The Home of Hearing
George Lindbeck’s understanding of community

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1. Introduction

1.1 Postmodern mindset

There has been increasing talk of communities and the sense of community in recent times and how it relates to culture. This discussion has both local and global dimensions, and at times the local and global become intertwined in ways that make it difficult to refer to them as separate spheres of action.\(^1\) Globality is making its presence felt locally, just as local realities make their presence felt globally.\(^2\) Because of this intertwining, culture is increasingly becoming understood as the mediator between its two dimensions, which serves in highlighting culture’s communicative properties.\(^3\)

Clifford Geertz noted in 1983 that we seem to be living in a time when something is happening to the way we think about the way we think. This shift is distinctive and general enough to the degree that it suggests, “an alteration in the principles of mapping cultural realities is underway.”\(^4\)

Thirty years on, distinctive shifts in the ways we think are sometimes reflected in somewhat strange, yet none the less exemplifying ways in the voices of the younger generation. According to the entertainment section of Helsingin Sanomat, artist Petri Nygård made the history books with his latest music video titled “Sober Day”.\(^5\) An introductory dialogue highlights the message of the song. Petri’s friends have gathered together in order to get drunk and ask: “where is Petri?” Petri responds from the other side of the world: “where am I? I’m drunk. Where are you at?” It is evident in these lyrics, that what is deemed of immediate significance for Petri with respect to one’s temporal whereabouts is ironically not one’s location or one’s community, but instead one’s immediate mindset.

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\(^1\) As an extreme example, the recent school shootings have been explained from a cultural perspective as an individual identifying with a cultural script. This does not imply that the nature of such tragic incidents can be attributed in their driving force to the cultural transcript, but the transcript served as a channel of and for self-redemption. Kiilakoski 2009, 6-7.

\(^2\) This is evident most recently in the insufficiency voiced towards multiculturalism in Europe. Past policy, referred to by David Cameron as state multiculturalism (implying multiculture is also a political ideology) has been labelled inadequate in accommodating the challenges put forward by the cultural implications of globalization. Merkel labelled the implementation of multiculturalism as “an utter failure” and demanded immigrants learn the local language as intrinsic part of the solution in order to integrate into society better. Merkel’s comments in particular place a lot of weight on language in the hope of remedying the current situation. BBC 2011, BBC 2010.

\(^3\) In this paragraph culture is portrayed as a monolithic whole. This of course does no justice to the complexity of culture in its immense diversity, but is a starting point in order to get a grip on what culture means in this study.


\(^5\) HS.fi 2010.
The question posed by Petri’s friends is interpreted by Petri not as ‘where am I?’ or ‘with whom am I?’, but rather ‘how am I?’. What one understands as most constitutive to the lens through which one sees one’s situation in the world seems to override where one actually is with respect to more conventional ways of understanding reality. One could argue that Petri assumes as the foundation of his communal identity his externally induced, and in this particular case, rather sensational experience of being drunk. The sense of community is therefore not derived from where one is, but from how one is. Deciphering the militancy of Nygård’s satire is not relevant to this thesis, but understanding the root causes of his genre of social criticism is telling of the challenges theology faces in this day and age for the purposes of this study, because Petri’s message evidently thrives in the age of postmodernity, at least within its offspring.

Matti Amnell writes in Kirkko&Kaupunki that the all-encompassing relativism advocated by postmodernism is problematic. He points to one manifestation of such in its radical form when he recollects spotting a young girl on the street with the message “I am my own God. I do what I want.” printed on her back. According to Amnell, her conclusive statement encapsulates the spirit of three central claims within radical postmodernism. Firstly God is assumed dead because it no longer means anything. People, on the other hand, are essentially dead because we are nothing more than the end products of our cultures. Communicative texts are dead, because language cannot grasp reality since reality does not go beyond language, which consequently signifies the irrelevance of history.6

In her statement to society, the young girl identifies with the logical conclusion of radical postmodernism in its totalistic relativism. If all we have is relativism, then really all we have is relativism, which justifies a holistic indifference towards reality because it is understood that we exist apart or, in a sense, in absolute difference from a true reality. Because of this (assumed) fundamental or radical lack of reality beyond ourselves, reality becomes constituted by a state of mind, which consequently authorises one’s personal state of mind to be the real real.7 In short, if the young girl is declaring how things stand, then Nygård is applying it and putting it into practice in precisely a manner which leaves little to question: he authoritatively does what he wills, which is to

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6 Amnell 2010, 4-5.
7 Amnell 2010, 4-5.
alters the state of his ‘authoritative’ mind. Whether or not the irony is intentional, their actions/statements implicitly pose a serious question to society and they cohere in their nihilistic underpinning: what really am I supposed to care about?

Heikki Kirjavainen makes an educated guess in his assessment of postmodern theology with respect to the spiritual core of postmodern culture: “it has been born to serve as a means for interpreting the identity crisis of the western individual.” One constitutive factor of this identity crisis is an inbuilt relativism that is accredited largely to post World War Two French philosophy. It created a philosophical and cultural atmosphere that concerned itself with criticizing of the universal theory of knowledge and abandoning epistemological foundationalism.

In its most radical form, it did not satisfy itself with criticism of the above, but rather took on the deconstruction of our understandings of reality by bringing into question the very referential nature of the medium with which we articulate such understanding, meaning language itself. In other words it brought along a perspective that disabled language from going beyond language when attempting to define reality in any definitive sense. Language becomes reality in itself, because language cannot extend to anything but itself and therefore the very notion of reality becomes purely subjective. Taken to its logical conclusion, it would imply that we lose our perspective on reality, because language, which is necessary to articulate our perspective on reality, has lost its capacity to articulate any relevance in determining reality. Reality becomes what you or I make of it, leaving us with the reality of an unlimited number of realities. If this is the case, applicability still remains an issue, unless we are content, as Kirjavainen says: “to

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8 This type of postmodernistic attitude towards reality finds a critical structural correlate in Sammeli Juntunen’s description of postmodern spirituality. In its quest for a sensible and meaningful existence in the midst of postmodern pointlessness, postmodern spirituality is created for the self by oneself. It does not require externally rendered divine revelation concerning the essence of reality and its structure, nor does it require a salvific narrative. For the modern individual an authentically lived out ‘self’ is spiritual enough. Juntunen 2010, 226-227.

9 This hypothetical conclusion resonates in a subtle way with Berger’s description of the modern situation of the individual in that our fate has become that of choice in a rather forceful manner. It leaves one asking “how it really was” concerning the origins of what is available. In other words since characteristic of this new situation is having to choose between traditions i.e. the situation is something more like untraditional traditionality, the question of what traditions really communicate has become a focus of curiosity. See Berger 1980, 11-12, 126. Petri’s and the young girls statements to society, if understood hypothetically as criticisms of this situation, is “what does any of this really have to do with me?”. In other words, what is one’s relationship to the diversity available through traditions.


11 Kirjavainen 2004, 168-169, 178-181. Timo Eskola points out that according to research done from a philosophical perspective, Derrida’s understanding of deconstruction was very theoretical and concerned itself with the principles of language and because of this it is not as such applicable to reality without trivialising the very theory. Eskola 2008, 110.
be whatever”. If one is, it implies a sense of indifference towards reality. If not, which is the more sensible response according to Kirjavainen, it implies we take this perception of different realities as real challenge and therefore need to try and account for its consequences by encountering the reality of difference.\(^\text{12}\)

It may be worth mentioning in order to disclose one’s positioning, that personal motivation towards venturing into a cultural-linguistic understanding of religion in this study is linked to personal experience. Moving back to Finland at the age of sixteen, having spent nine years in Botswana, brought about (in retrospect) a *third culture* experience, which falls under the more general category of cross-cultural experiences. Thirdness refers in its functional aspect to a *space/medium* characterised by behavioural traits derived from the need to adapt to changes in one’s environment/culture. Adapting is basically an interactive process of relating to one’s environment. It is characterised by forming a space to gain an understanding of what constitutes the general nature of behaviour, which presents itself as out of sync with one’s assumptions. The basic reason for this need of space is that what is constitutional in people’s thinking often correlates with what is taken for granted. People are, to use an analogy, fish-in-water when it comes to their respective societies and cultures in that they, to a lesser or greater extent, cultural-linguistically belong to it. People metaphorically speaking breathe their culture. This implies that the constitution of society is in everyday situations silent knowledge, and because this silent knowledge is often thought of as a given (in other words, its origins are not consciously thought of), it is not only silent but more often than not not in the form of latent knowledge and therefore needs to be deduced. This process of deduction is regulated (guided) by certain principles that seem to persist irrespective of where one is coming from.\(^\text{13}\) Third culture is a regulator of an adaptive process of deduction, and it is this regulatory characteristic of behaviour to which individuals of cross-cultural experience feel a heightened sense of belonging to. One can think of it as a temporary home of a kind.

### 1.2 Aim, source, method, previous research and limiting of scope

\(^{12}\) Kirjavainen 2004, 181.

\(^{13}\) For a widely cited definition and analysis of third culture which empirically speaks on the behalf of the above description of third culture see Pollock & Van Reken 2009, 13, 23-26.
The aim of this thesis is not concerned with seeking theologically substantial answers as such to questions possibly implicitly posed by Petri and the young girl, which is within the greater task of theology and social ethics. Rather, and on a more technical level, this study is primarily and distinctly concerned with the sense of immediacy and validity with which Petri and the young girl, and to varying degrees any and everyone, are off any opinion in the first place. More precisely it is concerned with the corporate matrix of our opinions, convictions and questions and how the prior functions as a regulator of the latter. In relation to Petri and the young girl’s hypothetically implicit questioning, this study focuses on how one arrives at one’s conclusion in order then to be able to focus on what drives the substance of these conclusions i.e. to find their home. \(^{14}\) If ecumenical engagement or theology were to be perceived as a hockey game, this study is primarily interested in the time-out and how its insights can be put to use. \(^{15}\)

In order to gain a perspective into the dynamics of this corporate reality at work in a limited theological context, the aim of this thesis is to examine the understanding of community in George Lindbeck’s Nature of Doctrine- Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age, 1984 (ND). In order to meet this aim, it is necessary to examine also how Lindbeck understands the relation between the text and the world which both meet in a Christian community. As a final note concerning the aim of this study, one also takes into consideration Lindbeck’s own description of his work. According to him the ND is not a systematic presentation of his cultural linguistic theory in that it does not move in a step-by-step demonstrative sequence, which would be characteristic of a linear and systematic approach, but is, in its heuristic intent, circular in its advocating for the cultural linguistic perspective into reality. Referring to Wittgenstein, Lindbeck says that the persuasiveness of his argumentation depends on the illuminating power of the whole. “It may be that if light dawns, it will be over the whole

\(^{14}\) The title of this study “the home of hearing” is meant to read from a cultural-linguistic perspective as the source from where one receives what one essentially witnesses to. One can have in this sense numerous homes with respects to different aspects of life and thought, (for eg. a philosophers thoughts can be traced to numerous influences or paradigmatically to modernity as an example). In this study it is meant to read as the home/source which is given primacy over all other homes. For example Petri Nygård gives primacy to hedonism, the young girl to radical postmodernism. The first is at home when drunk, the latter is at home within all-encompassing relativism etc. Generally speaking what one takes in is what one puts out.  

\(^{15}\) The intention of this time-out comparison is emphasize that Lindbeck’s model is born out of frustration towards the way in which doctrines are presumed to function in reality. Likewise if all is not going well in a hockey game, timeouts are taken inorder to modify tactics.
landscape simultaneously."16 Thus at its best this present study is an attempt to describe how this persuasiveness relates to Lindbeck’s understanding of community.

It is important to note that Lindbeck does not derive his understanding of community ultimately from the nontheological import, which is present in the ND. His use of Geertz, Wittgenstein and Berger to name a few is according to himself probationary. He is using them to test out their viability in communicating his theological understanding of community.17

The ND is credited with hearing the paradigmatic message of postmodernism and relaying it into theology in the form of a cultural linguistic understanding of religion and regulative rule theory of doctrine.18 Even though the theory of religion and doctrine put forward in the ND is designed for the purposes of ecumenical dialogues with the intent of enabling its counterparts to understand the nature of their doctrinal agreements (and likewise persisting disagreement on an institutional level) better, its usefulness rests on its general plausibility as a perspective into the communal nature of the realities in which we dwell.19 It thus seeks to provide a framework for encountering and exploring the realities where common ground is lacking in that very respect.

In order to serve the above intent, the cultural-linguistic perspective seeks to understand the corporate matrix within which ecumenical dialogue takes place. It is Lindbeck’s assertion that a cultural-linguistic perspective enables to make better sense of what is actually going on in these dialogues, especially in accounting for the nature of their results.20 In this sense, his concern is more with the discovery

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16 ND, 10. Here Lindbeck implicitly states his heuristic intentions which might explain why he often generalizes to the extent that many commentators of Lindbeck criticize him for not doing justice to what he is generalizing.
17 Lindbeck 2004, 15.
18 Knitter 2002, 178. According to Amnell, Lindbeck is a moderate postmodern theologian in that he has adopted certain thoughts from postmodernism which characterize to a degree the structure of his thinking. On the whole, however, his thinking cannot be considered postmodern since according to Lindbeck first order religious discourse can possibly make ontological truth claims. Amnell 2010, 205, 208.
19 ND, 8.
20 This is important in order for assisting the implementation of ecumenical agreements. In Lindbeck’s proposal, a paradigm which allow’s ‘doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation’ is understood as intrumental for facilitating the reception of doctrinal agreements. Lindbeck asserts that this principle, which would be necessary for the theological implementation of reconciled diversity, is not conceivable through presently dominant and established perspectives which according to Lindbeck “at their best resort to intellectual gymnastics to the extent that they are unpersuasive.” ND, 15-17. This is of course not a substantial argument in itself, but highlights Lindbeck’s pragmatic filters, i.e. it needs to work without having to resort to a too complex an intellectual exercise in attempting to satisfy the semantic requirements of paradigms Lindbeck sees as problematic to begin with. If this perspective is left unconsidered, it will lead to criticism of
of a more truthful nature of the situation, not the substantial truth that is thematically under debate in these situations. Lindbeck therefore construes a cultural-linguistic perspective into reality. Lindbeck’s basic concern in the ND is according to DeHart not to engage in theological debate about how to interpret specific doctrine, but rather to bring forth a framework within which these debates can be carried out in a way that makes disagreement mutually understandable.\(^{21}\) This does not mean however that Lindbeck is indifferent towards the ontological truth of the issues under engagement, as this study will attempt to disclose.

As secondary sources I use an interview with Lindbeck and an article from the Thomist.\(^{22}\) The reason for choosing the interview with Lindbeck as a secondary source is the basic outline he puts forward on his own thinking. It offers a subjective look at how Lindbeck understands the formation of his basic guiding principles concerning doing theology. These can be considered important in the present thesis because of the way the ND can also be perceived to reflect Lindbeck’s thinking on the whole. Michalson writes, that the ND represents a set well-considered insights that have been patiently arrived through a long-term effort during the course of Lindbeck’s career up until the release of ND. Underlying perspectives which have been difficult to detect in Lindbeck’s work up until the ND, come together in the ND in a way that open up the overall picture of Lindbeck’s theological work. In other words it states explicitly the logic, which has played a largely implicit role in his earlier work.\(^{23}\) With respect to legitimising the focus on the understanding of community in this thesis, Marshall assesses that despite the vast array of topics Lindbeck has engaged with over the years, most of what he has written has to do with the different aspects concerning Christian communal identity: practical, sociological, doctrinal and theological.\(^{24}\) Other secondary sources listed in the bibliography are to render clarity on central issues relating to the aim of the study.

The method for investigating Lindbeck’s understanding of community in ND is systematic analysis. How systematic analysis is applied unfolds in the structuring of the thesis. Chapter 1.3 will be a description of the context of

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\(^{21}\) Lindbeck’s assessment of hybrid theories of doctrine, as it has to quite an extent. One example see McGrath 1990, 32-33.  
\(^{21}\) Lindbeck cites this article as an important clarification to his theory of truth presented in the ND which he maintains is widely disregarded in criticisms of his analysis of truth. Lindbeck 2009, 139 ff10.  
\(^{21}\) Michalson 1988, 109.  
\(^{24}\) Marshall 2009, x.
thought from within which Lindbeck imported the main sociological, anthropological and philosophical ideas, which qualify his cultural-linguistic perspective from that perspective. Because of the vastness of this discussion, it will simply highlight the factors, which are deemed useful with respect to the aim of this study. Chapter 2 will be a description of Lindbeck in his own theological context of postliberal theology which he is above all associated with. It will describe the emergence of Lindbeck and the general nature of the ongoing process of reception of ND and its central ideas. The intention of Chapter 3 is to describe the integral nature of Lindbeck’s understanding of a religious community. Chapter 4 will focus on an evidently problematic feature in Lindbeck’s understanding of community, as identified by his critics, which is how Lindbeck’s understanding of community understands the relationship between the text and the world. The intention of this chapter is to get a clearer understanding of how the cultural-linguistic understanding of community goes about accounting for this relationship. It will be explored with the help of those voices who have specifically criticized his understanding of community as a cultural-linguistic system as insufficient for understanding the relationship between world and text. Chapter 5 will be a concluding reflection.

The cultural-linguistic pool of ideas selectively introduced in chapter 1.2 is a short elaboration on the nontheological import of the ND. A far more extensive exploration of these ideas would be necessary if one wanted to understand to what extent Lindbeck’s perspective is specifically qualified by these ideas. But that would be a separate question in itself, because Lindbeck’s use of these ideas is in his own understanding probational, meaning he is testing their viability for his main argument, which is not derived from them, but rather his use of these ideas is a derivative of his theological argument. In other words this study will not focus on how right or wrong Lindbeck is in the application of these ideas, but rather on how these ideas function in Lindbeck’s use of them. The main purpose of chapter 1.2 is to help the reader orientate towards a cultural-linguistic mindset.

Previous research on Lindbeck is vast and from a diverse variety of perspectives. One can find a comprehensive listing of about 300 articles, reviews and books that deal with Lindbeck in one way or another in Lindbeck 2009, 152-

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25 It is important to note that although Lindbeck makes heuristic use of these non theological ideas, they are not in Lindbeck’s opinion any way foundational for his argument and could be omitted without materially affecting it. Lindbeck 2004, 15. They qualify understanding his perspective, not the perspective itself.
Taking into consideration that Lindbeck’s understanding of community is implicit in most of his work, it is logical that most of what is written about him also concerns his understanding of community to a lesser or greater extent. Because of this integral nature of community to Lindbeck’s thinking, literature that deals with or utilises Lindbeck holistically has been assumed most useful. Paul DeHart’s “The trial of the Witnesses” (2006), Kevin Vanhoozer’s “The Drama of Doctrine” (2005), “The nature of Confession, Evangelicals and Postliberals in Conversation”28, Reinhard Hutter’s “Suffering Divine Things” and Alister Mcgrath’s “The Genesis of Doctrine” (1990) are all notable literature in this respect which have been utilised in this study.

Finnish research on Lindbeck is mostly notably as a corporate effort. He is mentioned or elaborated on in passing whilst dealing with thematic issues and from this perspective it seems his thinking is relatively well known. The most recent evidence of this is Olli-Pekka Vainio’s “Beyond Fideism” (2010). It cites Lindbeck to quite an extent and provides in passing a useful summary of Lindbeck’s realism. There are a few exceptions to this general rule. Reijo Työrinoja analysed the main tenets of ND in 1991 in an article titled “Systemaattinen teologia ja uskonnollinen kieli” which is summarised in “Oppi, kahle vai kalleus” 2000. Also Sammeli Juntunen, Timo Eskola and Tuomo Mannermaa have outlined the main tenets of the ND. See Juntunen 2004, Eskola 2008 and Mannermaa 2000 in bibliography. More recently Daniel Nummela has compared Vanhoozer’s canonical-linguistic approach to Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic approach in his master’s thesis titled “Opin hermeneutiikka- kanonis-kielellisen ja kulttuuris-kielellisen hermeneutiikan keskeiset erot”. It has also been published in Iustitita 25, 2009. Most recently Kaija-Liisa Lindberg has written a dissertation for a higher pastoral degree titled “George A Lindbeckin kulttuuris-kielellisen opinkäsityksen ja siitä käydyn keskustelun tarkastelua” (2010). Matti Amnell explores Lindbeck as one representative of moderate postmodern theology in his doctoral thesis titled “Uskonto ilman uskontoa” (2010).

In the light of the above, Lindbeck’s understanding of doctrine has been covered in recent research and therefore the aim of this study limits itself to exploring Lindbeck’s understanding of community. Questions concerning

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26 One can also find a bibliography of all Lindbeck’s writing (a list of over 200 articles, books and reviews) since 1945. Lindbeck 2009, 141-152.
27 See p.25 in this study.
28 Apart from including an essay (Lindbeck 1996) as a secondary source for this study, Volf’s article “Theology, Meaning and Power” is the only other essay utilised from this book.
doctrine, truth and revelation are deeply interrelated to Lindbeck’s understanding of community, but they are dealt with only to the degree that they serve in enhancing Lindbeck’s understanding of community. Also perspectives concerning Lindbeck’s ecclesiological and ecumenical thinking are only elaborated on when it is of direct heuristic value to point out confluences to them or when they reflect the cultural-linguistic understanding of community in their respective logic.

A theological motive for this study is the scandal of Christian division. For practical purposes this scandal can be viewed as a complex process of learning away from visible unity, which inhabited the Church for its first millennium. Theologically, this learning away from unity is constituted by sin if we take into account Jesus’ prayer of unity. It also allows one to assume that dividing sin has been at work from the founding moment of the church. Therefore it needs to be acknowledged that sin is in a real way inherent in the doctrinal decisions undertaken by the church in its history at least in the role that communally authoritative doctrine functions in forming, upholding and projecting divisions amongst Christians. The ND attempts to offer a useful perspective for understanding this reality.

1.3 Community as a cultural system and linguistic medium
This chapter is to serve as an introduction into the anthropological, sociological and philosophical currents of thought, which served as the pool of ideas from where Lindbeck channelled the nontheological aspects of his cultural-linguistic understanding of religion and regulative understanding of doctrine for his model. It will concentrate on the relevant aspects of Clifford Geertz, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Peter Berger with respect to the aim of this study. On Lindbeck’s own account, he uses Geertz as a semiotic instantiation of a wide range of ideas originating from Weber, Durkheim, Hegel and Marx. Lindbeck’s own knowledge of these ideas is chiefly second hand through Peter Berger.29 According to Vanhoozer, Lindbeck is particularly indebted to Geertz’s cultural anthropology and Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language.30 The insights chosen are chosen on the retrospective assumption that they are useful in understanding the general nature of Lindbeck’s understanding of community which is the aim of this study.

An understanding of communities as cultural systems and linguistic mediums requires understanding communities as cultural systems and linguistic

30 Vanhoozer 2005, 10ft30.
mediums. This is not meant to read as a tautology, but rather states that a community is how it is understood to be, which requires understanding understanding.31 These two words together illustrate in a nutshell what perceiving community as a cultural system and linguistic medium is concerned with: a cultural system is a mode of understanding amongst its members, and that understanding is understood by its members through a linguistic medium which operates of and for the cultural system in question.

The general validity of this double ‘of and for’ aspect is evident in for example this very paragraph: the reader, being part of the reader community (two being enough), would not be able to make sense of understanding understanding if one were not able to firstly identify English vocabulary and secondly utilise English grammar. The seamless interdependence of these two aspects of understanding something said or written is what ultimately communicates an understanding of understanding understanding from the writer to the reader in this context.32

The investigation of this interdependence is according to Geertz generally referred to as hermeneutics: the study of how and based on what principles, we interpret what we interpret. For Geertz, central to hermeneutical investigations in its attempts to penetrate modes of thought amongst people, is moving back and forth between two questions: “What is the general form of their life?” and “What exactly are the vehicles (transmitting mediums) in which that form is embodied?”.

This process, which seeks to relate the whole to its parts and vice versa, is commonly referred to as the hermeneutical circle. Accordingly, it is a process in which interpretations lead to understandings and understandings lead to interpretations. In this sense it holds a methodological realism, not a principle. But because of precisely this, it is inversely a methodological principle in the way of an open-ended principle for determining principles. This type of categorising is explicitly present in Geertz’s Local Knowledge- Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology 1983. He writes:

“One will not find [in these essays] very much in the way of ‘theory and methodology of interpretation’ … what one will find is a number of actual interpretations of something,

31 Geertz 1983, 5.
32 To emphasize the main point here: if for example one were to apply indonesian grammar to english vocabulary in the above case, understanding understanding would read as the plural of understanding i.e. understandings.Therefore it is the grammar which renders the intended content of the language. Language and grammar are in this sense meaningful when both correspond with the intended message.
anthropologizing formulations of what I take to be some of the broader implications of those interpretations, and a recurring cycle of terms – symbol, meaning, conception, form, text... culture-designed to suggest there is a system in persistence, that all these so variously aimed inquiries are driven by a settled view of how one should go about constructing an account of the imaginative make-up of society.”33

What this type of hermeneutical process leads to is not a communion with the form of life or mode of understanding under study, but is according to Geertz more aptly described as something along the lines of “grasping a proverb”, “catching an allusion”, “seeing a joke” or “reading a poem”.34 It is more a question of ‘getting it’, than actually getting into it. Or more accurately it is more a question of seeing it, not being one with it. There seems to be a strong connotation in Geertz’s point concerning understanding, that understanding ultimately correlates with distancing oneself from a mode of understanding in order for a more genuine perspective to emerge. Perspective and understanding go hand in hand in complementing each other.

Clifford Geertz sums up a shift in academic culture, which he saw breaking through in the enormous amount of genre mixing35 in intellectual life in his time as follows: “Something is happening to the way we think about the way we think”36 This quote reveals a key presupposition which is central to social anthropology, namely the question of why we think the way we think in the first place. In other words, the origin of our perspectives into our thought is where a shift is identifiable because the answer to the ‘why?’ is perceived to be changing.

Analysing religion as a cultural system can be understood as expanding the conceptual arsenal within which the study of religion is undertaken by extending it into its cultural dimension. More precisely this implies that the analysis of religion focuses on the cultural dimension of religious analysis in order to widen the scope of historically and scientifically established and thus authoritative traditions with respect to the study of religion. This is done for the purpose of loosening the conceptual constraints to enable more meaningful analysis of religion.37

Geertz’s understanding of culture is semiotic. This is rooted in understanding man as an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has

33 Geertz 1983, 5.
34 Geertz 1983, 5, 68-70.
35 For example philosophical inquiries looking like literary criticisms (Sartre), ideological arguments cast as histographical inquiries (Edward Said).
spun. Culture is understood as these webs and therefore an analysis of culture can only be an interpretive one in search of meaning. In line with this, Geertz defines culture more specifically as a context within which social events, behaviours, institutions or processes can be intelligibly - that is thickly\(^{38}\) - described. It is not a power to which these can be causally attributed. With respect to the cultural dimension of religion, culture denotes “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life”. As a result, Geertz defines religion as follows:\(^{39}\)

“A system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.”\(^{40}\)

Geertz correlates a system of symbols with a model. The term ‘model’ has two senses or aspects: an ‘of’ sense and a ‘for’ sense. This intrinsic double aspect implies that religion serves the community as a model for a reality and as a model of a reality. This implies that religion acquires meaning by shaping the members of the community as well as being shaped by its members. Motives can be understood as liabilities or persisting tendencies within the structural identity of a religion. They are goal orientated and become meaningful when paying reference to the goal they are understood to be aiming for. Moods on the other hand are totalistic and are understood in reference to where they are coming from. It is an immediate reaction like worrying if nuclear holocaust is perceived to be looming. In other words we are the recipients of moods in contrast to motives, which are received inbuilt tendencies towards something, for example, success.\(^{41}\)

According to Geertz, man depends on symbol systems with a dependence so great that it is decisive for his identity as a creature. In terms of religion, this implies that man depends on religion in order to make life sufferable, not to avoid suffering, because life inevitably confronts one with suffering. It provides a cultural linguistic framework which makes the enduring of life with its up and downs possible. This it does by providing a comprehension of life and how to

\(^{38}\) “Thick description” means describing something within its meaning-giving context to the extent that it renders the meaning of that something. For example as is the case with idioms. See Geertz 1973, 6-10.

\(^{39}\) Geertz 1973, 5,14,89.

\(^{40}\) Geertz 1973, 90.

\(^{41}\) Geertz 1973, 93-98.
comprehend life within this comprehension. It serves in a sense as a cosmic guarantee that there is meaning to life.42

Concerning religious belief, Geertz is clear and explicit when it comes to the role of authority in religion. The basic axiom underlying all religious perspectives, whereby a perspective is a mode of seeing in the extended sense of discerning, apprehending, understanding or grasping, is that in order for one to know one must first believe. For this reason, Geertz requires a clear recognition of the fact that religious belief does not involve a “Baconian induction” from everyday experience, but rather a prior acceptance of authority, which transforms that experience.43

For Geertz the importance of religion lies in its capacity to serve as an all-embracing system of thought from which its way of relating to culture flows from. Concerning the study of religion, Geertz advocates a two-stage operation: analysing the religion as a system of meanings embodied in the system which makes up the distinct religion after which these systems can be related to social-structural and psychological processes. Geertz is dissatisfied with the fact that it is the latter stage with which contemporary social anthropological work concerning religion is mostly occupied with. In doing so it neglects and therefore takes for granted precisely what needs the most clarification and explanation: religion as a cultural system.44 Cultural systems can also be thought of as language games or forms of life, hence we turn to Wittgenstein.

‘Language games’ is a key notion in Wittgenstein’s later thought. Although he did not expand the idea in a systematic fashion, it has been enormously influential. Its central message is that words do not carry meaning on their own, but their meaning depends on the context of their application in different contexts. Therefore there are as many meanings for a word as there are language games within which it can be used. Languages games can also be thought of as forms of life. This implies that in order to understand the meaning of a language specific to a certain form of life, one needs to some extent participate in it. Meaning of words is learned through their use in forms of life. Meaning cannot be determined from outside this form of life. Language games can be understood to refer to entire cultures or sub-cultures such as politics, education or theology, but likewise to

44 Geertz 1973, 123-125.
more foundational systems such as a web of belief. Complexities inherent to these games vary according to their scope.45

The possibility of private languages, or rather their impossibility, is distinctly Wittgensteinian. According to Bloor’s investigation of Wittgenstein, a private language would be a vocabulary of pure introspection for recording the innermost aspects of our experiences. They would refer to immediate private sensations, which are not as such conveyable by words implying that another person could not understand a private language of introspection. For example, pain refers to a sensation of pain, but it does not capture the meaning of pain apparent in the private realm of existence, or anything specific about the pain other than what is understood by pain in the public realm e.g. a distressing sensation of some sort. A private language would have to differ from normal languages if it were to actually exist.46

Wittgenstein attacked the notion of private languages because he wanted to prove that there is a perpetually binding link between the mental life of the individual and the public world. Proving this link has significant consequences for understanding the nature of morality as well, because if a private language is an impossibility, then that is the case with private morality as well. Bloor understands the core of Wittgenstein’s attack to be that their is actually no such thing as a private understanding of a sensation in the first place (and therefore no private language which would have mediated it) because its assumed correctness is an illusion of the mind. If one impresses on oneself a given sensation as pain in order to be able to make the right connection in the future, it is done by assuming some sensation as a point of reference for pain, which, if understood as private, renders the correctness of the conviction irrelevant and beyond any realm of evaluation. Whatever seems right is right only because it is assumed to be right on account of a private language.47 Most importantly, it neglects the significance of what is guiding one’s application of the word pain to sensations of a certain type to begin with.

This leads Wittgenstein to conclude, that introspective discourse is a public institution just like ordinary language games. Expressions based on our inner experience are not really based on inner experience, but rather on socially acceptable ways of attempting to interpret the inner self. This further leads Bloor

45 Stiver 1996, 59-64.
46 Bloor 1983, 54.
47 Bloor 1983, 54-56, 64.
to conclude that according to Wittgenstein we have no immediate self-knowledge and consequently no resources for accounting for purely private objects and experiences. In order to sum the above perspective of Wittgenstein, the source of subjective experience is in language, which originates from outside our minds i.e. from the socially constructed collective mind of the community. Society provides us with an ‘objectified’ understanding of subjectivity which consequently renders our own subjectivity unobjectifiable because we cannot objectify what objectifies since it is not a private enterprise or investigation, but socially constituted. Our modes of subjectivity are linguistically mediated (implying they are social to their core) which correlates with the implicit aim of Wittgenstein in that objectivity, just as rationality, are actually something that are socially forged for our benefit in the process of constructing a form of collective life. Objectivity is communal capital rather than objective (or real) objectivity, and constructing it is the life vein of the community. Objectivity is therefore subjective at the level of the community, but objective to the individual participating in that community. As a result, apparent universals become relative and we become responsible for those aspects of reality, which previously we felt responsible to. This sort of ‘objectified’ subjectivity, according to which objectivity is acknowledged as a subjective goal, can be associated with socialized subjectivity from a sociological perspective. How this dynamic works from a sociological perspective is where we turn to next.

Lindbeck cites Peter Berger and Thomas Luchmann in the ND as his sources for describing religion as an overarching integrating and legitimating frame of reference for the socially constructed worlds that human beings inhabit. A central tenet of their cultural understanding of religion with respect to the transmission of religion has to do with the internalisation of reality. Berger and Luchmann understand society as an ongoing dialectical process between the aspects of externalisation, objectivation and internalisation. In other words, society consists of receiving and giving objectifying/objectified understanding. To be in a society is to participate in the dialectic between these three aspects. One internalises the objectified content in order to inhabit it and inevitably externalises it in living out one’s life as a part the given society. No-one, however, is born into this state of participation, but everyone is born with a predisposition towards

49 On the basis that the apparent objectivity is a side product of socialization. See
50 ND 27.
sociality, which enables one to become a member of society by participating in the dialectic.\textsuperscript{51}

The above societal dialectic implies that it is through a process of socialization that individuals become members of a given society. When for example an individual x born into society Y, he/she is inducted into participation in the societal dialectic. The first step in this process is that of internalisation. In it, individual x goes through a process of being related to and relating to the significant other\textsuperscript{52} in order to gain understanding of this other and in order to apprehend the world of the other as a meaningful and social reality.\textsuperscript{53} This complex process leads to an ongoing mutual identification between individual x and the other, which as a result of socialization, is no longer an other, because now x and Y live in the same world. They live in the same social construct of reality by participating in each other’s being. Of most relevance is that there is a mutual identification in existence between x and Y. When this level of internalisation has been achieved one can, according to Berger and Luchmann, begin to talk of individual x as a member of society Y.

Berger and Luchmann speak of socialization leading one eventually (as a result of the interaction with significant others) to identify with the generality of others. This generalized other, abstracted from the reality internalised through significant others, is the given society in its general and encompassing significance to the individual. It is only as a result of this generalized identification of the other that one’s own self-identification attains stability and continuity. After this point, one’s identity is no longer dependent of the specific others one has encountered along the way, but is now subjectively perceived to be an “identity in general”. This new identity has an inbuilt capacity to incorporate within itself the various perspectives acquired through separate processes of internalisation.\textsuperscript{54} At this point it could be said that one becomes a generally representative member of a society.

\textsuperscript{51} Berger & Luchmann 1966, 149. Berger&Luchmann cite Weber for their conception of understanding the other. Lindbeck too lists Weber as a source of his ideas/logic for ND.
\textsuperscript{52} The significant others in an individuals life are the principal agents for the maintenance of one’s subjective reality, i.e. those close enough whose inevitable responsibility it is to represent ‘the other’ to the individual and socialize one into a society. B&L 1966, 66, 154, 170-171.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid 150.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid 1966, 152-153. This correlates with Berger and Luchmanns understanding of language with respect to tradition in that language “objectivates the shared experiences and makes them available to all within the linguistic community, thus becoming both the basis and the instrument of the collective stock of knowledge. ... language provides the means for objectifying new experiences, allowing their incorporation into the already existing stock of knowledge, and it is the most
This process has an integral connection to language.

The formation within consciousness of the generalized other marks a decisive phase in socialization. It implies the internalisation of society as such and the objective reality established therein, and, at the same time, the subjective establishment of a coherent and continuous identity. Society, identity and reality are subjectively crystallised in the same process of internalisation. This crystallization is concurrent with the internalisation of language. Indeed, for reasons evident from the foregoing observations on language, language constitutes both the most important content and the most important instrument of socialization.\(^{55}\)

This crystallization of the generalized other in the consciousness of the individual establishes a symmetrical relationship between objective and subjective reality. The higher the degree of symmetry, the more successful the socialization has been.\(^{56}\) The objective corresponds with the subjective hence making them translatable through the language which initially constitutes the formation of this symmetry. However, Berger and Luchmann stress that the symmetry between objective and subjective reality cannot be complete to the extent that the difference between the outer and inner aspects of reality becomes erased in some way. This incompleteness subsists because the two aspects of reality are not coextensive: there can never be more subjective reality than what the objective already holds and makes available. In other words and despite the symmetry, no individual will ever internalise the totality of what has been objectivated as reality in one’s own society.\(^{57}\) In this sense, there is a distinction that can be made between society and the ‘world’ the society represents. All the members of a society constitute the ‘world’ or total reality of a society, but the world never constitutes in its totality the identity of an individual member. Therefore the objective maintains the role of a leading partner in the dialectic between society and its members and in this sense individuals as members of a society reflect the nature of society but are never total manifestations of this society.\(^{58}\) The nature of a society or community is therefore not reducible from any single member, which also verifies the obvious: a community cannot consist of only one even with

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\(^{55}\) Berger & Luchmann 1966, 153. (italics added)

\(^{56}\) Ibid 183.

\(^{57}\) This is simply because the contents of socialization are determined by social distribution of knowledge. A child does not choose to which parents one is born and therefore it is the parents who set “the rules of the game”. This leads the child to internalize the world of his parents, not out of choice, but as the only conceivable world there is which is why the world of childhood is “massively and indubitably real”, in that it is the first world one knows and in this sense serves as one’s basic frame of interpretation. Ibid 1966, 153-155.

\(^{58}\) ibid 153-154.
respect to knowledge of a community. Communal knowledge has an unsurpassable dimension, which is only available to a community, not the individual.

Balancing out the leading role of objective reality in identity formation is the realism that there are always elements in subjective reality that are not of social origin, for example the awareness of one’s own body. The immediacy of this prior awareness is what facilitates the socially learned apprehension of one’s body. From this perspective the individual always has a basic intuitive understanding of oneself as being both outside and inside society, which too cannot dissolve. This tension highlights the reality that the symmetry described above is by nature dynamic because it needs to be produced and reproduced in the very act of creating it. Berger and Luchmann describe this relationship between the individual and the objective world as an “ongoing balancing act”.59

It can be seen in the above that central to socialization is the instrumental role of language. It enables one to become an effective member of a society by gradually coming to possess the world which one as a subjective and identifiable self inhabits.60 Language is in its function constitutive to the general identity of any given society. Languages uphold, create and modify the symbolic universes they transmit. For this reason it is important to acknowledge clearly, that the symbolic/semantic universes are social products and therefore understanding their meaning lies in the history of how they came to the point at which they are now. This emphasis on the socio-historical origins is especially important because of the sense of inevitability and totality societies present themselves with as a result of socialization.61 In other words the assumed authority built-in as a result of understanding being a social construct,62 -i.e. every member in a sense posits the society with its authority-63, does not justify the authority given to it, but looking to the sociohistorical origins can serve in either verifying or falsifying tenets of this authority. Even though the above description of internalisation is concerned mostly with primary socialization, and not with the more complex processes of secondary socialization, which nonetheless follow the same general logic, the

59 ibid 154.
60 ibid 157.
61 ibid 115.
62 Because of the nature of socialization, one acquires cohesive wholes through language without reconstructing their original process of formation. They are valid because they are. I.e. their authority is a given. ibid 87.
63 See Geertz for a useful perspective of this, in a sense ‘borrowed’, authority. Geertz 1973, 90.
significance of the world internalised through primary socialization persists as a home world throughout life. i.e. as the basic mindset (or base world according to Berger and Luchmann) which does not alter easily. One’s home is always in the past.64

The past is present in the core of our identities in the form of traditions. Naturally some traditions carry more weight than other. How we interpret history is enforced with more tradition than how we have our coffees. But with respect to religious traditions, Berger emphasises that at the core of the phenomenon of religion is a set of highly distinctive, yet on the other hand domesticated, experiences.

A religious tradition, with whatever institutions have grown up and around it, exists as a fact in ordinary, everyday reality. It mediates the experience of another reality, both to those who have never had it and to those who have but who are ever in danger of forgetting it. Every tradition is a collective memory. Religious tradition is a collective memory of those moments in which the reality of another world broke into the paramount reality of everyday life. But the tradition not only mediates the religious experience; it also domesticates it.65

Religious tradition is, according to Berger, the careful management of exceedingly dangerous human experience. Religious experience is by nature such that it breaches the reality of ordinary life. This rupturing of reality has its origins in what is understood and referred to as sacred. Despite the sense of overwhelming certainty with which these experiences can affect the perspective one has of reality, they are difficult to sustain in the long run. In order to keep them real, these experiences become embodied in traditions. These traditions mediate the experience to others, which eventually leads to the institutionalising of these traditions in order to establish a relationship between the given knowledge and the conventional reality of a society. In this sense religion follows a general feature of human existence, which is to embody human experience in tradition. As was evident in the description of socialization earlier, this is necessary for continuity, which is inherent necessity to any possible existence of social life. 66 Traditions and institutions alike are different forms of

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64 Berger & Luchmann 166, 182. For example in a school context, the content transmitted via secondary socialization requires the teacher to “bring home” to the best of one’s ability, the content being taught. The home refers to the general mindset constituted largely by primary socialization which needs to be taken into account in order to ease the internalizing of new knowledge and skills. See Ibid 162-163. When this logic is transferred to a theological context, it highlights the necessity of contextualisation in communicating a religious message to the extent that it is an imperative.
65 Berger 1980, 49.
objectifications through which the identities of societies are transmitted in the ongoing dialectic between internalisation, objectivation and externalisation, which constructs reality.

Summing up, religious experience becomes embodied in traditions, languages and symbol systems, which are all historically established. Hence a perspective emerges whereby religion is understood as a human projection because it is communicated in human symbols. But the very act of communicating it, which essentially brings about the projection, is *motivated* by an *experience* in which “a metahuman reality is *injected* into human life”. This leads Berger to conclude that any inquiry into a nature of religion must as its final objective have the discovery of the core experience which constitutes that religious tradition in the full knowledge that this objective cannot be fully attained, because the inquirer is always embedded within a specific sociohistorical context and as a result confined to approximations concerning the articulation of the core experience and its metahuman intentions. 67

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67 Berger 1980, 52, 142. According to Lindbeck, Berger’s thoughts with respect to religion bear a close resemblance to Schleiermacher, even though Berger’s own theory of culture need not restrict Berger to an experiential-expressive account of religion. ND 20, 28 fn18.
2. Lindbeck and postliberal theology

This chapter will describe the emergence, reception and position of Lindbeck within postliberal theology.

The ‘intuitive’ roots of Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic perspective into religion go back to his own roots. He was born in 1923 to Lutheran missionaries in Luoyang, China, where he spent the first seventeen years of his life. For the first twelve of those he was largely cut off from the outside world due to sickness of some sort, which kept him at home in a somewhat isolated existence. These years of his life he describes as ones spent in an invalid’s bubble, in which he was free to create an understanding of China, which appealed to him.68

He recounts certain aspects of Chinese culture that captivated his imagination and thus left lasting impressions on him. One significant such were the continuities of thought and culture present in Chinese history, the physical and literary evidence of which fascinated his young imagination. One exposure in particular exemplified these continuities in their far-reaching implications. He was deeply impressed by the personas of the local pastor and his wife in that they were Christian and yet simultaneously profoundly Confucian in their manners. These experiences among others implanted certain ways of thinking in him, which he compresses into four guiding principles: 1) the communal shapes us more than we shape ourselves. 2) The human basics are everywhere and always much the same.69 3) Despite these similarities, a combination of cultural and linguistic differences can make communication (therefore communication of these basics as well) almost, though not entirely, impossible. 4) Most importantly, book-sustained continuities of community creating thought and practice can survive thousands of years of political, social, economic and even linguistic upheaval.70

Noteworthy of these deeply instilled convictions, as Lindbeck himself refers to them, is that none of them relate directly to China, even though he refers to them as China-implanted modes of thought. What were at one point subliminal

68 Lindbeck 2006, 28. With respect to Lindbeck’s Christian identity, he says a Lutheran pastor who was very communicative about real presence had a profound impact on him. Lindbeck 1990, 494. 69 See ND for correlate. ND 60. 70 Lindbeck 2006, 28. Lindbeck understands text in itself as initially including not only written text, but also orally transmitted tradition, ritual enactment and pictorial representations. These forms of text are different from speech acts in that they are fixed communicative patterns which are used in various contexts for many purposes and their meanings vary accordingly. In other words they indicate the framework within which individual speech acts are possible or meaningful. The notion that they are fixed communicative patterns is what gives text in its written form a comprehensiveness, complexity and stability which is unattainable in any other medium. Lindbeck 1986, 361-362.
observations made within the influence of Chinese culture, have over time translated into conscious sociological generalisations concerning the significance of culture and language with respect to communal interaction and the life of communities. He does not claim certainty in the significance of these childhood observations, nor does he elaborate on later events in his life like moving to America which might have further enhanced these subliminal convictions, but he considers these convictions as the root cause of his attraction to the sociological, philosophical and anthropological streams of thought which provided the central ideas for his cultural-linguistic perspective on religion. It implies that he does not regard his personal experiences as in any way foundational to the above attraction, but in his case, his own life experience assisted in manifesting these inclinations. In other words he perceives his personal experience as having enhanced existing tendencies in his thought. It furthermore implies that he deems this inclination is in general more valid than other possible tendencies, which is most explicitly manifests itself in his advocating for the superiority of the cultural linguistic alternative he presents in the ND. The tendency to realise that the basic processes of linguistic, social and cognitive construction of reality and experience are much the same irrespective of place or time implies the general notion that we are as humans communal by nature. However the communal skills acquired via these basic processes can vary in their cultural-linguistic diversity to the extent that communicating, for example our understandings of this communal nature can become almost impossible. It demonstrates our dependency on the tools with which we understand how we exist as communal creatures. The dependency can be particularly “bewitching” if one assumes as unique the paradigm one gives authoritative status in one’s thinking, which Lindbeck regularly stresses is the case of those who hold modernity unique in its legitimacy and validity. From a CL perspective, assuming the uniqueness of the modern era does not make sense, even though its assumed uniqueness is a logical conclusion of its premisses. In short, modernity in the way Lindbeck asserts its nature is not a sensible option for him even though it is understandable option.

71 Lindbeck 2006, 28.
72 Even though he presents the cultural-linguistic theory as an alternative, the all-encompassing regulative view of doctrine, which is a derivative of his cultural linguistic theory, is understood to be superior (at least in specifying what is normative about doctrines ND p104-108)
73 See ND, 22, 51, 77, 127, 130.
74 Lindbeck 1990, 493.
75 ND 20-21.
Marshall summarises Lindbeck’s lifelong thinking on the whole as being an extended reflection and attempt at answering how should the Christian community understand its identity and purpose in the modern world. According to Marshall, Lindbeck evaluates this question in the light of three central criteria: the church’s own past, its likely future and the scandal of Christian division. This correlates with Vainio’s more general assessment of Lindbeck on the basis of the ND. After a brief analysis of the most problematic points of Lindbeck’s CL proposal on the basis of the theological debate and discussion it has invoked during the last 25 years, Vainio finds that the central problem from which all others emerge is Lindbeck’s understanding of the relation between text and the world. The relation between the text and the world correlates with that of the Christian community and the modern world because the text in the form of holy writ embodies in Lindbeck’s thinking the cultural linguistic reality, which constitutes the sense of the faithful of the Christian community in the scripture. Therefore it also constitutes the Christian community cultural-linguistically constituted by scripture in modern world by supplying the interpretive framework for seeking its coming into being. From this perspective, the ND can be seen to reflect the theological concerns of Lindbeck rather holistically since it has been successful in arousing discussion in precisely the area, which Marshall sees as of primary concern to Lindbeck during the most significant part of his career. In other words, Lindbeck managed to make his concerns the concern of theology to the extent that he, in alignment with Vainio’s conclusions, “put theology on a new track”.

Työrinoja puts Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic account of religious language and doctrine into perspective by analysing it through philosophy of language. Conventionally, language is examined in the light of three criteria. The first is syntax, which refers to the logical grammar of a statement: its vocabulary and the grammatical rules governing the correct intralinguistic application with respect to being meaningful within the language in question. The second is semantic, which is concerned with how an expression relates to the reality external to the language within which it has been articulated. It is concerned with what an expression is referring to and how the language itself conditions this referring and how this

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76 Marshall 2009, x; Vainio 2010, 73-75.
77 ND, 116-117. The sense of the faithful, ‘sensus fidelium’, is the cultural linguistic authority underlying the authority of the church which guided the formation of the canon. After the closing of the canon, the canon is what informs and therefore shapes the sense of the faithful of a Christian community which believes in the eschatological decisiveness of Jesus Christ. Lindbeck 2002, 205.
78 Vainio 2010, 76.
affects our understanding of reality. The third is pragmatic, which is concerned with the use and contexts of use of a language. Työrinoja notes that there is no consensus within philosophy of language as to how these three criteria relate to each other, but nonetheless how these three criteria are understood to relate to each other can reveal one’s position precisely in this respect.79

In the light of these criteria, Työrinoja draws the conclusion that Lindbeck’s account is almost completely syntactic and pragmatic: religion is first and foremost a question of knowing how to be religious in a given tradition. The semantic criteria are lacking almost completely rendering the model toothless in examining questions surrounding truth and meaning. Those are understood to belong solely to first order discourse, and therefore become questions inherent only to the performative use of religious language in the context of first order discourse.80

The structurally inbuilt lack of semantic criteria can also be viewed as intentional on Lindbeck’s part in the sense that it lacks semantic criteria precisely for the purpose that it is those criteria which have to be rethought in order to move towards establishing a more viable understanding of the semantics concerning Christian language. It brackets out the questions concerning the ontological or correspondent truth of dogmas with the specific neutrality brought about by the lack of semantic criteria, which Lindbeck considers as the decisive advantage of his model for ecumenical dialogue.81 Lindbeck wants to challenge the theological community in this respect instead of explicitly putting forward his own understanding of this, which according to Juntunen can to an extent be seen as existing implicitly in the ND.82 Hunsinger cites Lindbeck’s last sentence in the ND: “May their tribe increase” in his assessment of postliberal theology. According to Hunsinger, that tribe can be recognized by a common set of goals, like moving beyond the liberal/evangelical impasse by way of rethinking old questions like the truth of theological language which has been facilitated by the rise of nonfoundationalism. The ND in this respect can be seen as methodological support and guidance for channelling this tribe’s desires,83 which comes close to Vainio’s talk of Lindbeck putting theology on a new track as mentioned earlier. It

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81 Hutter 1997, 45.
82 Juntunen 2004, 214.
83 Hunsinger 2003, 57.
seems Lindbeck’s intent was to enhance certain existing tendencies within the emerging contemporary context.

Postliberal theology is a manifestation of narrative theology, which came out of America in the 1970’s. It was a reaction to the dominant tendencies, which tried to extract the real meaning from the narrative and present it in univocal form in the form of unambiguous propositions. Narrative theology in contrast advocated for the irreducibility and irreplaceability of the narrative. Narratives were in themselves to be understood as the primary language of the scriptures. Accordingly systematic theology done on the basis of a narrative must continually circle ‘back home’ to the narrative in order to be judged and kept in check. The narrative was in this way appointed the role of leading preunderstanding in the hermeneutical circle.

According to Juntunen, an important work concerning narrative theology is Hans Frei’s “Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative”. Frei’s intention is to demonstrate that the basic problem in modern theology is that it has not taken the narrative of the Christ in the gospel as the starting point of doing theology. Modernity has attempted to make believing possible by discerning the relevance of Christ by historically critical methods or by pondering to which existential need Christ is the answer. In other words the human subject has been granted primacy. Therefore a corrective shift was needed. The corrective from Frei comes in the form of recovering the importance of scriptural narrative for theology. According to Fodor, it is amongst Frei’s most central contributions to PL theology in that it has significant Christological implications. If one takes seriously the reality constituting power of the text, then the narrative depiction of Christ leads to a certain priority of identity over presence. How God renders Christ to humanity is the hermeneutical key for understanding his presence. In other words God renders his presence, which implies his presence is in effect a rendering presence. It enables Christians to ascertain what Jesus Christ’s presence “in” the church and “in” the world means.

Juntunen describes the basic idea of narrative theology as that of giving primacy to the world of the text. The given primacy serves in letting the otherness of the text remain as otherness by making the world of the bible the primary frame of reference for determining the meaning of the text. In order to understand the

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85 Juntunen 2004, 203, 206-207. Fodor 2005, 234-235. This principle is expressed in Lindbeck’s understanding of witnessing, which entails being for the other.
world of the bible on its own terms, one must make out its plot, in other words, its narrative. The storyline of the bible then becomes the intrinsic point of reference for deriving meaning in the textual world. In brief, the meaning of the text is derived from within the text. However, the world of the text should not be overly emphasized i.e. text absorbs the world, since it can alienate one from reality. This is not only because the world of the text can become the only world one knows, but because in doing so one might overlook the extratextual references the world of the text itself assumes within itself. Juntunen understands the biblical world’s basic relation to reality as being that of an eye-opener: it makes it possible to view creation from a new perspective. Absorbing ‘reality’ into the reality of the bible might overlook that the world of the bible is precisely the created world in which we live.86

According to Fodor, the sufficiency of narrative theology is limited. Narrative theology deepens the meaning of the text by expounding dimensions of its cognitive structures, which cannot be attained in any other way. However this does not render the narrative approach sufficient for all the needs of the church which requires a level of precision and systematisation that cannot be attained solely through narrative efforts. Fodor emphasises postliberals should do more to sustain the tension between systematic and narrative theological discourse. Fodor locates the crux of this challenge in the question of how the strange new world of the bible relates to other worlds. The ‘how’ involves determining how the biblical world impacts the extratextual? Does it replace it? Does it transform it? Does encountering the extratextual intratextually possibly advance a mutual process of judgement and correction? 87

Vanhoozer points out that the bible contains more than narrative. It contains truth claims about God and God’s relationship to the world, which provide “inner-biblical direction” for interpreting the narratives.88 These statements are as such irreducible to narrative form, even though narratives have the capacity to affirm the same content. Vanhoozer cites critics who assert that unfolding the world of the Bible narratively does not yet entail engagement with the world. Vanhoozer

86 Juntunen 2010, 210-211, 213, 233-234.
87 Fodor 2005, 238. The questions concerning the relationship between the biblical world and the outside world here resembles the layout of Paul Knitter’s model which categorises different assumptions concerning the relationship between Christianity and other religions.
88 Vanhoozer’s own theory of doctrine is directive. Vanhoozer 2005, xiii, 30. In other words, doctrines, which link together gospel and theology, are perceived as directives in contrast to Lindbeck who sees them as rules which regulate the the link between theology and the gospel.
further aligns himself with critic, that the narrative is dependent on the intratextual world of the text to the extent, that it disables it from being able to make any extratextual truth claims. The inability runs the danger of feeding Gnostic temptations by treating biblical narrative as knowledge enclosed in the intratextual world by subsequently overlooking the Church’s narrative in the world. It resonates with Vanhoozer’s understanding of where Lindbeck’s goes wrong with respect to revelation, which is that Lindbeck treats biblical texts as only human testimony, which according to Vanhoozer disables the bible from speaking in a way that transcends the world. Therefore, if Lindbeck’s intention was to distance his own position from the experiential-expressivist positions of Schleiermacher, Lindbeck ends up himself articulating a form of corporate expressivism.89

Lindbeck’s position in theological schools of thought is most firmly within that of postliberal theology, which is also referred to as the Yale school of narrative theology, even though this type of categorization is not without its problems. The Nature of Doctrine (ND) can be considered one of the seminal works with respect to the formation of what has become known as postliberal theology. Alister McGrath has considered ND as the most significant statement of the postliberal agenda. It is the most widely read and cited account of postliberal theology. Tuomo Mannermaa considers ND alongside Reinhard Hütter’s “Suffering Divine Things” as the most significant systematic investigation into the churches’ understanding of doctrine.

The ND has had direct bearing on significant theological efforts.90 Paul Knitter credits Lindbeck as one of the first theologians to hear the message of postmodernism and convey it to theology. Fodor notes however, that it is misleading and unwarranted to consider ND as some type of manifesto of postliberal theology, because it was intended to serve as a preliminary discussion towards a theologically substantial study in comparative dogmatics.

Fodor sees it more essentially as a programmatic proposal that concerns itself with methodological issues, which are in their general character

89 Vanhoozer 2005, 94-95, 95n66, 95n68, 97, 99-100. See also Vainio 2010, 74.
90 For example, Vanhoozer refers to his post-conservative, canonical-linguistic theology and directive theory of doctrine as a cousin of Lindbeck’s postliberal, cultural-linguistic and regulative theory of doctrine. The structural outlines of his work speak for themselves. Vanhoozer 2005, xiii. For a comparison of these ‘cousins’, see Nummela 2010. McGrath regards Lindbeck’s shortcomings in understanding the intellectual viability of cognitive propositional approaches to doctrine as a factor which led him to develop his three volume project: “A Scientific Theology”. McGrath 2002, 41-42.
pretheological. In this sense the ND is a pretheological preview of the theological tasks ahead in that it enables theology to distance itself from itself in order to enable new theological developments by way of expanding the ‘conceptual envelope’ within which the doing of theology takes place.

Fodor’s perspective is echoed in DeHart’s analysis of an apparent irony present in the rise of Lindbeck’s ND to that of a manifesto within the postliberal project. It is telling of the general character and possible intent of the ND in that coinciding with its rise to manifesto status within the postliberal project was the almost complete disappearance of postliberalism as a topic of active discussion and debate. This could at first sight reflect the ultimate rejection of its central ideas but DeHart also points to the contrary. Rather, it is evident that it was more a case of successful integration of its central ideas into theological discourse.

Lindbeck’s ideas, just as Frei’s, had dissolved into the broader tradition of creative thought that came about through being in contact with the postliberal project in its most explicit form. As a result, the ideas of Lindbeck and Frei, which have their specific home in postliberalism, live now in a wider tradition of thought than ever before even though these extended effects may no longer be accounted solely to postliberalism. This wide scope of influence correlates with Bruce Marshall’s assessment of the ND in that it has over time emerged as one of the most influential works of academic theology to appear in English during the last fifty years. Postliberalism, in its rise and decline served in this sense as a specific forum for channelling its central ideas to a wider audience and this happened by way of permeating its scope of influence to various degrees.

The susceptibility of certain theological circles to postliberalism was surely no accident. Just as postliberal theology came out of Yale on the western shores of the Atlantic, similar developments took place in Britain in the 1980’s as a reaction against the liberalism of the 1960’s and 1970’s. These developments displayed a

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91 McGrath 1994, 109, Fodor 2005, 231-232. Lindbeck 1984 This intended study of Lindbeck’s is yet to materialise. Lindbeck’s intention has evolved into that of an ecclesiological study, concerned with what he refers to as a church-as-Israel ecclesiology. Lindbeck 1990, 493. However, it has not taken the form of any systematic presentation yet. Lindbeck 2006, 35. See The Church in a Postliberal Age ed. James J Buckley for a collection of articles dealing with the issue. Lindbeck 2002. For an extensive analysis of the central tenets of Lindbeck’s ecclesiology based on what he has already published concerning it, See Hutter 2000, 66-68.
92 “Expanding the conceptual envelope” is here borrowed from Geertz who used it in the context of describing the nature of a similar need in social anthropology. By this he means, that the way to move beyond the limits and constraints of how we are accustomed to thinking within eg theology, comes about by placing these customs into “a broader context of contemporary thought than they, in and of themselves, encompass”. See Geertz 1973, 88-89.
94 DeHart 2006, 43.
vague resemblance to postliberalism by sharing in the postliberal mood. However, of specific significance is that these theologians, such as Rowan Williams, John Webster, Nicholas Lash, Andrew Louth, Oliver O’Donovan and Colin Gunton, formulated their positions greatly within their own contexts and largely independent of the influence of Frei and Lindbeck. By the 1990’s it had become pointless to attribute developments labelled postliberal to any single point of origin. Rather, it seems that it was a question of the time having been ripe for a certain type of reaction, one instantiation of which was the Yale postliberals, and another the British reaction.95

The programmatic nature of ND correlates with the way postliberal theology itself has evolved since its inception, which has consequently affected how postliberal theology is perceived today. Fodor sees it as a movement within theology rather than a specific school of thought, which would be open to systematisation. Fodor’s realism in this respect is a derivative of what postliberal engagement usually entails in practice: it is a joint effort rather than an autonomous one when it comes to dealing with doctrinal issues. It is characterised by collaborative engagement rather than autonomous scholarship. Doing theology in this sense means it is in its very essence a corporate effort.96 This resonates with one central aim of postliberal theology, which Fodor articulates as being that of an ecumenically open renewal of the church. In this context, the word ‘ecumenical’ distinctly connotes the corporate dimension of the church. This openness is also identifiable in Lindbeck’s realism, which according to Pecknold is not interested in closure but in remaining open to judgement. Lindbeck did not write the ND in order to render a complete account to questions surrounding meaning, or truth or justification. Rather he understands engaging communally with scripture as a journey into truth and this journey discloses an open ended propositional answer to these questions. This does not imply that there is no truth

95 DeHart 2006, 44-45. Reijo Työrinoja’s article in TA/1985 titled “Is Wittgensteinian Theology possible” can in the light of the above be considered one indicator/reflection of the same type of awareness breaking through in the context of finnish theology roundabout the same time as ND. Even though Työrinoja takes his cue for his article from Yale professor Paul L Holmer, there are no other references to Yale postliberals in his article. Instead it is concerned with examining the possibilities of utilising Wittgenstein in theology which of course indirectly goes to the heart of the philosophical instruments analogously utilised in ND. For article, See TA 3/1985,169-176. By 1991 Lindbeck’s work had broken through into Finnish discourse. See Työrinoja ’systematic theology and religious language” which deals solely with the main tenets of ND . TA/1991. 96 Lindbeck says concerning listening to Scripture as the final authority, that one must do so in the company of all those at all times and places who have taken the biblical story seriously. This emphasis on the corporate nature of listening to scripture emphasises the reality that if one does not listen to those who have listened, one is in fact not genuinely listening. ND 103.
beyond a ‘gigantic proposition’, but rather states that truth needs to perceived communally (and therefore is necessarily mediated by a semiotic system) and in this way correlates with the internal logic (communion) of the triune life of God. In this way Lindbeck’s semiotic attentiveness aims at relativizing relativism with the revelation of God as the ultimate reality.97

As a movement within theology, postliberal theology understands itself as a corrective in the early reformatory sense. It is not in the business of creating something new. Through ecumenically regenerative practices it aims at repairing and constructing theology from where theology is by raising a postliberal awareness. This awareness concerns itself with the dangers arising from regarding religious experiences as universal, but subsequently also with the inherent potential for false projections resulting from founding one’s religious self-understanding on foundational propositions. This awareness associates itself with a desire and commitment to move beyond the liberal/evangelical impasse resultant of modernity.98 How this is to be achieved is partially a reason for why postliberal theology concerns itself with methodology. It is looking for a way out this persisting dichotomy. A central aspect of postliberalism is reclaiming the notion of community tradition as a controlling influence in theology, and it is this notion in particular which is inbuilt into the methodological outlook of postliberal theology.99 For this reason it is the significance of community which determines the understanding of community in postliberal theology, that which Lindbeck wants to say is substantially overlooked in conventional ways of perceiving the role of doctrines in communal discourse/identity. As a result, postliberals advocate a mediating third alternative or a third way.100

98 Hunsinger 2003, 57.
100 In advocating for a third way in the context of theology, postliberalism could be seen as joining a loose category associated with mediating and reconciling differences in rather diverse contexts. For example, the third way in politics which tries to reconcile left and right wing policies, socialism and capitalism (advocated notably by sociologist Anthony Giddens), for a marginal example concerning culture, see ‘third culture’ (also known as crossculture), which tries to bridge the gap between different worlds. Pollock & Van Reken 2009. As a philosophical concept it was coined by the founder of pragmatism Charles Peirce who typically characterises thirdness as mediation. Saarinen sees thirdness as an emerging concept carrying on from recent discussions on otherness. Although Saarinen sees it as a concept still seeking an established meaning, he characterises it in one sense as a ‘mediation of sort’ born in encountering the other. Of particular interest to the theme of this study, is that Saarinen likens this thirdness to an offspring of hospitality, and by doing so links thirdness into old Christian tradition. Saarinen 2008, 31-32. Common to all of the above is that the thirdness implied assumes the new whole as something greater than the sum of its parts in that thirdness brings something new or strange (depending on how pragmatic one’s general approach is) into the equation. This links in with Lindbeck’s basic
Mannermaa sees Lindbeck’s CL model as a clear progression from the CP and EE models, which he profiles in the ND. The proposed solution, whereby religious language is the \emph{a priori} to religious experience, is especially welcome for ecumenical dialogue, because no historical religious community would welcome the claim that its language and system of symbols is a nondiscursive expression of a one and the same experience.\footnote{Mannermaa 2000, 190.} This would disempower the language of its meaning, because meaning is dependent on the history that has disclosed it.

McGrath assesses Lindbeck’s ND as a failed attempt in finding a way out of the failure of the enlightenment project. Evidence of this is that nothing significant has emerged from the Yale school, which would speak on the behalf of reaping the fruit of an initially promising approach outlined in the ND. This leads McGrath to conclude that Lindbeck’s explored approach is a dead end.\footnote{McGrath 2002, 52-53.}

McGrath suggests that Lindbeck has misread the spirit of the times in thinking that cultured people do not take seriously the capability of language to refer to extra-systemic realities. This misreading is a result of not being up to date with the advance made by realist theories of knowledge. Mcgrath argues, that despite utilising social scientists such as Clifford Geertz, Lindbeck does not take into account what natural sciences have offered with respect to cognitive-propositional approaches to reality.\footnote{These approaches in the scientific context carry with them a commitment to a belief in the reality the theoretical language depicts because it constitutes the meaning of that language. According to this view, what the language refers is basically an argument for that reality being ’really out there’. For example a realist will argue that positrons are ’out there’. McGrath 1990, 21-32.} This McGrath sees as a possibly fatal flaw in Lindbeck’s thinking on the whole. In all, Lindbeck offers a disappointingly superficial account of the place of doctrine within the Christian community according to McGrath.\footnote{Mcgrath 2002, 46, 52; Macgrath 2003, 31.} It seems this is especially the case with Lindbeck’s portrayal of the cognitive-propositional approach.

The basic problem with Lindbeck’s account of a cognitive-propositional understanding of doctrine is according to McGrath that it misunderstands that position to hold a belief that it is possible to state the objective truth about God “definitely, exhaustively and timelessly in propositional form.” Where it fails is
that it does not take into account the historical and linguistic sophistication of these approaches to doctrine, and in doing so does not pay adequate attention to what it means to suggest that religious claims are cognitive. McGrath notes that for example in the medieval period dogma was mostly understood as a dynamic concept. In these propositional traditions doctrines are recognized as perceptions, not total descriptions, which point beyond themselves rather than represent truth as such concerning God. Doctrines were understood as perceptions of truth tending toward this truth. McGrath quotes John Henry Newman as a manifestation of this more historically faithful portrayal of cognitive-propositionalist approach concerning doctrine: “doctrines cannot hope to do what they express, but they are nevertheless necessary and proper means of preserving and communicating the mystery of faith. A proper understanding of this approach is therefore that it does not reduce an experience to works, but is simply an attempt to convey it through words. Many are critical of Lindbeck’s too straightforward account of the cognitive-propositional position.

Fodor assesses the future of postliberal theology as resting more on its ability to generate productive tensions, than on its ability to resolve theological problems. If success is judged on the basis of working resolutions rather than working solutions, postliberal theology will contribute significantly to the future of theology. If Fodor’s prognosis is correct, it implies postliberal theology is primarily to be perceived as an instrument, which provides constructive motives and incentives for doing theology.

Vanhoozer places Lindbeck amongst those theologians who represent a turn to church practice, which is characteristic to contemporary theology. It leads to ecclesiology becoming the “first theology” which changes the hermeneutical

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105 McGrath 2002, 43-44. It is worth noting, that McGrath’s critic is not all points fair towards Lindbeck. Concerning his assessment of Lindbeck’s critique towards the cognitive-propositional perspective, McGrath suggests that Lindbeck suggests that those who are inclined to perceive religion in a cognitive fashion are those who combine unusual insecurity with naivete. Here McGrath takes Lindbecks heuristic intentions out of context. See ND, 21-22. It can be said in McGraths defense that Lindbeck does deal somewhat hastily with the cognitive propositional position. But McGrath is just as hasty towards Lindbecks limited heuristic intent in precisely this respect.

106 McGrath 2002, 43-46. Despite being heavily critical of Lindbeck account of cognitive-propositional theories of doctrine, McGrath sees Lindbeck’s critique of the experiential-expressive position, which sees doctrine referring to ubiquitous private prereflective experience underlying all religion, as fair and accurate and probably the most significant long-term contribution Lindbeck makes via the ND towards contemporary discussion concerning the nature of doctrine. McGrath 1990, 20.


108 Fodor 2005, 246.
mindset. The question concerning the bible is no longer what kind of a text it is, but rather what kind of understanding is Christian understanding.\textsuperscript{109}

Marshall categorises criticism of the ND under three main reservations around which it tends to gather. The first is that epistemically the proposed theology amounts to a biblical or ecclesial fideism, which does not succeed in seeking rational justification for Christian beliefs in any sufficient way. Secondly his theology is sectarian in nature, which leads the church to isolate itself from the world into a self-enclosed ghetto. Some have argued, that it does so to the point of irresponsibility. Thirdly, Lindbeck gives too much into postmodern relativism and therefore fails to account for the universality of truth especially with respect to doctrine.\textsuperscript{110}

Paul Knitter classifies theologies of religions into four categories\textsuperscript{111} concerning the relationship between Christianity and other religions. He classifies Lindbeck under the acceptance model, which he sums as accepting a reality of many intrasystematically true religions and simply leaving it at that. His account of critique towards this model is interestingly fairly close to the critique usually levelled against Lindbeck according to Marshall. Knitter’s first point is isolationism, which implies that because religions are untranslatable, the language of the religion locks us into a world which makes encountering the religious other a linguistic impossibility. Truth as a result becomes completely intrasystematic and so the second critical charge is naturally that of relativism because truth is only expressible relative to one’s own traditions. It leads logically to the charge of fideism, because if truth is totally relative, any decision to believe in this truth is relative to the logic provided by the religion. In other words, if one’s approach to religion is intratextual in the sense depicted in this critique, the text ends up imprisoning one from the world by isolating one into a fideistic relativism which itself shuts all the exits. Hence any relation between the text and the world would cease to exist.\textsuperscript{112} As mentioned earlier, the critique is interrelated and tends to emerge from how the relation between the text and the world is perceived. It is also clear from the critique in that critique around Lindbeck has to do with how he

\textsuperscript{109} Vanhoozer 2005, 175.
\textsuperscript{110} Marshall 2009, xii-xiii.
\textsuperscript{111} These categories are “the replacement model”, “the fulfillment model”, “the mutuality model” and “the acceptance model”. See Knitter 2002. Karl Rahner’s notion of Anonymous Christian falls under the fulfillment model. Knitter 2002, 72-73.
\textsuperscript{112} Knitter 2002, 224-226.
understands intratextuality. The next two chapters will attempt to show this critique to having been too quick in drawing these conclusions.
3. The cultural-linguistic perspective

The aim of this chapter is to describe Lindbeck’s understanding of community on its own terms. His understanding of community is looked at in the context of a theory of religion which in its technical nature is designed to provide a communal perspective into why we think the way we think, i.e. to enable learning away from the immediacy which persists in our opinions in order to evaluate their relationship to the corporate reality in which they have been shaped and which continues to do so. It is interested in the relationship between the representer and what is actually being represented and how the latter regulates this relationship.

Lindbeck’s general motive for writing the ND, as noted before, was in the frustration towards traditional ways of understanding how doctrine is understood to represent the religious identities of religious institutions. When different churches come to the table to engage in ecumenical dialogue, each party does so with a ‘working’ solution. More clearly stated, each party joins these ecumenical dialogues with their identities intact in the sense that its doctrinal confessions are working solutions within the community where these doctrines have authoritative status.

Engaging in dialogue is then essentially understood to be a practical responsibility, which originates from these working self-understandings as a result of the scandalous and practical reality that Christians are divided in their numbers and that these divisions are doctrinally enforced. In other words the responsibility to engage in attempts to overcome these divisions originate from what holds intact and constitutes the life of a religious community. What separates one from the other is simultaneously what obligates the removing of these fences. This constitutes perhaps the basic tension in understanding the nature of ecumenical dialogue and which Lindbeck seeks to put into perspective by conceptualising it, not removing it, with the concept of reconciliation without capitulation.

In beginning to discern Lindbeck’s audience, Phillips makes a point concerning the difficulties, which challenge ecumenical aspirations in general at a very basic and influential level. He notes that the religious traditions in which we

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113 ND 8-10. Lindbeck demonstrates with a card experiment that theoretical frameworks condition its adherents in a way that makes their perception of problems and their possible solutions irrefutable in themselves. In other words they work, because they are designed to work.

114 ND 15-19. Reconciliation without capitulation implies that historically opposed doctrinal positions can in some cases be reconciled while remaining in themselves unchanged. There are in other words different doctrinal formulations that can be identified in having identical theological intentions despite being articulated within different doctrinal paradigms and hence irreconcilable in that sense apart from confluences.
find ourselves, is most often accidental. In other words, belonging to a religious cultural-linguistic system is more often than not as accidental as being born: one does not make a choice, but rather a choice is made on one’s behalf. Only few have a true sense of the original theological reasons as to why divisions exist. Most are born into a reality of division and take it for granted and do not question the validity of these divisions. In ecumenical engagement this can reflect as progress being dictated by convenience rather than conviction, and economic pressures can weigh more than theological considerations. If one understands Phillips correctly, the more we become aware of how the church has arrived at its present situation and the less we take that for granted, the more room and motive there is for theological considerations in ecumenism.\(^{115}\) How Lindbeck attempts to create more room for theological consideration is the question we turn to next.

When someone asks a Finnish person a question in Finnish, the Finn responds in Finnish. Their communication is mediated by Finnish language. When life poses questions of ultimate importance, we respond religiously. According to Lindbeck, our ability to respond religiously to life can be generally understood as following one of two ways of going about it: the cognitive-propositional (preliberal) or the experiential-expressive (liberal).

Cognitive-propositional theory understands religion as proposing cognition in the form of informative truth claims. This implies that one is able to respond religiously to life by way of engaging with/becoming engaged by religious knowledge that is taken to correspond with an objective reality. The authority for this perspective lays in the assumed referential link this knowledge, when in the form of doctrine and doctrinal truth claims, has with the state of affairs independent of our subjective perceptions of it. This is authorised in part by the capacity granted to language in referring to objective realities. In brief, it declares a state of reality as a result of asserting doctrinal truth claims and they are authoritative because they are understood to communicate the proper truth about God. For this same reason this perspective has, according to Lindbeck, difficulty in envisioning different doctrinal formulations of substantially identical truth claims.\(^{116}\)

Experiental-expressivist theory understands religion as expressing experience, which implies that responding religiously to life is essentially

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\(^{115}\) Phillips 1988, 134.

\(^{116}\) ND 16,51,80.
introspective engagement with one’s experience of existence. Here doctrine plays a purely descriptive role and doctrinal authority is based in the subjective experience, which it articulates, not in the doctrine itself. This is authorised with the axiom that all humans share a universal core experience concerning existence. In other words, it locates a religious constant in the prereflective depths of inner experience. Doctrines are then accordingly understood to be noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes or existential orientations, in other words derivatives of experience.117

The cultural linguistic theory, and its inbuilt logic, is on Lindbeck’s part a response to the inadequacy felt towards these two conventionally established ways of understanding how we respond to life religiously. His response is motivated by a frustration towards the insufficiency of these dominant perspectives into how we perceive and understand the nature of doctrines and the communal reality they in turn depict. According to Lindbeck, these responses lead to an insufficient understanding of how communities are defined by these doctrines.118 Lindbeck’s alternative is in effect a resolution towards moving beyond two existing ‘solutions’, which each in themselves project a certain account of reality. In order to gain a more adequate perspective into how doctrines function, the nature of the context where these doctrines are applied becomes Lindbeck’s concern. The communal reality, i.e. the context, conditions the way doctrines function in any case, and therefore Lindbeck construes a cultural-linguistic perspective of religion in order to better understand the nature of this reality. Accordingly, a theory of doctrine then needs to take into account this reality in a complimentary manner.119

One could say Lindbeck wants to put the reality of our communal/corporate nature into how we understand doctrines as defining the identity of a community. This is attained by putting religion into a cultural-linguistic framework in order to articulate a perspective into how we understand ourselves to be how,

117 ND 16, 21,31,59. Due to the psychosocial pressures at work in modernity, this model is usually favored. See ND 21-22,77. One must note here that Lindbeck also acknowledges theories that combines these two approaches, but those are subsumed into the experiental-expressive when assessed from a cultural-linguistic perspective and therefore their more complex logic is left relatively unexplored in the ND. See ND
118 According to DeHart, Lindbeck sees the weakness of preliberal (propositional) and liberal (experiental-expressive) theological methods in that they fail to account for the fundamental cultural-linguistic nature of the Christian religious community and the regulative role of their doctrines. Precisely because their grasp of this reality is insufficient, Lindbeck sees them as giving into the temptation of extratextuality which is evident in subordinating the Christian idiom to either an ultimate reality to which the idiom either refers to or a depth experience which the idiom symbolises. In other words, the Christian idiom is understood as insufficient by those methods which understand the nature of the Christian idiom insufficiently. DeHart 2006, 160.
119 ND 7.
rather than whom we are with respect to religion. This brings about a cultural linguistic account of doctrine. This account is regulatory, because of the nature of religion (a medium in which one moves) expounded by the model is regulatory to its adherents, i.e. we participate in cultural linguistic schemes. As a result of religion being understood as a “comprehensive interpretive scheme which structures human experience and understanding of self and world”, questions concerning the nature of religion, nature of doctrine, and the nature of truth are interrelated. From the top down, it implies that an understanding of religion implies a certain understanding of the doctrine, which will also implicate how one is to relate to its claims concerning truth. From the bottom up, truth claims have an inbuilt understanding of doctrine (grammar), which have an inbuilt understanding of religion (language). This interdependence constitutes an integral question brought forth by the cultural linguistic-perspective: how do we learn to be how we are?120

The paradigmatic emphasis has a distinct theological motive in the paradigmatic distance it articulates to religion and the immediacy of life in religious communities. Its purpose is to provide an alternative perspective into religious self-understanding and how it comes about. One can for heuristic purposes view it as utilising sociological imagination121 in the context of theology. Anthony Giddens describes the requirement of this basic notion in sociology as one of thinking ourselves away from the immediacy of personal circumstances in order to understand them in the wider context with the intention of viewing our place and ourselves in it anew.122 It challenges to view our own realities as derivatives of the realities in which we dwell, rather that perceiving our homes as extensions of ourselves. Our home, understood as the cultural-linguistic medium in which exist, determines one’s reality to a significant and meaningful extent, and becoming aware of this is important. For example, modern society is not as much an extension of the modern individual, but rather the modern individual is a manifestation of modern society.

A cultural-linguistic perspective on religion emerges when the logic of cultural linguistic systems is analogously applied to religion in order to conceptualise religion in a way, which can focus on religion as a fundamentally

\[120\text{ND, 21.}
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\[121\text{A term coined by Mills. Mills 1959, 5-6. For systematic ways of invoking sociological imagination. See Mills 1959, 212-218.}
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\[122\text{Giddens 2001, 2.}
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communal reality. In this communal respect, it functions similarly to culture and/or language in that it shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than the other way around. In contrast to the experiential expressive response, it inverts the relation of the internal and external dimensions of religion. The external determines the internal, which implies a religious reality is first and foremost a communal reality. Religion in this communal sense is not to be understood as a manifestation of the subjectivities it consists of, but rather a communally transmitted way of understanding oneself. Reality is as a result depicted as intersubjective, not subjective, and the model will maintain that this depiction is more valid, and hence more truthful, in terms of actually describing the nature of our religious existence.123

Lindbeck understands religion as above all an external word, a *verbum externum* that moulds and shapes the self and its world, rather than an expression or thematization of a pre-existing self or preconceptual experience. The main function of a religion is to inform. For example in the case of Christianity, it is to inform the world of salvation in Christ. A religious community in this sense is where a particular and distinct external word has determining and constitutive influence amongst its members. More essentially, it is the space where the communication of the particular external word occurs. Because of this, communication involves the whole cultural linguistic system via which communication of a particular external word is possible. Religion is understood as a holistic medium, which encompasses the totality of communicative acts.124 From a semiotic perspective the life of a religion can basically be equated with a religious community.

The medium is comprised of a vocabulary and grammar/logic, which makes possible the meaningful deployment of its vocabulary. Lindbeck compresses the technical dimension of religion in this perspective as a “cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought.” It again represents the central emphasis of the cultural-linguistic outlook on religion: we are recipients of our religious identities. That we are recipients of our religious identities implies that it is precisely the religion, which enables one to have or experience certain perspectives, sentiments, thoughts, and realities. These are dependent on the religion and are shaped, moulded and in this sense constituted

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123 ND 32-33, 35, 38.
124 ND 34.
by the religion in question. In this sense the cultural linguistic perspective correlates with the cognitive propositional perspective, in that external beliefs are primary, but the comprehensive scheme used to structure religious identity is not a set of propositions to be believed, but rather a medium in which one moves in living one’s life. Religion can in this sense be understood as similar to an idiom, in that it enables a holistic perspective towards life because the context rendering the message meaningful coheres with the intended message in that they are mutually constitutive.125

It is important to note, that this reversing of the order between the outer and inner in terms of determining significance does not imply that the relationship between a community and its dwellers is in some sense not mutual. For example, mutuality is the precondition for any possible transformation within a particular community, but this transformation in itself is primarily a result of the cultural-linguistic system as a whole interacting with changing situations within the course of history because all individual action is communally defined and conditioned and in this sense theory laden. Lindbeck writes:

“..religious change or innovation must be understood, not as preceding from new experiences, but as resulting from the interactions of a cultural-linguistic system with changing situations. Religious are not transformed, abandoned, or replaced because of an updwelling of new or different ways of feeling about the self, world, or God, but because a religious interpretive scheme (embodied, as it always is, in religious practise and belief) develops anomalies in its application in new contexts. This produces, among other things, negative effects, and negative experiences, even by the religion’s own norms. Prophetic figures apprehend, often with dramatic vividness, how the inherited patterns of belief, practice and ritual need to be (and can be) reminted. They discover the concepts that remove anomalies. Religious experiences in the sense of feelings, sentiments, or emotions then result from the new conceptual patterns instead of being their source.” 126

The above way of viewing the mutuality in question tries to account for the taken-for-granted aspects of the situational realities in which we dwell by viewing who we are inseparably through our communal contexts. Lindbeck makes this distinction explicitly when he says: “..it is the framework and the medium within which Christians know and experience, rather than what they experience or think they know, that retains continuity and unity down through the centuries.” The intention is to focus on what is cultural-linguistically determinant in a given religious community. Lindbeck sees this as being possible only if we view religious experiences as resulting from conceptual patterns inbuilt in cultural-

125 ND 33-35.
126 ND, 39.
linguistic systems, rather than experiences being the source of these conceptual patterns.\textsuperscript{127} This is clearly expressed in Lindbeck’s interpretation of how Luther arrived at his doctrine of justification by faith through an exegetical insight: “Luther did not invent his doctrine of justification by faith because he had a tower experience, but rather the tower experience was made possible by his discovering (or thinking that he discovered) the doctrine in the bible.”\textsuperscript{128} Religion from the cultural linguistic perspective is a question of linguistic competence: the capacity, ability and capability to use Christian language, which exists within the text. Religion is in this sense a medium and framework of competence.

From Lindbeck’s cultural linguistic point of view one can then say that a Christian is someone who has some ability to speak the language of Christianity. It is of vital importance to note that when using this analogy, Lindbeck means it in a very humble sense.

“all human beings are toddlers, whether Peter, Paul of the veriest infant in Christ. The decisive question regarding them is whether the language they have begun to learn ex audito is that of Jesus Christ, that of true humanity, or something else. Is, for example, the love about which they feebly stutter, and which they are just beginning to understand and hope for, defined by Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, or in some other way... Only occasionally do they have inklings of the words they utter...every aspect of the new life exists in the modality of hope...[and so]...pride in being a Christian is excluded. Believers have by grace just begun to learn of the one in whom alone is salvation, but in moral and religious quality they are like other human beings”\textsuperscript{129}

Lindbeck also uses language as an analogy for understanding the difference between theology and religious faith. Learning theology is not to be understood in correlation with learning to speak a language of faith, but instead with studying the grammar and dictionary definitions of the verbal and nonverbal (ritual, moral and basically anything that constitutes a distinctive form of behaviour) items in its vocabulary. Therefore theology aims at gaining an understanding of a religion. With respect to doctrines, this implies doctrines are also second order discourse about first order discourse (speaking), because doctrines seek to explicate the inner logic of the faith which is spoken. In other words, a Christian can be a competent speaker of the language of Christ, insofar as the Christian speaks of Christ, without understanding the grammar of doctrinal formulations. One is able to speak a language when one knows how to use the right words correctly in order

\textsuperscript{127} ND, 22, 25, 36, 62,80.

\textsuperscript{128} ND, 39. See Wainright for a critique of Lindbeck’s position here in the sense that Lindbeck is too either/or as opposed to both/and which Wainright himself advocates. Wainright 1988, 128.

\textsuperscript{129} ND 60-61.
to express one’s faith. This type of knowing is independent of the knowledge that there is a grammar to the language, which defines the logic of and therefore intrinsically regulates the correct application of words. Rather, it is knowledge that has been learned (absorbed) subliminally as a result of belonging to a cultural-linguistic environment, which has as an inbuilt property the grammar of the religion. Competence is a communally acquired communal skill. Lindbeck borrows an example to make his point: “the master of Greek that was Homer had unsurpassed “how” knowledge of the grammar of his mother tongue but no “what” or “that” knowledge whatsoever.” In other words Homer knew how to use Greek unsurpassably well. He did not know the rules that determine this use. His knowing was informal. The same logic goes for a computer literate 10 year old. He/she can be very literate in understanding how to use a computer without any knowledge of how the computer technically works. The technical logic concerning how the hardware and software together with electricity render a usable application remains completely in the shadows. What needs to be understood in order to be computer literate is how different applications work, not what renders the application workable in terms of how it was programmed and how this relates to the physics involved. A religious community is, if thought of analogously to a computer, a hermeneutic in itself.

In order to stress the significance of the distinction Lindbeck wishes to make with his language analogy, he writes: “to confuse learning theology with learning to speak and act in the language of faith can erase the difference between death and life.” The main emphasis here is that being a religious person, and even if someone were to be the most competent speaker on the behalf of some religion, has necessarily nothing to do with understanding that religion as a cultural linguistic system, i.e. understanding the understanding of the religion. Rather the understanding inbuilt in the cultural linguistic system is the competence of the competent speaker, i.e. the cultural linguistic system lives in the mind of the speaker. It understands on behalf of the one living out this understanding. In this sense the authority of competence is in the interpreting

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130 ND 36.
131 Lindbeck 2006, 28-29; ND 66. In order to make this distinction in a more worldly context for the sake of clarity: if one confuses one’s need for psychotherapy and attempts to satisfy this need by studying psychology, the results can potentially be disastrous for the individual.
community. But the ultimate understanding of this authority is intrinsic to the cultural linguistic system to which the community is seeking correspondence to when utilising the bible as a cultural-linguistic deposit, or in Lindbeck’s words as a “relatively fixed canon of writings that [the religious community] treats as a normative instantiation of their semiotic code.” That is why testing the truthfulness /faithfulness of a communities interpretation is a case of assessing the “degree to which these interpretations correspond to the semiotic universe encoded in holy writ”. In this sense the ultimate authority is with scripture, and the communities interpretation of paradigmatically encoded holy writ is a proposition. Hence it might do more justice to Lindbeck to understand it as propositional authority on the behalf of the community or as a corporate praxis of authority, not ultimate authority.

The grammar of language is accounting for the internal meaning of language. Christianity as a language implies its grammar is an account of its internal meaning. Meaning has everything to do with truth when it comes to religion, especially Christianity. Therefore the account of truth correlates directly with the account of meaning. A grammar of a religion, when understood analogously with language, is therefore a systematic account of the inner logic of a cultural linguistic system and how this relates to conventional reality and the confessed reality. This relationship is of great importance because it is what ties meaningful language to reality. Grammar alone is pointless if one is unaware of the subject matter to which the grammar is paying reference. In order to account for this relationship from a cultural-linguistic perspective Lindbeck analyses truth to serve the needs of the model.

Lindbeck’s understanding of truth consists of three distinct dimensions: categorical, intrasystematic and ontological. How these three dimensions of truth relate to each other entail a grammar of truth. The first two perspectives tackle how truth constructs itself, i.e. what conditions the coherent nature of truth and in this sense have nothing directly to do with truth. They ask ‘what is Christian?’

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132 Nummela concludes that even though Lindbeck attempts to designate the authority for interpreting the bible in the bible, he acrually places it in the interpreting community. See Nummela 2009, 149.
133 ND 115-116.
134 Lindbeck 2004, 14. Lindbeck stresses this point in an article which criticises his understanding of truth as being restricted to intrasystemic truth and falling prey to postmodern relativism.
The ontological aspect deals with how this construction can be understood as corresponding with truth and asks ‘is Christianity true?’.

Categorical truth concerns itself with the sufficiency and adequacy of meaning and reference. If something is categorically true, it is so because it is applicable to what is taken as real. For e.g., ‘God exists’ or ‘God is’ would qualify as categorical truth for theology because without this assumption theological thinking would render itself pointless as well as meaningless, i.e. without necessary reference with respect to transcendent meaningfulness. In other words categorical truths make possible, in accordance with the above example, the practice of theology, but it does not yet on its own guarantee a meaningful existence for it when being practiced.

Intrasystemic truth concerns itself with the coherence of the whole within which categorical truths are articulated. It is what verifies or justifies that which has been taken as categorical. In other words it provides the relevance categorical statements have with the total way of thought and life in a given cultural-linguistic system. Thus religious statements are only valid when they concur with the total manner of speaking and the whole network of Christian beliefs and practices. If categorical truths are to be understood as necessary hermeneutical references towards an understanding, which they of course for meaningful understanding, the intrasystemic dimension of truth is the hermeneutical lens, which brings the categorical points of reference into accurate focus with respect to meaning. It either verifies, adjusts or falsifies the categorical meaning.

Ontological truth is something that has to be qualified by being intrasystemically and categorically true to begin with. A mutual coherence between these criteria needs to exist. However, its ontological validity is ultimately verifiable only according to the fruit it bears through its performative-propositional appropriation. In other words there is no direct possibility of judging whether a truth claim or the religion within which it is articulated is true of false. It either gains or does not gain propositional force in as far as its use corresponds with the ontological dimension of reality. As far as assessing the faithfulness of the correspondence (the fruit), what Jesus said and what he did is of ultimate ontological significance in terms of truth, which theologically remains

135 ND, 101.
136 ND, 48, 50-51.
an ultimate ontological mystery. This is something most clearly expressed in Lindbeck’s prospective theory of salvation which will be exemplified in chapter 4. However, this mystery is ontologically embodied in Christ and therefore verifiable from the fruit of a community that seeks to witness Christ.

Assertions concerning ontological truth can according to Lindbeck only be made when speaking religiously. Speaking is understood as a deed through which one seeks correspondence to what one is speaking of. Only in the immediate realm of religious speech, i.e. where speech is intended to be religiously meaningful in the first order sense is one able to assert ontological truths. In alignment with Austin’s notion of performatory use of language, religious speech accesses for oneself the propositional truth of ontological correspondence by helping to create the correspondence. Performative speech in this sense engages with the proposed truth in order to bridge the gap to the reality the truth corresponds with. Speaking functions in this way as a way of constituting one’s religious identity in order to align oneself and others with what is taken as, and therefore spoken of, as the most important. When Christians speak of Christ, they speak the Christian language only so far as they manage to confess Christ in their speech.

From a purely subjective perspective, truth is a question of what one feels is of ultimate importance in contrast to knowing objectively what is most important. For example, a person can be heard saying in an age saturated by entertainment, that “I believe in entertainment.” It makes sense only when the person is understood to be saying that one believes in the power of entertainment. Whether such a statement is sensible in any substantial way concerning the meaning of life for someone, is inherently an irrelevant question because it does not affirm anything particular about life beyond entertainment. It simply affirms that entertainment is experienced as meaningful to the extent that it is of ultimate significance to someone. An inbuilt indifference can be seen present as a meaningful meaninglessness. Evident of such indifference is evident for example in the success of the slogan: “The truth is out there”, which resonated successfully.

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139 Lindbeck 1989, 404.
140 ND, 66.
141 ND 65. Hutter describes this position advocated by Lindbeck meaning that the ontological correspondence of performative-propositional speech exists when they become transparent for God’s salvific activity. Hutter 1997, 55. How this links up with Luther’s understanding on faith see Hutter 1997, 31-32, 55.
142 In the same way Petri (in chapter 1.1) can be interpreted as saying “I believe in drinking”.

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within the reality of entertainment during the 1990’s. The notion of external truth explicitly expressed in the slogan, which in the TV series X-Files concerns itself with that of extra-terrestrial life, seems to have provided the imaginations of numerous TV viewers with the required food for thought. However, when it comes to searching for substantially meaningful truth in our time, it seems a lot easier to assume the depths of the inner-self as legitimate sources. Furthermore for the sake of illustrating the logic of this imagination, this ironically bears similarity with another slogan coined by the TV-series in question: “trust no-one”, which implies placing trust in none other but yourself is understood as dangerous.

Lindbeck sees members of western societies as increasingly regarding all religions as sources of symbols to be utilised in articulating, clarifying and organizing experiences of the inner-self. This increasing reliance on the self is seen as originating from within the structures of modernity, and the consequent pressure it places on people living under its influence. However, the pressure in question is not something that is perceived as external or identified to be of social origin which would imply it has been communicated to the recipient in the form of tradition, but rather it is enforced by the individual by embracing the values of modernity subliminally. In other words members of modern societies hold themselves accountable in regarding experiences of the inner-self as the basic criteria in one’s individual quest for personal meaning. This implies from the cultural-linguistic perspective that it is not by choice, but by lack of choice resultant of the regulative authority given to modernity in the paradigmatic sense. It pushes upon us the need to make choices and the choices we make are understood as valid because they are understood as being independent and thus meaningful. Anything that falls short of this assumption is according to Lindbeck, “an infringement of freedom and choice, a denial of creativity, and repugnant to all the most cherished values of modernity”.

The contradictory nature of modernity is clear in this respect: the lack of paradigmatic choice has brought about unlimited significance to personal choice in the religious respect. Truth becomes a case of choice rather than that of perception. Lindbeck’s assessment is that modernity is ingrained in the soul of the West to the degree that it has induced a blind spot in dealing with religious

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143 ND, 8.
144 Lindbeck 1984, 8.
145 By these structures he refers to vast implications of Kant’s revolutionary “turn to the subject” to western culture and thinking. See Lindbeck 1984, 7.
146 Lindbeck 1984, 8.
matters. What is taken as categorically valid in the paradigmatic sense hides the incoherencies that arise as a result of its inherent and thus often subliminal convictions. To illustrate, the coherency of an experience based religious identity is only coherent as long as it understands one’s subjective experience as constitutive to religious identity. One *hears* the experience, but not the paradigm justifying and thus constituting this listening to one’s inner self. If one claims that religious truth is a private and individual matter, one is able to say so because one is not aware that this conviction is actually *not* of private origin, but rather an inherent consequence of the ‘turn to the subject’ that modernity instils paradigmatically in it adherents. More critically stated, a modern individual grants revelatory status to modernity subliminally. 147 The individualist traits in modernism are communally transmitted even when they are on average thought of as of primarily intrinsic heritage on the part of the individual. 148 Lindbeck takes the roots of this dilemma further in declaring it is conceptually confused to talk of symbolizations or experiences, which are purely private in the first place. 149 In other words, there can be no individualistic (private) individualism, only communal (public) individualism, at least when we give relevance to the origins of our thought. This is an important reason as to why a cultural-linguistic perspective into our religious existence can be useful: it shows that our reality is communally constituted at a very basic level; a level, which Lindbeck is claiming, is largely and practically neglected by modernity.

It can therefore be argued that individualism is from this perspective modernity’s sense of community despite the centripetal forces, which are inbuilt, in that people can conceive themselves as being individually together. But in this sense, a community in itself as a concept has a neutral stance towards building up or breaking apart the togetherness aspect of community, and implies nothing conclusive about the togetherness aspect of community usually associated with a sense of community. Instead what makes a community a community in this perspective is that it functions like a cultural linguistic system. This hopefully highlights the technical nature, and general plausibility of this perspective into the realities in which people dwell advocated by Lindbeck. A community in this

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147 This might be a practical reason as to why the bible cannot be considered revelation in the sense that it reveals something that is not already present in the prereflective depths if the inner self. It subliminally undermines the necessity of revelation.

148 ND, 21, 37-38.

149 ND 37-38. Lindbeck uses amongst other Wittgensteins argument against the possibility of private languages. See chp1.2 for description if this argument.
technical sense is not necessarily pro-community anymore than it is contra-community. All that can maybe be said conclusively is that a community is. It is constantly in a state of life, so what regulates the life of this community (guides its substance) is the key question. Therefore it becomes logical to account for what determines the identity of a religious community through communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude and action rendering the nature of doctrine regulative. They serve in constituting the cultural-linguistic identity of a community which is already cultural linguistic by nature.\textsuperscript{150}

Christian communal reality and existence bears distinctive features in its externally derived nature when drawing biblical references. Ontological accounts of truth in the Bible are fundamentally out of the reach of articulation from anyone but God Himself, which is of categorical, intrasystemic and ontological significance to the very nature of Christianity. For example in Jesus’ words: “I am... the truth” (John 14:6)\textsuperscript{151}, truth is something in Christ and something Christ is. Therefore complete truth can only be known in and through Christ. Truth is in the same respect as truth is in: “God said to Moses ‘I AM WHO I AM.’” (Exodus 3:14). The point of reference when articulating meaning to truth is in who says it. Exodus 3:14 continues with “This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” Authority is attributed to the ontological identity of God, just as truth is attributed to the ontological identity of Christ in John 14:6. Ontological identity is the source of truth and the criteria according to which truth can be measured.

In the biblical quotes mentioned above, truth is fundamentally something that exists independent of how we humans perceive or have the ability to perceive reality. For this reason, when truth is articulated into doctrinal symbols, i.e. when the implications of “I am the truth” are cross-referenced with the biblical narrative of salvation rendered complete in the identity of Jesus Christ in order to regulate\textsuperscript{152} (render) its meaningful interpretation within the Christian community, it inevitably comes in the form of communicated truth. For Lindbeck the

\textsuperscript{150} ND 18.
\textsuperscript{151} Modern biblical exegesis understands these words as having being interpreted into Jesus’ words by the author of the Gospel of John. In other words, they are the words of Jesus as interpreted by the Johanine community to the faith of which the Gospel of John is attributed. Aejmelaeus 2000, 319.
\textsuperscript{152} For Lindbeck, the only purpose of doctrines in their role as church teachings is regulative. This includes the Creeds. He extends the notion of \textit{regulae fidei} (doctrines regulate truth claims by excluding some and permitting others) which has traditionally been seen as a dimension of communally authoritative doctrinal statements, to describe the essential nature of doctrine. Lindbeck 1984, 4-5. For classical understanding, see Mannermaa 1975, 38-39.
important aspect of communicated truth, is that it happens for a regulatory purpose in its role as a communal doctrine and thus has intent inbuilt rather than specific affirmations concerning the truth it is communicating. From this perspective doctrines serve in outlining the specific, not stating or declaring it.\textsuperscript{153} It regulates how we understand the specific which is unfolding and in doing so protects dogma from unbelief rather than declaring the faith in the way of declaring objective truth. This is one reason Lindbeck understands the formation of communally authoritative doctrines as the hermeneutical key to understanding their regulative nature.

It also implies that it has undergone conditioning by the recipients of the truth. Lindbeck’s thought it is to say it has taken the form of cultural-linguistic grammar, which is determining in guiding the understanding of religiously meaningful truth in a given community. The reality of this conditioning intrinsic to the process of communication concerns itself with the gap in knowledge concerning truth and its correspondence with the source of truth. This can be thought of as a theologically axiomatic position from which Lindbeck’s cultural linguistic perspective into religious truth begins to take its theological shape. It resonates with a theistic realism, which holds that truth and knowledge of truth only coincide in God, because only in God are they directly known to correspond.\textsuperscript{154} Reality and knowledge of reality cannot be in a contradictory relationship in an entity, which is taken as the source of truth in itself. From this realism we can approach Lindbeck’s understanding of language in terms of its substance.

In the overarching CL understanding of Christianity, Christian language is equated with confessing Jesus as Lord and with the language of the coming kingdom. Christian language in this way extends from the very first confessions of “Christ is the Lord”, which is a doctrinal and creedal statement, to the coming kingdom in which confessing the Lord is a prerequisite.\textsuperscript{155} A shared property of Christian language at both ends of the spectrum is that Christian language speaks of and for Christ. Christian language serves in this technical sense as model of Christian identity and can therefore be equated with it, because it is understood to originate from Christ. Christian language is a reflection of Christ’s identity.

The above can be pictured in a linear sense whereby Christ is at both ends, so to speak, of a salvific reality (or a cultural linguistic entity in purely

\textsuperscript{153} ND 94, Lindbeck 2004, 15.
\textsuperscript{154} Lindbeck 1989, 404.
\textsuperscript{155} ND 60.
nontheological technical terms). Christ can be seen as the starting point and fulfilment/goal of Christian identity. At the beginning of the arch, Christ is confessed of for the benefit of the other and at the other end the confessors are for Christ (i.e. pro-Christ). In other words, what is received eventually transforms into an encompassing reality of giving. Christ encompasses the entirety of Christian language in a transformatory manner.

The confessing Christian community in this linear depiction is always in a sense in between Christ, because salvation begins and reaches it goal in Christ. A Christian is therefore someone that participates in an economy of salvation that is constituted by the salvific economic grammar rendered in the language of Christ. Speaking the Christian language is being in-between the constitution and the rendering of the coming kingdom of Christ. As the above logic indicates, Christ is the substance of what is in-between which makes the perspective of Christ as the linguistic medium of a Christian community ontologically logical even though it leaves the criteria for judging its practical manifestations still wide open. The question we turn to now is how this cultural-linguistic medium relates to the world in practise and how does it account for the complexity of the context in which the church as the body of Christ dwells.
4. Text, world, and the world of the Text

This chapter attempts to deal with how the relation between the text and the world in understood in the understanding of community described in the previous chapter. In order to identify the dimensions, which require clarity in the cultural linguistic understanding of this relation, it discusses criticism, which is directly aimed at the way in which Lindbeck accounts for this relation.

Understanding Christianity as a language brings to light three aspects of Lindbeck’s understanding of theological intratextuality according to DeHart. Firstly, its semiotic aspect implies that the concepts, which prevail in a given community, are understood in terms of the community’s intrasystemic usage of them. Second, the reality encompassing aspect implies, given Lindbeck’s understanding of the role of religious language as a framework for ultimate orientation, that the usages which can encompass and structure one’s experience of reality are purposefully deployed in that respect. Thirdly, scriptural intratextuality implies that a collection of texts is given authoritative status in providing a paradigm of the grammatical system of the ecclesial “language” and its use in construing the world.156

In an essay titled “Theology, Meaning and Power”, Volf sees Lindbeck’s ND as something that brings theology and method together in a complimentary manner. By this he is highlighting that the method is part of the message of the ND. The message in itself, which Volf defines primarily as renewing faith in the ancient practice of absorbing the universe into the biblical world and in this way make the inner logic of the Christian narrative the guiding principle of a Christian community, has a twofold intention in that it intends to instruct as well as empower theologians in their engagements with the church and their diverse cultural contexts. In other words, according to Volf, Lindbeck wants to communicate a type of a road map together with the technical apparatus for travelling the road in one package.157

For Volf, Lindbeck’s attempt is flawed because it does not realistically account for the complexity of communal reality in which we exist.158 Volf understands Lindbeck’s metaphor of inhabiting the intratextual world of the bible, which positions one to absorb the world into the biblical world, as inadequate

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156 DeHart 2006, 159-160.
157 Volf 1996, 45.
because it does not account for how this inhabiting is in turn conditioned by the extratextual world. Volf seems to understand Lindbeck as coming dangerously close to advocating an understanding that inhabiting the biblical world somehow guarantees an interpretation based on the biblical world as being free of extratextual filters and distortions. As a result, Volf proposes that Lindbeck’s model should be improved in this respect and it would come in the form of integrating an admission that “we always inhabit more than the intratextual world and that we never quite absorb the extratextual world”.159

It is debatable whether Volf overlooks an implicit assumption in Lindbeck’s model that is rather axiomatic in the ND, and therefore of integral significance. Volf admits he might be pressing Lindbeck’s metaphors too far in his criticism, especially when one takes into account that Lindbeck explicitly understands Christianised social constructs of realities as being far from identical. Furthermore Lindbeck goes on to say that it is at most the significatum (what is used to signify something e.g. God is good), not the modus significatum (how what is being used to signify something actually materialises), which remains the same in the diverse manifestations of the biblical narrative.161

Noteworthy here is the ‘at most’ Lindbeck uses. In other words, the interpretations of narratives can vary in their interpretation as well as form when different worlds are redescribed within the one and same framework of biblical narratives.162 Lindbeck discloses this more explicitly in an article concerning atonement and the hermeneutics of intratextual social embodiment, when he says that for the most part of Christian history, the process of absorbing the world into the biblical world distorted the biblical world, and at times very badly. Lindbeck’s limited and primary emphasis is in other words concerned with the reality that scriptures were used to structure communities and worldviews, which aimed at making the varying social, cultural and intellectual milieus of believing communities biblically intelligible. How successful they were in using scriptures for this purpose with respect to theological faithfulness to the text remains a

159 Volf 1996, 52.
160 This is understandable as Volf is attempting to construct a new improved methodological outlook by using Lindbeck as a starting point. Exaggerations might be necessary inorder to address the points he wants to focus on. Volf 1996, 46.
161 ND 82.
162 According to Vanhoozer Lindbeck takes a fateful step when he extends his analogous use of Wittgenstein to apply for narratives in the same way as ‘practice gives words their sense’. According to Vanhoozer, if one understands the meaning of stories as being a function of their use within the community, it collapses the intratextual meaning of the narrative into its reception. Vanhoozer 2005, 96.
separate issue for Lindbeck, and it seems the effects of extratextual reality are consequently accounted for with an almost taken-for-granted constancy with Lindbeck. (I.e. one always begins with one’s cultural lenses, but inhabiting the world of the bible is what ultimately has the power to affect how one sees oneself and others in the world.) A possible reason as to why Lindbeck does not go into great lengths to make this more explicit in the ND, and why Volf consequently wants to modify Lindbeck’s model in this very respect, is that Volf wants to emphasize the textual world of the bible as “a strange word mapping a strange world”. Volf wants criteria with which to keep this strangeness intact, because if we are aware that we can never totally inhabit the biblical world it helps guard the irreducible externality of the textual world. Lindbeck, on the other hand, sees it pragmatically and in a more immediate sense as a strange new way of relating to the world in the world. This relating to the world is more a case of focusing through the Scripture, not on Scripture itself. The scripture acts as a hermeneutical lens and using scripture to interpret life is what is understood as relevant biblical interpretation. This does not mean for Lindbeck that this makes biblical interpretation ‘fail safe’ from projecting one’s own ideas into the biblical narratives and as a result thinking mistakenly that they are part of the intratextual meaning, which Volf would say runs the danger of domesticating the strange new world.\textsuperscript{163} What it does mean, contrary to historically /psychologically /philosophically critical readings of the bible, is that intratextual hermeneutics struggles against the reflex of consciously employing extratextual meanings as hermeneutical keys. Strangeness is something intrinsic to the struggle, and in this way witnesses strangeness to the world in that it does not, as a rule, resort to using psychologically or philosophically familiar concepts. In other words, relating to the world through scripture intends on being intratextual to the best of one’s awareness and knowledge in order to disclose the narrative to the best of one’s ability.\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{163} Lindbeck makes this point also concerning Barth’s intratextual efforts. It is evident that Barth read his own world into the bible on occasions, also including central issues like his doctrine of revelation. However, this does not mean automatically that all that has been ‘baptized into the biblical world’ instead of being derived from it, is biblically unfaithful. Biblically faithfulness varies in degree and in terms of success and can take various forms. See Lindbeck 1986, 367-368. Lindbeck also notes that for most people through Christian history the world of the bible was not strange or new. “Once they entered it, they experienced it as the world in which they lived, which was embodied in their communities and churches, and which absorbed all other worlds.” Lindbeck 1996, 226.

\textsuperscript{164} Lindbeck 1996, 226-228, 239. Volf 1996, 52. Vanhoozer sums similar criticism towards Lindbeck from the perspective of where do correct doctrinal rules of speech come from. (the text
The pragmatic criteria for discerning the faithfulness to subject matter rests ultimately on the fruit of the intratextual hermeneutics. However, when fruit are given authority in declaring the faithfulness of intratextual hermeneutics, the necessity of defining these fruit arises and therefore something theologically substantial must guide this process of recognizing what fruit can be considered good fruit.

The pragmatic emphasis present off course has its difficulties. If one takes pragmatism to the extreme, it will tie up truth with practicality. The logic of truth in itself becomes secondary to what has been practically determined as true. Truthfulness itself would no longer rely on explanation, but on good performance. The fruits of this performance are the only real evidence on the basis of which to judge the success of the performance. With respect to truth, the problem becomes imminent: how then to judge what are desired fruit i.e. what can be understood as evidence in support of what is desired? This is only possible if certain goals are understood as criteria i.e. as truthful aspirations. Having aspirations that are deemed capable of judging performances subsequently require a paradigm of thought which has inbuilt axioms that are assumed true without the practical test of their validity.

In the light of this difficulty, Lindbeck’s solution is interesting. Whatever “serves the up building of the community of faith in its God-willed witness to the world is the one (interpretation) to be preferred”. Success is judged by ability to witness God’s will which is intrinsic to the specific role of the Christian community. This is why Lindbeck talks of perceiving religion as a single gigantic proposition.
"As actually lived, a religion may be pictured as a single gigantic proposition. It is a true proposition to the extent that its objectivities are interiorised and exercised by groups and individuals in such a way as to conform them in some measure in the various dimensions of their existence to the ultimate reality and goodness that lies in the heart of things. It is a false proposition to the extent that it does not happen."\textsuperscript{168}

What this God-willed witness is would logically be the question, which requires an answer and a very broad theological one. It is interesting that Lindbeck turns to atonement to tackle this issue of discerning God-willed success. Approaching this question via the theme of atonement enables to focus on how the success of Christ becomes the success of His witnesses, which then renders the meaning of success, i.e. success comes through participation in success. In other words, successful witnessing as criteria for assessing the fruit is witnessing Christ’s atoning work, which is, in its vast theological significance, above all the ontological culmination of God’s reconciling will. Witnessing the reality of reconciliation seems to be basic purpose of any Christian community. This basic purpose is explicitly evident in Lindbeck’s anticipatory vision of the future, in which he sees the message of the cross acting like a magnet which draws Christians together from different traditions.\textsuperscript{169}

This movement has a technical correlation with Lindbeck’s understanding of how people became Christians in the early days of the Christian church. They were at first attracted to the Christian community and its form of life. Only after the initial attraction was understanding the faith a priority and happened within the community. This ran contrary to Gnostics who tried by resdecribing biblical material in new interpretive frameworks to render Christianity understandable and thus attractive to the outside, and in this sense witnessed primarily to man instead of Christ. In Lindbeck’s vision of the future, it is witnessing the message of the

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the extratextual world which often is overlooked or simply not seen. For eg. See Dulles 2003, 60-61 on relativism charge.\textsuperscript{167} ND 51.\textsuperscript{168} ND 51.\textsuperscript{169} Lindbeck 1996, 230, 240. Lindbeck’s description here almost sounds like an anticipated or hoped for grassroots manifestation of ‘reconciliation without capitulation’. The cross reconciles our diversity as movement towards the cross which unites one to another. The power of the cross is that it has the capacity to unite divisions. When this happens on a doctrinal basis, as it has in ecumenical dialogues, it literally happens only on a doctrinal level. However, understanding that reconciliation has occurred to a given extent on a doctrinal level, despite counterparts remaining in their own traditions, is evidence (!) of the reality of reconciliation. This might be a reason why Lindbeck so strongly wants to advocate the principle of reconciliation without capitulation. It is like a cloud of hope which will rain down once it condenses as a result of further dialogue and successful implementation.
cross which attracts Christians from different communities toward reconciliation, and thus towards understanding the mystery of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{170}

Volf is along the same lines also critical towards Lindbeck’s understanding of Christian faith simply as a CL or semiotic system. According to Volf, it is as such incapable of examining questions such as what is the force behind the emergence of a Christian semiotic system? What keeps it alive do the things we witness it do? What is the place of power in the embracing of the Christian faith? In short, Volf is asking what can the life of semiotic system be attributed to? What moves it? This criticism is warranted, because when it comes to understanding religion as a cultural system, Lindbeck aligns himself explicitly with Geertz in that religion, just like culture, is not a power to which events of the cross could be causally attributed to.\textsuperscript{171}

Because of Lindbeck’s lack of explicit exploration into how the world affects the semiotic system, Volf sees the powers at play as remaining categorically and therefore inherently in the shadows. The tools of Volf’s argumentation come by making the distinction between the semiotic and nonsemiotic aspects of Christian life and life in general. He justifies this distinction by stating that the semiotic dimensions of church life are powerless without the nonsemiotic dimensions, just as the nonsemiotic dimensions are meaningless without the semiotic dimensions. The legitimating of this distinction is derived from the initial emergence of the Christian semiotic system. Volf states with rhetoric vigour that:

“God did not send us a “semiotic system” so that we might see the world and behave in it differently, but became flesh and suffered on the cross in order to redeem and transform the world. The place where the Christian “semiotic system” emerges is the history of God with the world, a history that is more than a network of discursive and nondiscursive intersignifications.”

One can sense the insufficiency Volf wishes to indicate towards Lindbeck’s understanding of Christianity as a semiotic system. Vainio suggests that Volf has a tendency to regard Lindbeck’s perspective as exhaustive in its intentions,\textsuperscript{172} which might serve in understanding the reason as to why Volf sees it as inadequate to begin with. Volf’s critic can then likewise be considered very holistic. Concerning the history of Jesus Christ, Volf wants to stress that even

\textsuperscript{170} ND 132, Lindbeck 1996, 240.
\textsuperscript{172} Vainio 2010, 74.
though it is only accessible with the help of a system of intersignifications, what is accessed is more than that. In other words, what is accessed is at the end of the day nonsemiotic, which emphasises that ultimately salvation is not accessed, but received, because it is semiotically beyond reach. I.e. Salvation is not knowledge, but knowledge that has become personally meaningful that leads one to trust in the salvation the knowledge mediates.\(^\text{173}\)

In order to understand the significance this nonsemiotic dimension of faith, a theory concerning the location of a Christian needs to account better for the complex reality present as a result of different semiotic systems being intertwined in multiple relations of power.\(^\text{174}\) According to Volf, instead of talking about a cultural-linguistic system when we talk about Christian faith in the world, we should talk about structures, forces and experiences. It is important to note Volf’s selection of bible verses when it comes to arguing that a Geertzian reading of Lindbeck promotes exactly the inverse of what the Bible does. Volf writes:

“...a significant contrast emerges between how Lindbeck and how the New Testament (and the Christian tradition) speak of the location of Christians. There we read, of course, nothing of inhabiting a “cultural-linguistic system” or “texts”. Much more prosaically, we are told that Christian live on the other hand, “in Corinth” or “in Rome” and, on the other hand in some mysterious way also “in God” or “in Christ”. They inhabit both “Corinth” and “God”, “Rome” and “Christ”, at one and the same time. It is not that the New Testament is ignorant of the relationship between Christians and the language of faith. But the relationship is exactly the inverse of the one Lindbeck postulates between Christians and the Christian “story”: the “word of Christ” is supposed to “dwell in [them] richly” (Col 3:16), not they in the word of Christ; they, “the holy and faithful brothers [and sisters]”, dwell in that peculiar double habitation described with the unusual phrase “in Christ at Colossae” (Col 1:2).

Volf wishes to state in this perspective that inhabiting God and Rome at the same time is different to inhabiting a semiotic system, which would in some way encompass both worlds. Both, the effects of dwelling in God and dwelling in Rome, need to be accounted for when understanding a Christian’s location, and a single semiotic system cannot do what requires to be done on two fronts. At this point, it is debatable if Volf chooses to overlook the pragmatic intentions in Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic perspective. This overlooking is partially debatable on the basis of his selection of citations from the bible. Volf specifically states


\(^{174}\) In this critic of Lindbeck, Volf aligns himself with Talal Asad’s critic of Geertz, who objects to Geertz for precisely the reason that his understanding of culture disregards the issue of power. Volf’s critic against Lindbeck seems to have it roots in a different understanding of culture, or at lease Volf uses culture to mean more than what Lindbeck does. Volf 1996, 51, 54, 56.
that according to the New Testament, the relationship between Christians and the word of Christ is exactly the inverse of what Lindbeck postulates.

Volf declares on the basis of the bible verses that Christians are not to dwell in the word of Christ, but rather the word of Christ is supposed to dwell in Christians. If we compare Volf’s perspective to Jesus’ words in John 15:4 “Remain in me, and I will remain in you”, a different perspective arises to the one offered in Volf’s argumentation. Here, dwelling in Christ and Christ dwelling in us is portrayed in principle as a mutual reality, which is implied in the conditionality communicated by Christ. If we want Christ to keep dwelling in us, we must dwell in him. It does imply that Christ dwells amongst people before people dwell in him since Jesus uses the word “remain”, which is theologically constituted by incarnation, and in this way Volf’s argues for the prerequisite of John 15:4, but in order for Christ to continue dwelling in Christians, Jesus says they must keep dwelling in Him. In other words when we dwell in Christ, we are dwelling in “Christ dwelling in our reality”, which implies Christ is a reality, which has already taken on our reality in its totality. Christ is from this perspective ‘God dwelling in the world’. Dwelling in Christ is dwelling in a salvific relationship with the world. This implies that the mutual indwelling advocated by Christ is a Christ-dependent reality just as salvation, which implies that dwelling in Christ is witnessing to Christ. Witnessing is the verification of Christ dwelling in them richly. This would correlate with Lindbeck’s understanding of a Christian community as a witnessing community. Witnessing is what keeps the church doing the task it was given in Christ. It is a mutual indwelling in which Christ is the leading partner: when the community relates to Christ, it relates to itself in a God willed way.

This is more explicitly implied by for e.g. John 15:7, where the same logic is applied to words: “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” and in John 15:5 the same logic has similarly been applied to that of witness: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” If we consider Christ in himself as a cultural linguistic system which embodies both human and divine nature in the sense that God incarnated as a semiotic system, which is precisely what Volf deems is an insufficient perspective into Christ, these verses from the gospel of John can be considered as pragmatic perspectives for how this semiotic system is to relate to the world in the way of an
intrinsic paradigm. It does not contradict Volf like was shown in the previous paragraph, but the perspective is practical. These principles imply an inbuilt relation to other semiotic systems. It declares a starting point from which to begin to relate to other realities. Following this, all realities other than the one given, fall under one category, which Volf on the other hand is very critical of because it puts all culture under a monolithic whole which leaves the inherent cultural diversity and its implications in the shadows. For Lindbeck this is justified, because Lindbeck has inbuilt in his model the way in which culture technically regulates life, not how the effects of the cultural context are to be accounted for with respect to the articulation of a religion in a different context. Therefore what Lindbeck is possibly focusing on is what differentiates Christian regulation of life from all other regulatory schemes we are constantly under the effect of whilst living in the world. A pragmatic reading of “in Christ at Colossae” (which suits Volf), would read perhaps as “in Christ for Colossae” (which most probably would suit Lindbeck) which does not alter the meaning, but instead emphasizes what dwelling in Christ entails: being for the other. What this being is, is the important theological question. But for Lindbeck it is not primarily the being in itself, which is to be focused on, but what renders this being. This being is rendered in the depictions of God’s character as an agent in the stories of Israel and Jesus. The believer is to be conformed to the agency of Jesus Christ depicted in the narrative. Lindbeck writes:

“...the primary function of the canonical narrative...is “to render a character... offer an identity description of an agent,” namely God. It does this not by telling what God is in and of himself, but by accounts of the interaction of his deeds and purposes with those of creatures in their everchanging circumstances. These accounts reach their climax in what the Gospels say of the risen, ascended and ever-present Jesus Christ whose identity as the divine-human agent is unsubstitutably enacted in the stories of Jesus of Nazareth. The climax, however, is logically inseparable from what precedes it.”

175 A possible reason as to why Rome and God can be considered accounted for in one semiotic system, is that the relation between God and the world, which has been reconciled in Christ, overrides the diversity of cultural differences/variations. This does not imply they have not been accounted for, but rather those differences are precisely those we are called to encounter within the semiotic system.

176 ND 120-121. A possible Geertzian reading of 15:4, keeping in mind Geertz’s of/for aspects of a model, could read as “if you are of me” (as a consequence of one remaining in Christ), “I am for you” (I remain in you) Looked at in this way Christ is perceivable as the model of salvation in the Geertzian sense.

177 ND 121. (italics added) This climax being logically inseparable from what precedes it implies that the frame of reference and the center of the narrative are both narrational. Lindbeck 1996, 228. Vanhoozer sees the emphasis that Jesus is the literal subject of the gospel narratives, and that only going through these narratives can one get to their subject matter, as the narrative imperative
In other words, Christ is an instance of double habitation in His divine-human nature and in being so ties together the vertical and horizontal aspects of faith in order for the faith to be *witnessing* faith, which is of central importance to the communal nature of Christianity and especially Lindbeck’s ecclesiology, which for example Hutter argues is inversely determinable already on the basis of ND. According to DeHart, witness is Lindbeck’s dominant concept for understanding Christian ecclesial existence. Understanding the church as similar to language is Lindbeck’s dominant metaphor for guiding the church in understanding itself as a witnessing community. In this way Lindbeck’s ecclesiology serves as a conceptual conjunction between theories of salvation, Christology and religious language. Ecclesiology is where it all comes together for Lindbeck. 178

This communal witnessing/proclaiming character of faith, in the form of being for the other in a constitutive way, Volf agrees with respect to the mediation of faith. 179 According to Volf, the essentially communal character of the mediation of faith is most clearly symbolized in the administration of sacraments, which no person can self-administer. Volf further aligns himself with Lindbeck in that it is only through participating in the life of a confessing congregation that one discovers the meaning of the confession. But in contrast, Volf says that the semiotic system is meaningful only if it leads one to trust in God. For Volf, the need to stress this distinction comes from emphasising trust (fiducia) in Christ as solely a gift of the Holy Spirit, which is in effect a nonsemiotic happening. In Lindbeck’s perspective this trust is an inbuilt feature of the language of Jesus Christ. Lindbeck’s logic is more along the lines of –the more one understands, the more one trusts, but all trusting is real hearing i.e. faith–. DeHart sums Lindbeck in this respect that being able to speak of Christ and to experience the salvation of Christ are one and the same thing for Lindbeck. 180 It then makes sense, that Lindbeck understands the Holy Spirit, the verbum internum, in accordance with the cultural-linguistic model as a capacity for hearing the true external word. This implies an interconnection between the Word and the Spirit. 181 The question we then turn to in more detail is how then does Lindbeck account for the reality of

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179 Volf 1998, 163.
180 DeHart 2006, 155. See ND 60-61.
181 ND 34.
this nonsemiotic dimension of Christian faith in his cultural linguistic model of faith.

Wainwright puts forward this important and revealing question concerning the origins of cultural linguistic traditions. He is basically asking that, since inner experience is according to the CL model a derivative of the outer and in this sense inner experience can in its informative value be reduced to the outer since it had enabled the communication of that experience, what are these cultural linguistic traditions which are granted the authoritative status in guiding our identities then reducible to. If it is simply a given, then it needs to be asked what exactly is it that is given i.e. is it concepts or rather a way of conceptualising. Where does the authority for this givenness subside? How can the relationship between the outer and inner remain truly dialectical, if the outer is granted a leading role? Or more precisely where does a realism that the outer precedes the inner come from. What outer determined this specific ‘outer’ which is similarly intrinsic to the outer?182 This is an important question also because one central weakness in modern theology is in Lindbeck’s view that this question of origin is bypassed on a technical level altogether because it is intrinsically deemed irrelevant in the EE understanding of Christian language: original experience originates from the prereflective self and therefore even any hypothetically possible answer to the question of origin of this prereflective originality is unreflectable. Therefore the unreflectable has to be supposed real, which forms the basis for holding that all religions are basically similar. This does not make sense from a CL perspective because it forces the outer to be a derivative of the inner.183

Lindbeck speaks of Christian language as something which has the capacity to transmit the reality of a new being i.e. a Christian: a creature created anew through Christ. He correlates becoming a Christian with the acquiring of a language.184 Just as an individual becomes human by learning a language, so too does a human become a Christian through hearing and interiorising the language that speaks of Christ. However it is not language like any other, even though

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182 Wainwright 1988, 123-124. I will not go into Wainrigth’s analysis of how Lindbeck answers this question because it focuses on doctrinal issues which are not as such the focus of this study, but rather take his cue in that Lindbeck hints towards Sellars in this respect for an overarching perspective.

183 Barrett 1988, 157-158. ND 41. From Lindbeck’s CL perspective, also empirical reasoning offered for the existence of this basic similarity in the religious core of religions cannot compensate for the basic weaknesses it has inbuilt. For Lindbeck’s assessments of such attempts, See ND 41-42.

184 ND, 62.
technically the analogy is enough to describe the communal way in which faith is transmitted in practise. The most telling point in this analogy is that the acquisition of a language—“necessarily from the outside”—has its origin in something that Lindbeck attributes to something that is as transformatory and significant in its nature as “the jump which was the coming into being of man”. In this quote, Lindbeck refers to Willfrid Sellars, who is referring to a hypothetical event in the history of humankind when, in short, something happened which unleashed the power of human imagination.

This something entailed the transition from pre-conceptual patterns of behaviour to conceptual thinking, which correlates with man encountering himself and becoming aware of himself as man. At this hypothetical moment, man had gained the capacity and capability, which differentiates him from whatever he was before this event. This leap was in its substance the acquisition of the capacity and ability to conceptualise, the ability to learn a language, to think and to communicate conceptually. Ontologically it is implying that suddenly something was that was not there before and this something was not in any way a derivative of what was before. The new capacity exists on its own terms. Because of the holistic nature and integral consequences of this assumed leap in the capacity of man, the ability of thinking conceptually is concluded by Sellars as being something irreducible.

Lindbeck’s analogous use of Sellars then implies that along with Christ came something that has rendered all our preconceptions concerning God invalid. If becoming human meant for Sellars that man became conceptually capable of encountering himself as man, then becoming Christian in the ND correlates with man becoming conceptually capable (through becoming linguistically informed) of encountering God. This is a logical correlation, because according to Sellars, the leap to conceptual thinking from preconceptual behaviour cannot be perceived as the coming together of parts somehow already conceptual in their character. The shift was holistic and qualitatively distinct in nature in which the new whole was not only greater than the sum of its parts, but also ontologically and

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185 Here Sellars thoughts correlates with Berger’s more communal version the same logic in that according to Berger, language has its origin in the face-to-face situation: encounter brings about the birth of language. For Berger too, language is only language when as a vocal expression it gains the ability to detatch from the immediate “here and now” of subjective states vocally expressed for eg. by “snarling, grunting, howling or hissing.” Ability to detatch correlates with Sellars’ ability to conceptualise. B&L 1966, 51-52.

186 Sellars 1963, 6.
substantially different in the sense that in Sellar’s depiction animal became man. From this perspective it could be argued that Lindbeck’s reservedness with respect to ontology, which is reflected in its apparent inconclusivity, correlates with the inbuilt Christocentric implications of his cultural linguistic approach to religion in a way that can be argued as paralleling Luther’s realism with respect to the doing of theology.187

McGrath opens up the core of Luther’s theology of the cross with respect to pre-revelatory notions of divine reality. In McGrath’s analysis of Luther, one can see the similarity of the technical apparatus Lindbeck puts forward for facilitating the necessity of revelation with Luther’s revelational counterpart to a doctrine of grace.

Alister McGrath summarises Luther’s theology of the Cross as a form of a calculated and systematic attack on the role of a priori notions of God in any form of theology that wishes to be considered Christian. The way in which God revealed himself to humanity on the cross, i.e. through shame, weakness, foolishness, represents a divine decision to overturn the human preconceptions of the divine nature in order to reveal to humanity the conceptual incompetence of its theological resources. In this way, the cross educates Christians by permeating their preunderstandings of God by permeating the home and origin of their incompetence. According to McGrath, Christianity is for Luther fundamentally such that we need to be told. We do not have the ability to determine in advance the true nature of God. This epistemic critique of human capabilities in articulating God is according to McGrath a revelational counterpart to a doctrine of grace whereby humanity lacks the soteriological resources to justify itself. This lack forces one to rely on the grace of God for salvation. In correlation, humanity does not have the epistemic resources to grasp God and is therefore forced to rely on revelation, and its ontological culmination in Christ, for knowledge of God. Humanity depends on God to know God and to know about God. The essential prerequisite for being able to conceptually retrieve true knowledge of God is the

187 If one keeps in mind, that Lindbeck understands the Holy Spirit as the capacity to hear the external world of salvation and that this capacity is part and parcel of participating in the language of Christ (analogous use of Sellars above), then Lindbeck’s understanding of doctrine could be understood to be correlating with Luther in the sense that Lindbeck’s understanding of doctrine is paradigmatically pneumatological because it is only understandable when paying reference to the very thing it is depicting: the presence of the Lord. Mannermaa 2000, 192. McGrath sees Lindbeck’s understanding concerning the coming into being of the Christian idiom as being an evasion of the central question concerning the origin of revelation because it fails to distinguish whether it originates from accumulated human insight or the self-disclosure of God in the Christ-event. McGrath 1990, 28.
abandonment of any preconceived ideas concerning God’s nature, which have their basis in fallen creation. In this way Christ becomes the ontological principle and point of ontological reference through which something can be ontologically verified.\(^{188}\)

In interpreting John 14:6 “No-one comes to the father except through me”, Lindbeck’s understanding of salvation is clearly expressed with regard to semiotic understanding. Applying the notion of prospective salvation, Lindbeck expresses his hope, and in line with salvation’s dependency on semiotic understanding expects, that God will see to it that in the final consummation everyone [those of different religion as well as no religion at all] will learn the Christian language well enough to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord and ultimately the only way. Here salvation is explicitly linked with understanding, and acknowledgement is the end result, which is rendered through understanding.\(^{189}\) In other words, if one really understands Christ and what Christ renders about humanity and one’s footing in that corporate human reality, rejection is not a true option, but only a truly false one. Understanding the language of Christ makes salvation a necessity, though not an unrejectable necessity. It remains a gift.\(^{190}\)

This is evident in Lindbeck’s understanding of prospective salvation with respect to the religious other. It brings the relation between the world and the cultural-linguistic world of the text into sharp contrast. Lindbeck writes:

In terms of the basic NT eschatological pictures, non-Christians (i.e., Gentiles) would seem not yet to be confronted by the question of salvation: they are not heading toward either heaven or hell; they have no future, but are still trapped in the past, in the darkness of the old aeon. Only through the message of the coming kingdom, of God’s Messiah, does the new age, the true future of the world, become real for them, and only then does either final redemption or final damnation become possible.

One sometimes get the impression that the Bible balances Cyprian’s claim that there is no salvation outside the church (\textit{extra ecclesia nulla salus}) with an at least equally emphatic insistence that the beginning of damnation, of deliberate opposition to God, is possible only within the church, within the people of God: Jesus pronounced his woes (and wept), it will be recalled, over the cities of Israel, not those of the Gentiles. On this view, there is no damnation –just as there is no salvation- outside the church. One must, in other words, learn the language of faith before one can know enough about its message knowingly to reject it and thus be lost.

\(^{188}\) McGrath 2002, 278-279.
\(^{189}\) Lindbeck 2006, 30.
\(^{190}\) ND 58-59. Lindbeck’s position here with respect to the relationship between understanding and salvation seems to resonate with Jesus’s words on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34).
If we look at these exerts, there is an exclusively intratextual and intrasystemic element to Christianity, which has to do with true knowledge. The theologically loaded statement, that one must learn the language of faith in order to be within the reality where any possible decisions for or against the message of salvation have any significance, does not leave a lot of room to understand salvific reality in a way that lets it exist independent of how we relate to it, because salvation is explicitly linked only to the world in which such concepts have validity. Lindbeck’s realism here follows his interpretation of Paul in the sense that faith comes from hearing,\(^{191}\) which implies that saving faith is communicated to one from the outside: it is revealed. Explicit hearing is a necessity. If one has not heard one cannot know. Since knowing is dependent in a very fundamental way on participating in the semiotic universe which emerged in Christ, as shown earlier in this chapter, everything exists in the modality of hope, in an anticipated future. One, in a sense, remembers the future in order to exist in this modality of hope.

However it is of utmost importance to note that this has nothing to do with wishful thinking in the sense that all there is, is hope. The hope is an ontological derivative of the objectively true and concrete reality that Christ has been raised from the dead and that reality exists totally independent of what anyone wishes or hopes for in life. But this reality, when present in the life of a Christian through hearing the message of salvation, exists as a modality of hope. In other words hope in Christ is substantial in contrast to wishful thinking, which is relative to one’s own projections. In this sense Lindbeck’s model does not fall into relativism, which has often been levelled against him.\(^ {192}\) The intrasystemic attention given to the nature of salvation seems to correlate with the attention given to the intrasystemic nature of truth. According to Lindbeck this is an inevitable consequence of viewing Christianity from a cultural-linguistic perspective.\(^ {193}\) It is then fitting, that the prospective fides ex audito theory of salvation of the religious other sits well with Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic outlook. The language of Christ is according to Lindbeck at its heart not of the type of language which imprisons one ever more tightly in one’s tribe, but rather

\(^{191}\) ND, 36, 66.
\(^{192}\) See Dulles 2003, 57-61 for a critic of Lindbeck’s postmodernistic and relativistic tendencies attributed to the ND and Church in a Postliberal age. Lindbeck 2004 is Lindbeck’s reply to these charges.
\(^{193}\) Lindbeck 2004, 15.
that of true humanity which witnesses the love of God.\textsuperscript{194} It witnesses in the world with the aim of absorbing humanity into the body of Christ. This tribe is probably above all the tribe Lindbeck wishes to increase.

“The communication of the gospel is...the offer and the act of sharing one’s own beloved language- the language that speaks of Jesus Christ- with all those who are interested, in the full awareness that God does not call all to be part of the witnessing people.”\textsuperscript{195}

This full awareness, which Lindbeck advocates, paradoxically verifies to the witnessing people that the salvation of the world does not depend ultimately on the witnessing people, but in what they witness: Christ. Christ alone saves to which the church pays humble witness as a cultural-linguistic manifestation or extension of Christ. Humility serves in this sense as a mode of witness in the postmodern context.

This humility might at times entail encouraging people of different faiths to become better practitioners of their faith.\textsuperscript{196} In other words be more distinctly what one is: practice what one preaches more faithfully to where one is coming from. This entails the cultural-linguistic realism that in order to know who one is one must know how one is. One needs to know where one is coming from and become aware of what one is representing. Otherwise one does not necessarily know why one is witnessing to something in the first place. From this perspective, the concept of witness is central to how Lindbeck understands the relation between the church and the world, which also then has corollary implications for his understanding of the relation between the text, and the world. In order to then get a theologically encompassing understanding of how Lindbeck understands this relation, it would need to be discerned by taking into account his ecclesiology, to which witness as a concept is central.

\textsuperscript{194} ND 60-61.
\textsuperscript{195} ND, 61.
\textsuperscript{196} ND, 54.
5. Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to examine the understanding of community in George Lindbeck’s The Nature of Doctrine. Intrinsic to this question was also examining how Lindbeck understands the relation between the text and the world which both meet in a Christian community. Thirdly this study also aimed at understanding what the persuasiveness of this understanding depends on. The method applied for this task was systematic analysis.

The study was conducted by first providing an orientation into the nontheological substance of the ND which was assumed useful with respect to the aim of this study. The study then went on to explore Lindbeck in his own context of postliberal theology in order to see how the ND was received. It also attempted to provide a picture of how the ND relates to Lindbeck as a theologian. The third chapter was a descriptive analysis into the cultural-linguistic perspective, which is understood as being directly proportional to his understanding of community. The fourth chapter was an analysis into how the cultural-linguistic perspective sees the relation between the text and the world.

Lindbeck has been studied extensively. His reception in theological discourse was shown to be multifaceted. Its basic cultural-linguistic framework has diffused into theology to the extent that it has managed to put theology on a new track, which speaks on the behalf of the significance of ND. On the other hand the reception has also been very critical. Problems perceived in his cultural-linguistic understanding of community have centered on how the given understanding provides/lacks tools for understanding the relation between the world and the text in a theologically meaningful way. It has led to charges of fideism, sectarianism, isolationism and relativism.

Lindbeck’s understanding of community is above all a perspective into reality. Since it was initially put forward for the purposes of ecumenical dialogue, its aim was to make more understandable the reality in which doctrines function, which leads to understanding the nature of doctrine as regulative. From this angle it was to be perceived as a framework for dialogue.

Lindbeck’s understanding of community is in itself a framework. When religion is understood from a cultural-linguistic perspective, it presents itself as a cultural-linguistic entity, which Lindbeck defines as a comprehensive interpretive scheme which structures human experience and understanding of oneself and the world in which one lives. When one exists in this entity, it is the entity which
shapes the subjectivities of all those who are at home in this entity which makes participation in the life of a cultural linguistic entity a condition for understanding it. For this reason the task of systematic theology is for Lindbeck to give a normative explication of the meaning a religion has for its cultural-linguistically bound followers.

Language is the central analogy to understanding the medium in which one moves when inhabiting a cultural-linguistic system because language is the transmitting medium in which the cultural-linguistic system is embodied. They are mutually constitutive to its existence. It allows to understand why Lindbeck understands reality as being that of being situated amongst regulatory forces. One can master the Finnish language without understanding the logic of one’s correct application of words. Fluency is a derivative of having heard sound Finnish, which the person has put to good use. Recognizing grammatical errors becomes an inbuilt function of the competence ‘at home’ in one’s ear metaphorically speaking.

The realism entailed in Lindbeck’s understanding of a community is that we are fundamentally on the receiving end also when it comes to our identities whether cultural or religious. We always witness to something, which can be seen displayed most vividly in the well-known example of the wolf children. Who we are is a reflection of the reality at the mercy of which one happens to be. In the case of the wolf children, what made them wolf children was essentially that they were not within the scope of cultural-linguistic system of humanity. The persuasiveness of Lindbeck’s understanding of community comes in this way from accepting the realism that whatever we are is always dependent on something that has brought about that identity. We are never left unpersuaded.

The nature of religion correlates in this sense the general nature of our existence. Religion is above all an external word that moulds and shapes our religious existence and experience. Understanding faith then as coming from hearing, is something that correlates with the cultural-linguistic depiction of reality. Religion informs us of a religious reality. This externality linked to the axiomatic nature of religion is also something that distinguishes Lindbeck sharply from liberalist tendencies, which understand religion as ultimately expressing the prereflective depths of the inner self. Lindbeck sees this liberal conclusion as evidence of one having been persuaded by the premises of the modern paradigm in order to arrive at that conclusion.
Once this external nature of religion has been established, what becomes of integral importance is how to verify the ontological understanding of truth inbuilt in the intrasystematic self-understandings of religions. In Lindbeck’s understanding it becomes discernable only in the performative-propositional appropriation of this truth which for him is a derivative of a theistic realism which holds that truth and knowledge of truth only coincide in God, because only in God are they directly known to correspond. Therefore understanding either gains or does not gain propositional force depending on whether its use corresponds with the ontological dimension of reality which exists independent of our perceptions of it. With respect to the ultimate truths of Christianity and assessing their correspondence to this independent reality, what Jesus said and what he did is of ultimate ontological significance in terms of truth, which theologically remains an ontological mystery. But precisely because of what this mystery is understood to entail in accordance with to the words and deeds of Christ testified to in the Bible, it is ontologically embodied in Christ and therefore verifiable from the fruit of a community that seeks to witness Christ. Successful witnessing in this sense is an ontological derivative of the extent the community manages to witness Christ’s success on the cross. Only this type of success up-builds the Christian community in a God-willed way.

When Lindbeck speaks of Christianity as an external word, he means it a way that has numerous implications for how this external word relates to our cultural-linguistic reality in general. When this external word is thought of as analogous to a language, it transmits the reality of a new being in the same way as a language embodies a certain cultural reality. This new being is man (as a fallen creature) being created anew through Christ. For Lindbeck it is something that is for heuristic purposes comparable to “the jump, which was the coming into being of man”. If linguistic capability for Sellars, who Lindbeck refers to in the above quote, unleashed the power of human thought, Lindbeck wants to say that language that speaks of Christ unleashes the power of divine thought. This way of understanding the language of Christ renders man’s preconceptions invalid for the same reason as why Sellars concludes the coming into being of a man as an irreducible event. Therefore, the language of Christ is a self-sustaining and irreducible cultural-linguistic entity, which is ontologically founded in none other than Christ. This ontologically founded cultural linguistic entity is also what constitutes the ‘sense of the faithful’ which determined the formation of the
canon, which in turn, as an intratextual deposit, informs and therefore shapes the sense of the faithful of a Christian community which believes in the eschatological decisiveness of Jesus Christ. Thus the canon has ultimate authority over the community rendering the authority practised by the community propositional and corporate by nature.

In this respect Lindbeck is not only Lutheran, but also much like Luther in his epistemic thinking when it comes to the role of a priori notions of God. Luther rejected any notion whereby man has any natural ability to determine the true nature of God. For Luther, it is precisely the cross, which educates Christians by permeating the home and origin of their incompetence in this crucial respect.

Lindbeck expresses the dependence of the cultural-linguistic system communicating the message of salvation to the ontological reality of salvation in his prospective theory of salvation. According to it one must learn the language of faith in order to be within the reality where one can either surrender to or reject the message of salvation rendered in Christ. This does not imply a relativism that the message of salvation or damnation has validity only amongst those who are aware of it. It has universal validity, which is the basic motive for witnessing to the message of salvation, but the validity of this universality is only understandable through the language of Christ i.e. which ontologically means Christ for Lindbeck. The language of Christ renders the message of salvation in Christ and so a Christian community is witnessing to the rendering presence of Christ. The church as the body of Christ is the home of hearing this message correlating with the church as the home of the external word (both preached and in the form of the sacraments). Therefore the basic relation to the world for a Christian is that of witnessing salvation in Christ: witnessing Christ as the home of hearing the message of salvation. Following this logic, the relation of the world and the text is one of relating to the world from the text, i.e. In Christ through the word (text) for the world, because it assumes it’s logic from the way Christ ontologically relates to us.

Lindbeck’s understanding of community is not ultimately something derived from the non-theological ideas he uses to reflect his understanding of community, but from the way the reality of Christ seems to function in the reality depicted in scripture. This is most clearly depicted in the prospective theory of salvation of the religious other Lindbeck advocates which builds of Paul’s ‘faith comes from hearing the external word’. The sociological, anthropological and
philosophical import introduced somewhat in chapter 1.2 which implicitly undergird the heuristic dimensions of Lindbeck’s argumentation throughout for example in the way that hearing can be understood as internalisation, have been adapted to serve in verifying a realism which Lindbeck sees evidence of in Scripture. In this sense the ND is a test of their viability and the reception of the ND serves as the primary indicator of how well they work. It is evident that it raises a lot of questions as seen in chapter 2, but that it has provoked a wide-ranging discussion can be seen as evidence of it having depicted the nature of reality in a way that has touched theology profoundly. It came close enough to bring about a phenomena of resonance, if one may be permitted to use an idiom in this context.

On a concluding note, I recall a lecture series here in the university of Helsinki a few years back where the topic was atonement. It was clear from the student’s opinions that some held certain doctrinal perspectives into this very difficult question as far more dear than others. It was also evident, that they were dear precisely because they were what rendered the substance to one and for this reason they are in their instrumental significance of indispensable value, i.e. one felt at home with a certain perspective. Ecumenical dialogue from a cultural-linguistic perspective between Christians is challenging and difficult because it is very real. In contrast to the situation in inter-religious dialogue, where one can cultural-linguistically clearly find it in one’s own religious identity to identify the religious other as an other, Christians are of the same religion and understanding differences becomes fore mostly a hermeneutical question of encountering otherness amongst one’s own. Since all Christian churches confess Christ, it is not always a case of what is the religious substance of one’s religion, but rather how this substance is understood, that divides. Understanding these divisions requires shifting attention to the paradigms, which constitute the logical or grammatical dimensions of doctrine. At this point, dialogue becomes far more challenging in that it begins to concern those aspects of understanding, which are in their regulative role rather immediate for understanding, and for this reason very dear to one. Whilst the world can often be heard shouting, “kill your darlings” in the name of paving the way forward for compromise, it does not apply to theology or ecumenism because it is concerned with questions of ultimate importance.

An intrinsic problem in Lindbeck’s understanding of community does seem to persist even though the cultural linguistic perspective makes evident that our
identities as Christians are only understandable in the light of the historical formation of this identity, an therefore as derivatives of the cultural-linguistic deposit guiding this identity. The problem is it does not put forward as such very much in the way of criteria concerning how one is to account for the historical footing of the sense of the faithful (sensus fidelium) intrinsic to the intratextual world of the canon which guides the Christian community in its history. What one feels this problem facilitates is a need for some type of criteria which can help with the task of distinguishing what is historically conditioned prejudice and what is simply a given with respect to the sense of the faithful in the canon. This may be too much required of any model, but questions like to what extent and based on what criteria historical criticism could be utilised in this crucially important task remain difficult questions. Based on this short study all one can conclude with respect to this deficiency in the ND is that humility constitutes the way forward in one way or another.

Personally this study proved particularly fruitful because my initial attraction to Lindbeck was based on a thoroughly mistaken apprehension that Lindbeck’s understanding of community was a derivative of the non-theological cultural-linguistic import it possesses. Those aspects resonated with personal experience. Comprehending it as a derivative of fides ex audito strengthened one’s spiritual identity.
6. Abbreviations

ND The Nature of Doctrine
7. Bibliography

7.1 Source
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