I. THE HERMENEUTIC OF A TEXT

This volume of disparate essays bears the title Hermeneutics of Encounter not so much because the contributions are informed by an uniform hermeneutic concern but because it intends to draw attention to the thrust of Gerhard Oberhammer's work who though an Indologist by profession is a philosopher by temperament and a theologian by inclination. The essays themselves are neither studies of nor responses to Oberhammer's work because the purpose of the volume is in the nature of a tribute. The articles intend to honour a colleague (in the case of the majority) and a teacher (in the case of some) who has ventured into areas hitherto not trodden by traditional Indology. This is amply illustrated by Utz Potzeit's 'Die Sammlung De Nobili'.

The occasion for our publication is Oberhammer's 65th birthday. I am grateful to His Eminence Cardinal König for his 'Wort zum Geleit' who has seen and supported Oberhammer's Sammlung De Nobili right from its inception twenty-five years ago! I wish to thank all the contributors for their generous collaboration in spite of difficulties created by huge distances of space and scarcity of time. A very special word of thanks to Asst. Prof Dr Roque Mesquita who did the planning and coordination, to Ms Sybille Hoffmann who with great skill has prepared out of the variety in our articles a uniform manuscript for printing; and to Ms Alexandra Boekle for doing the proof-reading. On this occasion another volume is being brought out by Indologists: ORBIS INDICUS Gerhardo Oberhammer lustrum XIII. exigenti ab amicis discipulisque oblatus editus a Rocho A.C. Mesquita atque Chlodovigio H. Werba. Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunder Südasiens.
The aim of this Introduction however has little to do with initiating the reader with Oberhammer's thinking (in itself a fruitful though an immensely difficult task); rather the intention is to locate the hermeneutic focus of his work. From the beginning of his career Oberhammer has never been content with a purely 'descriptive' Indology, an Indology which handles texts as if they were catalogues of neutral facts but does not raise the question of their relevance to circles outside the tradition of those texts. For Oberhammer a text is the place of an hermeneutic encounter; and so he approaches it not merely to find out what it said historically but what the referent could possibly mean to today - that is to say, for him a text is a bridge between reality and the reader. Unlike some from the exegetical tribe for whom a text is but a written form of discourse and which like oral discourse can be univocally understood, Oberhammer's approach is sophisticated enough to know that between the world of the text and that of the reader lies a distance that is temporal as well as cultural, philosophical as well as theological, a distance that needs to be overcome if any understanding has to take place at all. Moreover Oberhammer is aware that such a distance cannot be overcome merely by method, be it ever so historical and critical. Methods, however helpful they may be, are unable to function beyond the semiotic and the semantic stages of understanding; for this very purpose Oberhammer has been striving for an hermeneutic awareness of a text and the happening of tradition. In spite of his occasionally ambiguous and generally idiosyncratic language, Oberhammer is well beyond the naive-realistic approach of traditional exegetes who knowingly or unwittingly build their exegetical house on the sand of a subject-object epistemology. His hermeneutic of the transcendental Subject as well as his interpretative attempts are proof enough that he is indeed far from adopting such a naive stance towards texts.

In order to understand both the nature of his questioning and the possible contribution it could make to the discussion of an hermeneutic of religion I want to locate Oberhammer's contribution on the backdrop of a hermeneutic of the text. However in what follows I do not pretend to speak for Oberhammer; much less to expose and analyze his 'meaning-grid'. I am simply attempting to find out from my point of view the place of encounter between the worlds
of the text and of the reader. If one is to study such a relationship one has to go beyond objectified terms like text and reader, and find more about the way they are, their mode of being. For this it is necessary to clarify our pre-sub-positions with regard to the more important concepts that are essential ingredients in the exegetical-hermeneutical enterprise.

1.1 The World of the Human Being

It would be best to begin by clarifying what we mean by 'the world of the Human'. The human being is a conscious subject that is in a position to discourse about reality and to raise the question of the meaning of his discourse and of its truth as well. The statement could be interpreted differently according to the diverse [metaphysical?] presuppositions of different readers. And our presuppositions are unwittingly but intensely coloured by a good deal of metaphysical high-flying. Because of this it would be a safer approach if we could eschew metaphysics and take a phenomenological path. This does not mean that I believe that there is a phenomenology which can totally avoid metaphysical presuppositions. What I mean is that the ideal approach would lie in the direction of a phenomenological attempt, even though it may not be possible to avoid altogether metaphysical presuppositions.

What phenomenology discloses is the world in which we find ourselves. Whatever the focus of our awareness there is a world surrounding this focus. But we never have merely a focus. Awareness is never of a single object in spite of the fact that our language always centres around such a focus. We can, say, point to this object and assert, 'this is a book' but if we examine our awareness of the book we discover that there is always a world in which the book is located. A book, whether in the waking state or in a dream, is never a book by itself independently and outside of a world; a book is a book only within some definite world. Though, as we said, we can speak of a book without any qualification our accompanying awareness always assumes the world that is not explicit in the linguistic expression. Hence a book as such is an abstraction and an abstraction is an abstract, lexical meaning. The subject-matter of the Human's discourse is normally not about such abstract meanings; it refers to the world in which the book and the speaker find themselves.

In a context like this a phenomenological approach reveals that language and perceptive understanding though not separate, have their distinct but related ways of being. In perception
If perception presents us with a unified whole, it is language alone that articulates the whole and its 'parts'.

But it is in the person's understanding that perception and language come together. The unified whole of perception is the world that the person who understands inhabits. What we are here calling the world is not very different from Heidegger's being-in-the-world. The world which we inhabit is the world which accompanies us wherever we go; it is the world through which we perceive and experience everything. Our thinking and acting, indeed our being, is inextricably connected with this world; there is no thinking and acting, and indeed no being without this world.

The world that we are referring to is not just the physical world though the physical world is the world common to all the worlds. The physical world is without doubt the base which supports each one's world and the platform where the encounter with the world of others takes place but we never find ourselves only in the physical world. The world that we inhabit is more than the physical world; the expression being-in-the-world refers to a world within which alone we encounter the physical universe. We do not perceive a world outside of our universe of meaning. That is why primarily and for the most part being-in-the-world refers to the universe of meaning in which too the world finds itself.

1.2 The Universe of Meaning

First of all, when we speak of the universe of meaning we have to ensure that we do not reduce it to the universe of an individual. An individual's universe is an impossibility. No one can create his own universe of meaning. One is born in it or, to change the metaphor, one finds oneself always and already soaked in and pervaded by it even before one becomes aware of it or begins to speak of it. We live, move and have our being, and are related to the world and to one another in and through the universe of meaning.

Furthermore though such a universe differs from culture to culture, there is at the base of all such universes a layer that is common to all universes of meaning. This layer comprises the
basics of life, like birth, death, suffering, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, etc. For all its difference, every universe of meaning has a base where the diverse universes of meaning touch each other like the poles where the cardinal points meet.

The traditional connotation of universe of meaning stresses the meaning rather than the universe aspect. Looked at from an Heideggerian perspective however where in the case of Dasein being and awareness are identical the universe of meaning could be perceived in a fresh way. A universe of meaning makes sense only in the context of human beings. For human beings meaning can be separated from universe just as little as universe can be separated from meaning. The reason is simple: there is no meaning without universe and no universe without meaning. A solitary meaning is as impossible as a solitary word or a solitary human being. Meaning is always a universe, a universe of meaning.

Usually meaning has to do with one or another thing in the universe. But this way of focusing on one thing is in effect to abstract from its real relations in the universe. A lexical meaning is such an abstraction and it functions more like a point than like a person. A real meaning, like a person, is constituted by a universe of real relations. But a point is only an element in a system of code-relations. These are bereft of referents and consequently of real relations; accordingly they exist only within a closed system of codes.

Real meaning is a universe not only in the sense that there are no solitary meanings and all meanings are interrelated but also in the sense that there are no solitary things and that everything is interrelated. Furthermore since real meaning refers both to the physical universe and to the universe of meaning, strictly speaking then, what we refer to as physical universe is as much an abstraction as the universe of meaning. What we always and already have is the one common objectifiable universe in which we distinguish (but not separate) the universe of meaning from the physical universe.

If in the phenomenological perspective meaning is the equivalent of a real relationship (between language and world in general and between a thing and its name in particular) it is not difficult to show that such a relationship includes awareness. A real relationship cannot exist without awareness. Meaning as a relationship between language and world presupposes awareness of this relationship. The understanding person cannot be separated from the thing to be understood. A person is as much part of the world as the world is part of him. His contact -

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Contact, that is, his touch with the world is through meaning, not abstract meaning but in the sense of real relations. This contact is surely physical but not merely; it is much more at the level of being and understanding: his being is related to the world around him and he knows (but not necessarily that he thematically knows about) this relationship.

Thus the Human's self-identity cannot exclude the real relations which constitute him because both at the level of his being and of his awareness his identity includes the world as well as the world of meaning. A person's self-understanding includes his understanding of himself and of the world of his relationships and is inextricably bound up with the universe of meaning-and-reality.

Accordingly, though reality is not meaning, meaning is not awareness and awareness is not person, still there is no person without awareness, no awareness without meaning and no meaning without reality. That is why the universe, to express it advaitically, is non-different from the world of person, awareness, meaning and reality. In other words the universe we inhabit is constituted by meaning, language, reality and awareness.

1.3 Awareness as a Mode of Being-in-the-World

The human eksesists in and through awareness. Awareness, as Heidegger has convincingly shown, is not to be reduced to an act of the knower; it is the way he eksesists, it is his mode of being. Awareness is the knower himself in as much as he enters into the disclosure of reality. Awareness in the phenomenological perspective means being-in-the-world which is the same as the world of real relationships. Hence when a person knows something he is changed by that relationship; he is in that measure different. The difference is not something 'accidental' to his being.

Against all this it may be argued that this is a mere change in vocabulary; what formerly was called an accidental, mental act is now referred to as a mode of being. Not really; awareness is the space in which the act of understanding takes place. The act of understanding is nothing other than awareness in action, as it were. In an epistemology of the subject-object type the result of the act of understanding is a new information but in the case I am arguing the outcome is a change in the knower's relationship. In order to stress the fact that there is a change in relationship between the knower and the known when understanding takes place, understanding is described as a mode of being and not as an accidental mental act.
How does the change in relationship manifest itself? In the case of new information the change in relationship is not necessary but in the case of an ontological understanding of understanding the preunderstanding which is at the base of our knowing and behaviour itself undergoes a such change that it is manifested in our knowing and behaviour. Ontological understanding refers to the fact that being and understanding are not separate.\(^9\)

Here is where the need of a re-vision of our preunderstanding becomes important. Reality is neither an objectified world; nor is understanding a mere mental process. Separation of reality from consciousness is the result of a naive-realistic epistemology whose main pillars are the subjectification of consciousness and truth, and the objectification of reality. The epistemology does not make sense from a phenomenological perspective. To consider the knowing subject apart from the known object is the outcome of a metaphysical stance and not of a phenomenological inquiry. From a phenomenological viewpoint knowing cannot be reduced to a mental process; it is the Human's mode of being-in-the-world. But being-in-the-world is not like being-in-a-room, rather it is a being-conscious-of-being-in-the-world, where being, consciousness and world are all intimately and inexorably connected with each other in and through language.\(^{10}\)

2. Discourse and Text

Here we have to take a closer look at the process which thematizes our being-in-the-world, namely the process called discourse which translates our being-in-the-world into language. The three "components' involved in this process and essentially connected with one another are: the Human, his [world-] situation and language. An analogy might help understand their relationship. Each of the components is a circle; language, the largest circle, 'comprehends' the world, the second but smaller circle, and the world in turn 'contains' the human, the third and smallest circle. The smallest circle (Human) is part of to the second circle (world); and both together find themselves within the largest circle (language). The largest circle thoroughly pervades the two smaller circles. The basic level of world and the Human is language. World and Humans are grounded in language as the universe of meaning. For world and Humans can become thematic, and so can come into their own in discourse, on the background of the universe of meaning alone. Because of the comprehensiveness of language, the circumference of the largest circle is in effect the circumference of reality. The borders of the universe of meaning

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...are inaccessible because the limits of meaning are inexhaustible. These are indeed the limits of reality. If the universe of meaning is the bearer of all the worlds, the centre of all the three circles (language, world and Humans) is human discourse. In the case of the Human it is discourse that makes him human, not only because without discourse there is no human being but because discourse brings to expression the ek-static nature of Dasein. Furthermore, it is in human discourse that the world too finds a voice and its meaning is brought out (= ausgelegt). And finally it is in discourse alone that the virtual state of language gets actualized.

In my way of looking at things then, we start from one level of language (that is, the most comprehensive circle of reality in which we find ourselves) and arrive at another level (that is, discourse, the centre of reality) but it is in language that reality is gathered and held together. Language is a gathering-together (an encircling, if you will), and depending on the level where we are, the gathering-together is different. The gathering-together at the comprehensive level is language as the universe of meaning [= being-and-consciousness], and the gathering-together at the centre of reality is thematic language or human discourse. In this way discourse operates as the centre of the [gathering-together] centripetal movement of language and the [spreading-out] centrifugal movement of the world. Whereas language as the universe of meaning is constantly moving towards human discourse the meaning of the world is constantly moving away from human discourse in the sense that human discourse can never fully 'grasp' the meaning of the world but is made possible by these two movements of language and world.

Human discourse then is not a mere speaking; rather it is the coming together in consciousness of the universe of meaning and the physical universe, that is, of language (ßabda) and world (artha) but in such a way that the coming together is never finished, never final, never definitive. The Human cannot give up discoursing; to do so would be to cease to be human. From this angle discourse is not an expression of the whim and fancy of the individual Human. Rather it is the 'saying' of language. In as much as the world's meaning is discharged through mere speaking, in authentic discourse the world of the Human is charged with meaning by the universe of meaning.

Human consciousness is the continuum between the universe of meaning and the physical world. In and through the world the universe of meaning makes a claim on the human
The remembrance of text and tradition does not come into the form of the universe of meaning as the first and most fundamental layer of reality pervades all the circles of reality in such a way that the world of the Human is soaked and permeated with this pervasion by meaning is the quintessence of reality. Because of it reality becomes transparent enough to allow us - at least to some extent - to see through it, reach its meaning and bring it forth in discourse. Hence when we 'understand' something it is not a mere meaning that we understand. Understanding is seeing through a thing, arriving at its meaning and reaching the fullness of thing-and-meaning. Such a meaning is far from being an abstract, lexical meaning; it is the thing itself in its fullness, as it were. In this way understanding is an arriving at the identity of thing and meaning on the one hand and language on the other. From this angle, being-in-the-world far from being static, is a dynamic state of conscious (though not self-conscious) relationships.

Discourse is the ever fresh but never definitive attempt to thematize the dynamic nature of being-in-the-world. Not every speaking of course is discourse because not every speaking springs from the dynamic nature of being-in-the-world; because of which not every speaking is open to it. Most speaking is either a set of contemporaneous, simultaneous monologues or a pooling together of factual information. This is a far cry from discourse. Why? Authentic discourse is the coming together (saḥgam) in consciousness of the two streams of meaning and thing which spills over into language. This presupposes in life a listening to the universe of meaning through an openness to the physical universe. In dialogue it is symbolized by listening to the 'other' through an openness to the 'content'.

Accordingly authentic discourse is the disclosure of the world of the speakers. The ontological disclosure of reality reaches a temporary conclusion, as it were, in discourse; but without discourse it remains dumb, speech-less. It is not enough that the universe of meaning impregnates the physical universe with meaning; this meaning needs to be conceived and brought forth - a thing that can happen only in discourse. And when this happens we inhabit a world. For in and through discourse the universe of meaning and the physical world get transformed into a world that we can inhabit. Discourse is primarily the testimony about the world we inhabit; it is a witness to the way, the ek-static way, we inhabit it.

Authentic discourse is the Human's way of discovering the terra incognita of the physical world in which he finds himself; it is also his way of encountering another universe of meaning.
Indeed it is only in discourse that he can discover, distinguish and thematize the universe of meaning and the physical world; without discourse he would not be in a position to know either of them. Discourse brings understanding to expression. When the Human stands within the universe of meaning and listens, according to the capacity of his preunderstanding, to reality’s claim that has struck him, there is at work here in him a fore-sighting and a fore-conception of this claim; this process finds its culmination in discourse. What he had a fore-sight of and had conceived in an embryonic fashion is then brought forth in discourse. What had been conceived in the disclosure of reality is delivered in authentic discourse. But what is born in inauthentic speaking is mere wind, mere words that have little or nothing to do with the disclosure of reality.

2.1 The Semiotics And Semantics Of Discourse

The way we have been reflecting on discourse has to do with phenomenology. The semiotics and the semantics of discourse on the other hand study its external aspects; this does not imply however that their contribution can be underestimated. The former studies discourse from the perspective of code-systems, and lays bare its various code-structures and their internal relationships; the latter looks at it from the viewpoint of meaning-systems, and reveals the story with which the code-structures are pregnant. But all this can be undertaken once discourse has become a text.

When discourse brings understanding to expression this is obviously not a definitive stage of understanding. All human understanding is on the way; there is never any definitive understanding. So when discourse expresses what was understood this is only a temporary conclusion. When this happens the preunderstanding is revised, and the understanding process begins anew from a fresh point of departure. This goes on and on.

2.2 Discourse as Code

Whenever something which we have understood becomes thematic in discourse, the new understanding enters the ‘system’ of the person who understands. This is what we call a re-vision of the preunderstanding. But one might ask, what is it that happens here? Firstly, the new understanding revises the system and begets a new mode of being and behaviour; and a new set of relationships is the outcome. Secondly, when the discourse which thematizes the re-vision becomes a text a fresh process of understanding begins. We need to explain this a little more.
Phenomenologically speaking, a process which does not begin from such an aspect is not possible at all, just as no being is possible that completely lacks an objectifiable aspect. This is because all reality is three-dimensional: the objectifiable, the objectifying and the depth-dimension. The objectifiable dimension is the point where reality takes shape and form; the objectifying dimension is the factor that locates the shape and form of reality; and the depth-dimension is that aspect which makes possible that there is no limit with regard to both the objectifiable and the objectifying dimensions. The objectifiable can be objectified indefinitely and the objectifying process too can go on objectifying without any limit. This would not be possible if the depth-dimension were not a constitutive dimension of reality.

But the point that we are busy with here is the objectifiable dimension which is the focus in the process of understanding. Discourse concentrates on the objectifiable even where the theme appears to be beyond the realm of the objectifiable (say, goodness or God). Whatever one's position may be about the ineffability of goodness or God one will have to admit that minimally at least that there is an objectifiable aspect which allows to assert whatever we assert about them. What is totally and completely unobjectifiable is in that measure impossible to speak of. In this sense even 'nothing' is not unobjectifiable.

Discourse concentrates, we said, on the objectifiable in the sense we have just explained. It says something about something. This saying something about something, the what-is-said, is also part of the objectifiable. It is this that is turned first into a code and then into a text. The mediation of phonetic and other kinds of code-systems is indispensable even for discourse which symbolizes one of the best forms of immediacy. Saying something about something takes place only through such a code-complex. Indeed neither communication nor even consciousness are at all possible without the mediation of code-systems. The objectifiable dimension is the ground where communication and consciousness can function.

In discourse what-is-said is expressed through a complex of code-systems. When discourse becomes a code/text what-is-said through the complex of phonetic code-systems can be preserved if it is transposed into another code-complex, namely, of written-codes. Discourse in the form of written-codes takes on a characteristic which is altogether foreign to oral discourse. If univocity of meaning is the hall-mark of oral discourse, polysemy becomes the

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2.3 Written Discourse as Text

A code becomes a text when it is decoded, that is, when the codes gave way to meaning.16 We decode a code but we read a text. Though the two activities are distinct they are closely related and the reader is usually skilled enough to perform them simultaneously. The first activity substitutes codes with meaning and the second ties together the different threads of meaning to enable the 'narrative' or the 'story' to emerge. The difference between them is clearly noticed however when the reader is not too familiar with the written code (i.e. script) and still less with the language. In the semiotic activity the concentration is more on the words and in the semantic activity the stress is on word-meanings flowing into sentence-meanings.

On the face of it a text appears merely to be speech that is written, the difference between oral and written discourse consisting in the circumstance that the former is spoken and the latter written. The only new thing that writing seems to bring in is that the written character of speech 'guarantees the persistence of speech'17. This view may get reinforced by the fact that historically writing emerged very late.

But, as Paul Ricoeur argues, in spite of this and similar arguments, writing brings in an element that is altogether foreign to oral discourse.18 A written text has an inbuilt distance the characteristics of which are absent from speech. Speech as discourse is dialogue that makes possible question and answer but in a such manner that the speaker can turn, without any warning, into hearer and the hearer into speaker. Moreover for the dialogue to succeed the key of the dialogue has to be, generally speaking, univocal and it has to be shared by both speaker and hearer. If the speaker were to speak in one key and the hearer hear in another key the possibility of dialogue would be cut short.

Ricoeur convincingly argues that this is not the case with a text. The writer is not there and the reader cannot take the place of the hearer. "It is not a relation of interlocution, not an instance of dialogue...Dialogue is an exchange of questions and answers; there is no exchange of

Writing then is discourse that is not spoken; it is written precisely because it could not be spoken. "Hence we could say that what comes to writing is discourse as intention-to-say and that writing is a direct inscription of this intention..." Whereas in spoken discourse the more the intention is transparent and immediately perceptible, the faster and better the process of understanding. In the case of a text the intention is only mediate since it contains only an intention-to-say.

It is true that what writing does is that it 'preserves discourse and makes it an archive available for individual and collective memory.' But this is more than a question of preservation of discourse and of increased efficiency. For, as Ricoeur has pointed out, when discourse becomes a text a major upheaval occurs.

"The emancipation of the text from the oral situation entails a veritable upheaval in the relations between language and the world, as well as in the relation between language and the various subjectivities concerned (that of the author and that of the reader). We glimpsed something of this second upheaval in distinguishing reading from dialogue; we shall have to go still further, but this time beginning from the upheaval which the referential relation of language to the world undergoes when the text takes the place of speech." In oral discourse because of the common context between speaker and hearer there is univocity of meaning, and so their discourse refers to a common world. Here it is possible to clarify ambiguities of reference through question and answer. But in the case of a text all this is absent. There is no speaker to appeal to for clarity; compared to the original context, the reader's context is completely new and the reference has undergone, to a great extent, a change in the activity of decoding. For decoding implies that when the reader substitutes the codes with meanings, it is meanings from his own world that he brings takes along into his reading; he cannot do otherwise. In other words, in the decoding-process the world of the reader enters the world of the text. With this the referential function undergoes a sea-change. The original 'I's, 'You's and 'It's disappear and are replaced by the reader's 'I's, 'You's and 'It's. Even in the case of historical events reported by contemporary witnesses, and organized into patterns and handed
The remembrance of text and tradition... is the attempt of contemporary historians to read texts with the eyes of contemporary historical 'prejudices'. This does not mean that the contemporary reading of history is not historically accurate; historically accurate need not and indeed cannot mean mathematically exact because history and mathematics are two very disparate models of understanding reality.

However the text does preserve all that can be preserved. This applies mostly to what was said in discourse (i.e. the locutionary aspect), and the mode of that saying, namely, whether for instance it was a statement, a question, a command (i.e. the illocutionary aspect). Language has enough possibilities to preserve what we say and how we say it. We can recall and reconstruct what was said not only yesterday but thousands of years ago. But aspects like the perlocutionary, namely, what one does to the hearer by saying the way one says it (shouting, frightening, etc) are not easily irretrievable. And so Ricoeur concludes: "It must be conceded that the perlocutionary act, being primarily a characteristic of oral discourse, is the least inscribable element."23

The difference between the two worlds of oral and written discourse can be brought out thus: Oral discourse takes places in a world common to the discoursing partners where the focus is on the contextual reference. Here univocity of meaning is essential; without this discourse is not possible. To make discourse possible the primary requirement is the correct understanding of the reference of discourse to the world of the speakers. Univocity of meaning is at the service of the discourse's reference to the speakers' being-in-the-world. To mistake the reference and so either to misunderstand or not to understand is to miss the very goal of discourse.

But the world of the text is a different world. In the case of a text where semantic autonomy reigns supreme univocity of meaning is incompatible. In a text there can be no question of any univocal reference to a common world; in the context of the text there is no common world to speak of. Rather reading means discovering the world of possibilities that is projected by the text, and of integrating it with one's own. "For what must be interpreted in a text is a proposed world which I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my own most possibilities. That is what I call the world of the text, the world proper to this unique text."24

Though in both the cases of oral and written discourse the mediation of code-complexes is indispensable, they both function in their respective situations in a diametrically opposite manner. In the oral situation the code-complexes are a help towards univocity of meaning; in the
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2.4 Text as Memory

The kind of questions that arise at this juncture are the following: how can there be any continuity between discourse which is characterized by univocity and a text which by its very nature is polysemous? Can discourse which is historically rooted and becomes intelligible only in an historical context, be said to say the same thing when it becomes an a-historical text? Even in an extreme case where a discourse is written out verbatim, the chances of any real connection between the two appear to be pretty slim, the reason being that discourse is directed to a specific audience whereas the audience of a text is anything but specific. When in discourse, for example, I praise or blame someone I am apportioning responsibility for something to a specific person; when such praise or blame gets codified into a text the very essence of responsibility disappears.

When responding to this kind of questions the direction of such reasoning needs to be noted. What is being expected of a text is that it have the same qualities as discourse, and perform the same kind of functions as discourse; the only additional quality of discourse being the preservation of the historical character of discourse.

What we must first get straight is that a text in its own right is a production of meaning; only then can we ask if there is any relation between the text and the 'original' discourse. If one views a text phenomenologically, then one may not bring into the discussion issues that are not related to this approach. We have to begin from the fact that we have discourse and that we have texts; we need to take both of them seriously, each according to its own specific mode of functioning.

The speciality of discourse is presence, the presence of persons to one another (= an 'I' and 'You" in a 'We') and presence-in-the-world (= an 'It'). What-is-said in discourse is an expression of this presence to one another in-the-world. To put it personalistically, there is in discourse a specific 'I' relating to a specific 'You' in a specific 'It'.

A text is incapable of retaining this. This is not a matter for surprise due to the fact that we are unable to hold back any event. We can do nothing about the fleeting nature of an event but the historical nature of our being allows us to retain its meaning. A text is like the memory of a past event; memory can preserve and make present the meaning of the past event but not the

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Past event itself. As a matter of fact what memory is to event, text is to discourse. What memory retains is not too different from what a text retains, though the difference is significant. Specifically here memory refers to the meaning of an event; and meaning preserves the locutionary and the illocutionary aspects of an event. That is why it can produce anew both these aspects of an event. However the perlocutionary aspect which existentially makes an enormous difference cannot be preserved. For example, the memory of a personal encounter with the Buddha is of a totally different order compared to the text describing an encounter with the Buddha. However personal memory dies with the person. Though he may infect his listeners with his enthusiasm for the Buddha, the intensity of such memory follows the law of entropy.

But there is no need to underestimate memory merely because it cannot produce the event. True, the dynamics of memory are different from that of the event. The action of an event is ontological - the encounter of the Human in the Cosmic with the Depth-dimension. The action of memory consists, as we shall see later, in re-membering the significance of the past-event with the present. Thus though the event is fleeting its significance can be 'captured' and re-membered for all times and all places! This is the achievement of memory! If discourse captures presence, memory re-members its significance! Memory is reality's way of ensuring that what is of significance to the Human is not only not lost and forgotten but pre-served for the future.

Though memory is neither to be sentimentalized nor to be scorned our understanding of its ontological role needs to be upgraded. The truth is that the heart of the human race, indeed of all reality, beats in the breast of memory. Without memory the human race would cease to be human, and with regard to language, human relations, tradition and 'personal' contact with the cosmos - nothing of all this would be possible. Memory, by re-membering the past with the future, makes possible the continuance of the human race and human civilization, human systems of learning, production and devastation, sciences of nature and nurture, methods of healing and killing, politics and economics of serving and exploiting. We rely on memory to be able to enter our home, to go to work, to update ourselves, to deepen our friendships, to smoothen the sharp edges of our relationships, not to miss buses or trains, to do our shopping before the weekend and in general to prepare ourselves for any rainy day.

But what is memory? There are to my mind at least two aspects to memory: the code-aspect and the meaning-aspect. The code-aspect is the a-temporal structure that endures in spite

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The meaning-aspect of memory has to do with understanding though this is rarely seen to be so. Meaning cannot be retrieved without understanding, and understanding is not possible without memory's supply of meaning. However I shall postpone the elaboration of this statement, for reasons of convenience, to the last part of this essay.

A text is memory which preserves both the story as well as its significance. The story can be re-constructed through careful decoding and a historical sense. The decoding procedure is like a drill which is executed step by step, the same steps constituting the same procedure. With regard to retrieving the historical meaning the task is like that of a detective's. Unlike a drill, the detective-historian has no fixed steps, no one method which helps him in his task. He looks out for a motive (the semantic axis) of the action he is investigating and searches for signs (the codes) that could either reinforce the motive, or reject it or suggest another and thus lead to the discovery of a consistent meaning-structure of the action.

The work of exegetes follows such patterns. The exegete, conscious of the fact that the text preserves whatever can be preserved of the original action, cannot afford to pick and choose but has to take all the possible clues into consideration and account for them in his reconstruction of the meaning-structure. The objective of the exegetical task is basically to work out a semantic axis of the text to be interpreted. When reconstructing the meaning-structure of the text the exegete has to find out, what is the question that the text is trying to answer, what is the issue that it grapples with. Once this task is completed the work of interpretation proper, that is, the search for the significance of the event, begins.

Memory's presence is made concrete in code-structures and, in the case of texts, it is preserved in code-structures that are written down; they are actualized in the meaning-structures and finally brought to a head in the retrieval of their significance which is what interpretation is all about. However neither decoding nor interpretation would be possible if the Human did not participate in a larger and more dynamic memory, namely, the universe of meaning which is an

In it the human lives, moves and has his being. And it is in it that the processes of decoding and of understanding and interpretation can be carried out. Interpretation is a complex affair which can never fully be objectified because the interpreter is always and already part of the interpretation. Being the final step in the understanding process it is part of the process of re-membering the past with the future, an issue which we shall take up in the final part of this paper.

II. A HERMENEUTIC OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECT

It is on an elaborate backdrop like this that I wish to locate Oberhammer's attempt to work out a transcendental hermeneutic of religious traditions because it is on such a background that Oberhammer's contribution can best be projected to advantage.

The focus of Oberhammer's reflections is the transcendental structure of consciousness. Time and again he has been returning to this centre to analyze the various movements that derive from there. Oberhammer's analysis of this structure is systematic and thorough. However, apart from sporadic remarks he has not articulated a detailed hermeneutic of the text. Instead he has concentrated on the transcendental structure of consciousness as the condition of possibility of the human spirit. He considers this not as a theological work but as a hermeneutic of the religious phenomenon. His concern, he says, is religion as a human phenomenon, unfettered by any dogmatic positions. His basic thesis is that the human being is the proper locus for revelation.

Oberhammer sees different levels in hermeneutics. At one level it is the purely philological method of text-interpretation which is used to interpret the language of the texts of the salvation-systems. At another level, hermeneutics as text-interpretation is brought into relation with the reality of being human in as much as the texts of the salvation-systems claim to say something about the salvation of the human and in that sense are themselves a project of the realization of the human spirit. In this case hermeneutics is indeed interpretation of texts in as much as they express a specific project of the realization of the human spirit and so demand its realization in a very specific manner.
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and the philological understanding of the text gains in proportion to our understanding of this reality.31

Oberhammer's predilection is for a kind of philosophical hermeneutics that embraces primarily the understanding and interpretation of the realization of the human spirit's salvation as witnessed to in the ancient Indian texts - on the horizon of our knowledge of the Human as such.32 These systems are doctrines of human existence, rational projects of a possible liberation of the Human from the cycle-of-birth-and-rebirth. Basically they speak of the state-of-being (Befindlichkeit) of the human spirit and are a project of that spirit's realization.33

The basic hermeneutical question for Oberhammer is this: The Human finds himself in a world of sense-perception and is characterized by language; at the same time he is part of a community that stands together before a common Ultimate. Faced within such a horizon with the powers of life and endowed with the ability to make free historical decisions how does the Human form community with other Humans vis-à-vis the common Ultimate, what role does the Other play in the face of this challenge, in what language does he address the Other with regard to his surrender to an Ultimate?34

Traditional approaches of working out answers from within their respective systems, however necessary they might be, are, according to Oberhammer, incapable of going beyond a specific theology to concerns that are common to the different traditions. This would change only if a new element of existential understanding of the human spirit's mode of existence were to enter the horizon of their reflections.35 The development of their dogmatic content could then be woven into a common hermeneutical texture and one would go beyond the dogmatic statements into the human reality which is prior to them and is the condition of their possibility. With that they would move towards a fundamental phenomenon that is common to all religious traditions, namely the religion of the Human as the realization of his spirit. From there the faith-statements of these traditions could be understood as concrete answers to the Human's basic quest for absolute meaning. The diverse religious traditions could then be viewed as living witnesses and interpretations of the experience of human transcendence. For this experience of

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The realization of meaning is one that cannot be questioned further; it is the 'existential' that bears and supports human life. Looked at from this viewpoint religious traditions would essentially be epiphanies, manifestations of salvation.

Taking off from here Oberhammer unfolds his transcendental hermeneutic. His reflections start from human transcendentality and there uncover the hermeneutic structure of religion. The phenomenon of human consciousness is structured by aprioris which make possible a trinitarian movement: consciousness is a "being-by-one's-self" ("Beisichsein") which moves towards the Other, namely, the transcendental-reaching-out (transzendentaler Ausgriff) to the reality beyond "beyond-being" (jenseits des Seienden) which is the goal ("Woraufhin") of this reaching-out; and finally returning to itself it brings to a conclusion the conscious act of the human spirit by opening it up to itself and to the others. This is what Oberhammer refers to as geistiger Vollzug, the act which constitutes the human spirit as such.

From there Oberhammer's transcendental analysis proceeds to treat of revelation as the manifestation of transcendence. Connected with it is the phenomenon of mythicising ("Mythisierung") transcendence. In Oberhammer's reasoning this is the foundation of the diverse experiences of transcendence. He argues that the understanding of revelation has to go beyond an individualistic understanding so that it is seen as a tradition which becomes in fact the witness of a successful experience of transcendence. The last step focuses on showing the sacramental character of the salvation-presence of transcendence. Here I shall introduce a gist of Oberhammer's understanding of encounter as a category of a hermeneutic of religion. Though it might appear repetitious, the addition seems to be justified by the importance Oberhammer attaches to it in his hermeneutic.

At each step the argument is rigorous and closely knit, the style is intricate, involved and dense, and the method of course is transcendental. To miss a step is to miss out completely on the progress of the argument. It is impossible therefore to summarize the argumentation; hence what I have attempted is mostly a paraphrase of those issues which, I think, point in the direction in which his thinking moves.

1. Human Transcendentality as the Hermeneutic Structure of Religion

The thesis: "If consciousness as "interiority" (Innerlichkeit) of the Human's ability to "be-by-his-self" (Beisichsein) is to be thought of as possible then transcendence as an Apriori of the

The fundamental question about the apriori foundations of human consciousness concerns itself first with opening up the 'space' of a possible experience of transcendence and second with establishing that, that which appears in this space on the horizon of the quest for absolute meaning, cannot be abrogated (unaufhebbar).

Oberhammer begins his hermeneutic with a transcendental analysis of the structure of being-by-one's-self ("Beisichsein"). The important elements in this analysis are: (i) the transcendental Subject is the condition of possibility for the categorial Subject to be-by-its-self ("Beisichsein"); (ii) the movement towards the Other-than-the Subject is called the transcendental-reaching-out ("der transzendentale Ausgriff"); (iii) The goal ("Woraufhin") of this transcendental-reaching-out is termed as the reality of "beyond being" ("Jenseits des Seienden"); (iv) Exposure ("Entblößtheit") is one's originary need to go out of one's self without reserve in order to be-by-one's-self; connected with it is surrender ("Preisgeben") to the goal of the transcendental-reaching-out.

The first part of Oberhammer's argument runs thus: to be-by-one's-self "within" oneself cannot mean being closed in within one's self-identity; rather it is an opening up of oneself for oneself and for the Other. One is oneself and one relates to oneself in as much one goes out to the Other and returns to oneself. For such openness to be apriori possible the transcendental Subject has spontaneously to reach out to the non-subject, before any categorial act of subjectivity,. This alone can break through the closed nature of the merely present to the openness of being-by-one's-self.

To be-by-one's-self then there has to be a reaching-out. This reaching-out is neither a categorial reaching-out of a Subject to an object nor a transcendental-reaching-out to a specific being (entity). Not the first because we are speaking of a transcendental Subject and, more importantly, not the second because, if the transcendental-reaching-out were a reaching-out to a specific being, the reaching-out would get fixated to that object; that would mean the end of being open to oneself and to the Other. Thus the goal of this reaching-out has to be to "non-being", but not in the sense of negating its reality or of an empty nothing but of some positive reality "beyond-being" which is an openness that, remaining what it is, continuously
In relation to consciousness the reality of "beyond-being" is for the transcendental Subject always and already no need of any mediation. Only in this way can the originary need of the Subject to open itself to itself and to the Other be met.

In the transcendental sweep towards the reality of "beyond-being" there has to be an originary "exposure" (Entblößtheit) in the Subject, a "nakedness" that corresponds to its irrevocable need for openness. This exposure which is a surrender without reserve to the goal of the transcendental sweep is the condition of possibility of its unmediated nearness to the same goal. In this way when the sweep of the transcendental Subject is accepted by its goal directly and without mediation, consciousness is constituted, that is, the Subject is opened up to itself and for the Other. In the exposure without reserve of the need in the transcendental-reaching-out, the reality of the relational existence of "being-by-one's-self" comes into its own. For the transcendental Subject finds in itself always and already the immediacy of an actual "being-by-one's-self" that is directed towards the goal of its reaching-out.

This immediacy to the goal is the reason why the "being-by-one's-self" cannot find in any one individual being the fulfillment of its relationality. It can be found, if at all, only in an encounter with the goal of each specific transcendental reaching-out, and this according to the openness of its goal which continuously communicates itself every time in a new event.

Religious traditions are said to be a witness to salvation. Now salvation means freedom from guilt and permanent fulfillment of meaning. The definitive reality of salvation of the "being-by-one's-self" can only be found in the encounter between the transcendental sweep and its goal but such encounter is successful only when every trace of culpable failure has first been eliminated.

Furthermore the goal of the transcendental-reaching-out is the only reality that can tie up with any possible revelation in a way that it can be a valid revelation for any individual. In such a relationship that the belief of any specific religious tradition that witnesses to a successful encounter with the salvation-reality of being-by-one's-self is revealed.

2. Revelation as the Manifestation of Transcendence

When individual beings cannot possibly fulfill the quest for meaning, transcendence can be experienced as that reality which alone can succeed in mediating ultimate meaning to the Human. When this happens the Human's "yes" without reserve to ultimate meaning becomes a reality of the human spirit ("geistige Realität"). This means that it is a reality which can be encountered only in a linguistic project. A reality like this finds its essence and actuality from an accepted insight into the human spirit which is born of an irrevocable experience and which both challenges and determines the human spirit. A foundational revelation in which every religious tradition finds its roots and on which it lives, takes place precisely when transcendence becomes thematic in such a binding manner.  

An experience which in the presence of transcendence is an expression of the human spirit is dialogical in a transcendental sense; it is the self-realization of the spirit in and from an encounter (Begegnung). Transcendence becomes experience when in an encounter it communicates itself in immediacy to the Subject; for immediacy is the attribute of encounter. In the experience of transcendence there is in principle an Other; this Other is immediate to the Subject because the latter is "exposed" ("Entblößtheit") without any reserve. This becomes experience in as much as the Subject is transformed into a new reality. The transformation seems possible only if it is understood as a response of the self-communicating Subject to the claim the encountering reality makes on it.  

The reaching-out towards transcendence grounds the experiencing Subject transcendentally and thus opens the apriori horizon on which transcendence can communicate itself in an a posteriori experience. The self-communication of transcendence bursts open in the subjectivity of the Subject. For in subjectivity the linguistic project of expectation of an encounter connects with reality. Here in "my world" is the meeting-place of transcendence as the goal of the transcendental-reaching-out and the linguistic project of expectation of an encounter; it is the place of the fulfillment of the apriori project of expectation.

In order that transcendence as the goal of the transcendental reaching-out may lead to the openness of an endless horizon, it is necessary for transcendence to encounter in a positive manner the reaching-out which is pure openness itself. When the expression of transcendence as openness which the Human encounters as continuously communicating itself to the Subject of "being-with-its-self" becomes immediate as fulfillment of an expectation then it becomes a posteriori present in an experience. Such an non-individualistic expectation has to be "linguistic", that is, "mythic" ("mythisch") because a non-individualistic faith-tradition can dovetail into the Human's own experience through language alone and thus become a comprehensive understanding of human existence (Daseinsverständnis). In such an understanding alone does the Subject's recourse to transcendence have its inalienable place.

One could ask here, how can a linguistic project of expectation lead to an experience of the reality it refers to? Language is not to be understood as a "sign-system" in which sign and significant are a posteriori brought together. The originary unity of language and reality cannot be established in this fashion. Language is a "saying" ("Sagen") in which the Subject opens and surrenders itself to that which is addressed (das Gesagte). "Saying" is that realization of the Subject in which the Subject in its self-articulation, relates without mediation to that reality (das Gesagte) as one opening itself and being touched in its articulation without mediation by that which is addressed in the "Saying". It is clear here that language is always and already prior to the recognition (Erkennen) of "World" and the Human. In "Saying" the spoken is always and already made one with the reality that is spoken of. In "Saying" where that which is spoken of is the same as that which is addressed the Subject overcomes the distance between knowing and reality. "Saying" is a surrendering of the Subject to a specific reality; in this process it suffers (erleidend) the reality and so assumes it. "Saying" as addressing a reality ("Anreden" und "Nennen") is prior to every species of "speaking about". The a priori unity of language and reality is realized when one addresses reality.

Before concluding this section Oberhammer turns to the question of the "truth" of the experience of transcendence and of religion itself. The linguistic project that we are speaking about cannot be verified. The "truth" of its encounter lies in the fact of the encounter itself and the "truth" of the project of expectation lies in its fulfillment, that is, in the actual encounter itself and its binding character. Another project which enables a deeper and more completely

Oberhammer traces the reason for the diversity of religious traditions to the diversity in the experiences of transcendence in which the reality of "beyond-being" communicates itself as ultimate Meaning-Fullness (Sinnerfüllung) and permanent salvation. In its turn such diversity is grounded in the diverse ways of mythicising the goal of the transcendental-reaching-out. For these are conditioned by the concreteness of the Human and his tradition.

But what does "mythicising" mean? "Mythicising" takes place in the "saying" of reality, which the Human must do in order to have a "world" and to be in immediate touch with reality in "having this world" ("Welt-Habe"). If there were no diversity in the Human's experience of transcendence, then mythicising itself would be of no significance at all with regard to the foundational experience of transcendence. But this is not the case; there is a specific relationship between a mythicising and each specific reaching out. For as a matter of fact an experience of transcendence bursts open in a relationship, emerging from responsibility and quest for meaning, to the goal of each specific reaching out. This experience requires a relationship to mythicising as a condition of its possibility since there can be no relationship to an apriori principle of one's own transcendence which has never become language. This implies that the anticipated knowledge of the ultimate reality of meaning in a faith-tradition determines and shapes such a relationship prior to any experience of transcendence. Even if the actual experience of transcendence goes radically beyond this knowledge, still there is a consciousness in the experience that it is an experience of the significance of the reality of "beyond-being" that is already known in faith. There has to be therefore an identity between the faith-content structured by language and the actual experience of transcendence. This would be unthinkable if the experience of transcendence did not have an ultimate linguistic composition. Otherwise it would not be intelligible how what is believed in faith as the meaning of one's existence and what one actually goes through in the experience of transcendence could be known to be one and the same thing. Such an identity is necessary if one's profession of faith has to be responsibly accounted for and if what one has experienced through such faith has to have binding character. If this

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In order to be the basis of the formal openness of "being-by-one's-self" the self-communication of the reality of "beyond-being" must be such that it allows participation in it (An-sich-selbst-Anteil-Gewähren) by the Subject which is both met and moved by it. But the reality of "beyond-being" is not a content in the sense of information. It permits participation in as much as it is a continuously self-communicating openness. The goal of the transcendental-reaching-out is the horizon of such openness, not its content. Only in human experience does it become content in as much as the presence of what is being encountered transforms the one who is experiencing.

The different verbalizations of the experience are to be traced to the differences in the experience. The mythicising of the reality of "beyond-being" which makes possible the experience of transcendence in a religious faith does in fact lead to such an experience but, mythicising is not annulled by this, it is transformed into a reality of the spirit (geistige Realität).

With regard to the structure that mediates between experience, mythicising and the reality of "beyond-being" on the one hand and "encounter" on the other, it has to be noted that "mythic" refers to those realities of human existence which, in as much as without mediation they have become language, are experiencable and are effable in language but not in the kind of language which consists of a system of signs. Accordingly "mythic" is that being, singly and as a whole, which has become reality for the human in and through language. It refers to the fundamental phenomenon of human existence that reality for the Human is the "world" in which he lives and works. Oberhammer calls "mythic" not merely what is commonly called "Mythos" but also poetry, philosophy and science in as much as they create a "world" of immediacy and presence.

In this connection Oberhammer relying on F. Ebner, speaks of realities of the human spirit (geistige Realitäten), for example, the "thou" of a fellow human being or of God, and our own death; that is, realities which influence the life of a Human in a decisive way and are present only in mythicising. In such cases mythicising is rooted in the possibility that such realities become present in an encounter and that we can validly, though not in an objective fashion,

Every concrete mythicising is the basis of an endless line of possible projects that are mutually compatible with experience. And as a matter of fact diverse mythicisings of transcendence are found in one and the same religious tradition. Mythicising is the total reality in as much as it has come to language which the Human in his concrete historical situation finds himself in, on the irrevocable horizon of the transcendental apriori of encounter.67 "Mythicising" is always that reality which has become language without any mediation. It takes place when one becomes aware of a reality as a concretization of a specific meaning in a world of relationships with others (im Mitsein mit anderen).68 The reality that the Human is conscious of is linguistically immediate; it becomes concrete meaning in a world which I inhabit along with other Humans and whose immediacy is that of language.69 At this stage language is not to be understood as a conventional system of signs where reality is mediated through knowledge or information; it refers to the stage where reality itself "speaks".70

To understand the relation between mythicising and experience of transcendence it is essential that both of them necessarily relate to each other in their very origin. "Mythicising" is the turning towards transcendence through "Saying";71 as such mythicising is not just a project of expectation, it leads the expectant into the immediacy of an encounter. As a project of expectation it opens for him the possibility of a concrete presence of the "expected". In this encounter the reality of "beyond-being" is made present and mythicising having fulfilled its role becomes mythological language; this is the objectifiable dimension of mythicising. However in as much as mythicising is the condition of possibility of the presence of "beyond-being's" reality it enters into the experience of the encounter.72

"Mythicising" as the language-version of the reality of "beyond-being" is the project of expectation for a specific tradition and as such has binding validity. This implies that the language-version has an unmistakable identity of its own which in spite of all diversity of experience makes it possible that the same transcendent reality of "beyond-being" is experienced and recognized as such.73 The persistence of the reality of "beyond-being's" identity in every
mythicising is possible only because the "mythic presence" in which the reality of "beyond-being" becomes concrete and specific is constant. It can be satisfactorily explained only when it is understood as a community's project of expectation for whom it is the witness of a successful project of transcendent experience. If it is to be responsibly accounted for then it has to be non-individually (überindividuell) valid in a way that the "Saying" of the reality of "beyond-being" takes place in a community. No one who is convinced that it is an arbitrary act of his subjectivity, would or could "mythicize". Only where it is discovered as a witness to a successful transcendent experience in a common "world" can the Human, on the horizon of ultimate meaning, responsibly choose and give his binding assent to it in his specific approach to the reality of "beyond-being".

4. Tradition of Revelation: Witness of a Successful Experience of Transcendence

In as much as it is essentially an encounter of the transcendental-reaching-out with its goal the experience of transcendence is the origin and foundation of the religion of the Human. The foundation of all religion is revelation which occurs when the reality of salvation appears as the Ultimate and ultimately Unquestionable in the consciousness of the Human. The manner of encounter points to a dual dimension of revelation in the sense of faith-tradition.

Encounter, it was said, implies surrender without reserve, even surrender to a possible "thou". In an a-posteriori encounter the Human is always and necessarily connected with a possible "thou". In addition, the surrender without reserve demands that the surrendering "exposure" mediate a new mode of being (Seinsweise); this is a new "existential" that arises from the encounter. Revelation takes place primarily and in principle when transcendence is encountered in the actual life of the Human, namely when the encounter's binding character becomes visible and its claim cannot be explained away as emerging from a free and subjective initiative. This kind of transcendence "appears" when the Human is delivered over to the binding character of encounter occurring in a community of "thou-s"; this "communion" though it is beyond the "interpersonal" communion of everyday life, founds and demands it. More about this a little later.

When however the Human's witness of his encounter is questioned he who is always open and has unreservedly surrendered to a possible "thou", is bound to speak of his experience
The remembering of text and tradition; he does this by objectifying his project of experience. The content of a comprehensive doctrine of transcendence that cannot any more be relativized, derives from such language. It is then possible for the project of transcendence that can be handed down. This enters into the non-individualistic (überindividuelle) memory of a religious tradition and is able to prove its authenticity to the generations that follow and thus opens up from its experience of transcendence "world" and "existence" to its faithful. When this happens, there takes place then, in the case of a believer who tries to relive this project of experience, the movement of self-opening and self-surrender.\(^79\)

There is thus in any authentic experience of transcendence a structure which founds not only community and tradition but also a prophetic characteristic which becomes evident whenever a salvific connection with transcendence becomes manifest in a situation or a historical period as, for example from the Indian perspective, is the case with regard to the specific dharma of Kaliyuga or a religious teacher (guru).\(^80\)

Oberhammer concludes this section by pointing out that every revelation understood in the above manner is in principle "historical". The distinction drawn between historical and non-historical revelation in order to deny validity to the latter because of the lack of "objectifiability" and "verifiability" of its founding event, cannot be sustained because it overlooks the function of the "mythic presence" in every experience of transcendence.\(^81\)

5. The Sacramental Nature of the Presence-of-Salvation in Transcendence

If the "mythic presence" of the reality of "beyond-being" is to make salvation present in a religious tradition it has to be "conceived" in space and time; this is its sacramental nature. The "mythic presence" itself has to become a sacramental reality. This means that the "mythic presence" has to become an objective event so that in its space-time aspect it is the presence-of-salvation which the Human encounters in an objectively concrete fashion. The sacramental presence-of-salvation has both its foundation and its validity in the sacramental nature of the Human's experience of transcendence.\(^82\)

"Communion" with fellow-beings (Mitseindenm) is built into the very structure of a transcendental experience. This experience founds "communion" on the horizon of the quest for absolute meaning and the Human's non-relativisable dependence in this matter on the reality of "beyond-being". To this dependence corresponds the "exposure" without reserve of the Human's

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...reaching-out; this is the Human's way of being human. This implies in principle, the Human's total surrender to the reality of "beyond-being" as the goal of every transcendental-reaching-out; this possibility has to be realizable, though of course not necessarily in every individual act. The "communion" of being-with-others which is unavoidably founded in the Human's realization of himself (Vollzug) demands a realization in the actual (historical) community of being-with-others so that a non-individualistic visibility which is founded on the Subject's surrender to the reality of "beyond-being" becomes possible. What in effect is demanded in the process is that the space-time visibility too of the "mythic presence" of the reality of "beyond-being" be a condition of its possibility. Examples for this in the Hindu-tradition are the mṛta, the mantra; and in the Christian tradition, Church or sacrament in the specific theological sense. The sacramental nature of the space-time visibility of the "mythic presence" of the reality of "beyond-being" becomes concrete only in an actual encounter.

6. Encounter as a Category of a Hermeneutic of Religion

In his actual state the Human does not find himself "in the state of salvation"; this is true also of the ancient Indian salvation systems. Salvation has to do with the future. In order for the Human to have future he has to be able to be with an Other. This means, the Subject must in principle be open to an Other since only in reaching-out to the Other can the present open itself to a possible future. Future, in our context, means what is approaching, nearing (das Herantretende) and which is not at one's disposal (unverfügbar). No future, not even one's own, allows itself to be possessed and preceded (präjudizieren) by the Subject. It does not arise out of the present either causally or logically. The Subject can perhaps divine its approach but is unable...

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The responsibility of the Subject reflects only in its openness to what is approaching. When in the first of all and finally the Other overwhelms us and to which we are passively surrendered. It takes place not so much when we think of the Other as when we are handed over to the Other over whom we have no power and by whom we are mediated into a new reality. Future is an event of encounter, in as much as we come to ourselves anew vis à vis the Other, even if the Other is death which spells our physical destruction.89

Encounter is the Other in as much as it is inevitable, unavoidable. We have encounter when "being-by-one's-self" one is touched by something that enters his immediacy and becomes immediate to him, and challenges him and persists in its Otherness.90 For a Subject to be-by-its-self it has to reach-out to the reality of "beyond-being" and thus open itself in unmediated surrender to anything that approaches it so that it can become unavoidably 'immediate' to that which approaches it.91

In the measure in which the Subject reaches-out to a definite entity and comprehends it categorially, the surrender to the encountering thing becomes a surrendering exposure to the concrete individual encounter against which the Subject can do nothing. This is because the surrender as such is not to the individual thing that is encountered but to the reality of "beyond-being".92

The characteristic of such a surrender, as condition of its possibility in every concrete encounter, is an obligation that ensues not from the encountering entity but from the claim of the Subject's transcendent-al-reaching-out to the goal of this reaching-out. Since to be-by-its-self the Subject has to reach-out to the reality of "beyond-being" and in this way become "immediate" in its exposure to every other entity, it is at the mercy of each respective entity encountering it. And so it necessarily has Future in that it realizes itself only vis à vis the Other. Thus in the matter of the Human's salvation the dynamics of encounter comes to have an irrevocable obligation.93

In as much as in an actual encounter with an entity the Subject freely assumes this dynamics, it finds itself unavoidably in a relationship of immediacy with the reality of "beyond-being"; from it it acquires Future which accrues to it only as salvation because by accepting the obligation it lets itself be determined thoroughly in its existence by the reality of "beyond-being".
In this sense then every prior reaching-out to one's own Future as permanent salvation is possible only in an encounter-mode if the reaching-out can be responsibly sought and sustained in life. In his further elaboration of this theme Oberhammer indicates that the encounter is not so much a passive "experience of" as an event in which existence always realizes itself. This, as condition of its possibility, demands a dialectical movement which establishes a unity-in-tension (Spannungseinheit). The Subject is challenged into a new realization of its existence when an Other enters into its immediacy. The fact that that which enters into its immediacy remains as the Other and cannot be taken hold of, establishes dialectically a movement in the Subject, which cannot be sublated except in a new realization of its existence. It is this realization of its existence that constitutes the essence of the encounter. For it is only in an encounter that the Subject really opens itself up existentially to the Other; and the Other enters into the openness of the Subject and is "one" with it.

Here Oberhammer further specifies the Other's entering into the immediacy of the Subject. In our context immediacy is ontological and takes place within the "space" of existence, it has nothing to do with emotion. Hence "immediacy" (Unmittelbarkeit) to the Subject can only mean that the Other enters as the Other in the inmost spontaneity of the Subject. This is the "source" of the Subject's freedom which establishes the realization of its existence in as much as it is from there that existence is always projected and realized anew.

The inmost space of the Subject's spontaneity is the source ("Woher") of the Subject's freedom and as such refers to the opening up in the entity, because of its need, to the openness of the reality of "beyond-being". The Subject opens itself up only when there is in it a movement of reaching-out towards the reality of "beyond-being"; the opening-up is geared to the openness of the reality of "beyond-being". In the realization of its existence this opening-up to the reality of "beyond-being" comes to be freedom only when the Subject gives itself to the Other on the horizon of "being-by-its-self", that is, responsibly. This happens when it does not block the encountering reality (das Begegnende) through its "I"-centredness ("Ich-Bezogenheit") and does not alienate it through objectifying reflection but allows it to enter into the "exposure" of its surrender to the reality of "beyond-being" in a dialectical exercise. When the Subject opens itself

The "space" in which the encounter takes place, is the inmost space of the Subject's spontaneity. It is the Subject's "opening-up" ("Aufgebrochensein") towards the reality of "beyond-being". It is therefore that inmost space of spontaneity in which the Subject's dependence in its radical need on the reality of "beyond-being" has become the space of ontological subjectivity. In the last analysis this space is the self-communicating openness of the reality of "beyond-being" in as much as it has become for the Subject its own specific individual horizon for the exercise of its existence.

Entering into the immediacy of the Subject can now be interpreted a little more distinctly. When the Subject opens itself to an encounter with the Other and is thus touched by the Other in the inmost space of its spontaneity, it means that the dialectic of encounter is overcome and sublated, and that the Other as such has entered the horizon of the Subject's openness to the reality of "beyond-being", and that the Subject projects and realizes his existence freely on the horizon in which the Other has entered. Such an assuming of the Other in one's own existence-realization becomes an encounter.

This means moreover that when the Subject accepts the Other in an encounter, it freely takes on itself the obligation of its surrender to the reality of "beyond-being". In the encounter with the Other the Subject relates to the reality of "beyond-being" in such a way that when the obligation is thematized the reality of "beyond-being" remains a self-communicating openness.

The significance of the interpersonal encounter for an understanding of the concept of encounter from the point of view of a hermeneutic of religion is seen especially in the case of mutuality and this too irrespective of the kind of religious tradition that one is studying. Only within a structure of an interpersonal encounter can one understand how the reality of "beyond-being" can become in a Subject's encounter without reserve its ownmost salvation-reality. It does this when it enters into the reality of the Subject as its "own". The human Subject can never possess another Subject, that is, another "being-by-its-self" as its "own" except when it communicates itself to it in an encounter, and allows the other Subject freely to realize its own
101 If therefore the reality of "beyond-being" is actually to become the salvation-reality of each respective Subject in a way that the Subject "possesses it as its own" then this can be understood only in the manner of an interpersonal encounter.  

102 The fact that the reality of "beyond-being" is not an entity is an indication of the event-character that is not at one's disposal. It remains unattached and withdraws both from "what-is-at-hand" ("Zuhandensein") and from "being-by-its-self" ("Beisichsein").  

103 When what is not "by-its-self" enters an encounter it is so taken up by the Subject into the inmost space of the own specific spontaneity of its reaching-out that in the encounter with the reality of "beyond-being" it is mediated in its irrevocable otherness but that vis-à-vis the immediacy of the reality of "beyond-being" it forgets itself and its mythic project of experience. Since the non-conscious thing does not enter into the spontaneity of the reaching-out to the reality of "beyond-being" as the own specific ground of freedom of intentional approach, it approaches the Subject as something valuable but not in its "own-specific-being" and as asserting its value. Thus losing sight of and going beyond the encountering Other to the presence of the reality of "beyond-being" is possible without negating culpably the openness of the Subject. The non-conscious entity enters the life of the Subject not as its own-specific-being; its specific value and its claim on the Subject appear actually to be fulfilled, in as much as it concerns the encounter of the Subject with the reality of "beyond-being" and not the association with the "thing-at-hand" in life, that it as Other than the Subject points away from itself to the reality of "beyond-being" and so makes the latter thematic on the horizon of the Subject.  

104 It is a different matter however when in the encounter "being-by-its-self" enters the immediacy of the Subject. For it seems that a Subject cannot lose sight of another human being in the encounter except culpably, that is to say, not without a conscious closing up of the Subject that is in front of it. Indeed a conscious being in that it affirms through the realization of its existence its own obligation to be open to the reality of "beyond-being" gains an ultimate value as the own specific being of "being-by-its-self" which cannot be relativized by a Subject. For in
In an encounter with the reality of "beyond-being" a fellow human being remains in the encounter a "being-by-his-self" and precisely through his own specific claim on the Subject's openness to him in the encounter transforms the apriori obligation of the transcendental-reaching-out to the reality of "beyond-being" into the concrete obligation of an existentially lived encounter.\(^{106}\)

The dialectic of the dynamics of encounter unfolds itself when the Subject opens itself up to the encountering reality in a free reaching-out. When it does this, it allows the encountering reality to enter its immediacy. If it takes the Other in a free affirmation of its own specific being in the inmost space of the spontaneity of its own existence-realization then the Subject makes it "its own" in the encounter, in that it realizes its existence on the horizon of the reality of "beyond-being" into which the Other has entered through its influence on the realization of its existence. The own worth of "being-by-its-self" which has entered the immediacy of the Subject is not only not negated; on the contrary, it is deepened all the more through the increasing thematization of the reality of "beyond-being". Because of this the Other that enters the encounter makes precisely just that existence-realization of the Subject unavoidable in which the Subject opens itself up to the reality of "beyond-being" from out of the radical depth of its being.\(^{107}\)

The concept of encounter which Oberhammer has worked out allows us to understand religion as an explicit interpersonal phenomenon. This has been achieved through reflection on the openness of the Subject for another "being-by-its-self" as the mode of being of a Subject with its own respective encounter with the reality of "beyond-being".\(^{108}\)

Oberhammer's aim in treating of encounter in a transcendental way was primarily with a view to showing how the human spirit can realize itself in accordance with the doctrine of the ancient Indian systems of salvation which do not have a theistic model. Right at the beginning of his investigation he had illustrated this with the concrete case of the Naiyâyika Pakôõilvasvâmi who characterizes life (which is common also to the Sâskhya and Buddhism) as suffering...
Reflecting further on this project of experience Oberhammer concludes that the human spirit's being-in-the-world (Dasein) as such is suffering because it has no real Future. By Future

The reason for the "futurelessness" of Dasein as such is to be sought in the fact that it blocks the horizon of encounter. The "being-by-its-self" overlooks the dimension of the Other and so remains bound and unfreely surrendered to the individual encountering entity and thus can move only to another individual entity; in other words it is tied up with suffering.116

But freedom from the suffering of birth-and-death is salvation. This is the point at which the Other becomes thematic in Dasein's encounter. Through the experience-project of comprehensive suffering the Human in the encounter becomes free for the wholly Other, which persisting in its Otherness becomes immediate to the Human as the horizon of encounter.117

It is not any individual suffering then that is the point of the discussion; the insight that becomes thematic in the ancient Indian salvation-systems is that it is Dasein as such that is suffering and it is that that needs to be overcome. Whether we take PakΩilasvāmin or Kau∫∂inya, the reason for liberation from such suffering is not any statement of these systems; rather it is the whole of Dasein's cycle of birth-and-death as suffering and hence as futureless that enters in the encounter. Liberation is possible only when the wholly Other is thematically hoped for as the real Future.118

It is here that Oberhammer locates the difference between Phenomenology and Daseinsreflection in the ancient Indian salvation-ways. Death in these systems like in others too is nothing unusual. It leads from one individual encounter to another. The break-through in the cycle of birth-and-rebirth to a real Future towards salvation is not death; it takes place when in the realization of existence the purely Other is thematized in the obligation of the encounter with Dasein as the non-relativizable meaning-reality. Death in the sense in which we who are outside these systems understand it occurs when liberation takes place, that is, in as much as the nearness of a radically Other becomes tangible.119

When Dasein encounters human existence (as such) as suffering, it refers the Human to that horizon of encounter which is openness for another. In this openness that Other becomes
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120) The human sketches out both in the rational reflection on the otherness of the Other and in his mythicising, an existence-project of the human spirit; it is a project of salvation whose distinguishing-mark is the demand made by the obligation of relating to the Other. In realizing his existence the Human responds to the claim of this obligation and so relates to this Other called the reality of "beyond-being". In as much as he takes upon himself this binding obligation and responds to it in a lived encounter with life, he necessarily opens himself in a freely accepted surrender to the reality of "beyond-being" and gives himself to it without reserve on the horizon of salvation-hope as to his own unprejudiceable Future. And thus once again a dimension of encounter manifests itself in the light of this obligation, a dimension which is suitable as a category of understanding that opens the ancient Indian salvation-systems in their very essence.

The encounter of the human spirit with the other in life is realized in a prior-reaching-out to one's own salvation. This necessarily implies, as a dimension of the fact that the Subject enters salvation, that the surrender to the Other that the reality of "beyond-being" is, is accepted, a surrender which through the Subject's unreserved opening up to the concrete Other, becomes due to its need in each realization of its existence a willing acceptance of its surrender. Only in such an realization of its existence does the Subject's transcendental-reaching-out, which is always and already presupposed as an apriori condition of the openness of "being-by-its-self" to the reality of "beyond-being", become an actual surrender to this Other which is "beyond being". The reason that the Subject can reach its salvation only in an encounter with the Other in life must be sought in this circumstance. The goal of the transcendental-reaching-out, namely, the reality of "beyond-being" which is "immediate" (unmittelbar) to the Subject cannot satisfy the subject's "being-by-its-self" as the meaning and salvation reality of life so long as it is not taken into the inmost depth of its spontaneity by the Subject in a free act of its existence-realization. Such a realization of the subject's existence is possible only in an encounter with the Other, even if in this encounter it should cancel the Other.

This existence-realization becomes concrete in the affirmed acceptance born of the need of the Subject's surrender to the reality of "beyond-being" and in the Subject's opening up, from

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Out of the depth of "being-by-its-self", to this Other that has entered into the Subject's freedom-base as the meaning-centre and reality of salvation. This kind of existence-realization is not different from worship ("Anbetung"), even if formally it does not stand out as such when reflecting on the existence-realization. Thus the concept of encounter shows that in essence the ancient Indian salvation-systems are religion in the full sense of the word, that is, religion as source of the inner existential of the Human.¹²⁴

In this way the concept of encounter, as Oberhammer has explained, is a helpful hermeneutic category for understanding and interpreting religion even in those cases of traditions which do not believe in God or Gods or whose salvation-practice does not concretize itself in a ritual; traditions that hope for the Human's irrevocable salvation only from the prior-reaching-out to one's own future and from obtaining this future in their life.¹²⁵

III. A HERMENEUTIC OF UNDERSTANDING AS RE-MEMBERING THE PAST WITH THE FUTURE

What is the internal connection between the hermeneutic of a text and the hermeneutic of the transcendental Subject? What have they to do with a hermeneutic of religion?

If the text is the record (recordare), the locus of the heart of an encounter, the transcendental Subject is its pre-sub-position, and religion the actual encounter. Accordingly the hermeneutic of the text explores the record of an encounter and its characteristics; the hermeneutic of the transcendental Subject studies the conditions of possibility of the encounter and the hermeneutic of religion interprets the happening of the encounter. The meeting-place of all three, I am suggesting, is memoria, not in the sense of a psychological memory but in the direction of an ontological understanding, that is, re-membering of the past with the future. The text is the locus of such a re-membering, the transcendental Subject ist possibilities and religion the integral act of gathering-together the past with the future.

Now the phenomenological and the transcendental approaches are built on memory and without it neither of them is possible. Underlying both the approaches is the indispensable operation of memory that is always and already operative in every approach and in every discipline. The kind of analysis presented in the first two sections of this paper is possible only with the active collaboration of the memory. Neither coding nor decoding much less

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...without the accompanying help of memory. Similarly the whole hermeneutic of the transcendental Subject is simply impossible without the activity of memory. Though neither of the two approaches seems to make place for memory the whole enterprise of understanding can best be interpreted as a re-membering of the past with the future.

Central to these reflections are two considerations: one, memory cannot anymore be understood as a 'deposit' of something past because there is need of not only a bridge between the past and the present but also and much more because the awareness (but not necessarily the reflected awareness) of such a need is equally necessary. Two, it is only within such an understanding of memory that the past and the future can be connected in the knowing of the present. The connection that is part of the knowing enterprise is neither merely physical nor only psychological; it has to be ontological. In other words, the act of understanding is essentially a re-membering of the past with the future. Just as all re-membering is possible only within understanding so too all understanding takes place within re-membering.

1. 'Re-Membering' the Past with the Future

Human thought and much more human behaviour (if it is not to be completely erratic or thoroughly irrational) are possible because of both an ontological linking of the past with the future. Thought and behaviour presuppose that the feet of any being are planted firmly in the past. There is no being, indeed there can be no being, without a past. Because of this the past is not simply 'past' and over; it has its own mode of existence. The world of perception is not wholly the world of the present. The foundation of the building of the present is the past, the 'matter' of the past is sedimented. That is the reason why we 'dig', literally and metaphorically, into the past. What we encounter in the present is always the matter of the past.

However for the Human what matters is not the past but the future! The matter of the past is of interest to the Human only in as much as it matters for the future. Human knowing is future-oriented, not past-oriented. Only that past matters for the Human which is future-oriented. The orientation towards the future is a dynamism which the Human cannot escape because his very being is future-oriented. This is the meaning of ek-sistence, he is future-oriented in as much as he is not totally 'encapsulated' by the present. If a being's feet are in the past its orientation is towards the future. The basic thrust of any being is towards the future. A

The present is basically a mediation, a mediation between the past and the future, not a mechanical nor a psychological but an ontological mediation. Hence when we say 'present', it can only refer to the world of the Now wherein this mediation is going on. When we look at the world and try to understand it, what we have is not a 'pure' present; it is the past appealing to be taken into the future. Experiencing attentively is the first step in the journey of understanding; grasping intelligently is the second and judging responsibly is the third. In this process the living past is taken up and projected into the future. When attention is turned to something that is to be understood, the dynamic nature of the linking up of the past with the future becomes apparent; on the basis of the past the future is opened up.

The opening up is the mediation between the past of that thing and its future, a mediation which constitutes the process of understanding as a re-membering of the past with the future. The Human's ability to-be-by-himself (consciousness) is but an abbreviated version of re-membering in this extended sense.

Memory is the past living in the present and pressing towards the future. It is the continuum that constitutes a being. Thus a being is fundamentally memory in this sense of re-membering. This is especially true in the case of the human being. His ability to-be-with-his-Self (consciousness) is nothing else but memory in this extended sense though it is not memory in the sense of a deposit of the past nor the psychological memory that 'consciously' remembers the past. True, understanding is like play and game. The back and forth of game as well as the representation of play are essential for grasping the How of the act of understanding. But there is more to the analogy than meets the eye. Both play and game presuppose and are supported by re-membering the past with the future.

Basically the futuristic nature of understanding is the evidence for the assertion that understanding is of the nature of re-membering. The essence of understanding, namely, the connecting of the past with the future is what I am calling re-membering the past with the future. The essence of re-membering consists in understanding the future of the past. This does not

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One might object that substituting memory for being might add a nuance or two to our understanding of being but there does not seem much else to recommend it. To this we have to say that it is not just a question of substituting memory for being and consciousness. The point is that our understanding of being, and of understanding itself, has to be such that it enables us to overcome the fragmentation of reality. Our analysis of reality into being, consciousness, thing, understanding, memory, imagination, time with its threefold of past, present and future, code, text, meaning, interpretation, etc., etc. turns us into monads and individuals and renders us desolate in the Babel of multiplicity. We need to retrieve the ontological unity of reality and find ourselves at home in the unity of be-ing. A re-vision of memory, I am suggesting, is one way of moving towards this goal.

Accordingly our traditional understanding of memory needs to be overhauled. We have to move away from its traditional but one-sided task of remembering the past and move in the direction of a 'comprehensive' response-ability of re-membering the past with the future. This is a dual responsibility: of preserving the past and of responding to the future. In the former the existence of the past is present-ed and in the latter the effort to catch up with the future is referred to.

The traditional understanding of memory is static because it is activated only when there is need to recall the past. Being in a virtual state it becomes operative only when the need to open the box of memory arises. However a little reflection shows that this is not a satisfactory way of looking at memory. For even to open the memory-box there is need of memory! A static understanding of memory is incapable of seeing to the need as well as to the search for that which satisfies the need. Though we have to grant that there is an aspect of 'store' and 'storing' at work in the task of memory, that cannot be the whole of memory because store and storing presuppose the knowledge of the store as well as of its purpose. Furthermore, this cannot be the task of understanding (as traditionally understood) either, since understanding can take place only within a remembering horizon. For only within such a horizon can things remembered be

Thus even to sustain the traditional sense memory requires a dynamic element. And a dynamic memory entails not just a store; it has to be an interrelated and interrelating whole in which the present re-members the past with the future. The present of being-by-one's-self (= consciousness) is not an empty void but a dynamically continuous process of linking the past with the future. To-be-by-one's-self means to be constantly linking the past with the future. Though understanding is a major ingredient in this complex process memory has the overall super-vision. The supervisory task consists in the fact that memory is involved before, in and after the process of understanding. If in spite of the fact that there is no dividing line separating the past from the future, and the past does not lose its identity and get lost in the future it is due to memory that actively re-members the past with the future in the present. The Now of the present [state of consciousness] is not just a monadic Now following upon a similarly monadic Before and giving way to a monadic After. Rather, in a dynamic and comprehensive understanding of memory, Now expresses the continuum in which the past is continually arriving and the future continually taking off.

2. The World As a Re-Membering of Reality's Future

What we call the past then is that which is encountered as the matter of the past, 'past-matter'. Because the present is 'in' the matter of the past we cannot ever grasp the present. What is grasped is always [the matter of] the past, the present being the act of grasping which is moving towards the future. Only that aspect of the past remains alive which is future-oriented. The 'living' past is that which makes a being move towards the future, and the actual moving from the past towards the future constitutes the present.127

The world in which we live, move and have our being is really an ontological process of re-membering reality's past with the future. Re-membering and understanding are dynamically connected with our being-in-the-world which is fundamentally a re-membering of the past with the future. This explains why we are able to discover the future of the past. The living past is what makes the future of the past possible. The former is operative in the memory of the understanding and the latter is at work in the understanding process itself.
Our world is the living memory of the past. It is a memory of the past because the present world comes to be from the past world. Indeed the past world is made present as the present world in as much as it is known. Memory is said to be living because it is ontologically heading towards the future. Now the world that we are talking about presently is not the world-in-itself but the world that affects us and the world with which we interact. It is the world which we to some extent understand, misunderstand or do not understand. Indeed it is the world in which alone we understand whatever we understand because it is inextricably interwoven with, completely pervaded by and irrevocably mediated through our world of meaning.

Hence all re-membering of the past with the future is a kind of mediation. That is why the world (with us as part of it) is not a world of objects but an ontological mediation which begins at the level of perception (as indeed all ontological mediation does). We see and feel things coming to birth, growing, growing up, growing old and passing away. Some (both things and ideas), we see, going on and on. In this sense then our world is reality's living memory. Living in it and experiencing it in various ways we are re-minded not only how our past was but also how our future can be.

However the world as reality's memory is not to be understood as a store-room from which we can retrieve whatever is stored. That would be a reified and static way of looking which stresses only one aspect of memory. The dynamic approach to memory however highlights both the on-going, never-ceasing re-membering of the past with the future in the present and the comprehensive horizon under which this linking operation takes place. The world, in an all-embracing sense, is the concretization of such a re-membering and the basis for such a comprehensive horizon. What does this mean?

With regard to the world as the concretization of the re-membering of the past with the future in the present it must be noted that the world we inhabit is always and already the world that is past; however in the process of understanding, the past world is projected in a new way and in this projection the mediation between past and future takes place. Thus the encounter with the world is always the encounter of understanding. For to be - consciously - in the world is to be in the midst of such an encounter. That means, to-be-in-the-world is, in the words of Oberhammer, to-be-by-one's-self. And we could add, vice versa, to-be-by-one's-self is to-be-in-the-world.
What all this boils down to is that human understanding takes place in the world, it is about the world and it is for the world. That understanding is in the world needs no further elaboration since the background of all understanding is the world. Whatever may be our categories of understanding they are all 'worldly' in the sense that they belong to the world. Our very mode of understanding has to do with the world's mode of being. This is so because our mode of being is basically 'worldly' too; it is a being-in-the-world.

Furthermore the subject-matter of all human understanding is the 'world'. Apart from the world, in the all-embracing sense of the word, there is nothing to be understood. Whatever can be understood is 'part' of the world. What is not 'part' of the world does not exist.

Finally understanding is for the sake of the world. The purpose of understanding is the world but not the world that is past but the world that is projected, the world that is the future. Even understanding the past is for the sake of the future-world. The goal of all understanding is the future and understanding is possible because it is future-oriented. However it is not any future in the sense of a metaphysical possibility but the concrete future that follows or flows from the concrete past. Understanding can concern itself only with possible modes of being-in-the-world.

When it is stated that the world is the concrete re-membering of the past with the future this is what it means: the past of the world is not lost, it is ontologically re-membered with the future. The past does not just give way to the future; the future is in-formed by the past. The world is a constant process of linking the past with the future, a ceaseless re-membering on the ontological plane.

As the same time the world provides the comprehensive horizon under which this linking operation takes place. In a dynamic approach to memory what is demanded is not only the unceasing linking of the past with the future but also such a comprehensive horizon under which this linking operation takes place. However the ceaseless linking of the past with the future is not to be understood automatically and mechanically. This would do violence to human understanding. The linking of the past with the future takes place always and only in the presence of the Human because it occurs in and through human understanding. Apart from human understanding there is no linking, no memory, no re-membering of the past with the future! The horizon of human understanding is the horizon of its world, of its universe of

3. A Text As A Linguistic Re-Minder Of The Future

If the world is a re-membering of reality's future a text is a re-minder of the reader's future. Any encounter with the world shapes the future of reality; the way each Human goes about this world affects the others in the world too. But reading a text affects first and foremost the world of the reader because reading projects the reader's future. Here we need to examine the relationship between the world as re-membering the past with the future and the text as a re-minder of the reader's future.

A complex of codes becomes, we said, a text when it is decoded. When the codes are familiar to the reader the semiotic stage, though really different from, is almost simultaneous with the semantic in the reading of a text. The semiotic and the semantic aspects could be said to re-present in a general way the world that is past. The hermeneutic stage however is really the final destination of the text; it is responsible for the fact that a text is future-oriented and so has to be understood as a reminder of the future.

A text, any text, is both a mirror and a window. In as much as it acts like a mirror it reflects the world of the onlooker. In as much as it is transparent it is a window that reveals an aspect of a world. An eisegetical reading of the text has a mirror-effect and an exegetical reading produces a window-effect. But a hermeneutic reading, a fusion of the two horizons of the text and the reader, harmoniously blends both the effects. In doing this however the text becomes a re-minder of the reader's future. How?

Reading is a production, not just a reproduction, of meaning. However the production of meaning is not intended to be understood merely eisegetically, as a reading into the text, but hermeneutically. Meaning, obviously, is not like a fixed deposit which irrespective of the context remains unchanged and which can be shifted and deposited as need and necessity demand. Meaning is a project of existence, a project of being-differently-in-the-world. As an existence-project, it is by its very nature future-oriented. Reading projects a world of real, not metaphysical possibilities, that is, it shows how the reader can be-differently in-the-world.
In the mirror-effect the reader sees his own world and in the window-effect he sees the world of the text; in a successful hermeneutic reading the worlds of the reader and of the text fuse. In as much as the two worlds coalesce the world of the future makes its appearance. A text becomes a re-minder of the future in the sense that a hermeneutic reading overcomes alienation and culminates in a participation in the future-world. However 're-minder' is not to be interpreted in a psychological sense. It is in continuation with our interpretation of re-membering the past with the future. A text is also a kind of mediation between the world of the text and that of the reader. If the world is an on-going ontological mediation between the past and the future of reality, the encounter with a text is a thematic though episodic mediation between the two worlds.

The mediation of the text though episodic is nonetheless ontological since the mediation occurs through understanding and understanding is primarily ontological and only secondarily psychological. What this implies is that the reader's future-world mediated by the reading of a text is neither an arbitrary act dependent on the reader's whim nor a solitary initiative connected with just the reader's mind. When the world of the reader is changed this implies a change in the world itself since the reader's world of meaning, though distinct, is not separated from the 'real' world. Indeed both reader and text as part and parcel of the real world are participants in the mediation-process between the past and the future of the world.

Far from being a subjective initiative the reading of a text is part of the dynamics of world-mediation. The future that a text projects is not merely the future of the reader, it is the future of the world, ontologically speaking. A text as part of the understanding process participates in the process of world-mediation and thereby shares in the future-orientation of the world. Because of a text's orientation towards the future its dynamics demand that it be read hermeneutically. To read it merely semiotically or semantically, even with all the sophisticated paraphernalia of modern exegesis, is to build a half-way house. A text to become a text in the full sense of the word needs not only to be decoded, not only to be explained; it has above all to be re-interpreted. That is to say, it has to questioned and coaxed so that it is able to reveal the world in which the reader can find his future home. But the future home is not like the 'earthly' home which one finds and firmly occupies, perhaps once and for all. It is a home towards which one is constantly on the way.
To be on the way to such a home is the destiny of the Human. It is such a destiny that the reading of a text is a re-minder of; and Oberhammer's hermeneutic concern has highlighted the implications of the encounter which a text is a witness to.

1 M. Eliade in his article on Yoga in The Encyclopaedia of Religion says the following: "On different types of yogic meditation, the best work is Strukturen yogische [sic] Meditation by Gerhard Oberhammer."


3 I am not in any way suggesting that the path I am treading is to be attributed to M. Heidegger. The path is mine but the inspiration is his.


5 Ibid.

6 My use of the expression 'universe of meaning' in no way implies that it is a consistent and coherent universe. It could be as chaotic as the traffic in our city Pune/India!

7 Thematic knowing does not keep pace with ontological knowing. The former is explicit knowledge and the latter is awareness that is identical with being. The be-ing of the Human is not like that of any other being. It is a be-ing that ek-sists 'understandingly', and his understanding is not a mere act of the knower but a mode of his being. See in this connection Heidegger's understanding of the scholastic distinction between actus signatus and actus exercitus, H.-G. Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics. Translated and edited by D. E. Linge. Berkeley etc. 1976. Editor's note, p. li.

8 See Heidegger's expression for this is: "...Erkennen ist eine Seinsart des In-der-Weltseins...", Sein und Zeit p. 61. [Being and Time, p.88 "...knowing is a kind of Being which belongs to Being-in-the-world..."].

9 Universe of meaning is like the 'charge' with which the world and the Human's understanding are energized. Thus it is from and within the universe that the world gets its meaning and that understanding understands. The light of the Human's be-ing which constitutes the clearing in which he [under-]stands is fed on the current supplied by the universe of meaning. When it is said that the Human is a kind of being that ek-sists in and through understanding what it implies is that the current for being's light is connected to the current of meaning (derived from the universe of meaning) in the two poles of understanding and the physical world.

10 To anticipate a later analogy, the universe of meaning points to the depth-dimension of reality; the physical world to the cosmic dimension and the human being to the human dimension. All three dimensions together constitute reality.

11 Being-conscious-of-being-in-the-world reaches its relative 'culmination' in the articulation of its own situation, that takes place in discourse.


Cfr. M. Heidegger, Poetically Man Dwells, in Poetry, Language, Thought. Translations and Introduction by Albert Hofstader, New York, 1971, p. 216: "For strictly, it is language that speaks. Man first speaks when, and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal. Among all the appeals that we human beings, on our part, may help to be voiced, language is the highest and everywhere the first."

Understanding is always understanding being, being-in-the-world. Accordingly understanding as thinking is always thinking being, not thinking of being.

Before proceeding we have to ask a further question about human consciousness. Generally it is taken as the consciousness of an individual. If this were so, it would be difficult to see how one consciousness can be connected with another. A position like this would ineluctably lead to solipsism; to avoid this we need to assume some sort of commonality in the stream of consciousness for all human beings. This commonality is the most comprehensive circle (in our earlier analogy) which contains everything. I am suggesting that this commonality is nothing other than what I have throughout this essay been calling the universe of meaning. The universe of meaning pervades, we said, everything and consequently every human being participates in it. Everything in the world is shot through with meaning.

Now the universe of meaning is operative differently in the cosmic and the human dimensions of reality. In and through the Cosmic the world of meaning makes a claim on the Human whereas in the Human it urges him to respond to this claim. The role of meaning in the Cosmic is to 'strike' the Human whereas in the Human (in as much as he is stuck) it makes him 'listen' to the meaning in the Cosmic.

To understand this we have to explain what we mean by the Cosmic and the Human. The Cosmic is not so much the cosmos as the objectifiable dimension of reality and the Human is not so much the human being as the objectifying dimension of reality. Both the world and the human being are constituted of all the three dimensions of reality. The cosmos is more than the Cosmic and human consciousness is more than the Human. The cosmos and human consciousness are manifestations of reality, whereas the Cosmic and the Human are its constitutive dimensions.

Every thing is constituted by these three dimensions but they operate in diverse ways in different beings. For example, the human dimension is different in 'things' where the Cosmic dominates (like the universe) when compared with human beings. Furthermore the human dimension in the universe operates in a manner different from that of the human dimension in human beings. In the former it lays claim on the human being but in the latter it operates by responding to this claim. The Human responds primarily by hearing-and-listening to the universe (element of commonality) and only secondarily through discourse (element of individuality). See R. Panikkar, Colligite Fragmenta. For an Integration of Reality in: From Alienation to At-Oneness. Proceedings of the Technology Institute of Villanova University. Edited by F. A. Eigo. (Villanova
Consciousness as a constitutive dimension has two aspects, the common and the individual; they are necessary to explain any human phenomenon like tradition (of language, religion, culture, habits and customs). There is nothing connected with the Human which can do without these two aspects. The input of the individual is not lost but becomes a part of common human consciousness and the common consciousness gets transformed through the input of the individual. Depending on the locus, the stress is now on the common, now on the individual aspect. If we look at nature and the products of civilization like buildings and traditions the common aspect stands out; if however we focus on human discourse the individual aspect is highlighted. The common aspect is the base from which discourse takes off because it presupposes and is built upon the common stream of consciousness.

P. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Essays on language, action and interpretation. Edited, translated and introduced by John B. Thompson. Cambridge/London/New York/New Rochelle/Melbourne/Sydney. 1985 (reprint). p. 145: "Let us say that a text is any discourse fixed by writing. According to this definition, fixation by writing is constitutive of the text itself. But what is fixed by writing? We have said: any discourse. Is this to say that discourse had to be pronounced initially in a physical or mental form? that all writing was initially, at least in a potential way, speaking? In short, what is the relation of the text to speech?"


See his Jenseits des Erkennen: Zur religiösen Bedeutung des Samâdhi, 'Struktur des menschlichen Geistes', 48; or 'die Tiefe des Bewusstseins', 50; or again 'die
b) The Re-Membering of Text And Tradition. Some Reflections on
Gerhard Oberhammer's Hermeneutics of Encounter, in: F. X. D'Sa/R.
Mesquita (Eds.), Hermeneutics of Encounter: Essays in Honour of Gerhard
Oberhammer on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday (Vienna: Indologisches
Institut der Universität Wien, 1994), ix - l.

28 Der Indologe Gerhard Oberhammer. Nach einem Interview von Wolfgang Pfaundler,
4358: "Die Hermeneutik, um die es mir geht, ist der Versuch das Phänomen der
Religion zu interpretieren, nicht aber im Sinne eines theologischen Verständnisses
dessen, was Religion ist, sondern im Sinne der Religion als menschliches Phänomen,
frei von dogmatischen Positionen. Warum hat der Mensch Religion, worin besteht das
Wesen der Religion? Hermeneutik in meiner Sicht ist die wissenschaftliche Lehre vom
Verstehen nicht nur eines Textes sondern auch eines Phänomens.

Gerhard Oberhammer, 'Begegnung' als Kategorie der Religionshermeneutik.

Ibid. Oberhammer adduces the examples of a believer for whom the philological texts
are revelation-texts because they constitute for him a project of religious experience,
and of a theologian who interpretes the same texts and makes them the source of his
scientific reflection on and interpretation of the faith that they contain.

Ibid. 10-11.

32 Ibid. 10 : "...das Verstehen und verstehende Auslegen des in den Texten der
altindischen Heilssysteme bezeugten Vollzuges menschlicher Existenz zum Heil im
Horizont unseres Wissens um das Menschsein als solches."
Ibid. 11.

34 G. Oberhammer: Versuch einer transzendentalen Hermeneutik religiöser Traditionen.
Ibid. "Vom Dasein des Menschen und seiner Geistigkeit".

Ibid. 9-10.

37 G. Oberhammer: Jenseits des Erkennens: Zur religiösen Bedeutung des Samâdhi In:
Zen Buddhism Today. Annual Report of the Kyoto Zen Symposium. Nr. 3 Kyoto 1985,
p. 48: "As the "a priori" of the encounter, the following three interrelated factos can be
found: The movement of the reaching out of the transcendental subject, the "being-
beyond-being" which is integrated into the reaching out as its "where-to", and the
development of factual openness of the transcendental subject for itself and for others."
Ibid.10: "Soll Bewußtsein als "Innerlichkeit" des "Beisichseins" des Menschen denkbar
sein, dann muß "Transzendenz" als Apriori des Geistvollzuges dem Menschen in jedem
Akt geistiger Verwirklichung unmittelbar sein. My italics in the translation.

Ibid.

The 'necessity of breaking through' that is referred to here is obviously only the
necessity of a transcendental structure, not the necessity of a mode of being that exists
necessarily and from itself. In case a being-with-itself exists, then what has its
transcendental structure to be so that a being-with-one'self can exist. Ibid. p.11.
Ibid. 12.
Ibid. 12-13.
Ibid. 13.
Ibid. 13.
Ibid. 13-14.
Ibid. 14-15.
Ibid. 15.
Ibid. 16.
1994 b) The Re-Membering of Text And Tradition. Some Reflections on Oberhammer's understanding of experience is interesting. Ibid. p. 17: "Denn Erfahrung
ist nicht eine Projektion des erkennenden Subjektes, noch auch Registrierung von
Fakten, vielmehr ist jede Erfahrung in ihrem Innersten Selbstmitteilung eines
Begegnenden.

50 Ibid. 17.
51 Ibid. 17.
52 Ibid. 18.
18.
54 Ibid. 19.
55 Ibid. 19.
56 Ibid. 21.
57 Ibid. 23-24.
58 Ibid. 26.
59 Ibid. 26.
60 Ibid. 27-28.
61 Ibid. 28-29.
62 Ibid. 29.
63 Ibid. 29-30.
64 Ibid. 30-31. "Mythological" in Oberhammer's terminology refers to "mythicising" that
has been reduced to objectified language where immediacy and presence of reality are
missing. In this sense "mythological" refers to that linguistic content which has become
alienated from its originary nature where reality and language are not different.
F. Ebner: Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten. In: F. Ebner, Gesammelte Werke,
65 Ibid. 31.
66 Ibid. 32-33.
67 Ibid. 33. In this context Oberhammer distinguishes "linguistic symbol" from
"mythicising", as that which secondarily - through a specific information - evokes the
reality it speaks of. He agrees however that it is possible for such symbols to enter in
and become part of a "mythicising".
68 Ibid. 33.
69 Ibid. 34.
70 For: "sich der Transcendenz sagend Zuwenden".
71 Ibid. 34-35.
72 Ibid. 35-36. Oberhammer gives as examples of identity faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the
incarnate Son of God for the Christians, ViΩnu-Nārāya∫a for the Vaishnavites and Íiva
for the Shaivaties.
73 Ibid. 36.
74 Ibid. 37.
75 Ibid. 38.
76 Ibid. 38.
77 Ibid. 38.
78 Ibid. 38-39.
79 Ibid. 39.
The Re-membering of Text And Tradition. Some Reflections on
Gerhard Oberhammer's Hermeneutics of Encounter, in: F. X. D'Sa/R.
Mesquita (Eds.), Hermeneutics of Encounter. Essays in Honour of Gerhard
Oberhammer on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday (Vienna: Indologisches
Institut der Universität Wien, 1994), ix-l.

Gerhard Oberhammer: 'Begegnung' als Kategorie der Religionshermeneutik.

Encounter takes places when the human spirit is moved from within by a reality that approaches it in its
immediacy; such is the case when the approaching reality opens by communicating itself; and it challenges the human spirit in the measure in which it opens itself and thus allows it to come to itself in a new intensity of being by remaining with the human spirit. The condition of possibility for such an encounter to take place demands that the experiencer when he comes to himself is not fixated to the specific reality that he encounters but is simply open to encounter. This implies that the openness of the human spirit for the self-opening of the other entity in the encounter is not constituted only through the encounter; rather it is must be there always and already as an Apriori of an encounter in such a fashion that the human spirit, in order to be its-self, reaches out to a reality which itself is not an individual entity and in this way becomes the width of the horizon in which encounter becomes possible.

F. X. D'Sa: THE RE-MEMBERING OF TEXT & TRADITION - 53

F. X. D’Sa: THE RE-MEMBERING OF TEXT & TRADITION - 54

114 Ibid. 14-15.

115 Ibid. 15.

116 Ibid. 15-16.

117 Ibid. 16.

118 Ibid. 16-17.

119 Ibid. 17.

120 Ibid. 17-18.

121 Ibid. 18.

122 Ibid. 18-19.

123 Ibid. 19.

124 Ibid. 20.

125 Ibid. 20-21.


127 In contradistinction to the living past there is the dead-past which is totally forgotten, which it is impossible to retrieve. This does not imply that what we now do not know of the past is the dead-past. It is possible that what today is not known may become known tomorrow. But the dead-past, because it is totally lacking in a future-orientation, can never be retrieved. The dead-past is not just what we do not know but that which we cannot know, of the past.

128 Even if at the semantic stage the reader supplies meanings from his universe of meaning the reference is to the world that is past.