Self as Symbol:

The Proper Name and Self-Reflectivity in the Hebrew Bible

The relation between name and referent, or proper name and person, has been a confounding topic for millennia. In the Hebrew Bible, a pervasive interpretation of the relation between proper name and person has been guided by nominal realism, where the proper name is conceived as being essentially linked to the referent in a substantial and concrete way. While this interpretation was challenged in the late 1960s, there is, in today's scholarship, a considerable disagreement in how the relation between the proper name and the referent is understood. This paper seeks to interpret the relation between proper name and person in the light of language as a form of being. By focusing on Paul Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology, the proper name will be considered as a *semantic essence* that provides meaning to physicality by the use of a symbol. A semantic essence, in the form of a proper name, offers a way to see oneself *as* something meaningful, which makes the proper name foundational for self-reflectivity. By concentrating on three select excerpts, the proper name will be presented as (1) a symbol in which one exists (1. Sam. 3,4-10), (2) a symbol that hermeneutically can be appropriated (Ruth 1,19-21), and (3) a symbol that serves as a headline for a story (Ex. 6,2-8).