

Meaning and Ethics

- The meaning of texts
- Ethics of interpretation

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Humpty Dumpty says...

"There's glory for you."

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't--till I tell you. I meant, 'There's a nice, knock-down argument for you.'"

"But 'glory' doesn't mean a nice, knock-down argument," Alice objected.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means exactly what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less."

Is Humpty Dumpty right?

2

The Meaning of Texts

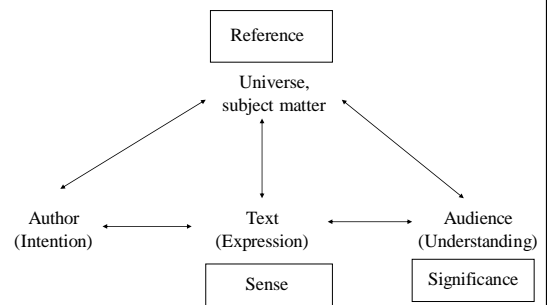
"A text is a discourse in which **someone** says **something** to **someone else** about **something**."

- **Someone** = author
- **Something** = text
- **Someone else** = audience
- **Something** = universe, subject matter

Paul Ricoeur

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The Meaning of Texts



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The Meaning of Texts

- **Sense** = what the text says (dictionary definitions of words, common understanding of grammar). "What does this mean?"
- **Reference** = what text refers to (the real world, the subject matter). "What is this about?"
- **Significance** = how the text relates to the life of any given audience. "What does this mean to me?"

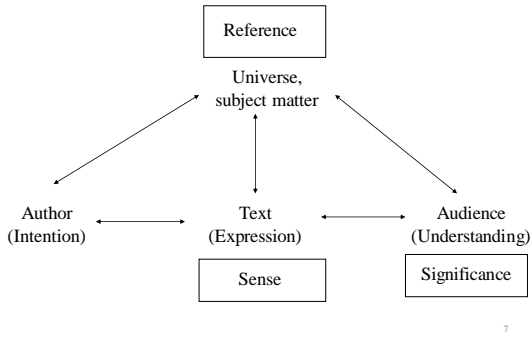
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The Meaning of Texts

- **Sense**
 - Literary context
 - Linguistic context
- **Reference** - Historical/cultural context
- **Significance** - Biblical/theological context
 - Personal application

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The Meaning of Texts



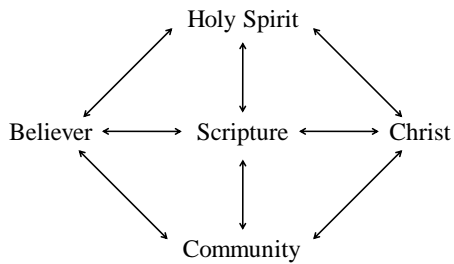
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The Meaning of Texts

- Critical role of the reader.
 - Must appropriate the meaning
 - Must be active rather than passive.
 - But can't control the process.
- Requires an act of faith/trust.
- Is meaning discovered or created?

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Formational Hermeneutics



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Ethics of Interpretation

- What does ethics have to do with biblical interpretation?
- What do Daniel Patte and Kevin Vanhooser believe about meaning?
- What does it mean to interpret ethically?

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