

CHAPTER THREE

Kierkegaard and Schleiermacher Revisited: The Revisionary Tradition in Romantic Hermeneutics

So far we have seen hermeneutics as providing a framework in which to view romantic literature, while also placing hermeneutics within the problematic which it frames. Such an approach brings out the interrogation of concepts like meaning and identity present in the subtext of hermeneutics itself. But it does not necessarily dismantle the postulate of a consciousness behind the text which legitimizes psychological reading, as opposed to the grammatical reading Schleiermacher saw as inadequate, and the rhetorical reading that has now replaced exegesis in an era that believes truth to be a mobile army of metaphors. This approach simply suspends the idea that this consciousness can ground the meaning of the text, or that this consciousness can achieve that identity with itself that will end its having to narrate itself to itself. The history of romantic hermeneutics is of a movement complicated by its emergence within a chain of substitutions. When writing fails to represent adequately the thought or speech that precedes it, it is replaced by reading, which is thus open to a similar failure. Moreover, the hermeneutic tradition itself is involved in substitutions that further unravel its project. If Ast and Schleiermacher defer meaning from the text to the author's consciousness, Hegel further defers it to the unfolding of the world-historical canon, and Schelling is unable to find meaning in a canonical reading that expands the text and instead must project one that negates it. This series of deferrals culminates in Kierkegaard's essay on irony, where the hermeneutic myth of a consciousness present to itself behind the screen of its textual appearances lays itself open to deconstruction.

But the history of romantic hermeneutics also shows the impossibility of deconstructing consciousness itself, considered as lack, desire, or will.

For Kierkegaard remains profoundly phenomenological in uncovering behind irony a desire to posit, if not an ability to do so. Indeed, his description of irony is highly phenomenological. Even though it does not contribute to the “content of personality,” irony, according to him, can be understood only in relation to personality: “It has the movement of turning back into itself which is characteristic of personality, of seeking back into itself, terminating in itself—except that in this movement irony returns emptyhanded” (*CI*, p. 242n.). Thus, it may be more accurate to speak of what happens between Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard not as the dismantling of hermeneutics, but as a displacement already present in the writings of Schleiermacher himself. Kierkegaard concedes the linguisticity of understanding, which compels anyone trying to penetrate the disguises of irony to return emptyhanded. But *The Concept of Irony* is not simply an earlier version of *Allegories of Reading*. For unlike de Man, Kierkegaard suggests that the failure to transcend the linguistic must itself be understood in psychological, not linguistic terms. Whether we see this coupling of the linguistic and the psychological as spelling the death of ‘hermeneutics’ will depend on how monolithically we define a term that is itself historical and subject to change. If the aim of ‘hermeneutics’ is to fix the meaning of a text, Kierkegaard shows the emptiness of the hermeneutic project. But if its central postulate is that reading is psychological rather than purely rhetorical or grammatical, he remains within the hermeneutic tradition. Hermeneutics, as the study of the relations between textuality and reading, was and is committed to the value of the word. *The Concept of Irony* is an early instance of a revised hermeneutics that treats the consciousness of the text and the text of consciousness as twin paradoxes. In it, reading remains an attempt to understand the intellectual personality behind the text, and a process with consequences for the intellectual life of the interpreter. But the special circumstances of reading, in which authorial identity is made available only in textual form, complicate both this identity and the interpreter’s attempt to understand himself or herself through the text (and consequently as a text). For the normal situation of texts, as texts of the first degree produced by their authors, tends to suppress their textuality and lets the reader use them as a window to the author’s intention. It is precisely to emphasize the special nature of reading that Kierkegaard chooses a text of the second degree, one in which the comforting link with the author has been broken, and instead of a text written by Socrates we have one written by a reader (Plato) to supply the place of an absent text.

But Kierkegaard’s exposure of reading as supplementary also dramatizes how involved it is with needs and desires, and thus how powerfully psychological it remains. What he does implicitly in *The Concept of Irony*,

namely, to “relift” hermeneutics at a “more certain depth,” he will do more explicitly in a later text, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*. In this retrospective interpretation of his own oeuvre, he exhibits one direction taken by the revisionary movement within romantic hermeneutics: toward the reinstatement of a psychologically oriented reading decoupled from the notion of origins. But the continued emphasis on reading is purchased at the cost of conceding that the author has disappeared, and thus that reading cannot be aletheological, because what it reproduces is not something outside the reader but simply the dialogue of desire and scepticism within the reader. The cryptic absences of the author, as it were, generate readers who are never anything but supplementary. Although the *Point of View* differs from *The Concept of Irony* in reintroducing the author (Kierkegaard himself), this author is never more than a reader, a guest in his own text. Romantic hermeneutics is not always content with thus renouncing the figure of the author as source. For the disappearance of Socrates from his text is matched by the many cases in which authors attempt to appear in romantic texts, if only to have their authority challenged, as in *The Prelude*, or to appear as figures in their own texts, as in *The Triumph of Life*. The presence of the author as figure in so many romantic texts suggests that we need to define a second way the relation between reading and textuality can be reconceived: one that will preserve the link between psychological reading and the search for origins, while pluralizing the origins themselves.

Considering certain crucial margins in the work of Schleiermacher, where he becomes concerned with the speech or discourse of the text, allows us to explore a revised model of psychological reading that is thematized in poems like *The Triumph of Life*, and that is also implied in Shelley’s *Defence of Poetry*. Unlike interpretation, the focus for Kierkegaard’s inquiry into the experience of reading, discourse is not one-sided and projective, but involves an activity of exchange. The focus on the discourse of the text allows for a reconceiving of the reading process somewhat different from Kierkegaard’s. Kierkegaard does not really deal with the activity of writing or speaking, but simply with how the reading of what has already been written becomes self-complicating. For Schleiermacher, too, reading remains disseminative. But the emphasis on the discourse of the text involves an interest in texts from the point of view of the author as well as the reader, and thus crucially changes the relation between reading and original meaning(s). Instead of being purely self-referential, the text becomes an intent at meaning that generates in the reader a corresponding intent at understanding. What is understood is not simple, just as what is meant is not self-identical. But just as the disappearance of the author in Kierkegaard results in an eclipse of the text’s aletheological dimension, so his ‘appearance’ (and I

use the word deliberately) results in a sense that texts do indeed disseminate truths, lead to temporary understandings. His appearance, in other words, restores to the text what Ricoeur calls its outside as opposed to its inside: its “transcendent aim,” which makes it something “which is addressed to someone about something.”¹

Reinscribing Hermeneutics as Reader-Response Theory: Kierkegaard's *Point of View*

A study of how the romantic tradition reconceives hermeneutics can begin with Kierkegaard's *Point of View*, often taken as the key to his 'canon' but just as clearly part of its enigma. This later text repeats from *The Concept of Irony* the deconstruction of a critical metalanguage outside the play of signifiers by promising an interpretation of Kierkegaard's texts, which itself calls for further interpretation. But it also goes beyond *The Concept of Irony*, where a higher perspective from which to refocus the texts's negativity had not yet emerged. *The Concept of Irony*, in other words, remained fundamentally deconstructive, in that it did no more than express the need for psychological reading, but as a desire that still lacked an outside, a will that had not yet achieved representation. *The Point of View* actually figures for us this reading of the canon, based on a hermeneutics of reversal, while according it a merely 'lyrical' status. As such, it brings out the importance of desire in producing psychological reading and simultaneously compromising it. It refuses to dismantle the phenomenological notion of a will accompanying the writing and reading of the text, a *telos* that may not precede and direct the linguistic process but that is still produced along with it. But more important, Kierkegaard's approach to the problem is not monolithic: he is as much concerned with 'readings' as intellectual events that occur regardless of whether they have any ground, as he is with the very activity of 'reading' itself as something that has become suspect. He suggests that there are modes of reading just as there are literary modes. A lyrical reading will be different from a discursive reading: it may not be logically persuasive, and yet it cannot therefore be discarded. We will see Shelley adopting a similar strategy in *Prometheus Unbound*, where the dialogue between Asia and Panthea on dreams provides a lyrical reading of the text that is problematized by being set in the discursive mode of drama. There is a considerable distance between the recognition that reading is figurative and the analysis of its complicity with emotional needs and fears, on the

¹Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 153.

one hand, and the claim that texts are unreadable, on the other. That distance marks the difference between a Kierkegaard and a de Man, between someone who is concerned with how desire produces readings and someone who is concerned to reduce all reading to a figure of desire. The difference is nowhere more apparent than in the rhetorical ramifications of their respective styles. For de Man's is a metalinguistic criticism that analyzes figural moments in literature, whereas Kierkegaard's 'theory' is itself conveyed through scenes of reading, which involve us in their dialectical reduplication and thus compel us to elaborate and live through their figures.

The Point of View begins with a hermeneutic dilemma: how to find the 'real' Kierkegaard, given that 'Kierkegaard' produced fictitious as well as religious texts, pseudonymous as well as authorized texts, and that he thus allowed his canon to be inhabited by a certain 'ambiguity' or 'duplicity.' We are not concerned here with the nature of Kierkegaard's Christianity so much as with his conception of 'truth,' and with how the attempt to ground the meaning of his works is complicated by the existence of different authorial voices, which in this case happen to include the religious. Clearly, the oscillation between voices, one serious and one playful, one that appears directly referential and one that is implicated in metaphoric processes, is part of a problem to be found in other writers like Blake and Godwin, who also combine the polemical and the imaginative. As Kierkegaard points out, the discrepancy between the voices cannot be explained by positing an author who evolved from the aesthetic to the religious, for the canon is simply not arranged as a progress of the soul. The priority of 'truth' over 'falsity' is constantly jeopardized by the intertwining of the aesthetic and the religious (*PV*, pp. 10–12). Precisely when pseudonymous works seem to be replaced by authorized religious works, "as a testimony and as a precaution" comes "the little aesthetic article by a pseudonym, *Inter et Inter*" (*PV*, p. 14). Precisely when "direct communication" (*PV*, p. 40) seems to have taken over, the threat of obliquity is reintroduced.

'Kierkegaard's' response is to argue that his duplicity functions pedagogically, like Socratic dialectic (*PV*, pp. 39, 41), and thus incidentally to complete the placing of Socratic irony as a type of Christian truth merely hinted at in the essay on irony. He argues for a reading of his aesthetic texts in terms of a hermeneutics of reversal, with the difference that what lies beneath the actual text (the religious) is now supplied in other texts by the author. The duplicitous use of the aesthetic and the ironic, with their endless deferral of meaning, is not something done by 'Kierkegaard,' who is himself caught in the dialectic, but by the "Governance," a religious equivalent to Hegel's world-historical spirit, or more realistically speaking, to the Lacanian unconscious. In constructing the

aesthetic as a surface to be consumed, the Governance at once accommodates the power of things as they are and allows readers to be surprised by their own error into resisting the text of actuality:

For there is an immense difference, a dialectical difference, between these two cases: the case of a man who is ignorant and is to have a piece of knowledge imparted to him, so that he is like an empty vessel which is to be filled or a blank sheet of paper upon which something is to be written; and the case of a man who is under an illusion and must first be delivered from that. Likewise there is a difference between writing on a blank sheet of paper and bringing to light by the application of a caustic fluid a text which is hidden under another text. Assuming then that a person is a victim of an illusion, . . . if I do not begin by deceiving him, I must begin with direct communication. But direct communication presupposes that the receiver's ability to receive is undisturbed. But here such is not the case; an illusion stands in the way. That is to say, one must first of all use the caustic fluid. But this caustic means is negativity. (*PV*, p. 40)

The valorization of the religious over the aesthetic is of course undermined by the very terms of Kierkegaard's argument. For a genetic metaphor that makes the religious texts more mature than the aesthetic texts he substitutes a spatial metaphor that makes the religious stratum of his thinking more profound than the aesthetic. But his insistence on how the two voices have been intertwined throughout his career makes it difficult for him to have recourse to metaphors of surface and depth, whether horizontal or vertical, teleological or geological. Derrida has shown how in Husserl's *Ideas* the "geological metaphor" that posits a grounding stratum gets insensibly associated with a "textual metaphor" in which "the 'strata' are 'woven'; their intermixing is such that the warp cannot be distinguished from the woof."² In Kierkegaard the rejection of a geological, archeological, or teleological model of understanding in favor of a textual model is quite explicit. Hence it is surprising to find him positing, through the Governance, a deep structure of events and using methods he has called into question. Moreover, the idea that Kierkegaard only came to understand the methods of the Governance over a period of time seems a version of the genetic postulate earlier discarded as illusory. In the light of his own argument, we must be suspicious of those reassuring words drawn from a genetic logic that gradually reenter the *Point of View*: references to a "turning-point in my whole activity as an author" and to a "transition to the series of purely religious writings" (*PV*, p. 53). Once again we have the paradox of a text

²Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 110–12.

performing what it has shown to be impossible, and thus taking away the interpretation that it offers.

Just as important in terms of introducing and unsettling the hierarchy of the religious and aesthetic is the concept of dialectical reduplication. Dialectical reduplication involves a translation from one mode to another: the translation of theory into practice, of religious commitment into the terms of actual life. As the living through of what is abstract, it is part of the existential aspect of Kierkegaard's hermeneutic, in which understanding must occur through application. The idea is introduced to explain why the Governance, instead of communicating its religious intentions directly, reflects them in the distorting mirror of the aesthetic. For the religious position to be truly understood, the process by which one is converted to it must be experienced. But a dialectical reduplication is not a simple translation of theory into practice: understanding is inevitably shifted through its application. Put differently, dialectical reduplication involves an enactment that repeats and defers or differs from what it enacts. Hence, it is by no means clear that the attempt to reduplicate the religious position existentially by making it emerge from the aesthetic will necessarily return us to the religious position. Corresponding to dialectical reduplication as the Governance's method of writing the Kierkegaard canon is the idea of 'repetition' as Kierkegaard's own method of reading it. Elsewhere Kierkegaard distinguishes between repetition-as-recollection and genuine repetition: between repetition backward as the recollection of what has been, and repetition forward as a second chance that allows us to have everything double.³ Such repetition, although not a reproduction of the same, claims not to involve the nonsynthetic difference of Derridean repetition. 'Kierkegaard's' retrospective reading of his aesthetic texts involves the second kind of repetition: he retraces his past as part of a spiritual therapy in order to make it produce new insights. There is no guarantee, however, that returning to the aesthetic texts to perform a divinatory reading will deliver precisely the new truths within them that 'Kierkegaard' wants disclosed. Similarly, Kierkegaard seems aware of the dangers that lurk in reduplication, and his description of it as "dialectical" indicates a desire to see complication as progressive, differences as returning to an identity instead of proliferating. But the metaphor he uses to argue that duplication and duplication produce truth is deliberately disturbing:

as a woman's coyness has a reference to the true lover and yields when he appears, but only then, so, too, dialectical reduplication has a reference to

³Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling, Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 131, 149, 220–21, 294.

true seriousness. To one less serious the explanation cannot be imparted, for the elasticity of the dialectical reduplication is too great for him to grasp: it takes the explanation away from him again and makes it doubtful to him whether it really is the explanation. (*PV*, p. 17)

Especially given Kierkegaard's concession that "the mark of a dialectical reduplication is that the ambiguity is maintained" (*PV*, p. 17), we must wonder whether coyness and play ever do become serious, whether there is a true lover who can bring into play a coyness that is without subterfuge.

Through the dialectical reduplication at the heart of his work, namely, the replaying of theory as fiction, Kierkegaard repeats the strategies of traditional hermeneutics so as to make them self-reflexive. The result is a radical revision of hermeneutics, in which the author is reduced to the status of a reader, and the text becomes a heuristic stimulus: "That I was 'without authority' I have from the first moment asserted clearly and repeated as a stereotyped phrase. I regarded myself preferably as a *reader of the books*" (*PV*, p. 151). As reader he provides us with a 'psychological' interpretation of the canon that cannot ground its meaning, since it does no more than reflect his own need for stability. Such a reading of his own work is a "lyrical satisfaction to me *qua man*" (*PV*, p. 18) and thus has the status not even of an originating desire but rather a desire after the fact. The effect of allowing the text to exist only as it is read is to grant the text a linguistic and historical autonomy from the author's intention. Thus Kierkegaard begins his second chapter with the heading "The Explanation: That the Author is and was a Religious Author." But he goes on to add:

It might seem that a mere protestation to this effect on the part of the author himself would be more than enough; for surely he knows best what is meant. For my part, however, I have little confidence in protestations with regard to literary productions and am inclined to take an objective view of my own works. If as a third person, in the role of a reader, I cannot substantiate the fact that what I affirm is so, and that it could not but be so, it would not occur to me to wish to win a cause which I regard as lost. (*PV*, p. 15)

'Kierkegaard' might argue that the *Point of View* does indeed substantiate from the perspective of the reader the claim that Kierkegaard is a religious author. But then 'Kierkegaard' is himself a fictional construct. In the end the *Point of View* tells us the truth about the author's work, but this truth is a moving army of metaphors and metonymies, subject to further reading. Of particular interest is his slippery use of the term 'poet,' for paradoxically the status of religious interpretation depends on the status of the 'poetic.' Initially it seems that the term 'poetic' is associ-

ated with the purely fictitious, with the weak, the aesthetic voice in Kierkegaard: "There was allowed me again a period for poetical production, but always under the arrest of the religious, which was on the watch" (*PV*, p. 86). But later on there is a curious statement that identifies the religious interpretation of Kierkegaard's life with poetic myth-making.

I have nothing further to say, but in conclusion I will let another speak, my poet, who when he comes will assign me a place among those who have suffered for the sake of an idea. . . . The dialectical structure he [Kierkegaard] brought to completion, of which the several parts are whole works, he could not ascribe to any man, least of all would he ascribe it to himself; if he were to ascribe it to any one, it would be to Governance, to whom it was in fact ascribed, day after day and year after year, by the author, who historically died of a mortal disease, but poetically died of longing for eternity. (*PV*, pp. 100, 103)

The religious 'truth' that allows us to ground the reading of Kierkegaard's texts is in some sense 'poetic' and duplicitous.

What do we make of this interweaving of the 'aesthetic' and the 'religious,' initially made to oppose each other as false and true, under the rubric of the 'poetic'? The suggestion is surely that religious truth, and the hermeneutic concept of Governance, are themselves figures contained within the ambiguity they seek to contain. But this does not mean that they are untrue, for if the religious world-view is poetic, by the same token the poetic is religious rather than fictitious, a source of values, though one that is always under the 'arrest' of the aesthetic. This is also the point made by Kierkegaard's regretful distinction between being a religious author and a religious man: "it was not at all my original intention to become a religious author. My intention was to evacuate as hastily as possible the poetical—and then go out to a country parish" (*PV*, p. 86). To write about his religiousness instead of simply being religious allows Kierkegaard to inhabit the discrepancy between the religious and the aesthetic impulses, between the metaphysical and the playful, without excluding either one.

The metatext that begins by offering us the end of a golden string ends, in short, by leading us further into the labyrinth. At one point Kierkegaard uses the curious metaphor of spying to describe his religious reading of his aesthetic self, and suggests that this agent who detects counterfeiters must himself be under the suspicion that he exercises:

I am like a spy in a higher service, the service of the idea. I have nothing new to proclaim; I am without authority, being myself hidden in deceit; . . . I am

not a holy man; in short, I am a spy who in his spying, in learning to know all about questionable conduct and illusions and suspicious characters, all the while he is making inspection is himself under the closest inspection. Observe that this is the sort of people the police make use of. They will hardly select for their purposes the sort of people whose life was always highly honest; . . . the police are far from disinclined to have under their thumb a person who by reason of his *vita ante acta* they can compel to put up with everything, to obey. (*PV*, pp. 87–88)

Despite the later disclaimer that the divine police are purer than the civil police, this analogy is a good example of how the poetical mode complicates or dialectically reduplicates religious 'truths' by incorporating them into scenes of reading: scenes with a plot and a cast of characters that can be interpreted in more than one way. We can of course accept 'Kierkegaard's' claim that the analogy applies only to him as spy and not to his employers. But if the reader who pries out the truth is himself concealing something, the motives of his Kafkan employers would seem no less dubious. The gesture of humility by which 'Kierkegaard' confesses his own duplicity so as to absolve the Governance from any blame may be precisely that: a fiction that conceals his desire for a religious certainty that nothing in his life authorizes. We might wonder also about the compulsion that the Governance exercises over 'Kierkegaard.' What emerges from this passage is a theory in which reading is concealment as well as decipherment, an activity that penetrates secrets and reveals truths but at the same time harbors its own secrets.

The potential endlessness of reading is further compounded because the writer is always in the position of reading something already written and is never in the position of actually writing it. He thus speaks from outside rather than inside his own words. Lest this sound too much like the death of the author,⁴ however, it is important to note a particularly romantic caveat that Kierkegaard inconspicuously inserts. This caveat seems at odds with the insistence elsewhere that the author is without authority, and that the text has an autonomy that makes original and final intentions irrelevant. Here, by contrast, Kierkegaard seems to criticize the writer who withholds a signature and is subsumed into the text:

in our age, which reckons as wisdom that which is truly the mystery of unrighteousness, viz. that one need not inquire about the communicator, but only about the communication, the objective only—in our age what is an author? An author is often merely an x, even when his name is signed, something quite impersonal, which addresses itself abstractly, by the aid of

⁴Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 145–47.

printing, to thousands and thousands, while remaining itself unseen and unknown. (*PV*, pp 44–45)

The voice here makes an existential demand that the author (in this case Kierkegaard) declare himself as an individual and put himself at risk (*PV*, p. 44). The demand is not so inconsistent with the voiding of authority as it may seem, for this writer does not confer authority on his text: rather he renounces a claim to objectivity and admits that as a “single individual” he is quite insignificant. He enters the circuit of communication, where to assume a position is to lay oneself open to attack, as well as to the “control which in practical life must always be exercised over everyone who wishes to teach others,” the accountability that allows the audience to judge whether the writer’s personal and intellectual life comports “with his communication” (*PV*, p. 45). In other words, as Kierkegaard commits himself, his life becomes part of his text. This view that authors must declare a reading of their texts, even if that reading is subject to further reading, marks what is particularly romantic about Kierkegaard’s idea of the literary transaction, which insists on the presence of the personal element as part of the play of signifiers. Kierkegaard’s theory of authorship does not involve a classical theory of impersonality, in which it is the invisibility of the author that lends the text its authority, nor does it involve the theory of egotistical sublimity wrongly associated with romanticism, in which that authority derives from the massive presence of the author. But he also does not argue for the modern ‘scriptor,’ who is born simultaneously with the text and written by its decentered processes. There is for him a dialectical tension between author and text, in which the text assumes a degree of autonomy, but in which the writer, too, must take a stand (or a series of stands) outside these differences that never seem to progress toward identities. Such, for instance, is the tension in Blake’s *Songs* between a series of poems that endlessly displace and rewrite each other, and the voice of the bard, which in some sense clearly does represent ‘Blake’ himself, but without making Blake present to us.

This demand that the authors declare themselves is explored more fully in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Against the attempts in philosophical and religious hermeneutics to establish through objective critical procedures a truth that only turns out to be vulnerable to further reading, Kierkegaard insists on the need to grasp truth subjectively (*CUP*, pp. 23–33). But he soon concedes that a subjective truth, though emotionally different from an objective one, is not logically more certain, because it is no more than contingent (*CUP*, pp. 68, 68n). Moreover, it is kept in perpetual motion by Kierkegaard’s wariness about the mutual constraint exercised on each other by the institutions of ‘author’

and 'reader.' Not surprisingly, he is critical of any attempt to tell the reader what to think. He dislikes "direct" or "ordinary communication," a truth without figure that omits "the elusiveness" and "has no secrets" (*CUP*, pp. 76, 73), because he wants to leave the reader free to interpret "something which was not stereotyped for insertion in a systematic formulary, but which the trained dialectical gymnast produces and changes and produces again, the same and yet not the same" (*CUP*, p. 64). What is more unusual is a sophisticated reception aesthetics that leads Kierkegaard to suspect the institutional power of the audience and consequently to deconstruct the sympathetic reader favored by other romantics. A hostile or contemptuous reader, he argues, does not curtail the liberty of the author:

An admirer on the other hand, is not so easily disposed of. His tender assiduities become so many burdens laid upon the object of his admiration, and before the latter has an inkling of what is taking place, he finds himself groaning under heavy taxes and assessments, though he began by being the most independent of men. . . . To speak dialectically, it is not the negative which constitutes an encroachment, but the positive. (*CUP*, p. 5)

Kierkegaard here criticizes the process of canon formation and intellectual reification at the heart of a romantic idealism that is secretly structured as an economy. The contingency of subjective truth is what makes it flexible. It is something Kierkegaard guards jealously, against a visionary company that encourages what he caustically describes as "fellowship, and . . . support from the other shareholders in the enterprise" (*CUP*, p. 62).

The idea of a personal commitment similarly applies to us. The reader, too, must take a stand in relation to the text and cannot take refuge in being reduced to a semiotic gram. Yet the position we assume will always harbor its own secrets, for becoming present to the text inevitably involves becoming represented in it. Toward the middle of the *Point of View* 'Kierkegaard' suggests that the desired reader of his texts is one who will approach them as a lover (*PV*, p. 62). The metaphor of love seems innocuous, a common romantic metaphor for understanding. But like the hermeneutic tradition that it encapsulates, it opens rather than resolves the problem of reading. As lover, the reader will have to become involved in the text, and not take refuge in a spectatorial scepticism. 'He' will be committed to understanding it, specifically to enacting a lyrical rather than critical reading of Kierkegaard's authorship. But the image of the reader as lover cannot be disentangled from its double, the image of the reader as spy. We have only to remember Kierkegaard's discussion of dialectical reduplication, where the text is figured as a coy woman

yielding to her lover, to recognize that love also has its secrets. The questions that arise as we explore the intricacies of the metaphor are endless and suggest something of the complexity of even a constructive reading. Whether love is to some extent seduction is one question. Likewise, there is the problem of whether the text will yield to its lover or continue to play with 'him.' The woman, we have been told, will yield to the 'true' lover. But we might well ask whether there is a 'true' reader without his own subterfuges, who can make the text yield its truth rather than play with the metaphors within his attempts at truth. To what extent is true love simply a name for the lover's will to certainty? To what extent, on the other hand, is the notion of a will that compromises everything it does simply a name for a fear of commitment?

Reinscribing Authority: Schleiermacher

The reappearance of the writer distinguishes the *Point of View* from *The Concept of Irony* and seems to bring Kierkegaard closer to the second tendency discussed with reference to a redefined hermeneutics. But Kierkegaard's writer remains a reader who offers a point of view, and the hermeneutic that emerges from this text does not require us to make contact with the author who wrote the works. It requires us simply to follow the example of the writer who now reads them, and to take a stand toward the problem of relating the aesthetic and religious voices. The emphasis, in other words, is more on applicative than on psychological reading, and the reading process does not pretend to be an archeological one, but simply requires an existential choice on guard against its own possible secrets. Romanticism, however, can be a powerfully archeological movement, as it emerges in such poems as *The Prelude*, *The Triumph of Life*, and *The Fall of Hyperion*, in which the narrative act is a return to personal or cultural beginnings. It is not that the return is successful. Indeed, it functions paradoxically, generating from the very failure to find an origin various supplementary acts of understanding that provide new points of origin in the present, points that give us access not to the past but to the past as it survives into the present.⁵ But if this sounds suspiciously like the deconstruction of reading as an archeo-

⁵I draw on J. G. Droysen's attempt to redefine rather than dismantle the idea of origins: "The seed first became a tree by growing It is of no use to deny the existence of the tree because the original seed can no longer be traced or because one is uncertain whether this, that, or a third point is the actual beginning. If one were to dig down to the roots . . . in order to find the original germ seed, it would no longer be there. Its beginning only repeats itself through its fruit": "The Investigation of Origins," in Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, ed., *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1985), p. 124.

logical act produced by Kierkegaard, there is a difference. The archeological form taken by the attempt at understanding in these texts reshapes the failure to find an unequivocal origin that is their content into a new origin. In other words, the hermeneutic form of these texts, though deconstructed by what happens in them, simultaneously reconstructs what happens in them into an event, a (dis)closure. It thus converts the supplementary acts of understanding that ensue into moments of origination in which the act of reading, of trying to understand, is once again something author(ized) and not (as in Kierkegaard's *Point of View*) purely speculative. To put it differently, where Kierkegaard renders all psychological reading essentially applicative, Schleiermacher makes all applicative reading ultimately psychological.

In returning to Schleiermacher's writings on hermeneutics, we are struck by their archeological form. The later version of the *Hermeneutics* proceeds from grammatical, through technical, to psychological interpretation, as though moving from surface to depth. The introduction to the dialogues of Plato is part of a romantic renaissance that corrects previous commentary so as to recover the 'true' Plato. These archeologies, however, succeed in a very different way from that intended. Articulating how they succeed through a 'divinatory' reading of insights that Schleiermacher himself did not systematize is the main task that faces us. Such divinatory readings seem justified not only by Schleiermacher's own principles of interpretation but also by the form of his work, much of which comes to us from his students because he himself preferred not to fix it in writing. D. F. Strauss was to criticize Schleiermacher's preference for the lecture over the essay.⁶ But as will become apparent from Schleiermacher's discussion of speech and writing in Plato, the choice of a medium that is more fluid and dialogical than writing is meant to create openings for both author and reader, "compelling the mind of the reader to spontaneous production of ideas" (*IDP*, p. 37). At the same time, this very fluidity makes it dangerous to attribute a definite position to Schleiermacher. A relevant instance is the later version of the hermeneutics, where he distinguishes psychological from technical interpretation. It is by no means clear here whether the psychological is simply concerned with a more organic and inward version of the achieved, formalized unity of the text accessible to technical interpretation, or whether it provides insights into something less coherent, whether it provides access to a work or to a process. In order to pick out and develop one strand in Schleiermacher's writings, this discussion proceeds as though it is the second alternative that has authority. But it

⁶*The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History: A Critique of Schleiermacher's The Life of Jesus*, trans. Leander E. Keck (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 12.

would be more accurate to speak of certain ambiguities in Schleiermacher's theory. A tension between the formalist and the phenomenological has already been observed in various versions of the hermeneutics, where it is unclear whether psychological reading complements or supplements grammatical reading. There is also a further tension between a phenomenology oriented to the recovery of an original meaning, and a disseminative or deconstructive phenomenology that does indeed posit something more primal than writing, namely, discourse, but does not necessarily associate this with unity. Again, this discussion proceeds as though Schleiermacher is committed to a phenomenology that discloses truth as plural, and again it is important to point out that this is only a tendency in his writing.

Four texts are crucial to this discussion: the lectures on the life of Jesus, the commentary on Luke, the account of psychological reading in the later lectures on hermeneutics, and the introductions to the dialogues of Plato. Not surprisingly, as theologian Schleiermacher has a greater need for cognitive theism than as classical philologist. Revolutionary for his time in describing some of the ways in which the synoptic gospels disrupt the unity of effect that creates the illusion of a fixed meaning, he is also conservative in projecting onto the Gospel of John a hermeneutic certainty of which he cannot wholly convince himself. *The Life of Jesus* remains committed to a formalism of incarnate meaning, in which the successful text (the Gospel of John in this case) can be wholly understood through a combination of grammatical and technical interpretation. But at the same time, it introduces a need for a more phenomenological approach, in that it sees three of the gospels as 'imperfect' texts that can be understood only by going beyond the requirement of technical and formal coherence. In his study of the Gospel of Luke, Schleiermacher does indeed move in a more radical direction. This also holds true for the later version of the hermeneutics, where the subdivision of psychological interpretation into technical interpretation and psychological interpretation proper concedes the limits of a purely formalist analysis. But whether psychological reading simply deepens technical reading or whether it illuminates a kind of text that the latter cannot penetrate is left unresolved here, since the *Hermeneutics* does not deal with specific problems in practical criticism. Finally, in the introductions of the dialogues of Plato, Schleiermacher tackles the problem of interpreting disjunctive texts, apparently under the guise of finding in them a more inward coherence, but actually in order to argue for a disintegration of both formal and organic unity that makes the reader a constitutive element in the life of the text.

The Life of Jesus is unusual in that its subject, the gospels, are texts but are also readings of the life of Jesus. It is therefore concerned both with

norms for the writing of texts, and with the kind of reading that seems most satisfactory. Schleiermacher's goal is to grasp the life of Jesus as history rather than chronicle, to know "the inner quality of [Jesus'] life" rather than its external details (*LJ*, p. 3). The distinction between chronicle and history corresponds to the one between grammatical and psychological levels of reading. History is a method of writing that allows the reader to grasp its subject from within, whereas chronicle remains exterior and episodic, thus preventing us from moving beyond the grammatical, in order to understand the whole and not simply the parts. The Gospel of John, it seems, provides the most history-like representation of Jesus and is therefore to be preferred to the synoptic gospels, which frustrate access to the inwardness of Jesus' life by disrupting the grammar of narrative. Schleiermacher's ideal in these lectures is a form of representation that reveals the inner man, but he does not feel this can be done if the textual surface is fragmented. The Gospel of John achieves that history-likeness whose decline is lamented by Frei, and which can occur only if the close unity of inner and outer meaning has not been broken. It does so because its narrative is continuous and therefore seems to come from "one who narrates what he himself had experienced" (*LJ*, p. 159). Lacking such authority, the other gospels are unable to grasp their subject from within, to make it present within the text. The norms that Schleiermacher assumes for writing are in turn a function of what he thinks will make the practice of reading a comfortable one: the disjunctive text is inadequate because it does not yield itself to psychological reading.

In these lectures at least Schleiermacher takes an orthodox position. He is committed to texts that create the illusion of incarnate meaning by following classical principles of decorum, and he does not develop strategies of accommodation to salvage the authority of fractured texts.⁷ But what is interesting is his description of the ways in which texts can fail as acts of representation, and his awareness that such texts exist even among the scriptures. Among the deficiencies of the synoptic gospels is their narrative discontinuity: their composition from separate narratives that were later joined together (*LJ*, pp. 223, 158), which gives the impression that the author is groping after a truth not fully contained in the text. Modal ambiguity and shifts in voice can also play a role in unsettling the authority of a text. The intermixture of a lyrical or dramatic element in the gospels, for example, may cast doubt on the historical character of the narrative, and so too may uncertainties about whether a narrative is interior or exterior, literal or metaphoric (*LJ*, p.

⁷Schleiermacher does suggest, however, that insofar as we read the synoptic gospels, it must be in the light of the more 'complete' version by John.

49). These descriptions of the synoptic gospels are extraordinarily accurate as accounts of the compositional method of someone like Blake, and as explanations of why his texts jeopardize a transcendental signified. Aggregational and stylistically heterogeneous texts exhibit what De Quincey calls a “mechanology of style.” Where style “maintains a commerce with thought” and is “modified by thoughts,” it is organic; but where “words in combination determine or modify each other” and where “words act upon words,” it is mechanic.⁸ In these texts narrative segments or presentational modes act upon each other, so that the signifier reflects upon itself instead of transparently reflecting the signified.

Although Schleiermacher tends to dismiss the synoptic gospels, from the admission that such texts exist in large numbers it is but a short step to the sense that they may have some legitimacy. The revaluation of the fissured text can lead in two directions: to a sentimental use of the reading process as a way of reversing the fall into writing, or to a redefinition of writing and reading as activities whose power lies precisely in their dissemination of meaning. It should not surprise us that these two very different developments manifest themselves indecisively or that they are often intertwined in the work of individual theorists. *The Life of Jesus* places itself before the flood by identifying a normative text that achieves linguistic stability and makes reading unproblematic. But a wide gulf separates Schleiermacher from those predecessors of his who similarly resist the decline of history-likeness in narrative. For he recognizes that the ‘fragmented’ quality of the synoptic gospels issues from the flux of the oral tradition behind them and cannot be argued away as a technical failure. If he tries to reestablish a fixed meaning through the Gospel of John—something for which Strauss criticized him⁹—he does so as if aware that his project is illusory. For one of his most intriguing concessions is that a connected presentation of the life of Jesus is in fact impossible, because John itself presents the appearance of continuity only by being highly selective (*LJ*, p. 43): “because it has a definite tendency, what it narrates as the content of a period is just as full of gaps as the other Gospel accounts” (*LJ*, p. 159). Thus the psychological coherence of John emerges as an effect of grammar. In marginalizing the synoptic gospels and requiring that they be corrected by a text whose unity has already been shown as a stylistic illusion, Schleiermacher simply brackets a problem that he knows he must address: the problem of what their fragmentation says about the status of representation itself.

⁸Thomas De Quincey, “Style,” in *De Quincey as Critic*, ed. John E. Jordan (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 83.

⁹*The Christ of Faith*, pp. 36–37, 42–43.

But Schleiermacher does not always set aside this problem. Already in the protected field of biblical interpretation, in his *Critical Essay on the Gospel of Luke*, the formalist norm is seriously challenged. Beginning with the variations between the synoptic gospels, he argues against Eichhorn's attempt to construct a stemma by positing an original gospel that then became corrupted (*GL*, pp. 1–7). He suggests that Matthew and Luke often draw on different sources for the same event, that there is no original source, and indeed that there is a “plurality” of sources (*GL*, pp. 57, 7). He thus avoids the temptation to create an ideal text by a process of subtraction, implicit in the “comparative” method of eliminating what is not common to all the gospels and then selecting the most “concisely expressed” common denominator so as to produce “a still more meager original Gospel” (*GL*, pp. 17, 8). His commentary traces in microscopic detail the disintegration of unity at both the grammatical and technical levels. But contrary to expectation, he does not uncover a hidden coherence behind either level. Luke is seen simply as a compilation of narratives from different sources, which are sometimes themselves compilations rather than eyewitness accounts. Moreover, the parts of Luke's text are not unified by a pervasive cultural spirit, because they are often irreconcilable. What Schleiermacher makes of the discrepancies in and between the gospels is unclear. Sometimes he provides mechanical explanations for them, related to the biographical circumstances of the writer or compiler. But often the completely different emphases given an event reflect the fact that something is perceived in substantially different ways (cf. *GL*, p. 67). Events are repeated in “wholly different associations” (*GL*, p. 101), perhaps because the truth is originally complex. Like so much of his other writing, the form of Schleiermacher's commentary is itself open to theoretical constructions that it refuses to turn into dogma. For as he points out, what he offers his reader is an essay whose parts follow an “inartificial connexion,” not a polished work the argument of which has been reduced to unity (*GL*, pp. ii–iii). He avoids an overview of Luke and provides only a part-by-part analysis of the organization of the text, thus giving his reader space to think about the implications of its polygenetic textual history for meaning and language in general. Readers are left free to conclude that some of the variations in the gospels are of merely pedantic importance. But we may also conclude that the process of variation sometimes has a bearing on the nature of meaning itself, as something unfixed both in the history and also in the future of the text.

What emerges from Schleiermacher's reading of Luke is a profound suspicion of closure, whether representational or phenomenological, whether in or behind the text. The archeological form of his inquiry, which in this case traces the historical rather than psychological emer-

gence of the text, does not lead back to a single source, but rather to the experience by which the collective mind tries to understand and reconstruct that absent origin. At the origin of the Bible is an oral tradition inhabited by relativity rather than governed by inspiration. Closer to us are the first eyewitness narrators and their auditors who committed to writing their special but discrete insights (*GL*, pp. 12–13). Closer still there are the compilers who collected these sources and created texts that only seem more encyclopedic than the original detached narratives, but in fact avoid the use of writing to confer on themselves the canonical status we associate with the Bible. The compilations, of which the synoptic gospels are simply larger versions, do not offer themselves as “regular book[s] with a beginning and conclusion,” and their “public authority” derives precisely from the fact that they are not “closed” to additions and revisions (*GL*, p. 15). Like Plato’s dialogue form, they are written attempts to recapture the flux of the oral tradition, and thus the process of thought and inquiry. In moving back toward them, we are moving beneath the text to the discourse that subtends it. The role of the interpreter thus involves a deconstructive hermeneutic. We must show that the gospels are not books but compilations; we must paradoxically disintegrate them in order to recover their openness.

The *Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato* similarly address those problems of internal discontinuity in texts and canons set aside in *The Life of Jesus*. Schleiermacher observes that Plato’s writings do not fit into either of the received genres of philosophy: the fragmentary and empirical, on the one hand, or the clearly systematic, in which the parts are “regularly built up,” and in which “however weak the foundations of these structures often are, and their compartments taken at random, they have still an attractive look of firmness and arrangement” (*IDP*, p. 6). Plato’s texts do not form a canon, and yet they have the extensiveness of one. Ostensibly, Schleiermacher attempts to establish the unity of the Platonic oeuvre, against arguments that the texts are so many different fragments that do not add up, and against the contrary argument that their true meaning must be esoteric, “sought for in secret doctrines which he as good as not at all confided to these writings” (*IDP*, pp. 7–9). The problem of the hermeneutic circle that arises through the discrepancy between part and whole at the level of the collected texts is repeated in individual texts like the *Phaedrus* and the *Protagoras*, which are also made up of parts that have little in common, and which appear to fail as acts of conceptual representation. Refusing to go beyond the language of the text to some private meaning, Schleiermacher also refuses to ignore the problem of texts that do not fit into the canon, as he does in *The Life of Jesus*. He is thus faced with the dilemma that the unity of these texts cannot be sought outside them and yet is not clearly given within them.

The radical nature of Schleiermacher's solution may not be apparent because he continues to speak of the Platonic oeuvre as though it possesses a conventional unity, and reverts to a metaphor that he had earlier criticized, that of the building systematically arranged (*IDP*, p. 42). He further describes the text as a kind of macro-dialogue, a progressive universal text "comprehending every thing in it" (*IDP*, p. 19).¹⁰ But despite these habitual formulae he does not create a center for the canon, but rather makes discontinuity a constructive principle by replacing the idea that language has a referent with the idea that the referent is the linguistic process itself. An "analytical exposition" of the dialogues, though helpful as a scaffolding, neglects the fact that in Plato "form and subject are inseparable" (*IDP*, p. 14). The eccentricities of Plato's form, moreover, prevent the reader from coming to rest in what Plato says and instead force him to "an inward and self-originated creation of the thought in view," indeed to the "spontaneous production of ideas" (*IDP*, pp. 17, 37). Among the heuristic tools Plato uses are digression, the "frequent recommencement of the investigation from another point of view," the "concealment . . . of the more important object under one more trifling," and "the dialectic play with ideas" (*IDP*, p. 37). All of these counteract the passivity induced in the reader by "long and continuous discourses" (*IDP*, p. 16), by the philosophical equivalent of history-likeness. This idea that gaps at the grammatical level are actually stimuli to the reader informs Schleiermacher's interpretation of particularly problematic dialogues. The *Phaedrus*, for instance, falls into two parts, one concerned with love and the other with rhetoric. Instead of unifying the text by making one part the appendage of the other, Schleiermacher argues that the text does not contain a meaning but catalyzes the reader into creating one: "we are driven from an outer to an inner, and as this last does itself in turn soon become an outer, we push still onwards even into the innermost soul of the whole work, which is no other than the inward spirit of those higher laws . . . [of] dialectics" (*IDP*, pp. 57–58). Thus in Platonic dialogue what is communicated is not a series of concepts denoted by the words but an activity (*IDP*, p. 17). In a neat allusion back to his critique of a hermeneutics that searches for esoteric meaning, Schleiermacher argues that there is indeed an esoteric and an exoteric meaning in Plato's work: the exoteric being "writing," and the esoteric being "immediate instruction," the dialogue of the mind with itself, not

¹⁰Against this formulaic insistence on the wholeness of the canon we must set Schleiermacher's concession that when he began work on Plato, "I had the same impression of incompleteness, . . . of short-coming as regards the understanding of himself and others, as I have now after the most mature acquaintance with his writings": *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in his Autobiography and Letters*, 2 vols., trans. Frederica Rowan (London: Smith, Elder, 1860), I, 301.

something outside language, but the very process of words acting upon words.

Crucial to Schleiermacher's analysis of Plato is a distinction between writing and speech that parallels the one in the Compendium between text (*Schrift*) and discourse (*Reden*; O, p. 1). The distinction, however, is not the opposition attributed by Derrida to Rousseau, between a writing inhabited by the trace and a speech immediately linked to the voice of the soul. For while preserving a characteristically romantic contrast between the material and spiritual aspects of language, Schleiermacher reinscribes this distinction so as to associate discourse with something akin to 'difference.' The word 'akin' seems appropriate, since Schleiermacher's distinction is not thoroughgoing. Indeed, his concept of speech or discourse, like its source in Plato's *Phaedrus*, vacillates between unitary, dialectical, and dialogical concepts of language. In a passage that Schleiermacher cites, Plato seems at first to condemn writing because it places the author's words in a wider circuit of communication: "Words once written down . . . are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them, and know not to whom they should reply, to whom not: and, if they are maltreated or abused, they have no parent to protect them; and they cannot protect or defend themselves." But as against this sense that writing makes the word an orphan by estranging it from its original meaning, Plato also seems to condemn writing because it is too single-minded: "writing is unfortunately like painting; for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence. And the same may be said of speeches. . . . if you want to know anything and put a question to one of them, the speaker always gives one unvarying answer." At first glance it seems that oral discourse is dialectical rather than dialogical and therefore yields a meaning that is ultimately if not originally unitary. The living word of knowledge "graven in the soul of the learner" is one that can "defend itself," and that utilizes question and critique to consolidate its position.¹¹ Yet the notion of dialectic as a logocentric mode is itself questionable, not only in the light of Theodor Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, which restores the link between dialectic and language elided by Hegel,¹² but also in view of the romantics' image of Socrates, which includes the Socrates of Kierkegaard as well as of Nietzsche. Of particular relevance to the idea that dialectic may result not in the defense of an initial proposition but in the development of its further ramifications is another passage that seems to welcome the au-

¹¹Plato, *Phaedrus*, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, 5 vols., trans. Benjamin Jowett (London: Oxford University Press, 1871), I, 485.

¹²Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 163.

tonomy of the author's words in the circuit of reception. The dialectician "finding a congenial soul, by the help of science sows and plants therein words which are able to help themselves and him who planted them, and are not unfruitful, but have in them a seed which others brought up in different soils render immortal."¹³ The surrounding metaphors are different because they imply fertility rather than suspicion. But the underlying idea is not unlike Kierkegaard's notion that dialectical discourse harbors secrets that provoke the reader to produce and change what is said, so that it is "the same and yet not the same" (*CUP*, p. 64). Shelley will also use the image of the seed as part of a disseminative view of creation and reception, in which dissemination enhances authority. The first plant to grow from the seed is perhaps one that the writer envisages. But as that plant in turn produces a seed, and as the seed is transplanted to other soils, what happens in the process of reception is farther and farther removed from the paternity of the author.

Like Plato, Schleiermacher seems ambivalent about the precise nature of that dynamism that distinguishes "oral instruction" from writing, and the exact consequences for the relationship between author and reader. At times the greater openness of dialogue to the reader seems to do no more than involve the reader who has "the figure already before him in his own mind" in filling in the gaps as planned by the author (*IDP*, p. 18). But at other times the method excites the reader to "spontaneous origination of ideas" (*IDP*, p. 43). As in the reader-response theory of Wolfgang Iser, there is a reluctance to pursue the more radical implications of a phenomenological approach and to abandon the idea of an implied author. A divinatory reading of Schleiermacher's practical criticism, however, can see him moving toward a theory in which the understanding of the 'theme' articulated by the various parts of a literary structure is increasingly inadequate and in which the reader must grasp the process out of which the text originates by recognizing writing as no more than a "remembrance" of the activity that produced the writing (*IDP*, pp. 16–17). Writing, as Ricoeur says in commenting on Plato, captures only "the 'said' of speaking" and not "the event of speaking."¹⁴ To grasp this event the reader avoids being held captive by a merely technical reading, resists the tendency of writing to fix meaning, and goes beyond the written text to a 'work' now reconceived not as an intentional unity but as continuous labor. But this work is no longer a conception unfractured by expression: it is the very process of thinking itself and therefore of language. To recover the work the reader must deepen the "analytical exposition" of the text's parts produced through

¹³Plato, *Phaedrus*, I, 486.

¹⁴Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics*, p. 199.

technical reading, by the “supplementary process” of psychological reading, which “restore(s) to their natural connection those limbs, which without dissection, usually appear so very deplorably involved one with another” (*IDP*, p. 14). Interestingly, exposition (the reader’s equivalent to *Schrift*) provides an anatomical clarity without which the reader would be confused. But this clarity is an artificial procedure, in grave danger of dismembering rather than remembering the body of the text. The reader must also return to that diacritical interimplication, that deplorable confusion of the parts of both text and canon, that discloses the structurality of expository structures.

This heuristic theory of reading works out hints that exist in Schleiermacher’s theory as well as his practical criticism. In the last chapter we assumed that psychological reading was aimed at the recovery of an originary meaning. And indeed there is much in the *Hermeneutics* to suggest that where the technical appreciation of an achieved totality is impossible, divination discerns such a unity by understanding authors better than they understand themselves. It does so by finding a point of inception (*Anfangspunkt*), which is also the work’s center in that it unlocks its *arche* and *telos*, and thus allows the reader to grasp it as a totality. Terms like ‘unity’ and ‘inner coherence’ are pervasive in Schleiermacher’s writing, and by them he means something more than mere connectedness. The term ‘unity’ is sometimes accounted for in terms of the ‘theme,’ and sometimes in terms of the “writer’s motivating principle” or “the work’s overall subject as its motivation” (O, pp. 12–13). In any event, it conveys the sense of a phenomenology that is essentially a deferred formalism.

Yet a more careful reading of the later lectures suggests that psychological reading is also the unraveling of form. What distinguishes the psychological from the technical is precisely its tendency to disseminate rather than center meaning. Thus Schleiermacher points to a

distinction between the indefinite, flowing thought-process and the completed thought-complex. The former, as in a river, is an unending, unfocused intermingling of one thought with another, without necessary connection. The latter, in finished discourse, has a definite goal, to which everything refers, one thought defines the other with urgency, and when the goal is reached, the series has an end. (*HK*, pp. 155–56)

Distinguishing for the first time between psychological and technical reading, he suggests that the latter attends to the finished thought complex, whereas true psychological interpretation concerns itself with the more inchoate thought process itself (*HK*, p. 157). The psychological “relates more to the rise of thought out of the wholeness of the life-

moments of the individual,” whereas the technical “is more a reduction to a definite mode of thinking and will to representation, out of which sequences [of thought] develop” (*HK*, p. 159). Technical reading is thus concerned with two processes, meditation and composition, by which a direction and then a formal shape are given to the thought process (*HK*, p. 161).¹⁵ But psychological interpretation is concerned with the recovery of all those associated thoughts that are eliminated by the will-to-representation and the choices it makes. Given this description of the psychological ground behind the text, it is difficult to envision a reading that can extract a clear point of inception from what seem to be several points of inception. Nor is it clear why an awareness of subtextual and collateral thoughts (*Grundgedanken* and *Nebengedanken*) should focus rather than complicate what is being conveyed. Schleiermacher sometimes insists that the psychological and technical interpretations lead in the same direction. Yet clearly they are complementary only in a dialogical way. The technical reading is a logocentric one: it reduces the multiple to the linear (*die Reihe*). The psychological reading, by contrast, is concerned with the diacritical surplus that technical analysis cannot reveal. Its emphasis on collateral thoughts sensitizes it to what Derrida calls those “syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be *present* in and of itself.”¹⁶ At the psychological level thoughts are interwoven in such a way that each is constituted on the trace of other elements in the thought complex. This interconnectedness is indeed a version of what Dilthey will call *Zusammenhang* or organic coherence. But if it allows the recovery of what is most organic in discourse, it does so precisely at the cost of not reconstructing the thought process into a unity.

The “Academy Addresses of 1829” further help to clarify the revisionary direction in Schleiermacher’s thinking. By 1822, when he wrote the “Draft for the Presentation of the Second Part” of the *Hermeneutics*, Schleiermacher was beginning to feel that his treatment of psychological interpretation in the 1819 Compendium was too simple. The section entitled “Technical Interpretation” did not respond to the complexities of psychological interpretation as described in the “Introduction,” and it was possible that technical and psychological interpretation were not identical. Accordingly, he began to plan a more elaborate account of psychological interpretation that presumably formed the core of the lectures Lücke heard in 1832–33. In the 1822 draft he introduces a distinction between the “objective train of thought” leading to the com-

¹⁵Schleiermacher defines meditation as “the genetic realisation” of the thought process and composition as its “objective realisation” (*HK*, p. 161).

¹⁶Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 26.

position of the text and the “subjective train of thought, the secondary representations” (*H*, p. 154). This distinction anticipates the division between the technical and the psychological, between *logos* and *differance*, around which reading will later be constructed. Interestingly, Schleiermacher concedes that leading and secondary representations may be “interwoven” and that it may not always be possible to establish a hierarchical relation between the two, but he is still enough of a formalist to describe such texts as “confused” (*H*, p. 155). Nevertheless, he recognizes that there are texts where the leading idea “has degenerated into secondary ideas” or has “occasioned them,” or where the author has “yielded to a free train of thought” (*H*, p. 156). Surprisingly, the “Separate Exposition of the Second Part” (1826–27) does not develop these hints at a psychological interpretation distinct from the technical and seems strenuously committed to finding the unity of a text. But by 1829 an interest in the psychological emerges more strongly, tentatively decoupled now from the notion of unity. Given that in 1832 he will still see the technical and the psychological as parallel readings, it is significant that Schleiermacher here sees form as restrictive: “an interpreter who does not see correctly how the stream of thinking and composing at once crash[es] against and recoil[s] from the walls of its bed and is diverted into a course other than it would have taken by itself cannot correctly understand the internal movement of the composition” (*H*, p. 189). Apparently, language at a certain level does not express the movement of language itself, of thinking and composing. In the same vein the second address is at least partly a critique of Ast’s concept of the hermeneutic circle as a way of grasping the totality of the work. Schleiermacher points out that almost every work contains secondary thoughts, “parts that cannot be fully understood in relation to the overall organization of the text” (*H*, p. 201). Although these parts have their own unity, which is not generic and formal but related to the author’s “individuality” (*H*, p. 201), it is difficult to see why anything other than the fear of calling these texts aesthetically inferior would lead Schleiermacher to use the term ‘unity’ to describe what are really organic discrepancies in the text.

Although it is the final lectures that develop the crucial distinction between the technical and the psychological, it is thus clear that they are not the first to complicate the archeological movement of understanding. Already in the 1819 Compendium Schleiermacher concedes that the movement from text to voice may not resolve anything because this voice itself may require further interpretation (*O*, p. 8). Nor is he able to convince himself that meaning is fixed even at the grammatical level of a formally perfected text, for although he struggles to affirm that we can “identify the true and complete unity of a given word,” he also speaks of

“an infinite, indeterminate multiplicity,” a “multiplicity . . . already . . . present in the unity” of each word (*H*, pp. 121–22). By 1832 the grammatical, with its elusive promise of lexical definiteness, has ceased to engage him. The new material focuses entirely on the psychological as the site of a multiplicity already present in the unity of a text’s origin. That the later *Hermeneutics* contains in embryo a disseminative theory of intention is highly significant, because it might otherwise be objected that Schleiermacher’s discovery that discourse is plural occurs only in relation to a certain kind of text that has no romantic equivalent. The synoptic gospels have what McGann would describe as a “polygenous” or polygenetic textual history.¹⁷ They are transcribed and compiled by several people over an extended period of time. The dialogues conceal a similar though less radical polygeny. Plato is in some sense the compiler of Socrates’ various reflections; the original author Socrates, as Kierkegaard recognized, is no more available to us than the original gospel posited by Eichhorn. This raises the question of whether the deconstruction of a simple origin is unique to manuscript cultures as opposed to print cultures, in which we do have a point of origin in the author. Or, to put it differently, to what extent are the models generated by studying manuscript cultures and the “pre-autonomous” works that Jauss finds characteristic of them irrelevant to a hermeneutics of texts produced in terms of a romantic ideology of the self?¹⁸ Thus it is significant that in the *Hermeneutics* Schleiermacher transfers to the individual psyche the polygeny explored in connection with composite texts. This is not to say he describes a self that is polygenous because it is constructed out of various social texts. But if Schleiermacher is romantic in remaining resolutely psychological rather than social in his approach, the romantic ideology is clearly not for him an ideology of the unitary self but rather of the intersubjective self.

What emerges, then, from both Schleiermacher’s theory and practice, is that understanding involves a movement to a depth that is not a ground. Sometimes this movement is described as being from *Schrift* to *Reden*. It would be wrong, however, to translate *Schrift* as ‘writing’ and *Reden* strictly as ‘speech’ rather than ‘discourse.’ The writing/speech dis-

¹⁷My discussion of polygenous and monogenous texts and of the influence of the ‘romantic ideology’ on the textual criticism of monogenous texts obviously draws on Jerome McGann’s *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 15–49.

¹⁸On the role of the author in oral and manuscript cultures, see H. R. Jauss, “Theses on the Transition from the Aesthetics of Literary Works to a Theory of Aesthetic Experience,” in Mario J. Valdes and Owen J. Miller, eds., *Interpretation of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 144–46; Gerald Bruns, *Inventions: Writing, Textuality, and Understanding in Literary History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 44–59.

inction is perhaps the clearest form that this distinction assumes. But from the fact that the object of both technical and psychological interpretation is described as *Reden*, and from the fact that hermeneutics is not exclusively concerned with the oral, we can infer that 'text' and 'discourse' are modalities rather than forms, ways of using and understanding language that cut across the formal distinction between the written and the oral. By 'text' it meant that which elicits grammatical understanding of a lexical system. By "the discourse of a text" (O, p. 1) is meant that which elicits a more profound understanding of the process behind the finished product. This process, however, is not something private. For discourse is "the mediation of shareable thought," (O, p. 2), and it is precisely its communality that constitutes it as a process, as the interchange rather than the fixing of meaning. Discourse will remain an important concept in modern hermeneutics, and its presence in Schleiermacher's work helps to suggest why Gadamer is wrong in claiming that he denies the linguisticity of understanding, as well as how this linguisticity is connected to a certain referential openness.¹⁹ Characteristic of discourse, according to Ricoeur, is the fact that it is addressed to another person and is constituted by an exchange of questions and answers, whether implicit or explicit.²⁰ Discourse is thus oriented to other possibilities that enter it as collateral and subtextual thoughts. To understand the 'discourse of a text' is to grasp the dialogism that underlies even its most single-minded utterances. Moreover, there is no point at which the creative mind is not already part of the world of discourse, for even thought is essentially intersubjective and "becomes complete only through interior discourse" (O, p. 2). Or more precisely, there may be an originally monologic stage of thought, but it is of no importance: "original thoughts" remain unfulfilled until they have been transformed into discourse (O, p. 2).

Paradoxically, then, it is the view that has seemed to set the romantics apart from the present—the view that understanding is the recovery of a discourse/speech behind writing—that constitutes what is particularly modern in their contribution to hermeneutics. The romantic period has long been recognized as favoring speech and such written forms as approach it. But this 'speech' is itself a complex concept, partially at odds with the naive logocentrism attributed to Rousseau by Derrida. The

¹⁹See Gadamer, "The Problem of Language in Schleiermacher's Hermeneutic," in Robert W. Funk, ed., *Schleiermacher as Contemporary* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 68–84. James Edie points out that Gadamer's concept of linguisticity is limited by being somewhat structuralist and thus refusing the title of language to anything not "independent of the subjective intending of consciousness." Given a different view of language, a phenomenological view for example, the psychological and the linguistic are not incompatible (pp. 89–91, 93).

²⁰*Hermeneutics*, pp. 197–99, 145–46.

problem is complicated by the fact that the association of voice with a self-identical meaning is something we do indeed find in much romantic literature. But at the same time speech is often conceived as force rather than form, as inherently shifting. Humboldt, for instance, defines language as *energeia* rather than *ergon*, and as an “eternally productive medium.” Though he dismisses writing as “an incomplete, mummified preservation” and sees speech as closer to life and breath, it would be wrong to see the opposition he constructs as essentialist or idealist. For the fundamental characteristic of speech is variability or difference. Language itself develops rather than translates thought, and what it communicates is developed further by the listener.²¹ The consequence of Humboldt’s refusal to abstract thought from the intersubjective activity of language is a concept of speech as disseminative that is close to what Derrida chooses to associate with writing.²² At the same time it is significant that it is speech and not writing that Humboldt and Schleiermacher place at the site of difference, for if the romantics anticipate modern theory, they do so in their own way. They preserve the opposition between speech/discourse as organic and text as mechanical while subverting its implications. In other words, by preserving the terms of the opposition Derrida attributes to them but resituating within it the attributes of identity and difference, they compel the historian looking for romantic counterparts of modern theory to reconceive the very nature of ‘difference’ itself. As an element now associated with speech, or with the discourse of the text, genuine difference no longer has to involve a distance from origins and a corresponding loss of contact with truth and meaningfulness. Difference is refigured as actually closer to life and therefore to truth.

Schleiermacher is often identified with Dilthey because of the latter’s pioneering work as his biographer and publicist. But Dilthey has no interest in an underlying discourse of texts, as distinct from the written documents or ‘life-expressions’ themselves. Correspondingly, he has no interest in psychological reading as Schleiermacher envisages it.²³ Though he argues that interpretation always involves the grasping of an inner meaning, he also insists that it is wrong “to identify our knowledge

²¹Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Linguistic Variability and Intellectual Development*, trans. George Buck and Frithjof Raven (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1971), pp. 27, 34–37.

²²At times Humboldt absorbs his perception of linguistic variability into a Hegelian teleology in which differences are part of a developing identity. But the dialogue of this Hegelianism with a disseminative theory of speech is, as it were, the ‘discourse’ underlying Humboldt’s ‘text.’

²³It could be argued that Dilthey’s aesthetics, briefly discussed in the tenth chapter, is closer to Schleiermacher than is his hermeneutics.

of this inner side . . . with psychology.”²⁴ The inner form is for him the “mental structure” or thought complex rather than the more inchoate thought process that precedes it. The object of critical study is not “the processes in the poet’s mind but . . . a structure created by these processes yet separable from them.”²⁵ In other words, Dilthey is not interested in the psychological as something distinct from the technical. By contrast, it is Schleiermacher’s interest in the psychological that is responsible for much of what is radical in his approach. Where Dilthey abandons a psychological in favor of a technical hermeneutics because the former does not yield a ‘truth,’ the later Schleiermacher is interested in the psychological for precisely that reason.

With Dilthey and Droysen there begins a tradition in philosophic hermeneutics that is structuralist rather than (de)constructive, conservative rather than sceptical. Insofar as he is not interested in structures abstracted from life, Dilthey is a structural hermeneuticist rather than a pure structuralist. But he anticipates structuralism in his deemphasis on the individual, who is “only the crossing-point for the cultural systems and organisations into which his existence is woven.” And he also anticipates it in assuming that the resulting interstructure is systematic, even going so far as to use a linguistic model in comparing its logic to that of syntax and grammar.²⁶ If Dilthey parts company with the Hegelian and metaphysical tradition in ways that bring him closer to Schleiermacher, he also parts company with the latter in ways that mark Schleiermacher as fundamentally romantic. Unlike Hegel, Dilthey questions the possibility of metaphysics and argues in a historicist variation on Kant that we can know the categories that the mind uses to structure life but cannot know what is behind life itself.²⁷ Though he does not dismantle metaphysics as a form of desire,²⁸ he abandons the claim to find a transcendental signified behind the interconnections constructed by the mind. This rejection of a transcendental ground may seem to ally him with Schleiermacher’s emphasis on the linguisticity of understanding. But language (or rather semiotics, since Dilthey does not confine himself to

²⁴Wilhelm Dilthey, *Pattern and Meaning in History: Thoughts on History and Society*, ed. and trans. H. P. Rickman (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 69.

²⁵*The Essence of Philosophy*, trans. Stephen Emery and William Emery (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 34; *Pattern and Meaning*, p. 70.

²⁶*Pattern and Meaning*, pp. 93, 168.

²⁷See Theodore Plantinga, *Historical Understanding in the Thought of Wilhelm Dilthey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 80. See also Dilthey, *Pattern and Meaning*, p. 125.

²⁸Wilhelm Dilthey, *Dilthey’s Philosophy of Existence: Introduction to Weltanschauungslehre*, trans. William Kluback and Martin Weinbaum (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), pp. 39–40, 73.

written or spoken language) is not for him what it is for Schleiermacher. Dilthey's is a structuralist and not a philological hermeneutics. He concentrates on larger unifying structures and does not engage in the close analysis characteristic of Schleiermacher's reading of Luke, which reveals slippages and discontinuities not perceptible in an overview. It may seem unusual to link Schleiermacher's sensitivity to textual difference with his interest in philology, given the way the discipline was practiced by precursors like Ernesti. But Schleiermacher's philology is often closer to Nietzsche's description of it as *ephexis* than it is to any traditional philology. As important, Schleiermacher, unlike Dilthey, shares in the post-Kantianism of the romantics: though he questions the idea of a transcendental signified, understanding is for him a process of recognition, and not simply of cognition or knowing how we know.

What has emerged is that Schleiermacher's major tools, philology and psychology, produce results radically at odds with the promise they hold out, while nevertheless constituting this process of autodeconstruction as foundational. In this respect they are aspects of that larger 'archeological' impulse in his work that distinguishes him from Kierkegaard. Obviously, given his conception of psychological reading, Schleiermacher's hermeneutic is not archeological in any literal sense. Nevertheless, if the term 'archeological' is metaphoric, the metaphor is constitutive and not just fictional. Its presence in Schleiermacher's writing as a containing form for the work as a whole reconstitutes the failure to find a ground as itself a ground from which interpretation can begin and makes Schleiermacher's hermeneutic very different from Kierkegaard's theory of reading. For Schleiermacher, the dissemination of meaning is a function of writing and thinking and not just of the belatedness of reading. That means that readers, in discovering the secrets harbored by the 'truth' they recover, are not just making contact with their own limitations but with something intended by the author. Their reading, in turn, even as it fails to recover a single truth behind the text, does in some way unveil the text and invest itself with a certain authority. But it is not an authority that precludes further reading, since what is uncovered is the process and not the meaning of the text.