ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM OF REFERENCE (III)

Intention and Reference in Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

Towards the end of the discussion of phenomenology, in part 3, we encountered the problem of speech and writing; we saw that Husserl, along with Frege and De Saussure, privileges speech over writing. But in Ricoeur's hermeuentic theory, there is a recognition of the specific functionalities of writing; he recognises not only the wide range of social and cultural effects of writing but also shows how the functions of discourse are qualitatively transformed by writing. [57] It is particularly with regard to the function of reference that Ricoeur goes beyond the usual limits of thinking, when he argues for a non—descriptive and non—ostensive reference at the level of a text, which is irreducible to the reference of speech. [58] This idea of a textual reference is perhaps the most significant contribution of Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory and hence I shall focus most of the time on the idea of extended reference. Connected with this, is another significant aspect of Ricoeur's theory, namely, his claim that we must recognise not only a metaphoric sense but also a metaphoric reference. Since Ricoeur himself connects his theory of textual reference with his theory of metaphoric reference, I shall also follow this aspect of his theory. [59]

But while recognising the irreducible functionality of writing, Ricoeur positions himself differently from the Deconstructionists. Firstly, unlike some of the literary deconstructionists, Ricoeur does not argue for the elimination or severance of the idea of

reference. Ricoeur writes : "Discourse cannot fail to be about something. In saying this, I am denying the ideology of absolute texts. Only a few sophisticated texts along the line of Mallarme's poetry, satisfy this ideal of a text without reference. But this modern kind of literature stands as a limiting case and an exception. It cannot give the key to all other texts, including poetic texts. In one manner or other, poetic texts speak about the world, but not in a descriptive way. The reference here is not abolished but divided or split ".[60] Connected with this, Ricoeur, unlike Derrida, sees the relationship between speech and writing in what may be called, a Hegelian, dialectical manner. In a sense, writing cancels the features or attributes of speech but this is not mere external negation or elimination. On the contrary, writing also actualizes certain potencies which were implicit at the level of speech; the idea of extended reference is a case in point. Ricoeur writes : " what happens in writing is the full manifestation of something that is in a virtual state, something nascent and inchoate, in living speech, namely, the detachment of meaning from the event. But this detachment is not such as to cancel the fundamental structure of discourse. Writing is the full manifestation of discourse. To hold, as Jacques Derrida does, that writing has a root distinct from speech and that this foundation has been misunderstood due to our having paid excessive attention to speech, its voice and its logos, is to overlook the grounding of both modes of actualization of discourse in the dialectical constitution of the discourse ".[61]

In the light of the above remarks, it can be imagined that Ricoeur's fundamental reply to the critique of writing also would be very different from that of Derrida. It is interesting to note that Ricoeur also deals with the Platonic critique of in the *Phaedrus*, as Derrida does.[62] But Derrida's critique is an

immenent critique in the sense that he shows how in the very moment of marginalizing writing, Plato falls back upon it. Ricoeur does not attend to these subtle forces of agon between the thought and the textuality of Plato's dialogue. Rather than following such a 'rhetorical' critique, Ricoeur counterposes the idea of a productivity of the icon. Plato had used the notion of an icon or image to express the sterility and unproductiveness of writing. As against this, Ricoeur shows how there is a surplus, an augmentation, precisely by means of iconic techniques; icons, therefore, are not mere re—presentations, but pre-rentations of a new aspect of reality. [63] This enables Ricoeur to rejoin the idea of a new mode of reference at the level of texts.

It may, therefore, be seen that Ricoeur's total strategy is based on the idea of a new level of referentiality. Hence, it is this central principle that we must keep as the focal point in the exposition of this theory of meaning and interpretation.

Language as Structure and Event

Ricoeur's theory of meaning and interpretation is based on a fundamental contrast, namely, language as system or structure and discourse as event or performance. [64] The study of the first of these aspects, the systemic and structural aspects of language, Ricoeur calls semiotics and the study of meaning as event, he calls semantics. Accordingly, the parameters of his entire philosophy of lauguage are set by the proper understanding of relationship between semiotics and semantics. Ricoeur further believes that although in its classical beginnings in Plato and Aristotle, the semantic and communicative functions of language were kept in the centre of reflections, in the contemporary period, as a result of the enormous impact of linguistic structuralism, this aspect of language as expression of sense and reference has been somewhat overshadowed. Accordingly, Ricoeur sets himself the task of recovering the hermeneutic moment,

while accepting the major claims of the structuralist understanding.[65] This dialectical motive of recovering a sharper hermeneutic understanding, by first exposing it to its structuralist opposition, is particularly marked in his treatment of reference, for it is precisely this idea of reference as involving language in its relationship to world that structuralism seeks to eclipse.

But Ricoeur's response to structuralism is not an empty or external negation; on the contrary, the does justice to he structuralist position as a necessary point of departure for any adequate understanding of language. Particularly in his critique of romantic of psychologistic hermeneutics, structuralism serves as the basis of his attack. Hence, we may begin with a brief consideration of the appreciation of the structuralist conception of language by Ricoeur. For Ricoeur, the structuralist attitude in the study of language may be summed up in the form of four postulates or maxims. First is what may be called the synchronic approach, according to which systems are more intelligible than changes. Therefore, the history of change must come after the theory that discribes the synchronic states of the system. The second guiding idea is the postulate of *finitism*. A system conceived of as finite sets of discrete entities with combinatory possibilities among themselves, becomes the object of a structuralist science. These combinatory capacities and possibilities add to the intelligibility of the system.

In such a system, no entity beloging to the structure of the system has a meaning of its own; the meaning of a word, for example, results from its opposition to the other lexical units of the system. As Saussure said, in a system of signs, there are only differences, but no substantial existence. And lastly in such systems, all the relations are immanent to system In this sense, semiotic systems are 'closed' i.e., without relations to external, non—semiotic reality. A sign, for example, is defined

by De Saussure by an opposition between two aspects. These two aspects are the signifier – for example, a sound, a written pattern, a gesture – and the signified – the differential value in the lexical system. From this point of view, language no longer appears as a mediation between minds and things. It constitutes a world of its own, within which each item only refers to other items. [66]

If we look at the conception of language as a system or structure, from the point of view of discourse or communication, the structuralist conception of language may be described in terms of certain contrasts. Ricoeur particularly marks three elements in this contrast :

1. Language is subjectless
2. Language has no addressee
3. Language lacks reference.

Ricoeur suggests that the structuralist understanding of language is uni–dimensional in the sense that signs are the basic entities of such a conception As against such a conception, Ricoeur holds that in addition to language as system or structure, we also need to think of language as discourse. At the level of discourse, the basic unit is a sentence and Ricoeur claims that the unity of a sentence is of a different type than that of signs. "The sentence is not a larger or more complex word; it is a new entity. It may be decomposed into words, but the words are something other than short sentences. A sentence is a whole irreducible to the sum of its parts. It is made up of words, but it is not a derivative function of its words. A sentence is made up of signs, but is not itself a sign ". [67]

Semiotics, the science of signs, is formal to the extent that it relies on the dissociation of language into constitutive parts. Semantics, the science of the sentence, is immediately concerned

with the concept of sense, to the extent that semantics is fundamentally defined by the integrative procedures of language.

Ricoeur holds that a sentence is not a compositional but a synthetic unity, an integration of two functions, of the subject and the predicate. The subject is the instrument of identification, while the predicate is the instrument of characterization; subject and predicate do not do the same job in the proposition. The subject picks out something singular; the predicate, in contrast, designates a kind of quality, a class of things, a type of relation or a type of action. The sentence is a functional unity of identification and predication. It is a saying of something about something. [68]

The study of discourse, therefore, takes shape as the study of three aspects of the act of utterance. Ricoeur here follows the theory of speech-acts and following Austin, he distinguishes the locutionary, illocutionary and the perlocutionary aspects of utterances. The locutionary aspect is the saying of something. The illocutionary is the doing of something in saying and the perlocutionary is the effecting of something in the hearer by saying.

But besides these three aspects, Ricoeur also mentions a fourth aspect, which he calls the *interlocutionary act*. All discourse is addressed to some one. The presence of the pair, speaker-hearer, constitutes communication. The study of communication from the point of view of its function of addressing some one may be called the study of its interlocutionary aspect. [69]
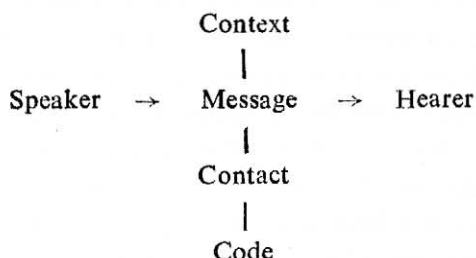
An important issue in Ricoeur's analysis is the question of how these three aspects, the locutionary, the illocutionary and perlocutionary — are preserved in writing. As we shall see, Ricoeur claims that these three functions are preserved in a diminishing order of ease and clarity in writing. Thus, textual

discourse preserves most easily the locutionary aspect, whereas the illocutionary force and the perlocutionary effects are preserved with much greater difficulty and far less clearly and effectively. This is an aspect of the loss that we have to recognise when we go from speech to writing. For the study of discourse as event, Ricoeur holds that communication is the key and in pursuing this idea, he follows Roman Jakobson's model. But before we take up that aspect of the matter, we may note Ricoeur's transition from structure to event. Looked at from a structuralist persuasion, it may appear that there is an epistemological weakness of parole, the use of language, for utterance is a vanishidg event, which disappears as soon as it is produced. This evanascence of the event of communication is strongly contrasted with the stability and permanence of language as system. It therefore appears that the demands of scientificity cannot be met at the level of an appearing -- disappearing event. Science demands a system, a set of stable relationships, and this can be provided only by considering language as a structured totality in abstraction from the episodes of its use. But this privileging of structure over discourse conceals the fact that it is the use or the performance which is an actual datum; we encounter language in the form of its communicational interactions, as lived speech and performance and the postulation of a structure is a device to explain in discursive aspect of language. As Ricoeur puts it, structure and system are virtual, while performance is real. [70]

Ricoeur uses the Jakobson model in his study of meaning. It is also to be noted that it is in terms of this model of six functions of discourse that he explicates the transformations of writing.

Jacobson starts from the three-fold relation between hearer, speaker and message, to which he adds three other factors —

code, contact and context. To these six factors, he assignss pecific functions as below :

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
& & \text{Context} & & \\
& & | & & \\
\text{Speaker} & \rightarrow & \text{Message} & \rightarrow & \text{Hearer} \\
& & | & & \\
& & \text{Contact} & & \\
& & | & & \\
& & \text{Code} & &
\end{array}$$

The speaker sends a message to the hearer, the message uses a code (usually a language familiar to both speaker and hearer); the message has a context and is transmitted through a contact (a medium). In terms of this model, we can assign functions to these factors :

1. Speaker   —   emotive function
2. Hearer   —   conative function
3. Message   —   poetic function
4. Code   —   meta—linguistic function
5. Contact   —   phatic function
6. Context   —   the referential function.

We may briefly explicate these functions with some details from the context of an oral communication. The emotive function of the speaker may be taken as the expression of his intention and the conative function, the recognition by the hearer of the intention. The poetic function would be the texture of the message itself, the meta—linguistic function of the code being the self—reference to the speaker and to itself. The phatic function would be the perceived sensuousness of the medium and the referential function, the objects and the situation, the message is about.

Ricoeur, in particular, elaborates the aspects of speaker, addressee and reference of the speech situation. Discourse, as speech event, has a subject in the sense of a specific individual with a communicative intent, an addressee, in the sense of a thou, to whom the communication is addressed and a reference in the sense of that about which the communication is made. What is distinctive about this characterization of discourse is the extension of the Fregean notion of reference from the level of sentences to the discourse of speech. Ricoeur connects Frege's distinction between sense and reference to Husserl's distinction between meaning-intention and meaning—fulfilment, for, in both cases " what we are dealing with is a meaning-intention which breaks the closed circle of the sign, which opens up the sign towards something; in short, which constitutes language as the saying of something about something. The moment there is a turn from the ideality of the sign to the reality of the thing is the moment of transcendence of the sign ".[71]

This transcendence from sense to the world is mediated by a sentence, for, in a sentence, there is the unity of predication in the sense that something is said about something and this pre-dicative complex is referred to the world and asserted as holding of it. As Ricoeur points out, the question of reference arises only at the level of sentence (in strictness, only in the context of the *use* of sentence) and not at the level of signs. Sense is immanent in discourse but reference moves language beyond itself to the things of the world. As Frege pointed out, we are not satisfied with sense alone, but we presuppose a reference. But what is the ground of this postulation ? Ricoeur argues that there is a more originary movement from being to expres-sion in language. The referential nisus of our language, Ricoeur suggests, is the counter—point to this ontological movement from existence to discourse. In this sense, the experience of being is

the ground of the referential capacity of language, Ricoeur, in this, is connecting the Fregean thrust towards reference with Heidegger's idea that being comes to expression in language.

But Ricoeur's ultimate purpose is to follow the career of reference as writing displaces speech. In order to have a clear perspective on the transformations of the function of discourse, when it transcends the situationality and contextuality of dialogue and becomes written discourse, Ricoeur first emphasises the effects of writing, for too often, writing is looked upon merely as a parasitic inscriptional device for recording speech. As against this, Ricoeur makes a double movement; first, he shows the fundamental transformations of our social existence brought about by writing; when one has a clear view of the dimensions along which writing transforms our existence, one would no longer think of it as a mere inscriptional or notational device. Secondly, on a very different register, Ricoeur shows how there is a possibility of short circuiting speech, as it were, when meanings are directly embodied in writing, without the detour of a spoken dialogue. This is the moment of origin of literature, according to Ricoeur, and this new level is unthinkable except on the basis of writing.

Regarding the first aspect of the transforming impact of writing, Ricoeur points out the following : (i) the formation of large scale political rule made possible by transferring orders and regulations over long distances, (ii) birth of market relationships made possible by fixation of rules of reckoning and calculation, (iii) formation of a sense of history by archives, and (iv) institution of law and other forms of judicial administration. [72] All these transformations which go so deeply into the quality of living are consequent upon the institution of writing. Ricoeur, therefore, holds that the phenomenon of writing must be seen as bringing about a fundamental transformation of

individual and collective existence and not merely as a narrow notational device.

A second line of reflection on writing which Ricoeur opens up is the possibility of a direct embodiment of meanings in writing. He writes " Writing raises a specific problem as soon as it is not merely the fixation of a previous oral discourse, the inscription of spoken language but is human thought directly brought to writing without the intermediary stage of spoken language. Then writing takes the place of speaking. A kind of short-cut occurs between the meaning of discourse and the material medium. Then we have to do with literature in the original sense of the word ". [73]

But Ricoeur, while recognising the new threshold of possibilities opened up by writing, yet does not wish to oppose the written to the spoken; he does not suggest an oppositional or antagonistic relation between the two forms of discourse. Rather, he wants to look upon the transformations brought about by writing as actualizations of certain tendencies and possibilities already implicit at the level of speech. This continuity between the two levels is suggested by the procedure Ricoeur adopts in his study of the transformation of discourse at the level of writing; he uses the schema of Jakobson's six functions to contrast the spoken and the written. The use of the same schema is itself symptomatic of the continuity between dialogue and textual discourse.

As Ricoeur points out, the most obvious and palpable change that writing brings about is the fixation of the message in some relatively permanent medium; the spoken word is evanascent; it disappears as soon as it appears; but in writing, the message is encoded in a material medium, stone, papyrus or paper. But what we must notice here is that this inscription is a fixation

of the message; it is concerned with discourse rather than the structural system of language. What writing does is to preserve what is said – the propositional content of the communicative event. But the other two dimensions, namely the illocutionary and the perlocutionary, also are to some extent preserved in writing. [74]

But this inscriptional effect is, in a sense, the most external and superficial of the effects of writing; beyond this inscriptional effect, Ricoeur notices more subtle levels of transformation produced by writing. The relation between the message and the speaker as well as the relation between the message and the addressee are transformed with the access to writing. To consider the relation between the message and the speaker first : speech has a subject in the sense of a concrete individual speaker, communicating his intention by way of his speech. Here, the personal intention is dominant such that, at the level of oral communication, the two questions, " What do you mean ? " and " what does it mean ? " become the same. We may also say that oral communication is constituted by the motivational intention of the speaker. That is why an understanding of he who speaks is determinative of the understanding of what is spoken. We may say that the speaker constitutes the speech. But with textual communication, what the text says is never reducible to authorial intentions; relative to the personal intentions of the author, the text has a certain autonomy of its own, to ignore which is to commit what literary critics call " the intentionalist fallacy ". But Ricoeur points out here that while avoiding the intentionalist fallacy, we should not fall into the opposite fallacy, which may be called the fallacy of the absolute text – the fallacy of hypostasizing the text as an authorless entity. The text, ofcourse, is the production of a certain biography; this sense of authorship we may call biographic authorship to be distinguished from

what I should like to call hermeneutic authorship. Hermeneutic authorship is a construction in the sense that it is an understanding of the author as revealed in the textual discourse itself. The text discloses a structure of meanings and what I call the hermeneutic author is the idea of an abstract personage as the centre of those meanings. The notion of the hermeneutic author is the notion of an assumed centre of the meanings as disclosed in the text itself. It is this shift from biographical to hermeneutic authorship that is the first transformation that we observe when we go from oral to written discourse. This moment may be called "anonymization". The text 'anonymizes' the subject in the sense that the idiosyncracies of a concrete psycho–physical biography are transcended, as it were, and the author is re-constituted at the level of the textual discourse. It is, in one sense, a loss of subjectivity, but in another sense, it is a purification of it; we may say that the text is one of the means of achieving selfhood.

Ricoeur points out that this semantic autonomy of the text, namely, that what it means is more than what the author meant by when he wrote it, restores the proper object to hermeneutics and at the same time de–psychologises it. Interpretation now can no longer be taken as the attempt to coincide with authorial meanings; nor can it aim at the placement of the interpreter with the original addresses. Interpretation now has the task of unfolding the meaning in the text and although this is not a simple process of reception, it does not involve the idea of empathy with intentions of the author or the original hearer.

Just as writing fundamentally transforms the relationship between message and speaker, liberating the meaning from the intentions of the author, so also does it fundamentally transform the relation to the addresses. Oral discourse, in the form of dialogue, has a contextual orientation to fellow participants in

the dialogue situation. This contextuality of dialogue is transcended at the level of textual discourse such that it is addressed to all those who can enter the discourse unfolded by the text itself. Corresponding to the anonymization of the subject, we may speak of the generalization of the addressee. Unlike a living oral communication, the text has a certain 'impersonality' of address. It is no longer oriented to aconcrete 'thou' but it addresses itself to all those who have a certain competence to receive it. In this sense, its orientation is to a generalized other. Here again the apparent negativity of the process of generalization of addressee should not, however, occlude the element of a certain qualitative richness in the appeal of the text. It is not merely that in this generalization the range of audience of the communication is widened. The text transcends the spatio-temporal restrictions of dialogue, but this is made possible precisely because now the meaning possibilities of the discourse get a dimension of universality. The text speaks to subjects in their essential humanity; it addresses them in the name of and with the authority of essential needs, power and demands of human nature.

With regard to this enlargement of address, we must note that this universality is only potential and is grounded in the semantic autonomy of the text. Because the meaning of the text is freed from authorial intentions, it can enlarge its circle of communication and in a sense, create its own public. But it is in the reception of the meaning by the extended audience that this potentiality is realised. Hence, we must see the interaction between the semantic autonomy and extended communication as a dialectical process mutually constituting each other. Hence, Ricoeur writes : " Discourse is revealed as discourse by the dialectic of address which is both universal and contingent. On the one hand, it is the semantic autonomy of the text which

opens up the range of potential readers and, so to speak, creates the audience of the text. On the other hand, it is the response of the audience which makes the text important and significant... It is part of the meaning of a text to be open to an indefinite number of readers and therefore of interpretations. This opportunity for multiple readings is the dialectical counterpart of the semantic autonomy of the text ". [75]

The third aspect of transformation effected by textual discourse has to do with the meta–linguistic function in the context of the relationship of the meassage to the code. Under this aspect, Ricoeur studies the formation of literary genres such as the essay, the poem, the novel etc. These may be called discursive codes, which operate on levels beyond that of the sentence where phonological, lexical, and syntactic codes function. In a sense, Ricoeur admits that these discursive formations could be studied without reference to writing. " The function of these generative devices is to produce new entities of language longer than the sentence, organic wholes irreducible to a mere addition of sentences. A poem, narrative or essay relies on laws of composition which, in principle, are indifferent to the opposition between speaking and writing. . . . Language is submitted to the rules of a kind of craftsmanship, which allows us to speak of production and of works of art and by extension of works of discourse. . . . The generative devices, which we call literary generes, are the technical rules presiding over their production ". [76] But inspite of this, writing plays a decisive role in the formation of such discursive entities. A text is not only an inscription but also stands for the 'textura' of discourse; it means discourse both as inscribed and as wrought. But perhaps the most significant and transformative effect of textuality is to be seen in connection with reference. Since this is Ricoeur's

most original and exciting theme, namely, the idea of extended
reference, we shall follow his arguments more closely in the
following discussion.

The idea of the referential function of discourse is a strategi-
cally important aspect of Ricoeur's theory, for it is on the basis
of reference of discourse that he tries to work out a theory of
the truth of interpretations, for if there is a conflict of inter-
pretations then without a concept of truth of interpretations, we
would be stuck in an irremediable relativism of interpretations.
But there is a complication here, for as we shall see, plurality
of interpretations arises in the context of symbols. Now, in
Ricoeur's theory, symbols are not mere expressions having
significance, but are essentially plurivocal. Hence, the truth of
symbols is a more complex notion than the truth of univocal
expressions. As an example of such plurivocal signs, we may
take metaphors. Now, the interesting point about Ricoeur's
theory is that he suggests a notion of metaphorical truth and
not merely metaphorical sense.

A second context in which the idea of reference in Ricoeur
becomes significant is the confrontation of hermeneutics with
structuralism. Ricoeur argues that given the systemic presup-
positions of structuralism, a sign must not be defined in terms
of some object for which it stands, but rather in terms of its
relation to other signs within the system of which it is a part.
By constituting itself as the study of language as a system in
this sense, Ricoeur argues that structuralism violates the funda-
mental intention of language i.e., to say something of something.
Not only has language both sense and reference, but Ricoeur,
like Frege, claims that we cannot be satisfied with sense alone,
for sense itself is intelligible only on the basis of the referential
nisus of language. For Ricoeur, this silence about reference is not
merely a criticism of the structuralist conception of language,

but he regards it as the basic or foundational weakness of the structuralist point of view in general. For example, this is also the basis of his critique of Levi Strauss' account of myth. Here his basic point is that myths cannot be considered purely as an inter–locking self–sufficient system of rationally positioned signs. It is precisely because myths do say something about the world that they become objects of a structural investigation. The ' mythemes ' are expressive; they talk of human phenomena such as birth, death, marriage and incest. [77] Here again, it is the idea of reference that is being emphasised by a peculiarly problematic notion of reference of pluri–vocal symbolic expressions that Ricoeur is advancing.

If the idea of reference is deployed against structuralist and hermeneutic theories, on the one hand, Ricoeur specifies his notion of reference against the logical analytical conceptions of reference, on the other. In this context, we may first of all observe that, while Ricoeur borrows the distinction between sense and reference from Frege, yet he extends it beyond the boundaries of the Fregean application, to discourse as a totality. This idea of discursive reference as something irreducible to propositional reference is a specific feature of Ricoeur's theory. The second aspect of differentiation is from the theory of Strawson. With Strawson, Ricoeur recognises that reference is to be located in the use of a sentence and not merely in the propositional content of the sentence. But in connection with the idea of the referential use of expressions, Ricoeur differs from Strawson and Searle on another point of theory. For both Strawson and Searle, for a person to refer to an object by means of the referring use of an expression, he must be intending that object and no other; in other words, for them, intention is a necessary condition of reference. Ricoeur accepts this inten-

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tionalist account of reference as far as oral speech is concerned, but in writing or textual discourse, he holds that reference need not be tied up with intention.

This idea he develops on the basis of a three–fold typology of reference – ostensive and descriptive reference and non ostensive and non–descriptive reference. Thy last type is a peculiarly Ricoeurian notion which he develops in his hermeneutics of textual discourse. [78]

Another feature of Ricoeur's theory of reference may also be mentioned here. To understand the reference of a symbol is to interpret it and all interpretations of being are also interpretations of the subject or self. Hence, in every reference, there is also a moment of self–reference. In other words, an expression, for Ricoeur, is sustained by a bi-polar tension – a tension towards the world and a tension towards the self. What is characteristic of Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy and which distantiates such a hermeneutics from phenomenology of Husserl and the fundamental ontology of Heidegger at once, is that both the understanding of Being as well as of the subject are possible only by way of an understanding of expressions For Ricoeur, there is no immediate access to either the world or to the self. In his own way, which is, of course, very different from that of Derrida, Ricoeur too rejects philosophy of immediacy. As against Heidegger, Ricoeur would claim that while necessarily hermeneutics must be linked up with existence, yet this linkage or connection cannot take the form of an immediate ontology. Only a detour by way of interpretation of symbols and by way of the conflict of such interpretations can we hope to approach being. As against Husserl, Ricoeur would similarly urge that consciousness too is self–interpreting and cannot deliver itself to a wholly unmediated vision or seeing. On the contrary, here too there

is a plurality of understandings and to be a self and to have an understanding of being a self requires a detour through these pluri-vocal symbols of consciousness. Self-knowledge too is through and through hermeneutic and because it is hermeneutic, it too is contestable and open-ended.

For Ricoeur, the referential function of language emerges at the level of a sentence. In this idea, he rejoins the classical notion found in Plato as well as in Aristotle. In the *Cratylus,* Plato shows that the problem of truth arises only at the level of the synthetic unity of a name and a verb effected by a sentence, and not at the level of isolated ' names ', or words. [79]. This was also the view of Aristotle, namely, that truth and error are 'affections' of discourse and discourse requires two basic signs, a noun and a verb connected in a synthesis of a sentence. Hence, a sentence refers to an object and characterizes it by way of predication. It is this unity of referring and characterizing that is the distinctive function of a sentence studied by Aristotle in *On Interpretation.* [80] As Ricoeur remarks, for Aristotle to refer to an object and predicate something of it is to interpret reality. It is in this manner that the classical conception of interpretation or hermeneutics gets closely associated with reference. It is one of the fundamental aims of Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory to preserve this link between reference and interpretation. [81]

For Ricoeur, the distinctive function of sentence is, therefore, predication and it is in this sense that he accepts Benveniste's claim that predication is the indispensable factor of the sentence. [82] Now, predication as a semantic function, is an integration or synthetic unity of two component functions, referring and characterizing. The first, the function of singular identification, is performed by the logical subject which picks out something singular — Peter, London, this table, Mt. Everest etc. This

logical function of identification may be carried out by several
grammatical devices, such as proper names. pronouns, demon-
strations (this and that, now and then, here and there etc.) and
definite descriptions (the so and so). They all serve to identify
one and only one item. The predicate characrerizes this identi-
fied element in terms of quality, class, relation or action. [83]

The fundamental polarity expressed in the sentence is between
singular identification and universal predication. [84]

Before we proceed further with Ricoeur's extension of the
notion of reference, we may have a brief backward glance at
Husserl's theory we discussed in the previous section. As we saw,
Husserl develops his semantic theory of sense and reference on
the foundation of a more primordial stratum of intentional or
act–meaning. But although this is a more ultimate level, yet
even at this level, a distinction functionally similar to logical
subject and predicate can be made. As we saw, in the noematic
meaning of an act, Husserl distinguishes an X component and a
predicative part. The X–component secures the object being
intended and the predicative component serves to characterize
the object further. In the unity of the intentional act, referring
and characterizing are connected with each other. It is this
structure of an intentional act, which is expressed at the linguis-
tic level, by means of the logical subject and predicate. As we
further noted, the fundamental question which may be raised in
connection with Husserl's analysis is whether he is imposing
the structure derived from the semantics of reference onto the
pre-linguistic level of intentions or conversely, whether the
linguistic distinction follows the phenomenological one.

Ricoeur does not base his semantic and hermeneutic theory
so univocally on a phenomenological foundation like Husserl;
indeed, he could not do so for, one of the deeper motivations

of his entire philosophical thinking runs counter to the philosophy of immediacy, which he holds to be characteristic of Husserlian phenomenology. But this does not mean that there is a simple or 'external' repudiation of phenomenology by Ricoeur's hermeneutics. On the contrary, we must, Ricoeur tells us, see the relationship between phenomenology and hermeneutics as an inner reciprocal need. While phenomenology requires to be grafted on to hermeneutics, it is equally true that hermeneutics requires a phenomenological complement, although not a foundation.[85] After completing the examination of Ricoeur's theory of reference, I hope to come back to this issue of the reciprocity of phenomenology and hermeaneutics in Ricoeur's philosophy.

The most elementary and basic form of reference recognised by Ricoeur is simple ostensive and descriptive reference. The specific claim that he advances at this level is that such ostensive reference is based on what he calls 'monstration'.[86]

Speech achieves its referential scope because there is the ultimate possibility of showing the thing spoken about. This showing is made possible by the common context or speech situation shared by the speaker and the hearer. Because of this environing contextuality of dialogue, the things spoken of can be even gesturally pointed out. But even in purely discursive terms, the object can be designated by devices of ostension, such as demonstratives, the adverbs of time and place and the tenses of the verbs. On even higher levels, they could be uniquely described in su h terms as to secure singularity of reference by the very force of such descriptions; such are what Russell has called ' definite descriptions ' which have the force of singling out one and only object to which they apply. It is of course true that singular identification in the above sense can be carried out by purely discursive devices we have mentioned; it is also

true that such ostensive and descriptive references are as such
possible in writing as in oral speech. For example at this level
and for this type of reference, the definite description, ' the so
and so ' achieves the same effect, whether it is spoken or written.
Hence, such ostensive and descriptive reference can be purely a
linguistic functionality. But Ricoeur claims that all such osten-
sive references rest upon a gestural pointing to as a condition
of their possibility. It is because the participants in a speech
situation occupy a common context and share the same nexus
of spatio–temporal determination, that they have things in
common which they can point out. It is in this sense that
Ricoeur claims that all references of oral language rely on mon-
stration, which depends on the situation perceived as common
by the members of the dialogue. Monstration is the existential
availability of a thing or event to subjects embedded in the same
context and it is this availability of things in the bodily sense
that is the foundation of ostensive reference. This primordial
type of reference, Ricoeur calls ostensive and descriptive refe-
rence, which is primarily an oral phenomenon, although as we
saw, there could be a simple inscriptional form of such reference.
What is characteristic of oral reference is, Ricoeur claims, the
close connection between identification and monstration. Mon-
stration is perceptual while identification is properly linguistic,
but in speech, because of its contextuality, the two are so closely
connected with each other that, as it were, one passes over
into the other. But writing is context–transcending. With the
inscription of what is said in the form of marks in a medium,
the message achieves a relative permanency and independence
from the occasion of its origin. Because of this fixation of the
content of the message, it is available to others outside the
context of the speaker/author. This is what we previously
studied under the aspect of the enlargement of the circle of
communication. With expansion of the range of its address,

there appears a gap between identification and monstration. When the addresses are outside the context of the author, reference can no longer presuppose a locatability in any shared context. Writing, therefore, introduces a first complication, a first rupture in referring. This type of referring, which emerges distinctively at the level of writing, Ricoeur calls non—ostensive but descriptive reference.

But this spatio—temporal gap could be overcome in certain forms of writing which provide what Ricoeur calls ' the equivalents of ostensive reference '. Letters, travel reports, geographical and historical descriptions etc. create a kind of quasi-situational sharing. The indications within such narative forms could ultimately be connected with the here and now of the readers and through such connections, the characterizations of such forms of discourse could be tied to the identifications of the contexts of the readers [87] Although this extension may appear to be a small step, yet Ricoeur emphasises of even this first extension brought about by writing, for thanks to this, man and only man has a world and not merely a situation.[88] Although in its inscriptional form writing appears to be merely a material innovation, yet, its function, as Ricoeur remarks, is truly spiritual for it frees meaning from the constraints of a mental intention at the same time at it frees reference from the limitations of a narrowly circumscribed situation.[89] For readers share a world and not merely a context in which they are embedded. The text in its situational transcendence no longer evokes any concrete setting; in relation to oral discourse, textual discourse is de–contextualized. But precisely by means of this freedom from a specific setting or situation, the text represents a world. We may call this representation of a world in abstraction from all situational contingencies, the essentialization of reference. It is in this sence that we sometimes speak of the world of Shakespeare

or of Plato. Ricoeur points out that this second extension of reference is, in a sense, less due to writing as such than to certain forms of literature. Further more, there is a negative moment in such reference; as we say, in representing a world, the concrete situation is lost. The reference here is neither ostensive nor descriptive in the original sense, but rather all such first order references seem to be eclipsed. This phenomenon of an abolition of primary reference is particularly marked in work of fiction. But does this mean that all reference, as such, is abolished ? Does it mean that a literary work is not *about* anything at all, but purely by way of its literary devices, it draws our attention to itself ? Ricoeur's contention is that discourse cannot fail to be about something and hence he would deny the ideology of ' absolute texts '. In one manner or the other, even ' poetic ' texts speak about the world, only not in a descriptive manner, Ricoeur writes that the effacement of the ostensive and descriptive reference liberates a power of reference to aspects of our being in the world that cannot be said in a direct descriptive way, but only alluded to, thanks to the referential values of the metaphoric and in general symbolic expressions.

Ricoeur is now suggesting the most novel theme of the reference of metaphor and symbol. This extension of the notion of reference to include metaphors is perhaps the most challenging and at the same time provocative idea in Ricoeur's extensive reflection on reference, for the idea of metaphoric reference allows him to introduce the notion of poetic truth. But a proper understanding of this development of the theory of reference would first require that we keep in mind the specific signification he gives to symbol. In *Freud and Philosophy* Ricoeur remarks that his specific understanding of the symbol may be situated between two extremes, as it were — the one too broad and the other too narrow.[90] The overtly broad definition makes the

symbol almost equivalent to thought, as for example, in Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms.* In Cassirer, the symbolic function reduces to the function of objectivization.[91] But Ricoeur's objec-tion to this broad conception of the symbolic function is that it obliterates the distinction between univocal and pluri–vocal expressions. Hence, Ricoeur, in his determination of the symbol, lays special emphasis on this aspect of double meanings. For Ricoeur, symbols are essentially pluri–vocal, where an expression is said to be pluri–vocal if (i) it has a direct or primary meaning (ii) an indirect or secondary meaning such that (iii) the direct meaning designates the secondary and indirect meaning and (iv) the indirect meaning can be apprehended only through the the direct meansng.[92]

This brief characterization of the symbol may make clear the nature of metaphor, for metaphors clearly have this two–level semantic structure in the sense that in metaphor there is a secon-dary meaning which is available only by way of the inappro-priateness of the primary meaning of the expression. But Ricoeur, while recognising the similarity between symbol and metaphor, also points out to us their difference — unlike in a metaphor, Ricoeur says, in a symbol there is a non–semantic structure.[93] But nevertheless, the theory of metaphor is a proper preparatory ground for the theory of the symbol. With regard to the theory of metaphor, the fundamental claim of Ricoeur is that here too the distinction between sense and reference continues to be helpful, so much so that we can speak not only about metaphoric sense but also of metaphoric reference. This idea of the reference of metaphor Ricoeur himself regards the crowning phase of his closed study of metaphor in *The Rule of Metaphor.*[94]

Sense and Reference in Metaphor

Ricoeur's study of metaphor in *The Rule of Metaphor* has a highly complex structure organised, however, by a fundamental

movement, from Rhetorics to Semantics and from Semantics to Hermeneutics. [95] At each one of these levels, metaphor is considered at its appropriate sphere of analysis; thus the rhetorical level of analysis takes metaphor as focussed on words and changes of meaning at the level of words. Thus, Aristotle's definition of metaphor focusses on the word or the name. 'Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else, the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species or on the grounds of analogy'.[96]

As Ricoeur points out, this conception of metophor as the epiphora of the name, which is characteristic of rhetorics, marks metaphor as a figure of speech. Ricoeur further argues that although in Aristotle's *Rhetorics* and *Poetics,* there is implicitly a much larger and more philosophically significant conception of metaphor, in the later period, under the influence of classical rhetoricians and stylists, metaphor was reduced to a figure of speech and was classified along with the other tropes, as an ornament of speech. It is this narrow conception of metaphor, which Ricoeur names the substitution theory, since it looks upon metaphor as an expression substituted in the place of another. He argues that this narrow conception of metaphor is based on a number of presuppositions, each one of which is highly questionable. The net result of these presuppositions, as Ricoeur shows, is to reduce the epistemological value of metaphor almost to a vanishing point. Under these presuppositions, metaphor becomes merely an ornamental or stylistic device, whose only value is psychological or heuristic. Its sense is emotive and the question of its reference or truth hardly arises. These presuppositions of the narrow conception of metaphor, as identified by Ricoeur, are :

1. Metaphor is a trope, a figure of discourse that concerns denomination

2. It represents the extension of the meaning of a name through deviation from the literal meaning of words.

3. The reason for this deviation is resemblance.

4. The function of resemblance is to ground the substitution of the figurative meaning of the word in the place of the literal meaning, which could have been used in the same place.

5. Hence, the substituted signification does not represent any semantic innovation. We can translate a metaphor i.e. replace the literal meaning for which the figurative word is a substitute.

6. Since it does not represent a semantic innovation, a metaphor does not furnish any new information about reality. This is why it can be counted as one of the emotive functions of discourse.[97]

Ricoeur's basic case against the substitution theory is that it misconceives the process of the formation of the metaphorical meaning; it looks upon this process as if only names or words are involved, but the emergence of the metaphoric sense, what Ricoeur calls semantic innovation, arises only on the basis of the collapse of the literal or ordinary sense. It is only when the customary or literal sense is seen to be absurd, that the situation is saved by interpreting the expression according to a metaphoric sense. Metaphoric meaning is, therefore, constituted not at the lexical level, but at the level of a sentence subjected to interpretation.[98] Hence, it is at the level of sentence or statement that we can understatd the formation of metaphor. The transia tion, therefore, is from a rhetorical to a sementic theory which

takes the statement as the site of the constitution of metaphoric meaning. But once we recognise that it is at the level of a statement that we can grasp the process of epiphora, we can also take the next consequential step towards a hermeneutic theory of metaphor. It is when the sentence is interpreted according to its customary sense that the absurdity of the first interpretation prepares the ground for the second interpretation. Thus, the metaphoric sense is the function of a certain conflict of interpretations; it is because the first interpretation of the statement leads to absurdity that a second interpretation taking recourse to a metaphorical sense becomes necessary. Thus, the constitution of a metaphor is bound up with the hermeneutics of statements.[99] With this, our study of metaphor moves from a semantical to a hermeneutical context.

But there is another important gain in seeing metaphor at the statement level. It may be remembered that Ricoeur had suggested that it is at the level of use of sentences that the issue of reference arises. Accordingly, a statement theory of metaphor, such as the one Ricoeur is developing, would raise the question of, not only the sense of metaphor, but of its reference as well. But the issue of the reference of metaphor has a certain complexity about it. Since sense and reference are so closely bound up, we may expect the specific structures of metaphorical sense to also influence the reference of metaphor. More specifically, we may ask : what is the relation of the two level structure of sense (literal and metaphorical) of metaphors to their reference ? Since metaphorical sense arises only on the basis of the destruction of the ordinary sense does this process affect the reference also, and if so how ? These questious are of basic importance to Ricoeur; in fact, his theory of reference is shaped to a large extent by the pressure of such questions. In effect, what Ricoeur is suggesting is that just as the metaphorical sense

arises only on the basis of the suppression of the ordinary sense, so also metaphorical reference is possible only after a cancellation of ordinary reference. Because the customary reference is superseded, it is possible to think of metaphoric expressions (poetic discourse in general) as lacking all reference. In fact, Ricoeur himself confronts these non—referential theories of poetic discourse, but his final thesis is that the suppression of customary reference is only a moment in the service of the emergence of secondary reference.

Ricoeur begins his discussion of metaphor and reference by pointing out that the question of reference can be posed at two different levels of semantics and hermeneutics.[100] At the first level, it deals only with entities belonging to the order of the sentence. At the second level, it addresses to entities that are larger than the sentence. The problems of reference at the second level of texts raise particularly complex questions, for certain kinds of texts, i e. the poetic ones, seems to dispense with reference altogether. But this non—referential autonomy of texts goes counter to what Ricoeur calls the postulate of reference. Frege, who distinguished between sense and reference, gives expression to this postulate in a particularly striking manner. Frege writes " we are not satisfied with the sense alone. We presuppose besides a reference. It is precisely this presupposition that causes us to err, but if we are wrong, it is demanded by our intention in speaking or thinking. This intention is striving for truth which drives us always to advance from the sense to the reference."[101] It is this striving for reference that seems to be checked by certain kinds of texts. The text, as Ricoeur understands it, is a complex entity of discourse whose characteristics do not reduce to those of sentences. Texts are specific or singular discursive formations which can be arranged according to certain literary types or genres. It is the reference of these discursive

formations that is the point at issue. Initially, it may appear no profound transformation of the Fregean distinction between sense and reference is necessary, for it may be thought that the sense of the text, in our example, is the structure of the work and its reference is the world of the work. If so, hermeneutics is the theory of the transition from the structure of the work to its world. This conception of hermeneutical task, as displaying the world before the text rather than giving us a privileged access to the intentions and other mental formations of the author, has of course an important role to play in overcoming the psychological and romantic presuppositions of the hermeneutics of Schleirmacher and Dilthey. But such a critical hermeneutics would be available to us only if we could justify the necessity as well as possibility of moving from senes to reference. And it is this passage which is being questioned by the no—reference theorists of literature.

This justificatory movement from the sense to reference in the case of literary texts is called into question by several counter arguments, coming from such widely differing contexts as philosophical semantics, theory of literature, criticism, structural stylistics and certain persuasions in analytic epistemology. The case against reference, as we have to measure upto today, is therefore a highly sophisticated and articulated position and no longer merely rests upon the prejudice of classical rhetorics that metaphor is merely a dispensable ornamental device. Ricoeur, therefore, in the central portions of his study of metaphor and reference, carefully picks his way through these complex levels of argument. Before we follow him into the thick folds of this debate, we may keep certain broad presuppositions of his argumentation in mind :

1.   The issue of reference at the level of texts arises in the
      context of hermeneutics, since it is in the context of

interpretations that the double structure of sense-literal and metaphorical—could be identified, so also we need interpretation to fix the reference of texts.

2.   The paralellism with sense holds at another point also; the metaphorical significance of the expression is revealed only on the ruins of the customary meaning. So also the suspen·sion of customary reference is the necessary condition of the emergence of secondary reference. Hence, the movement from sense to reference must be seen in terms of a certain dialectic of suspended referece and displayed reference.

3.   The theory of metaphor becomes a particolarly apt site for understanding the dialectic of reference; as such, metaphor, as it were, holds the mirror unto poetic truth.

4.   The reference of poetic texts ultimately raises ontological qustions of reality and our mode of access to it.

With these guidelines in view, we may now follow the movement of Ricoeur's treatment of the problem of reference.

In a way, it is ironical to note that although Frege is, in a sense, the stimulus for Ricoeur's theory of reference, yet Frege himself dissociates his semantics right at the beginning from Ricoeur's ultimate objective – i.e , the reference of poetic and other literary discourses. For Frege, the movement from sense to reference is limited only to what he calls scientific statements. With regards to poetry, in terms of an example from epic poetry, Frege writes ' we are interested only in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings aroused '. This is echoed by Carnap who says "the aims of a lyrical poem in which occur the words ' sunshine ' and ' clouds ' are not to inform us of certain mete·rological facts but to express certain feelings of the poet and to excite similar feelings in us ".[102] This is not merely a sentiment

expressed by logicians and semanticists but as we shall soon see, it is also the position of certain highly articulate and self-conscious literary theorists and literary critics. Hence, the theme of non–referentiality of literary discourse is immanent to literary theory and not merely an external philosophical judgement passed upon it.

To see the rootedness of this ideas within literature itself, we shall briefly consider the work of Roman Jakobson and North-rop Frye.

It may be remembered that Roman Jakobson pairs six functions of communication with six factors as below :

           addresser — emotive function
           addressee — connotative function
           code   — meta–linguistic function
           message   — poetic function
           contact   — phatic function
           context   — referential function

For our present context, it is the ' poetic ' function that is important; by the ' poetic ' function, be means the high lighting of the message for its own sake. The poetic function arises where the massage draws attention to itself, puts itself before us and dominates our attention exclusively. We may say that the poetic function occurs when a commnication, as it were, congeals before us and we are drawn to its own texture. Insofar as we take a poem to be a discourse in which the poetic function in Jakobson's sense, is dominant, we get the idea that a poem obliterates all reference to any thing beyond it; it is for itself and we contemplate it for its own sake rather than for the sake of anything which may be said to be disclosed by it. In short, the poetic function is an eclipse of the other directed movement which is reference.

Roman Jakabson's idea of the poetic function, thus, initiates the theme of the non–referentiality of poetic discourse; the suggestion here is not merely that a poem lacks reference, but rather, that it is a poem and thus fulfils its proper ‘poetic’ function precisely by eliding reference. In considering this position, Ricoeur advises us to keep two further features of Jakobson's theory of communicative functions and not to flatten it out by an over–simplification. The first precaution that we must observe is that even for Jakobson, the predominance of one function does not mean that the others are abolished; with a new predominance, a new heirarchy is established and this means that the other functions will be altered in their functionality. In the case before us, the predominance of the poetic function in a discourse does not, we may say, abolish the referential function, but alters it. And this brings us to the second aspect of his model — the notion of split–reference. He writes ''The supremacy of the poetic function over the referential function does not obliterate the reference but makes it ambiguous... it leads to split–reference, as is cogently exposed in the preambles to fairy tales of various peoples – (it was and it was not).[103]

The theory of Roman Jakobson is instructive for us insofar as it alerts us to precisely this idea of split–reference. We may understand this as involving a cessation, a suppression of ordinary reference, precisely such that on the basis of this suspended reference, a new kind of reference, a new kind of disclosure, can come to prevail. The impelling question at this state would be what is this new disclosure like; Ricoeur believes that an answer to this question can be glimpsed if we turn our attention to the argument of Northrop Frye.[104] At first, the encounter with Frye appears to be merely a negative and external opposition,

...3

for Frye emphatically rejects any idea of poetic reference or poetic truth. But as with Jakobson, here also Ricoeur allows us to be instructed by Frye and be helped towards a positive insight, precisely by his seeming denials and rejections.

In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye opposes literary discourse to informative or didactive discourse in terms of two types of signification, centrifugal or outward signification and centripetal or inner signification. In didactive discourse, the symbol functions as a sign that stands for or 'points to' or represents something. As against this, literary symbol represents nothing outside itself. Frye writes "Verbal elements understood inwardly or centri-petally, as parts of a verbal structure, are simply and literally, verbal elements or units of a verbal structure". [105] This would make Frye's view somewhat akin to a pure structuralism which does not even give much place to the notion of sense. But Frye moves away from such a pure structuralism, for while asking the question of the unity of a poem, he writes " the unity of a poem is a unity of mood. Poetic images express or articulate the mood ". He further says "the mood is the poem, not something else still behind it ". [106]

We seem to be in touch with the broader current of emotivism at this point for one of the marks of demarcation of emotive from the cognitive is precisely that the emotive is sense with-out even in principle the possibility of reference. At this level, positivist epistemology and literary theory support each other. As Ricoeur shows, Todorov's 'Opaque discourse' is precisely the discourse without reference the emotivists were talking about. Similarly almost echoing Carnap, Ayer and Stevenson, Jean Cohen says the function of prose is denotative, the func-tion of poetry is connotative.

But here again to push beyond the barrier placed before us does not involve a total negation or rejection of the position but to ask a question which would unlock the constraints of emotivism and lead us back on the road to reference. The reference to moods and feelings in the analysis of literature as usually developed by emotive theorists is not in itself without value or indication for us. But there are two issues about the emotional significance and function of literature which are not generally emphasised or kept in focus by the emotive theorists.

The mood or the feeling in question i.e. the feelings expressed in the poem, has a certain distinct character which distinguish it from non–literary moods and feelings. There are several ways of marking the contrasts and differences between the two types of emotional states, but I would like to briefly comment upon two such phenomenological contrasts – firstly, the feelings expressed in a poem have an intentional relation to the objects and events which are represented in the poem, whereas in life, the relation between feeling and object is a causal one. It is because the relation is intentional that the non–existence of the object is irrelevant to the feelings and emotions in the poem. Secondly; because the relation is intentional, there is a certain necessary congruence or appropriateness between the feeling and the object – the emotional tone and content of the poem seems to fit the exigencies of the situation without any excess or defect. This correspondence which is an aesthetic norm or standard is what literary critics like T. S. Eliot call ' the objective correlative '.

If we keep these two features of emotions and feelings expressed in literature, we may begin to have an understanding of emotions as in their own way intentional and cognitive. And in fact, Ricoeur, by another route (i.e , by way of a long engagement with Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art*) comes to the

same point namely, to put it in Goodman's terms, " in aesthetic experience, emotions function cognitively ".[107] But still we have to settle two further issues before we can speak firmly and with theoretical justification, of the truth of art and of the reference of a poem. These two questions are – (i) what is the nature of the objective or existential situation referred to in a poem i e., what is the nature of what we previously called displayed reference or suspended reference ? Or to go back to the very initial formulation with which we started this discussion; it was said that the reference of the text is the world of the work. Now it is this conception of the world as the reference of text that requires to be clarified. The second question that has to be settled is a connected issue. We saw that the displayed reference or the secondary reference of the text emerges only after the suppression of the primary or literal refrence. Just as the metaphorical sense is constituted on the basis of the suppression of the ordinary or customary sense, so also the reference of the text, what we previously called the world of the work, is accessible only after the suspension of literal reference. We might indeed say that textual reference is to literal reference what metaphorical sense is to ordinary or literal meaning. The point to be clarified is about the processes involved in the suspension of literal reference.

Since the two are connected and since further, the first, the suspension of literal refrence, is a condition for the display of textual reference, we can begin with this process of withdrawl of literal reference.

Hester refers the reading of text to the epoche of Husserl which suspends the affirmations of external reality of the natural standpoint. Because of this suspension or bracketting, the free play of consciousness is revealed; similarly, in reading by means of the suppression of reference, the autonomy of sound and

image in the text is made possible. [108] For Hester, therefore, the perception of the literariness of a work of literature is conditional upon an elimination of reference; a naive reading must be overcome in order to grasp the poetic form as poetic. Just as the epoche of the natural standpoint in phenomenology leads to a distinctive phenomenological attitude and phenomenological experience, so also the overcoming of a naive reading and the suspension of reference leads to a distinctive attitude, the aesthetic attitude and an experience, the aesthetic experience, consequent upon that attitude. [109]

But for Hester, the matter ends there, whereas for Ricoeur, the suspension of reference is only the negative preparation for the emergence of secondary reference proper to texts. Here we may rejoin the idea of the subjective or emotive theory that the discourse of the poem is about feelings and moods rather than about things. In Northrop Frye's terms, the signification involved in poetic or literary discourse is centripetal or an internal signification of moods. But since moods and emotions as they function in a work of art, are intentional, we must take a mood as a way of finding oneself in the midst of reality. It is, in Heidegger's language, a way of finding oneself among thing. It is this reference to one's being in the world that is displayed by the text, on the basis of an epoche of its literal reference. The reference here belongs properly to the textual level and is not to be taken as a function of the references of the statements. Indeed, the reference of the text is displayed only after the customary reference have been elided; hence it cannot be their function.

Secondly, what is displayed in secondary reference is a mode of being in the world, a certain structure or form of involvement of the subject with the world. It is neither a purely subjective disclosure nor a purely objective representation,

neither of feelings and other psychological events nor of things and relationships in their external facticity, but of the *vis-a-vis* of the subject and object.

Thirdly, this existential disclosure of the world as a possible life world for the subject is revealed and clarified in the interpretative work carried out on the text. It is through such interpretative work that the reference of the world is manifested. Hence, just as the sense so also the reference is bound up with the work of interpretation. Since interpretation is concerned with the possibilities of being in the world, every hermeneutics of the text is as much an interpretation of the self as it is of the world. It is in this sense that Ricoeur claims that there is a reflective moment in every interpretation. But this reflection is essentially mediated by an interpretation of symbols. There can be no immediate comprehension of the subject; a detour through symbols is always necessary. But this creates a problem, for if every interpretation is also an interpretation of the subject it would follow that a plurality of interpretations leads to a plurality of ways of self-understanding. But can we organise these different modes of understanding of the subject according to some types, just as we are able to organise the endless diversity of discursive formations according to the types of literary genres ? Indeed, Ricoeur thinks we can distinguish some basic hermeneutic styles, what we may call interpretative genres. He discerns three major forms of interpretation of the self in the Western tradition, which he calls the Archaeological, the Teleological and the Eschatological respectively. Hermeneutic archaeology is a regressive mode of understanding which seeks to comprehend the formation of the subject in terms of its roots, be it desire, as in Freud or the will to power, as in Nietzsche. It is a decipherment of symbols in terms of their expression of drives and such other primordial exigencies of life.

Such a hermeneutic seeks to understand meanings in terms of their life—contexts.

As against the regression of an archaeological hermeneutics, the teleological hermeneutics seeks an understanding of symbolic formations, each explicating and interpreting the earlier forms. Both an archaeology and a teleology of understanding may be contrasted with an eschatology which seeks the final sense of a symbol in the light of a final end or terminus beyond the symbolic and the humanly discursive.

While the full delienation and exposition of these hermeneutic ways would be a problem for general hermeneutic theory, for a theory of literature, in the style of Ricoeur, the chief problem would be to relate the formation of literary genres to these modes of self-understanding. One of the fascinating questions which arises at this point of contact between theory of genres and hermeneutical theory is how, in different genres of literature, the subject is comprehended; what modes of reflection is inscribed in these different discursive formations.

But the reference of the text is not to be limited to the presentation of the self; it is also a disclosure of possible world. It is this disclosure of an essential possibility of a virtual life which makes us grasp an aspect of reality that is obscured and repressed in our ordinary practical dealings with the world. By projecting a fictive possibility, a disclosure of that which is, is effected. It is in this way that a world is projected by the organization of the text; an attentive reading sends us from the sense to the reference, only here this referential passage is through the epoche of ordinary reference.

But still a final issue remains : since by its very nature there is a plurality of interpretations and since further, Ricoeur's

theory of interpretation, no longer takes authorial meaning or intention to be the norm of interpretation, how does one validate the correctness of one's interpretation, or is it the case that there is no place for correctness of interpretation and that every reading is a permissible reading ? Ricoeur believes that we may recover the notion of a correct interpretation or authentic reading, not in terms of an identification with the text, nor in terms of an incorporation of a text in terms of one's own schemes of understanding, but in terms of a continuing dialectic between the text and its reading.

We may schematize this dialectic in the following representation :

$$R-E-A-D-E-R$$

$$\uparrow \qquad\qquad \uparrow$$

Disclosure   Pre–understandin

$$\uparrow \qquad\qquad \uparrow$$

Interpretation ← Text ← Reading
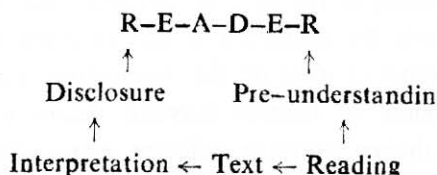
One approaches the text not in the form of an understanding empty of all expectations or anticipations No reading is, in that sense, a naive or presuppositionless reading. Against this Boltmann and others, following Heidegger's stress on fore–understanding, have shown that all understanding of a text presupposes an existential encounter with it, in which one approaches the text with a definite pre–understanding. But while accepting the necessary corrective to objectivism, Ricoeur points out that a certain distancing – a separation of the textual discourse must also be effected, if one is to *read* the text and not simply incorporate it into one's own frames of conviction. It is here, for Ricoeur, that the value of the structuralist disciplines is to be seen, for they serve the function of distanciation. So the reading radiates out in the process of interpretation where the

structure of the text is invested, not only with sense but with reference. After the display of the structure of the text has been completed, which reveals the other–ness of the text, the secondary reference of the text, the world disclosure enacted by it, is experienced and in this enactment, the subject finds himself relocated; a hermeneutic placement of oneself in the discourse opened out by the text takes place. This relocation of oneself, this finding of oneself by way of the otherness of the text, leads to a new formation, a new constellation of preunderstanding. One, therefore, approaches the text again with new anticipations and expectations. It is in this circular process of finding oneself in the understanding of the other that may be called hermeneutic experience and in this experience, the two functions of the text, namely, appropriation of the other and a new self–understanding on the basis of this appropriation, are distinguishable but inseparable moments.

We have attempted to follow Ricoeur's discussions of reference which, joined with the hermeneutics of texts and nourished by the semantics of language, takes shape as a theory of poetic and literary truth as consisting in the disclosure of a mode of being in the world, as an essential possibility for human subjects. Into this philosophy of reference, many disciplines and types of investigation have been drawn; as we saw, Ricoeur's theory includes the major insights of philosophical semantics, of structural linguistics, theory of literature and existentialist philosophy. But all this wealth of detail is organised and structured by two basic types of inquiry – phenomenology and hermeneutics. Ricoeur claims that we need to see the interaction between these two in the sense that while each limits the other yet, it also needs the other. In other words, within Ricoeur's theory, the phenomenological component is limited and qualified by certain basic hermeneutic insights, at the same time as his hermeneutic

theory is nourished by a phenomenology. Coming after our study of the problem of reference in Husserlian phenomenology, it therefore appears natural to end our discussion of Ricoeur, with a brief account of the relationship between phenomenology and hermeneutics in his philosophy.

When we look back at the programme and project of phenomenology from the point of view of what, in the above, we have called ' hermeneutic experience ', the first limitation of phenomenology that becomes noticeable is its ideal of scientificity. This ideal encounters its fundamental limit in the ontological condition of comprehension. Secondly, the constant appeal to the immediacy of presence, its intuitional vehemence, appears narrow and constraining, when set against the aim of understanding as the goal of interpretation. Furthermore, from the point of view of the hermeneutics of text, the meaning, its sense as well as reference, is no longer tied to the act of originative intention; on the contrary, the text appears as autonomous and available to interpretation on its own terms. With this goes the reservation about the Husserlian project of ultimate foundations in subjectivity.

But inspite of these reservations and limitations, Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory is still thinkable only in connection with phenomenology. As Ricoeur himself notes, the hermeneutic concern with linguisticality itself has to be connected and nourished by a theory of sense, for the primary question is the structure of experience which is brought to language. In this sense, although in a very different way, Ricoeur seems to converge upon Husserl, in that the phenomenological is the nourishing ground of the semantic. For all its depth and refinement Ricoeur's theory of reference is yet nourished by this fundamental conviction. In the next study on Derrida, we shall

see the implications for the problem of reference, of a reflection on language, which moves beyond these regulative guidelines,

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