DETRANSCENDENTALIZING SUBJECTIVITY:

PAUL RICOEUR'S REVELATORY HERMENEUTICS OF SUSPICION

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A Jean-Claude Piguet (1924-2000)
in memoriam

SÍNTESE – O artigo esboça o desenvolvimento da hermenêutica filosófica de Paul Ricoeur a partir de sua fenomenologia da vontade em direção a uma hermenêutica da revelação, mostrando como o projeto radical de destranscendentalizar a subjetividade, subjacente à recepção francesa contemporânea de uma hermenêutica da suspeita, termina por favorecer um retorno pós-hegeliano a Kant e reformula a filosofia transcendental numa correlação histórica e socialmente mediada entre linguagem e subjetividade, juntamente com uma dialética entre poiesis e praxis.com uma dialética entre poiesis e praxis.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE – Filosofia transcendental. Hermenêutica. Linguagem. Revelação. Subjetividade.

ABSTRACT – This paper seeks to outline the development of Paul Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics from a phenomenology of the will towards a hermeneutics of revelation. It is shown how the radical project of detranscendentalizing subjectivity, underlying the contemporary French reception of a hermeneutics of suspicion, turns out to favor a post-Hegelian return to Kant that recasts transcendental philosophy in a historically, socially mediated correlation of language and subjectivity, on a par with a dialectic between poiesis and praxis.

KEY WORDS – Hermeneutics. Language. Revelation. Subjectivity. Transcendental philosophy.

1 Introduction

In a highly polemical book on the "French philosophy of the 1968 period", Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut attacked what they described as the French hyperbolic repetition of German thought, especially in the supposedly radical antihumanism of Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jacques Derrida's respective appropriations of Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, and Martin Heidegger. The celebrated "masters of suspicion" *(maîtres du soupçon)* often refer to a 1964 paper read by Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx", and is regarded by many postmodernists as a solemn manifesto. Ricoeur speaks also of the masters of the "hermeneutics of suspicion" *(herméneutique du soupçon)* in his

1965 book on Freud, *De l'interprétation*. However, Ricoeur used both terms as early as 1963, in a paper read for the "Première Rencontre romande d'universitaires protestants".[1] Ferry and Renaut identify the themes of the end of philosophy, the hermeneutic paradigm of genealogy, the disintegration of the idea of truth, and the historicizing of categories as tortuous paths ultimately leading to the annihilation of universals and, above all, to the oft-celebrated death of the subject. Interestingly enough, the authors strategically decided to spare other French thinkers who were also very influential in the sixties, such as Emmanuel Levinas, Raymond Aron, Jean Beaufret, Jacques Bouveresse, Louis Althusser, and Paul Ricoeur, precisely because they either did not succumb to the politically irresponsible interpretations of May 1968 or did subscribe to some form of humanism –that was especially the case of Jean-Paul Sartre. To be sure, postmodernists and poststructuralists have also come under attack by heralds of modernity on the other side of the Rhine, such as Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel, just to mention two of the most prominent German philosophers of our days. *Grosso modo*, the problem of modern reason and the emancipatory ideals of self-knowledge and freedom were the main targets for the self-proclaimed heirs to the *maîtres du soupçon* in the sixties. In effect, the transcendental dream of subjectivity *cum* unity, identity, and reflexivity is said to have come to an end with the Nietzschean critique of German idealism, the Freudian-Marxian unmasking of conscious representations, and the Wittgensteinian critique of consciousness, although Hegel's critique of Kant's transcendental idealism may be regarded as the beginning of the ongoing crisis of modern paradigms of subjectivity. Following Martin Heidegger's "destruction of metaphysics", Foucault and Derrida spoke thus of "detranscendentalizing the subject" and "deconstructing subjectivity" in their independent criticisms of Husserl's rehabilitation of transcendental philosophy. It is my contention here that Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology responds to the genealogical and deconstructive charges against the philosophical discourse of modernity without falling prey to an antihumanist nihilism or privileging linguistic paradigms to the detriment of the classical and modern paradigms of ontology and subjectivity. Furthermore, Ricoeur succeeds in avoiding the aestheticist temptation found in both Foucault and Derrida, as he maintains the epistemic specificity of his hermeneutics of praxis and of his metaphorics of poiesis.

The name of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur has been often associated with the existential phenomenology of the 1950s and with the hermeneutical philosophies of the 1960s and 70s. Ricoeur's transition from transcendental phenomenology to philosophical hermeneutics, in continual dialogue with a myriad of different disciplines such as psychoanalysis, structural anthropology, history, theology,

social sciences and linguistics, has very often been regarded as an eclectic philosophizing. In point of fact, Ricoeur's *répertoire* is very broad and his compositions very intricate and nuanced. His dialectical way of reconciling both ancient and modern thinkers, analytical and continental traditions, and the architectonic structure of his writings and lectures, as Henri Blocher has put it, characterizes Ricoeur as "l'homme des nuances, dites avec un charme discret," the Jaspersian maestro of a veritable *Symphilosophieren.*[2] And yet Ricoeur has been careful enough to repudiate constant charges of "eclecticism," which he dismisses as "la caricature de la dialectique".[3] Whether his dialectic can really account for the metaphilosophical itinerary of his philosophy of language remains, however, an open question. In a broad sense, this question has to do with Ricoeur's work as a historian of philosophy *and* as a philosopher who questions everything, but in particular the very meaning of questioning itself or problematizing – "*philosopher c'est problématiser*".[4] Within an established Cartesian tradition, the Cogito explores the world and the subject's alienation from it. Following Husserl and his *maître à penser* Gabriel Marcel, Ricoeur questions the Cogito's insertion within the world, at once as consciousness of being-in-the-world and as finitude in her/his appropriation of it, by intending, yet undergoing the experience of the world. The question of transcendental subjectivity and the very meaning of positing the I-world opposition, co-constitution and correlation arise thus at the heart of Ricoeur's phenomenological explorations. Now, in a more specific, existential sense, the hermeneutical question arises out of religious symbolism: "Le symbole donne à penser" ("the symbol sets us thinking.") Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and biblical hermeneutics lead Ricoeur to think the religious anew, to reflect upon the nature of the language of faith. The classic problematic of "faith and reason" acquires then a decisive hermeneutical orientation, in that the Cogito doubts, suspects, and believes. We can no longer take "consciousness" for granted – including our innermost religious convictions and feelings –, since there is also a "false consciousness", as "consciousness, far from being transparent to itself, is at the same time what *reveals* and what *conceals*", and this very dialectic calls for a *hermeneutics.*[5] The "ethical" lies, therefore, at the bottom of Ricoeur's hermeneutic, insofar as it seeks "to distinguish the true sense from the apparent sense", and as "a proper manner of *uncovering* what was covered, of *unveiling* what was

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[1]   H. Blocher, "L'herméneutique selon Paul Ricoeur," *Hokhma* 3 (1977): p. 12.

[2]   P. Ricoeur, *Le Conflit des interprétations* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 119. Cf. also pp. 58, 176, 330, 450; Henry Duméry, "La disgrace éclectique est-elle évitée?," *Regards sur la philosophie contemporaine* (Tournai-Paris: Castermann, 1957), p. 150.

[4]   J.-C. Piguet, "Qu'est-ce qu'un philosophe?," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 118 (1986): pp. 1-9. Ricoeur, Piguet, Jean Brun, Jacques Ellul, and Pierre Thévanaz were among the French-speaking Protestant thinkers who followed Marcel's Christian approach to philosophy, in an attempt that sought to rationally account for faith and the existential experience of the mystery of Being, without reducing philosophy to theology, and vice versa. Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers: Philosophie du mystère et philosophie du paradoxe* (Paris: Seuil, 1948).

[5]   "The Critique of Religion," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work*, edited by C. Reagan and D. Stewart (Boston: Beacon, 1978), p. 215. My emphasis.

veiled, of removing the mask".[6] Following Heidegger, Ricoeur seeks to think the unveiling thrust of language prior to the experience of subjectivity and consciousness, as language itself reveals the existential structure of human openness to the world. Like Hegel and Heidegger, Ricoeur attempts at rethinking "revelation" (Offenbarung) in the very becoming of self-consciousness, so as to highlight the transcending of coming into being. Unlike Hegel and Heidegger, however, Ricoeur does not believe that the Judeo-Christian paradoxical conception of an eternal God who intervenes in temporal history is in need of a totalizing metaphysics or has become an obsolete onto-theological paradigm. As we shall see, Ricoeur's wager is that the revelatory nature of metaphors, especially in mythical and poetical accounts, can actually be very helpful to rescue the radicalness of a hermeneutics of alterity, a hermeneutics that resists systemic closure and that refers to the complex, existential situations of our human reality, including natural languages, mythologies, literature, and the cultural products of civilizations. Ricoeur poses thus the hermeneutic problem in metaphilosophical terms, say, analogous to Tarski's convention T: "p" is true in L, iff p, where "p" is the sentence stating a certain proposition in a certain object language L and p is the translation of that sentence into the metalanguage. In contrast with Tarski's theory of truth, which deals with languages that are not semantically closed, Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology follows Heidegger's attempt to account also for nonpropositional language so that the hermeneutical transformation of phenomenology is itself intertwined with methodological and conceptual enlargements of signification that are reflected in the very conception of metaphors and metaphoricity: 'W' means that W, insofar as W refers not only to a state of affairs in the world, but also to the self-understanding and transposition of meanings presupposed in narratives and nonpropositional accounts. Although I cannot pursue this further, I think that Ricoeur has correctly spotted the hermeneutic transformation of phenomenology in Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and his shift from *Ideas I* to the generative phenomenology of the *Lebenswelt* and in the earlier Heidegger's interest in a phenomenology of formal indication (formale Anzeige). I reformulate thus the Ricoeurian problematic in the following terms: to what extent does Ricoeur's metaphilosophizing unveil some kind of *revealing* language? And what is, after all, the nature of such a language of revelation? What is the revelatory function of the hermeneutical circle? These questions and problems will underlie my hermeneutical investigation throughout this paper. The main purpose of this modest study is to understand the place of Ricoeur's conception of "revelation" in his hermeneutical philosophy, especially in the earlier writings leading to his own alternative variant of a post-Heideggerian phenomenological hermeneutics. In order to situate Ricoeur's conception of revelation within the hermeneutical development of his philosophy, I shall recapitulate his thinking along the *chronological* order of publication of his main writings, especially the earlier ones dealing with his phi-

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[6]   Ibid., p. 215.

losophy of language and hermeneutic philosophy, so as to reexamine his metho-
dological shift from an existential, perceptualist phenomenology towards a lin-
guistic phenomenology, that is, how an implicit hermeneutics of finitude gradually
evolved into an explicit hermeneutics of suspicion. This first part of the paper will
cover three main stages in the evolution of Ricoeur's hermeneutical reflection
(namely, *l'eidétique, la symbolique et l'herméneutique*). That will provide the nec-
essary background to articulate theological and philosophical hermeneutics within
the much broader framework of hermeneutics *tout court*, in the second part, as the
particular function of revelation calls for the *interpretation* of texts and contexts.

2   The Phenomenology of the Will

As David Klemm has pointed out, "only relatively lately has Ricoeur under-
taken to write a comprehensive hermeneutical theory based on a philosophy of
language".[7] However, as we approach Ricoeur's earlier writings within the broader
perspective of his own phenomenology, it seems that the hermeneutical question
has prevailed along the evolution of his thought, even before culminating in what
has been saluted as a "phénoménologie herméneutique." Ricoeur confesses that
he received "le choc philosophique décisif" from his Socratic master Gabriel Mar-
cel, but it was the influence of the Husserlian method that guided his first attempt
to construct a phenomenological "philosophie de la volonté." As he himself would
explain later in a famous collection of hermeneutical essays, *Le conflit des inter-
prétations* (1969): "My purpose here is to explore the paths opened to contempo-
rary philosophy by what could be called the graft of the hermeneutical problem
onto the phenomenological method".[8] "La greffe du problème herméneutique sur
la méthode phénoménologique" – a programmatic formula to be retained – trans-
lates indeed Ricoeur's mediation between the Heideggerian, hermeneutical ontol-
ogy of *Existenz* and the modern hermeneutical theory which has been associated
with Schleiermacher and Dilthey. The name of Husserl should appear then in be-
tween, as what has been described by Ricoeur himself as a "phenomenological
detour". Beyond the Cartesian Cogito *(res cogitans)* and the Kantian judging con-
sciousness *(transcendental ego)*, Husserl sought to relocate the thinking and living
ego in its own correlative milieu of consciousness, the *Lebenswelt* (*le monde
vécu*), so that the transcendental Cogito remains "inserted and involved in the
dense world of human life", which he called the *Welterfahrendesleben* ("life--
experiencing-the-world").[9] The ultimate meaning of such a transcendental ego is
to be found not in the material ego, *Mensch*, but in the ego qua *subject* to the
world, "exterior" to the world yet "oriented" towards it. The objectivity of the
world becomes thus a "transcendental intersubjectivity," in which the problem of

[7] D. Klemm, *The Hermeneutical Theory of Paul Ricoeur* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1983),
   p. 45.

[8] *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, trans. D. Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern
   University Press, 1974), p. 3. Cf. *Le Conflit des interprétations*, p. 7.

[9] E. Levinas, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger* (Paris: Vrin, 1949), pp. 11ff.

the other will always point to the transcendental ego, that is, in a descriptive analysis which Husserl has called a "phenomenological reduction" (epoché), *Einklammerung* ("bracketing"). According to Husserl, in this reduction both the transcendental ego and the world-phenomenon intended by this consciousness *(Intentionalität)* reveal, as it were, the very meaning of their relationship *(ego-- cogito-cogitatum)*. Ricoeur's phenomenology attempts thus to articulate this signification in terms of being-in-the-world, however moving away from every transcendental founding on the part of the Cogito and yet always returning to a transcendental, reflexive attitude in its self-understanding. Thus Ricoeur will not forgive the Platonism of the early Husserl, although he will also regret that the later Husserl almost abandoned his original "phenomenology of signification" on his way to an idealistic "transcendental phenomenology". Commenting on Husserl's "analysis of signification" in the second volume of his *Investigations*, Ricoeur says:

> It is important to notice that the first question of phenomenology is: What does signifying signify? Whatever the importance subsequently taken on by the description of perception, phenomenology begins not from what is most silent in the operation of consciousness but from its relationship to things mediated by signs as these are elaborated in a *spoken* culture. The first act of consciousness is designating or meaning *(Meinen)*. To distinguish signification from signs, to separate it from the word, from the image, and to elucidate the diverse ways in which an empty signification comes to be fulfilled by an intuitive presence, whatever it may be, is to describe signification phenomenologically.[10]

In part, the importance of these remarks resides in the implicit critique Ricoeur was addressing against the existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, in defense of the eidetic description he had employed four years earlier to compose the first volume of his *"philosophie de la volonté," Le volontaire et l'involontaire* (1950). In the "Introduction" to his French translation of Husserl's *Ideen I* (1950), Ricoeur had already criticized Merleau-Ponty's existential use of phenomenology to reconquer the "facticité" of our "être-au-monde", whose world has always already been out there.[11] Since every consciousness is perceptual, Merleau-Ponty seems to assume too hastily that the *signifié* has already been appropriated as *signifiant* in the experience of consciousness as *corps vécu*, as though the finitude of the latter concurred with the cognition of the former. Ricoeur thinks that Merleau-Ponty absorbed from the later Husserl (notably Husserl's *Lebensphilosophie*, after the *Krisis*) an existential shift towards a "perceptual" phenomenology (*Phénoménologie de la perception*, 1945) in which perception becomes "the prerequisite and genetic origin of all thought processes":

> Reduction is no longer understood as the withdrawal of consciousness from the world but as the revelation of the true sense of the transcendence of the "thing" in relation to consciousness. Contrary to the Platonic and subsequently Galilean tradition, which

[10] P. Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, trans. E. Ballard and L. Embree (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), pp. 5f.

[11] Ibid., p. 33 n. 34.

holds that true reality is not what one perceives but what one measures and conceives, the thing perceived recovers its presence, its sparkle, its marvellous power of revelation. .... The transcendency of the thing is the relative transcendency of a *vis-à-vis* in which consciousness goes beyond itself. Consciousness, defined by its intentionality, bursts outwards, moves to where the things are. Correspondingly, the world is "world-for-my-life", the environment of the "living ego", and it has no sense apart from the "living present" in which the commitment of the vivid now, in all its presence, is constantly renewed.[12]

Although Ricoeur would be forever indebted to Merleau-Ponty's holistic *circularité* between the "symbolism of the body" and "the play of intersignification", he thinks that Merleau-Ponty's "return to the speaking subject" does no justice to the co-constitutive character of language itself. Although he often speaks of the *impensé* in Husserl's phenomenology, and despite his recognition of the excess of the "signified" over the "signifying", Merleau-Ponty seems indeed to maintain the "sedimentation" and the "institution" of language as a corollary of his perceptual phenomenology.[13] On the other hand, Ricoeur's "phenomenology of the will" attempted to respond to the Husserlian challenge of intentionally representing *(vorstellen)* the noetic-noematic structure of consciousness, posited in the *Ideen*. According to Husserl, affection and volition appear as complex representations in the process of *Fundierung*. In order to understand these "affective and volitive subjective processes", Ricoeur first applies the Husserlian method of description to the practical functions of consciousness, before arriving at the "constitutive" power of consciousness in *Vorstellungen*, and he finally denounces "as naive the pretensions of the subject to set himself [sic] up as the primitive or primordial being".[14] The project of the *Philosophie de la volonté* was originally conceived in three phases: in the first volume, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* (ET: *Freedom and Nature)*, Ricoeur deals with the "eidetics of the will," while the second and third volumes would be respectively devoted to the "empirics" and the "poetics" of the will. Only the second volume of his ambitious project was published, in 1960, under the title *Finitude et culpabilité*, in two separate parts: *L'homme faillible* (ET: *Fallible Man)* and *La symbolique du mal* (ET: *The Symbolism of Evil)*.

In the first volume, which he dedicated to Marcel, Ricoeur sets out to articulate some kind of dialectical *via media* between the Sartrean ontological dichotomy *(être-pour-soi* subject / *être-en-soi* object) and the "incarnation" *(être-au-monde)* of Marcel's existentialism. Without adhering to the Husserlian "Platonizing interpretation of essences" and its "idealism of the transcendental ego", Ricoeur applies Husserl's "eidetic reduction" to the domain of the will, which is unveiled

[12] P. Ricoeur, "New Developments in Phenomenology in France: The Phenomenology of Language," *Social Research* 34 (1967): p. 6.

[13] Cf. Ricoeur's preface to Gary Madison, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981).

[14] P. Ricoeur, "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will," *Husserl*, p. 214. I have left the inclusive language whenever it occurs in the original.

as consciousness *("vouloir comme conscience")*, as it *diagnoses* the nature of the involuntary:

> ... The initial situation revealed by description is the reciprocity of the involuntary and the voluntary. ... The involuntary has no meaning of its own. Only the relation of the voluntary and the involuntary is intelligible. Description is understanding in terms of this relation.[15]

This *latent* hermeneutic must dig up the meaning-structure which underlies the prepredicative, prelinguistic "given," in an explorative movement that reminds of Husserl's process of *Rückfragen* ("backquestioning"), although Ricoeur also uses a Kantian delimitation to avoid falling back into "transcendentalism":

> Pure description, understood as an elucidation of meanings, has its limitations. The gushing reality of life can become shrouded in essences. But while it may finally be necessary to transcend the eidetic approach, we must first draw from it all that it can give us, especially delimiting of our principal concepts. The words decision, project, value, motive, and so on, have a meaning which we need to determine. Hence we shall first proceed to such analysis of meanings.[16]

Just like Husserl, who had used the term *eidos* to designate "the immediately given structures of experience" (hence the German *Wesenschau*, "idea--perception"), Ricoeur deploys an *"eidétique de la volonté"* to effect his phenomenological analysis of the essential structures of human being qua *"être-au-monde"*. Like Husserl, Ricoeur takes the Cartesian Cogito as the starting point of his phenomenology, proceeding from the "voluntary" to the "involuntary." The Husserlian notion of "intentionality" and his technique of "bracketing" inspire Ricoeur's "double abstraction" of the fault *("la faute")* and transcendence: the autonomous *"je pense"* is left alone to its own freedom, motivated by an infinite drive, yet bound by a finite nature. Again, Kant's *limit-idea* defines the paradoxical character of Ricoeur's phenomenology. Contrary to Husserl in his tendency to reduce the world to the transcendental subject, Ricoeur thinks the dichotomy of the subject and the object to be real, although metaphysically inconclusive. As over against the objectifying empiricism of others, he maintains that, in order "to understand the relations between the involuntary and the voluntary we must constantly re-conquer the Cogito grasped in the first person *(le Cogito en première personne)* from the natural standpoint".[17] Ricoeur affirms thus the "reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary," in the conciliation of nature (the *"corps propre"* which I am) with freedom (my appropriation of a meaningful world through incarnation), as an alternative to the paradoxical duality of the involuntary and the voluntary.[18] Of course, although he goes beyond the psychological dualism of the subject and

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[15] P. Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, trans. E. Kohak (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), pp. 4 f.

[16] P. Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, p. 37.

[17] P. Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, p. 9. See also Ricoeur's comparison between "Kant and Husserl," *Husserl*, pp. 175 ff.

[18] P. Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, p. 341.

the object, Ricoeur does not seek to overcome the duality of the involuntary and the voluntary. For in the innermost center of the human will, Ricoeur concludes, remains the existential paradox of the "chosen" and the "undergone" *(le paradoxe de l'existence choisie et de l'existence subie)*. Such is the Kierkegaardian accent of Ricoeur's dialectic of human freedom. Moreover, the human, rational boundaries implied in the Ricoeurian phenomenology of the will reflect the Lutheran heritage of his Kantian morality. After asserting that freedom is not a pure act but activity and receptivity, Ricoeur sets up the "limit concepts" of human freedom only to open its way to meaning and the Transcendence. The last words in this volume remind us of the ontological regionality of the human:

> A genuine transcendence is more than a limit concept: it is a presence which brings about a true revolution in the theory of subjectivity. It introduces into it a radically new dimension, the poetic dimension. At least such limit concepts complete the determination of a freedom which is human and not divine, of a freedom which does not posit itself absolutely because it is not Transcendence. To will is not to create.[19]

If Kant's *Kritik* meant to bring about a Copernican revolution by restoring to subjectivity its due *(der Mensch* qua the transcendental "I" as the center of a *gegenständlich* cosmos), Ricoeur seeks to perform "a second Copernican revolution which displaces being from the center, without however returning to the rule of the object".[20] In this sense, the Ricoeurian dialectic compels us to postpone any conclusive remarks about the nature-freedom paradox. In effect, Ricoeur maintains from the outset that "a paradoxical ontology is possible only if it is covertly reconciled."[21] Such a dialectical phenomenology is thus to be understood as "reconciliation," as an understanding reconcilement of the voluntary with the involuntary: "[...] comprendre le mystère comme réconciliation, c'est-à-dire, comme restauration ... du pacte originel de la conscience confuse avec son corps et le monde".[22] Even though his first major work does not contain an explicit hermeneutics, it seems that Paul Ricoeur was already preparing the soil on which he should construct his *"empirique"* and *"symbolique"*. In point of fact, as Blocher has remarked, the Ricoeurian *"eidétique"* prefigured somehow his future philosophy of interpretation not only in its "description" of the will, but also in the very phenomenological style --in French, *"caractère"* – of his writing. For the occurrence of expressions such as *"la parabole de l'être"*, *"figure"*, *"métaphore"*, and *"analogie de la Transcendance"*, serve to illustrate the hermeneutical concern which permeates the Ricoeurian phenomenology of the will. But it was only in the preface to the second volume, *Finitude et culpabilité*, that Paul Ricoeur employed the term *"herméneutique"* for the first time, as an ensemble of deciphering rules applied to a world of symbols. Of course this interpretive exegesis of the symbol is to be understood against the mythico-symbolic background of the *"symbolique du mal"*, which

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[19] Ibid., p. 486.
[20] Ibid., p. 32.
[21] Ibidem.
[22] P. Ricoeur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* (Paris: Aubier, 1950), p. 21.

constitutes the second part of *Finitude et culpabilité*. If the eidetics of the will culminated in the "incarnate freedom" of the human essentially understood, an "empirics of the will," on the other hand, should complete our understanding of the actual conditions of human existence as reflected in consciousness and as we find them in non-reflected expressions such as myth and symbol.

Although *L'homme fallible*, the first part of this volume, remains within the framework of a "descriptive phenomenology," i.e. a work of pure reflection, it has been acclaimed, along with its sequel *La symbolique du mal* as the "most perfect" book ever written by Ricoeur.[23] In its first part, the problem of evil is thoroughly dealt with on the level of the *"imaginaire"*, as existentially reflected in the human *"conscience"* (both "consciousness" and "awareness") of her/his finitude and fallibility, in her/his *"conscience de faute"*. Ricoeur's perspective is that of an ethical world-view *("vision éthique du monde")*, which presupposes the dialectical interdependence between freedom and evil:

> Tenter de comprendre le mal par la liberté est une décision grave; c'est la décision d'entrer dans le problème du mal par la porte étroite, en tenant dès l'abord le mal pour "humain trop humain." Encore faut-il bien entendre le sens de cette décision, afin de ne pas en récuser prématurément la légitimité. Ce n'est aucunement une décision sur l'origine radicale du mal, mais seulement la description du lieu où le mal apparaît et d'où il peut être vu; il est très possible en effet que l'homme ne soit pas l'origine radicale du mal, qu'il ne soit pas le méchant absolu; mais même si le mal était contemporain de l'origine radicale des choses, il resterait que seule la manière dont il affecte l'existence humaine le rend manifeste. La décision d'entrer dans le problème du mal par la porte étroite de la réalité exprime donc seulement le choix d'un centre de perspective: même si le mal venait à l'homme à partir d'un autre foyer qui le contaminerait, cet autre foyer ne nous serait accessible que par son rapport à nous, que par l'état de tentation, d'égarement, d'aveuglement dont nous serions affectés; l'humanité de l'homme est, en toute hypothèse, l'espace de manifestation du mal.[24]

According to this ethical view, not only is freedom the reason for evil but the "confession of evil" *("l'aveu du mal")* is also the condition for the consciousness of freedom. Thus the ethical view of evil leads inevitably to an interpretation of mythical significations, as in the "myth of the Fall": if it was the human being who has posited (*posé*) evil in the world, humans on the other hand posited evil only because they succumbed to an adversary, alien temptation. In other words, the positing of evil implies already the victimizing of freedom by an Other: "en posant le mal, la liberté est en proie à un Autre".[25] Such an ambiguous structure of myth requires an exegesis of the symbol, which inspires Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology.

[23] M. Philibert, *Paul Ricoeur ou la liberté selon l'espérance* (Paris: Seghers, 1971), p. 64.

[24] P. Ricoeur, *L'homme faillible* (Paris: Aubier, 1960), p. 14.

[25] Ibid., p. 17.

3 Phenomenology of the Symbol

Commenting on Ricoeur's transition from his eidetic phenomenology of the will to his hermeneutic symbolism of evil, Kohak evokes the Ricoeurian hermeneutical principle of *pars pro toto* symbolism (i.e. a two-layer structure of meaning, growing from the partial to the total representation of symbolic meaning) which, in *De l'interprétation*, would be applied to the interpretation of dreams qua symbols and fully developed into a veritable hermeneutics:

> The task of hermeneutic phenomenology is precisely to recognize the universal latent significance made manifest through the overt meaning of myth and symbol. Thus a hermeneutics must combine the attitude of trust with an attitude of suspicion, a willingness to listen to what is revealed through the symbol and a suspicion which would protect it from being misled by its overt meaning.[26]

The Ricoeurian project of building up a phenomenology of the will had to undergo a radical methodological change, in its transition from the eidetic analysis of *L'homme faillible* to the structural hermeneutic of *La symbolique du mal*. Ricoeur had already announced the boundaries of his phenomenological method in *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, when he was forced to "bracket" *(mettre en parenthèses)* both the fault and the Transcendence in order to work out a "pure", eidetic description of the will. Now, as he moves from the *"eidétique"* to the *"empirique"*, Ricoeur admits that humans' transition from a state of "innocence" to a "faulty" condition cannot be properly dealt with by any "empiric description" but requires what he calls a *"mythique concrete"*. The Ricoeurian project moves then in the direction of a philosophical reflection upon the myth. The concept of fallibility opens up the way to the symbolic language of the confession of faults, as humans are held in a dialectical mediation between the finite and the infinite, caught up between their language of analogies and their guilty conscience's language of enigmas. The enigmatic character of this "langage de l'homme faillible" requires, essentially and not accidentally, an *herméneutique* (i.e. "une exégèse du symbole qui appelle des règles de déchiffrement"). The Kantian aphorism, "the symbol gives raise to think," is then invoked to translate the hermeneutical project of Ricoeur's symbolism:

> Cette herméneutique n'est pas homogène à la pensée réflexive qui a conduit jusqu'au concept de faillibilité. On esquisse les règles de transposition de la symbolique du mal dans un nouveau type de discours philosophique dans le dernier chapitre de la seconde partie sous le titre: "le symbole donne à penser"; ce texte est la plaque tournante de tout l'ouvrage; il indique comment on peut à la fois respecter la spécificité du monde symbolique d'expression et penser, non point "dernière" le symbole, mais "à partir" du symbole.[27]

In his analysis of primary symbols such as *"souillure"* (stain), *"péché"* (sin), *"culpabilité"* (guilt), and of myths which systematize these symbols, Ricoeur seeks

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[26] P. Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, p. xxxi.

[27] P. Ricoeur, *L'homme faillible*, p. 12.

to depict the unity of the paradoxical relation of man as agent and patient, as act and fact, as voluntary and involuntary, as freedom and nature. In dialogue with the phenomenology of religions (Mircea Eliade, G. van der Leeuw et al.) and his- torical-critical theologies of our times (notably Gerhard von Rad's *Überlieferungs- geschichtliche Theologie*), Ricoeur classifies the myths into four different types:

(i) those of the "original chaos", as in the Babylonian account of creation *("Le drame de la création et la vision 'rituelle' du monde");*

(ii) the "tragic myth," and those of the evil god *("Le dieu méchant et la vision tragique de l'existence");*

(iii) the "adamic myth," in Genesis *("Le mythe 'adamique' et la vision 'eschatologique' de l'histoire");*

(iv) the myth of the "exiled soul," as in the Orphic gnosis *("le mythe de l'âme exilée et le salut par la connaissance").*[28]

The twofold conception of myth as *"parole"* (as opposed to *"langage"*) and "récit" *("en lui le symbole prend la forme du récit"),* according to Ricoeur, implies a sequential relationship between symbols that refer to time and to a concrete mode of existence:

Le mythe exerce sa fonction symbolique par le moyen spécifique du récit parce que ce qu'il veut dire est déjà drame. C'est ce drame originel qui ouvre et découvre le sens caché de l'expérience humaine; ce faisant le mythe qui le raconte assume la fonction irremplaçable du récit.[29]

"Totalité du sens" and "drame cosmique," "genèse" and "structure," the structural themes of the Beginning and the End --these concepts characterize Ricoeur's dialectical theology of reconciliation, as he had already admitted vis-à- vis the mystery of the serfdom of will, "l'énigme du serf-arbitre, c'est-à-dire d'un libre arbitre qui se lie et se trouve toujours déjà lié, est le thème ultime que le symbole donne à penser".[30] Thus the phenomenology of *La symbolique du mal* grounds its hermeneutics upon the double intentionality of myth and symbol: the Ricoeurian hermeneutics is then better defined as the task of deciphering double-- meaning symbolic expressions. Now, I must recall that the Ricoeurian symbolism in question is not speculative but it remains dependant on our human experience and its reflection upon the myth. Ricoeur announces a third volume on the "phi- losophy of the fault" (in the awaited *Poétique de la volonté*), where he would deal with the so-called *"symboles spéculatifs".*[31] In his introduction to the *Symbolism of Evil* he develops an entire "critériologie du symbole" in order to arrive at some definition of the symbol in question. In the first place, every authentic symbol comprises three dimensions: cosmic (i.e. it always refers to a place or an aspsct of the universe), oneiric (it is in the dream that one can bring out the passage from the cosmic function to a psychic-function in a symbol) and poetic *("dans la poésie*

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[28] P. Ricoeur, *La symbolique du mal* (Paris: Rubier, 1960), p. 153.

[29] Ibid., p. 161.

[30] P. Ricoeur, *L'homme faillible*, p. 13.

[31] P. Ricoeur, *La symbolique du mal*, p. 17 n. 3.

le symbole est surpris au moment où il est un surgissement du langage"), and these three forms are structurally intercommunicative. Ricoeur goes on then to enumerate six approaches to what should be the essence of the symbol:

1. The symbol is a sign: "ce sont des expressions qui communiquent un sens; ce sens est déclaré dans une intention de signifier véhiculée par la parole".

2. Symbols are opaque: "à l'opposé des signes techniques parfaitement transparents qui ne disent que ce qu'ils veulent dire em posant le signifié, les signes symboliques sont opaques, parce que le sens premier littéral, patent, vise lui-même analogiquement un sens second qui n'est pas donné autrememt qu'en lui... Cette opacité fait la profondeur même du symbole, inépuisable comme on dira".

3. The symbol is a primary intentionality which provides analogically a secondary sense: "à la différence d'une comparaison que nous considérons du dehors, le symbole est le mouvement du sens primaire qui nous fait participer au sens latent et ainsi nous assimile au symbolisé sans que nous puissions dominer intellectuellement la similitude".

4. A symbol is not an allegory: "dans l'allégorie le signifié primaire, c'est-à-dire le sens littéral, est contingent et le signifié second, le sens symbolique lui--même, est suffisammemt extérieur pour être directement accessible ... le symbole précède l'herméneutique; l'allégorie est déjà herméneutique; et cela parce que le symbole donne son sens en transparence d'une toute autre façon que par traduction; on dirait plutôt qu'il évoque, qu'il le suggère au sens de l'*ainigma* grec (d'où procède le mot 'énigme'). Il le donne dans la transparence opaque de l'énigme et non par traduction".

5. This "symbol" in question has nothing to do with that of the "symbolic logic," but the former is the very opposite of the latter: "la signification, par sa structure même (en même temps fonction de l'absence et fonction de la présence), rend possible à la fois la formalisation intégrale, c'est-à-dire la réduction du signe au 'caractère' (au sens leibnizien) et finalememt à un élément de calcul, et la restauration d'un langage plein, lourd d'intentionnalités impliquées et de renvois analogiques à autre chose, qu'il donne en énigme".

6. How shall one draw the line between "symbol" and "myth"? "Je tiendrai le mythe pour une espèce de symbole, comme un symbole développé en forme de récit, et articulé dans un temps et un espace non coordonnables à ceux de l'histoire et de la géographie selon la méthode critique; par exemple, l'exil est un symbole primaire de l'aliénation humaine, mais l'histoire de l'expulsion d'Adam et d'Eve du Paradis est un récit mythique de second degré mettant em jeu des personages, des lieux, un temps, des épisodes fabuleux..."[32]

In the conclusion to this volume, Ricoeur inscribes himself within the hermeneutical circle sketched by Schleiermacher and Dilthey, and reproduced in different domains by Leenhardt, Eliade and Bultmann. In effect, the Marburger theologian is evoked several times by Ricoeur throughout his later writings. Although

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[32] Ibid., pp. 21-25.

Ricoeur shares the former's demythologizing program on the whole, the French philosopher rejects the Bultmannian confusion of "démythisation" with "démythologisation." According to Ricoeur, Bultmann has rightly articulated the hermeneutical circle in terms of *Verstehen* and *Glauben*, in that one has to understand in order to believe insofar as one has also to believe in order to understand. Understanding and interpretation are certainly conditioned by our presuppositions, by our preunderstanding and by that which is "aimed at" in our approach (the Heideggerian *Woraufhin*). Therefore, belief is only made possible, for the postcritical subjectivity of "modernity," through the mediation of one's self-understanding. It is this sense that understanding, from a hermeneutical standpoint, is mediation rather than reconstruction, revelation rather than objectification. Furthermore, I agree with Gary Madison in that "Ricoeur's reflexive philosophy is not a philosophy of consciousness, and the hermeneutical subject is not a metaphysical subject".[33] Thus the intrinsic demythologizing character of every critique effects the deconstructive thrust of Heidegger's *Abbau*, as Bultmann's *Entmythologisierung* recasts the *entformalisiert* sense of Dasein's facticity: "Toute critique 'démythologise' en tant que critique: c'est-á-dire pousse toujours plus loin le départage de l'historique (selon les règles de la méthode critique) et du pseudo-historique."[34] In particular, the "historisch-geschichtlich" rupture implied in Bultmann's neo-Kantian criticism has opened up the way for the liberation of the *logos* enclosed in the *mythos*. Nevertheless, such demythologization in the very pursuit of objective truth does not suppress the myth but rehabilitates it, in its symbolic dimension. As Ricoeur remarks,

[...] C'est précisément em accélérant le mouvement de "démythologisation," que l'herméneutique moderne met au jour la dimension du symbole, en tant que signe originaire du sacré; c'est ainsi qu'elle participe à la revivification de la philosophie au contact des symboles; elle est une des voies de son rajeunissement. Ce paradoxe selon lequel la "démythologisation" est aussi recharge de la pensée dans les symboles n'est qu'un corollaire de ce que nous avons appelé le cercle du croire et du comprendre dans l'herméneutique.[35]

Hence we can speak of the Ricoeurian distinction between "démythisatiom" and "démythologisation" in the following terms: whereas the former means the radical suppression of the myth, the latter seeks to denounce the historical naiveté of the pre-critical belief in the myth. Ricoeur rejects the former, while Bultmann apparently confuses the two. In point of fact, the notion of "de-mythologization" as the "de-objectification" of myth is better understood if we compare Bultmann's definition of *Mythos* with that of Hans Jonas, whose work on Gnosticism inspired the former's demythologization project in the 1940's. According to Bultmann,

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[33] G.B. Madison, "Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of the Subject," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Lewis E. Hahn, "The Library of Living Philosophers" (Chicago and La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1996), p. 80.

[34] P. Ricoeur, *La symbolique du mal*, p. 328.

[35] Ibidem. Cf. M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 7th. ed., § 7 C. p. 35, § 48, p. 241.

The real purpose of myth is not to present an objective picture of the world as it is *(ein objektives Weltbild)*, but to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives. Myth should be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically, or better still, existentially... The real purpose of myth is to speak of a transcendent power which controls the world and man, but that purpose is impeded and obscured by the terms in which it is experienced.[26]

Now, as we consider Jonas's identification between *entmythologisiert* ("demythologized') and *entmythisiert* ("demythed") to express the "logicized" language of human thought, as opposed to the "hypostasized" language of myth, it becomes evident that such an interpretation of mythology had to appeal to an existential terminology. Because the kerygma should not be eliminated (Bultmann), the demythologization should not be reduced to a mere suppression of mythology but consisted in the interpretation of it (Jonas). In other words, Bultmann --just like Jonas-- does not dispense with the mythological, but rather seeks to understand it in existential, self-appropriating terms. The myth, on the other hand, has itself to be sacrificed on the altar of reason so that the logos itself be resurrected, at the very level of our human existence. This re-appropriation of the logos by the understanding subject, vis-à-vis the symbolism of the myth, was the kernel of Jonas's approach to Gnostic mythology:

We first turn to an anthropological, ethical sphere of concepts to show how the existential basic principle we have postulated, the "gnostic" principle...is here in a quite distinctive way drawn back out of the outward mythical objectification *(der äusseren mythischen Objektivation)* and transposed into inner concepts of Dasein *(in innere Daseinsbegriffe)* and into ethical practice, i.e. it appears so to speak "resubjectivized".[27]

It seems that Ricoeur's conception of "myth," originated from his "dialogue" with Jaspers, Berdyaev, Eliade, and Jung, is much broader and more adequate to be used in a philosophy of language than the Bultmannian one. As Ricoeur would point it out in his preface to the French edition of Bultmann's *Jesus* (1968), the "nonmythological" language of faith proposed by Bultmann does not solve the hermeneutical problem of objectifying the meaning of the *Dass* ("this event of encounter") which follows on the *Was* ("on general statements and on objectifying representations").[28] Ricoeur is not taking so much a stand against Bultmann as he wants to go further in a linguistic direction overlooked by the latter. Accordirig to Ricoeur, "Bultmann seems to believe that a language which is no longer 'objectifying' is innocent. But in what sense is it still a language? And what does it signify?"[29] Like the "new hermeneutic" movemerit which would emerge out of the post-Bultmannian quest of the historical Jesus, Ricoeur re-invokes the object of this hermeneutical inquiry in order to radicalize the demythologizing program. Yet,

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[26] R. Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. by H.-W. Bartsch (New York: Harper & RQW, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 10 f.

[27] H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), pp. 3f.

[28] Cf. *Le Conflit des interprétations*, p. 387.

[29] P. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 396. *Le Conflit des interprétations*, p. 388.

unlike Ebeling and Fuchs, he critically avoids the Heideggerian identity between an existential hermeneutics and an ontology of understanding. In his search for a method which reconciles both the symbolic use of myth and the signification of faith, Ricoeur concludes that, in the last analysis, "kerygma can no longer be the origin of demythologization if it does not initiate thought, if it develops no understanding of faith". The question that arises then is whether the kerygma can still be understood as both event and meaning together, without falling into the "objectifying" aporia again:

> This question is at the center of post-Bultmannian hermeneutics. The opposition between explanation and understanding that came from Dilthey and the opposition between the objective and the existential that came from an overtly anthropological reading of Heidegger were very useful in a first phase of the problem. But, once the intention is to grasp in its entirety the problem of the understanding of faith and the language appropriate to it, these oppositions prove to be ruinous. Doubtless it is necessary today to award less importance to *Verstehen* ("understanding"), which is too exclusively centered on existential decision, and to consider the problem of language and interpretation in all its **breadth**.[40]

It would be imprecise, however, to understand Ricoeur's criticism of Bultmann as an attempt to avoid the Heideggerian category of "historicality" (*Geschichtlichkeit*; in French, "historialité"). For Ricoeur agrees with Bultmann as to the existential appropriation of meaning in the *geschichtliche* decision; nevertheless, according to Ricoeur, this *geschichtliche* appropriation "is only the final stage, the last threshold of an understanding which has first uprooted and moved into another meaning". Ricoeur criticizes Bultmann for leaping over "the moment of meaning," which is "objective" and "ideal" (in the Husserlian conception of *Sinn*, which does not hold any place in reality, not even in psychic reality). Ricoeur wants thus to emphasize "the semantic moment" and "the objectivity of the text, understood as content --bearer of meaning and demand for meaning-- that begins the existential movement of appropriation." He does follow Husserl and Frege in their distinction between sense/meaning and reference ("*Sinn*" and "*Bedeutung*"): "[...] Il faut alors distinguer deux seuils de la compréhension: le seuil "du sens" qui est ce qu'on vient de dire, et celui de la "signification" qui est le moment de la reprise du sens par le lecteur, de son effectuation dans l'existence. Le parcours entier de la compréhension va du sens idéal à la signification existentielle".[41] This should bring us back to the hermeneutic phenomenology developed in the *Symbolism of Evil*. In its conclusion, Ricoeur evaluates the postcritical impasse suscitated by the modern hermeneutical circle: on the one hand, the symbolic and mythic expressions of being have been defied by the critique towards an objectifying language, having human being as the center of meaning (transcendental Cogito); on the other hand, the first naiveté, that of belief in a divine-ordered cos-

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[40] Ibidem: "Ces questions je ne formule pas contre Bultmann, mais afin de mieux penser ce qui reste impensé chez lui."

[41] P. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 397; *Le Conflit des interprétations*, p. 389.

mos, has been suppressed by demythologizing programs only to culminate in the metaphysical forgetfulness of Being. Just as Kant's *Kritiken* mark the end of pre-modern approaches to the metaphysics of representation and the beginning of anthropocentric conceptions of subjectivity that articulate the rational and the empirical realms of whatever becomes object of human cognition, Heidegger sought to rescue the fundamental ontological dimension that was lacking in transcendental subjectivity. Nevertheless, Heidegger's hermeneutical clue to account for the meaning of Being out of Dasein's factual existence is far from conclusive, as its historicality and linguisticality allow for open-ended interpretations. Hence Ricoeur goes on to confess:

> Est-ce à dire que nous pourrions revenir à la première naiveté? non point. De toute manière quelque chose est perdu, irrémédiablement perdu: l'immédiateté de la croyance. Mais si nous ne pouvons plus vivre, selon la croyance originaire, les grandes symboliques du sacré, nous pouvons, nous modernes, dans et par la critique, tendre vers une seconde naiveté. Bref, c'est en interprétant que nous pouvons à nouveau entendre; ainsi est-ce dans l'herméneutique que se noue la donation de sens par le symbol et l'initiative intelligible du déchiffrage.[41]

4   The Hermeneutics of Suspicion

As we have seen, according to Ricoeur, hermeneutics has emerged out of the passage from a "pre-philosophical," mythical naiveté ("la première naiveté") to a demythologizing, critical understanding of our human existence ("la seconde naiveté"). In this sense, Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will is a propaedeutic to his philosophical hermeneutics, and his philosophy can be properly called a "hermeneutic phenomenology".[42] For Ricoeur brings both ontology and epistemology together onto the level of his hermeneutics of human being. Not only the classical question "Qu'est-ce que l'être humain?," but above all the hermeneutic question "Qu'est-ce que l'être de l'être-humain?" runs through his explorations of meaning, in a dialectical philosophical anthropology which reluctantly gives way to an ontological hermeneutics vis-à-vis the problematic of speaking the language of Being. In effect, it seems indeed that this "dialectique" makes Ricoeur's critique of metaphysics stand closer to Kant's than to Heidegger's, in that its ethical dimension allows for the "symbolique" without any transgression of the truth of Being, aligning Ricoeur's "éthique" with Levinas's and Kierkegaard's primacy of the Other over the thinking of the Being of beings.[44] Furthermore, such an *ursprüngliche* ethical dimension constitutes the *humanist* character of Ricoeur's philosophical thought, which overtly assumes the Christian presuppositions of his thinking in

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[41]   P. Ricoeur, *La symbolique du mal*, p. 326.
[42]   Cf. Don Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971).
[44]   Cf., for example, *Le Conflit des interprétations*, pp. 338 ff.: "Je suivrai Kant deux fois: d'abord dans sa définition de la *fonction* éthique de la religion, ensuite dans sa définition du contenu *représentatif* de la religion..."

the form of a hermeneutic anthropology. Like Heidegger, Ricoeur believes that language is the house of Being and human being its shepherd; unlike the Messkirch philosopher, however, Ricoeur believes in a transcendental "signifier" which refers to our human finitude and fallibility as much as it does refer to our openness to the Other. Religion, according to Ricoeur and in full agreement with his Kantian conception of morality, translates thus the very hermeneutical circle which keeps us within the mystery of being, without any warrant of finding our way out. For religion, as the ultimate expression of a human desire to transcend oneself in encountering the Other, makes no pretension to overcoming the hermeneutic circles that take us from suspicion to belief. Religion reveals thus our human belonging together with the language of being. Therefore, a critical religious attitude leads us not to unbelief but to interpretation, even within the circle, so that our understanding of ourselves and our spiritual vocation may be fulfilled in a world where meaning comes into being. This is the "wager" ("le pari") of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion, the philosophical wager that, following "the indication of symbolic thought," "I shall have a better understanding of man and of the bond between the being of man and the being of all beings".[45] In this shift from a mythicosymbolic expression of human existence towards a critical, philosophical hermeneutics of being, Ricoeur has stressed the function of the consciousness of self which lies in the very transition from a precritical to a postcritical subjectivity. The first stage of subjectivity (the first naiveté) holds the primary symbol not as a "given" ("une donnée") to human being but as a telos (and *Ursprung*) to be "aimed at" *(visée)* through mythic expression. The second stage of subjectivity can be portrayed by the Cartesian cogito but it was decisively won by the Kantian epistemological turn in his critique of dogmatic metaphysics: "How do I know what appears to me as it appears?" Such critical approach, in its destruction of the immediate, symbolic meaning, constitutes the preamble to the "hermeneutics of suspicion" which was practiced by Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. The structure of selfhood is thus objectified in the conscious critique of subjectivity, and subsequently suspected and unmasked in its "false-conscious" pretensions to a full, self-transparent "consciousness". Finally, the third stage of subjectivity is attained with the emergence of a reflexive consciousness in a "restorative" hermeneutic that mediates the content of symbolic consciousness through the critical consciousness. Ricoeur employs here the Husserlian phenomenological method to return to the Kantian epistemology: the subject is no longer a transcendental ego, but a historical-existential "I" that synthesizes direct self-world relations. As Klemm has summed it up, "the second naiveté is grounded on the full appearance of reflexivity just because it exists where the naive meaning is mediated through the critical consciousness".[46] The development of the Ricoeurian hermeneutical reflection found its climactic point between 1965 and 1969, when were published, respectively, *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, and *Le conflit des interprétations*.

[45] P. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. E. Buchanan (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 355.

[46] D. Klemm, op. cit., p. 73.

Essais d'herméneutique. It is in *Freud and Philosophy* (ET, 1970) that Ricoeur makes explicit the challenge of a "hermeneutics of suspicion," as opposed to a primitive naiveté-based "hermeneutics of recollection" which tries in vain to explain the symbolism of evil. First of all, in this book Ricoeur announces the challenges imposed by the complexity and vastness of the realm of language today:

> Language is the common meeting ground of Wittgenstein's investigations, the English linguistic philosophy, the phenomenology that stems from Husserl, Heidegger's investigations, the works of the Bultmannian school and other schools of New Testament exegesis, the works of comparative history of religion and of anthropology concerning myth, ritual, and unbelief --and finally, psychoanalysis.[47]

"Le domaine du langage", says Ricoeur, "is an area today where all philosophical investigations cut across one another". In his penetrating analysis of Freud's hermeneutics of the self, Ricoeur marks off his own project of interpretation of signs by taking a "longue route" that differs from the "short cut" taken by Heidegger, in the latter's definition of Dasein as the being which has its being in understanding. Commenting on Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics, Ricoeur remarks that

> One does not enter (Heidegger's) ontology of understanding little by little: one does not reach it by degrees, deepening the methodological requirements of exegesis, history, or psychoanalysis: one is transported there by a sudden reversal of the question. Instead of asking: On what condition can a knowing subject understand a text or history? one asks: What kind of being is it whose being consists of understanding? The hermeneutic problem thus becomes a problem of the Analytic of this being, Dasein, which exists through understanding.[48]

Nevertheless, it would be a gross mistake to simply oppose Ricoeur's reflective hermeneutics to Heidegger's ontological hermeneutic as though the former were not following the *Denkweg* of the latter:

> Je ne dis pas que la théologie doit passer par Heidegger. Je dis que, si elle passe par Heidegger c'est par-là et jusque-là qu'elle doit le suivre. Ce chemin est le plus long. C'est le chemin de la patience et non de la hâte et de la précipitation. Sur ce chemin, le théologien ne doit pas être pressé de savoir si l'être, selon Heidegger, c'est Dieu, selon la Bible. ...tout cela reste à penser. Il n'y a pas de plus court chemin pour joindre l'anthropologie existentiale neutre, selon la philosophie, et la décision existentielle devant Dieu, selon la Bible. Mais il y a le long chemin de la question de l'être et de l'appartenance du dire à l'être.[49]

This "longue route" typifies Ricoeur's hermeneutics as an "herméneutique du détour", in that his philosophy of the "sujet" meets "le long détour des signes" as it proceeds from the "je suis" to the "je pense". For Ricoeur, "la réflexion est l'effort pour ressaisir l'Ego de l'Ego Cogito dans le miroir de ses objets, de ses

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[47] P. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. D. Savage, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 3; *De l'interprétation: Essai sur Freud* (Paris: Seuil, 1965), p. 13.

[48] P. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 6; *Conflit*, p. 10.

[49] P. Ricoeur, *Le Conflit des interprétations*, p. 392.

oeuvres et finalement de ses actes".[50] The hermeneutical detour compels the existing cogito to appropriate its own existential meaning not in a reflection objectified, as it were, "thought" outside its being, but in the very interpretation of those signs which anticipated its reflection upon existence. According to Ricoeur,

> The ultimate root of our problem lies in this primitive connection between the act of existing and the signs we deploy in our works; reflection must become interpretation because I cannot grasp the act of existing except in signs scattered in the world. That is why a reflective philosophy must include the results, methods, and presuppositions of all the sciences that try to decipher and interpret the signs of man.[51]

That leads Ricoeur to concentrate his hermeneutical project upon the textual approach: instead of reducing itself to an ontology of understanding, hermeneutics has to deal with the object of interpretation par excellence, the text, and its subject matter (Sache). The "longue route du détour" impels Ricoeur to immerse deeper and deeper into an existential-structural understanding of the sense, more precisely of the "double sense": "l'interprétation c'est l'intelligence du double sens".[52] As he thoroughly explores the Freudian theory of interpretation, he precises the "hermeneutical field" containing the psychoanalysis (interpretation of dreams as symbols) but inscribed within the broader sphere of a general science of signs:

> Ainsi, dans la vaste sphère du langage, le lieu de la psychanalyse se précise: c'est à la fois le lieu des symboles ou du double sens et celui où s'affrontent les diverses manières d'interpréter. Cette circonscription plus vaste que la psychanalyse, mais plus étroite que la théorie du langage total qui lui sert d'horizon, nous l'appellerons désormais le "champ herméneutique"; nous entendrons toujours par herméneutique la théorie des règles qui président à une exégèse, c'est-à-dire à l'interprétation d'un texte singulier ou d'un ensemble de signes susceptible d'être considéré comme un texte...[53]

Hermeneutics is thus the process of deciphering which goes from manifest content and meaning to latent or hidden meaning. The "text", object of interpretation, is to be taken here in a very broad sense: symbols as in a dream, myths and symbols of society (as in religious, cultural, and social contexts), literary texts, and so forth. Ricoeur goes on to assert, after Cassirer's conception of das Symbolische, that it is precisely because of the distinction between "les expressions univoques" and "les expressions multivoques" that the symbolic function makes

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[50] P. Ricoeur, De l'interprétation, p. 51: "Une philosophie réflexive est le contraire d'une philosophie de l'immédiat...Nous pouvons dire, en un sens un peu paradoxal, qu'une philosophie de la réflexion n'est pas une philosophie de la conscience, si par conscience nous entendons la conscience immédiate de soi-même ...La conscience, dirons-nous plus tard, est une tâche, mais elle est une tâche parce qu'elle n'est pas une donnée..."

[51] P. Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, p. 46.

[52] P. Ricoeur, De l'interprétation, p. 18. "Existential" translates here the French "existential" (German, existenzial)--as opposed to the French "existentiel" (existenziell)--, just as "structural," in English, refers to the French "structural," as opposed to "structurel." Ricoeur's own conception of the "existential" ("l'ontologique") seeks to recuperate the "existentiel" (thus, "l'ontique") absorbed by Heidegger's "ontologization of the ontic" ("Ontologisierung des Ontischen," as Adorno has put it).

[53] P. Ricoeur, De l'interprétation, p. 18.

hermeneutics possible and necessary. "Vouloir dire autre chose que ce que l'on dit, voilà la fonction symbolique".[54] In effect, the equivocal symbols (as opposed, say, to the univocal symbols of symbolic logic) constitute the true focus of hermeneutics. As he would define it in an article that has become a classic of hermeneutic theory ("Existence et herméneutique", 1965, reprinted in *Le conflit des interprétations*):

> I define "symbol" as structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first.

And he adds,

> Interpretation, we will say, is the work of thought which consiste in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning. In this way, I retain the initial reference to exegesis, that is, to the interpretation of hidden meanings. Symbol and interpretation thus become correlative concepts; there is interpretation wherever there is multiple meaning, and it is in interpretation that the plurality of meanings is made manifest.[55]

It is revealing that the Ricoeurian detour of semantics appears to be a hermeneutical, dialectical response to the Heideggerian ontological concentration. Ricoeur's epistemological concern here is to avoid the temptation of separating "vérité" and "méthode"[56]--as ironically implicated by Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Method* (1960)-- in order to properly articulate the existential, unveiling meaning of an ontological understanding:

> A purely semantic elucidation remains suspended until one shows that the understanding of multivocal or symbolic expressions is a moment of self-understanding; the semantic approach thus entails a reflective approach. But the subject that interprets himself while interpreting signs is no longer the cogito: rather, he is placed in being before he places and possesses himself. In this way, hermeneutics would discover a manner of existing which would remain from start to finish a being-interpreted. Reflection alone, by suppressing itself as reflection, can reach the ontological roots of understanding. Yet this is what always happens in language, and it occurs through the movement of reflection. Such is the arduous route we are going to follow.[57]

The Ricoeurian conception of symbol is, in the words of Richard Palmer, that of "a semantic unity which has a fully coherent surface meaning and at the same time a deeper significance."[58] "Semantics" is to be understood here as the linguistic study of the principles of discourse ("la linguistique du discours" as opposed to "la linguistique de la langue"), following de Saussure's distinction between

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[54] Ibid., p. 21.

[55] P. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, pp. 12 f.; *Conflit*, p. 16f.

[56] Cf. P. Ricoeur, "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. by J.B. Thompson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 63-100.

[57] P. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 11; *Conflit*, p. 15.

[58] R. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern, 1969), p. 43.

"speech" (parole) and "language" (langue). The sentence, combining noun and verb, allows humans to say something about something (ti kata tinos): because it conveys a message, it can thus be considered the basic unity of the discourse ("l'unité de base du discours"). On the other hand, if one holds the sign (phonological or lexical) to be the basic unity of language (in the sense "langue"), one should speak instead of "semiotics" as opposed to "semantics". In point of fact, the noun-verb duality at the level of the sentence has been eclipsed by the duality of levels of language.[59] Ricoeur's hermeneutics has constituted itself a thorough critique of the semiotic monopoly, which has largely determined the success of structuralist and contemporary linguistic researches. What Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics seeks to unmask is any pretension to a "structural" dissolution of sense (including certain nihilistic forms of "deconstruction" and "dissemination") on the basis of objectified explanations of semiological mechanisms. Such is the role of "suspicion" reserved to Ricoeur's hermeneutics: like les maîtres du soupçon Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the continual task of the hermeneutist is to suspect any given structure of "false consciousness", and to unmask the "ideological" pretensions to conclusive explanations of meaning.[60] This hermeneutics of suspicion is in fact the effective, ongoing praxis of our demythologizing task to continue progressing towards the second naiveté:

> Thus hermeneutics, an acquisition of "modernity," is one of the models by which that "modernity" transcends itself, insofar as it is forgetfulness of the sacred. I believe that being can still speak to me --no longer of course, under the precritical form of immediate belief, but as the second immediacy aimed at by hermeneutics. This second nat

As I conclude this exposé on the development of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, I cannot proceed without conceding that the Conflit des interprétations is but the beginning of a new, fertile phase of Ricoeur's writings on hermeneutical theory. It would be misleading, however, to exaggerate the opposition of this "later" Ricoeur to an "early" one, for his entire philosophical work, since the "Philosophy of the Will", should be regarded as an "oeuvre de maturité". The methodological shift should thus be understood as an evolution towards a more precise, enlarged definition of the hermeneutical field, as Ricoeur specifies the primacy of the text and, at the same time, maintains the open-ended extension of its textuality, for instance, in the hermeneutical dialogue with the social sciences.[61]

5   Conclusion: The Hermeneutics of Revelation

Ricoeur's post-Hegelian interpretation of Kant is the hermeneutic effect of a dialectical post-Hegelian retour à Kant, following the phenomenological detours of Heidegger's critique of the onto-theological. For the manifestation of the gift of Being, according to Heidegger, is not so much Offenbarung ("revelation" of tran-

[59]   Cf. P. Ricoeur, "La structure, le mot, l'événement," Le Conflit des interprétations, pp. 80-97.

[60]   Cf. the section "L'interprétation comme exercice du soupçon," De l'interprétation, pp. 40-44.

[61]   Cf. Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, pp. 78 ff.

scendence) as *Offenbarkeit*, the "impersonal" unveiling of the Open *(das Offene)*, as an un-concealing dimension of Being in the "es gibt" of all that is. The ethical is therefore subordinated to the ontological, as the unconditional primacy of Being over all other beings (including "God") is given in language itself, as the event of appropriation between Being and human Dasein, in that language *reveals* their belonging-together ("das Zusammengehören von Mensch und Sein").[62] Ricoeur reappropriates this "belonging-distanciation dialectic" in his hermeneutics of the idea of revelation, by means of yet another detour, "le détour du texte."

Before anything, Ricoeur shows that the *détour* of the text is indeed a veritable *retour* to the text and its world. I shall confine myself to presenting three brief overviews of three main writings which will serve to highlight the main thesis of this paper, namely, that the evolution of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion translates the revelatory nature of his correlative conception of philosophical anthropology and philosophy of language. The first one is the article "Qu'est-ce qu'un texte? Expliquer et comprendre", published in 1970 in the collection *Hermeneutik und Dialektik: Aufsätze II*, edited by Bubner et al. (ET: "What is a Text? Explanation and Interpretation," in J. Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 1981). In "What is a Text?" Ricoeur deals with the "two basic attitudes which one can adopt in regard to a text," namely that of an "explanation" *(Erklärung)* and that of an "interpretation" *(Verständnis)*, following a Diltheyan terminology. Ricoeur believes that such dichotomy has nevertheless become obsolete in our days: if the structuralists, on the one hand, aim at "explanatory" methods (language as a system of signs which displays an objective structure), the "interpretative" attitude on the other hand (language as speech, whose sense signifies a referent) follows the sense of a text carried by its own structure. By stressing the nuances of such distinction, Ricoeur goes on to affirm that these attitudes are no longer in polar opposition ("aux antipodes") to each other, but they can still serve as a clue to what should be a hermeneutic "mediation" between *erklären* and *verstehen*.[63]

In order to arrive at this mediation we have to articulate both "explaining" and "interpreting" with that which a text is. For Ricoeur believes that hermeneutics proper springs from the problem of the text conceived as a work.[64] In this sense, Ricoeur asserts that "interpretation, before being the act of the exegete, is the act of the text."[65] The Ricoeurian notion of "text" includes, in effect, the multiple modes of "distanciation" associated not only with writings but with "the production of discourse as a work." In brief, Ricoeur assigns to the notion of text the same basic characteristics of discourse (the event-meaning dialectic and the

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[62] M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. J.G. Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 235. Cf. J. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1978), pp. 254-257.

[63] P. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 149 ff.

[64] P. Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 140 ff.

[65] Ibid., p. 162.

sense-reference relationship): texts refer thus to an intended "world of the text" (*le monde du texte*) and to the self as well.[66] Surpassing Dilthey's Romantic conception of *Verständnis* as "appropriation," Ricoeur goes on to reconcile both the semantic, concrete level of discourse with the semiotic, abstract level of formal language at the same hermeneutical level of what has been called a "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*) —to use Gadarner's felicitous formula:

> I shall therefore say: to explain is to bring about the structure, that is, the internal relations of dependence which constitute the statics of the text: to interpret is to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself *en route* towards the *orient* of the text.[67]

Following this interpretation-explanation dialectic, both the hermeneutical "belonging" (*Zugehörigkeit*) and the critical, objectifying "distanciation" constitute together the appropriation of the "world of the text":

> ...Ultimately, what I appropriate is a proposed world. The latter is not *behind* the text as a hidden intention would be, but *in front of* it, as that which the work unfolds, discovers, reveals. Henceforth, to understand is *to understand oneself in front of the text*. ... In this respect, it would be more correct to say that the *self* is constituted by the "matter" (*Sache*) of the text.[68]

The second writing to be mentioned here, *La métaphore vive* (1975; ET: *The Rule of Metaphor*, 1977), as Ricoeur himself would comment, "tackled the two problems of the emergence of new meanings in language and of the referential claims raised by such nondescriptive language as poetic discourse".[69] These two problems were somehow already implicit in Ricoeur's early inquiry into the symbolic forms of discourse, which would be later designated by "the complex problem of fiction and of productive imagination." The Ricoeurian conception of *métaphore* is to be framed within the wider framework of the *récit* (the narrative) to which he attributes "the power of reshaping human experience" more than any other "language games," as the self itself is mediated and constituted through first-person narratives in one's self-understanding. Because he maintains the distinction between the philosophic-speculative and poetic-religious realms of discourse, Ricoeur focuses on the latter in which figurative meaning outgrows literal meaning ("the metaphoric process"):

> Let us call any shift from literal to figurative sense a metaphor. If the general sweep of this definition is to be preserved, it is necessary, first, that the notion of change of meaning be not restricted to names, or even to words, but extended to all signs. Futhermore, one must dissociate the notion of literal meaning from that of proper meaning. Any lexical value whatsoever is a literal meaning; thus, the metaphorical meaning is nonlexical: it is a value created by the context ...An implicitly discursive trait fol-

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[66] Ibid., pp. 140-142, 145-149.
[67] Ibid., pp. 161 f.
[68] Ibid., pp. 143 f.
[69] P. Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. L. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 41.

lows, which at the same time prepares for the entrance of resemblance: every meta-phorical meaning is mediate, in the sense that the word is 'an immediate sign of its literal senses and a mediate sign of its figurative sense' (Michel Le Guern, *Sémantique de la métaphore et de la métonymie*, p.175). To speak by means of metaphor is to say something different 'through' some literal meaning.[70]

Finally, *Temps et récit* (3 vols., 1983-85) should be mentioned here as one of the most magnificent attempts to reconcile *praxis* and *poiesis* in a single herme-neutics of the human subject. According to Ricoeur, "the refiguring of time by narrative...is the joint work of historical and fictional narrative".[71] In *Histoire et vérité* (1955), the problematic tension between subject and object vis-à-vis the historical reality had already been submitted to the *krisis* of a "not-yet" Word: a Judeo-Christian conception of history seemed to constrain the philosopher to go beyond both existentialism and historicism, in an eschatological attitude of hope.[72] Now, complementing his metaphoric theory, Ricoeur takes the defense of "narra-tive time" against atemporal (and ahistorical), structuralist narratives. With Aris-totle, Ricoeur maintains that temporal narrative represents human action in the world. Hence the term "récit" is to comprise reader and text are kept in a dialogue which culminates in the understanding of the text by the reader and the latter's self-understanding as being-in-the-world:

> To understand these (narrative) texts is to interpolate among the predicates of our situation all those sayings that, from a simple environment (*Umwelt*), makes world (*Welt*). Indeed we owe a large part of the enlarging of our horizon of existence to po-etic works.[73]

It has become clear now that Ricoeur's return to the text reveals also an in-triguing detour of ontology. In point of fact, Ricoeur's "reflective" philosophy op-poses every "ontological" attempt to conclusively appropriate the un-thought meaning-structure of being: "l'impensé reste toujours à être entièrement pensé", one will never exhaustively think the totality of the unthought. Certainly, this character of finitude in Ricoeur's hermeneutics betrays not only an eschatological return to Kant's "limiting concept" but also a "proleptic" detour towards the *tran-scendens*. Such is again the Ricoeurian debt to Hegel's metacritique of Kant's transcendental subjectivity. As Walter Lowe has convincingly shown, the "re-gional ontology" of Ricoeur's humanist "philosophy of presence" is coherent with the Reformed dictum *finitum non capax infiniti* ("the finite is not capable of the infinite"), so dear to Karl Barth and neo-Kantian theologians.[74] Furthermore, it seems that Ricoeur's mediating hermeneutics of metaphor seeks to respond to

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[70] P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Lan-guage*, trans. R. Czerny (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1977), p. 188.

[71] P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 80.

[72] P. Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. C. Kaibley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), pp. 11-14.

[73] P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, p. 80.

[74] W. Lowe, "The Coherence of Paul Ricoeur," *Journal of Religion* 61 (1981): 384-402.

Heidegger's linguistic mysticism for the very insufficiency of the latter's appropriation of Luther's *finitum capax*. Thus, the elliptical shift from a "symbolique" towards a "métaphorique" is quite revealing of Ricoeur's ambitious *dépassement* of the later Heidegger, as we can infer from his magisterial study on "Métaphore et discours philosophique" (last one in *The Rule of Metaphor*):

Le prix de cette prétention (chez Heidegger) est l'ambiguïté des dernières oeuvres, partagées entre la logique de leur continuité avec la pensée spéculative, et la logique de leur rupture avec la métaphysique. La première logique place l'*Ereignis* et le *es gibt* dans la lignée d'une pensée sans cesse en voie de se rectifier elle-même, sans cesse en quête d'un *dire* plus approprié que le *parler* ordinaire, d'un *dire* qui serait un *montrer* et un *laisser-être*, d'une pensée, enfin, qui jamais ne renonce au discours. La seconde logique conduit à une suite d'effacements et d'abolitions, qui précipitent la pensée dans le vide, la ramènent à l'hermétisme et à la préciosité, et reconduisent les jeux étymologiques à la mystification du "sens primitif." ... Ce qui est caractérisé, ici, c'est la dialectique même des modes de discours, dans leur proximité et dans leur différence. D'une part, la poésie, en elle-même et par elle-même, donne à penser l'esquisse d'une conception "tensionnelle" de la vérité... Par ce tour de l'énonciation, la poésie articule et préserve, en liaison avec d'autres modes de discours, l'expérience d'*appartenance* qui inclut l'homme dans le discours et le discours dans l'être.[...] D'autre part, la pensée spéculative appuie son travail sur la dynamique de l'énonciation métaphorique et l'ordonne à son propre espace de sens. Sa réplique n'est possible que parce que la distanciation, constitutive de l'instance critique, est contemporaine de l'expérience d'appartenance, ouverte ou reconquise par le discours poétique, et parce que le discours poétique, en tant que texte et oeuvre, préfigure la distanciation que la pensée spéculative porte à son plus haut degré de réflexion.[75]

It is, therefore, within the framework of a *métaphorique* that Ricoeur's *discours théologique* seeks to respond to Heidegger's *Destruktion der Onto-Theo-Logik*: "A travers métaphore et récit, la fonction symbolique du langage ne cesse de produire du sens et de révéler de l'être".[76] As announced from the outset, I did not intend to explore Ricoeur's "theological hermeneutics" in this study but rather to articulate his "revelatory language" in terms of his "hermeneutical reflection." I shall conclude thus this paper with Ricoeur's own account of such an "herméneutique de la révélation".

In a lecture delivered for a "Symposium on the Idea of Revelation" at the Faculté Universitaire St. Louis in Brussels (1976), Paul Ricoeur avowed that "the question of revelation is a formidable question in the proper sense of the word".[77] It is not only the theological question *per se*, but the task of recovering the originary meaning of 'revelation' remains an immense one. Before proposing the response of

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[75] P. Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pp. 397-399.

[76] P. Ricoeur, "Poétique et symbolique," in B. Lauret and F. Refoulé (eds.), *Initiation à la pratique da la théologie*, t. 1, Introduction (Paris: Cerf, 1982), p. 61. Cf. "Le récit interprétatif," in *Recherches des Sciences Religieuses* 73/1 (1985): pp. 17-38; *La métaphore vive*, pp. 344-356.

[77] P. Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," in *Biblical Interpretation*, p. 73. The French original presents some slight variations: cf. "Herméneutique de l'idée de révélation," in E. Levinas et al., *La révélation* (Brussels: Publications des Facultés Universitaires St.-Louis, 1977).

a hermeneutical philosophy *(La réponse d'une philosophie herméneutique)*, Ricoeur refuses both an authoritarian, opaque concept of revelation and the concept of a self-sufficienit, transparent reason, by identifying the concrete modes of discourse in which the religious consciousness comes to stand *(Les expressions originaires de la Révélation)*. Ricoeur emphasizes that one cannot separate the "confession of faith" from the "mode of discourse" in which it is embodied because of the "linguistic strucutre" associated with the world-text of the *written* confession. Following the literary-critical work of Old Testament scholars,[78] Ricoeur distinguishes five modes of discourse: the *prophetic* discourse, which "constitutes the originary nucleus of the traditional idea of revelation," that of revealing God behind the speech of a prophet; the *narrative* discourse, which names God (especially in the Pentateuch) as "the ultimate actant" in the third person; the *prescriptive* discourse, which names God as the Law-giver and adds the ethical side of revelation (not in the idea of "heteronomy," but by the very character of the Holy One, the sacredness of the Other); the *wisdom* discourse, which names the hiddenness of God *(deus absconditus)* in the *pathos* of suffering (e.g. Book of Job), binding together *ethos* and *kosmos*; and, finally, the *hymnic* discourse (Psalms) which names God as "You" in the second person, the One who may respond to praise, supplication, and thanksgiving.[79] All these modes of discourse point to an originary preconceptual, poetic view of revelation, within a "language of a community of faith" (the hermeneutical foundation of *re-ligio* as the re-linking of the community-identity with their God). Moreover, those literary genres belong to specific "theologies", in that each *logos* reveals a particular message or character of God *(theos)*. However, beyond the "theological" proper, Ricoeur wants to "arrive at a polysemic and polyphonic concept of revelation", much deeper than anything formulated in a creed or "body of truths": 'The God who reveals himself is a hidden God and hidden things belong to him".[80]

The intrinsic dialectic of *deus revelatus / deus absconditus* accounts for the very idea of revelation, insofar as the Name of Yahweh cannot be pronounced: *ehyeh asher ehyeh* (literally, "I will be what I will be", Exodus 3,14). Ricoeur has rightly remarked that the Septuagint's translation of God's self-revelation ("I am who I am") "opened up an affirmative poetics of God's absolute being that could subsequently be transcribed into Neoplatonic and Augustinian ontology and then into Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics," including Arab thought.[81] As over against this metaphysical, onto-theological rationalization of biblical revelation, Ricoeur takes the Heideggerian "détour ontologique" but, instead of focusing on the "différence" *(Unterschied)*, Ricoeur prefers to "defer" the ontological once

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[78] Cf., inter alii, Claus Westermann (ed.), *Essays on Old Testamet Hermeneutics*, trans. J.L. Mays, (Richmond, Va.: J. Knox Press, 1963); Wolfhart Pannenberg (ed.), *Revelation as History*, trans. D. Granskou (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

[79] "Hermeneutic of Revelation," *Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 75-90.

[80] Ibid., p. 93.

[81] Ibid., p. 94. Cf. A. Maqdici, "L'ontologie kérygmatique de Paul Ricœur, approche arabe," in Gary Madison (ed.), *Sens et existence. En hommage à Paul Ricœur* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

again and appropriate the *écriture* through its "distanciation," in a revelatory, pragmatic process which he calls "la manifestation du monde par le texte et l'écriture" – and which we may as well call a "Gadamerian différance", reminiscent of the linguistic correlation of *Sprachlichkeit* and *Schriftlichkeit*. Ricoeur constructs his analysis of "the revelatory function of poetic discourse" upon three preparatory concepts: "l'autonomie par l'écriture," "l'extériorisation par l'oeuvre, and "la référence à un monde." The category of poetics ("la poétique") designates the totality of literary genres (introduced in the first part of his lecture), "as they exercise a referential function that differs from the descriptive referential function of ordinary language and above all of scientific discourse".[82] The Ricoeurian "poétique" will reveal, in effect, the interplay between the "symbolique" and the "métaphorique" as an event of appropriation of meaning in the text-world:

> My deepest conviction is that *poetic* language alone restores to us that participation-in or belonging-to (*appartenance*) an order of things which precedes our capacity to oppose ourselves to things taken as objects opposed to a subject. Hence the function of poetic discourse is to bring about this emergence of a depth-structure of belonging-to (*appartenance)* and the ruins of descriptive discourse. ...Fiction and redescription, then, go hand in hand. Or, to speak like Aristotle in his *Poetics*, the *mythos* is the way to true *poiesis*, which is not slavish imitatton, or a copy, or mirror-image, but a transposition or metamorphosis --or as I suggest, a redescription. This conjunction of fiction and redescription, of *mythos* and *mimesis*, constitutes the referential fiction by means of which I would define the poetic dimension of language. In turn, this poetic function at once is a dimenision of revelation where revelation is to be understood in a nonreligious, nontheistic, and nonbiblical sense of the word --but one capable of entering into resonance with one or the other of the aspects of biblical revelation...[83]

Ricoeur articulates this "fonction révélante" (*"révélante"*, revelatory, is to be distinguished here from the current adjective *"révélatrice"*, revealing, and its theological homologue *"révélationnelle"*, revelational) with the "fonction poétique," which recapitulates in itself the three preparatory concepts of the autonomy of the text, the externality of the work, and the transcendence of the world of the text. Using a conception of "manifestation" which he obviously borrowed from Heidegger's binomial *Offenbarkeit / a-letheia* ("laisser-être ce qui se montre"), Ricoeur places his nonmetaphysical "révélation" at Dasein's horizon of encounter with manifested truth, coextensive with the poetic function of the *Sprachereignis*:

> Ce qui se montre, c'est chaque fois une proposition de monde, d'un monde tel que je puisse l'habiter pour y projeter un de mes possibles les plus propres. C'est en ce sens de manifestation que le langage, dans la fonction poétique, est le siège d'une révélation.[84]

Revelation should not, therefore, be ever reduced to an authoritarian dogma or to a system of rationalized beliefs: "Revelation, in short, is a feature of the biblical

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[82] Ibid., p. 100. Cf. "Poétique et Symbolique," art. cit., p. 54.
[83] P. Ricoeur, "Hermeneutic of Revelation," in *Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 101f.
[84] P. Ricoeur, *La révélation*, p. 41; *Biblical Interpretation*, p. 102.

world proposed by the text".[85] As over against the idea of an autonomous reason, Ricoeur goes on to establish a hermeneutical mediation between his philosophy of reflection and another "revelatory" correlate, the concept of testimony, which he elaborates in function of three other preparatory concepts --"réflexion médiate," "l'appartenance," and "l'appropriation". "Mediated reflection" refers to "the appropriation of our effort to exist and our desire to be" (Jean Nabert), in our interpretation of a universe of signs; the Gadamerian "belonging-to" corresponds to the Marcelian "second-order reflection," in opposition to Husserl's idealism, as the critical moment of "distanciation" which confers a *historical* character on this consciousness; and, finally, "appropriation" designates the act of self-understanding before the text, as a prolongation of the "appartenance-distanciation" dialectic. These preparatory concepts serve to support the hermeneutical idea of "revelation" as opposed to that of a self-constituted consciousness:

> Where consciousness posits itself as the origin of meaning, hermeneutics brings about the abandonment *(dessaisissement)* of this pretension. This abandonment is the reverse of Feuerbach's critique of alienation.[86]

Testimony *(témoignage)* to the revealed implies a reflexive act of divestment *(dépouillement)*, in that self-consciousness has to divest itself *(se dépouiller)* of what seemed to be "true" and "right," and appropriate the revealed anew. This second-order reflexivity is an important transcendental move that takes place after every detranscendentalizing, decentering and displacing critique that unmasks all pretensions to self-transparency and self-completion on the part of subjectivity. Ricoeur's hermeneutics of testimony, like a "hermeneutics of suspicion," unmasks and renounces false consciousness in order to remain true to itself. Certainly, witnesses have died for suspicious causes: martyrdom is but a limit-situation. Nevertheless, "the witness of things seen", according to Ricoeur's dialectic of revelation, "at the limit becomes a martyr for truth". Not only because of our *obedience* to the voice of Being or even to the Word of God, but for the sake of the *poiesis* of Life itself that continually addresses our imagination and daily *praxis* of self-understanding and self-overcoming:

> [...] What is the historical testimony that our reflection would like to internalize addressed to if not to our imagination? If to understand oneself is to understand oneself in front of the text, must we not *say* that the reader's understanding is suspended, derealized, made potential just as the world itself is metamorphosized by the poem? If this is true, we must say that the imagination is that part of ourselves that respondes to the text as a Poem, and that alone can encounter revelation no longer as an unacceptable pretension, but a nonviolent appeal.[87]

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[85] P. Ricoeur, *Biblical Interpretation*, p. 104.

[86] Ibid., p. 109. See the article on "The Hermeneutics of Testimony," *Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 119-154.

[87] P. Ricoeur, "Hermeneutic of Revelation," in *Biblical Interpretation*, p. 117.