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DISTANCIATION AND TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

Barry D. SMITH

RÉSUMÉ. — Selon Ricœur, Gadamer établit une fausse antinomie entre la vérité et la méthode. La distanciation entre le discours écrit et le sens voulu par l'auteur produit le monde du texte. C'est ce monde que découvre la méthode structurale. Le lecteur est alors confronté au monde du texte, et il se crée une distanciation entre la vérité du texte et l'horizon du lecteur. Cette distanciation est dépassée par l'interprétation. C'est pourquoi, pour Ricœur, la vérité et la méthode sont deux étapes de l'interprétation d'un texte, qui correspondent à deux types reliés de distanciation.

SUMMARY. — Ricœur criticizes Gadamer for setting up a false antinomy between truth and method. The distanciation of the written discourse from an author's intended sense results in the production of the world of a text. This world is what is uncovered by the structuralist method. The reader then is confronted by the world of a text, and a distanciation between its truth and the horizon of the reader results. This is overcome in interpretation. For Ricœur truth and method, therefore, are really two stages in the interpretation of a text, corresponding to two related types of distanciation.

T HE PHENOMENON of reading a text is something both very familiar and very opaque to us. It is familiar in so far as, since we are for the most part a literate society, texts form an integral part of our daily life. Bookstores and newspapers are fixtures in our daily life. On the other hand, the experience of reading a text is very opaque to the average reader. When asked to describe what it is he is doing in the act of reading a novel, newspaper or a philosophical text, he is hard pressed to articulate this experience. What we, as readers of texts, take for granted turns out to be not so clear after all. It soon becomes obvious that the reading of a text cannot be understood on the model of a dialogue between two interlocutors. The fixation of discourse, i.e., the creation of a text, has revolutionary consequences for hermeneutical theory.

Paul Ricœur has set himself the task of investigating what happens when discourse is fixed in writing, and relatedly what it means to read a text. This task has occupied him for several years. As we shall discover, the concept of distanciation, a concept for which he is partially indebted to Hans-Georg Gadamer, forms an essential part of his hermeneutical theory. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine Ricœur's analysis of the experience of the reading of a text in the light of his re-working of Gadamer's concept of distanciation.

As a preliminary to this study, we should mention that Ricœur's interest in the philosophy of language, a component part of which is the study of written discourse, evolved over a period of years. It was partially the rise of structuralism, not only as a linguistic method but as a philosophy, that prompted Ricœur to change his focus from the problem of the structure of the will to the problem of language as such. [1] He explains in his article, "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language", that structuralism approaches language as a system that is deeper than the individual's own self-consciousness; language is a system before it is an event, i.e., before it is used by individuals, and as such functions as a kind of structural unconsciousness.

Structuralism, therefore, posed a direct challenge to Ricœur's own phenomenological presuppositions. He writes, "... The primacy of subjectivity which was so strongly emphasized by existentialism is overthrown by this displacement of analysis from the level of the subject's intentions to the level of linguistic and semiotic structures." [2] It had consequences for hermeneutics as well. A written text, examined from a structuralist viewpoint, is stripped of its reference. This is because structuralism views language as a closed system of signs, which refer to one another within the system but never to anything outside of the system. A text's connections both with its author and its subsequent readers is severed.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Ricœur's approach to the field of hermeneutics is coloured strongly by his struggle to come to grips with the philosophy of structuralism. It was the challenge put forth by the structuralist approach to the reading of a text that pushed him into the field in the first place. For one thing, he changed his definition of hermeneutics from the interpretation of symbolic language to that of the "specific problems raised by the translation of the objective meaning of written language into the personal act of speaking which a moment ago I called appropriation." [3] The focus, for him, is now on the written text, the object of investigation for structural analysis. We shall discover also that his re-working of Gadamer's concept of distanciation occurs in the light of insights that Ricœur has gained from structuralism.

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1. Paul Ricœur, "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language", *Philosophy Today* 17 (1973), pp. 88–111.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Ricœur, as we said, remains committed throughout his investigation into the philosophy of language to Heidegger's existential analysis of Dasein as a thrown-projection. Thus we also find that he is very appreciative of Hans-Georg Gadamer's work in the area of hermeneutics, who likewise, takes his point of departure from Heidegger's phenomenology.[4] Nevertheless, despite his fundamental agreement with Gadamer's work, he does take exception to some aspects of Gadamer's major work, *Truth and Method*; this is primarily due to his journey through structuralism. Of particular significance, as we said, is Ricœur's re-working of Gadamer's concept of distanciation (*Verfremdung*) and its relation to textual interpretation.

The temporal distance that exists in relation to the interpretation and the to be interpreted past text is a prominant theme in Gadamer's writings. A text that comes to the reader from out of the past exists in a dialectical relationship of distanciation (*Verfremdung*) and participation (*Zugehörigkeit*) with him. In so far as he participates in the tradition to which the text also belongs, the *Sache* of the text is familiar. But in so far as he is separated in time from the text, the reader experiences the text as alien. Interpretation (*Auslegung*) occupies the position between the familiar and the alien, seeking to overcome the alienation by means of what Gadamer calls the fusion of the horizon of the text with that of the interpreter (*Horizontverschmelzung*). In the fusion of horizons the distance is overcome, leaving only a relation of participation between the reader and the text. He, likewise, stresses that, far from being an obstacle, distance in time is actually a productive possibility of understanding. This is because a condition for the re-actualization of a text is the existence of a life-relation to the *Sache* of a text on the part of the interpreter. Time is the ground of this process, because in it is the continuity of tradition and custom that allows for such a prior relatedness.[5]

Textual interpretation is an instance of the dialectical interplay between participation and distanciation. In a text we have the remarkable situation of the simultaneous existence of past tradition with the present.[6] Written tradition in the form of a text stands alongside the interpreter in its pure ideality of meaning, and calls for a mediation of this meaning. It has as a sort of atemporal existence, in that its meaning is not that of its author's intended sense nor can it be identified with the meaning given to it by its original audience. A text has an ideality of meaning, which endures through time, but which is understood differently in its every temporalization. Thus Gadamer writes, "The understanding of something written is not a reproduction of something that is past, but the sharing of a present meaning." [7] In the event of interpretation, the text's horizon, its ideality of meaning, fuses with that of the interpreter. The re-temporalization of the meaning of a text, therefore, is the outcome of this fusion of horizons.

4. Ricœur, "The Task of Hermeneutics", *Philosophy Today* 17 (1973), pp. 112–128.
5. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans., Sheed and Ward, Ltd. (New York : The Continuum Publishing Co., 1975), pp. 263ff.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

Gadamer prefers to understand the interpretation of a text in terms of the model of the conversation. In essence, a conversation is the attempt of two speakers to agree upon the object under consideration by means of a common language.[8] Conversation requires that the participants be open to the viewpoint of the other and be willing to follow the conversational dialectic wherever it leads. To interpret a text, therefore, is to enter into conversation with it. The text is an imaginary partner with a certain viewpoint (an ideality of meaning); to engage it in conversation is to expose one's own fore-understanding to the horizon of the text and then be open to be led by the ensuing to and fro of such dialectical encounter. In another place, he compares tradition with a "Thou", with which we enter into conversation.[9] Language, as in any dialogue, is the universal medium for any conversation, including that of the interpreter with a text. To understand a text is, for Gadamer, to agree with the text upon a common object, the same goal that any conversation has; this is really another way of describing the fusion of horizons, in which the tradition of the text has disclosed to the interpreter its possibility for being.

Now, given the priority of the model of conversation in Gadamer's hermeneutic, it follows that written discourse has a certain inferiority in contrast to spoken discourse. He writes:

> Writing has the methodological advantage that it presents the hermeneutical problem in all its purity, detached from everything psychological. What is, however, in our eyes and for our purpose a methodological advantage is at the same time the expression of a specific weakness that is characteristic of writing even more than language. The task of understanding is seen with particular clarity when we recognize this weakness of all writing. We need only to think again of what Plato said, namely that no one could come to the aid of the written word if it falls victim to misunderstanding, intentional or unintentional.[10]

All writing, in Gadamer's view is alienated speech. It is speech that has been fixed in written signs, and needs to be transformed back into meaningful speech. A text, therefore, makes a poorer conversation partner than another human being. Since it cannot respond directly to questions put to it by an interpreter, the reader must assume the task of making it participate in the dialogue.

The hermeneutical task, according to Gadamer, is to overcome the self-alienation of writing and to transform the marks on a page that make up a text back into speech. This is done by interpretative understanding, which engages the text as a partner in conversation. Thus we could say that the text is past tradition that has the potential to be meaningful in the present. The interpreter is both related to its subject-matter and alienated from it at the same time. That is, he exists in a relation of participation and distanciation. By virtue of the text's pastness it is alien, but by virtue of the interpreter's horizonal continuity with the past tradition in it, the text is familiar. This distance, therefore, is what is to be overcome in interpretation.

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8. *Ibid.*, p. 347.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

Gadamer writes, "Thus written texts present the real hermeneutical task. Writing involves self-alienation. Its overcoming, the reading of a text, is thus the highest task of understanding." [11] When the distance is thus overcome, there remains only a relationship of participation, i.e., of the appropriation of past tradition into the present.

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Ricœur considers Gadamer's introduction of the dialectical pair of concepts, distanciation and participation, to be very valuable in clarifying the experience of reading a text. [12] To be an historical being is both to belong to the past as well as to be distanced from it; neither pole can be eliminated. Nevertheless, he believes that Gadamer's philosophy has an intolerable antinomy within it, which is the inevitable outcome of Gadamer's work, *Truth and Method*. It is at this point that Ricœur seeks to resolve this antinomy by resorting to the insights he has gained from his study of structuralism. What is the antinomy that Ricœur finds in Gadamer's work?

Ricœur holds that the opposition in Gadamer's philosophy of distanciation and participation invariably leads to an untenable alternative:

> ... On the one hand, alienating distanciation is the attitude that makes the objectification that reigns in the human sciences possible; on the other hand, this distanciation that is the very condition which accounts for the scientific status of the sciences is at the same time a break that destroys the fundamental and primordial relation by which we belong to and participate in the historical reality which we claim to construct as an object. Thus we reached the alternative suggested by the title of Gadamer's work, *Truth and Method*: either we have the methodological attitude and lose the ontological density of the reality under study or we have the attitude of truth and must give up the objectivity of the human sciences. [13]

In Gadamer's work the distanciation between a reader and a text exists only in order to be overcome by interpretation. This overcoming of distance is possible in the first place because the reader has a prior relatedness (*Zugehörigkeit*) to the tradition of the text. The methodological or objectifying attitude towards the text, which seeks to maintain the distance between the reader and the text as the condition for its possibility, is, in Gadamer's view, a distortion of what actually happens in authentic textual interpretation. Rather, the reading of a text is the attempt to bridge the historical distance by means of interpretation. Thus, it would seem that, as Ricœur rightly observes, Gadamer seems to be choosing truth over method.

But do we need to choose between these two alternatives? Is it not possible that distanciation and participation are not mutually exclusive options? Ricœur suggests

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11. *Ibid.*, p. 352.

12. RICŒUR, "The Task of Hermeneutics", pp. 125–128.

13. RICŒUR, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation", *Philosophy Today* 17 (1973), pp. 129–141.

that the methodological approach to a text, the possibility of which is due to distanciation, is really an essential part of the interpreter's participation in the truth of the text. He arrives at this conclusion with the help of structural analysis.

Ricœur's inquiry into the nature of a text begins with Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between *langage* and *parole*. Language as *langage* represents the purely formal character of language, existing as an abstract system, i.e., abstracted from its actual use. This is the object of structural linguistics : it concerns itself with language as "un système clos de signes".[14] Language, however, for Ricœur, is not simply an object for empirical science, i.e., semiotics ; it is also semantics (*parole*), or what he calls "une médiation".[15] Language, understood in the sense of *parole*, mediates, first, man to the world ; secondly, it is a mediation between man and man ; finally it is a mediation of self to self.[16] The character of language as mediation is what Ricœur refers to as *discours* (discourse). It, as opposed to semiotics, is not a timeless system of signs ; rather, it has a temporal nature, and it is for this reason that he calls an instance of discourse "un acte", an event.[17] Discourse can only exist in time because those who use language are temporal beings.

The function of discourse, Ricœur continues, is to refer to realities that lie outside of the closed system of signs. He writes, "Sur la base de l'acte prédicatif l'intenté du discours vise un réel extra-linguistique qui est son référent."[18] Not only does discourse aim at saying something about something, but it also refers back to the one who is himself signified in the discourse, i.e., the speaker. It also has the capacity to refer to different times by means of verb tenses, as well as to different places. Each of these types of references aims at realizing one or more of the three types of mediation mentioned above.

But what happens when discourse is written down ? Ricœur answers that a text comes into existence : "Appelons texte tout discours fixé par l'écriture."[19] The creation of a text totally transforms the nature of discourse. In oral discourse, as we noted, a speaker refers to extra-linguistic realities within a definite intersubjective context. His speech aims to point out certain things to certain people in certain ways for certain purposes. All of this changes in the committing of discourse to writing.

In the fixation of discourse in writing, there results a pulling apart of the author's intended meaning from the text's own meaning. By the very fact that it is preserved in writing, written discourse is removed from its temporal specificity. As Ricœur puts it :

> With written discourse, however, the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide. This dissociation of the verbal meaning of the text and the

14. RICŒUR, "Philosophie et langage", *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 168 (1978), p. 451.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 454.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 454.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 455.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 456.

19. RICŒUR, "Qu'est-ce qu'un texte ? Expliquer et comprendre", in *Hermeneutik und Dialektik*, vol. 2, ed., Rudiger Bubner et al. (Tubingen : J. C. B. Mohn, 1970), p. 181.

mental intention of the author gives to the concept of inscription its decisive significance, beyond the mere fixation of previous oral discourse. Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic autonomy of the text, which results from the disconnection of the mental intention of the author from the verbal meaning of the text, of what the author meant and what the text means. The text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text means now matters more than what the author meant when he wrote it.[20]

The separation of the author's meaning and that of the text leads to the text becoming productive of new meanings. In this Ricœur is in full agreement with Gadamer's hermeneutical theory.

But from here Ricœur draws the further conclusion that in no way can one draw parallels between the writer and speaker, on the one hand, and the reader and listener, on the other. The fact that, in the writing-reading relationship, the two cannot be considered as interlocutors destroys the possibility of such a parallelism. Ricœur writes, "Il ne suffit pas de dire que la lecture est un dialogue avec l'auteur à travers son œuvre ; il faut dire que le rapport du lecteur au livre est d'une tout autre nature ; le dialogue est un échange de questions et de réponses ; il n'y a pas d'échange de cette sorte entre l'écrivain et le lecteur."[21] Between the author and the reader the text thus produces what Ricœur calls "une double occultation",[22] thereby eliminating any possibility of the establishment of a dialogue between the two. Gadamer, as we saw, preferred to understand the reading of the text by means of the model of conversation. Now, he did not imagine that in the reading of a text the reader was carrying on a conversation with its author ; rather, the reader of a text was conversing with the text, itself. Nevertheless, he did see interpretation as a conversation. Ricœur, it would appear, is rejecting Gadamer's model. (One could even argue that Gadamer is inconsistent in holding that interpretation is a conversation with the text ; unfortunately, the scope of this paper does not allow for an elaboration of this.) We shall come back to this point a little later in the paper.

What happens, therefore, in the fixation of discourse is the distancing of the text from the author's original context. This is Ricœur's first understanding of the concept of distanciation.[23] Inasmuch, however, as a text no longer coincides with its author's particular purposes in writing it, it reveals itself to have a "surplus of meaning"[24]. Distanciation, conceived as the separation of the author's intention and the meaning of the text, is the negative condition for the possibility of new and deeper meanings to emerge. He writes, "Elle [sa thèse] pose que la suspension de la référence, au sens défini par les normes du discours descriptif, est la condition négative pour que soit dégagé un mode plus fondamental de référence."[25] In oral

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20. Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discours and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Texas: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), pp. 29ff.

21. Ricœur, "Qu'est-ce qu'un texte ?", p. 182.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

23. Ricœur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation", p. 134.

24. Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, cf. *supra*, note 20.

25. Ricœur, "Philosophie et langage", p. 460.

discourse, the reference is what Ricœur calls ostensive[26], i.e., it refers to entities within the shared environment of speaker and listener. A text, or written discourse, leaves behind this ostensive reference, and, as a result, develops a deeper reference, which Ricœur calls "le monde du texte"[27]. The world-reference does not refer to particular entities in a particular world; instead, it offers the reader new possibilities of being-in-the-world. It is, in fact, in terms of the world of the text that Ricœur defines the task of hermeneutics: "Si l'on définit l'herméneutique comme la science des règles d'*interprétation* des textes, c'est bien en une interprétation que consiste l'art de dégager ce que j'appellerai désormais le monde du texte"[28].

Ricœur seems also to have provided a second meaning for the concept of distanciation, one that resembles that of Gadamer. In Gadamer's thought, we noted that the interpreter stands before the text as someone whose task it is to understand what the text is about, i.e., its *Sache*. We must take the word "understand" in this context in the Heideggerian sense of the projection of Dasein's ownmost possibilities (*Verstehen*). All understanding is self-understanding. The assimilation of past tradition, to which we have a relation of participation and distanciation, is the projecting of the interpreter's potentiality of being. This is what the fusion of horizons means. Now Ricœur holds essentially the same position, although he does not often use the word distanciation to describe the interpreter's separation from the world of the text prior to his assimilation of it.

We find this second meaning of distanciation articulated in Ricœur's writings in close conjunction with his concept of *appropriation*. The two are antonyms for him. Often, in fact, Ricœur will use the word estrangement (*l'éloignement*) as a synonym for distanciation. He says, for example:

> "Par le terme d'*appropriation*, on soulignera encore deux traits; une des finalités de toute herméneutique est de lutter contre la distance culturelle; cette lutte peut elle-même se comprendre en termes purement temporels, comme une lutte contre l'éloignement séculaire, ou en termes plus véritablement herméneutiques, comme une lutte contre l'éloignement à l'égard du sens lui-même, c'est-à-dire à l'égard du système de valeurs sur lequel le texte s'établit; en ce sens, l'interprétation 'rapproche', 'égalise', rend 'contemporain et semblable', ce qui est véritablement rendre *propre* ce qui d'abord était *étranger*.[29]

It is obvious that what Ricœur means by the second meaning of the struggle against distance — the estrangement from meaning itself — is what Gadamer means by his concept of distanciation. Likewise, the making one's own what is alien, i.e., appropriation, in Ricœur's works, corresponds to Gadamer's concept of the fusion of the horizon of the text with that of the interpreter, and his concept of *Aneignung*. In another work, Ricœur elaborates further this second meaning of distanciation and

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26. RICŒUR, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text", *Social Research* 38 (1971), pp. 528–562.

27. RICŒUR, "Philosophie et langage", p. 460.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 460.

29. RICŒUR, "Qu'est-ce qu'un texte ?", p. 195.

its complement, appropriation. He writes that temporal distance is more than simply the temporal and spatial distance between a text and its reader. Rather, "it is a dialectical trait, the principle of a struggle between the otherness that transforms all spatial and temporal distance into cultural estrangement and the owness by which all understanding aims at the extension of self-understanding." [30] Appropriation is the recovery of this cultural estrangement, the process by which the meaning of a text is brought back from its alienation. Thus we can see that Ricœur's second understanding of the concept of distanciation is in substantial agreement with Gadamer's own concept of the same.

This leads us to the question of whether Ricœur's two definitions of distanciation are related. It seems that they are. The first distanciation emerges as a result of the fixation of discourse in writing. In such an event, the meaning of the text becomes separated from the author's intended sense. This distanciation, however, results in the emergence of a deeper reference, namely, the world of the text. This world does not point to entities within the world, but discloses to the reader possibilities of being-in-the-world. Now, because there exists this first type of distanciation, it becomes possible for the second type to arise. Texts exist as bearers of possibilities of being-in-the-world. We, as interpreters, are distanced from these texts, not only in the temporal and spatial sense, but distanced with respect to their meanings. It is only in appropriation that this distance is overcome. Ricœur's concept of distanciation, therefore, is two-sided. This is how it appears that he would have us understand it.

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We are now finally in a position to understand how Ricœur's re-working of Gadamer's concept of distanciation functions as a necessary corrective to the latter's untenable alternative between truth and method. Structuralism deals with the text as a system of signs. It considers it as a worldless and authorless object ("texte sans monde et auteur"), distanced from its author's original intentions and its original audience. Structural analysis restricts itself to the closed system of signs that make up the language of a text. Ricœur gives the essence of structuralism in four postulates.[31] First, structuralism does not concern itself with the relation of language to reality: "... le langage... doit devenir un objet homogène... isolé: la langue" [32]. Secondly, structuralism gives priority to the synchronistic approach to language over that of the diachronistic. It is essential that a given language be treated as a self-contained system. "Troisième postulat: dans un état de système il n'y a pas de termes absolus, mais uniquement des relations de dépendance mutuelle..." [33] That is to say, that every sign exists in relation to other signs. Finally, the system of signs must be taken to be closed, which in turn implies that the system is finite and limited.

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30. RICŒUR, *Interpretation Theory*, cf. *supra*, note 20.
31. RICŒUR, "Philosophie et langage", p. 450.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 450.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 451.

Now, according to Ricœur, since this first distanciation, which results in the text escaping the horizons of its author, its autonomy, leaves the text worldless and authorless, it is able thereby to become an object of structural analysis. It becomes, in other words, the object of a methodological, i.e., semiological investigation. He writes:

> Ce projet est non seulement possible mais légitime ; en effet, la constitution du texte comme texte et du réseau de textes comme littérature autorise l'interception de cette double transcendance du discours, vers un monde et vers un autrui. À partir de là est possible un comportement explicatif à l'égard du texte.[34]

The explanatory attitude to the text seeks to explain the text in terms of the internal relations of its signs, i.e., the structure of the text. Such a reading of a text must adhere to strict methodological rules. It would seem legitimate to say that what Gadamer describes as the text's ideality of meaning is what Ricœur means by its depth structure, or its world. The difference between Ricœur and Gadamer, however, is that for the former, the structure of a text can become the object of empirical science, i.e., semiotics, whereas this dimension is absent in the latter's work.

A structural analysis of a text must be conjoined with a second type of reading of the text : interpretation. Ricœur expresses it as follows, "... Nous pouvons aussi lever ce suspens et achever le texte en parole actuelle." [35] The real purpose of reading is self-understanding, the re-actualization and appropriation of the world of the text, understood as possibilities of being. We now come across the second type of distanciation, the estrangement from meaning. The text, as an object of structural analysis, gives rise to what Ricœur calls a depth semantics (la sémantique profonde), which does not coincide with its author's intended sense. Rather, this depth semantic is the structure of the text itself; it is the world, or non-ostensive reference, of the text. Thus, the emergence of the world of the text as a result of adopting the explanatory attitude towards a text, creates the second type of distanciation. The reader, having explained a text, now finds himself distanced from the world of the text, which emerged as a result of his structural analysis of it. His task now is to interpret the text, to re-actualize the intention of the text, thus overcoming this estrangement. As Ricœur puts it, "Therefore what we want to understand is not something hidden behind the text, but something disclosed in front of it." [36] That is to say, the reader seeks to uncover new possibilities for his being-in-the-world, opened up by the text. What was once alien becomes, by means of interpretation, his own.

To put it differently, the removal of discourse from its temporal specificity by means of its fixation in writing gives the text a semantic autonomy. This, in turn, results in what Ricœur calls the objectification of discourse. He says, "L'autonomie sémantique du discours constitue, comme l'avait d'ailleurs vu Dilthey, une des

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34. RICŒUR, "Qu'est-ce qu'un texte ?", p. 189.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

36. RICŒUR, "The Model of the Text : Meaningful Action Considered as a Text", cf. *supra*, note 26.

conditions plus fondamentales d'objectification du discours." [37] It is this objectifica-tion of discourse that is the condition for the possibility for, first, the existence of the world of the text (which is the defining characteristic of literature), and secondly, for the possibility of as well as the necessity for explanation. "Cette extériorisation dans des marques matérielles et cette inscription dans des *codes* de discours, rendent non seulement possible *mais nécessaire la médiation de la compréhension par l'explication*, dont l'analyse structurale du récit constitue la plus remarquable exécution." [38] The objectification of discourse in the form of a text requires that the interpreter adopt a methodological attitude towards the text, the application of which allows the non-ostensive reference of the text, its world, to emerge, which subsequently is to be appropriated. After method comes truth. Although method is not an end in itself, its use is a necessary condition for interpreting a text.

Explanation (structural analysis) and interpretation are not, therefore, two mutually exclusive approaches to the interpretation of a text. Rather, they actually are two points along what Ricœur calls the hermeneutical arc:

> Si au contraire on tient l'analyse structurale pour une étape — et une étape nécessaire — entre une interprétation naïve et une interprétation critique, entre une interprétation en surface et une interprétation en profondeur, alors il apparaît possible de replacer l'explication et l'interprétation sur un unique *arc herméneutique* et d'intégrer les attitudes opposées de l'explication et de la compréhension dans une conception globale de la lecture comme reprise du sens.[39]

The function of explanation is to move from a naive and surface reading of the text to a depth meaning. We took this to mean above that structural analysis brings out the internal structure of the text, its non-ostensive reference, its world. Interpretation, on the other hand, is the appropriation of this non-ostensive reference. In appropriation distance is overcome and participation (*Zugehörigkeit*), to use Gadamer's term, alone remains.

From here we must conclude that Gadamer's distinction between truth and method need not be seen as an antinomy between two conflicting approaches to textual interpretation. There is no necessary conflict between explanation and interpretation. We saw that, by virtue of being written down, the text's meaning was distanced from its author's intended sense. This distance is the negative condition for the application to the text of the structural analytical method, which seeks to bring out the non-ostensive reference of the text, or its world. This is the methodological stage in the reading of a text, according to Ricœur. This first distanciation, in turn, gives rise to a second, namely, the distanciation between the reader and what the text is about, i.e., the truth of the text. It is in this second sense that Gadamer understands distanciation. Thus we find that Ricœur, by introducing structural analysis into

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37. RICŒUR, "Expliquer et comprendre", *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, Séries 4, 75 (1977), pp. 126–147.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
39. RICŒUR, "Qu'est-ce qu'un texte?", p. 197.

hermeneutical philosophy, has been able to re-work Gadamer's concept of distanciation in order to avoid the antinomy between the methodological attitude towards a text and the existential or hermeneutical attitude.

Likewise, Gadamer's preference to view a text as self-alienated discourse and interpretation as conversation needs also to be revised if we follow Ricœur's line of thinking. Written discourse is not in any way an inferior form of oral discourse. In the fixation of discourse in writing, we have, according to Ricœur, the introduction of something entirely new into human existence: the text. The text is not oral discourse because in the process of fixation it undergoes a distanciation from its author's immediate environment. It becomes an autonomous entity. This first distanciation is the negative condition for the emergence of the world of the text, which in turns guarantees that the career of the text will escape the finite horizons of its author. Thus to understand the reading of a text, as Gadamer does, on the model of conversation and written discourse as an inferior form of the spoken kind is quite inappropriate and has the potential for misunderstanding. As we intimated above, perhaps Gadamer's own view of the meaning of a text as going beyond its author's intended sense should in fact lead him to abandon his conversation model of textual interpretation.

In conclusion, we have seen how Ricœur re-works Gadamer's concept of distanciation in his analysis of the experience of reading text. In particular he differentiates two related notions of distanciation — that between the author and his text and that between the reader and the world of the text — which allows him to introduce into interpretation theory two stages in the reading of a text. These two stages are, as we saw, explanation and interpretation. The former can be called methodological stage, while the latter stage is that of appropriation, or the assimilation of the truth of the text. The recognition of these two levels of distanciation allows for the introduction of structural analysis into interpretation as the preliminary methodological stage to the appropriation of the truth of a text.