic theory will need to take into account the full extent of a given participation framework.

[783] Ibid. 27.

[784] Ibid. 28.

[785] Thiselton, *NH*, 619.

Conclusion

We have traced the insights that SAT has afforded Thiselton in his elucidation of the biblical texts as pieces of communicative action. We noted how the role of the author, the presupposition of the extra-linguistic world, and the nature of the activity or purpose of an utterance/text came into view. However, as we pressed the philosophical framework of the theory it quickly became clear that the implications of the social nature of interaction were not adequately explicated by Austin's original work on performatives or by Searle's later developments. For instance, whilst we noted how Searle's notions of institutional facts and the Background represented important developments in elucidating the total speech situation, a number of concerns persisted. Firstly, it was not clear that adequate criteria exist for identifying and discriminating between speech acts within a naturally occurring stretch of discourse; secondly, the social and anthropological implications of interaction have not been adequately addressed by work in SAT; and, thirdly, an illocutionary or performative analysis of Paul's utterance of the cross cannot adequately address the mechanism by which the utterance of the cross manages to transform human behaviour. In part this criticism rested on the observation that SAT foreclosed the hermeneutics of the specific participation framework of 1 Corinthians 1: 18-2: 16. Together these concerns brought into sharp focus the problem of integrating speech act philosophy with the worldview or life form presupposed by the theological horizon.

If SAT represents a rudimentiary model of communicative action, developments in pragmatics have seen models of communication emerge that attempt to do justice to the relational nature of interaction. The most influential of these has been the work prompted by the BLTP. In simple terms, this was SAT according to Grice with a relational twist. However, the BLTP itself was not sensitive enough to the nature and structure of social reality. Turner's proposal to subject the BLTP to the influence of Bourdieu's social anthropology has continued to set the communicative event within its true frame or context. We must also iterate the influence of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language over and against Searle's systematisation of speech acts. In

other words, the tension that remains unresolved in Thiselton's work between his commitment to Wittgenstein and his appropriation of Searlean SAT has been made more transparent in this study. We retain Searle's commitment to some version of (critical) realism but reject his reductionist approach as a handmaiden to hermeneutics and, more importantly, to the question of theology.

The benefit of this work has been to draw together the concerns of pragmatics, social anthropology and hermeneutics in order to develop a more coherent and flexible relational hermeneutic. As we saw, Turner's revised BLTP was itself ripe for further developments in light of Paul's anthropology and his discourse on the theology of the cross. In particular, we proposed the notion of 'relational reality' over that of 'social reality'. This did at least two things: firstly, it allowed us to give due consideration to the claims of Christian theology; secondly, and consequently, the world could be subordinated to the prior relational understanding of the covenantal grace and peace 'from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 1: 3).

Notwithstanding the considerable ontological challenges facing a relational hermeneutic, the model forces us to take account of the total speech situation in the following ways. Firstly, it draws our attention to the nature of the participation framework within a given field of relationships. Secondly, a relational hermeneutic is sensitive to an agent's position in the world. This draws our attention to the extra-linguistic context in which a range of phenomena may be marked linguistically via the pragmatics of deixis, implicatures, or presuppositions. Thirdly, a relational hermeneutic draws our attention to the temporal horizon of history. In this sense a relational hermeneutic needs to account for a given habitus or, in Gadamerian terms, the historically effected nature of consciousness. Fourthly, a relational hermeneutic provides us with criteria by which to judge the quality and character of interaction. Finally, a relational hermeneutic can be developed which will provide an understanding of an agent's relation to a given ideology or belief system. Within the terms of Paul's utterance of the cross this has been addressed under the rubrics of theological anthropology and the doctrine of illumination. It is here that the religious dimension of language comes properly into view and this represents an important

corrective to the latent dualism in Thiselton's work between philosophical hermeneutics and theology. The following observations are of particular importance.

Firstly, theological anthropology invites us to take seriously the fallenness of human beings. In this context a relational hermeneutic is able to make sense of a doctrine of sin in two ways: firstly, as a member of the human race every human agent is always already embedded within a network of relationships torn between the wants and desires of self whilst, simultaneously, obliged to meet the wants and desires of others. Bourdieu's habitus and the hermeneutic emphasis on tradition remind us of the extent to which we are situated beings. Within this process of socialization values associated with a cruciform definition of wisdom and spirituality can easily become relative to the demands of facework (or relational work) or the particular nature of a given field. These insights are important for these reasons:

1. The way people use language is not morally neutral but is relationally compromised in different sorts of ways.
2. Neither older models of pragmatics or Thiselton's hermeneutic theory adequately explicate the organic nature of the relationship that holds between anthropology (people in their essence) and ethics (people in their practice) with the coming to speech of language.
3. To the extent that philosophical hermeneutics does not have any tool for this task the hermeneutic tradition itself remains part of the problem.
4. Consequently, some trans-contextual criteria are needed to critique hermeneutic theory. Whereas Habermas puts his faith in an ideal speech situation and Apel proposes what he refers to as a 'transcendental pragmatics', Thiselton follows Pauline anthropology in arguing for a pastoral hermeneutic grounded in wisdom of the cross. We have argued that Thiselton does not follow through with the full logic of this position. Consequently, the prejudices of hermeneutic philosophy are not adequately challenged. This is especially relevant to the hermeneutic attachment to some version of historicism and its correlate, linguistic relativism.
5. Taking the fallenness of humanity seriously also helps us to appreciate the extent to which the cross functions as an FTA locally in terms of the speech

situation in Corinth and universally to subsequent hermeneutical situations. In Paul's utterance of the cross divine wisdom stands over and against the wisdom of the world; that is, universal humanity designated by 'Jew *and* Greek'. As Thiselton rightly says, any theological hermeneutic will be obliged to take seriously the implications of this doctrine for the activity of (biblical) interpretation.

Secondly, theological anthropology draws our attention to a particular ideal or model anthropological identity: Jesus Christ as the image and embodied representative of God. In Paul's utterance of the cross this image or 'face' of Christ is presented as a radical renunciation of any prior claims to self. This new identity is realised in the body and is to be lived according to the Spirit. In BLTP terms this theological anthropology has important implications for R-values which in turn forces us to rethink the way in which we are to understand other social variables like P and D.

Thirdly, a re-appraisal of the participation framework of Paul's extended word of the cross not only drew our attention to the epistemological role of the Spirit but also, following Fee, to the ontological agency of the Spirit as God's (empowering) presence. In the former case illumination is a necessary corollary to the noetic effects of sin and in the latter case we are required to attribute a participant role that does justice to the structure of the participation framework assumed by Paul's discourse. In the words of Francis Martin, a hermeneutics of the flesh must give way to a critical hermeneutics of the Spirit.

Finally, attributing a greater dignity and status to the Holy Spirit has implications for the hermeneutic task in a number of ways. Firstly, it qualifies the extent to which historical distance from the original speech situation of the text prevents the reader from understanding. Secondly, notwithstanding the abuses associated with radical pietism, consideration of the participation role of the Spirit underlines the appropriateness of notions like 'dialogue' and 'conversation'. Thirdly, and more generally, the participation role of the Spirit supports our argument for prioritising the relational and resisting the suggestion that the grammar of theology can be understood in institutional terms. Consequently, a new space is opening up in which it makes

sense to speak in terms of theological pragmatics. Consequently, further work is invited in both theology and pragmatics. For instance, one important direction for theology will be to describe the pragmatics of relational reality in terms of Trinitarian theology. Interesting questions are raised for the discipline of pragmatics about the nature of discourse in postmodern culture and, especially, in the ever-widening religio-political field. In terms of historical pragmatics, there is considerable scope for further research on the interface between pragmatics and hermeneutics.

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