

A CRITICAL THEOREM FOR TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Situation + Linguistics=Immediate understanding

- I Incorporating mathematical logic with the analysis of documents.
 - II Intelligent work in the fields of textual criticism.
 - III Specimens and how to interpret them contextually
-

ANCIENT MATHMEMATICS

From the Yale Babylonian collection, W.W. Hallo, curator of the Yale Museum, published a series of texts labeled YBC7289; containing what are purported to be some of the oldest mathematical diagrams extant. Approximately 1000 years before Pythagoras, these tablets show how the ancients used numbers. Professor Hallo issued the hypothesis that visual reasoning is as valid as verbal reasoning. Detailed studies concluded that the ancients knew that the ration of the diagonal of the square to a side was a number whose square was 2. Also, that the ancients possessed an algorithm for finding approximations to the square root of 2.

Pythagoras (580-500BC) was the founder of a school and the primary source of inspiration for Plato and Aristotle. His thinking impacted the Western tradition in more ways than one. He is famous for the theorem "The area of the square built upon the hypotenuse of a right angle is equal to the sum of the areas of the squares upon the remaining sides."

Archimedes, a preeminent mathematician (287-212BC), also calculated the pi, or what is called the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, as 3.1418---. He was also fabled to have created a reflective instrument for focusing the sun's rays upon the enemy's boats and igniting them.

Theorems by nature are the tracks along which a train of thought moves. Pertinent to all deductive schemes, theorems figure in greatly from a historical point of view as necessary antecedents to problem resolution. Every person's mind is governed by some cognitive bias or subtle influence. Whether known or unknown, these are the pillars on which the human leans when forming opinions. For the one who refuses to affirm as much, he or she is, to one degree or another, insane.

Mathematics, often called a language of vision, is filled with principles and formulae that are also beneficial for other areas of societal life and vocation. Since arithmetic involves systematic computations and exercises which deal with riddle like problems, it is instructive.

The ability to recognize forms, equations and numbers for their worth makes a mathematician more than a mere statistician, but also an explorer; each equation being a path in and of itself. People have wondered for some time now, about the mathematician's analytical brain and why it operates as it does.

Along with scientific studies on left and right brain compartments has come a tendency, on the part of some, to disassociate one's self from those areas in which one seems to lack the necessary tools. Truthfully, it is a given that some people are able to conduct themselves in areas where difficulties attach themselves to other lay persons. But, with close, careful and patient study, the complex can be made easy through systematic application of set principles. In the end, the recipient of such diligent effort is found to be a recognizable expert, at least as it pertains to the problems he or she is able to resolve.

These few words are foundational to my premise, one which affirms the necessity of sound principles, in use, for demonstrating the truthfulness of any claim. So believing, as I do, in God's superintendence of His Words over against the human preservation of other types of literature in the classical corpus, I prefer to use the word 'critic' as it pertains to work among classical collections of literature and the word 'analyst' in reference to work within the Biblical canon. Undoubtedly, some may find this troubling; ascribing divinity to Old and New Testament documents, but I leave that matter for another time and place.

I

Ideas abound in the arena of textual criticism. For the historian, when he speaks of the critical work accomplished in the past, he immediately directs you to those places which were centers of scholarship and editing. So the most notable of all cities to begin with are Alexandria and Byzantium, these two cities became the twin towers of ancient text-critical history. The two of them, together, joined hands through time as they sought to preserve antiquity's treasures and were concerned with the collating of precious MSS.

So many of the extant writings, were marked with glosses, alternate wordings and spelling changes that savvy minded men spent hour upon hour attempting to gain control of annotations and marginalia showing up in early classical

documents. Their labors eventually graduated to a professional craft issuing gold standard texts for the general reading populace.

Through these measures the book trade flourished and private libraries developed as the wealthy procured those rolled books deemed to be of value. In a similar way, likeminded authors who undertake to edit & pen award winning Gold Medallion books today, are usually revered as outstanding fellows in their own respective fields, and rightly so.

More and more it seems that each field is developing into its own separate gated community with trespassers, or some would say “transgressors,” being treated as though they have invaded another’s hallowed space. But how are we to judge these efforts? Even now, as MSS are placed side by side we can’t help but notice the textual disparities present. Equally troubling and no less disturbing is the lack of uniformity in spelling along with the considerable damage incurred from manuscript placement in badly kept scriptoriums of every type; early document conservation was primeval at best.

The entire historical process of roll and scroll preservation has eroded man’s confidence in the classical corpus as it now stands. This is amply illustrated by the omnibus indictments in the introduction section of each modern publication seen through the press. Given the current crisis in identifying and cataloging these damaged goods it is not surprising to find literary critics at the forefront of many discussions. The critic’s role is to construct and usefully employ methods which weed out irrelevant theories making room for the growth and proliferation of true readings.

As a rule though, few text critics in today’s scribal work force are interested in formulating their own their theories for doing text critical work, {*One noteworthy exception is James J. O’hara, Paddison professor of Latin at UNC Chapel Hill, who believes most textual emendations to be “illegitimate critical moves.” He lays out his theoretical orientation in the 2005 article ‘Trying Not to Cheat: Responses to Inconsistencies in Roman epic’*}. For the most part, he or she continues to follow previously established principles while adding one or two criticisms that are typically buried somewhere in the last chapter of a 700 page tome that few will ever read. But an important question to ask at this point is whether or not the theoretical

should be placed alongside fact and extended the same treatment, should it? Other questions concerning how one may ascertain the original wording, meaning, and intent of a writer's text is certainly a noble inquiry, but to be honest, faulty investigative technique tends to err on the side of the spurious.

To me, this stems from not following a methodology that introduces cautious and judicious entries into the pages of literature, but in divergent settings, critical inquiries often focus more on supposed form(s) & forgeries than on the content; inevitably, leading to conjectural emendations which gender questions of quick sand like proportion. In the event that you have good dictionary nearby, the text book definition for theory is:

(1) The analysis of a set of acts in their relationship to one another, (2) A hypothesis assumed for the sake of argument or investigation, (3) Supposition or conjecture. {The above is taken from Webster's seventh New Collegiate dictionary.}

By definition, a theory is, at its initial invocation, unproven. Given a little time though, a theory may prove itself to be true after all. A theorem, on the other hand, is a formula, proposition or statement (of logic) deduced from other formulae or propositions; a reasoning that is based on logical, or mental deductions. Keeping definition number one in mind and also combining it with the explanation for theorem, I take these aspects as my point of departure for demonstrating 'how to draw near' to the meanings embedded in a text.

RUBIC'S CUBE

When confronted with a problem, the mind immediately begins to seek ways of resolving it. The whole process is logical (at least in the mind of the thinker). Depending on how the dilemma is addressed, in the end he or she will be either correct or false in his or her conclusions. A matter of puzzling proportions may be like the standard Rubic's Cube, where colors must be aligned in order for the matter to be complete. Through many twists & turns, approximations are made on the spur of the moment and the faculty of thought is helping to bring the matter to its proper end. The case of the Rubic's Cube may be likened to present textual discrepancies confronting critics.

A puzzling, enigmatic textual difficulty could one day force itself upon you, and it may possibly be that an emendation is needed; if for no other reason than, a defined alignment for clarity in expression. Some definitions make no sense at all without an appropriate transpositioning of a letter or letters. But in the hands of a capable examiner a text's words can be logically concluded when a close reading is given.

Any system of logic used by humans to deduce and arrive at conclusions will create theorems. A theorem, though

scientific in expression, is also, an idea accepted or proposed as a demonstrable truth. The word *theorem* is derived from: {LL *theorem*, fr. Gk. *Theorem*, fr. *Theorein* to look at, fr. *Theoros spectator*, fr. *thea* act of seeing—more at *theatre*.}

The threads above provide necessary components for fabricating principles that, should they be shown to be sound and proper, could alter the way in which texts are studied. In whatever genre they lie, today, passages are normally viewed skeptically in their present form. Following the examples of Zenodotus, Apollonius and Eratosthenes, who were librarians in Ancient Egypt, the texts of Homer, Virgil, Beowulf, Chaucer, Shakespeare and other lingual streams, while being held in highest regard are continually scrutinized to no end.

Let's cite one example from Aristarchus' labors: In his critical work on copies of Pindar's Nemean texts he found an instance where an adjective seeming to be nominative singular, had to be reconstructed as accusative plural on metrical grounds {Nem. 1.24}

Although, only slightly critical in format; today's volumes of the Loeb classical library, the Clay Sanskrit library, and the I Tatti Renaissance library demonstrate how individual writers believe specific words are to be 'critically translated' and understood by their reading audience. This perspectival angle has given rise to many methods (some good, some bad) in textual criticism and there are a great many of them. Numerous investigations into the origins of a word or pericopae are foundational to the present structures of form critical analyses.

Form critical examinations supposedly take fresh approaches to syntactical evolutions from oral traditions, morphemic structures and narrative composition. While the most recent and popular discipline today is historical in orientation; with a view to cultural discoveries. The historical critic generally wades through a mass of data and uses it to superimpose meanings on illustrated events on record. Even if its occurrence appears untrue to history, it is viewed as authentic from the historicist's literary approach to the subject.

Now after years of studying texts in original languages, I believe, it is feasible to offer another approach to textual study that over time has led me toward a more careful and thorough type of research, which yields up tremendous amounts of truth in textual labors. Substantively, it is a combination of some of the general principles of the two mentioned above along with a few other ingredients, but in methodology, I believe it to be more specific and less ambiguous; a type of virtual, historical and philological method in surround sound.

By terming a method *situational*, it is implied that a 'text' is to be studied in relation to its surroundings. Examining those witnesses only which are located directly within its immediate vicinity; epigraphal remains, canonical texts, historic events, significant persons, physical sites, et cet. By fusing circum-stantial evidences, in its literal sense, with a situational approach, I can now turn my attention to those things '*standing around*' *at the scene of the crime*.

In this scheme each item of visual and aural importance is to be thoroughly tested as to its merit and relationship to the text. The possibilities for accomplishing these textual feats are great but they are wholly dependent upon one's mind. There is ample evidence extant that links early Greek thought to Egyptian influences. From the days of Thales until later scientific years, Egyptian processional thought greatly influenced the way Greeks went on record describing their world. At times I wonder if Egyptian belief has affected our religious & secular thinking too. Indeed, at death, Egyptians were known to bury their dead with certain organs deposited in a clay vase, which was afterwards placed within the same coffin or sarcophagus of the deceased. The brains were always discarded as it was not thought to be of importance for afterlife ritual. So, mummification, as a process, in my opinion, looks a lot like today's mindless efforts to preserve the useless rather than conserve the useful. By denigrating rational thinking we have produced a cadre of non-critically thinking persons. It is somewhat disconcerting to watch professionals parrot presumptions which have long been defeated by fact. Therefore, an evidentiary procedure needs to be substituted for the common critical illusion that purports to be neutral in its stance on literary issues. A large number of people are under the impression that vagueness is the quickest route to genius. Thus, it is believed that "So long as I am

noncommittal in my writing I can't be accused of any bias." In the area of logic this is fallacious!

MAGNIFICENT BRAIN

The brain is so powerful an organ that it is able to retain much more information than the average human is able to fathom. Containing much more than mental furniture, the neuro-architecture located in our cranium is, without a doubt, the substructure of our physical & emotional being. With an excess of 100 billion neurons constantly sending signals in every conceivable direction, a speaker (or reader) is able to assimilate vast amounts of data every second unconsciously. Experiments in neuro-imaging and various aspects of linguistic memory make it possible to challenge dated but, longstanding illogical theories .

For our purposes this is a necessary thought because I doubt that few humans take time to scan their background setting while they are engaged in daily conversation -- therefore, making little use of the *mentalis apparata* available--.

I know this to be the case in my own life, and the 'surroundings' are what add context, contour and meaning to the words we speak. I prefer to tag this whole construction "*situation linguistics*" for lack of technical term. Whether one is examining a modern newspaper, classical document, ancient Near Eastern papyri, or even scripts from various periods, the specific situation in which a dialogue is carried out conveys details that in other environments are missed. A quick scan of fixed surroundings allows the contemporary reader to make eye contact with an ancient author and peer into his soul, in effect, getting a feel for his attitude and personality.

In reading, we tend to focus on the words before our eyes and are unable to see peripherally those things distant to us. Whereas, the eyes function as receptors for signs, pictures and words, the mind is a receptacle that catches and analyzes all this information, catalogs it, categorizes it, while simultaneously helping you to interpret it all in light of the activity around you. Because the mind is inexhaustible in its ability to analyze discriminately, all of the procedures are in play as close readings are given to a text. Without doubt profit is derived from rooting out the meanings of words as they were utilized in multiple settings in antiquity. L.D. Reynolds & N.G. Wilson aver that "the best guide to an author's usage is the corpus of his own writings." I'd even go a further step to say that it is

also good to be familiar with dialectal stratigraphy from different time periods.

But the larger question among the smaller questions will always be “why has this person spoken thus, here, at this time?” Whether you are reading a poem of Catullus, pillaging a cache of newly discovered Sumerian proverbs, or digging around in the Gospels for insight into Second Temple Judaism, the question arises as to why someone would speak in this manner-- in Rome, Mesopotamia, Jericho or Jerusalem-- and even more specifically why was this narrative recorded so precisely in this instance? Of all the arcane and archaic idioms and classical phrases current at the time, what is the writer saying by using this specific set of words?

The study of peculiar and/or particular ‘situations,’ in contrast to glimpsing broader contexts, brings the narrative into greater focus from afar. From a linguistic point of view, internal word forms can now be broken down into constructs that allow greater divisions of meaning. The prefixes, infixes and suffixes give out much info when comparative linguistic analysis is employed.

Knowledge of when certain verbal uses were instigated and later discarded is helpful in determining not only the relative dating of a text, but, also, in formatting the general lingual makeup of a society.

In rhetorical criticism we come face to face with the writer and his audience. Communicative dramas may or may not contain allusions; nevertheless, they are ripe for examination. Investigations into alternative glosses and the manner in which they are affixed to typological situations strengthen the episode’s context. As a result, poetic forms and their attendant parallelisms, if situated in an enchanted heroic age, can be studied, but according to a different criterion. To postulate another theory, I can think of no other drill or skill-test that advances one’s analytical abilities more than repeated readings in ‘*POETICS*:’

- Oblique references are to be noted. In the poems of Catullus there is overwhelming passion, fire and energy compacted in each verse. In a poem to Lesbia he writes “*Vivamus mea Lesbia, atque amemus,*” Let us live my Lesbia and let us love. This one sentence animates the whole of the poem. So to receive the full import of this poem it has to be heard in ‘stereo;’ these words, along with

others, should echo throughout your being as you pass from line to line. A symphonic resonance, coupled with multiple textual voices, singing the same note. In fact, if you read good poetry correctly you will normally find select words that resonate throughout.

- Symbolic references are to be noted. Obliquity & symbolism can be a boon to the critic and/or analyst who is well versed in parallel genres of literature. When concrete terms are used for abstract purposes, generic methods of inquiry may lead you to a well but the critical bucket will always be drawn up empty. So, somewhere in the back of your mind collected material must be stored for later recall. Here are two examples of symbolic words with at least dual meanings and references. William Harris' poem "If a tree falls in the forest with a sudden thud heard or not, make no mistake, *the forest is less*" conjures up the author's hint at John Donne's sobering line "Europe is the less." Then, William Blake's notebook of poetry has one cryptic piece that packs much in so few lines; from the Mental Traveler:

*"I traveled thro' a Land of Men,
a Land of Men & Women too,
And heard & saw such dreadful things
As cold Earth wanderers never knew."*

The above words of Blake may, indirectly, be said to refer to his vision of the Last Judgment. These types of poetic critical tools are of use, only, to the one who avails himself of their intended usefulness. Combining language arts with our proposed theorem extends the reach of the linguist & philologist by adding an extra appendage to the whole operation of subjective studies. Extant pottery and other artifacts, are now releasing us to pay more attention to how words traveled and were used by different ethnic groups in similar and dissimilar settings. By way of example, for a newcomer who is reading and comes across the word *blessed*, he or she may understand its modern definition of "how fortunate" or *enriched*. Yet, if time is taken to trace it historically back to its Anglo Saxon origins, then the root-word *blood* comes into focus.

As time progressed, semantically this word became the reflectively transparent term for Old English speakers as they sought to describe Latin & Greek words in Anglo Saxon times and later in medieval Europe. Now, through formal translations, a reader of the New Testament is able to associate blessing with a shedding of blood. This interpretative skill adds a little more color and shading to

an English word that is often ambiguously and wrongly defined, as happy. Returning to our subject, situation linguistics is a discipline that, when & where properly employed, is demanding and time consuming.

There is a certain logic that must be underscored in all of this. Bundling up massive amounts of statistical & linguistic data for research purposes is tedious, to say the least. But when the accumulated data is finally sifted, an *immediate understanding* comes into view. Immediate in the sense that a direct revelation comes to the mind, this is apart from the intervention of mediated, extraneous, and superfluous elements of a commentaries or translations. Moreover, immediacy in research authenticates personal writings and vindicates privately held opinions. Secondary sources can be of great help, but for radical interpretations and maverick style results, some familiarity with the text in the original is needed. Grasping parallel documentary evidences in order to synthesize the whole is good practice for comprehending the wording of a text. So if you desire to fully penetrate the mind of an author, ample time should be given to considering who he or she is as a character in the unfolding drama portrayed before you.

III

To contract a theorem such as situation + linguistics =immediate understanding, first the idea must be plausible, if not probable. Then, to put the method in action you will need to be able to go forward without coercing the text into stating what is not locatable in the verbal constructs. There can be wide and varied systems of meaning functioning in a given context. Words may impart conditions of time, number of persons; plural, dual, singular; they may also amplify/modify or explain situations. So like the Phoenix crafter, launched by NASA, which landed on Mars in order to send back data, words send out information and images to far away & distant generations. Extracting data of this kind is like removing teeth. A delicacy is desirable when handling documents and wrestling with their manuscript contexts. Listed below we have a few witnesses that allow us to get inside their verbal locations and interpret their wording. These examples are not opuscle, but are amenable to our discussion.

1. {Revelation 3:5} Recently, in a discussion with a colleague, I was questioned about a text in the bible's book of Revelation. In chapter 3:5 it says "He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in

white raiment; and I will not {*ou me—I will not* by any means, or any way} blot out his name out of the book of life but I will confess his name before my father and before his angels” {KJV} Aside from all of the theological assumptions that can be made from the verse above, we must acknowledge the possibility of a ‘blotting out’ occurrence from its linguistic side. However one stands in view of eternal security, perseverance, or the Arminian position of a salvation that can be lost, from a position of language, the possibility of erasure exists in the micro structure of the words. This is why ‘situation linguistics’ can be a fascinating discipline of specialization. It provides another means by which a scene can be understood.

2. {I John 2:2} Another example of this is found in I John 2:2. The Calvinist of limited atonement belief, and the Arminian of unlimited redemption persuasion, are yet, at the mercy of the ‘words’ in the passage. In whatever way it is studied, the underlying words of the original language belie a propitiation that is as broad in its application as sin is widespread. From a linguistic vantage point, John sees Jesus’ Cross-work as antidotal to the plague of sin anciently released in the world (earth). John’s prevailing supposition is that the benefit of Christ’s death was for all mankind, and available for all time.

3. {Colossians 2:18} Also, in Colossian 2:18 the Greek word “embateuown” had been a conundrum from the earliest of times. In the KJV it is rendered “intruding into those things which he hath not seen..” During subsequent centuries various glosses were offered but few satisfied the scholarly establishment until Albert Schweitzer discovered a neo-Pythagorean text (from the 1st cent. BC) possessing related Gnostic usages. Since the Colossian heresy is tied to esoteric practices the Greek word could now be recognized in another form; *an investigative sense of heightened discovery as if an initiate is continuing on a path of enlightenment.* So the KJB rendering was vindicated as a definition (however obscure) for the Greek term.

4. {Philemon} Paul’s epistle gives very little background information within the 25 verses of text. The only way to derive knowledge of Onesimus’ status in Roman Society is by thoroughly investigating the Greek word given for servant/ slave {*doulon*}. The linguistic data elucidated from philological procedure more than makes up for the lack of specific facts acknowledged by Paul.

From the above lines we understand that as words are analyzed in their proper settings of time and space, ancient wisdom’s secrets are afforded the opportunity to burst forth in fragrant form, as if escaping from a flower at the opening of its petals. All of the studies in language variation remind us that language arts are constantly in need of refinement. With each new generation, language behavior concepts are modified so that general precepts can keep pace with current cutting edge terminology. In the event that linguistic theory takes a radically different shape, as long as

words published in translations genuinely reflect meanings originally transmitted by the author, few will complain.

Each word transcribed is a capsule. It encapsulates an author's mindset at the time of writing and it displays authorial creativity in its syntactical arrangements. The critic today gingerly criticizes archaic texts; penning his or her own obiter dictum on the bad grammar supposedly contained therein. But the ancient authors, themselves, composed with the understanding that what they wrote made sense to them and that their wordings were consistent with the usage of the day. Grammar usage was not and is not confined to the matter located between the front and back pages of modern school books. Although there may be material found therein which may comfortably guide one in whatever usage of the day is deemed suitable, we must remember that dictionaries and lexicons, though standard today were unknown to writers prior to the 16th century. The rule of the day was to compose literary pieces according to provincial usage & vocalization.

Peering backwards 2000 years in time, critics scathingly attack those of the past without, in many cases, possessing the necessary compositional tools themselves, which would equip them to perform superlatively better textually. All words should be received as they are, as repositories and archives since they contain historical data that can't be gleaned unless one is familiar with and intrigued by the recovery of ancient morphemic allusions and their constituent uses. The proposed Situational linguistic theorem, if worthwhile as a proposition at all, is advantageous for one who is able to read long passages of continuous narrative in-text.

Without a good command of language and its grammatical operations the lexicon will become more problematic to the user. Faced with paragraphs and columns of definitions, a researcher is frequently pressed to decide, arbitrarily, the rendering that he or she believes, best accentuates the meanings.

Sometime ago, in a discussion with celebrated lexicographer F.W. Danker, the compiler of "A Greek English lexicon of New Testament and other early Christian literature," we discussed several meanings for the word "Jews" as mentioned time after time in the New

Testament. He began by calling “Jews” an anachronism. Stating that it meant one thing in Roman society and quite another in modern terms. In classical terms, he referred to Lucian the satirist, who wrote that Jews were “those folks who runaround in ragged fashion clad in superstition, practicing a religion of strange belief.” Coming from an authority so distinguished, dialectology, as an aid to understanding, has to be brought in if our philological foundations are to be established by intelligible principles.

Because of classical nuances and related Hebraisms it is good to be able to compare & weigh each meaning in its own private setting. By relating contextually to each sequence, where a term is used becomes as important as how it is used when determining its coded information. Technology today allows us to abide in a virtual world where objects may be viewed three dimensionally. As more focus is laid upon the science of textual criticism we can expect to hear of more attempts at finding better and more progressive ways for listening to voices and perceiving moods and aspects in ancient words. But who has time to pilfer through layer after layer of information just to get to the bottom of the meaning of a word used in a specific situation to describe Jews?

The answer is easy, one who is patient with a text and desires accuracy in transmitting its meaning. Dialectologists specialize in quaint phrases and words with queer meanings. Unraveling colloquialisms and ancient standard literary forms is a job in itself. So the critic who is plodding along using methods that are sound and principled will find himself enlightening, or amusing, any number of interested parties.

If 45 hours of research is needed to comprehend a word or narrative (in whatever form), then, each pearl unearthed and unshelled will cause your translations to glisten, as you remove the accumulated dirt and filth from years of misunderstanding and philological abuses. That being the case, the more time spent in linguistic investigations; the easier it will be to later fetch large amounts of information at your leisure, because the textual critic who is teachable will always be in a position to learn from his research.

A new breed of scholars is on the rise. Actuated by different stimuli and moved by unseen forces. A fresh inspiration draws them toward studies of a general nature; historical in method and scientific in application. Younger professors, with a desire to break out of older molds, are accessing other fields and frameworks in order to integrate many of the raw materials daily coming to light.

Darrell Sutton,
Pastor & Biblicist