In the Garden of Eden, Adam’s primary hermeneutical task was *to name* the creatures (Gen 2:20) over which he was to also have dominion-care. This task of *taxonomy* involved the use of language signs to identify by naming, so that the names he assigned to them would be their markers of identification. That is, the naming-words would correspond to the reality of the creatures’ identity in a very real way. This is *not* to say that the sign-words themselves could involve only one corresponding sign to their referent, but rather that Adam used what language God had given him to assign names that would create a correlation for identification and differentiation. In other words, we are not supposing a necessarily ontological correlation between the names and their referents, but rather that of a personal identification. For my purpose, nevertheless, what is of hermeneutical interest here is that Adam’s role in taxonomy was something of an interpretive one, and it was really the beginning of all human knowledge in all of its many diverse branches, and especially the sciences. Therefore, it can be said that this hermeneutical task was also *prophetic* in that it would include the gathering and interpreting of the boundless information available to him in the unfallen universe. This interpretative role of identifying and classifying involved the need for understanding language, gathering knowledge of the created world, proper interpretation, discovery and new insights that would have presumably lead to ever increasing science, art, literature, theology, philosophy, architecture, and all avenues of human life.

The simple truth is that all of that was, and is, entirely dependent upon the greatest gift given to humankind (besides life itself) and that is language and the ability to communicate. This is the basis of all meaning, all knowledge, and all of life: that language corresponds with reality in a coherent and comprehensible way. The reason for this foundational necessity for all of life is that the One who created this universe is a Triune communicating Godhead: God the Logos spoke and created all that is by his infinite power. The Logos is the reason, the rationale, the source of all meaning for the created and named universe, which includes all that is in it. Therefore, the creating and sustaining of reality is logical and orderly, since God must be *consistent* with himself as the one who ordered all reality according to his reasons and purposes. His rationale is absolute and perfect since it comes from his perfect person who is *true* in all that he is. Since there is an absolute, and necessary (since a perfect God can have no inconsistencies or contradictions), *self-consistency* and *coherence* in the triune God, there is also logical consistency and coherence in his creation, though it is always contingent upon God who is the Logos.

In light of these considerations, therefore, to remove the possibility of all certitude for meaning in language, communication, and interpretation would be to strike at the very foundations of all reality and human existence. In response, it is quite important to confront the “hermeneutical suspicion” that is preached from every roof-top and in every sophomoric classroom in the universities today. If language itself can be shown to represent nothing more than suspect *power-plays*, prejudices, and abuses of
power, then all communication truly cannot be trusted to convey any certain truth. In fact, even truthful communications become unbelievable in such a “universe of discourse.” If this temptation to disbelieve all communications, resulting from such a deep “hermeneutical incredulity,” then practically anything becomes believable. When Adam and Eve were lured into the hermeneutical quandary of questioning the very words of God, what began was the suspicion that language signs and their meanings are arbitrary and altogether unreliable, while casting doubt on the Author himself.

“The fate of hermeneutics and humanity alike stand or fall together.”

In one sense, therefore, we can say that the “Fall” of humanity began with incredulity towards the meaning of God’s words, redefinitions of absolutes as relative, and reassigning meaning arbitrarily towards disbelief, as continued today quite precisely in the Post-modern world of the “hermeneutics of suspicion.” In that world, words are understood as arbitrary systems of conventions that are indeterminate in meaning, but more seriously they are all suspect of ulterior agendas of power and abuse, and thus logically and “morally” untrustworthy. Within this view, all language contains bias and communicates them necessarily, making it impossible to have any certitude that there is true, or truthful, meaning and communication. Indeed, the situation today is even worse than the latter, in that it is widely assumed that since words cannot correspond with true meaning, interpretations of reality do not. And further, since there can be no certain meaning communicated then it is the interpreter who determines the meaning. In that hermeneutic, there is no correct interpretation, only preferences. With such a semantical, hermeneutical shift, removing language from meaning results in the disappearance of the author. In our understanding, it removes the Author of all reason and rationality, the meaning and the giver of meaning, the Logos. If there is “no meaning in the text,” the very fabric of all reality and human life in it can have no integration point for significance, for meaning, for any “correct interpretation” of anything at all. Without any epistemological possibility, or certitude, for meaning, then there can be no metaphysical affirmation of anything that transcends human reality (as God does), nor true knowledge of anything in created reality, nor true moral knowledge, and certainly not true theological knowledge. It comes as no surprise then to find that many modern philosophers cherish this idea of total indeterminacy, since God is in conclusion no longer a necessity, nor even within the realm of possible knowledge.

Kevin Vanhoozer notes, for example, of the modern movement of Deconstruction: “Deconstruction undoes logocentrism by unraveling the texture of every logos (e.g., consciousness, authorial intention, ideas, revelation.)” This is found in such famous writers like Jacques Derrida who concluded that there is no objectivity in anything. In fact, there is no object to consider, only oppositions that need to be deconstructed by the interpreter. Thus the moniker “deconstruction,” to take apart and undo traditional distinctions and definitions until there is nothing there at all to discuss, except the comments of the observer. Unsurprisingly, Derrida’s conclusion was that there is no truth available about anything in any text or event in life. Vanhoozer notes that for Derrida this also meant a repudiation of all concepts of the “Word of God” as nothing but a privileged, logocentric, hermeneutical bluff that must be deconstructed. Similarly, Frederic Nietzsche’s famous cynical contributions to this hermeneutical agnosticism and atheism included the conclusion that “god is dead,” and primarily since there can be no absolute God’s eye point-of-view, humans must impose their own meaning as a fiction on reality. Quoting Mark Taylor and Roland Barthes, Vanhoozer summarizes well this movement towards deconstruction as follows:

2 Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning, p. 111.
3 Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning, p. 22.
“The death of God was the disappearance of the Author who had ascribed absolute truth and univocal meaning in world history and human experience.”

The death of God is linked to the disappearance of the human author too: Roland Barthes writes that the refusal to assign a fixed meaning either to the world or to texts ‘liberates an activity we may call countertheological, properly revolutionary, for to refuse to halt meaning is finally to refuse God.’

With great irony, often unnoted, many Postmodern Deconstructionists use biblical categories when they consider all traditionalist assertions of epistemic certitude as idolatrous. To deconstruct the text of all meaning in their view is to tear down all traditions of authority, interpretation, and truth so that there is no constraint leftover to obstruct the individual. Honestly considered, nevertheless, this total freedom presumably would also apply to the deconstruction of the Deconstructionists. As in all systems of total relativism, it collapses by force of its own anarchism upon itself, since it is self-contradicting in its absolute claim of absolutely no determinate meaning. If all truth is relative, then so is this sentence, along with the unsound edifice of Deconstructionism.

In seeking a response to these matters, I found that Graeme Goldsworthy makes a profound observation for Christian theology that may guide us towards a resolution: that is, there is unity and distinction in the universe because of the Trinity. In the biblical view of all total reality is this profoundly important, yet simple, truth that there is unity and distinction between every single created thing, since there is unity and distinction within the triune Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (unity without fusion). The fundamental and irrevocable truth this conveys is, as logicians posit it, that A is not non A. Foundational to all understanding, of anything, it is a fact that there is both unity and differentiation between everything that is.

As Goldsworthy states it very well: “. . . it is worth pointing out that that one of the implications of Jesus as representative reality is that every thing or fact in reality has some point of unity with, and some point of distinction from, every other thing or fact on reality. To put it another way, the doctrines of the Trinity, the incarnation, creation and the distinction between God and creation establish the unity/distinction of all things.”

There is a unity, yet also an absolute differentiation-distinction, between God the Creator and all of his creation. As there is a unity and distinction between God and humanity, there is a unity and distinction between humans, and animals, and plants, as well as inanimate creation. Importantly, there is the unity and distinction between male and female, as God created them with unity yet with absolute differentiation. There is this law of identification and differentiation at all levels of reality, and therefore it applies to all things in reality, including space and time, signs and the signified, literal and symbolic, and it allows us to know and understand why there is something rather than nothing. In Biblical Theology, it also gives us unity and differentiation in regards to Adam and humanity, Adam and Christ, the representative one and the many, creation and redemption, promise and fulfillment, types and antitypes, divine sovereignty and human responsibility, the signs of the promise and their realities, prefigurations and their antecedents, the divinity and humanity of Jesus, the transcendence and immanence of God, the human and divine authors of scripture, the unity and differentiation between

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the Old Testament and the New Testament, their continuities and discontinuities, the enscripturated Word and the Incarnate Word, the Word of God and the Spirit of God, as well as the relationship of the original creation to the coming new creation. This latter example would include our present earthly life with sinful bodies and souls, and our future earthly life of resurrected bodies and souls, as this is assured from the necessary resurrection and ascension and glorification of Jesus. This is expressed in our understanding that the Kingdom of God has come but is still coming, Christ is now Victor, yet someday all the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever . . . (Rev 11:15).

This truth of unity and distinction obliterates the assumptions of monism, pantheism, animism, dualism, humanism, Deconstructionism, PostModernism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, and every other ism that blurs, negates, exaggerates, or denies the unity and distinctions created into the universal order of reality. This would also apply to those who would collapse all of reality into the fusion of yin and yang, or those who collapse male and female distinctions, or the Postmodern attempt to collapse signs and what they signify in all of human language that leads naturally from a “hermeneutics of suspicion” to “epistemological atheism.”

In conclusion, the reason that total indeterminacy in meaning is itself really quite impossible is that every effort to articulate such a philosophy itself depends at every turn upon the intrinsic fact of unity and differentiation in all of reality. And this is why it is a life and death matter, since all knowledge and interpretation and meaning in this life depend upon unity and distinction. If we can no longer name or be named, we can no longer know or be known. If there is no Logos, no possibility of identification, unity nor differentiation, nor coherence, there can be no universe in which we can find and know any meaning or significance. Most seriously, there can be no true relationship to God, his universe, and to one another. It would mean not only the “death of God,” it would necessarily mean the end of humanity and all of its endeavors, as well as the collapse of reality itself. Fortunately, we can rest assured that this cannot in fact happen, since the world was indeed created by the infinite triune God, the Logos, by his naming-creating words, who also sustains it by his infinite power, and who wove into its every atom and molecule the principles of unity and distinction, and who gave us who are made in his image the task of naming and interpreting all things to his eternal glory.