



Fine-tuning the Hermeneutical Spiral

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ABSTRACT

A hermeneutical spiral model illustrates the temporal process of inductive and deductive reasoning for interpretation. *The Hermeneutical Spiral* by Osborne describes a conical spiral that stretches from the ancient text to the modern world of the listener. Unfortunately, this model implies a trade-off of biblical authority for increasing relevance as it moves away from Scripture. To avoid this problem a viable hermeneutical model must allow Scripture to norm the whole process (Sola Scriptura). In addition, the worlds of meaning unpacked from the text (Tota Scriptura), the worlds of meaning of the interpreter (Prima Scriptura), and the fusion of those worlds of meaning (Viva Scriptura) should be incorporated if possible. I propose a cylindrical three-tiered (micro, meso, macro) hermeneutical spiral model with a central long axis of Scripture that norms all the loops. The axis of the text radiates worlds of meaning (in, behind, in front of, above and below the text) which encounter the interpreter's worlds of meaning as he/she travels along a spiral path. Fusion of their two horizons requires semi-permeable boundaries (dialogue of questions and answers) to allow interpenetrative understanding.

HISTORICAL HERMENEUTICAL MODELS

Plato

Parts - Whole

"Every speech must be put together to have a certain body of its own; so as to be neither headless nor footless but to have middle parts and end parts, written suitably to each other and to the whole." *Phaedrus*, 264c.



Spinoza

Text-Literary Context

"Consequently, knowledge of all these things, that is, of almost everything in Scripture must be sought from the Bible itself, just as knowledge of nature has to be sought from nature itself." "On the Interpretation of Scripture," sect. 3, in *Political-Theological Treatise*.



Schleiermacher

Text-Literary/Author

"The task is also to be expressed as follows, to understand the utterance at first just as well, then better than its author." *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, 18:3.



Heidegger

It-DaSein (but why?)

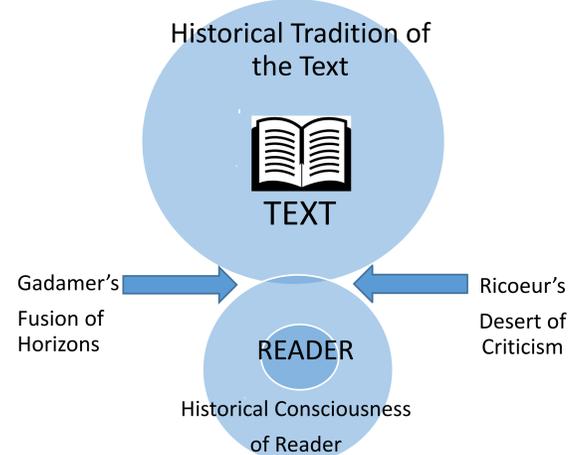
Being-in-World

"The wherein of self-referential understanding is the phenomenon of world." *Being and Time*, sect. 18:86.



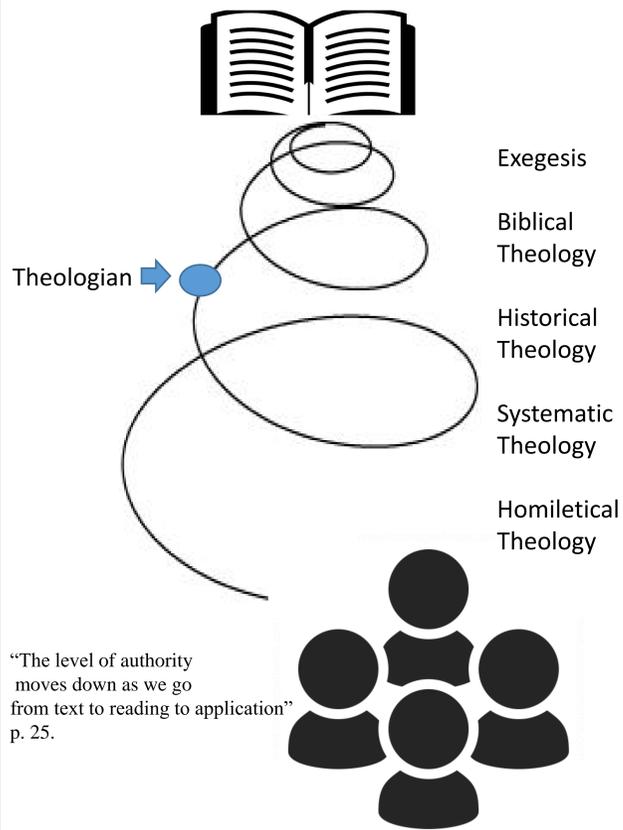
GADAMER-RICOEUR MODEL

"The original understanding is surpassed and integrated into a broader, more informed understanding. One's horizons are broadened; we have a new perspective on our old views and maybe new views as well. This is the meaning of the "fusion of horizons." David Vessey, "Gadamer and the Fusion of Horizons."



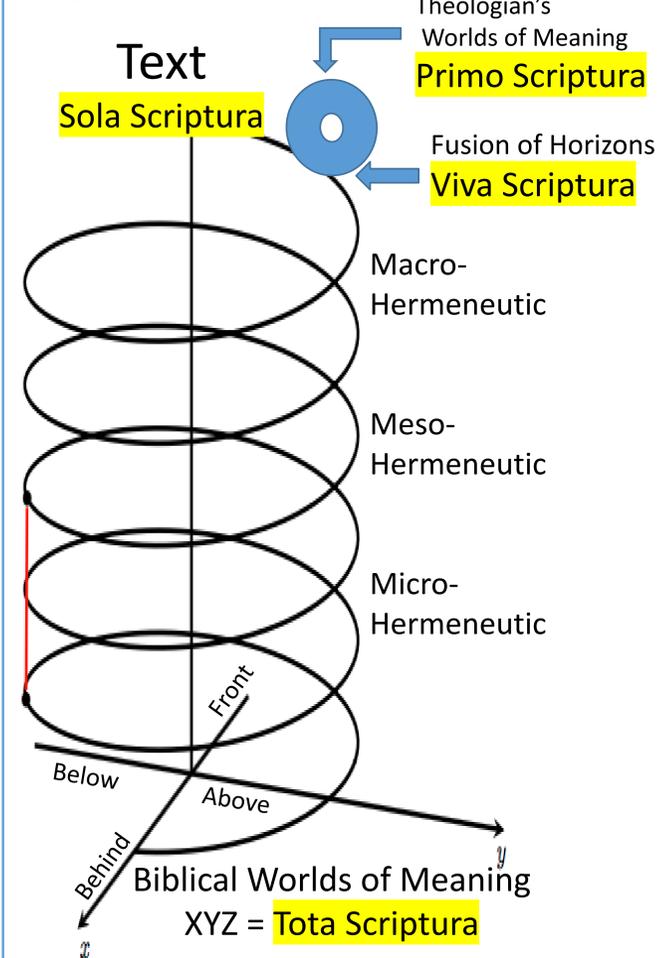
OSBORNE'S HERMENEUTICAL SPIRAL

"The major premise of this book is that biblical interpretation entails a 'spiral' from text to context, from its original meaning to its contextualization or significance for the church today. . . the spiral is a cone. . ." Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 22.

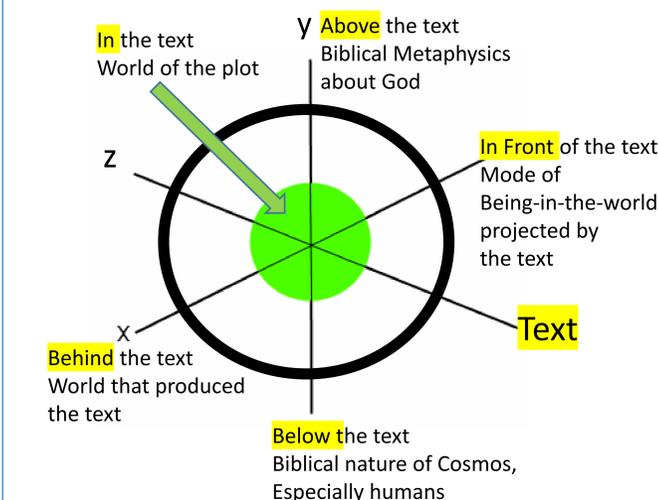


PROPOSED HERMENEUTICAL SPIRAL IN 2-D

The worlds of biblical meaning are traversed by a methodological cylindrical helix anchored to the axis of text. The coils are explored by the theologian.

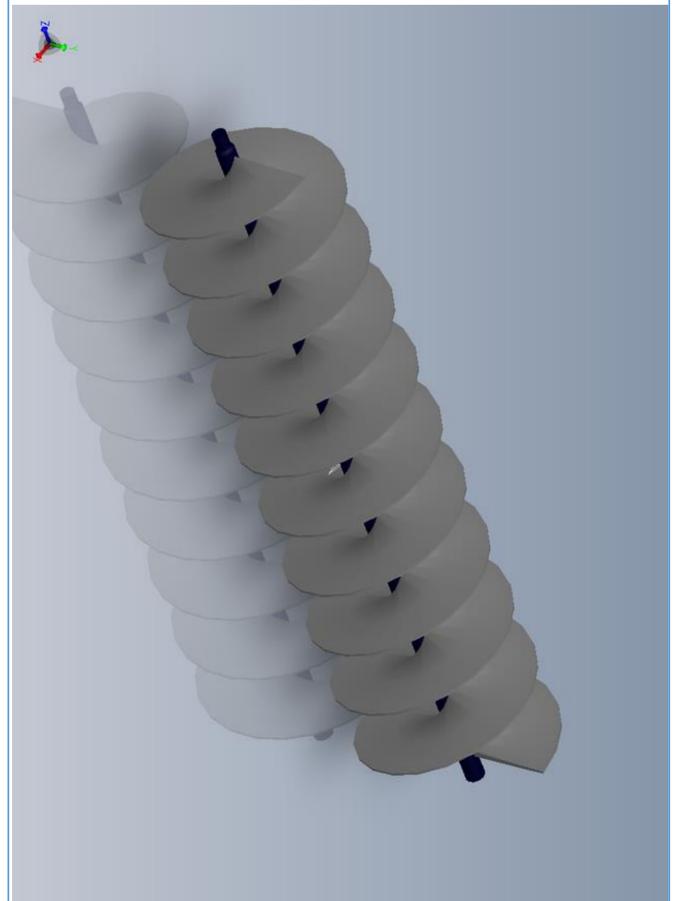


CROSS SECTION OF SPIRAL



PROPOSED HERMENEUTICAL SPIRAL IN 3-D

The spiral ramp slices through the worlds of meaning radiating from the core axis of the text. Interpreter and audience can be envisioned as adjacent balls (spherical worlds of meaning) that roll up or down the ramp in circles, in contiguity with the ramp and the core text.



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