THE INTERFACE OF PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS
AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION:
TOWARDS A NEW TAXONOMY

David J. Fuller
McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, ON, Canada

Introduction

While biblical scholars have long been aware of the promise of philosophical hermeneutics, and the gravity of the questions it raises, something of an uneasy gap exists between this mode of abstract explication and the concrete practice of interpreting texts. Although many have claimed that philosophical hermeneutics cannot offer any direct guidance for the outright act of reading,[1] the fact remains that much valuable interpretive work has been done that incorporates various modes of explicit reference to particular philosophical sources and concepts.[2] Furthermore, although a critical mass of studies exists within this rubric, little work has been done to precisely delineate the angles of engagement that can occur between a text and a philosophical source. It is the intention of this study to propose a taxonomy for the uses of philosophical hermeneutics in biblical interpretation. This taxonomy will ideally be of pedagogical value, as it illustrates the range of available research possibilities and should also aid in demystifying a subject area that is often seen as lacking in applicability. This taxonomy, drawn from a literature review on the

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1. For documentation of this claim, see the "Prolegomena" section below.

2. For a range of examples, see the exposition of the various categories of the taxonomy below.

reception of Hans-Georg Gadamer within biblical studies,[3] demonstrates that a given philosophical concept or model can be situated "within" a text, or can serve as a mediating device between text and interpreter, between two texts, or between a text and a previous act of interpretation.

Prolegomena: Precedent and Problems

The use of philosophical categories to interpret Scripture predates the close of the New Testament canon itself. In the first half of the first century AD, Philo of Alexandria wrote a series of works interpreting the Pentateuch through the lens of Platonic and Stoic philosophy.[4] Notwithstanding the gap between the biblical text and Hellenistic thought, for him the latter was the ultimate referent of the former. While Philo doubtless had an immediately apologetic purpose for attempting to prove that Moses had anticipated the cosmological, moral, and metaphysical insights of the Greeks, the fact remains that his correlation of the "body" of Torah with the "spirit" of an underlying conceptual system was a significant intellectual accomplishment, one that furthermore was not based on arbitrary symbolic leaps but rather followed a rigorous method of classifying phenomena and associated forms in the realm of ideas.[5]

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3. Fuller, "Gadamer and Biblical Studies," 17–52. This survey article has three major headings: (1) the direct use of Gadamer for exegesis; (2) the use of Gadamer in abstract reflections on the hermeneutical endeavor, which contains a sub-category of studies using Gadamer to assess the merits of previous acts of interpretation; and (3) employment of Gadamer in the subdiscipline of reception history.

4. Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 1, 2, 3.

5. Reventlow, *History*, I:44. Reventlow states "The methodology of Philo and Aristotle follows the developed model of the so-called *diarese*: the classification of the world of phenomena according to the dialectical principle of the separation from one another of things that are similar and yet still different. The purpose of Plato in following this procedure was to penetrate to the supreme ideas. Through the determination of what is common to two ideas (including, e.g., the world of plants and of animals), one reaches the highest concept under which one may subordinate all related things . . . There was for Philo the preexistence of the biblical text and the world of ideas. He

While early Christian exegetes differed significantly in their choice of conceptual grid, their overall procedure—moving from the surface meaning of the text to a larger organizational system—remained comparable. Some of the fathers who were amenable to Platonism used allegory in service of the Christocentric interpretation of Scripture. For them, this was not simply an interpretive conviction but a metaphysical one. If Scripture itself participated in the ontological being of Jesus Christ, it was only proper that the words and phrases of the Bible pointed to the true reality beyond the physical world, the triune God.[6]

And so it is today, with the continued search for semiotic "deep structures" and assorted ideological ghosts lurking in the cultural unconscious.[7] The last two decades have seen a renewed interest in explicitly philosophical engagements with the Bible. While, predictably, much methodological innovation has taken place in New Testament before being adopted in Hebrew Bible, a couple of monographs on the latter are significant. Seizo Sekine's 2014 *Philosophical Interpretations of the Old Testament* collected a number of his studies (originally published in Japanese) that as a whole sought to critique traditional monotheism, with its tendencies to support empire, and instead advocate a panentheistic being of self-negation.[8] Additionally, Jaco Gericke has written both *The Hebrew Bible and the Philosophy of Religion* and *What is a God? Philosophical Perspectives on*

methodologically arrived at the position that every specific feature possesses a keyword in the text that connects to a preassigned meaning . . . Thus, Philo is able to give a multifaceted, symbolic interpretation to Jacob's dream of the heavenly ladder (Gen 28:12). One is the ladder on which the angels as God's messengers ascend and descend. This describes the air, because its basis is the earth and its top reaches into heaven. However, the ladder is also the symbol of the human soul." See also Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 68–70; Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria," 114–43; Siegert, "Early Jewish Interpretation," 130–98.

    6.   See Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*; Paget, "Christian Exegesis," 478–542; Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 104–109; Reventlow, *History*, I:174–99.

    7.   For an example of the former, see Barthes, *Mythologies*; for the latter, see Žižek, *Sublime Object*.

    8.   Sekine, *Philosophical Interpretations*. See Fuller, Review of *Philosophical Interpretations*, 127–29.

Divine Essence in the Hebrew Bible.[9] The latter offers twenty-three short studies that experimentally apply the thought of different philosophers to the nature of *Elohim*, for the purpose of better understanding divine essence in the OT.

In Pauline studies, there has been nearly two decades of continental philosophers interested in utilizing Paul's thought processes for tackling current problems of identity and subjectivity.[10] These sources occupy something a boundary position between appropriation and interpretation, as these thinkers generally have no interest in either exegesis proper or the historic Christian faith,[11] yet they see in Paul's proclamation of the gospel, which cut against both the Jewish and Greek thought of its day, a promising move for overcoming current political and ideological deadlocks.[12]

9.   Gericke, *Hebrew Bible*; Gericke, *What is a God?* See also Hazony, *Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture*.

10.   See Badiou, *Saint Paul*; Milbank et al., *Paul's New Moment*; Frick, ed., *Paul in the Grip of the Philosophers*; van der Heiden et al., eds., *Saint Paul and Philosophy*; Blanton and de Vries, eds., *Paul and the Philosophers*; Caputo and Alcoff, eds., *St. Paul among the Philosophers*; Agamben, *The Time that Remains*.

11.   Badiou bluntly states "For me, truth be told, Paul is not an apostle or a saint. I care nothing for the Good News he declares, or the cult dedicated to him. But he is a subjective figure of primary importance" (*Saint Paul*, 1). He further clarifies his own purpose by asserting "For me, Paul is a poet-thinker of the event, as well as one who practices and states the invariant traits of what can be called the militant figure. He brings forth the entirely human connection, whose destiny fascinates me, between the general idea of a rupture, an overturning, and that of a thought-practice that is this rupture's subjective materiality. If today I wish to retrace in a few pages the singularity of this connection in Paul, it is probably because there is currently a widespread search for a new militant figure—even if it takes the form of denying its possibility—called upon to succeed the one installed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks at the beginning of the century, which can be said to have been that of the party militant" (*Saint Paul*, 2).

12.   See Worthington, "Alternative Perspectives," 371. Worthington states "With renewed interest in St. Paul, the discourse of Paul and continental philosophy is stimulating new questions regarding the universality of truth-events, and offers a way forward in the philosophical discussion of truth beyond post-modern liberalism. Make no mistake—this is an exciting discursive phenomenon. However, as this discourse continues to develop, Žižek, Badiou,

With these preliminary sketches of the general realm of engagement between biblical studies and philosophy in place,[13] it is appropriate to focus more narrowly on the processes of human subjectivity operative in interpretation. The rich legacy of the continental "philosophical hermeneutics" tradition—a lineage usually traced from Schleiermacher onwards through figures such as (but not limited to!) Heidegger, Ricoeur, and the post-structuralists—is that of substantial reflection on the nature of interrelated topics such as reality, human perception, meaning, and language.[14] Meaning requires a metaphysic, whether implicit or explicit.[15]

At the same time, for many biblical scholars, much of this hermeneutical discussion seems substantially removed from the objects and operations of exegesis itself. The usual definitions and guiding principles proposed for the discipline can incipiently betray this divide. For example, Thiselton states "It remains helpful to distinguish hermeneutics as critical and theoretical reflection on these processes from the actual work of interpreting and understanding as a first-order activity."[16] More pointedly,

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and the rest of us will need to take the tough medicine of historical-critical Pauline scholarship in order to develop a more grounded, particular, universal Pauline vision."

13.   For a broader sampling of these potential intersections, see Pokorny and Roskovec, eds., *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*. The topics of the essays in this volume include the biblical canon, Anglo-American philosophy, theology, patristic allegory, preaching, and reception of the Bible in art.

14.   See the comparable parades of thinkers assembled in Palmer, *Hermeneutics*; Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*; McLean, *Biblical Interpretation*; Thiselton, *Two Horizons*; Thiselton, *New Horizons*.

15.   As an example, see the following programmatic observation in Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 114: "However, in each individual case, these thinkers approach questions about meanings with pre-understandings which, in their view, unlock and disclose them. Freud believes that the key to meaning comes from the unconscious psyche. Hence he interprets consciousness from the standpoint of this pre-understanding. Nietzsche approaches the matter in terms of man's will to power. Marx interprets life and history with presuppositions about man as a social being. Their view of 'meaning' is inseparable from their own pre-understanding."

16.   Thiselton, "Biblical Studies," 95.

Westphal asserted "There can be no such thing as an interpretation of . . . [a] biblical passage in the light of philosophical hermeneutics. It is not a method, a strategy, a procedure, much less a set of rules that tells us how to go about interpreting the Bible."[17] It is perspectives such as these that the present study seeks to directly challenge. This article advances the thesis that it is not only possible to directly utilize philosophical hermeneutics in the process of exegesis,[18] but that a substantial body of work already exists in this rarely-appreciated idiom.

Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Interpretation:
A New Taxonomy

With this background established, it is now possible to present and exposit the proposed taxonomy regarding the use of philosophical hermeneutics in biblical interpretation.[19] The categories are as follows: (1) conceptual clarification; (2) guidance and self-reflection on one's own interpretive arc; (3) the creation of

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17.   Westphal, "The Philosophical/Theological View," 84. This assertion occurred in the context of an edited volume containing other contributions advocating "Historical-Critical/Grammatical," Literary/Postmodern," "Redemptive-Historical," and "Canonical" interpretive strategies (Porter and Stovell, eds., *Biblical Hermeneutics*). Commenting on this deliberate omission in Westphal's essay, Porter states "The philosophical/theological hermeneut explicitly declined such an attempt, in Gadamerian and Ricoeurian fashion not wanting to equate hermeneutics with either authorial meaning or method. We could debate whether the philosophical/theological hermeneut could have at least given some indications of where such a hermeneutical stance could have led, or whether another hermeneut would have done differently. The point, however, is that, in a book such as this, we could probably only reasonably expect one of the five hermeneutical positions not to offer a reading of the text—because for biblical hermeneutics the Bible is integral to the hermeneutical enterprise, especially the forms of biblical hermeneutics represented" (Porter, "Biblical Hermeneutics and *Theological* Responsibility," 34).

18.   For a detailed literature review summarizing different perspectives on the relationship between concrete linguistic analysis and philosophical hermeneutics, see Fuller, "Limits of Linguistics."

19.   The following section contains material drawn from Fuller, "Gadamer and Biblical Studies," 17–52.

dialogue between two texts; and (4) the analysis of a previous act of interpretation.

Conceptual Clarification

The first category, "conceptual clarification" involves importing a philosophical source as a conversation partner to help make sense of a certain theme or concept in a text. This does not simply remain within the horizon of text (as in, for example, a task such as lexical semantics or historical criticism) but allows for true incorporation of the experience of the reader as well. Some examples should flesh this out.

Gerry Wheaton's article "The Shape of Morality in the Gospel of Mark" provides a sustained engagement into the "moral vision"[20] of the Gospel of Mark using a methodology that synthesizes both Gadamer and the moral philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (*Postmodern Ethics*).[21] Wheaton particularly seeks to follow Gadamer's dictum that "application" is intrinsic to, and not an appendix to interpretation, and that true dialogue must take place between the text and the reader.[22] He additionally notes that Gadamer viewed temporal distance as helpful instead of problematic. Before laying out the full methodology, he exposits the relevant texts, starting with the call for disciples to think of themselves as slaves in Mark 10:44. He also includes discussion of the use of slavery as a metaphor in the ancient world. Significantly, one of the frequent applications of this metaphor was the concept of "devotion,"[23] to which was frequently appended "suffering" and "pain."[24] He finds it curious that Jesus would take a metaphor that generally carried pejorative connotations in its day and make it the basis of the relations of his disciples.

What follows is an exposition of the relevant thought of Bauman. From his perspective, the emphasis on universal ethical systems in modernity led to the collapse of morality (which he

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20.   Wheaton, "Shape of Morality," 117–41.
21.   Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*.
22.   Wheaton, "Shape of Morality," 119.
23.   Wheaton, "Shape of Morality," 124.
24.   Wheaton, "Shape of Morality," 125.

defines as intrinsic to the motivations of the individual), as it sought solutions in laws rather than genuine interpersonal care or concern. In his system, morality is "taking responsibility for the Other."[25] As opposed to a posture of mere "being-aside" or "being-with," Bauman advocates togetherness in a "being-for" manner, which is "the work of selfless love,"[26] even the willingness to die for the other.

Wheaton finds considerable common ground between Bauman's "being-for" and the Markan Jesus' paradigm for humanity (note the phrase "slave of all" in Mark 10:44). This theme was foreshadowed earlier in Mark, as Jesus gives as the requirements of discipleship the denial of oneself and the taking up of one's cross (Mark 8:34). These factors lay the groundwork for being fully committed to Jesus by being a servant of others. Jesus' unusual use of a familiar metaphor would serve to "*re-awaken* in the disciples sensitivity to the primal moral impulse which, when embraced, constitutes human beings as fully moral subjects."[27] Wheaton then notes that for Bauman, morality is "anterior," prior to thought and relationships themselves. As opposed to objectifying the Other, Bauman advocates a "participatory-empathetic stance" which views the other as a "partner."[28]

It is exactly this attitude of empathy that Wheaton finds in the many instances throughout Mark where Jesus shows compassion. This consistent theme shows that compassion is "the driving force behind the entire public ministry of Jesus."[29] For the disciple, an emotional care for others must precede all other commitments. The next key point from Bauman is that our full humanity is revealed in our orientation towards the other. As Jesus, in various places, rebukes the disciples for seeking their own status or position, he is pleading with them to live in such a way that captures the essence of what humanity is meant to be.

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25. Wheaton, "Shape of Morality," 128.
26. Wheaton, "Shape of Morality," 129.
27. Wheaton, "Shape of Morality," 133.
28. Wheaton, "Shape of Morality," 134.
29. Wheaton, "Shape of Morality," 135.

As a result, Jesus' teaching of "costly devotion"[30] presents a shock to the self-centered impulse and recalibrates one's expectation of the nature of personhood.

Earlier precedent for this kind of engagement comes from Martin Heidegger himself.[31] In a course on the phenomenology of religion that he taught in 1920, he analyzed "early Christian experience of time." He was particularly intrigued by Paul's reflections on the imminence of the Parousia in 1 Thess 4–5. To make sense of this Pauline discussion of time, Heidegger differentiated between *khronos* (historical time, or the when) and *kairos* ("kairotic" time, or the how, something not measurable in numbers; it involves the experience of the "now" and the opening of future possibilities).[32] Life involves both types of time. Paul shifts his audience's focus from historical to "kairotic" time in 1 Thess 5:1 when he declines to set times or dates, but warns that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, and gives instructions on how to live accordingly.[33] The teaching in 5:6 to "be awake and sober" points to Paul's experience of time as being that of "struggle . . . in which every moment demands an existential decision because one's very being is at stake."[34] Those who fail to be watchful (v. 3) are those who live only in historical time, as opposed to those who live in kairotic time, who live in wakefulness.[35] As a result, Heidegger interprets the significance of the Parousia as a call to alertness rather than a matter of counting down minutes or days.

Guidance of One's Interpretive Arc

Hermeneutical theories can also be employed in an act of interpretation to allow for closer attention to the existential frame of the interpreter, and by doing so, to gain closer access to the universal experience propelling the text.

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30. Wheaton, "Shape of Morality," 141.
31. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation*, 130–132. See also Sheehan, "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion," 40–62.
32. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation*, 130.
33. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation*, 131.
34. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation*, 131.
35. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation*, 131–32.

A useful example is Sandra Schneiders' article "The Foot Washing,"[36] which intends to examine the foot washing story of John 13:1–20 by looking at the text (in accordance with the theories of Gadamer and Ricoeur) as a "work" rather than as an "object," and paying foremost attention to "the possibilities of human and Christian existence which it projects for the reader."[37] She further states that historical distance allows for the readings of later audiences to be "richer" than those of an original audience, as they can make use of the horizon of their own tradition as a reading grid. Thus, instead of posing the traditional questions of authenticity or historical accuracy, her reading inquires into "what interpretation of life and relationships does it present, is that interpretation true, and if so what are the implications for the interpreter's own understanding."[38]

Turning to the text, Schneiders initially notes the significance of Peter's hesitancy to accept this act of service from Jesus, which corresponds to his shock at Jesus' foreshadowings of his crucifixion throughout the Synoptic Gospels. The next element of the study is a phenomenology of three models of the nature of service in human experience: (1) service based on obligation due to the position of the one being served; (2) service rendered freely because the server in some way desires to fill a need (a model that can all too easily place the server in a dominant position); and (3) service based on friendship, the only way to realize true equality.[39] Therefore, Jesus' decision to wash the feet of his disciples bypassed any hierarchy he had over them in his other capacities (such as a Teacher), and expressed a closeness and deliberate friendship. As Peter rejects Jesus' advance to wash his feet, he expresses his reservations about the abolishment of a hierarchical system in which he would exercise power under Jesus. Jesus self-identifies as Teacher and Lord in John 13:13, but these attributes are bypassed by a much more foundational friendship and love, which is to be instructive for his followers.

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36. Schneiders, "Foot Washing," 135–46.
37. Schneiders, "Foot Washing," 135.
38. Schneiders, "Foot Washing," 137.
39. Schneiders, "Foot Washing," 140–41.

Far beyond a simple show of humility, the foot washing symbol-
izes the transcending of the inequality between Jesus and the dis-
ciples.

Schneiders ends with some methodological observations.
While the exegesis began with a pre-understanding that Jesus
was in some way performing an act of revelation with his foot-
washing, crucial for making sense of the text was the contempo-
rary experience of service, not class structures in first-century
Palestine. While it certainly made use of insights from conven-
tional historical criticism, it was not restricted to these in the
search for present meaning, as it assumed that the text as a se-
mantic entity operated independently of the original author's in-
tention.[40] Equally important was its divergence from convention-
al exegesis in that "application" was not an optional step that
took place after the real work of interpretation was done. Instead,
because meaning is "for someone" and not merely abstract, the
search for the meaning of the text for the contemporary reader
was a core part of the exegesis itself. It can further be demon-
strated that this interpretive conclusion, that the text is more in-
terested in the transformation of structures of domination in soci-
ety through friendship, is a far better fit with the larger scope of
Johannine theology than the usual emphasis on self-humiliation.

Another intriguing comparative use of Gadamer is performed
by Kim,[41] who generates three readings of the story of Mary and
Martha in Mark 10:38–42 using Gadamer, Habermas, and Ri-
coeur, respectively. From Gadamer, Kim draws on his use of tra-
dition, and the need to engage with one's own tradition for deter-
mining the questions that one will bring to a given text.[42]
Reading the text through the eyes of Gadamer, Kim nods to-
wards his Korean background and focuses on Jesus' remark that
Mary chose the better portion, raising the question for the con-
temporary interpreter of what the better portion is. Historically,
interpreters have given different answers, ranging from the prior-
itization of preaching over practical ministry, to the life of a

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40.   Schneiders, "Foot Washing," 143–46.
41.   Kim, "Three Different Readings," 218–24.
42.   Kim, "Three Different Readings," 219–20.

monk being preferred to that of general society. For Kim, this better portion is one's personal relationship with God, which must come before other people and personal comfort; these things must not be distractions from direct divine communion.[43] In other words, the text constantly prods the reader, asking whether they are sitting at the Lord's feet or distracted with peripheral things.

Conversely, his Habermasian reading is skeptical about the historical accuracy of the text, suggests it is a projection from a later time, and criticizes it for its potential to be used in ways that would restrict the role of women.[44] When Kim adopts Ricoeur's structuralist orientation, he probes its "projected world," and identifies some foundational binaries, of active versus passive women and teaching males versus receptive females. His application is thus that dualities in the understanding of loving and serving God should be abolished, and that "ecclesial leadership" should be a "discipleship of equals."[45]

Comparison of Texts

Hermeneutical theory can also be used to facilitate dialogue between two different texts, either in terms of their intentional juxtaposition, or to better understand how one drew from or adapted the other.

Annie Hentschel's article "Luther's Relevance for Contemporary Hermeneutics" draws from Gadamer in trying to understand how the Gospel of John, as a literary work, "interprets" the "text" of the historical events themselves. As she looks at the Gospel of John, she notes the contrasting horizons of the original historical context of the life of Jesus and the later ecclesial setting of the composition of the Gospel of John.[46] Accordingly, the author is interested in the import of Jesus for his audience. The first significant act of re-interpretation happens as the resurrection legitimated Jesus' claim to be God's son, thus enabling his

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43. Kim, "Three Different Readings," 220.
44. Kim, "Three Different Readings," 221.
45. Kim, "Three Different Readings," 223.
46. Hentschel, "Luther's Relevance," 59–60.

life to be understood in a new way (such as in John 2:22). Regarding this dialogue, Hentschel states "It combines two temporal horizons—that of the time of Jesus and that of the time of John and his community . . . the two horizons cannot be separated because events and interpretation are intermingled."[47] Throughout John, the ministry of the Spirit is often present to confirm these interpretations of Jesus' life. Truth is repeatedly referred to in connection with the ministry of the Spirit, who confirms the faith of the believers. The locus of truth is thus in Jesus and the witness to him, not in a written text. Hentschel links this observation back to Gadamer, arguing that every act of reading opens the possibility for a new fusion of horizons, in which faith can be created and hope can be given.[48]

Ming Him Ko's article "Fusion-Point Hermeneutics" performs a "theological exegesis of Saul's rejection in light of the Shema (Deut 6:4–9), understood as the rule of faith."[49] Acknowledging the anachronism of speaking of a rule of faith in the Hebrew Bible, Ko argues that the Shema served a function comparable to that of confessions in Christian contexts, and thus exegesis performed in both traditions can follow it as a guide. This confession thus can be understood as a "prejudgment" in Gadamer's terminology. Ko further interprets the Shema as being a paradigmatic prophetic word (based on its context) and as being an expression of devoted love.[50] The framework of the Deuteronomistic History can likewise be understood as an "effective history" that places any individual episode (such as the story of Saul) in a larger framework of values. Within the Deuteronomistic History, the continued mandate to destroy the high places testifies to the program of the Shema.

The body of his analysis identifies certain "fusion-points" between the story of the rejection of Saul in 1 Sam 13, 15, and 28 and the Shema. As an example of his conclusions, in 1 Sam 13 Saul disobeys Samuel's command to wait a prescribed amount of

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47.   Hentschel, "Luther's Relevance," 61.
48.   Hentschel, "Luther's Relevance," 63.
49.   Ko, "Fusion-Point Hermeneutics," 57–78.
50.   Ko, "Fusion-Point Hermeneutics," 61–62.

time before offering the sacrifices. Part of what instigated Saul's act of disobedience was his "seeing" of the people scattering, Samuel's absence, and the Philistine presence (1 Sam 13:5–8). Thus, he failed to follow God with his whole heart (Deut 6:5), as he was quickly led off course by what he saw with his eyes.[51] As Samuel chastises Saul for disobeying the command (1 Sam 13:13–14), this likewise points to a transgression of Shema and offence against God on the part of Saul. Saul will be replaced by one who follows the Lord with a devoted heart (1 Sam 13:14). Overall, Ko concludes that the various points of "fusion" be- tween this story and the Shema indicate that Saul's rejection "is best understood as a relational crisis between Saul and YHWH in the context of the Deuteronomistic History and the Shema."[52]

Analysis of a Previous Act of Interpretation
As practitioners of biblical studies know perhaps better than any- one else, the task of interpretation all too easily blends into the task of the evaluation of previous interpretations. Our access to, and range of vantage points upon, primary texts is inevitably me- diated by previous interpretations. Some studies have used her- meneutical principles to evaluate the merits and detriments of certain acts of interpretation.

Glenn David Earley, in "The Radical Hermeneutical Shift in Post-Holocaust Christian Thought," examines the general prob- lem of the latent anti-Judaism tendencies in Christianity that cul- minated in the Holocaust, and the subsequent proliferation of in- terpretations of the New Testament's attitude towards Judaism in the period following World War II.[53] His first example is that of Krister Stendahl (in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*),[54] who sought to defuse potentially anti-Semitic interpretations of Paul by working descriptively and emphasizing historical context (putting him in line with Schleiermacher's approach to herme- neutics). Stendahl clearly diverges from Gadamer in his quest for

51.   Ko, "Fusion-Point Hermeneutics," 71.
52.   Ko, "Fusion-Point Hermeneutics," 78.
53.   Earley, "Radical Hermeneutical Shift," 16–32.
54.   Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*.

objective meaning and knowledge of the author's intent. Earley suggests that Stendahl is mistaken to think he can entirely escape his own subjectivity, particularly as he openly admits that his work (which heavily involves dissolving the Lutheran lens that dominates much Pauline scholarship) is driven by the desire to foster Jewish-Christian relations in a post-Holocaust context. Earley further argues that Stendahl's ability to read Paul in the way he does (as supporting the mutual existence of Christianity and Judaism) comes from the similarities between the concerns of the post-Holocaust church and Paul's context.

Jens Zimmerman, in his chapter "Hermeneutics of Unbelief," addresses recent philosophical interpretations of Paul, specifically those of the continental tradition after the religious turn.[55] His concern is that the blatantly secular orientation of many of these thinkers (Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek) may render it impossible for them to properly appreciate Paul's worldview. He provides his thesis at the outset: "By neglecting Paul's incarnational and participatory high Christology, philosophical interpreters fail to let the Pauline horizon confront their own, and thus they fall short of a productive hermeneutical engagement with theology."[56] A common denominator of these recent interpretations of Paul is their intense focus on the nature of subjectivity. However, their failure to adequately consider Paul's incorporation of transcendence or the mechanics of the incarnation renders them a one-way conversation.

Zimmerman then expounds on Paul's theology of the incarnation, noting that it involves both the individual and the cosmos being made right with God in Christ. This exposes the work of many philosophical interpreters as rigidly "impersonal."[57] Thus in Gadamer's terminology, authentic dialogue has not taken place. Zimmerman suggests that Paul has much to offer modern philosophers. For example, his understanding of subjectivity can help recapture participation in the transcendent, but in a personal way, and he offers similar insights in the areas of universality

55.   Zimmerman, "Hermeneutics of Unbelief," 227–53.
56.   Zimmerman, "Hermeneutics of Unbelief," 230.
57.   Zimmerman, "Hermeneutics of Unbelief," 241.

and particularity as well as ethics and politics. He concludes by reiterating that for true understanding to take place, Paul must be given a voice and allowed to offer a challenge to modern philosophers.

Conclusions

This proposed taxonomy will hopefully be of pedagogical use. While there is no shortage of introductory texts covering philosophical hermeneutics, including those intended for application to biblical studies, most of these dwell solely on theoretical matters. While McLean, for example, does include some isolated examples (such as the Heidegger and time anecdote covered above) they are certainly not introduced in any kind of systematic way.[58] Being able to offer students this kind of grid of categories should ideally be helpful for showing the various uses for these kinds of theories, and the multifaceted acts of mediation that they can perform. The sources gathered above are hopefully an indication that this entire field of research remains fruitful for much development.

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58.   Other examples found throughout McLean, *Biblical Interpretation* include the anti-semitic medieval usage of Matt 27:25 in the context of a discussion of Habermas (219), Levinas' extrapolation of the "ethical responsibility of the 'other'" from Exod 3:4 (262), and an unpacking of Paul's allegorical and typological methods within the context of Deleuze and Guattari's fractal ontology (278–79).

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