

## HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Sunnie D. Kidd  
James W. Kidd

Hermeneutics is interpretation and understanding.  
Interpretation represents one of many possible meanings  
but understanding  
changes through further interpretation.  
Put simply: one has to say, “at this time I am seeing this.”

Sunnie  
1981

Hermeneutic phenomenology is to bring the far near. In so doing it is disclosed in a clearer way. Interpretation maintains the quality of self-evidence. This is staying-with the continuity, in going on and back from there to here, to bring it near.

Interpretation is within the context that makes something meaningful. It asks for the meaning. One begins with the given description and searches for intentions that are expressed or unexpressed in the context. The researcher comes to a theme expressing it in another way, what the subject presents. A theme can only be understood from the whole and vice versa. Themes are at work within the context. That which resides outside the subject's intentions is also at work.

Within this composition, the dynamic structure, resides the possible and the actual, the direct and the indirect meaning. This is how meaning comes into being and what brings it forth. Yet the subject is already-in an existing whole (society). The subject is within the within, woven in.

The phenomenon is within and at work accompanied by inclusion and exclusion. The subject is seen as a self-in-relation to the other and the world, while changing. A phenomenon brings forth the possibility of different phenomena.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the un-covering-interpretation-of-meanings that is not immediately given. It is relatedness backward and forward. For interpretation to begin some understanding is already-there, presuppositions, of that which is to be interpreted. This beginning is given-to-further-meaning as the hermeneutic circle becomes wider.

The idea is not to get out of the circle but to move in it. This is not circular reasoning. It is a reaching into and through, for a wider

understanding. The un-covering-interpretation-of-meanings is a working out of these beginnings in relation to the things themselves, to understand a theme.

This is a going into, a going on and back which gives forth making present a theme. It is possible to hear that which is said in a description and that which is unsaid.

In this way the researcher can come to a theme expressing it, although, in another way what the subject presents, to a wider whole. It is an expanding like a vise that expands with the unscrewing in which it is squeezed. It is always whole yet can spread itself over a wider surface.

This is to be open to that which is beyond what was said. That which is left unsaid gives itself toward the present within the context out of which it is to be (Figure 1).

The theme (T) and that which it arises out of the thematic field (TF) is co-present. Although in the context but not relevant to a particular theme is the margin (M), which is co-present. At the wider is the dimensional field (DF).

A theme is that which stands forth. A theme is that which arises for the researcher, although, in another way what the subject presents, to the wider whole.<sup>1</sup>

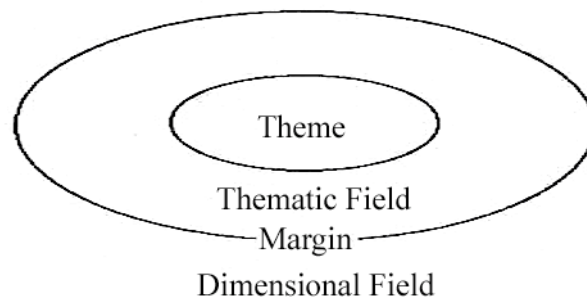


Figure 1

## Notes

- 1) Cf. Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969). In a section on Schleiermacher, Palmer presents a clear idea of what the hermeneutic circle involves: “Understanding is a basically referential operation; we understand something by comparing it to something we already know. What we understand forms itself into systematic unities, or circles made up of parts. The circle as a whole defines the individual part, and the parts together form the circle. A whole sentence, for instance, is a unity. We understand the meaning of an individual word by seeing it in reference to the whole of the sentence; and reciprocally, the sentence’s meaning as a whole is dependent on the meaning of individual words. By extension, an individual concept derives its meaning from a context or horizon within which it stands; yet the horizon is made up of the very elements to which it gives meaning. By dialectical interaction between the whole and the part, each gives the other meaning; understanding is circular, then. Because within this ‘circle’ the meaning comes to stand, we call this the ‘hermeneutic circle.’” p. 87. Palmer tells us that intuition is involved in the hermeneutic circle: “Somehow, a kind of ‘leap’ into the hermeneutical circle occurs and we understand the whole and the parts together. Schleiermacher left room for such a factor when he saw understanding as partly a comparative and partly an intuitive and divinatory matter. To operate at all, the hermeneutical circle assumes an element of intuition.” p. 87.

Palmer presents in this work “Thirty Theses on Interpretation” and a Bibliography in three parts: “A) Hermeneutical Theory and Theorists; B) Theological Hermeneutics; C) Other Works Cited or Potentially Significant to Hermeneutical Theory.”