PAUL RICOEUR AND THE THEORETICAL IMAGINATION

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Summary
This study seeks to account for and contest Ricoeur's relative absence from the literary-theoretical canon in Britain. Whilst Ricoeur secured a highly influential position within American language philosophy in his lifetime, the literary consequences of his philosophy have been largely overlooked by literary-theoretical discourse itself. This is in spite of Ricoeur's role within the revolution of French thought from whence the New Critical dominion was finally overturned in this country. I contend that the heightened socio-political exigencies of the theoretical revolution, whilst they facilitated a desirable renewal of thought, also fostered unhelpful polarities—between the subject and the text, between an idealist metaphysics and a sceptical Theory—and a submerged prejudice against philosophies which, like hermeneutics, maintained a positive dialogue with the Kantian tradition. Forged in the interchange of German romanticism and German historicism, modern hermeneutics developed as a response to the excesses of both, seeking to place limits on the claims of a self-authored genius and linguistic determinism alike. As a contemporary of phenomenology and structuralism, Ricoeur provides a similar negotiation of his immediate context, putting paid to the heightened polemic of the literary textualists and the literary relativists alike. Central to this achievement is Ricoeur's concept of "semantic innovation"; it stands at the heart of his theory of metaphor and forms the basis for his semantic re-appropriation of the productive imagination. Through a combination of historical and philosophical analysis, this thesis seeks to demonstrate Ricoeur's highly rigorous achievements as an astute theoretician and as one wholeheartedly committed to the liberating powers of the literary imagination.

For Julie and Lefteris

The power of impulses which haunt our phantasies, of imaginary modes of being which ignite the poetic word, and of the all-embracing, that most powerful something which menaces us so long as we feel unloved, in all these registers and perhaps in others as well, the dialectic of power and form takes place, which insures that language only captures the foam on the surface of life.

Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, p. 63.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Paul Ricoeur's reputation as a hermeneutic philosopher and one of the twentieth century's greatest thinkers is undisputed. Within the order of great literary theorists however, his place is less established. This is in spite of the fact that creative language stands at the very heart of his philosophy. In the parting light of the twentieth century, it was the genius Jacques Derrida and his illustrious cohorts at Yale, who blazed the brightest trail in Anglo-American literary circles. Their brilliance may one day prove to have been a swansong, not for the century, but for the literary theoretical revolution it bore. Propelling this study is an overwhelming perplexity regarding the culture of a monumentalised Literary Theory. Why, we ask, should literary studies have adopted a stance of such thoroughgoing scepticism as regards the literary object, abandoning the claim for the literary work and its aesthetic distinction for a discourse of the "merely" literary, a discourse at pains to demonstrate the literary status of *all* language, and one which works to erode the autonomy, and indeed the integrity, of both work and critic? The main topic of this study concerns Ricoeur's relationship to this phenomenon and to his own treatment of literature as a philosophical concern. My focus is limited to just two of Ricoeur's major works, namely *The Conflict of Interpretations* and *The Rule of Metaphor*. These works were written in close proximity to one another and reflect the development of what in my title I refer to as Ricoeur's "theoretical imagination."

"BEYOND THE DESERT OF CRITICISM WE WISH TO BE CALLED AGAIN"[1]

Before philosophy, literature, poetry and music; the mimicry of birdsong, the rhythmic beat of the battle drum, or the itinerant tales of gods displeased. This was the vision of Rousseau and the romantic philosophers of the eighteenth century, who cast out the thesis of divine attribution, of language as a fully-formed, God-given totality, for narratives of incremental acquisition, histories of naturalistic imitation (Condillac) and motivated expression (Rousseau). The question of external determinism and

[1] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan, Beacon Press, Boston, 1992, p.349.

internal, creative force dominated here as it did elsewhere in European debate. The sublime pathos of the *felix culpa* was replaced by pathos of a different kind, that of man's self-exile in the pursuit of self-knowledge, the loss of "natural" language and the cultivation of ideas. In the heroic spirit of the eighteenth century, philosophy's eminence lay in the formulation of their eventual reunification, in the culmination of Hegel's Absolute Spirit.

In his *Aesthetics,* Hegel recognised the *desideratum* of artistic truth in terms of this essential paradox; that the means by which we come to truth may very well be the means by which we murder it, through the dulling precision of our very own concepts. Against the "risk of reason" and the untrammelled march of its rarefied ideas, dialectical idealism set its sights. If the task of the literary critic is somewhat humbler, the risk undertaken in the pursuit of truth is no less significant for it. The critic undertakes the cardinal risk of all translation, to remain true whilst saying differently; to explain and to show, without diminishing the sense of wonder by which criticism is inspired in the first place. How to explain without explaining away? How to clarify, without reducing magic to the alchemy of mere device, to the crafted repository of trade tricks, mere rhetoric?

Questions such as these presume a certain distinction between the customary exchanges of our everyday understanding and the order of understanding proper to the work of literature. Following Kant, aesthetics strove to determine the ineluctable essence by which such works are distinguished; artistic response being deemed suitably singular to warrant its own branch of enquiry. As an older discipline, hermeneutics had long presumed a distinction between ordinary, everyday forms of communication and the privileged obliquity of certain texts. Here however, the impulse to interpret was driven by forces external to the text itself, according to the pre-existent authority of universal laws, religious and judicial. Interpretation was thus a matter of correct interpretation. Since the truth of the matter transcended the historical particularities of both interpreter and empirical document, neither was deemed significant in its own right. Hermeneutics as we know it today, as the philosophy and not the practice of interpretation, conforms to the aesthetic view that interpretation elicits a form of reflective knowledge about human understanding itself. A crucial distinction ensures their separation however: philosophical hermeneutics contests the locality to which aesthetics, by the dedicated nature of its discourse, limits artistic understanding as a contrasting form of knowledge which would run

alongside conceptual knowledge. Hermeneutically speaking, literary-aesthetic interpretation is universally relevant.

For both Heidegger and Gadamer, the experience of poetry is deemed to disclose a more original mode of understanding which, in its primacy, conditions all subsequent manifestations. As it conditions these other forms, it remains situated within a position of privileged distinction. For Heidegger, this "authentic" understanding must be opposed to the more derived forms of everyday sense. In Gadamer too, the reflective wisdom elicited in the poetic experience is treated as something to be set in elevated opposition to other forms of understanding. Both thinkers corroborate an essential distinction between the language of concepts, explanation and everyday rationality, and the modality of understanding proper to the poetic experience. Whilst the understanding of poetic insight conditions these subsequent forms, a gulf divides them nonetheless, making the communication of poetic experience a uniquely difficult task, and one which commands a thorough re-evaluation of our ordinary linguistic attitudes. But within the triune of great modern hermeneutic philosophers, Ricoeur makes a unique departure from both Heidegger and Gadamer, refusing the traditional romantic distinction between the imaginative, interpretive commands of poetic experience, and the faculties of non-poetic knowledge. If Ricoeur flattens the alleged hierarchy enjoyed by poetry, he also makes the hermeneutical claim for poetry all the more universal. In Ricoeur alone, the truth of poetry and the truth of concepts, of understanding and explanation (the division through which hermeneutics since Schleiermacher had conceived its task), are placed within an unsurpassable dialectic, at the base of which no priority can be given to either term. It only looks paradoxical that this more radical continuity between the two "realms", should in fact assure the essential discontinuity of poetry and concepts.

In the context of literary interpretation, this dialectical relationship assures a basic distinction between the discourse of critical reflection and the discourse of poetry itself. In so doing, it serves to maintain poetry's qualitative distinction amongst other discourses, and consolidate the claim for poetry's uniqueness. It is Ricoeur's claim for the dialectic of interpretation and explanation, and the productive distinction of poetry and concepts, which commends his wider acknowledgement in literary studies today. To be "called" once more to poetry, it is not enough to just confirm the particularity of poetic experience, or to claim an indubitable truth on its behalf; it is

necessary to show how today, in the light of theory, such claims can still be maintained.

In the twentieth century, questioning of the aesthetic and reflective kind fell from literary favour, ponderous speculation being exchanged for the brisk pragmatism of the New Critics. As literary theory's self-designated opening, the rise of the New Criticism, we may presume, marks the point at which,

> The approach to literary texts is no longer based on non-linguistic, that is to say historical and aesthetic considerations or, to put it less crudely, when the object of discussion is no longer the meaning or the value but the modalities of production and reception of meaning and of value prior to their establishment—the implication being that this establishment is problematic enough to require an autonomous discipline of critical investigation to consider its possibility and its status.[2]

Occupying the furthest reaches of this continuum, the American deconstructionist and former phenomenologist Paul de Man makes a pretty stark, if indirect, association here, of linguistic scrutiny on the one hand, history and aesthetics on the other. For de Man, the depths of human experience and understanding purported of the work of literature were but the wishful projections of a discipline in search of a science. The mixed-bag of traditional literary critical practices, be they socio-historical or psycho-biographical, were merely the self-certifying illusions of a misguided positivism, whereby the work of literature was elevated as a special kind of historical document, as a privileged form of truth. Borrowing from other disciplines, the critic's projections assure his findings, namely that the work of literature testifies to a very special, universal form of understanding. Speaking of the art he serves, the critic may proclaim that "all life is there". The sceptic's less joyous response would be "yes, because you put it there". By this light theory is effectively nothing other than naïve positivism, and criticism but a straw-man of antiquated reckoning; a curmudgeonly social-historian incapable of dispelling the illusions of a time-honoured credulity.

Against the classical stance of the liberal critic, the advance of structural linguistics in France had bequeathed literature an altogether different mode of

[2] Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory", *Yale French Studies*, No. 63, 1982, pp.3-20, p.7.

reckoning. With the methodological detachment of the speaking subject (with Saussure's distinction between the formal arrangements of the code, *la langue*, and the imputed meanings attached to language usage, *la parole*) it became possible to analyse language function as a system of abstract values, liberating signification from the complex pitfalls of psychology and motivation. Predicating a system of synchronic and differential relations, structuralism returned language to the quasi-transcendental status of a fully-formed totality, to a signifying system which must by logical necessity precede the conscious articulations and historical permutations of the speaking subject. The epistemological transformation to proceed from this was seismic; if man could no longer be placed at the origin of his meaning, then nor could he be trusted as a rationally adduced basis for self-knowledge. The classical humanist assumptions of Western metaphysics came under serious attack and with them the ostensibly self-evident practice of literary criticism. If the author is no longer the creative *causa sui*, the fount of a self-governing imagination, then it is not just the criticism of subjective intention and causal context that becomes suspicious. The critic's own presumed powers of articulation and reflection, upon putatively unintentional or unconscious influences, or indeed upon formal considerations of style and composition, must also be called into question, the authority of these discourses stemming from the same tendentious origin as literature.

Naturally, the anti-rationalist implications of this argument were not to everyone's taste. Within departments of literature and the wider critical debate, an atmosphere of heightened and at times even hostile polemic ensued. It was within the adversarial tumult of this atmosphere that Literary Theory, conceived as a pedagogic unity and an autonomous discourse, was born. The polarising undercurrents accompanying de Man's portrait of theory, of an unprecedented rise to critical rigor and scrutiny, betokens the dichotomising tendencies which, perhaps in fairness, attend the birth of all new discourses. But with them came some undesirable distortions and some overhasty reductions by the claimants of both sides.

For some voices of the critical orthodoxy, the new-wave scepticism of their cohorts was vaguely absurd; nothing encapsulated this absurdity better than Roland Barthes' claim for the death of the author. Of course this was not a claim for the absence of authorship, but for the excoriation of the kind of foundationalist assumptions through which the traditional concept of the author was realised. By refusing to engage in the rationale behind Barthes' rhetoric, otherwise judicial,

discerning minds fell to satirising the empirical impossibility of the unbegotten author. In doing so, they could be seen to play straight into the hands of their adversaries, enhancing their own caricature as a bunch of critically naive positivists. For Barthes' proponents, the radical nature of his rhetoric befitted the logic it propounded, namely the logic (or rather the illogic) of Text or textualism: the assertion that consciousness is not only mediated by language, but that the signifying system is so radically unstable, so thoroughly ungovernable, that there simply is no possibility of transcending its realm and "fixing" meaning. In the textualist paradigm, Saussure's division of sign and signifier (the split between formal and semantic values) transforms into an all the more radical dehiscence of signification and intention. In this way the primary notion of a cognitive foundation is undone, both linguistically (in terms of philosophy's primary terms and concepts) and transcendentally (in terms of a grounding consciousness). Indeed foundations of either kind are traduced as one and the same illusory phenomenon.

Textualism's *locus classicus* came by way of Derrida and his now infamous assertion that "*il n'y a pas de hors texte*" ("there is nothing outside of the text"). For literary interpretation this was not only a command to reject the extra-textual significances surrounding texts, but to accustom oneself to an essential rift between the author's putative content and the autonomous operations of text itself, to what Derrida referred to as the textual aporia within signification. Following his conversion to deconstruction, Paul de Man transferred his commitments from transcendental phenomenology (to a rigorously impersonal subjectivity) to the assertion of text: "the bases for historical knowledge are not empirical facts but written texts, even if these texts masquerade in the guise of wars or revolutions".[3] Accordingly, de Man treated Text's historical counterpoise—the apotheosis of the romantic subjectivity—by means of its textual disinterment. In *Allegories of Reading* de Man deconstructs what he takes as the essential dissimulation of romantic rhetoric. The preferred *topos* of romantic literature—spiritual transcendence, man's fleeting glimpse of the infinite—depends upon the elevation of symbolic and metaphorical tropes wherein the categories of mind and nature are purportedly synthesised. De Man's rejection of the symbolic, his claim that all symbolic, metaphorical tropes can in fact be reduced to

[3] Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity", *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Wlad Godzich, Methuen, London, 1983, p.165, quoted by Sean Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998, pp.2-3.

the status of metonymy, works to abrogate the romantic claim for an aesthetic-synthetic transcendence with the less lofty proposition of analogy, allegory and an unimpeachable dualism between the orders of writing and "truth". Insofar as this critique confirms the essential aporia within signification and the Derridean priority of text, it also testifies to the particular cultural inflections of deconstruction's Anglo-American translation; a translation moreover, which left very little room for a hermeneutical discourse such as Ricoeur's.

In Chapter One of this study, I chart the rise of the theoretical revolution at the site of its inception in France. Here, the intellectual divide between old and new was as much sociological as it was philosophical; indeed the claim for a new theoretical anti-humanism was a claim against philosophy's traditional authority within the humanities. The disciplinary tensions which shaped the course of Anglo-American literary theory were derived from here. Tending towards the political Left, the leading claimants of France's intellectual upheaval were very often critics of the university establishment, and figures who moved in different circles to those of Paris's traditional intellectual elite. Published in 1969, Ricoeur's collection of essays *The Conflict of Interpretations* was written from within the midst of France's academic turmoil in the late 1960s. The themes of these essays reflect the French preoccupation with Cartesianism and its overturning. For Ricoeur, the affronts presented to the stable *cogito*—by Freud, Marx, Nietzsche, and most importantly for us, by structural linguistics—are by no means straightforward renunciations of the subject, of self-consciousness or the philosophical project. From Ricoeur's hermeneutical perspective, they are testament to the essential detours through which self-understanding must pass. The hermeneuts of suspicion (Ricoeur's collective name for Freud, Marx and Nietzsche) all testify to the existence of an essentially symbolic universe. In all three, understanding must make an indirect detour by way of these symbolic systems and their interpretation, whilst in structural linguistics the fabric of language itself becomes the mediating system through which thought is denied a direct hold upon itself.

Ricoeur is less interested in the absolutist claims of these discourses than in the structures of interpretation they collectively reflect. From the hermeneutical perspective, self-understanding must go by way of an essential detour, a journey "outside" of the self and through the symbolic universe of its own unconscious making. The self must be read "suspiciously", as an ambiguous text therefore. The

"conflict" of the Ricoeurian interpretation is not so much an empirical, historical struggle of the kind witnessed in 1960s Paris, as it is a transcendental conflict, against the *cogito's* false consciousness on the one hand (the "truth" of self-presence and self-identity), between the competing interpretations of the symbolic universe (be they psychoanalytic, literary or theological) on the other. As Ricoeur would later write, the figure to emerge from *The Conflict of Interpretations* was not an anti-*cogito* but a "wounded *cogito*", the eponymous conflict being "so thoroughly internalised" as to make it constitutive rather than destructive.

For two reasons it is Ricoeur's treatment of structural linguistics which concerns us most in Chapter One. Firstly, it was the code's extension beyond the confines of formal linguistics to other, previously historical disciplines, which precipitated the claims for a "post-philosophical" anti-humanism. In short it was structuralism which presaged the opposition to historical knowledge replicated in the work of literary theorists such as Paul de Man. Secondly, Ricoeur's attitude towards structural linguistics is absolutely pivotal to his characterisation as a poststructural thinker. For Ricoeur, all understanding is linguistically mediated, but as a theoretical science, structural linguistics need not, and indeed should not be opposed to the kind of interpretive-historical recuperations described in a hermeneutics of consciousness. Ricoeur's dialectical treatment of structure grounds his claim for the speaking subject as the locus of rational consensus. In speech the instability of the signifier is stabilised within the historical particularities of the speaking instance. Against the claims of a radical heterogeneity or Wittgensteinian "language games", thought takes a hold of itself, grasping the formal impersonality of the linguistic system and making it "mean" within the particularity of the personal given instance. This claim for the speaking subject and for the power of intention will be central to the Ricoeurian argument for a qualified distinction between literary language and the language of critical reflection in *The Rule of Metaphor*.

In Chapter Two I make a return to intellectual history before France's anti-humanist revolt, to the era of Kant and the romantic idealists. Beyond historical interest, the purpose of this return is twofold. The "romantic prejudice" against hermeneutics is, I claim, an inaccuracy borne of the discipline's *critical* proximity to post-Kantian idealisms, rather than any agreement with them. Gadamer's critique of a "misguided Kantianism" at the beginning of *Truth and Method* is an unequivocal indictment of idealist aesthetics. Pinpointing certain ambiguities within Kant's text,

Gadamer charts the rise of the romantics' "misguided" subject-centred aesthetics and the rise of a philosophically marginalised aesthetic discourse. Gadamer's critique of the Kantian imagination anticipates Ricoeur's positive re-working of imagination in *The Rule of Metaphor*. The second reason for this Kantian-romantic detour is romanticism's resoundingly negative impact upon literary theory. Clearly, the birth of the social sciences in France can be read as a direct backlash against the claims of an overbearing and seemingly limitless romantic subjectivity. The revolt nonetheless belies the deeper philosophical currents subtending such debate. Implanted within an Anglo-American literary context however, some of the wider philosophical filiations surrounding structuralist / poststructuralist discourse were lost.

At the hands of de Man and his fellow deconstructionists at Yale (Geoffrey Hartman and J. Hillis Miller), Anglo-American theorists situated deconstruction within a distinctly literary ideological setting, one which helped to obscure the *aesthetic continuities* subtending the hyperbole of a theory versus criticism, Text versus Subject divide. Ricoeurian hermeneutics was a casualty of this rhetoric. In a rather different way, Derrida was too. With the translation of French theory a misappropriation of Derrida's work began to take root, the claim for the text and for the instability of the signifier being taken for an all-out renunciation of philosophical knowledge. Philosophers were quick to condemn the error of these purports. Characteristically, it was the theorist's turbid grasp of philosophy that was blamed. During Derrida's most endemically misread phase, Christopher Norris characterised these appropriations in terms of "a kind of radical euphoria, much like the consequence of reading Nietzsche before one got round to reading either Kant or Hegel."[4] Such assertions rightly beg the question of whether or not a coherent Theory is really possible without an element of re-interpretation or even reinvention. In all the essential ways, literary history may reflect the turns and innovations of philosophical history, but the cadence of its debate and the weighting of its preoccupations remain unique; after all, the great work of art can arrive in the most unheralded of ways, steering the path of literary debate far from its anticipated course. This marks the obvious but important distinction of literary discourse, be it "theoretical" or "critical"; namely that it is a mixed and dependent discipline, and that it remains caught between the contingencies of creation and reflection. Philosophical shortfalls aside, the

[4] Christopher Norris, *The Contest of Faculties: Philosophy and Theory After Deconstruction*, Methuen, London, 1985, p.223.

particularities of the literary conversation into which Derrida was received also contributed to the heightened tenor of its debate.

In philosophical history, the subjective idealism of the romantics was but one extreme manifestation of the post-Kantian universe; even in aesthetics the romantic vision was a partial rather than a universal one. But in literary history it was the unrivalled successes of the romantic brotherhood which prevailed. These creative successes ensured the ubiquity of romanticism and romantic theories of creativity and subjectivity. In literature, the elision of aesthetics and romantic subjectivism was warrantable. With the advent of literary formalisms in the early twentieth century, a satisfying swing of the historical pendulum could thus be marked. Paradoxically, literary theory's self-professed opening—with the intellectual sobriety of the New Critics, with their aversion to all things metaphysical—would one day determine the excessive "euphoria" of Anglo-American scepticism, and the exclusion of moderate poststructuralists such as Ricoeur.[5]

As far as the present study is concerned, the organising impetus behind Anglo-American literary theory and its consolidation as an independent discourse is an anti-romantic one. Indeed, as a pedagogic tool (and this surely represents the essence of what literary theory is), one could go so far as to call it a discourse of enlightenment; the undergraduate's journey from Abrams to Derrida conforming to a narrative of increasing liberation, from subject-centred epistemologies, from the constraints of formalisms and the naivety of cultural historicism, to the final dis-illusionments of postmodernity: radical heterogeneity within signification and the collapse of all grand narratives (except this one). In the march of theoretical progress there is a very real "risk of reason" of the sort named by Hegel, a marching-away with ideas which threatens to forget the very occasion of its calling, the work of literature no less. In the pursuit of ideas, the logical order between work and theory threatens to be subverted, with the work becoming an opportunity for theoretical demonstrations rather than the other way around. It is an attitude to which hermeneutics is wholly averse. Furthermore, the hermeneutical argument against methodological applications of this sort serves to emphasise the inherent contradiction of theory's ultimate claims—for relativism, scepticism and irrationalism—and the mode of their reckoning.

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[5] Such euphoria being dependent upon the elision of certain aesthetic continuities.

In hermeneutical enquiry the means to interpretation cannot be pre-formulated in advance, in the form of a universal method. Interpretation must take the form of an encounter, or as Gadamer calls it, a dialogue, which takes place with all the openness and lack of pre-defined criteria proper to natural conversation. There would be no point conversing if one knew the outcome of the discussion in advance. Genuine conversation is guided by a shared theme, but this theme only develops in the shared pursuit of understanding. Like the genuine conversation, the genuine encounter with the work of art emerges within an inter-subjective space, not between two psychologies, but between a "fusion of horizons", where the socio-historical determinates of one's understanding are made to encounter the horizons of a different milieu. In this way the truth of the work of art takes the form of an historical event, an individual happening within the exchange of work and interpreter. It is for this reason that hermeneutical enquiry forgoes the claims for certain scientific knowledge in favour of "understanding". On a philosophical level this argument is highly appealing, for the actual business of criticism however, its merits are less certain. In Chapter Three I develop the principle of poetic "singularity" to which both Gadamer and Heidegger subscribe, outlining the problems attached to such a position. Here also I elaborate upon Ricoeur's critical relationship to Heidegger, and Ricoeur's refusal of the epistemological opposition of explanation and understanding implicitly re-awakened within the Heideggerian poetic.[6] For Ricoeur, there is nothing inimical to explanatory method within the human sciences so long as philosophy recognises these methods for what they are, abstractions not absolutes. Within this chapter I also discuss the historical contexts of Heidegger's receptions, as the author of *Being and Time*, as the sacerdotal "thinker" or "poetiser" of his later years, and finally, as Nazi operative, and author of the infamous "Rectoral Address", with its questing call for Germany's spiritual self-assertion.

The importance of Heidegger's receptions relates to the contrary manner in which deconstruction and poststructural hermeneutics are regarded within literary theory. Ricoeur's exclusion from the theoretical compass belies the many affinities uniting Ricoeurian hermeneutics and Derridean deconstruction. Chapter Four

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[6] Heidegger would deny this charge himself. The radicality of Heideggerian poetising is that it presumes access to a pre-conceptual realm of understanding which thereby precedes any such division between the explanatory and interpretation/understanding. Nevertheless, in the elevation of pre-understanding, indeterminacy and openness, the effect to take hold is an opposition to explanatory knowledge.

develops this overlap. But in Chapter Three I connect the exaggerated misprision of their discourse to the historical contingencies surrounding Heidegger's name, and to their different negotiations of this deeply flawed inheritance. A critical advocate of Heidegger's ontological ambitions, Ricoeur's relationship to Heidegger remains constant throughout his career. It is this ontological commitment which vouchsafes the Ricoeurian mediation of interpretations from the anodyne or relativistic connotations of the "merely" interpretative. Interpretation for Ricoeur is ontologically significant, so too therefore is the interpretation of literary works. But Ricoeur rejects the claim for a "direct ontology" such as he perceives in Heidegger, claiming that it is only indirectly and "by degrees" that we may glimpse something of the ontological being caught within the movements of interpretation. Within the refusal of a direct ontology, an ontology which forgoes methodological questions regarding the manner of being's interpretation, there resides an implicit censure to the ethico-philosophical inadequacies which historical revelations served to magnify within the Heideggerian text. Ricoeur's philosophical relation to Heidegger possesses an in-built criticism of Heidegger's politically related philosophical shortfalls I claim, whilst Derrida's early deferment of ontological Truth helped to facilitate his false repute as a strong textualist averse to all truth-claims. Ricoeur's relation to Heidegger serves to emphasise the points of cleavage between poststructural hermeneutics and Derridean deconstruction and the ontological justification for a philosophy of interpretation.

In the final and also the longest chapter of this study, Ricoeur's arguments for a productively mediated form of understanding, and for the powers of critical reflection and literary distinction alike, converge within Ricoeur's semantic theory of imagination. For Ricoeur, the diverse modalities of interpretation proper to the human sciences should not consign us to relativism or scepticism. On the contrary, conflicting interpretations present the very "documents" through which philosophical self-reflection can alone proceed. In their unity, the multiplicity of these discourses confirms the irreducible structure of double meaning at the origin of all interpretation. To understand the ontological, indeed the transcendental implications of this structure, and the relationship between interpretation and self-understanding, it is necessary to analyse the symbol semantically, under the linguistic aspect of metaphor. After all, it is through language alone that the symbolic content of experience reaches its manifest expression within understanding. In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur contests classical and structural substitution theories of metaphor to assert metaphor's profound

cognitive imports. The creation of new meaning within the metaphorical process takes the form of a semantic "schematism" between conflicting semantic fields. This power to create new meaning stands at the heart of Ricoeur's theory of imagination and at the heart of his claim for the "wounded" *cogito*, mediated, yet still capable of critical reflection. The power to create new semantic pertinences, new references within the world even, testifies to the reflective powers of interpretation and imagination. In turn, these powers ensure the distinction of literary and non-literary discourse and with it, the dialogical relation of literary critic and literary work.

CHAPTER ONE

RICOEUR AT NANTERRE

In the Spring of 1967 Paul Ricoeur reneged his professorship at the Sorbonne. His career so far was already one of prodigious merit. Incarcerated as a prisoner of war for five years, he had worked to translate Husserl's *Ideen* into French, and co-authored a work of commentary with fellow prisoner Mikel Dufrenne on the existentialism of Karl Jaspers. This had been followed in 1948 with the publication of a comparative study of Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel and in 1950, with the first volume of Ricoeur's tripartite *Philosophy (or Phenomenology) of the Will, Le Voluntaire et l'involuntaire.*[1] The text's critical commitment to phenomenological ideas testified to the discipline's predominance in French thought at the time, but it also prefigured its eventual decline and the distinct path Ricoeur's own thinking was to take in a post-Husserlian and post-existential era. An implicit rejection of Sartre's intractably individualistic freedom, Ricoeur's text promotes a conditioned freedom (such as Merleau-Ponty had signalled with the notion of embodiment) consonant with the dialectical potentialities of both a renewed, and in Ricoeur's case transformed, hermeneutic consciousness and the predominant socio-ideological paradigms of the 1950s and '60s. Just as the hermeneutic consciousness consolidated by Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer took the constraints of its own ontology—its historicality, its situatedness and hence finitude—to be the negative condition of its very possibility, so Marxist-inspired theory of the time was obliged to reject Sartrean individualism in favour of the historically and politically constrained freedom of the communal realm;

[1] Whereas existential phenomenology constituted a rejection of Husserlian idealism, rejecting the precondition of a synthetic transcendental ego with the atheistic dictum of existence before essence, the work of Jaspers and Marcel constitutes phenomenology's theistic side. Jaspers was a German Catholic, Marcel, French. The significance of this in terms of Ricoeur, himself an avowed Protestant, cannot be escaped. Ricoeur's extensive work on religious themes does not constitute a "stage" within his career, and nor can it be marginalised as a competing interest. As he has often professed, it was his own frequently Christological hermeneutics of the symbol which activated his presiding interest in the order of signs. In the manner of Heidegger and Gadamer, Ricoeur places a limitation upon the referential sign, refuting the realm of a purely representational signifier through the elevation of the word. Only that *which holds together* in the symbol (*sumballein*, from the Greek *sum* (together) and *ballein* (to throw)) brings forth meaning existentially. The synthesis inherent to the symbol is also the synthesis proper to the understanding of meaning, both as an historical feat and as a temporal process.

the freedom of individuality being a notion proper to the bourgeois realm of self-reflection.[2]

The dawn of a new theoretical anti-humanism sought to countenance the promises of the rationalist and speculative traditions and expose the philosophical edifice as just another ideology of mastery. Of course this drive towards epistemological neutrality was itself inherently ideological—having pulled the left-wing rug from under Sartre's feet, rapidly enshrined it within the discourse of the *anti -cogito*, leaving him isolated and politically anachronistic—in this time of wider social foment, populist notions of existential liberty and the Subject's rights still mixed freely with the generalised anti-establishment sentiments promulgated in the name of the new theoretical sciences. The student riots of May 1968 and 1969 were a symptom of just such transitional ambiguity and excitement, reinvigorating the existential edict to act (both on campus and in the unions) and reinvesting philosophy and politics with exhilarating immediacy and consequence whilst drawing upon the new theoretical scepticisms for academic integrity. Paul Ricoeur had himself warned the authorities of the potential for unrest within the universities. His decision to remove from the Sorbonne's esteemed environment signified the culmination of a prolonged and public critique of the French university system, as well as being an expression of his own professed desire to teach unfettered by certain institutional conventions. Essentially it was a move to match his commitment to university reform. And yet with his deferral and election to the new and more egalitarian site of Paris X at Nanterre, Ricoeur was to become a symbol of precisely those constrictions he had chosen to abandon. Despite his own critical essays and the decision to act in accordance, Ricoeur's position as *Doyen* meant that his own role as a public and official figure was automatically associated with the authoritarian rigidity which Parisian students were increasingly beginning to attack along with other disclaimers of the de Gaulle era. To left-wing sympathisers, the university was perceived as an instrument of State rule in which academic integrity was sacrificed to hegemonic interests. Moreover, such sentiments were in fact compounded by an increasingly

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[2] Critics had questioned the viability of an existential community and a politics founded upon pure subjectivity, and Sartre had responded with "Existentialism and Humanism": "When we say that man chooses himself, we do mean that every one of us must choose himself; *but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men*". That Sartre should have chosen to re-categorise existentialism as an ideology, and a Marxist one at that, speaks of the cross-winds that were gradually eroding subjectivity.

radical re-evaluation occurring from "within" the university, in the form of a widely referred to "legitimation crisis".

Of course, the critical atmosphere of the 1960s was one of ingenious innovation and exploration, but like any time of intense partisanship, it was also a time of crass polemic and oversimplified polarities. At Nanterre subtlety was sacrificed to enthusiasm when the campus became a battleground between the university's own faculties, the Faculty of Letters where Ricoeur was elected Dean, and the Faculty of Law. According to Charles E. Reagan, both friend and biographer of Ricoeur, the colleges were politically divided between affluent middle-class law students and the Letters faculty's more working-class Leftist sympathisers. Further internal divisions involved the competing, and retrospectively insular conflagrations of Maoist and communist students, involving what were often violent assertions of control over the campus. In hindsight such details of the student revolt can seem insignificant, especially within the wider context of national and global unrest. And yet, by this interpretation at least, they provide a salient focal point from which to assess the fate of hermeneutics, both then and now.

Just as his transition from Sorbonne Professor to Dean of Nanterre was both a move befitting the era of democratic change and a step up the prevailing order's regimental ladder, so Ricoeur's intellectual developments proved to be of antinomian significance in this critically partisan era. Within this context Ricoeurian hermeneutics and hermeneutics in general were to suffer an overhasty opposition to the idiom of crisis and radical questioning, becoming all-too easily sidelined as a humanist alternative to formalism in a post-phenomenological and purportedly anti-idealist age. Latterly, Ricoeur expressed reservations as to the true political import of the May "events", unsure as to whether they were something of "profound cultural significance" or merely "a great waking, playful dream", perhaps the dream of a colourful teleology or the formal dance of an arbitrary motion.[3] For Ricoeur personally, they ended in resignation and a three year leave from the French university system, but political dream or not, it is fair to say that *intellectually,* Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy only gains its true distinction amid the conflict to which he was once so curiously central and peripheral.

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[3] Quoted by Reagan. Charles E. Reagan, *Paul Ricoeur; His Life and His Work*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996, p. 89.

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THE DECLINE OF EXISTENTIALISM

Had politics and academia not entwined themselves so intimately, existentialism may not have sunk so swiftly. Yet an appeal to chance neglects the compelling circumstances which conspired to make Sartre's fall from favour more than a mere accident in the revolutions of intellectual fashion. Indeed, Sartre's fate cannot be disentangled from the fate that beset millions caught between the political extremities of Left and Right in the first half of the twentieth century. But there was also a much narrower history, pertaining to French culture and the organisation of its academic offices, which had its part to play. The importance of these practical accidents is numerously attested to in the accounts of French academic historians and French philosophers. By way of introduction to *Modern French Philosophy* Vincent Descombes writes of the university system and its procedures of recruitment in terms of a process of assimilation, in which applicants are groomed into "civic-minded State missionaries", in an environment where academic focus and favour devolves to the bias of a select committee. He plants the seeds of an explanation for the birth of French irrationalism in the origins of the Third State. Keen to establish its legitimacy through the doctrines of positivism and neo-Kantian rationalism, the state entrusted philosophy teachers with a role closer to that of the civil servant than the independent intellectual. Philosophy was to propound the progressivist, scientific principles of the state's own self-perceptions and a wholly rational and optimistic view of human progress. But of course the philosopher's need to break these bonds was compounded all too violently by the retrograde savagery of war; "for the generation of 1930, the starting point was a desire to escape from this optimistic view of history."[4]

It is not for poignancy alone that the historian François Dosse opens his capacious *History of Structuralism* with an heroic epithet for Sartre, possibly the last in a long tradition of French men of letters. "The law of tragedy requires a death before a new hero can come onstage" he writes, and there is no doubt that Sartre's prestige had once been of heroic proportions.[5] But poignancy aside, it was the

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[4] Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J.M Harding, Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp.6-7.

[5] François Dosse, *History of Structuralism*, Vol.1, "The Rising Sign, 1945–1966", trans. Deborah Glassman, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997, p.3.

ramifications of Sartre's politics, and the politics of a literary and humanist establishment figure, which in their utterly French contexts (Rousseau, republicanism, *le Parti Communiste Francais*, the highly influential journals *Les Temps modernes* and *Tel Quel*), made Sartre not merely old-hat, but tragically dead in intellectual circles even whilst he retained populist appeal with the general public. Individualism makes for an unlikely politics or ethics, but the continuity invested in French politics and philosophy compelled Sartre to provide a social framework for the existential ego. Despite his intellectual superfluity Sartre remained an all-round cultural figure or "voice of a generation" for the French public, and they demanded an example of commitment from him in a time of raised social and political conscience. Compelled to break with his habit of political non-intervention, Sartre commited his voice to a political stance, but this was not without problems. Having failed to protest against Nazism during the war, Sartre later joined the French Communist Party in an attempt to appease his critics, and yet he did so precisely when the atrocities of Stalinism began to emerge during the Cold War, when the majority of French intellectuals were rapidly rejecting this affiliation. Sartre was to endure increasing isolation as former colleagues at *Les Temps modernes*, including Merleau-Ponty, Camus and Claude Lefort left the review. Merleau-Ponty–once Sartre's closest friend and intellectual kin–published a sharp denunciation of Sartre's alliance to Bolshevism soon after. Although Sartre continued to allure and fascinate many members of the younger generation, his monopoly was symbolically overturned in a debate with the young Marxist Louis Althusser; a voice of starker contrast is hard to imagine. "Existentialism was the expression of postwar optimism, but the new relationship to history was more disenchanted". On the other hand "Structuralism was born as an intellectual phenomenon that, in a certain sense, took up where Marxism left off".[6] No structuralist made this connection more explicit than Althusser.

At a time when Man and his destiny were taking centre stage, the transition from a deeply humanist existential phenomenology to a structuralist anti-humanism could not have emerged save through the mediation of Marxism and the tensions internal to its own decree. Both Marxist *realpolitik* and the proliferation of Marxist theories propounded in the advent of structuralism reflected the paradigm shift away from the centralised and individualistic subjectivity of liberal humanism. Universal to

[6] Dosse, *ibid.*, p.158

the extent that they were socially, politically and intellectually motivated, the events of '68 signified a wholesale rebuke of the prevailing order, not only of political and ideological hegemony but also the prevailing critique which, in its oppositional role, could be said to "belong" to the status quo just as much. In such a way, the longstanding tensions between a "classical" economic determinism and the kind of "humanist" Marxisms propounded by the existentialists were both reinvigorated and supplanted. The atrocities attendant upon Leninist dogma dictated a swift revision of allegiance on the part of the intellectual Left in France. In droves it rejected Communism and the ossified mechanics of the Marxist vulgate, but by the same atrocious consequence, assimilation to a liberal discourse of human agency was for some all the more misguided than previously. In place of the old contest emerged the political face of structure and with it a far more sophisticated understanding of historical determination which, whilst it most certainly did not grant individual *will* a founding role in the determination of historical process, did incorporate a revised and highly compromised subjectivity within its horizon. Louis Althusser's critique of economism sought to elevate the consequence of the superstructure over the base with an analysis of ideology (beyond cruder notions of deception and propaganda) in which its function is distinctly psychological but crucially pre-subjective and involuntary. The Althusserian model repudiates the notion of individual historical agency in much the same way as classical determinist economism, but where it differs and where it gains its structuralist character is in the fact that it also repudiates the natural-cientific categories upon which the latter depends, exposing them as just another ideological construct of the bourgeoisie. What it represents within the wider context is an overt expression of the profound political and philosophical consequences of structuralism; in other words, it epitomises the consequences of a post-dualist epistemology as it emerges from the flames of war and philosophical hubris.

In a time of deep political insecurity, existentialism was no match for the inherently political paradigm of structuralism or indeed, for the radical status of its anti-humanist epistemology. As a coherent paradigm structuralism expressed the vision of a borderless and utopian objectivity such as Marxism had promulgated with its Science of Man. Structuralism provided not only the method but also the ideology for a generation for whom political oppression and the failures of the human sciences were symptoms of an unchecked and misplaced faith in human rationality.

Structuralism was the systematic indictment of liberal humanist optimism both as political practice and prejudiced epistemology. Once Claude Lévi-Strauss and his cohorts had formalised the arbitrariness of the Sign's relation to the referential world and transformed this formally expanded homology into an ontological trait beyond the realm of theoretical linguistics, Sartre's romanticised ethos of authenticity was supplanted by the discourse of the *anti-cogito*, and what Lévi-Strauss would later call a theoretical anti-humanism.

Sartre's ethos of authenticity appeals to the political conscience as a form of philosophical *praxis*, appearing to prefigure what was to become Ricoeur's *philosophy of will* or *philosophy of action.* In both cases the judgements and commitments of the individual are prioritised over the preordained statutes of law or convention. For Ricoeur the activity of judgement involved in praxis is guided by an inter-personal principle of the good life such as Aristotle specified, and judgements of the individual are always shaped by what Hans-Georg Gadamer refers to as the individual's "horizon of interpretation", largely the context of a living tradition passed on through social institutions and cultural dialogue. Whilst both the hermeneutic and the existential principles of choice claim parentage in Heideggerian authenticity, Ricoeurian judgement is always involved in a dialectic of the self and the cultural or historical Other present within society. In Heidegger the socio-cultural is nowhere more than a theoretical shadow, a mere principle impinging upon the dynamics of individual *Dasein.* Whilst Gadamer's corrective to Heideggerian authenticity is decisive in terms of hermeneutics' capacity as an ethical discourse, the Sartrean individual is never truly submitted to the censure of social existence. As with Heidegger's own characterisation of authentic *Dasein*, the Sartrean agent is distinctly inhuman and isolated; whilst it is not passive, neither is it a socially constituted, socially distinguished being subject to social constraints.

Sartrean choice received redoubled criticism when Heidegger distanced himself from the Sartrean model, condemning it for remaining trapped within the bounds of Cartesian subjectivity. Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* presents a more or less conclusive correction to Sartrean subjectivity and its failure to account for the Other. Interpreting Sartrean subjectivity as a less original mode of consciousness, as a kind of secondary affect of agency subsequent to being, he argues that the reciprocal relationship of subjectivity and Being, to which consideration of the Other and hence ethics inheres, gets obscured by the derived thought of a monadic consciousness.

Whilst Heideggerian consciousness proved too inhuman for some, Sartrean subjectivity was for him and a great many others, an overly "humanistic" rendition of consciousness as a one-way process of self-creation rather than the dyadic relationship of self and all the non-self world and its Being.

Sartrean authenticity, like *Dasein's* ontological authenticity in *Being and Time*, fails to satisfactorily account for the existence of the Other. So whilst existentialism is a philosophy of will and action, of self-determination and self-realisation that would appear in perfect accord with the rally-cries of global democracy, universal suffrage and equal rights for all, and whilst Sartre's insistence that existence precedes essence bequeaths the most staunch opprobrium to *laissez faire* politics, when placed within the order of concrete political reality the philosophical and essentially ethical inadequacy of authentic *Dasein* becomes apparent.[7]

Sartrean philosophy suffered the combined pressures of social and intellectual change, with the latter coming to full fruition at a moment of heightened social exigency. Sartre was thus compelled to defend his philosophy in terms of the most pressing contemporary demands and in an atmosphere of scepticism; the free will of the solitary agent was made to confront the immanent structure of a faceless historical necessity.

1.3
STRUCTURALISM AND THE RICOEURIAN CRITIQUE

At the height of its popularity structuralism was both more than a method and less than a philosophy, and yet for many the implications of its method spelt the end for philosophy. For others, such as Ricoeur, structuralism was a new philosopheme to be accommodated within a revised epistemology and with a restricted pertinence. From a more extreme perspective, structuralism presented a new philosophical subtext or ontological strata upon which to ground the entire sphere of meaning both

[7] What is more, in the realm of practical ethics, the absolute freedom to choose stipulated by Sartre is by implication an indictment of anyone for whom choice has not facilitated freedom, and this not because enslavement or servitude is by necessity a symptom of bad faith or inauthentic reasoning—one may authentically choose not to agitate after all—but because freedom is only recognised at the level of individuals. If authentic behaviour does not lead to a state of freedom-as-authenticity then the individual must judge himself inauthentic.

philosophical and non-philosophical. The rise of structuralism not only prompted a drastic revision of the disciplinary hierarchy (placing the philosopher—as the highest symbol of rational enquiry—and his authority to question under grievous suspicion), it also forced the issue of truth beyond the speculative, in the natural sciences and history for example, where questions of theoretical truth and method, practice and hypothesis rested under positivism's long dominion. In such a way epistemological questions were rekindled just as their classical relationship to philosophy was eroded.

Whether structuralism provided one a mere method, a hypothetical and yet practicable truth which may or may not require philosophical elaboration, or at the other extreme, a pre-ontological strata to philosophical truth, the movement commanded a challenge to the long-standing edifice of rationalism. That structuralism could encompass both a purely methodological position (practical and anti-metaphysical) and a speculative ontology (purportedly anti-metaphysical) suggests the pervasive tenor of its sometimes ambiguous intentions and points towards the broad range of its compass, in sociology and anthropology, psychoanalysis and literary criticism, philosophy and political theory.

As a movement, structuralism flowed from the nascent collaborations of linguistics, anthropology and psychoanalysis in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Whilst the latter two disciplines were at this stage peripheral to the classical humanist agenda in France, it was the wholly peripheral and non-classical linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure which, through the efforts of Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss and Lacan (to name but France's most auspicious pioneers), united these disciplines as they sought to furnish semiology's revolutionary potentials beyond linguistics. The idea of universality—a model for all models, a structure for all structures—which accompanied so much of the structuralist enterprise, derived primarily from the Saussurean exclusion of the referent, but of course the desirability of such an exclusion was pre-empted by the wider epistemic ambition for a universal science of humanity based upon rigorous scientific method. The exclusion of the referent, like the Husserlian *epoché* before it, not only excluded the mutability of a changing world, with its shifting lexicon and sensory instability, it also brought with it the suggestion of pre-subjective intelligibility, implying not only the fulfilment of objectivity, but also determinism at the (pre-)ontological level. Such speculations wildly surpassed the remit of Saussure's analysis, yet in an era that made a virtue of re-reading, with returns to Freud and Marx as well as Saussure, it was the latter's concept of the sign

as an abstracted and idealised entity, that facilitated the period's hunger for revision and renewal. In this respect the utterly material point of structuralism's historical context cannot be overlooked. Whichever the more powerful sphere of influence, social dissatisfaction and academic formalism emboldened one another. The rejection of establishment politics and learning was a rejection of the liberal individualism upon which they were both founded. Under the tutelage of Saussure, Marx, and Freud, structuralism appeared to provide the antidote to both a flawed rationalism and a wounded humanism.

The tacit politics of the academic world announced themselves in the overt competition of institutional and disciplinary politics which, as the events of 1968 attest, were sometimes little more than a contest between the status quo and an inevitably left-wing avante-garde on the outside of institutional life. Yet behind these more transient alliances lay the genuinely authentic renewal of Marxist thought which, through the conceptual shift from systems to structures in the natural sciences, enabled the anthropologist Lévi-Strauss to adopt the concept of structure in a social, trans-historical context, and in full consciousness of its Marxist overtones.

Before committing to ethnology and anthropology, Lévi-Strauss had been a dedicated reader of Marx and his development of the linguistic model for sociological purposes was intended to "contribute to that theory of superstructures which Marx barely sketched out."[8] Yet although structural anthropology reflected Marxism's social reductions into what it claimed to be globally comparable sectors with their historically comparable functions, the vexed questions of history, diachrony and dialectical reasoning remained unmitigating obstacles which, for many, served to entrench a perceived ideological alliance between Marxism and structuralism. Despite the contradictions, a profound ideological (if not epistemological) kinship developed, uniting these discourses as co-combatants against the philosophical tradition. Long before Marxism's structural revision at the hands of Louis Althusser, there were contextual factors serving to compound the revolutionary association of these disciplines.

An academically disparate group, the progenitors of structuralism were often geographically as well as institutionally peripheral to the French academy. Structuralism came from the outside, and nothing symbolised the French interior as

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[8] Lévi-Strauss, *La Penséé Sauvage*, quoted by Frederic Jameson, *the prison-house of language*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1974. p.102.

potently as the figure of the Sorbonne. This at least is one way in which structuralism was to acquire its decisive position in the ideological wars so neatly encapsulated by its own binary logic. If the Sorbonne signified the classical humanist tradition in France, if it stood for conservative politics and mores, then the de-centralised and frequently itinerant institution of structuralist thought bore with it the values of the maverick intellectual, so often coloured, if not in any way constrained by decisively foreign ideologies. The biographies of numerous structuralist luminaries fit this bill, their developments often expressing the expediencies of war as well as personal privations.[9] What these histories demonstrate is that structuralism could very easily have remained an Eastern-Russian, Slavic, Scandinavian movement were it not for the politics of the period. Instead structuralism took root in France with all the excitement and enthusiasm of one lately released from an earlier preoccupation.[10]

By the time of Saussure's death in 1915 the arduous process of collating and analysing the transcriptions of his student audiences had come to fruition with the publication of the *Course in General Linguistics*. Saussure's lack of personal writings had delayed the project by at least four years. The text's insistence upon the arbitrariness of the sign was not of itself original but what was original was Saussure's insistence upon the idea of a synchronic system of value which, being strictly divorced from semantic content, explained value through the concept of difference.[11] The change from a genetic model to a synchronic one introduced linguistics to the notion of the pre-existent and total structure which repudiated the historico-empirical model of the nineteenth century. This wholly abstract formation

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[9] Saussure was a Swiss man; his intellectual journey took him by way of Geneva, Leipzig and Berlin before he relocated to Paris, the site of his lecture course in general linguistics. Roman Jakobson promulgated structuralist reading in Russia (Linguistic Circle of Moscow) before evading Stalinism with a move to Czechoslovakia (Prague Circle). He also enjoyed strong links with structural linguists of the Copenhagen Circle, most notably Louis Hjelmslev. The Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia necessitated a third move, this time to New York where linguists were keen to forge links with European schools. It was here in New York that Jakobson eventually met with the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss; a meeting which forcefully compounded structuralism as a universal epistemology.

[10] i.e phenomenology.

[11] Dosse writes "Saussure only consolidated the idea of system, thereby reducing its field of study to the synchronic system in order to give it the greatest possible impact, but abandoning the historical and panchronic aspects." He progresses to say that Saussure "cleaned-up the fundamental principles needed by the linguists of his period, which is to say historical linguistics" (*History of Structuralism,* Vol. 1, p.47). In essence, Saussure prepared the formalist ground, his achievement being the honing of a method which promised new potentials. For Roland Barthes, whose practice evinces a more diffuse, culturalist brand of structuralism than the linguists', the Saussurean break represents "an epistemological change": "analogy replaces evolutionism, imitation replaces derivation". (Barthes, "Saussure, le signe, la démocratie", *Le Discourse Social*, nos. 3 and 4, April 1973.)

was to shift linguistics away from empirical and historical research, eventually presaging the renewed aspirations towards a universal science of humanity as rigorous and coherent as the natural sciences. Saussurean semiology severely restricted the linguistic field in order that it may eventually broach its disciplinary confines and become the "science that studies the life of signs at the heart of social life".[12] Linguistics, according to the Saussure of the *Course*, was to constitute just one part of this universal science. By introducing the formalist possibility of a general theory of value, the *Course in General Linguistics* brought the isomorphic potentials of a differential system for inter-disciplinary research by way of theoretical import. For such insights is Saussure accredited as the father of structuralism, the ambition of a general science being for so many, the driving force behind the structuralist epoch.

For the semiological system to breach its linguistic confines and become the "science that studies the life of signs at the heart of social life" a second intercession was necessary.[13] In keeping with the period which made a virtue of re-reading, with returns to both Freud and Marx, the return to Saussure was more like a discovery than a re-discovery in France, the Sorbonne, still the bastion of intellectual propriety in the 1950s, having conceded nothing to Saussurean method between the 1920s and 1940s. Truly Saussure had not been abandoned in France, even if his influence had not led to linguistic schools founded upon his principles. Saussure and hence the recognition of structure lived, but only in the intellectual margins. Even in the 1950s, when figures such as André Martinet and André-Georges Haudricourt were publishing texts along the same lines as Jakobson and the Prague School, their unconventional career paths and lack of institutional clout could not rouse the French academy from its traditionalist, and by now downright retrograde slumbers. Only in the 1960s, when not only the Sorbonne but the entire nation's ideological aspirations were challenged did the by now sure and steadfast trails of structuralist epistemology blaze incandescent in the popular imagination of a young and revolutionary France.

Elsewhere in Europe and America things were quite different. One may hazard that in France however, had it not been for the war, Saussure's delayed reception may not have blossomed at all, France's tardy acknowledgement being the product of *émigrés* who had spent the war years exploring the wider implications of Saussure in receptive American institutions. By the time they reached France these figures had

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[12] See Dosse, *History of Structuralism,* Vol. 1, p. 45.
[13] Saussure's definition of semiology, quoted by Dosse, *ibid.*, p.45.

already established careers in the name of structuralist epistemology (rather than pure linguistics or semiology). Pre-eminent amongst this group are Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roman Jakobson, without whom the structuralist movement is virtually unthinkable. And it was their chance encounter in New York in 1942 which helped set alight the interdisciplinary and universalist aspirations first envisaged by Saussure.

The bond established between Lévi-Strauss and Jakobson led to such a close intellectual alliance that whilst their work was not collaborative, it was profoundly linked in such a way that the claim for underlying universal structures could not be overlooked. Russian by birth, Jakobson had led a peripatetic existence at the service of his intellectual commitments. In 1915 he had established the Moscow Linguistic Circle, dedicated to the linguistic aspect of poetry and literary immanence. The inevitable ideological clash between formalism and Stalinism had led to his first exile in Prague where his comparative interests, in Czech and Russian poetry, contributed to the birth of structural phonology and the Linguistic Circle of Prague. Whilst taking on board the name of structure, the Prague Circle did so on the understanding of a "dynamic ensemble". The circle was certainly influenced by Saussure and Russian Formalism, but equally it owed its debt to the thought of Husserl and the Gestalt. International in spirit, Jakobson also enjoyed close links with the Vienna Circle and the high formalism of Louis Hjelmslev and the Copenhagen Circle. With an advancing Nazi occupation Jakobson was destined to travel through Denmark, Norway and Sweden before he was eventually in the position to meet his future friend and colleague in New York. Meanwhile Lévi-Strauss' exile from France led him directly to New York. Whilst perhaps not exposed to the same degree of international exchange, Lévi-Strauss' own form of intellectual eclecticism, with its over-riding intent for epistemic syntheses, was a certain match for Jakobson. No one except possibly Saussure did more to establish the spirit and tenor of structuralism–culturally, ideologically and intellectually–than Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Claude Lévi-Strauss

As the sire of modern method, Lévi-Strauss' career was devoted to questions of disciplinary worth and scientific measure within the human and the social sciences. His questing spirit, to discover and to inscribe the very bounds of human knowledge, is evident in both his earlier ethnological research and the renowned anthropological

innovations of his later years. With Durkheim, his predecessor in sociology, Lévi-Strauss shared an holistic perspective on such matters; significantly it was a brand of universalism from which philosophy's traditional dominion over other disciplines was ejected.[14] Both men owed this anti-philosophical predisposition towards a global science of the human—fit to supplant philosophy—from Comtean positivism. Perversely, structuralism was impelled by the same anxieties that had shaped both the German hermeneutic defection from Romanticism and Husserl's withdrawal from dualism, namely an objection to regionalism and an ambition for methodological consensus amongst the humanistic disciplines. Comte's aspirations before them were accompanied by an aversion to the synthetic idealisms of contemporary philosophy; only by borrowing from the empirical sciences and transforming themselves into theoretical equivalents could the humanities (life-sciences by name only) achieve any sort of objective and systematic parity. Whilst Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss shared Comte's aversion to speculative thinking, neither could be accused of his uncritical dependency on scientific models and nor could they be accredited with sticking to his positivist agenda.

In so many instances, the ambition of a general science of man equal to the universal and objective criteria for natural science compelled the paradoxical tendency towards an arch formalism purged of all mutability. When Lévi-Strauss imported Jakobson's phonological model into his own research on kinship models, he took what some may call an epochal step into the realm of abstract methodology, driving an irrevocable wedge between observational practice and theoretical method. In *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, the transposition of value is justified on the basis of an analogy between kinship and language, whose characters are linked by the concept of exchange. The value-exchange of words in kinship is reflected in language through the circulation of women; a process that enables the healthy distribution of

[14] Due to the occlusion of "ethnology" from the English language, the distinction marking anthropology's significance as an independent discourse from sociology is obscured. Ethnology, according to Lévi-Strauss comprises just one stage of anthropological research. Previously ethnology (*éthnologie*) and anthropology (*anthropologie*) had been interchangeable terms with ethnology being the more common. In English this equivalence did not exist. Lévi–Strauss' preference for "anthropology" signified the wider remit of his discipline, to which ethnology was but the singular process of synthesising data gathered in the prior empirical stage of ethnographic observation (fieldwork). Rejecting the previous equivalence of ethnology and anthropology, Lévi–Strauss subsumed the ethnographical and the ethnological within the global perspective of a reassigned anthropology. By Lévi–Strauss' prescription therefore, anthropology encompassed the wider field of abstraction and reflection to which sociology had previously claimed singular tenure, presiding over ethnology as its own sub-discipline. Anthropology was provocative by design.

genes as well as knowledge and social interaction between clans. On the pragmatic level, social interaction and the distribution of knowledge equate with the semantic charge of words. On the organisational level, clan relations operate like signs, "not on the level of the terms but on that of the pairs of relations" such as Mother-Daughter, Mother-Father, terms which cannot function in isolation but only within a system of synchronic value, like that of the signs representing them. [15] By "defining a limited number of possibilities as elementary kinship structures", Lévi-Strauss according to Dosse, "made a reduction in the mathematical sense of the term";

> ...the Lévi-Straussian revolution consisted in debiologizing the phenomenon [of kinship] and removing it from the simple structure of consanguinity and from ethnocentric moral considerations.[16]

There were critics and advocates alike for whom this decisive manoeuvre represented the dawn of a new idealism, whereby the sign's synchronic purchase over the historical and hence the existential, the prioritisation in linguistic terms of *langue* over *parole*, led, in Frank Lentricchia's words "to the Platonic pursuit of the taxonomy or model as transcendentals".[17] By this account, the *Elementary Structures of Kinship* expunged the problematic variables of history and the individual from the field of kinship and in so doing prepared the ground for similar research in other fields. Accordingly, Lévi-Strauss represented the premier voice of a new idealism, with Saussure's *Course on General Linguistics* providing a direct and purportedly unequivocal lineage.

Incontrovertibly, arch formalist, anti-humanist epistemology would be unthinkable without the founding demonstrations of a formal homology transferable between disparate phenomena. But whilst it is true to say that Lévi-Strauss "debiologised phenomena", it is thoroughly wrong to judge him as an out and out formalist. On the contrary, neither Jakobson nor Lévi-Strauss sought to defer from Saussure's original constitution of the sign, which entailed a *bracketing* rather than an unequivocal voiding of the semantic field and external reference. Indeed by Dosse's analysis, Lévi-Strauss represents a hero of mediation, one who gained the hard-earned,

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[15] Ricoeur, "Structure and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde, Continuum, London, 2004. p.34.
[16] Dosse, *History of Structuralism*, Vol. 1, p.19
[17] Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism*, Methuen, London, 1983. p.117.

albeit precarious balance—between observation and theory, chance and determinism—to which the life-sciences had so long aspired.[18] But Lévi-Strauss' position at the centre of structuralism also represents the near-miss of a genius whose imperfections ricocheted into the ever-widening sphere of formalist excess on the one hand and recalcitrant positivisms—historical, empirical, deductive—on the other.

Even whilst astute critics recognise that the semiotic template begins life as a theoretical and not a transcendental model, that the theoretical was not intended to supplant the practical, and that, along with the continuation of traditional observation into empirical particulars, Lévi-Strauss also maintained a profound interest in conspicuously anti-formalist, literary fields, they also recognise a point at which the sheer power of the structural-anthropological model can be seen to engulf its author's original, pioneering intentions, and that at this point theoretical mediation does transform into transcendental totalisation.[19] This occurs when the purely formal homology is corrupted, when language can no longer retain the character of an external analogy and becomes itself a feature of the analogon; in short, anywhere that the subject–phenomenon is in any way constituted through discourse. This auto-implication represents the impossibility of a non-transcendental, abstract or merely propadeutic description of the sign occurring wherever language bears an internal relation to the phenomena under scrutiny. It is for this, rather than any one-sided assessment of the code itself, which leads Lévi-Strauss' most even-handed critics to place limits upon the code's analogic remit.

Lévi-Srauss' Marxian apprenticeship is a telling indictment of his formalist credentials. Even while he would affect a withdrawal from overt politics—announcing that it was dangerous "to enclose political realities within the framework of formal ideas"—he remained attached to the idea of developing an understanding of ideology beyond the crude notions of propaganda initiated by Marxism.[20] It is therefore paradoxical that a structuralist critique of ideology should expose the Platonising

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[18] He writes that "In an era in which the division of intellectual labor limited a researcher to increasingly fragmented knowledge, Lévi-Strauss sought to balance the material and the intelligible. Torn between a desire to restore the internal logic of material reality and a poetic sensibility that strongly tied him to the natural world, Lévi-Strauss forged important intellectual syntheses in much the same way as one writes musical scores." Dosse, *ibid.*, p.10.

[19] For Lévi-Strauss and the embryonic discipline of anthropology, observation was not a counter to theoretical methods but in fact an indispensable preparation for the elucidation of underlying structures. In such a way the Saussurian sign itself did *not* signify the decisive wedge between methodological abstraction and practical analysis but the great clue to their indissolubility.

[20] Quoted by Dosse, *ibid.*, p.11.

tendency and hence the predisposition towards totalisation inherent to its own operations. A structuralist refinement of the concept of ideology cannot work unless the linguistic system is shown to be the pre-eminent basis upon which all discourse is founded, and in order to do this, one must presume a kind of detached and pre-ideological system, an idealised system of completely neutral values (a formal oxymoron) which contradicts the very relations upon which dialectical materialism is founded. To suppose some theoretically neutral originality for the semiotic code is to assume what Frederic Jameson, one of Lévi-Strauss' most perspicacious and even-handed critics outside of France, describes in terms of a "false autonomy of the superstructure":

> ...one cannot place a superstructure between parentheses for descriptive and analytical purposes and still remain true to the impulse behind the terminology; this is so even if, as Lévi-Strauss feels, the forms of linguistic organization which he has revealed are those which characterize the superstructure as a whole.

The contradiction of such a totalising move is that it fails to honour the social totality to which the superstructure belongs. In Jameson's words, the constitutive feature of its apprehension lies

> ...in the mental operation by which the apparently independent ideological phenomenon is forcibly linked back up with the infrastructure; by which the false autonomy of the superstructure is dispelled, and with it the instinctive idealism which characterizes the mind when it has to do with nothing but spiritual facts. Thus the very concept of the superstructure is designed to warn us of the secondary character of the object which it names. [21]

The American phenomenological and deconstructive critic Frank Lentricchia echoes another Jamesonian reservation concerning the reality which the superstructure claims to name. As the sign writ large, the superstructure both names and "forbids any research into the reality beyond it".[22] Lentricchia's critique in *After the New Criticism*

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[21] Frederic Jameson, *the prison-house of language: a critical account of structuralism and Russian formalism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1974, p.103.
[22] Jameson, *ibid.*, p.106

expresses a greater anxiety concerning the importation of the Saussurean sign which "...defers from the outset the ontological question of the relationship of language and reality itself."[23] In Jameson's Marxian context this translates as the "insulation of the superstructure from reality". And yet this refusal to address ontology is coupled to an implicit conviction in the system's "ontological participation".[24] Given the system's suppression of diachrony such participation must, according to the argument, go by way of something both more fundamental and instantaneous than historical mediation (which could provide an outroute from the problem of the code's ontological relation); instead one must assume it to be some kind of formative paradigm from which historical events, actions and intentions deviate, in much the same way that *parole* deviates from the purity of *la langue*.

Ricoeur echoes the critique of the structure's autonomy with an analysis of Lévi-Strauss' primary analogy between the semiotic code and kinship structures. Whilst he largely gives credence to the formal properties of this initial correspondence, Ricoeur elicits the point at which Lévi-Strauss hastily transforms a relatively modest and cautiously couched analogy into a universalised philosophical proposition. Transforming a formal analogy into a *foundation* for all linguistic (that is cultural) phenomena, Lévi-Strauss is once again condemned for apportioning the system an unjustifiable philosophical priority and preliminary autonomy. By questioning the isotopic validity of the Lévi-Straussian analogy beyond kinship, Ricoeur delimits the remit of structuralist epistemology, in the first instance, as a genuine homology and in the second, as a philosophical position. Despite this, Ricoeur does not view the importation of the Saussurean sign as quite the barrier to ontological clarification named by Lentricchia. Ricoeur proposes to demonstrate how the semiotic model is integral to a philosophy of language, but how it none the less constitutes just one regional level of intelligibility within the actual totality of human (linguistic) discourse. It is through an elaboration of the properties of discourse and its simultaneously mediating and constituting roles within the process of understanding, that Ricoeur projects his dialectical vision of a limited but nevertheless warranted structural pertinence.

For Ricoeur, the consciousness of a method's worth is inseparable from the consciousness of its limitations. In the case of structuralism, one may suppose this

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[23] Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism*, *ibid.*, p.118.
[24] Frank Lentricchia, *ibid.*, p.119.

limit to be met through an immediate objection to the projection of a synchronic model upon the waxing and waning of human existence. Certainly, Ricoeur believes the true phenomenality of language to exceed the parameters of structural linguistics, but then he never claims scientific structuralism to think differently. Structuralist epistemology does not confront diachrony with the kind of stark opposition redolent of literary theoretical practice; in structuralism there is not the "pure and simple opposition between diachrony and synchrony" claimed by some of its detractors.[25]

Ricoeur's Critique of Lévi-Strauss.

> There is ... no reason to juxtapose two ways of understanding; the question is rather to link them together as the objective and the existential (or *existentiell* !).[26]

Naturally, phenomenologists and ethicists were keen to assert the phenomenological and moral limitations incumbent upon a linguistically and rationally compromised psyche without forsaking the epistemological advances such a model made over rationalisms. Amongst hermeneutic philosophers at the time, Ricoeur's attention to structuralist epistemology was relatively unique. To an extent his critique accords with that of fellow phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Both express the inherent limitation of a linguistic theory which fails to account for the historically asystematic and frequently incidental character of meaning, whether it be in terms of semantics and the common lexis or the nature of speaker's intentions and ambiguity and more generally, the limitations of a philosophy which excludes reflective thought. But whilst Merleau-Ponty strives for a more global synthesis, Ricoeur accords structuralist insights an unequivocally central yet essentially more limited role.

From the start of his investigations, Ricoeur grants structuralism a decisive validity which by no means countermands the claims of a philosophical hermeneutics. There is no "more rigorous or more fruitful approach than the structuralist method at

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[25] "Lévi-Strauss, in this respect, is right to oppose to his detractors Jakobson's great article on the 'Principles of Historical Phonetics', where the author explicitly distinguishes between synchrony and statics.", Ricoeur, "Structure and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, *ibid.*, p.32.
[26] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.30

the level of comprehension which is its own". It is precisely this conception of a very real and relatable universe of the different levels of comprehension or horizons of understanding—beginning from the most rudimentary division between objective science and the interpretive humanities—,which impels Ricoeur to define the remit of this region of intelligibility. Far from rejecting the validity of the linguistic code, Ricoeur seeks to limit and synthesise the order of semiosis within the field of meaningful interpretation and to corroborate its role within this universal scheme. Structuralism is a science which seeks

> to put at a distance, to objectify, to separate out from the personal equation of the investigator the structure of an institution, a myth, a rite, to the same extent hermeneutics buries itself in what could be called "the hermeneutic circle" of understanding and of believing, which disqualifies it as science and qualifies it as meditating thought.[27]

As far as Ricoeur is concerned, structuralism and hermeneutics occupy polar extremities within the human sciences. Structuralism disqualifies itself from historical understanding as much as hermeneutics disqualifies itself as a science. Hermeneutics immerses itself within the very acts and operations which structuralism brackets. Yet rather than proving a barrier to further thought, the apparent discontinuity of these levels of intelligibility is to prove the primary clue to their continuity. In "Structure and Hermeneutics" Ricoeur makes it his task to demonstrate the limits of a synchronic priority and to affect a reversal which can thereby demonstrate structuralism's true remit *within* philosophical hermeneutics conceived in these general terms. Whilst the semiotic code reflects a distinctly anti-phenomenological objectivity, it never posits the all-out opposition of synchrony and diachrony embedded at the heart of textualist and intentionalist extremes. Truly, the code relies for its intelligibility upon the synchronic law of differential relations, an "axis of coexistences, which is wholly distinct from the axis of successions". Synchronic linguistics examines language in its systematic aspects; it is "a science of states in their synchronic aspects".[28] But this does not mean that the system cannot admit of change and diachrony; what it means is that "history is secondary and figures as an alteration of the system" and that "these

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[27] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.30.
[28] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.31.

alterations are less intelligible than the states of the system". By the code's own light "history is responsible for disorders rather than meaningful changes."[29]

Contesting the opposition of synchrony and diachrony and confirming their hierarchical relationship in this way, it is clear that the code's eventual delimitation within the hermeneutic will depend, at least in part, upon the proposed continuity of their temporal modes. To this end Ricoeur enters into a dialectical examination of their respective bonds or value-systems in the linguistic field; the synchronic traits of the code, as a system of simultaneous, differential arrangements, which functions independently of the referential or signifying function, are made to confront the signifier's historical unfolding between language-users. From an epistemological vantage, the non-referential and purely inter-relational arrangements of syntax describes an act of reduction; the code is a reduced model from whence the equivocation of speakers' intentions, polysemia and ambiguity have been subtracted, its "reading" involves a "decoding" of the structure. Semantic analysis by contrast entails an amplification of possible meanings; guided by the referential context, significance is "deciphered" or interpreted.[30] Through the elaboration of their parallel functions, Ricoeur seeks to integrate the sign and word, synchrony and diachrony, to the hermeneutically expanded dialectic of structure and event. His justification for doing so is borne of the preceding analysis. The phenomenological amplification of the terms testifies to the semiotic model's reversed priority, the contrast of synchrony and diachrony being limited to a purely regional pertinence within the wider historical horizon of hermeneutic understanding. Ricoeur seeks to demonstrate this by setting the binomial properties of synchrony and diachrony, syntax and semantics, decoding and deciphering, to work within the fabric of Lévi-Strauss' own text.

Structural consensus and justification rests upon the apprehension of a primary homology between Saussurean linguistic laws and the phenomena upon which it is projected. In Lévi-Strauss' initial work on kinship the basis for analogy, that women are circulated like words, that kinship functions like a language, as "an arbitrary system of representations" is situated in terms of an original impulse compelling men to exchange words, namely the "split representation that pertains to the symbolic

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[29] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.32.

[30] The structural semantics of A.J Greimas precludes speaker's intentionality, but in its hermeneutic context, semantic signification carries the full charge of inter and extra-referential meaning.

function".[31] It is on the basis of the structure's apparent surpassing of this ambiguous split representation, that Ricoeur can assert structuralism's dependency upon a pre-existent background of split representation, symbolism and essentially *semantic* understanding. "Wouldn't the objective science of exchange be an abstract segment in the full understanding of the symbolic function?" [32] Ricoeur nevertheless grants the structural analysis an important mediating role between a naïve semantic interpretation and a semantics which has been enhanced through the mediation of a semiotic decoding and re-amplification of the semantic base.

Lévi-Strauss' initial apprehension of an analogy between phonemic laws and kinship systems can be justified to the extent that kinship satisfies the four premises upon which the phonemic system is based (systems based at an unconscious level which operate on the level of differential relations rather than singular terms and which "are most readily apprehensible from a synchronic perspective).[33]Yet we find in all structurally conceived phenomena an elevation, a prioritisation of those aspects which best behove the generation of ever wider structural homologies between different "languages". Accordingly kinship takes on the properties of language and phonemic distribution; it is "an arbitrary system of representations, [rather than] the spontaneous development of a real situation." [34] Now Ricoeur's reservations concerning the methodological bias of the phonemic model, predestined as it is, to disqualify explanations rooted within the order of historical consciousness and to overlook the potential for a plurality of heterogeneous signifying functions, are in a way demonstrated by the hasty ambitions of Lévi-Strauss' own pen.

Three publications after the *Elementary Structures of Kinship* Lévi-Strauss attempts to expand the scope of systematic values to encompass the far more ambiguous and complex phenomena of art and religion. In the process, Ricoeur implies, analogical justification transmutes into a covert epistemological declaration; similarity is no longer the basis for comparison but a form of transcendental

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[31] Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, quoted by Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.34.
[32] *The Savage Mind*, p.62, Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.36.
[33] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.34
[34]Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, quoted by Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.35. Lévi-Strauss expresses the structural homology between kinship and semantics as follows: kinship is "...a kind of language , a set of processes permitting the establishment, between individuals and groups, of a certain type of communication. That the mediating factor, in this case, should be the *women of the group*, who are *circulated* between clans, lineages, or families, in place of the *words of the group*, which are circulated between individuals, does not at all change the fact that the essential aspect of the phenomenon is identical in both cases" (Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.35).

equivalence. In the passage from *Structural Anthropology* to *The Savage Mind*, the original analogy to phonemic structures is compromised when it is projected upon phenomena which are themselves already linguistically implicated or constituted. But when Lévi-Strauss applies the linguistic analogy to deeply cultural phenomena such as religion, this is what he does. There is a qualitative difference between the projection of an extra-linguistic analogy, where something non-linguistic is likened in its functioning to the linguistic structure, and a comparison between language and what is essentially a cultural discourse. As Ricoeur puts it, when a discourse such as religion is

> erected on the foundation of language, considered as an instrument of communication...the analogy is shifted inside language and from this moment on refers to the structure of this or that particular discourse in relation to the general structure of a language.[35]

On the one hand, structuralism takes on the unexpected hue of a comparative discipline. But the more important issue concerns the temporal relations governing their assumed likeness.

> It is...not certain *a priori* that the relation between diachrony and synchrony, valid in general linguistics, rules the structure of particular discourses in an equally dominant fashion. The things said do not necessarily have an architecture similar to that of language viewed as a universal instrument of speaking.[36]

Whilst some discourses within the humanities demonstrate a greater leaning towards the synchronic model of explanation, other discourses display a profoundly historical, interpretive mode of transmission. For this reason the model of the code is felt to bring its own analytical and methodical prejudices with it, directing investigations

> ...toward articulations which are similar to its own, that is, toward a logic of oppositions and correlations, that is to say, finally, toward a system of differences.[37]

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[35] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, pp.36-7.
[36] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.37
[37] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.37

The idea that different discourses conform to different temporal modalities is a distinctly literary one. Literary critics have long known the intimate bond linking a narrative's temporal markers and the reality it claims to name. The scholarly workmanship of Eric Auerbach's *Mimesis* testifies to a pre-theoretical parentage drawn from classical German exegesis. The analysis of kinship structures names a reality of timeless social contracts and impersonal relations based not on blood so much as the archetypal forms of clan structure. If the structure *were* a narrative, it would surely be equal to those folk or fairy narratives favoured in the first stages of literary structuralism, where all psychological depth and contextual determinates have been flattened? The challenge to literary structuralism was of course to prove the worth of a synchronic correspondence in more sophisticated and temporally complex literature, where the logic of opposition and correlation is not so consistently apparent. To this end there is no greater triumph than Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse,* which elaborates structuralist method through the unceasing vacillations of Proustian temporality. But the relationship which Lévi-Strauss attempts to name does not concern the code's role in the particular instance of this or that narrative and its temporal order, but the relation of the entire cultural discourse to which it belongs.

The temporal relations governing religious discourse or art cannot be assumed to display a *unitary* suppression or elevation in the diachronic or synchronic elements in the same way that kinship reflects the elevation of synchrony proper to the code. To assume as much involves an unjustifiable leap from the particular to the general which Ricoeur, the meticulous archivist of thought, can only view as a bold and unwarranted generalisation. Such a generalisation is constitutionally different from the principle of methodological generalisation upon which a structuralist reading of this or that text operates, where all questions of a diachronic nature (historical context, authorial intentionality, social or temporal constraints) are rejected and diachrony simply ceases to exist; both this and the practical application which such a total abnegation of history facilitates itself debars the way to any greater ontological claims concerning for example, structure's priority in the nature of creativity. As Ricoeur reminds us, the diachronic remains a function, albeit secondary, in the systems of both Saussure and Trubetzkoy. As such, Lévi-Strauss' extension of the code beyond the bounds of an external analogy towards the relations of all cultural discourses, and one could say all phenomenal understanding, entails the radical ontological assertion that structure precedes process, or to use the terms proper to Ricoeur, that the event (of meaning in

its widest application) is the consequence of the structure. Against such a hierarchy Ricoeur will assert the dialectic of structure and event informed by the code's stipulated limitations; it will then become apparent how the insights of structure function *practically* within Ricoeur's description of a mediated signification.

Culture functions not like a language, but through language. To this extent Lévi-Strauss is not wrong to say that language "may appear as laying a kind of foundation for the more complex structures which correspond to the different aspects of culture". No one in our post-Nietzschean landscape would reject such a claim in its general message, but only a belated structuralist would willingly accept the assumption that greater complexity necessarily corresponds to the piling-up of more and more complex structures. Even whilst Lévi-Strauss structuralises culture, by his own admission greater complexities within the cultural framework ensure a qualitative alteration to the mode of its production; products of each other, language and culture are also products of the human mind in a way that kinship structures simply are not. Between the code and clan-structures an analogy is claimed to exist independent of the thinking subject, as such the analogy is a static identity. Conceding, as indeed he must, to the role of the thinking mind, the structural analogy now forces its way from language and culture into the mind itself. Ricoeur now confronts a situation in which

> ...linguistic laws designate an unconscious level and, in this sense, a nonreflective, nonhistorical level of the mind. This unconscious is not the Freudian unconscious of instinctual, erotic drives and its power of symbolization; it is more a Kantian than a Freudian unconscious, a categorical and combinative unconscious. It is a finite order or the finitude of order, but such that it is unaware of itself. I call it a Kantian unconscious, but only as regards its organization, since we are here concerned with a categorical system without reference to a thinking subject.
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> ...
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> This is why structuralism as philosophy will develop into a kind of intellectualism which is fundamentally antireflective, anti-idealist, and anti-phenomenological.[38]

[38] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, pp.32-33.

The idea that the pattern of the code designates the unconscious mind at a pre-subjective level exceeds the claims of any formal analogy; it supposes an identity in which the unconscious mind "can be said to be homologous to nature; perhaps it even is nature". This identity relationship, whose sanction exceeds the claims of the explanatory, is entirely non-historical. The path to this "bold generalisation" goes by way of *The Savage Mind*, a work that claims to name "an entire level of thought, considered globally".[39] Structurally constituted, savage thought will come to name the foundation, or rather the structural sedimentation from whence all subsequent modes of thought are seen to emerge anthropologically. Lévi-Strauss' name for it is totemic thought. But totemic thought is not to be considered a pre-logical antecedent to modern thought. It is in fact homologous to logical thought "in the strong sense" that "the ramifications of its classifications, the refinement of its nomenclatures, are classifying thought itself."[40] It is therefore granted an undeniable evolutionary precedence in civilisation and the development of the human intellect. Most significantly, this is archaeology of *unconscious* developments, where a nascent structurality orders itself in response to sensory stimuli. The origin of meaningful thought is thus located in an unconscious consolidation of structural categories:

> Intelligibility is attributed to the code of transformations which assure correspondences and homology between arrangements belonging to different levels of social reality...*it is the choice of syntax over semantics.*[41]

By deploying the essentially linguistic terms of syntax (the formal arrangement of components within a given order) and semantics (the content of these components), Ricoeur is able to challenge the elevation of totemic thought whilst remaining true to the essential premise that thought and culture are linguistically mediated. As far as Ricoeur is concerned, totemic culture represents an "an extreme example much more than a canonical form". At the other end of this spectrum lies the converse model of *Kergymatic* thought, where culture is primarily governed by content (or semantics). Ricoeur's model is the early Hebraic world, a tradition founded through interpretation and re-articulation of an original mythic base. It is a culture where "semantic richness

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[39] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.38
[40] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.38
[41] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.39. Emphasis added.

allows an indefinite number of historical recoveries" and in which the process of recovery itself constitutes a defining part of one's cultural membership. In their greater prevalence to totemic cultures, kerygmatic societies severely limit Lévi-Strauss' claims to have located a universal model.

> Whilst the structuralist explanation seems to encompass almost everything when synchrony takes the lead over diachrony, it provides us [with] only a kind of skeleton, whose abstract character is apparent, when we are faced with an overdetermined content, a content which does not cease to set us thinking and which is made explicit only through the series of recoveries by which it is interpreted and renewed.[42]

Perhaps more importantly for Ricoeur, the contrary cultures of totem and kerygma help to demonstrate structuralism's epistemological limits within the human sciences and how, as reading practices, structural semiotics and the hermeneutical theory of interpretation comprise complimentary opposites on the social-scientific scale from codification to amplification.

Roman Jakobson

If Lévi-Strauss over-formalised the structural affinities of code and culture, if, in doing so, code and culture were in one way or another hypostasized or conflated, this was not Jakobson's basic intention in formulating the phonemic system.

To follow the brilliant and itinerant career-path of Jakobson is to re-illuminate structuralism's socio-political and intellectual histories upon a single map. Forced into exile not one but five times, the frontiers of Jakobson's journey were never chosen for their political climate alone. Following Soviet rule in Russia, Jakobson was forced to abandon the Linguistic Circle of Moscow and de-camp to Czechoslovakia, where, along with Czech and fellow Russian linguists Jakobson contributed to the formation of the Prague Linguistic Circle. This skill for sourcing and fomenting intellectual alliances provides something of a motif for Jakobson's career. With close relations to both the Gestalt Vienna Circle and the Copenhagen Circle of linguists, it was no

[42] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.48.

accident that Jakobson's eventual move to America—following time in Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm and Uppsala—coincided with the receptive environment of New York's own linguistic circle.

In life and work Jakobson was the walking embodiment of structuralist conventions. In the precocity of his early Moscow days, he formulated the linguist's task in terms of little less than a general theory. His ambition, for a set of universal linguistic laws, and for a linguistics firmly anchored within the hard sciences, was to build the elusive bridge between scientific method and the creative artistic arena in which he himself was so articulately immersed.[43] By Jakobson's own account the birth of phonology, of the science of sound in its formal linguistic distribution, was an accident of history and poetry, borne of his own rather unserious translations of Russian poetry into Czech. But throughout his career, with every new development, Jakobson's work confirmed two fundamental precepts, that language is regulated by universal laws and that the production of all meaning is founded by oppositional traits. In accordance with the Saussurean model, phonemes, like signs, only distinguish themselves differentially, oppositionally, by virtue of their relationships with other phonemes. In phonetics the binary rule is a function of sonorous matter at the sub-linguistic level of the phoneme.

But whilst Saussure provided the basic mechanism of the phonematic code and continued to dictate the over-ruling research paradigm—the location and study of language in its compositional units—,Jakobson and his fellow Prague linguists were in fact developing a critical distance from Saussurean linguistics. In its wide-ranging application, and in hands others than Jakobson's, phonology almost certainly helped promote a kind of over-stretched and radicalised Saussureanism. As with structural anthropology however, this was not the product of its inception so much as its extension. The tendency for which Ricoeur condemns Lévi-Strauss for example, for the suppression verging on negation of diachronic traits, is not a Jakobsonian principle so much as a consequence of phonology's application. Whilst diachrony and synchrony were not continuous for the Prague School, they were not deemed irreconcilable. On the contrary, against the static conception of synchronicity, Jakobson frequently asserted a condition of "dynamic synchrony", something to

[43] Jakobson was reading the French Symbolist poets by the age of twelve. A little later he participated in the readings of futurist poets such as Mayakovski. This led to an unlikely dialogue between Russian Formalism and the principles of Futurism.

which Ricoeur himself frequently alludes in his critical treatments of semiotics and the human sciences. Similarly, against the stark radicalism of his Copenhagen colleague, Jakobson admonished Hjelmslev for wishing to go too far in the direction of a mathematised binary logic, from which Hjelmslev wished to excise both the semic and phonemic elements altogether.

Always dichotomising in its fundamental arrangements, Jakobsonian linguistics nevertheless testified to an altogether more complex and interactive relation between terms. Whilst Jakobson's celebrated work on aphasic disturbance utilised the Saussurean opposition between syntagma (the grammatical chain of noun, verb and pronoun say) and association (the selection of one term from within a group of associated or paradigmatic terms within the code), it also testified to the fundamental interaction upon which successful language usage depends; aphasic selection deficiency and association deficiency being predicated upon the incapacity of one or other of these famous poles.[44] From our own perspective, the work on aphasic disturbance and the subsequent distinction of the metaphoric and metonymic poles had two enormously influential consequences for the relationship between literary studies and the social sciences. The first of these was to imbue poetic diction and literary creativity with an explanatory model; now the mystique of the poet, the beauty, prescience or profundity to emerge from his form, could be explained in terms of objective operations. The poetic was an artful derangement of standard usage; a technical unbalancing of the selective pole and the substitution pole. In literary terms this signified the elevation of technique and talent, albeit perhaps obliquely practised, over and above inspiration and the velleities of the muse. But perhaps more important was the effect which would one day permeate this relation in the other direction, in terms not of what the social sciences could say of literature, but of what literature could, and indeed would go on to say about them.

Jakobson's own career as a linguist was in fact inseparable from his life-long attachment to poetry. Linguistics' renewal at the hands of structural phonology was itself the chance genesis of Jakobson's poetic translations.[45] In all his early poetic

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[44] See Jakobson's celebrated paper, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbance", *Fundamentals of Language*, Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, Mouton de Gruyter, The Hague, 2002, pp.69-90.

[45] Noticing that Russian and Czech are lexically very similar but tonally disparate, Jakobson realized that these different phonological choices were "nonetheless similar enough that a listener could grasp the fact that only very slight changes would suffice for the pertinent difference to change." Quoted by Dosse, *History of Structuralism*, Vol.1, p.55.

engagements it was poetry's linguistic aspect, and the need to treat the literary text internally, as a sealed-off coherent unity, which he emphasised. And it was this formal emphasis which led to the defining opposition of standard language and poetry. Whilst the opposition was not itself new, the scientific and law-bound justification for it was. Whilst the work on aphasia and the distinction of the metaphoric and metonymic poles led to the generalisation of heretofore uniquely literary operations, consolidating linguistic conceptions of consciousness, Jakobson's definition of the poetic function nevertheless consolidated the literary work's irreducible standing within the aesthetic tradition. For Jakobson, poetry was intrinsically different from other discourses. Jakobson's classical formula opposes the poetic and the referential in full contrariety; reference pertains to the language of description, to instances of scientific precision and everyday communication, where language is absorbed by the message it carries. With poetic language it is the medium itself which is elevated; here Jakobson asserts a "stress on the palpable side of the signs" which "underscores the message for its own sake and deepens the fundamental dichotomy between signs and objects."[46] Such an elevation works to subvert or short-circuit the referential function; now, instead of reaching outwards to the reality it purportedly names, it deflects inwards.

However, and this is critical to the development of postructuralism, poetry's distinction was *not* predicated upon a pure and simple negation of the referential function. As Ricoeur points out, the poetic function testifies to a deviant form of reference, not an absence of reference. Where standard descriptive discourse refers outwards to a non-linguistic reality, poetic discourse bypasses this detour, instead referring directly to its own sensible manifestation, as textual or audible signs. Language either "has a communicative function, which is to say that it is directed toward a signified, or a poetic function, which is to say that it is directed toward the sign itself."[47] But even whilst Jakobson asserts the *autotelic* function of poetry, he never postulates the kind of intellectual idealism for which formalist poetics are sometimes confused. To be sure, the very premise of phonology, as a science of *auditory* signification, contradicts the possibility from the start. The binarity of the phonological system corresponds to the dualism of the sign, with its sensible and

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[46] Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2, The Hague, 1962, p.356, quoted by Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No.1, Autumn 1978, pp. 143-159, p.152.

[47] Dosse, *ibid.*, p.56, FN. 14.

intelligible aspects and its dual reference to the signifier and the signified. The difference with poetry of course is that the signifier in many ways is the signified.

For Jakobson the strict distinction between internal and manifest features of language did not amount to an all-out exclusion of the latter's function. On the contrary, this distinction was predicated upon the basis that one could measure their interaction. Poetry's intrinsic distinction rests upon the co-existence of two empirically verifiable structural patterns, one being the formal arrangement of the line, the other, the grammatical construction of the sentence. "Measure of sequences is a device that, outside the poetic function, finds no application in language."[48] But this claim for the referential and formal discontinuity of the poetic function, and for the precise modalities of interaction between language's internal and manifest features was soon to be challenged by the new generation of poststructuralists.

In the golden age of literary formalism, the Anglo-American and structuralist traditions had co-existed in unmediated parallel. When Jakobson came to formulate the principles of structuralist poetics at a conference in Indiana in 1958, the promise of a powerful new synthesis must have looked tantalisingly near. In reality however the chance had been missed; the convergence of Continental linguistics and Anglo-American poetics would come to fruition at the expense rather than the profit of Jakobsonian principles. As with all dissent-based alliances, it was to forge a complex, volatile, and in this instance wholly iconoclastic compound.

For a generation of post-New Critical thinkers, the argument for poetry's intrinsic linguistic features, whilst not necessarily false, belied the role played by normative contextual features. The poem's unique dual structural distribution between line and sentence for example, was according to Samuel Levin, not in fact an intrinsic cognitive feature of the poem but rather a convention, a feature of the poem's context rather than a textual matter. With the growth of reader-response criticism as well, the return to context was granted an unheralded technical sophistication thanks to the likes of Stanley Fish and Michael Riffaterre. But it was poststructuralism in its strongly continental guise that would come to dominate the field of literary studies in both locations. The cloistered world of the semiological system, with its unique ordination of the poetic, would be broached as new figures sought to re-introduce the silenced questions of genesis, of historicity, of the subject even. Structuralism in this

[48] Jakobson, *Language in Literature*, ed. K. Pomorska and S. Rudy, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1987, p.72.

light takes on the form of a necessary heuristic device, an epistemological necessity which, through the potent refusal of such themes enabled their return within the new paradigm. Structuralism cleared the way to reconsider these issues free from the taint of much that was wrong in them; freeing the sign from its naïve correspondence, to either the mental image or empirical reality, distinguishing the internal difference between the signifier and the signified, structuralism managed to disambiguate the interplay of intention and signification. But having done so, the time to re-consider their interplay arose once more; just as the French institution had eventually submitted to the sign, so the protective seals of both enclosures were rent by the pressures and demands of a thoroughly contingent history. Now the resources that had once fuelled the consolidation of the poetic function would themselves become the target of an increasingly open-ended *literariness*. On the one hand this manoeuvre evinced the claims of a "super-structuralism", a radicalisation through which the sign accedes to its logical or mechanical function within the theory of signification to attain a quasi-transcendental status within the philosophical order. But on the other hand, this same promotion of the sign beyond its semiological confines works to disrupt the very logico-technical premise upon which the semiological distinction, and indeed the categorical distinction of other discourses, operates.

In this period,

> The energies and motivating forces of critical writing shifted from a centripetal emphasis upon the construction of the literary text to the centrifugal forces that sweep such artefacts into the diffuse and untidy world of deconstruction, gender studies, psychoanalysis and historicism.[49]

What these new critiques attested to was a return to the hermeneutical issue of interpretation, to a perspective from which the question of *value* could no longer be exiled to the projections of an outlying context. With its re-introduction, the signified's standard relation to the sign is transformed. In its pre-eminence, it is the sign alone which provides the condition for the perception of its distinction from the signified. In this way the sign is transformed from a representation of the signified, to a qualifying condition for the signified.[50] Now the excavation of hidden premises or

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[49] Richard Bradford, *Roman Jakobson; Life, Language, Art*, Routledge, London, p.76.
[50] The signified here referring to the *relation* between the sign and its referent rather than the referent alone.

depth meanings must extend beyond the motivating forces of the subject and its history to the pre-condition of a sign now thoroughly imbricated within the weave of consciousness. As a system of signs, the text, or rather the universal nexus of Text, becomes the *substance* of motivating forces. With this radicalised and tangential move it is not only the traditional binary of structure and event which collapses, but also the continuity of *genesis* and production. The forking paths of the poststructural paradigm, of *textualism* at one end, and poststructural hermeneutics at the other, attest to their varying degrees of separation.

1.4

TEXTUALISM

Being at once radicalised and subverted, the sign's transition from structuralism to poststructuralism was an ambiguous affair. From within this ambiguity arose two distinct but disproportionately propagated modes of post-structuralism; deconstruction and poststructural hermeneutics.

For the school of super-structuralists or proto-deconstructionists, the sign's radicalisation invited the opportunity to reconsider diachronic categories without succumbing to the dangers of a sovereign subject. And so the overt polemic of Roland Barthes' earlier work, with its iconoclastic death-knell for the author, for creative intentionality and the mimetic function, passes into its own sly reconstitution of the author. The author's former hypostasis, with an absolute authority, with presence, origin, omniscience, and finally with Nietzschean deicide, gives way to the author's textual re-birth. Without its master-puppeteer, the unifying strictures of the work, the univocal message of its maker, dissolve. Polysemia and indeterminacy are unleashed. Where the death of the author releases the text from the "work" and its unitary "theological" message, heralding "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash", the author's return—by the back door so to speak—works to consolidate a textually generated *mythology* of presence and unity.[51] Subverting the presumed hierarchy, the author now returns as the second-

[51] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", *Image Music Text*, trans. and ed. Stephen Heath, Fontana, London, 1971, p.146.

order effect or illusion of the text. In the most literal of senses the author is now the God of His work, but the work as such has been eradicated. If we may speak of a work, then it is the work of a thoroughly non-dyadic inter-textuality. And because the text constitutes an indeterminate and wholly open "space", a force-field of overlapping significations, the author's fabulous reversion extends well beyond the reading-space of the text. Not only does the author return "as a 'guest'", now "his life is no longer the origin of his fictions but a fiction contributing to his work; there is a reversion of the work on to the life.[52] As Sean Burke has pointed out in his critique of the matter, whilst the author's diversion disrupts the mimetic pattern from author to work, from signifier to signified, the primary interconnectedness of life and work remains undisturbed.[53] If the death of the author represents a kind of apex for anti-humanism, the author's return as textual production heralds the dawn of a new textual dynamism. The critic, reduced by Barthes' author-God to the impotent status of redactor, now acquires something approaching his former productivity. In fact in its antecedence, the influencing factor behind this change confirmed the hypostasis of his initial characterisation.

Influenced by his student Julia Kristeva, Barthes began to apply the categories of Bakhtinian dialogism to the field of the text. In Bakhtin, Kristeva had found a mode of reading consciously averse to the unities redressed in Barthes' critique of the theocentric author. Bakhtin had studied the large-scale complex narratives of authors such as Rabelais and Dostoyevsky, and theorised the existence of an essential polyphony or dialogism at the heart of the text. Beneath and beyond the dialogues of characters, the work engaged a dialogue with its textual predecessors. But this was more than the canonical influence expounded by the New Criticism; it was a specifically situated dialogue, and one which threatened to de-stabilise the very unity upon which the work itself was premised. Against the pervasive instability of the Bakhtinian model, the dialogism of the New Critics looks less like a dialogue and more like a one-way exchange between the author and the monolithic edifice of a more or less linear tradition. Here the energy of exchange remains an extrinsic texture. Where the New Critics had expounded intrinsic criticism and a distinctly extrinsic mode of authorial influence, dialogism asserted a thoroughly constitutive and intrinsic

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[52] Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", *ibid.*, p.161.
[53] Sean Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author; Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998, pp.31-33.

mode of interference within the text's very fabric. The dialogic text is a thoroughly situated and historical phenomenon. For Kristeva, Bakhtinian polyphony promised a means of return to the question of the exculpated subject. Recognising the climate as an intemperate one however, she held back the theme of subjectivity, or rather inter-subjectivity, in favour of the more conducive proposition of intertextuality. In this way Kristeva remained true to the intrinsic character of structure whilst departing from the projected isotopy of code and work. Whilst the notion of an inter-text corroborates the fundamental principle of difference, of the text as relation rather than unity or identity, it does not replicate the rectilinear synchronicity upon which every alteration to the semiotic code is premised. On the contrary, the multiformity of the inter-textual body represents a thoroughly panchronic and multi-directional form of interference. Every bit as much as the all-powerful author, intertextualism disarms the uniformity of the code in its isotopic projection.

The philosophical implications of intertextuality would soon be felt within Derrida's unprecedented mode of performative writing. More than mere style or rhetoric, Derrida's discourse demonstrated the fundamental heterogeneity of signification and intertextuality with painstaking rigor. Like the poet, Derrida worked by means of the most self-conscious rhetoric, to subvert the presuppositions of classical philosophy by activating and exposing the multiple layers of polysemia within philosophy's most cherished concepts. The critical difference from the poet being that this highly idiosyncratic mode of writing was also a form a scrupulous self-evasion. One may recognise Derrida's signature easily enough, in the endless games of etymology, neologism, archaism, parataxis and so forth, but finding Derrida's *voice* is a different matter altogether, and consciously so of course. For what Derrida is demonstrating is the very dynamism and slippage between the sign's technical and metaphysical unity within the code, within intention, and the actuality of the sign's *dissemination* within the text or inter-text. Once more, the unitary signification of the author, of the self-certifying subject, is put in abeyance. By extension the presumed lucidity of the critic and the philosopher, and the presumed clarity of their disciplinary parameters are demonstrably revoked. Writing from "within" the text, following the commands of the text, the critical distance upon which all standard commentary, all meta-discourse depends, whether literary-critical or philosophical, disappears. The effects of Derrida's discourse upon departments of literature, particularly in terms of

their disciplinary self-perceptions and their relations to the traditionally conceived parent discipline of philosophy, would be profound.

Before affecting the full force of this technique, Derrida's philosophy had conformed rather more to the standard expectations of philosophical analysis. Nevertheless the theme of *writing*, of *écriture*, in which the sign—be it Derrida's signature or any other name—is liberated from the signifier and made to "play", is thematised from the start. From as far back as the early 1960s Derrida had devised a mode of critique which worked to disrupt the structuralist epistemology from the inside out. Utilising the notion of semiological difference, of transitive as opposed to constitutive values, Derrida projected a philosophical, some would even say transcendental significance to the mechanism of the linguistic system. On the surface such a radicalisation appeared to entrench the universalist aspirations of his structuralist peers. But radicalisation was not the same as entrenchment; indeed it was a veritable inversion of structuralism's founding suppositions. In the seminal debut text *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida seeks, against the professed departure of semiotics, to expose structuralism's latent replication of metaphysical prejudices. Within Saussurean linguistics, within Jakobsonian phonology, the structural system is designed in such a way as to confirm the traditional metaphysical relation of meaning, of significance and being, with the self-constituting conditions of an absolute presence, which he identifies with speech. Derrida was certainly not the first to expose this metaphysics of presence within the Western tradition, nor was he the first to proffer literature as a kind of remedy to this malaise. Sure enough this accolade sits more comfortably with Nietzsche and Heidegger. But like Ricoeur, Derrida is one of the first to develop the Heideggerian *destruktion* of metaphysics along semiological lines, and to reject Saussureanism's latter-day prejudices without abandoning the sign altogether.

For Heidegger, the metaphysical privileging of presence and identity belies the more essential difference upon which any preference at all must be predicated. Heidegger's name for this differential relation is ontological difference. Accordingly for Heidegger ontological difference—between Being and beings—names the more original condition from whence the thought of presence and the conditions for the metaphysical episteme derive. The metaphysics of presence is the subsequent possibility of a more primordial difference. It is clear to see how Derrida's binarism of speech (the *phonē*) and writing (*grammē*) could fit within the *destruktive* paradigm, as

one more opposition within the metaphorical chain of presence and absence. But for Derrida, the repercussive preference for speech over writing, for the self-certifying presence of enunciation over inscription, is much more than a mere *effect* of the metaphysical episteme. Indeed Derrida's *Of Grammatology* makes the unheralded assertion that the metaphysical determination of being as presence was itself the effect of speech's privilege. "The formal essence of the signified is *presence,* and the privilege of its proximity to the logos as *phonē* is the privilege of *presence*."[54] Before metaphysics could activate the privileging metaphors of essential presence, of voice and breath and spirit, there must have been a prior suppression of writing from whence the sign's determination as presence, as speech, was fixed. The claim being made here is a professed gain upon the Heideggerian postulate of ontological difference as the necessary, originary condition for signification.[55] By Derrida'a account the forgetfulness of Being, as the primary un-thought of metaphysics, must itself be conditioned by what Derrida terms logocentrism; the logos of an unmediated and manifest divinity, of logic, science and the entire epistemic order of Western conceptuality. Before onto-theology, before metaphysics, there is this virtual privilege of speech, the suppression of an as-of-yet unrealised writing.

The prioritisation of speech and writing over presence and absence garners little or no textual support from within the philosophical tradition it serves to qualify; something Derrida's critics certainly emphasised. From the Derridean perspective however, such objections only work to reinforce the claim for a suppressed writing. In a way, the validity of Derrida's argument lay in the radicality of its demand; to understand the apparently unwarranted and illogical claim for grammatology, for speech and writing, one must first renounce the security of one's basic conceptual convictions. And if the postulate of ontological difference is easier to grasp, this is because the difference of Being and beings already predicates the priority of the *logos* in the unity of Being. The difference of Being and beings assumes a stable relation between identity and difference, univocity and multivocity. Heidegger exposes a transcendental difference behind the assumed originality of pure Being, but he doesn't renounce the thought of pure Being. The proposition of *différance* or the *arché-trace* of writing works to shut this thought down.

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[54] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1976, p.18.

[55] I elaborate further on this point in Chapter 4, following a fuller account of the Heideggerian *destruktion.*

Derrida's refusal of the concept had stark consequences for the presumed authority of philosophical discourse, provoking antinomy amongst philosophy's vanguard establishment. In departments of literature, Derrida's refusal of the concept and the unprecedented lyricism of his style appeared to represent an out-and-out riposte to the philosophical hegemony. Coupled with the distinctly literary themes of Barthes and Kristeva, the assertion of the text, of textualism, became an overwhelmingly literary concern, celebrated by writers and theorists alike. The claim for an autonomous literary-theory, detached from the essentially metaphysical conceits of traditional criticism was born. In literature as in the other human sciences, theory emerged to castigate the presumed autonomy of the subject. For a theory of signification rooted in the intentionality of the speaking subject, it would prove hostile ground indeed.

1.5

"RETURNING THE SIGN TO THE UNIVERSE"; BENVENISTE AND THE RICOEURIAN DEPARTURE.[56]

> Whatever the moment or circumstance of its appearance in some stage of animal life, language could only have come into being instantaneously. Things could not have come to be meaningful little by little...; this radical change has no counterpart within the domain of knowledge, which is developed slowly and progressively.[57]

For all its intrinsic formal properties, the transfer of the semiological model did not affect a universal and synchronic alteration to the disciplines it fed. The contingencies of the literary-critical climate ensured a more belated reception there than in the social sciences for instance. Indeed the realisation of literary theory, as a discipline within the social sciences, was somewhat akin to the trickle-down effect of a river, dried at source but only recently received at its outer reaches. As the sign was

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[56] "Returning the sign to the universe" is a phrase Ricoeur borrows from the French linguist Gustave Guillame. See "Structure, Word, Event", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.87.

[57] Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss", quoted by Ricoeur, "The Question of the Subject and the Challenge of Semiology", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 252.

reabsorbed *within* philosophy, so linguistics ventured its own modified pertinences, forging new links with the previously excluded tradition of language philosophy in America and Britain. Pre-eminent amongst this new class of post-structural linguists was the former Saussurean and comparatist Émile Benveniste. His influence upon this new era and upon Ricoeur especially has been profound.

Like Ricoeur, Benveniste's precocious scepticism towards semiology had placed him in a position of marginal influence during structuralism's heyday. Whilst structural linguists studiously ignored the theories of their Anglo-American counterparts, whilst A.J Greimas asserted the need for an absolute divorce between the speaking subject and its language, Benveniste was busy propounding a theory based upon speech utterance closely akin to the analytic theory of speech-acts devised by the Anglo-American philosophers John Austin and John Searle. For a long time ignored by his fellow linguists, Benveniste's impact upon linguistics was made via the detours of philosophy and psychoanalysis. Ricoeur himself played a significant role in popularising Benveniste's work in the philosophical arena. By the same token, Ricoeur's debt to Benveniste is writ large almost every time he seeks to limit semiology's philosophical remit.

Benveniste's departure from Saussurean linguistics did not lead him to an all-out renunciation of formal categories but to the proposition of an extended field to which semiology belongs as just one half of the picture. Whilst semiology is granted a much more limited pertinence within the totality of discourse, it is nonetheless a limitation borne of formal linguistic properties. As Saussure decreed, the science of semiology deals with the internal properties of *la langue*; all external properties are bracketed within the domain of *parole*. It is language and speech in their presumed totality and their classical segregation to which Benveniste's theory of discourse applies. For Benveniste, this totality commands the existence of two distinct fields of analysis; structural semiotics, which relates to the code, and structural semantics, which deals with speech or utterance. But rather than polarise semiotics and semantics as competing models, Benveniste asserts their parallel competencies. The premises upon which the semiotic code operates—as an object for empirical science, as a synchronic and closed system comprised of mutual relations and as a purely internal or immanent system of difference—are not to be rejected. The important task is to recognise the self-sustaining limits within which semiology operates as a science. "The triumph of the linguistic view" Ricoeur writes, "is at the same time a triumph of

the scientific enterprise." But every gain for the science of states is also a loss for the speaking subject;

> The act of speaking is excluded not only as exterior execution, as individual performance, but as free combination, as producing new utterances. Now this is the essential aspect of language—properly speaking, its goal.
>
> At the same time, history is excluded, and not simply the change from one state of system to another but the production of culture and of man in the production of language...the generation, in its profound dynamism, of the work of speech in each and every case.[58]

In its success, semiology leads to antinomial ways of thinking, about the subject, its acts and intentions, and about language's genetic aspect as an historical phenomenon. According to Ricoeur there is nothing wrong with this so long as we "maintain the critical awareness that this object is entirely defined by the procedures, methods, presuppositions, and finally the structure of the theory which governs its constitution."

> If we lose sight of this subordination of object to method and to theory, we take for an absolute what is only a phenomenon. Now the experience which the speaker and listener have of language comes along to limit the claim to absolutize this object[59]

The problem with semiology arises when these traits are absolutized, and when the claims of the speaking subject are made to confront these constraints from a similarly antithetical perspective. Accordingly Ricoeur condemns Merleau-Ponty's return to the speaking subject for being "conceived in such a way that is rushes past the objective science of signs and moves too quickly to speech."[60] The message from Ricoeur is that one ignores the lessons of structural linguistics at one's peril; to do so is to risk the blind-alley of psychologism from whence structural linguistics has uncontroversially "rescued" us.[61] What Benveniste's theory of discourse effectively grants Ricoeur is a means to reconsidering the character of speech without committing

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[58] Ricoeur, "Structure, Word, Event", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.81.
[59] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.82.
[60] Ricoeur, "The Question of the Subject: The Challenge of Semiology", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.242.
[61] Ricoeur, "Structure, Word, Event", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.83.

this overhasty return to intentionality.[62] As a phenomenologist, Ricoeur would be at liberty to *describe* this link between sign and subject in terms of the experience of speech, but what he could not do, and what he must do as a hermeneutic philosopher—as a philosopher who believes all experience, all understanding to be linguistically mediated, but nevertheless intentionally governed—is *explain* the interaction between formal linguistic attributes and the constitution of understanding as meaningful speech. This process is absolutely pivotal to hermeneutics' poststructural return to the thinking subject and the historicity of interpretation.

In the mid sixties Benveniste had written a paper regarding the relationship between subjectivity and temporality focussed upon language's phenomenological aspect. "Of the linguistic forms that reveal subjective experience," he writes, "none is as rich as those that express time." With the expression of time there is what he calls "an organic tie to the exercise of speech."[63] With every enunciation of the present for example, the present is circumscribed by the precise instance of its naming. Likewise expressions of the future or the past are tied to the present by means of their relativity; without the present instance in which it is named, there is no meaningful relation through which to gauge the pastness of the past, the futurity of the future. Moreover an expression of temporality will by its very nature situate a speaker for whom time exists. Time necessarily refers to the subjectivity of the speaker. Whilst one may say the same about spatial indicators, about propositions or indeed pronouns, temporal indicators inhere uniquely within their mode of expression, namely the utterance. Although spatial indicators may designate a position relative to the speaker's location, the actual utterance is of a temporal constitution; where speech proceeds without an alteration to the present location, *the* present is a condition of the present utterance, lost with every advancing clause. But rather than polarise language's temporal and formal properties, Benveniste's theory of utterance and the instance of discourse points towards their intrinsic coherence.

Whilst Benveniste defines semiotics and semantics against one another, their discontinuity is understood upon the basis of their parallel compositions within a

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[62] Of course in the Anglo-American tradition, where the shadow of Descartes never loomed so large, the false association of speech and intention was eradicated much sooner; from this vantage French structuralism was every bit the rebellious progeny of the French Enlightenment. But even in the English speaking world, the zealously scientific mood of the logical positivists seems to have provided the original means to more moderate analysis. Indeed, Austin's subsequent theory of speech acts was the contemporary of Benveniste's theory of the instance of discourse.

[63] Emile Benveniste, quoted by Dosse, *History of Structuralism*, Vol. 1, p.46.

fundamentally unified paradigm. In semiotics, the sign constitutes the smallest unit of the code. In semantics, the sentence or utterance fulfils this role. Because the utterance comprises an inexponable unit within its own right, semantics is irreducible to semiotics. Accordingly their discontinuity is premised upon a change in *level* within the one system. Where structural linguistics projects an essential homology between the distribution of signs and the larger unit of the text, Benveniste's theory of discourse asserts an alteration of quality as well as scale. "By changing the unit" Ricoeur writes, "one also changes the function, or rather, one passes from structure to function".[64] The semantic unit, the utterance, is thus rendered irreducible to the internal relations of the semiotic code. But the scientific triumph of structural linguistics, which as we know is also the cause of its hermeneutical weakness, does not simply delineate the point of its own surpassing within some extrinsic taxonomy of methods. Semiotics and semantics do not exist side by side as explanatory alternatives to be picked up or disregarded within the theory of signification. Rather, the discontinuity of the semiological and the semantic is deemed to reflect an essential dualism at the heart of language's very functioning.

In numerous works from this period one finds Ricoeur juxtaposing the properties of semiotic and semantic signification in order to demonstrate the acute oppositional symmetry between the traits of code and discourse.[65] What is more, these traits are shown to posess a mutual dependency which reflects the experience of speaking subjects. In the first instance the code, as a formal construct, comprises only a virtual mode of existence. As a mere potentiality of meaning, this virtuality is both atemporal and permanent. Such potential is only actualised through the instance of discourse, through the "transitory, vanishing act" of speech.[66] Furthermore in the semiotic system, where signification is immanent and alteration to the code synchronic, meaningfulness depends upon restrictive combinations. But in the event of discourse, where the construction of utterances depends upon the selection of components, the law of constraint is counteracted. It follows that the creation of new utterances depends upon new combinations. Such combinations, when compared to the theoretically finite system of the code, are as good as infinite. Finally it is only

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[64] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.84.
[65] In the *Conflict* essay "Structure, Word, Event," in the American publication *Interpretation Theory; Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, and when treating of metaphor as a sentential structure in *The Rule of Metaphor*.
[66] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.84.

within the instance of discourse that language has a reference, and what is more, a reference to the speaking subject. The contrary paths of so-called Continental and analytical philosophy can and indeed very often are distinguished upon the basis of this one trait; where Saussure excised the question of reference altogether, Frege distinguished the twin orientations of sense and reference. Where sense deals with meaning in its ideality, as a pure object of thought, reference marks the point at which an imminent potentiality of meaning—like the code's in this respect—is transcended in the instance of speech; when language actually speaks and in doing so grasps the real. This moment of transcendence is of course dependent upon the subject, who in speaking performs the actualization through which the code is broached. As Ricoeur reminds us, it is not languages which speak but people.[67] "For us who speak" Ricoeur writes,

> Language is that through which, by means of which, we express ourselves and express things. Speaking is the act by which the speaker overcomes the closure of the universe of signs, in the intention of saying something about something to someone; speaking is the act by which language moves beyond itself as sign toward its reference and toward what it encounters. Language seeks to disappear; it seeks to die as an object.[68]

Only in speech can the formally expunged themes of speech, reference and the speaking "I" be encountered. Such are the sacrifices made by a science of signs. But, as a "vanishing act", as an event, speech alone cannot satisfy language's basic philosophical exigency to persist, to endure, and to "fix" meaning within the world. We are not here talking about strict definitions or concepts, only the simple notion of consensus, of the shared meanings and ideas which together comprise cultures, traditions, epistemes and ethics. Strictly speaking, there could be no significance without consensus, and this is something to which the code, as a system of mutual dependencies, testifies. In the code there are no essential identities only formal relations, but in order for these relations to signify, there must be mutual consensus regarding the relationships between signs. Because consensus is predicated upon the capacity for meanings to be repeatable, the moment of transcendence in which

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[67] See "Language as Discourse", *Interpretation Theory; Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Texas Christian University Press, Fort Worth, 1976, p.13.
[68] Ricoeur, "Structure, Word, Event", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.82.

language dies as an object, when speech takes hold of its singular meaning within the given context, must itself be conditioned by some principle of regularity or identity. It is this capacity for language to mean, again and again, and yet to still create singular instances of discourse, which informs Ricoeur's attempt to move beyond the antinomy of structure and event and to posit the word as a third term within this dialectic.

The Dialectic of Structure and Event

In the first stage of this dialectic, Saussure and Benveniste furnish the antinomy between code and utterance, between a systematic, closed, anonymous realm of potential meaning, and the historical event of allocution and reference. To speak of speech is to speak of usage, and it is quite clear to see what Benveniste and Ricoeur mean when writing of the instance of discourse as a moment of transcendence, as an event in which language is made to come alive. In speech we take possession of language, of *our* words, and responsibility for their effects. Yet this description remains just that, an extrinsic description. It does not show the mechanisms through which the transition from language to unique speech is achieved. For all our sense of an intimate exchange, speech and language remain as distinct from one another as the poet and the pre-formulated expressions of a robot. And were the orders of language and speech to remain opposed in this way, hermeneutics could make very little advance upon structuralism or indeed its challenge to traditional phenomenology. Semiology poses a serious challenge to phenomenology, and a wholly valid one as far as Ricoeur is concerned. It ensures phenomenology can no longer sideline language as a subsequent formulary of meaning; that consciousness and language be treated in terms of an inexponable unity. But likewise, phenomenology teaches semiology that utterance is far more than an appropriation, and that linguistic mediation, far from condemning the claims for an autonomous thinking subject, constitutes a movement of self-affection, in which the self becomes a self through its own self-positing.[69] The task of poststructural hermeneutics for Ricoeur therefore, is

[69] See "The Question of the Subject: The Challenge of Semiology", *The Conflict of Interpretations* pp.250-254.

> To think correctly the antinomy between language and speech...to produce the act of speech in the very midst of language, in the fashion of a setting-forth of meaning, of a dialectical production, which makes the system occur as an act and the structure as an event.[70]

In order to broach the divorce between language and speech, intentionality and systematicity, it is necessary to consider the means through which language facilitates both regularity and innovation within the singular instance.[71] Now the issue moves from structure and production to the theme of construction, to the syntactical and grammatical arrangements which underpin our every utterance. To this end Chomsky's theory of "generative grammar" proves exemplary. For Chomsky it is the "'creative' aspect" of language, our ability to generate and to interpret a virtually infinite variety of sentence structures within a given language without the slightest hesitation, which constitutes the focal issue within language analysis. Ricoeur's name for this advance upon the taxonomies of the structuralist enterprise is "regulated dynamism"; a mode of production capable of infinite variety and yet regulated by the order of the underlying system.[72] As Chomsky's theory demonstrates, it is in usage that the borders between language and speech, systematic regularity and creative innovation are breached. It is here that the sign ceases to be a sign—a pure difference within a system—and becomes singularly meaningful within the context of the utterance. Having stipulated the irreducible nature of sign and utterance, Ricoeur now introduces the notion of the word as an intermediary term.

Classically of course, words denote units of meaning within the sentence, lexical entities such as one finds in the dictionary. It would appear that Ricoeur is therefore making something of an about-turn here. After all, if the utterance comprises the irreducible unit of discourse, how can one then speak of words within the sentence? His justification depends very much upon the kind of division which Austin makes between the locutionary and the illocutionary within speech acts, or which Frege names when he delineates sense from reference, and the very precise definition the word thereby acquires for Ricoeur. Whilst the utterance is an indissoluble unit it has two functions, the one is to *say* something about something, the other is to *name* something. In the code there are no names, only differential values. To this extent

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[70] Ricoeur, "Structure, Word, Event", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.83.
[71] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.86.
[72] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.87.

signs comprise potential words. It is in speech alone that the word can be actualised as a name. Hence Ricoeur's singular definition of the word as "a trader between system and the act, between the structure and the event."[73] As a trader, the word constitutes a principle of motility between the code's immanent potentiality and the actuality of speech. But to what purpose? Nothing so far recommends this relation as anything more than a rather abstract solution to the antinomy of structure and event. But beyond this academic relation, the word demonstrates a more tangible and satisfying relation to the sentence.

Just as the word depends upon the utterance, so the utterance proves its own dependency upon the word. The reason why this relation provides a more satisfying explanation is because it concerns a process for which there is a great deal of consensus within common experience, namely the process of lexicalisation and the growth of polysemia. Whilst the sentence constitutes an ephemeral act, the word, being a "displaceable entity", survives the passing of the sentence; "it survives the transitory instance of discourse and holds itself available for new uses".[74] As the sentence dies, the word draws back, returning to the system from whence the sentence raised it. However the word is not unaltered, for with every return the word takes with it the singular values of its last usage. Strictly speaking, polysemy is a synchronic attribute, describing the co-existence of multiple meanings within the one word at a given time. But what the word's determination within the sentence demonstrates is the historical movement through which these new connotations accrue within the instance of discourse. Just as the sentence depends upon a certain stability of meaning within the code, just as its capacity to deviate, to particularise within the given context is code dependent, so the code's synchronicity and its capacity to support a state of multiple meanings, shows itself dependent upon the word's deployment within the historicity of naming. Entering once more into the code, the code harbours these variations, holding the sign open for new deployments within discourse.

For Ricoeur, the theory of discourse is much more than a mere theory of speech or communication, it is the absolute anchor to his philosophical position; the means by which to justify—against the polemics of anti-humanism and literary textualism—the claim for intentional meaning and rational consensus amongst

[73] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.89.
[74] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.90.

language communities. Implicitly, such a claim is also a claim for philosophical knowledge and knowledge of the literary text. Like Derrida, Ricoeur renounces the claim for a universal semiotics and with it the naïve polarities borne of a history / structure opposition. For both thinkers, signification takes on the form of a dynamic structure; a kind of transcendental de-regulation of the code for Derrida, and a highly ordered mode of epistemological limitation for Ricoeur. Although the theory of discourse imposes a distinct limitation upon structuralism and the conquering ambitions of its founders, it does nonetheless accord the code a universal pertinence of a rather different kind. Where deconstruction evinces the return to diachrony by means of the transcendentalised and eternally mobilised sign, where Derrida inscribes the sign's trace at the very origin of consciousness, Ricoeur articulates a vision of dialectical progression to which the sign corresponds as a unique and limited stratum of intellection. In one sense, this semiological stratum testifies to the absolute triumph of scientific reason; because it manages to excise the former complications of history and interpretation, structural linguistics represents a pinnacle of sophistication within the explanatory sciences. The success of semiology entails the elimination of "any understanding of the acts, operations, and processes that constitute discourse." But in a philosophical sense, these same scientific strengths render the sign little more than a rudimentary tool. By design, it "leads to thinking in an antinomic way about the relation between language and speech."[75] The sign comprises a minimal order from which to construct a theory of language in its living breathing totality. For this reason, Ricoeur chooses to contain rather than subvert the logic of the semiological system.

Within the radicalised context of French theory, Ricoeur's dialectical treatment of the sign is a resonant symbol of his mediate position between the extremes of subject and text; a rejection of the anti-*cogito*, the sign's dialectical transcendence within the theory of discourse is an equal correction to the phenomenological assumption of the *epoché*, with its postulate of a pure unadulterated intentionality, purged of language and all its historico-cultural inflections. It is through language alone that experience takes a hold of itself. And it is in the act of speech, in discourse, where language moves beyond itself as sign toward its reference and toward what it encounters, that this hold takes place.

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[75] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, pp.77 and 78.

CHAPTER TWO

HERMENEUTICS AND THE ROMANTIC PREJUDICE

As a discipline which has frequently been misunderstood, both in France and the English speaking world, at times as a sort of uncommitted irenicism, as a kind of relativism or quite differently, as a retrograde outgrowth of romanticism, the question of translation, of cultural inflection and the refractory movements through which French theory appropriated and countenanced the German philosophical tradition, are of particular importance to an understanding of contemporary hermeneutics and the peripheral status it has now exceeded.

Hostile assessments of hermeneutics invariably involve an objection to romanticism in some form. Quite what form this objection takes shapes the judgement by which hermeneutics is condemned, as retrograde, or overly psychologistic, subjectivist, as relativistic or merely ineffectual. Of course there is no one definitive text or figure of romanticism. The unified efforts of an egalitarian, cosmopolitan and international class of artist-philosophers, committed to political as well as imaginative freedom is but the simplified, *post factum* generalisation of the epoch-making historian. As a posthumous event, romanticism was not a singular movement at all; there was no common manifesto uniting Schiller and Wordsworth, they did not participate, Pound and Joyce-like, in a self-consciously international community, intellectually and ideologically homogeneous. Indeed, high modernism's return to the Classical world is at one and the same time a reaction against and a continuation of romantic concerns. The postmodernist paradigm of literary textualism and cultural relativism can be seen to perpetuate this double relation, rejecting the foundational conditions of the romantic subjectivity (as the self-creating imagination, as an agent of self-determination and historical freedom) whilst at the same time running away with its affects. In the absence of the self-certifying subject, the postulate of an almost limitless freedom becomes its own ironic subversion, a kind of euphoric paralysis. This paradoxical relation and the opacity in which the romantic period is related to beyond conventional caricature is held, in the present argument at least, to be the source of a general conflict of opinion regarding contemporary hermeneutics, and one

which provides a certain unity to the pattern of its exclusion from Anglo-American literary theory.

As a European movement, the impetus to romantic developments varied between its parent nations; the catalysts in France and Germany could not have been more opposed. And as Marilyn Butler makes plain, there were no politically transcendent artistic loyalties either;

> The German writers who first called themselves Romantics were not supporters of the French Revolution at all. They were, on the whole, German patriots, who increasingly came to approve of the involvement of the various German states in the war against republican France. Their opposition to eighteenth-century classicism might even be read as opposition to a style they associated with France, the home of a revolution that had turned expansive and aggressive. For the first two decades of the nineteenth century, German Romanticism remained Catholic and counter-revolutionary. In both France and England during these decades, it was classical or antique style that was commonly linked with republicanism. When the Gothic or medieval or avowedly Romantic taste began to gain ground in England after the peace came in 1815, it was at first identified with the *anciens regimes* which had triumphed over France, and with their extreme political conservatism.[1]

Following Butler's distinction of an ideological divide between a Northern, that is to say a Germanic, gothic, romanticism, characterised by the revivification of indigenous folklore, of ghosts, gloom and introspection, and an altogether more Southern iconoclasm which served to unify French neo-classicism with revolutionary sentiment, the conservative prejudice against hermeneutics finds its historical precedent. If 1960s Paris signalled a *petite retourné* for revolutionary optimism, for social and intellectual renewal, it would seem at a glance, that Germany remained true to the model of its former glory. A model that is, drawn from Kantian idealisms, in turn revolutionary and eschatological but never really equipped for social praxis, and a linguistic turn against the subject still very much based within the philological tradition of its romantic forebears. Whilst in France the dispossession of the subject led to structuralism, to psychoanalytical scrutiny and a deeply sceptical mode of

[1] Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries; English Literature and its Background 1760-1830*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981. p.5.

reading united by a left-wing ideology, the overturning of rationalist certitudes in Germany had fostered the staggered paths of the Frankfurt School and Heidegger. That these contrary discourses should one day converge to produce an ontologically based mode of social critique—in the likes of Hannah Arendt, in the dialogue of Gadamer and Habermas, and in Ricoeur himself—is, I think, testament to the developing powers of philosophical hermeneutics.

The delayed response to philosophical hermeneutics in France (and indeed Britain) and the continuation of the romantic prejudice against it can be attributed to three overwhelming contexts. The first relates to the stronghold of French rationalism in the years prior to the theoretical revolution, and to the reflexive militancy of its over-turning. As Butler clarifies, the seeds of French romanticism were rooted in the essentially rationalist discourse of liberation. The acceleration of theoretical formalisms in France could certainly be read as a jubilant repetition of this staunch anti-authoritarianism, were it not that this more recent rejection of the intellectual establishment extended to the very tradition it emulated. As was concluded in the preceding chapter, there was little room for a philosophy of consciousness which threatened to tarnish the new paradigm with a residual subjectivity. Ricoeur's onto-hermeneutical thesis, that language could depose subjective sovereignty whilst positively recomposing the powers of self-articulation—in the manner of a speech act for instance—was no more welcome than the discredited humanism of Sartrean becoming.

A somewhat more ambiguous context relates to Heidegger's complex reception in France. As hermeneutics' singularly most important precursor, modern hermeneutics without him is virtually inconceivable. Whilst Ricoeur's relation to Heidegger is by no means uncritical, it would be impossible to do justice to the Ricoeurian perspective without appreciating hermeneutics' radical transformation in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. To miss the triumph of this text is to forever misread hermeneutics as an outgrowth of romanticism and to repeatedly mischaracterise hermeneutical consciousness in terms of subjectivity. It was not until certain anthropological misreadings of Heidegger had been rectified that this break could be truly appreciated in France. Coincidentally or not, this realisation was contemporaneous to the gradual exhaustion of formalist categories within French *academe*, and with Ricoeur's ascendancy amongst a new generation of post-structuralist thinkers. And yet whilst Heidegger achieved this dramatic departure for

hermeneutics, his influence in many respects appears to have entrenched the old romantic prejudice against it. For one thing, Heidegger was only partially successful when it came to covering-up his own debts to his romantic predecessors. But far more unsettling and destabilising was the political dissemblance of his professional debt to National Socialism in wartime Germany; a secret known to France's intellectual elite for a very long time. There is certainly no direct, logical relation between Heidegger's hidden Nazism and his disguised romanticism. To suggest that this political revelation compounded Butler's ideological divide within the French popular imagination would even be going too far I think. But in Chapter Three I will say more about this unpleasant association, and the decisions which some post-Heideggerians felt it incumbent upon them to make in light of this secret knowledge. In their way, these delicate manoeuvres have influenced the tandem trajectories of postructural hermeneutics and deconstruction. The disparity of their affect within literary theoretical discourse follows on as a related matter.

Because Heidegger's link to deconstruction is just as important as his link to hermeneutics, he also presents the common link with which to refute the simplicity of mono-culturally and mono-causally evinced explanations of a perpetuated ideological divide. Whilst adherents of such a framework may wish to cite a national and ideological division of *interpretation*, in which Heidegger leads Derrida to Being's openness, its indetermination and linguisticality—a mediation of ontology and semiotics—, where he leads Gadamer to the insight of an understanding grounded in the horizons of tradition, consolidated by the texts of pre-ontological hermeneutics, to do so would be wrong on at least three counts. Firstly it would entail the wilful neglect of French existentialism, where the subject returns with a romantically individualistic force like nothing in the Husserlian original, and a subjective charge unparalleled by anything the hermeneutic determination of experience has to offer.[2] Although an unexamined conception of romanticism subsumes these contemporary tensions within the all-encompassing figure of poet-revolutionary (a tendency perhaps more common to the inheritors of its English manifestation, where political sympathies proved more indecisive and the movement more malleable), the same

[2] The fact that France has provided some of the most vocal renunciations of subject-centred epistemology may in fact signal the site of its greatest stronghold. As a literary-theoretical concept, nothing brought the subject into such central and sharp distinction as the discourses of its demise; in Barthes, Foucault and early Derrida. No doubt something in the disjunctive and rapid consolidation of an autonomous "literary theory" played its part in reducing the subject to the straw-man limitations of the "romantic ego".

tensions still operate, themselves unexamined. The prejudice involves a double indiscretion therefore. The "romantic" charge against hermeneutics imports the prejudice against reactionary romanticism, whilst assimilating it to the unscrupulous equation of romanticism and the unfettered ego, an equation firmly rooted in French libertarianism, and evidently still manifest in the intellectual currents of existentialism and the political activities of 1968-9. The second problem is that such a reading would require a total disregard for the proximities uniting hermeneutics and deconstruction within the general discourse of poststructuralism (a theme within my final chapter). Finally, and this presents the third context for hermeneutics' belated French repute, a presumed division of interpretation would involve the necessary elision of hermeneutics' own very critical relationship towards philosophical romanticism, before Heidegger as well as after. In this instance hermeneutics' proximity to certain problems is taken for the very problem itself. The forgetfulness of these moves begins to look suspiciously convenient from a polemical angle; an alliance of subject-centred epistemology and conservative ideology on the one hand, formalism and progressive thinking on the other. It is this forgetfulness with regards hermeneutics' own *critical* relation to romanticism, and to the subjective idealism of the eighteenth century, which the following section seeks to redress.

2.2

A "MISGUIDED KANTIANISM" AND THE HERMENEUTICAL CRITIQUE

Kantian Ambiguities

Hermeneutics' development from a classical discipline of scholarly exegesis into a thoroughgoing philosophy could not have occurred without the remarkable proliferation of thought and creativity centred upon Germany in the late 1700s and early 1800s. There were two revolutions of thought which contributed to this unique epoch, both themselves being responses to the revolution of Kantian epistemology. One was the development of historical research conducted by the likes of Ranke and Droysen, who sought the development of a progressive historical science with an adequate consciousness of its own method and scope, the other was romanticism. It is

really the possibility of these extremes and not the intricacies of their systems that is of interest to us, for then as now, hermeneutical theory sought to tread the delicate path between both points, risking the opprobrium of moderation in a time of innovation, and a listing dependency upon parent texts. But now as then, the hermeneutic interpretation of Kant's text remains pivotal to the clarification of an autonomous "third way", between historical and theoretical objectivism and the "radical subjectivisation" of the romantics.[3]

Kant's attempts to square epistemological foundations with moral freedom in the three critiques, and the repercussions which followed, are well known. David Hume had asserted the falsity of fixed causal laws independent of human observation, thereby opposing the theological picture of a divinely determined, law-bound universe with a vision of contingency. The upshot of Hume's position was a deep scepticism regarding the possibility of certain knowledge; there can be no certain knowledge of the world if observation depends upon empirical contingencies alone. With his famous "Copernican turn", Kant sought to overcome Humean scepticism by implanting certain laws of observation within the mind itself. By claiming that objects follow cognition, rather than vice versa, Kant could assert the validity of *a priori* foundations for knowledge within the mind, not the world, and bypass Hume's scepticism regarding the knowledge of empirical perception. But at the same time, Kant needed to square these laws with the claim for moral freedom; after all, if the human mind was entirely law bound and determined, there would be no space for the kind of individual choice upon which morality is founded. The ambiguous turns and counter-turns to which this dual demand led Kant over the course of the three critiques were a source of contention amongst his immediate readers, and proved determinative for an era of widening epistemological disagreement. It was with the publication of Kant's third critique, the *Critique of Judgement*, that two clearly opposing interpretations emerged, and it was the implications of this ultimate work which eventually fostered the tenor and themes of literary theory.

The division in Kantian interpretation rests largely upon the apparent disparity of Kant's first critique, the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), which deals with the law-bound realm of appearances, with the *a priori* conditions of natural experience, the "forms" that knowledge is necessarily subject to, and the final *Critique of Judgement*

[3] Gadamer uses this phrase in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, trans. Nicholas Walker, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p.36.

(1790), which deals more directly with the question of self-knowledge. Here the theme of reflective judgement, in which human beings recognise themselves for what they are, and Kant's reflection upon the validity of his own system, are treated through a consideration of natural and artistic beauty. The source of historical contention arises most prominently when Kant moves from the treatment of rule-bound aesthetic judgements of taste, judgements aroused through a certain feeling of accord between the structures of cognition and its objects, and Kant's explanation of genius, for which no prior rules are said to exist. For advocates of the first critique, the objective idealists and the later neo-Kantians, Kant's triumph was to subvert the usual primacy of the knowing subject, and to demonstrate how the forms of understanding belonged not within the individual's psychological faculties, but within an intersubjective order of *a priori* concepts. In this way, the knowing subject arises as one more element within experience, rather than the primary basis for knowledge and experience. In short the "forms" of knowledge testify to a non-psychological mode of understanding.[4] The subjective idealists of romanticism, who drew on the implications of Kantian genius in the third critique, held the opposing view. By this account man is at liberty to create his own rules, free from the constraints of a fixed empirical world.

For Kant of course, empirical truths are no less objective for being mediated by the mechanisms of sensory experience, it is just that objectivity takes on a very different sense to the objective identity of idea and object in the natural sciences. If objects follow cognition, then the object itself changes its definition. Losing its independent validity, the object is now dependent upon its appearance before the subject: an object for Kant "is that concerning which a subject can make a true judgement."[5] The world and its truths present the unceasing articulations of synthetic judgements, whereby the subject brings together two or more ideas drawn from experience, and judges them to be in some way the same. *Contra* Hume and the empiricists, *a priori* knowledge is to be grounded in the cognitive conditions of human judgement. As such, truth is a dependent of the judging subject. The repercussions for human history, for morality and theology are immense. Against naturalistic or deistic determinisms of human action, man is now, at the very least, a co-author in his own history. It is easy to recognise the wholly familiar model of

[4] This description is indebted to Frederick C. Beiser. See Beiser, *German Idealism: the Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA., 2002, p.18.
[5] Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory; the Philosophy of German Literary Theory*, Routledge, London, 1997, p.32.

romanticism, wherein man acquires absolute sovereignty, in all of this. But by Kant's own account, he was no heretic of the faith; the implicit moral freedom of the subject was still to be implicated within a divine sense of the right, the good and the true, rooted within natural phenomena.

In the *Critique of Judgement*, the desire to balance agency with a sense of higher purpose (the free world of the inner "intelligible" self and the law-bound realm of natural phenomena) leads Kant to the consideration of aesthetic judgements, where the determinations of argument and proof are absent, but a certain sense of qualifying knowledge is not. Thus Kant is led to the question of aesthetic judgement, not from the perspective of art itself, but from the critical need to qualify the co-existence of *a priori* universals within nature, with the non-universality of subjective experience. Never the less in doing so, Kant foments the primary themes of aesthetic discourse and literary theory, where the questions of *a priori* universals and independent judgement are understood in terms of representation and the art work's claim to truth.

"Misguided Kantianism"; Gadamer's Critique

For Gadamer, as for Ricoeur and Heidegger, the work of art is pivotal to the apprehension of human understanding. Doubtless, the romantic prejudice against hermeneutics endured for this very reason, and yet it is for romanticism that Gadamer reserves the full force of his critique in the opening movements of *Truth and Method.* As the title of Gadamer's *magnum opus* attests, the task for philosophical hermeneutics involves the substantiation of truth claims within the sphere of human interpretation, over and against both the relativism of latter-day sceptics, and the misplaced methodologism of an imported scientism. In their full contrariety, Gadamer in fact locates the origins of both perspectives in the misguided idealism of Kant's romantic interpretation. In both instances, knowledge or truth is deemed to involve the transcendence of historical interpretation. What emerges from Gadamer' critique is an argument in which scientific objectivism and subjective idealism are merely two facets of the same misguided Kantianism. From the hermeneutical perspective, the epistemological conflict of the immediate post-Kantian decades obscured the question of historical understanding, denying the chance for a credible (hermeneutical) alternative to really flourish. It is against the misguided Kantianism of the idealists

(objective and subjective), that Gadamer, like Heidegger, and with certain modifications Ricoeur, elevates the work of art, and the work of literature especially, as the means to a self-constitutive mode of historical understanding.

From Gadamer's hermeneutical perspective, the consolidation of aesthetics after Kant went hand in hand with its gradual withdrawal from the spheres of reason and moral judgement. In the elevation of a distinct aesthetic realm, the work of art was increasingly divorced from the historical totality of everyday experience. This gave birth to an attitude of aesthetic*ism*, wherein the work of art was held aloft as a beacon of transcendence, but one from which the observer must return essentially unchanged. Gadamer calls this attitude one of "aesthetic differentiation", from whence the work of art is abstracted from the living, breathing totality of our own reckoning and from the conditions of its own "accessibility".[6] This kind of aesthetic experience (*Erlebnis*)

> is directed towards what is supposed to be the work proper—what it ignores are the extra-aesthetic elements that cling to it, such as purpose, function, the significance of its content. These elements may be significant enough inasmuch as they situate the work in its world and thus determine the whole meaningfulness that it originally possessed.[7]

The possibility of the work of art having any effective historical power, or purchase upon the world, is renounced in favour of the pure aesthetic intention. The work's dominion resides in the purity of this distinction and in the redoubling extraction by which the work becomes an object for itself. By rights the work communicates no truth other than its own aesthetic status (a familiar enough motif of postmodernist poetics). As Gadamer makes plain, aesthetic consciousness derives its own historical justification in the continuity of its own objects, in the meticulous order of archive and catalogue. Sheltered from the chaos of the extra-aesthetic, the only concession which the aesthetic consciousness makes to history is a kind of scholarly historicism relating to the continuity of its own aesthetic objects. Availed of its historical elements, the aesthetic experience belongs within the confines of the gallery, in the narrow space

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[6] Gadamer uses the term "aesthetic differentiation" frequently within *Truth and Method.* It denotes the way in which art is excised from the continuity of ordinary life.

[7] Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. revised Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Continuum, London, 2006, p.74. I expand upon the hermeneutic attitude towards the work of art in the subsequent chapter.

through which we peer at artworks; a cloistered, out-of-time experience from which we emerge unchanged.

The emergence of aestheticism came to full fruition in the Kantian extrapolations of the romantic philosophers, for whom history was always more of a secondary attribute of subjectivity rather than *vice versa*. Nevertheless, it is in Kant's text itself, in the transcendental critique of aesthetic judgement, that Gadamer charts the possibility of romanticism's claims and the consequent devaluation of the artwork's claim to truth. Where the concept of taste had once been grounded in the socio-historical context of a *sensus communis*, a humanistic concept of communal knowledge, fostered not through abstract reason or theory, but through the universality of a given community, taste within the *Third Critique* becomes necessarily detached from this classical doctrine. It is Kant's transcendental objective, the need to ground aesthetic judgement within an *a priori* rather than an empirical claim to universality, which impels this necessity. For Kant, the philosophical profundity of taste resides in the dual character of its claims. On the one hand taste is meant to constitute an independent judgement on the part of the individual, but at the same time taste is by definition a quality conferred by agreement. Since taste is a quality that cannot be taught, since it depends upon the innate propensity of the individual, the universal "correctness" by which taste is distinguished from other individual judgements thereby suggests the existence of an *a priori* universal rooted within cognition itself. This "supra-empirical norm" as Gadamer calls it, is to do justice to both the empirical non-universality of aesthetic judgements and the claim to objective validity in the realm of aesthetic judgement. By extension, the co-existence of these features is intended to furnish Kant's claim for the co-existence of the natural and law-bound and the moral freedom of the individual agent. Taste in Kant's hands is a means to interpolating the realms of history and nature. By Gadamer's account, however, this balancing act comes at an all too heavy price and one which would eventually seal aesthetics' philosophical segregation from substantive knowledge.

Effectively, Kant transforms aesthetic judgement into a highly specialised and singular type of judgement distinct from all other forms of knowledge. The transcendental validity of aesthetic judgement rests in its distinction from other kinds of judgement after all. Within the inter-subjective and historical framework of the *sensus communis*, taste had once involved judgements of a moral and legal, as well as an aesthetic nature. Kant however "denies taste any *significance as knowledge*"

reducing "sensus communis to a subjective principle."[8] In this way the concept of aesthetic judgement is made to serve Kant's overriding concern to justify the transcendental principle of a subjective universal judgement which could connect the realms of inner freedom and natural law. Granting taste conceptual knowledge would have endangered Kant's system with one of the very things it was designed to repel, namely the existence of a "ready-made", deterministic world. After all, if aesthetic judgement was objective, it would be empirically universal. The whole point of taste of course is that it is empirically non-universal and subjectively universal. In ordinary cognition knowledge is grounded by concepts, but in the instance of aesthetic judgement, no such conceptual determination exists. Lacking the determination of conceptual understanding, taste constitutes a reflective knowledge grounded in the feeling of pleasure aroused in the subject. Taste involves the spontaneous harmony of intuitions free from concepts. Taste therefore

> imparts no knowledge of the object, but neither is it simply a question of a subjective reaction, as produced by what is pleasant to the senses. Taste is "reflective".[9]

Gadamer makes it quite plain that Kant's transformation of taste into an exclusively aesthetic and subjective property does not follow from a desire to establish an exclusive philosophy of art. Perversely, it is the *Critique of Judgement*'s global importance for the coherence of Kant's entire philosophy, which leads to taste's singularly aesthetic connotations and to the singularly subjectivistic nature of future aesthetics. By making Kant's motivations plain in this way, Gadamer not only reveals the causal constraints leading to the subjectivisation of aesthetic judgement, he also points towards the essential misreading at work in aesthetics' romantic elevation, where one finds the work of art *centralised* in its exclusivity. Conditioned by the transcendental goal it serves, it should not be disconcerting to find Kantian taste restricted to the *merely* subjective and extraneous principle claimed by Gadamer. To put it a different way, aesthetic judgement is only central to Kant in the formal sense that it unifies his overall metaphysical system. But within this system aesthetic judgement possesses no direct epistemological validity; central at the meta-

[8] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.38.
[9] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.38.

epistemological or transcendental level, aesthetic judgement becomes increasingly peripheral in real epistemological terms. Gadamer writes that

> The limited phenomenon of judgement restricted to the beautiful (and sublime), was sufficient for [Kant's] transcendental purpose; but it shifted the more general experience of taste, and the activity of aesthetic judgement in law and morality, out of the center of philosophy.[10]

By denying the work of art truth claims beyond the reflective knowledge of aesthetic judgement, Kant precipitated the divide between aesthetics and other philosophical discourses. With the rise of romantic aesthetics the divide approached the insurpassable polemics of objectivism and subjectivism, to which the historical school of Ranke and Droysen, and the romantic school of Schelling and Fichte belonged as opposites. The claim for an historical understanding of the work of art in which the work's claim to truth could be treated substantively, as a genuine conduit of knowledge, but also non-subjectivistically, was all but lost from sight. It is this fundamental split between aesthetics and the philosophical search for truth, between romantic subjectivism and the purported rationalism of "objective" methodologies, which modern hermeneutics holds responsible for the suppression of historical understanding. But the radical subjectivisation of aesthetics did not follow from the aesthetic judgement of taste alone. Whilst Kant's transcendental treatment of taste helped to divorce aesthetic judgement from the realm of substantive knowledge, it was Kant's development of the concept of genius which enabled a fully-fledged subjective idealism, in which the logical priority of history and subjectivity were fully reversed.

Taste for Kant is a universal faculty of judgement, it is reflective, and what it reflects is a certain state of mind which confirms accord between the structures of the mind and the beauty it perceives. In this way taste confirms beauty as an "expression of the moral". Such is the transcendental function of taste.

> Thus the critique of taste—i.e, aesthetics—is a preparation for teleology. Kant's philosophical intention is to legitimate teleology...The intelligible towards which taste points, the supersensible substrate in man, contains at

[10] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.36.

> the same time the mediation between the concepts of nature and of freedom.[11]

Although the concept of taste is directed towards natural and artistic beauty, it is the judgement of natural beauty which fulfils Kant's philosophical objective: "Natural beauty alone, not art, can assist in legitimating the concept of purpose in judging nature."[12] And yet, as the history of German aesthetics attests, and as Gadamer goes on to explain, the progression of the *Third Critique* can be seen to lead Kant further and further away from the original grounding of nature's moral purpose. In the development of the concept of genius Kant seeks to demonstrate the relation between natural beauty and its artistic equivalent, to show how "nature gives art its rules."[13] Through the invention of aesthetic ideas, genius communicates the free-play of the mental faculties, the "vitalisation" through which the reflective judgement recognises itself. In this sense genius was really only ever intended as a compliment to the transcendental function of taste. Yet in the course of Kant's demonstration, the philosophical weighting between aesthetic judgement and genius becomes reversed, and what begins as a principle for art's natural dependency transforms into something implicitly different, providing the openings for a more potent conception of aesthetic genius in Kant's successors. From the mediating device of a natural teleology, genius in the hands of the romantic idealists will become the very principle with which to refute extrinsic determinations.

Paradoxically, this fate can be traced to the very philosophical priority accorded natural beauty in the *Critique of Judgement*. The demand for the concept of genius derives from the teleological demand to link artistic beauty to its natural counterpart. This means that the *Critique* moves ever increasingly into a discussion of an exclusively artistic beauty; a transition from the standpoint of taste and natural beauty to the standpoint of genius and artistic beauty. Kant's moral interest in natural beauty does not waver, but Gadamer seems to suggest that the intellectual force of genius is such, that even Kant's own argumentation is caught unawares and swept along by its as of yet unrecognised logic. Genius gets ahead of itself in this way when Kant "himself points beyond the standpoint of taste and speaks of a *perfection of*

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[11] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.48.
[12] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.48.
[13] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.49.

taste."[14] The prospect of a perfected, absolute and unchanging taste *sounds* absurd even if it is "quite logical". Perfect taste testifies to the powers of aesthetic judgement over and against the relativism of aesthetic sceptics. It is not a singular or homogenising principle but one which encompasses all that can genuinely be called art. Since art is the production of genius, Gadamer claims the perfectibility of taste "would be more appropriately defined by the concept of genius." [15] So Kant is treating of genius even whilst he speaks of taste. The problem with taste is that it is "if anything, a testimony to the mutability of all human things and the relativity of human values." For Kant, who seeks a transcendental justification for beauty, taste is not really adequate to the task after all. The concept of genius on the other hand, "seems much better suited to be a universal principle."[16] And so genius, originally intended to convey the judgement of taste through ideas, becomes a superior means to expressing the universally valid perfection of artistic beauty. Genius is perfection and all true art is perfection; for Kant "[f]ine art" becomes "the art of genius."[17] The stage was thereby set for a philosophy of art detached from the moral consideration of natural beauty and the teleological implications of aesthetic judgement. By many an account, including Gadamer's, romanticism was a hugely productive form of deviation from the Kantian aesthetic. Whilst the Kantian genius demonstrates a transcendence of the rule-bound, art itself is not transcendent of nature; the beautiful in art emerges as a question in pursuance of the beautiful in nature. The "disinterested delight" experienced in the apprehension of beauty is for Kant an expression of moral accord between man and the natural *telos*:

> In Kant a creationist theology stands behind th[e] unique capacity to encounter natural beauty, and forms the self-evident basis from which he represents the production of the genius and the artist as an extreme intensification of the power that nature, as divinely created, possesses.[18]

What for Kant could be called the formal primacy of the aesthetic (its demonstrative worth) becomes in romanticism a substantive primacy. With the elevation of genius in artistic beauty and the sidelining of natural beauty, aesthetics grew in strength,

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[14] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.50.
[15] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.50.
[16] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.51.
[17] Kant, quoted by Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.51.
[18] Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, *ibid.*,p.30.

subsuming the realms of nature and history to the standpoint of an aesthetic subject. In Schelling for example, the problem of moral freedom and natural determinism is resolved in the synthesising powers of aesthetic intuition, for Fichte similarly, nature is understood as "a product of spirit", and in the absolute idealism of Hegel's *Aesthetics* "natural beauty exists only as a 'reflection of spirit.'"

> The moral interest in natural beauty that Kant had portrayed so enthusiastically now retreats behind the self-encounter of man in works of art...There is in fact no longer any independent element in the systematic whole of aesthetics.[19]

Kant's transcendental imagination and the elevation of genius enabled man to become his own teleological cause in the treatises of romantic idealism. Here, the notion of creative genius would eventually transcend the confines of art to become a universal governing principle to which the operations of political history, and even man's sublunary limitation were subject. Kant's *Third Critique* provided the axiological basis for a revolutionary metaphysics based upon the notion of aesthetic transformation. The problem with this from the hermeneutical perspective however, is that these transformative powers, whilst extended beyond the artistic compass, were never the less divorced from the realm of determinate knowledge. To be original and hence transformative, the knowledge constitutive of the aesthetic has to be intuitive. The productivity of the Kantian imagination resides in the originality of intuition, in the novel syntheses of images within the imagination. Whilst Kant rightly recognised the constitutive or productive powers of imagination and aesthetic experience, he nevertheless instituted a system wherein the knowledge of art was fated to remain in formal opposition to the more substantive knowledge of concepts according to Gadamer.

The price Kant paid for the assertion of an original imagination, the apprehension of intuitions free from concepts, was a culture which reduced artistic truth to the "merely" intuitive. To Gadamer therefore, the erosion of historical knowledge and the rise of an unwarranted scientific prestige emerge as the consequences of an incrementally singularised and radically subjectivised aesthetic realm. Beginning with the restriction of taste and the subjectivisation of aesthetic

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[19] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.51.

judgement, and culminating in the concept of genius, Kant's grounding for an autonomous aesthetic consciousness foreclosed the potential for determinate knowledge within the aesthetic realm, divorcing it from the practices of historical interpretation. Because the artwork's intelligibility was restricted to the productivity of intuition, "Kant's transcendental analysis made it impossible to acknowledge the truth claim of traditionary materials" which would otherwise endanger the claim for pure originality.[20] Gadamer thereby attributes the erosion of historical knowledge to Kant's transcendental aesthetics, claiming that it discredited "any kind of theoretical knowledge except that of natural science"—presumably, one must assume, because the theory of natural science posed no threat to the autonomy of aesthetic understanding—, and that it "compelled the human sciences to rely on the methodology of the natural sciences in conceptualizing themselves." [21] The implications of this claim are clearly very significant for hermeneutics, both in the romantic period and the theoretical revolution of the mid-twentieth century; it is *aestheticism* rather than the development of scientific procedure and technology, which must be held accountable for the trespass of scientific attitudes and the suppression of historical insight within the humanistic disciplines.

Following Kant's doctrine of free beauty and reflective judgement, the concept of intuition underwent an implicit diminution in contrast to the determinate judgements of concepts. In their way, the growth of subjectivism and psychologism in the nineteenth century testified to this transformation. Hermeneutics' awkward association with these trends is also attributable to the re-evaluation of intuitive knowledge. With the erosion of historical understanding, the hermeneutical concepts of pre-understanding, of prejudice, and of the historical "horizon" which shapes them, were forced to fit the epistemological pressures of the day. Thanks to the erosion of intuitive knowledge and the suppression of historical understanding, the intuitive "leap" of hermeneutical pre-understanding was to be misread, either as the expression of our innate irrationality, or as testament to our essential determinism.

Because aestheticism—the denial of truth in art and the absence of an aesthetically independent truth—is only the negative counterpart of romantic idealism, because both positions deny the work of art a claim to truth beyond the aesthetic, Gadamer's critique of romantic aesthetics should also be read as a direct indictment of

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[20] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.36.
[21] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.36.

postmodern scepticism and literary textualism. Contrary to the prejudicial claims against hermeneutics, it is the irrationalism of latter-day aestheticism which must bear the romantic burden. In hermeneutics, the work of art is certainly traduced in terms of its originality, as a presentation and not as a copy, and for this reason—against subjectivism—as a force for knowledge rather than mere feeling. But whilst the knowledge of the work of art is central to self-understanding, it does not *found* other modes of understanding. History and art exist in distinction *and* continuity within hermeneutical understanding. This is precisely the balance which Gadamer, Heidegger and Ricoeur all seek to renegotiate. Disciples of modern hermeneutics would have to wait twenty years for Gadamer's explicit "recovery of the horizon of Kant's critiques". [22] In this critical re-appropriation, Gadamer seeks to redress the opposition of intuitions and concepts, and justify the determinate knowledge of aesthetic objects. [23] Yet under different names, and in rather different ways, the hermeneutical re-appropriation of the Kantian imagination was already well-underway. It is this project which links the paths of Gadamer, Heidegger and Ricoeur, and which, in the context of the present study, links the Ricoeurian advocacy of discourse and speech acts examined in the first chapter, with a critique of Heideggerian ontology in the next.[24]

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[22] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.51.

[23] My understanding of this comes by way of a paper by Daniel L. Tate; "Art as *Cognitio Imaginativa:* Gadamer on Intuition and Imagination in Kant's Aesthetic Theory", presented at the British Phenomenology Society annual conference, St. Hilda's College Oxford, 2008. It can be accessed from the society's website at britishphenomenology.com/208Papers6.aspx.

[24] Hermeneutics' critical relation to romanticism can in fact be traced further back, to the so-called romantic hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. What the projects of Schleiermacher and Dilthey serve to demonstrate, is the under-acknowledged role which hermeneutics had to play in the formation of twentieth century post-Kantian epistemology. What their stories also serve to corroborate is the overwhelming context which they sought, quite presciently, if not successfully, to surpass. Writing on the cusp of the eighteen hundreds, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics was a critical response to the extremes of historical objectivism and subjective idealism. Divided and yet similarly hubristic, both assumed a theoretical hold over truth which devalued the historical nature of understanding. The task of hermeneutics was to gain access to an understanding which exceeded the regimented categories of metaphysics and the natural sciences. Whilst the "life philosophy" he sought had been anticipated by eighteenth century idealists such as Fichte and Schelling, the aim for Schleiermacher (and Dilthey after him), was to turn the concept of "life" away from the metaphysical and the moral foundations of the previous century towards what would eventually be recognised as the understanding's phenomenological character. According to Richard Palmer, the word "life" signified "a battle cry against the fixedness and determinations of convention (Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics; Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1969, p.101). The ambition of a "general hermeneutics" was directed specifically towards the universal particularity of inter-subjective understanding, something which neither science nor metaphysics could properly account for. For the first time therefore, the task of hermeneutics was directed away from the claims of historical authority and away from the conception of understanding as a mode of linear and monologically coherent transmission, towards the uncertainty of the dialogical encounter, to a distinctly post-Kantian realm of inter-subjective meaning. In Gadamer's words,

"Schleiermacher's idea of a universal hermeneutics starts from this: that the experience of the alien and the possibility of misunderstanding is universal" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 179). Defining hermeneutical interpretation as the "art of avoiding misunderstanding", Schleiermacher effected a decisive—albeit impermanent—shift within the hermeneutic conception of understanding. Insofar as the life-sciences represented a "battle cry" against convention, the assertion of misunderstanding should be read as its own battle cry against the reigning paradigm of identity philosophy.

Where the twin origins of literary and scriptural hermeneutics had once looked upon understanding as a normative assumption guided by the "special exemplariness of tradition" and as the basis from whence theoretical and historical reflection could begin, Schleiermacher posited the requirement of a universal hermeneutics grounded not by the unity of tradition but the dis-consensus of individual minds interacting through a shared language. What he sought to understand was "not only the exact words and their objective meaning, but also the individuality of the speaker or author" (Gadamer, *ibid.*, p. 186). In the perception of this potential dehiscence—between individual subject and a presumed objectivity of language, between intention and meaning, between sense and reference even—Schleiermacher can be seen to have made a precursory departure from the totalising paradigms of objectivism and idealism and yet, from our own belated perspective it is clear to see how Schleiermacher, for all his critical energies, repeats many of the tendencies he sought to escape.

By emphasising the internal aspect of understanding, and the external aspect of language and explanation, Schleiermacher effectively sought to bridge "the innerness of transcendental speculative philosophy and the externalness of positive, empirical science" (Gadamer, *ibid.*, p. 92). What he sought was a theoretical means to elucidating what he saw as a very direct transmission from one mind to another. Hermeneutics was thus intended as a mediating discipline between psychology and representational forms of knowledge. The paradigm for this mediating art was the dialogical relation of speaker and listener, but unlike in contemporary hermeneutics, where understanding takes the form of a dialectical exchange between interlocutors, interpretation for Schleiermacher rested solely on the side of the listener. The art of understanding was also the art of listening or hearing. Meaningful listening—to which Heidegger and Gadamer will return—involved two simultaneous moments of "grammatical" and "psychological" clarity, in which the auditor reconstructed the language and thence the thoughts of the speaker. So although Schleiermacher shifted the locus of meaning away from the reduplicative linearity of tradition, it was still *reconstruction*, the reduplication of a pre-existent content *in the mind* of the speaker, which informed his philosophical ideal. By situating the problem of alienation and misunderstanding spatially, in terms of an exterior gulf and the inaccessible interiority of other minds, Schleiermacher's work can be seen to organise itself according to a logic of internal and external, thought and action, which in fact belongs very much to the metaphysics he sought to escape.

Whilst the recognition of the grammatical / psychological distinction could be seen to place certain limitations upon more speculative accounts of meaning, Schleiermacher's own agenda remained true to the age of speculative metaphysics in so far as he proposed a universal theory of understanding adequate to a total recuperation of meaning between one mind and another. To this extent the conception of a productive difference or an intransigent, productive distance (historical, psychological, linguistic) is beyond the philosophical paradigm to which his thought belongs; Schleiermacher's was an ultimately totalising aspiration in keeping with his age.

In hindsight Schleiermacher's emphasis upon the alien and external particularity of language—as a phenomenon which to some extent always resists the appropriating intentions of the speaker—is a fatefully premature precursor to the linguistic turn a century later. Whilst the move away from the absolutisms of science and metaphysics towards the critical treatment of language and thought would eventually prove decisive for the course of philosophy and hermeneutics, Schleiermacher's own recognition of the distance of thought and language, author and text, encouraged him to eventually abandon the study of "grammar" in favour of a systematic theory of psychological recreation. Where the text's autonomy and facticity would one day be looked upon as a productive insight within the philosophy of understanding, the fact that a text could not be read as a direct manifestation of an author's thoughts and that language was not a transparent medium, suggested for Schleiermacher that the theory of understanding must go by way of psychological re-enactment rather than grammatical analysis.

Because Schleiermacher perceived the distinction of language and thought through the same dualistic lens as his contemporaries, because he deemed language an external and objective manifestation and thought a thoroughly internal and subjective phenomenon, Schleiermacher ultimately compounded the epistemological distinctions which he sought to mediate. In capitulation to the age, Schleiermacher's increasing commitment to psychological reconstruction echoed the wider philosophical turn towards the subject. And where hermeneutics had traditionally linked the roles of

explanation and understanding within a model of circularity or dialectical reciprocity, Schleiermacher abandoned the role of explanation as a distinctly scientific faculty. Although the ambition of a "general hermeneutics" was directed specifically towards the universal particularity of inter-subjective understanding, as something which neither science nor metaphysics could properly account for, in overturning the traditional hermeneutic association of explanation and understanding, and arguing that the verbalisation involved in explanation belonged more properly to the external plane of rhetoric, Schleiermacher led hermeneutics into the problematic territory of psychologism, wherein understanding takes the form of a direct recuperation between one psychic life and another. Such a formulation not only repeated the romantic prioritisation of the subject, but also promoted a contrarily conservative re-working of that subject insofar as a "depth hermeneutics" centred upon recuperation countermands the dynamic productivity of interpretation and the libertarian potentials of the imagination invested by the romantics. Finally, in seeking to elaborate the course of human understanding in terms of a universal model, universally relevant to the individual, Schleiermacher ultimately conflicted with his own dissenting claim for "life" rather than metaphysics.

Dilthey's hermeneutics in the next century developed out of a similarly critical attitude towards the scope of the humanities at the present time. The methods of scientific positivism, guided by Newtonian principles of an unchanging universe, were ill-matched to the study of human experience in all its multiplicity. Likewise the claims to objectivity vaunted by the German historical school amounted to little more than the confused practices of an uncritical realism, propelled by an equally uncritical objective idealism. Both failed to grasp the true complexity of historical relations and living action to which Dilthey, as a literary-critic strongly influenced by romanticism, was himself attuned (Dilthey published numerous studies on the German *Strurm und Drang* movement; works deeply involved with the complexities of the inner life). But Dilthey's emphasis upon the inner life did not follow Schleiermacher's demand for psychological transference between one psychic life and another. Like the neo-Kantians, Dilthey sought a return to Kant focussed upon the validation of phenomenal categories. But as a proponent of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, the life-sciences, Dilthey's prime concern was that the study of meaningful life and understanding should begin and end within the concrete realities of lived experience. By placing the question of man and knowledge within the context of a shared horizon of historical experience, he sought the grounds for a science of life in which the "expressions of inner life" could be objectively interpreted. Indeed it was Dilthey's ambition to establish an epistemology of the human sciences as respectable and secure in foundation as the natural sciences.

Unlike Schleiermacher, for whom understanding was primarily a matter of psychological recreation between interlocuters, Dilthey believed interpretation to require a more profound sense of our own historicality. His method of practice was to be a continuation of the Kantian critique but addressed this time to the category of historical reason. The experiences of living, and the meaningful moments of particular experiences, were for Dilthey the key to clarifying human understanding. To this end he developed the notion of historical consciousness—awareness of our past experiences and future expectations, and most importantly an awareness of how these temporal modalities interact within the constitution of our present interpretations—and sought to temporalise the dynamics of the Kantian synthesis for the purposes of an objective science of self-understanding distinct from the Kantian theory of knowledge. In Dilthey, we find the origins of hermeneutics' modern manifestation as a properly philosophical discourse, in which meaning is construed phenomenally, and phenomenal experience historically.

Naturally Dilthey was influenced by more than just Kant. And the transition from the Diltheyan conception of hermeneutics to its most radical phenomenological expansion in Heidegger was not as straightforward as this account may suggest. Even whilst Dilthey sought a solid scientific foundation for his study, the intellectual cross-currents of German romanticism also played their part. Like Schleiermacher before him and Heidegger after him, the critical energies which impelled Dilthey's life-philosophy stemmed from the impassioned anti-rationalism of eighteenth century romanticists such as Rousseau, Fichte and Schelling. Different to them he may have been, none the less it is no easier to disentangle Dilthey from this cultural milieu than it is Bergson or Nietzsche, also life-philosopher's of the nineteenth century. And the same radical energies which compelled Fichtean individualism and Nietzschean irrationalism also consolidated Dilthey's desire for complete epistemological independence from the scientific and the metaphysical traditions. Dilthey wrote that "in the veins of the 'knowing subject' constructed by Locke, Hume, and Kant, runs no real blood" (Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* V, 4, quoted by Palmer, *Hermeneutics; Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer*, *ibid.*, p.102). By *their* accounts, the knowing subject tends towards a detachment from experiential determinations, but for Dilthey, the historical

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THE NEW CRITICAL HERITAGE.

Just as French academic and political developments of the early to mid nineteen hundreds were decisive for Ricoeur's influence in France, a more attenuated history on British soil has influenced his reputation here. Once more it is a distrust of German romanticism which informs this history. It is no coincidence that it begins at the *canonical* start of literary theory in this country, with the irredoubtable persuasions of T.S Eliot. The New Critical tradition has leant its own cast to deconstruction in Britain and America, and likewise, its own particular inflection to the dialogue between deconstruction and poststructural hermeneutics. For this reason, hermeneutics as a literary theoretical possibility cannot avoid the decisive opening through which this theoretical construct presents itself. New Criticism and "new classicism" I contend, persist as fragments and distortions and certainly as points of maximum tension within the ongoing debate of literary theory. Construed in this way, literary theory represents the site of an ongoing battle against aesthetics; veiled in the artistry of its most prodigious and ambiguous voice (Derrida), we find the ambiguities of this aesthetic past newly expressed. But in the confusion of this ambiguity, there also persist the same forms of dichotomising and prejudice with which the New Critics' first sought to clarify the matter.

For at least two generations criticism was dominated by the social and intellectual values of the New Critics, amongst whom T.S Eliot reigned supreme. The New Critics judgements extended far beyond the remit of their favoured genre of poetry. It encompassed what was in fact a comprehensive ideologue in which the critic's role was purportedly curtailed on the intellectual level but palpably enhanced at the social level where the critic assumed a role of socio-cultural guardian, keeper

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character of man's inner life, with its memories and desires, is integral to the condition of self-understanding.

Where hermeneutics had traditionally conceived understanding to be a dialectical process of (subjective) interpretation and (objective) explanation, Dilthey asserted their opposition to one another, aligning explanation with the exiled principles of scientific reason whilst claiming interpretation for hermeneutic understanding alone. By exiling the role of explanation from the hermeneutic circle, Dilthey consolidated the primary ambiguity of the human sciences' methodology and the uncertainty with which the subject of its appraisal was conceived. It is this fateful opposition which tarnished hermeneutics reputation as an unrigorous outgrowth of romanticism. No one does more to undermine this perception than Ricoeur himself, who rejects all such antinomies. The dialectical treatment of semiotics within the theory of discourse confirms this most thoroughly.

and director of a culture's tradition. Arguably almost every nuance of the New Critical paradigm, every preference, prejudice and bias—for poetry not prose, reality not fantasy, for referential diction, for the non-metaphysical poetic traditions, for a limited and wholly distinct sphere of critical practice divorced from philosophical discourse, one devoted not to speculative trajectories but to an assiduous reading closed-off from the contingencies of writing, to a formal method that is, but one which was nevertheless accompanied by a most resolute theory of cultural history and creative development—every one of these values can be negatively accounted for in terms of a wholesale rejection of romantic literary epistemology. Eliotean choices align themselves according to an historical distinction of romantic and classical mores. As a rejoinder to the entire romantic tradition, the New Critical stance is wholly conservative with regards to history, artistic creation and art's role within history.

T.E Hulme, co-founder of the Imagist movement in poetry and a formative influence on Eliot, was responsible for the most decisive expression of the New Critics' classical, anti-romantic agenda.[25] Hulme made no contrivance of his role as canon-guardian, casting-out the etiolated fragments of romantic vagueness for a revival of classical "hardness". In the essay "Romanticism and Classicism" he sought to disambiguate the two terms in just about all ways; philosophically and politically, nationally, religiously and artistically.[26] Diagnosing the revolutionary fervour of 1889 he writes;

> Here is the root of all romanticism: that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities; and if you can so rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress.
>
> One can define the classical quite clearly as the exact opposite to this. Man is an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is

[25] Its other founder was the poet Ezra Pound. Both Pound and Hulme were influenced by arguments of the far-right, most notably a fascist group of French intellectuals called *L'Action Française* to whom Hulme makes approbatory reference (for their admiration of classical French literature and their hostility to literature of the Revolution).

[26] In so doing Hulme can be seen to essentialise history in terms of a classical-romantic dialectic. But in attaching universal and ahistorical qualities to the terms, it is unclear whether Hulme remains true to his professed stance, since an ahistorical outlook upon the two temperaments would seem to suggest an archetypal interpretation redolent of aestheticism.

> absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organization that anything decent can be got out of him...[27]

Whilst rationalism and romanticism both pervert the natural course of man's faith, making a paradise of earth and a god of man, the classical apprehension of man's limitations gains religious support from the "sane classical dogma of original sin". The distinction serves to convey literary style and critical conviction with as much continuity as if he were suggesting a naturalised priority, or that style and interpretation could themselves be righteous or of the Devil's party. But Hulme's literary-critical distinction is not the commonly assumed difference between the staid and the energetic, between Milton's God and the more exuberant Satan, nor is it simply the contrast of sublunary cares with supernatural imaginings. True literary sensibility involves a sensitivity to certain limits, and by Hulme's own description, a general preference for Fancy over Imagination. The classical poet will always remain "faithful to the conception of a limit" he writes. Whilst fancy permits the poet to "exceed man's limit" it does so only to the extent that the unbounded will be framed by a knowing disbelief or a self-conscious "flourish"; "You never go blindly into an atmosphere more than the truth, an atmosphere too rarefied for man to breathe for long".[28] Romanticism's imaginative counterpart by contrast does. The imagination's eventual return to lower climbs—to the days of old age, or the foothills of Shelley's "Mont Blanc"—does not compromise the sanctity of its flight, the pertinence of its vision. The characteristic limit of fancy finds its critical counterpart in our historicality, which not only refutes the possibility of a transcendent knowledge (or vision) but also the claim to absolute originality. Tradition—and here we see Hulme's influence on Eliot at its most obvious—cannot be avoided, its consequences cannot be fully controlled either. "Your opinion" writes Hulme,

> is almost entirely of the literary history that came just before you, and you are governed by that whatever you may think.[29]

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[27] T.E Hulme, "Romanticism and Classicism", first published in *Speculations* (1924), a collection of critical essays edited by Herbert Read. Reproduced in *20th Century Literary Criticism; A Reader*, ed. David Lodge, Longman, London, 1972, pp.94-5. The editor tells us that the essay was probably written in 1913 or 1914.

[28] T.E Hulme, *ibid.*, p.96.

[29] T.E Hulme, *ibid.*, p.97.

Holy writ, God, original sin, these are the relatively superfluous additions of Hulme's own faith. His genuine impetus is an attack upon the aesthetic illusion of human freedom. Taking what he claims to represent the aesthetic imagination—total historical transcendence—and opposing it to the more constrained condition of human fancy, Hulme establishes a pattern of opposition in which an altogether decadent and wishful aesthetics is opposed to the reality of a much more fleeting form of artistic consciousness, utterly time-bound and ephemeral.

> Particularly in Germany, the land where theories of aesthetics were first created, the romantic aesthetics collated beauty to an impression of the infinite involved in the identification of our being in absolute spirit. In the least element of beauty we have a total intuition of the whole world. Every artist is a kind of pantheist.[30]

Now the distinction between imagination and fancy, and the elevation of the former over the latter, by right belongs to Kant. Human limitation, the ephemeral nature of fancy and the determining confines of tradition are the literary-critical analogues to what is essentially an epistemological argument against philosophies of the *Third Critique*. Invoking this opposition therefore, Hulme implicitly summons Kant. And yet within this essay, Kant's name is altogether passed over.

In the suppression of Kant's name, Hulme can be seen to attack the German tradition with a rather blunt instrument, one which fails to represent the import of Kant's epistemological advance over dualist paradigms, and which refuses to acknowledge the theological *telos* which subtends the Kantian imagination. Collating "beauty to an impression of the infinite involved in the identification of our being in absolute spirit" could only ever look like a form of pantheism if one suppresses the *cognitive* validity of beauty and imagination within Kantian epistemology. The moral importance attached to the experience of beauty in nature, its capacity to elicit the "moral side of our being" is not the condition for a total intuition by any means. Far from pointing to an eventual identification of man and nature, natural beauty's schematic distinction from artistic, humanly produced beauty, ensures its relative independence within the Kantian scheme. Indeed it is Kant's contrast between natural beauty and artistic beauty which occasions the analysis of beauty's cognitive validity

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[30] T.E Hulme, *ibid.*, p.96.

in the first place. It is through this contrast that art's capacity for both the representation of objects and the *presentation* of aesthetic ideas emerges. The distinction between genius and mere taste arises from here also. So indeed, if by infinite Hulme in fact means the form of indeterminate solicitude which he so frequently mentions, then one can say that it is precisely the impression of the infinite within nature that leads Kant to claim an epistemological superiority for artistic beauty. Literary epistemology can make little of a tradition purportedly founded on the absolute identification of nature and freedom. Kant himself made little of it but unmistakably laid the way for his romantic successors. Like Hulme, Eliot chooses to focus upon them.

> I have read some Hegel and Fichte...and forgotten it; of Schelling I am entirely ignorant at first hand, and he is one of those numerous authors whom, the longer you leave them unread, the less you desire to read.[31]

As with Hulme, it is hard to take Eliot completely at his word and not interpret the professed admission as a form of knowing ebullience, not least because it arises within the context of Coleridgean aesthetics and a quote from Coleridge which makes its obligation to Kant very plain. Hulme's reference to the concept of "total intuition" and pantheism reverberates with a similarly subsumed knowledge of this history. This is a history in which Hulme's contentions regarding romantic aesthetics, regarding agency and historical limitation, had already been voiced, and precisely in terms of what was then known as the "Pantheism Controversy". As Hulme well knows, Kant's Copernican revolution was a response against Cartesian arguments for the self-affecting subject. What Hulme's familiarity with the Pantheism Controversy further exposes is his knowledge of the counter-forces which opposed Kantianism to romantic idealism in its day. At the centre of the Pantheism Controversy was F.H Jacobi, a figure who by rights stands at the very forefront of literary theory. Having driven a decisive wedge between Kant and the romantic idealists who claimed him, Jacobi was central to literary theory's inaugural distinction from aesthetics. But Hulme's either/or mentality, his idiom of classicism *versus* romanticism, obscures the debt that his own references to pantheism and intuition owe to "the land where

[31] T.S Eliot, "Wordsworth and Coleridge", *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,* Faber and Faber, London, 1964, p.77.

theories of aesthetics were first created", namely Kant's Germany. The connotations which we are invited to read in Hulme's evocation of pantheism did not in fact emerge until much later. The critiques to which Kant and Jacobi were prompted were above all else attacks on the totalisation of the total intuition promoted by romantic philosophers such as Fichte.[32] Together, Kant and Jacobi helped to introduce modern philosophy to the fateful themes of mediation, circularity and uncertainty which have continued to resonate almost seamlessly ever since. But the New Critics chose to steer clear of such details. Consequently the emergence of such themes within the Anglo-American literary arena occurred somewhat belatedly, circuitously and with a characteristically altered bearing. So it is that we can only wonder where the canonical or rather the pedagogical opening to the field of literary theory would have fallen *had* Eliot read more of the German aestheticians.

By rejecting the German metaphysical tradition in such a wholesale manner, there is no doubting the New Critics' progressive drive to innovate, and to forge a more analytical approach to literature. The proliferation of a new vocabulary testifies to this stance of independence, not just from the romantics, but from the metaphysical tradition as a whole. The demand for a more precise and analytical methodology could even be seen to represent the more populist face of Britain's philosophical renaissance at the hands of the logical positivists. This link to Britain's philosophical heritage, to a tradition once quashed in the mêlée of revolutionary idealism, and recently re-awakened, would certainly have enhanced any imperialist desires for a new criticism of the native tongue. Certainly this relation helped to consolidate the enduringly reticent, if not downright hostile attitude of many British critics towards their European counterparts, the work of whom was all too readily dismissed as trifling esotericism. For the New Critics, criticism was a task and a pedagogical tool with clear social utility. Insofar as it provided a formal method—close reading—it still remained firmly rooted within the ideological framework of the humanist education. This idiosyncratic blend of intellectual progressivism and cultural conservatism was to prove determinative for the consolidation of Anglo-American literary theory.

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[32] For a lucid account of this history see Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory*, Routledge, London, 1997, pp.1-52. Bowie's polemical slant substantiates my own claim that the German aesthetic tradition has been subject to selective readings within Anglo–American literary and critical theory.

Whilst claiming pragmatic concern for universally valid criteria divorced from the plane of speculation, the New Critics could not fail to make the kind of epistemological and ideological judgements which a close-reading edict would seem to condemn. This is no secret. New Criticism's dual reputation as both a praiseworthy departure from aesthetic ambiguity and a peculiarly dogmatic, narrowly parochial interregnum within the court of European intellectualism confirms as much. What it attests to is the fact that the school's technical innovation depended upon a theoretical suspension of the extra-textual which, in the absence of semiotic insights, only the paradoxical assertion of historical limitation and a strong objection to romantic aesthetic ideology could support. If critical analysis is to be precise, if close reading is to provide substantially fixed and determinate structures of meaning, one must presume—like the logical positivists—that signification exceeds the ambiguity of subjective judgement and that a "correct" reading implicitly exists. Where the Russian formalists asserted the limiting criteria of form, the New Critical assertion of the closed text in fact bequeathed form its own history and the individual his own historical form. Detached from the psychological intentionality of the author, the justification for right and wrong readings in poetry, where the criterion of logical sense does not hold, must draw succour from the historical precedence of the canon. Right readings and wrong readings do exist, and they should be drawn solely from the poem itself. But at the same time, the theoretical possibility of such a claim must inevitably draw upon a sense of historical continuity, and the continuity of signification to which the concept of tradition attests. In the absence of semiotics, it is the impersonal continuity of tradition which justifies determinate knowledge of literary texts for the New Critics.

It is quite remarkable to consider the similarity one finds here between the New Critical perspective and that of hermeneutics. In both cases one finds the forces of history being cast in a thoroughly impersonal light. We never have our meaning alone, it is "almost entirely of the literary history that came before you" Hulme writes. Hulme was clearly no less attached to the principle of a living tradition than Gadamer.[33] Nevertheless, hermeneutics' false association with romanticism assured hermeneutics' exclusion from the realm of criticism proper for years to come.

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[33] Of course the most compelling affinity between hermeneutical exegesis and New Critical interpretation is the emphasis upon the text as it stands, in and of itself. In neither instance does the edict of close reading pose a challenge to the claim for historical understanding. To read the work in

Even if one ignores the politics—the fact that New Criticism began roughly in 1919 (with Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent") and ended even more approximately in 1949 (with Wimsatt and Beardsley's essay "The Affective Fallacy"), that it spanned three decades of elevated nationalism, insularity and suspicion, that its most esteemed practitioners occupied the centre Right and in some cases the extreme Right–then the intellectual success of close reading coupled with its strong pedagogical and dogmatic traits were reason enough to deprive Continental trends of a receptive audience in Britain and America. When European theory finally set alight the English-speaking world, a radical shift was most certainly encountered. And yet the radicality of this transition belied the continuation of certain cultural precedents; with its translation at Yale, deconstruction acquired a decisively Anglophile inflection, so much so, that it would not be inapposite to be speak of "New Criticism at Yale", and with it, the perpetuation of a romantic prejudice against hermeneutics. Nowhere is this attitude more apparent than in the de Manian deconstruction of the romantic symbol and the romantic ideology of transcendence.

Within the culture of literary theory, philosophical hermeneutics has suffered the false repute of romanticism. In the stark polemic of subject and text, the claim for hermeneutical truths within the work of literature was read in terms of an essential naivety, a failure to comprehend the reality of our verbal intransigence, our thorough immersion within the global text. But in Ricoeur's poststructural hermeneutics, linguistic mediation presents the fundamental pre-requisite of philosophical knowledge. In order to understand this possibility it is necessary to turn to Heidegger, to the ontological transformation of hermeneutical understanding in *Being and Time*, and to the reconfiguration of poetic truth in his later writings. As we have said, modern hermeneutics without Heidegger is virtually unthinkable, but his influence upon deconstruction is no less important. In order to understand this common heritage and the divergences to which it led, it is necessary to consider both Ricoeur's critical relation to Heidegger and the wider cultural debate provoked by his name.

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isolation, free from the contextual details of historicist criticism, does not discredit the claim for the work's continuity within an historical continuum. The fact is that the work is so thoroughly a part of this continuum, that with the projection of extra-textual details, concerning the author or the socio-political environment of the day, one risks distorting the impersonal or unconscious historical forces at work within the text. In this respect, the projection of a conscious historical logic is rather like the self-illusions of the ego in psychoanalysis. In this context, the prescience of Gadamer's critique of a "misguided Kantianism" is that it locates the historical accident which ensured the segregation of two relatively sympathetic modes of reading.

CHAPTER THREE

RICOEUR AND ONTOLOGY

> Push the rock of Sisyphus up again, restore the ontological ground that methodology has eroded away.[1]

Whilst Ricoeur's detour away from a purist phenomenology echoed the wider trend away from Husserl's totalising idealism and the problems inherent to an existential praxis, his formulation of a decisively syncretic, dialectical hermeneutics was in marked contrast to the attitude of radical questioning and partisanship more commonly associated with the age of a social and intellectual "legitimation crisis". In a time of apocalyptic proclamations concerning the "end of philosophy" and the dawn of "posthumanisms", the less assiduous reader could have been forgiven for mistaking the smooth idiom of Ricoeurian mediation for the painstakingly protracted acquittal of the old rational-humanist foundations. Although Ricoeur's collection of essays does reflect the period's preoccupations both in title and content, *The Conflict of Interpretations* is in many ways an indictment of prevailing attitudes *vis á vis* philosophy. On the one hand, Ricoeur acknowledges the indubitable constraints under which a post-Freudian, post-Marxist and post-semiotic hermeneutics must operate. But contrary to the scepticism of the day he seeks, through the operations of Heideggerian ontology, phenomenology and hermeneutics, to translate these epistemological constraints into a series of onto-phenomenological assertions which ultimately honour the tradition of reflective philosophy. In the essays devoted to semiology, to ontology and to Freudian interpretation therefore, what we appear to find is not so much a conflict in the model of a partisan attack or defence, but rather an earnest attempt at synthesis, in which the undeniable blows of modern thought and modern history serve to transform, not transgress philosophical parameters. Thanks to his transformative appropriations—of the Freudian ego and Heidegger's analytic of

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[1] Ricoeur, "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology", *The Hermeneutic Tradition; From Ast to Ricoeur*, ed. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift, State University of New York Press, State University of New York, 1990, p.311.

Dasein—"Ricoeur's contribution is, in effect, to have "'desubjectivised' subjectivity".[2] Writing retrospectively on this work, Ricoeur would state that

> The tone is polemical, to be sure, but the conflicts are so completely internalized that I can say that the figure that emerges from them is that of a militant and wounded *Cogito*.[3]

This degree of "internalization", like the hermeneutic reputation as a whole, is frequently condemned for being overly irenic, for seeking to incorporate and synthesise too much, with the effect that it ultimately says too little. Given the gulf between Ricoeur's hermeneutic inheritance (German idealism, Diltheyesque psychologism) and the theoretical anti-humanism surrounding him, one may be forgiven for expecting the figure of the wounded *cogito* to represent a kind of relativistic and vague gesture towards a minimal consciousness. But the wounded *cogito*, whilst it might sound like a form of compromise in the context of anti-humanism and structural determinism, is in fact nothing of the sort. Ricoeur is no "survivor" of subjectivity, and nor does his path through the philosophical landscape constitute a form of compromise, haphazard analogy or dialectical straining.

In order to understand the justification for this mode of "internalised conflict" and the possibility of the "wounded *cogito*", it is necessary to chart Ricoeur's relation to Heidegger over and against the latter's dominant characterisations at that time. In "Existence and Hermeneutics", the introductory essay to *The Conflict* and its general statement of intent, Ricoeur projects the methodology of his procedure. To all intents and purposes it appears to be a highly programmatic affair. Within the Ricoeurian hermeneutic one moves through discernable phases of analysis. Starting from a consideration of semantic concerns (relating to the production of meaning within human discourse, within competing discourses), one moves to what he terms a reflective level (a level of self-awareness regarding our implication within their discourses) and finally an existential level (where we may assess the nature of our existence). As a pre-formulated system, a projection from above as it were, nothing could be more anachronistic within the dominant context of anti-foundationalism. To

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[2] G.B Madison, "Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of the Subject", *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, The Library of Living Philosophers, Volume XXII, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn, Open Court, Chicago, 1995, p.77.

[3] Ricoeur, "Intellectual Autobiography", *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, *ibid.* p.23.

presuppose such a method is surely to presuppose the kind of self-certifying clarity against which hermeneutics, and the entire paradigm of hermeneutical "suspicion"—in Freud, Marx and Nietzsche, in Lacan and the textualist inversions of structural semiotics—operates? The idea that we may disambiguate discursive traits and reflective traits, in the manner assumed by Schleiermacher (grammar and psychology) is simply wrong-headed within the context of anti-intentionalism. Moreover, it is the kind of analysis one would least expect from a self-professed Heideggerian.

3.2

Being and Time; Hermeneutic Phenomenology

For the "romantic" hermeneuts Schleiermacher and Dilthey, the path to hermeneutical knowledge was premised upon an opposition between understanding and explanation; for both thinkers, hermeneutical understanding was opposed to the methodological formulations of the explanatory sciences. This led to the rejection of historical method and linguistic analysis and the elevation of psychological determinates. Had it not been for Heidegger, hermeneutics may very well have lost its distinction as an independent discipline, disappearing somewhere in the gulf between historicism and Husserlian phenomenology. Of course the ontological project of *Being and Time* aimed at refuting both of these positions as the product of a misguided metaphysics. The mistake of metaphysics was to position humanity at the centre of all meaning, at the centre of an entirely neutral world, significant solely through the prism of human judgement (Kant) or equally, through the innate capacity to reflect this world steadily within the mind's eye (Descartes). In the forgetfulness of the question of Being and ontology, epistemology founds itself upon the assumption that we know what Being is, constructing its methodologies upon the assumed identity of this entity. The point for Heidegger of course is that Being is not an entity but rather the precondition for any thinking of entities whatsoever. Both historicism and Husserlianism reflect this anthropocentric attitude towards the world. Historicism obscures the question of historical existence in the projection of an all too static relationship between the investigator and the past. The past is treated as a fixed

determination within the present, something which the investigator, in his presumed identity, may turn in his hand with the detachment proper to natural objects. The naivety of this position is what romantic hermeneutics sought—and failed—to satisfactorily redress. The Husserlian method of bracketing is an attempt to move beyond the falsity of this view, to recognise the co-implication of history and human historicity, and from there on transcend the distortions of subjective judgement. In the process of bracketing Husserl presumes to strip away the veils of habituated prejudice, the velleities of the subject and the blindnesses of our historical location, to reveal a more "original" stratum of impersonal consciousness, in essence, a transcendental condition for historical consciousness. From a Heideggerian and a hermeneutical perspective, transcendental phenomenology repeats the central mistake of idealism; by stripping away all historical determinations, the Husserlian *epoché* presumes to treat consciousness as an absolute, as a principle over and above the world and the objects it houses. After reduction, Ricoeur writes,

> ...every being is a meaning for consciousness and, as such, is relative to consciousness. The reduction thus places the Husserlian *cogito* at the heart of the idealistic tradition by extending the Cartesian *cogito*, the Kantian *cogito*, the Fichtean *cogito*.[4]

What Heidegger and his hermeneutical allies recognised in Husserl was the imperceptible transformation by which the desire to access the originality and purity of experience transforms the neutrality of the existent into a self-reflexive foundation.

In the naming of *Dasein*, of our *being-there*, Heidegger rejected the claim for any pre-historical transcendental principle of consciousness and the aspiration for an objective science of man. Both of these aspirations according to Heidegger, belong to an epoch of forgetfulness (metaphysics), in which the ontological question of Being has been subsumed by an epistemological desire to make man transparent to himself. This drive for self-mastery feeds and is in turn fed by the determination of philosophical truth as an essential and self-present identity (*veritas*). Within all dualist epistemologies, truth constitutes an identity between subject and object, between thought and its representations. Like the transcendental consciousness, the truth of *veritas* stands before

[4] Ricoeur, "The Question of the Subject: The Challenge of Semiology", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde, Continuum, London, 2004, p.251.

and outside of time. It is this atemporal conception of truth which leads Husserl to associate the postulate of a pre-subjective consciousness with a pre-*historical* horizon of intelligibility and to thereby attempt to treat consciousness as if it stood outside of time, like any other object free for scientific analysis.

But of course consciousness is not an object like any other, indeed it is not an object at all, and this is where Dilthey got it correct. Consciousness is ineluctably caught-up within the historical movements it seeks to capture. In many ways they are one and the same phenomenon. Anthropocentric or instrumental attitudes towards the world disguise *Dasein's* temporal character, fixing being as the self-evident core of human consciousness. For Dilthey, unable to escape the dualisms of his day, the claim for historical understanding involved a necessary opposition to objective science and to the entrenchment of an unsatisfactory psychologism.[5] But for Heidegger historicality is by no means an appeal to the subject, nor does it imply that historical knowledge should be in anyway relativistic. On the contrary, like the Husserlian transcendental consciousness, the proposition of *Dasein*, is pre-subjective.[6] The critical difference of course is that this pre-subjective level of consciousness is innately historical, and that whilst it assumes a formal precedence over subjectivity, there exists between the two an ever-constant exchange, an historical process of exhange which prevents *Dasein* from constituting anything like a definitive foundation.

For Heidegger consciousness can never be fully present to itself precisely because it is historically constituted and because these profound temporal relations constitute the very fabric of what it is to know and feel as *Dasein*. The word *Dasein* (da-sein) describes the being-there or the "throwness" of human being. Ricoeur writes that

> In speaking of "*Dasein*" Heidegger did not only replace the concepts of subjectivity, self–awareness and the transcendental ego by a new word of striking force; by elevating the time–horizon of human existence, an existence that knows itself to be finite (i.e., is certain of its end), to the

[5] The much maligned premise of psychologism, that epistemological questions can be answered through empirical analysis of cognitive processes, was not Dilthey's alone. Moreover, whilst Dilthey did at times veer towards this position, it did so as a consequence of his wider commitment to the Kantian division of pure and practical reason, to the belief that only some aspects of human understanding are accessible to scientific reason. Gadamer attributes Dilthey's tendency towards psychologism to the fact that he "was never really reconciled with his firmly held Cartesian conception of science". Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Continuum, London, 2004, p.249.

[6] Husserl's transcendental consciousness and Heidegger's *Dasein* are both names for a universal condition for consciousness.

> rank of philosophical concept, he transcended the understanding of Being that was the basis of Greek metaphysics.[7]

Metaphysics agrees that history fields the constraints of our intellectual and mortal finitude. Yet by transforming these constraints into a defining characteristic of *Dasein's* ontological structure, Heidegger transforms the "problem" of historical knowledge into something constitutive of knowledge. Without historical parameters there is no consciousness, *ergo* consciousness cannot be treated as some historically independent or static entity. Both knowledge of our death in the future and knowledge of the past exert their pressure, circumscribing the experience of *Dasein* as a being-there rather than any fulsome self-presence. *Dasein* is rather the point at which these multiple trajectories converge.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger introduces the project of fundamental ontology as a *hermeneutics* of facticity, and as a *hermeneutic* phenomenology. The critical distinction which hermeneutics brings to phenomenology is clear to see; phenomenology entails a "reading" and an interpretation of the historical movements of consciousness, furthermore it is to be an exegesis of facticity, of life itself, not a science devoted to the projection of some inexponable and distant essence. Moreover the constitution of historical understanding follows the path laid out in the classical template of the hermeneutical circle. Just as textual interpretation entails the progressive to-ing and fro-ing between part and whole, so in Heidegger the pattern of interpretation becomes the template for self-understanding between the horizons of one's birth and death.

Dasein Heidegger tells us, is that being for which being—and indeed Being—is an issue for it. Only humans, with their capacity to reflect upon their situation, question the conditions of their existence. *Dasein's* fundamental constitution is thereby governed by its questioning relationship with Being, its fundamental character by the aspect of its temporal relations and the uniquely human concern or "Care" which these relations solicit. By linking this concern to the question of our death, and to *Dasein's* perceived anticipation of totality or self-completion, Heidegger ensured Care be understood primarily in terms of a temporal movement, a "productive" to-ing and fro-ing, a circular enlargement of the understanding, but one which is necessarily confined to the historically mediated remit of mortal finitude and historical situation. Thus *Dasein's*

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[7] Gadamer, *Heidegger's Ways*, trans. John W. Stanley, State University of New York Press, New York, 1994, p.124.

unique concern is a concomitant trait of its temporal character. By transforming the Kantian principle of phenomenality into the historico-ontological proposition of *Dasein's* inability to "step outside" and grasp the totality of its existence, *Dasein's* historicality refutes the possibility of a transcendental principle. In the characterisation of Care's reflective aspect—its looking forwards and backwards, which Heidegger calls the *Rückbezogenheit*, the "relatedness backward" which determines the historical movement and relational structure of *Dasein's* "thrown" existence—the hermeneutic model of circular understanding was transformed into an ontological trait, uniting *Dasein's* ontology in the historical process of understanding.

Now the truth of *Dasein* is its historical constitution. Because this truth can only account for itself from within the movements of its own historical relation, Heidegger is moved to call upon an alternative concept of truth to the one presumed by science. This is the older truth of *Aletheia,* of disclosure or unconcealment named by the Ancient Greeks. What the notions of unconcealment and disclosure convey is the fundamentally hermeneutical characterisation of understanding as a process or an event. Because *Dasein* is historically constituted, truth's disclosure must necessarily take the form of a simultaneous revealment and concealment, a kind of vacillating movement within which the constraining factors of one's historicality—the limited range of one's perceptions, the prejudices and traditions to which one is blind, the "horizon" as Gadamer calls it, of one's interpretation—also provide the means to glimpsing something of the ontological nature of being. In this way, human understanding follows the golden template outlined in the traditions of legal and scriptural exegesis.

3.3

HEIDEGGER'S FRENCH RECEPTIONS

Consigning hermeneutics the task of a fundamental ontology, Heidegger provided the discipline a more resolute philosophical theme, and a radical departure from the vexed and increasingly narrow issue of method in the human sciences. In its rejection of metaphysics (defined in a uniquely Heideggerian way) *Being and Time* could be seen to chime in accord with the anti-foundationalist, even anti-philosophical

sentiments of early twentieth century France. But in another very real sense, *Being and Time* represented the rally-cry for a philosophical renaissance, a return to philosophy's long-lost dominion over other disciplines and a staunch rejection of scientific methodology within the humanities. Indeed, against the Heideggerian backdrop, scientific objectivity arises as something of a special case, an exception not an exemplar:

> Science is anything but a fact from which to start. Rather, the constitution of the scientific world presents a special task, namely of clarifying the idealization that is endemic to science.[8]

For the first readers of *Être et temps* its immediate prescience resided in the themes of authenticity and *Dasein's* comportment towards the world, in passages which clearly evoked the themes of existentialism, such as Heidegger's pronouncement that "the question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself."[9] In Gadamer's words, initial readers were

> seized by the vehemence of its passionate protest against the secured cultural world of the older generation and the levelling of all individual forms of life by industrial society.[10]

Such approbation was essentially misguided however and the French response exacerbated Heidegger's own sense that *Being and Time* had failed in its attempts to uproot the sovereignty of the subject. Where the French had failed to appreciate the pre-subjective and impersonal nature of *Dasein*, Heidegger himself admitted to placing *Dasein* in a position all too easily assimilable to the subjectivity of anthropocentric epistemology. Whilst *Dasein* undercut the supposition of an essentialist foundation within consciousness, its position at the very centre of *Being and Time* allowed it to operate as a mechanism of self-reflection, as if pre-understanding (the groundless fore-knowledge which shapes *Dasein*'s historical movement) were itself a stratum of

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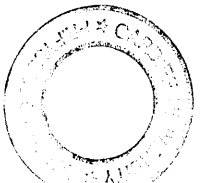
[8] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Continuum, London, 2004, p.249.
[9] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Blackwell, London, 2005, p.33.
[10] Gadamer, "The Truth of the Work of Art", *Heidegger's Ways*, trans. John W. Stanley, State University of New York Press, State University of New York, 1994, p.96.



subjectivity to be self-consciously evoked, in the manner of Sartrean existence or authenticity.

> ...Heidegger's critique of the concept of consciousness, which, through a radical ontological *Destruktion* showed that idealism of consciousness in its totality was really an alienated form of Greek thinking, and which boldly confronted the overtly formal, neo–Kantian element in Husserl's phenomenology, was not a complete breakthrough. For what he called the "fundamental ontology of Dasein" could not—despite all the temporal analyses of how Dasein is constitutes as *Sorge* ["Care"]—overcome its own self-reference and hence a fundamental positing of self-consciousness.[11]

When Sartre himself claimed solidarity with the project of fundamental ontology, Heidegger was moved to renounce the affiliation in no uncertain terms and to drop the nomenclature of *Dasein* altogether. Whilst Sartrean philosophy accords with Heidegger's conception of *Dasein*'s temporal constitution, with the becoming of Being, against a transcendental or essentialist view of human being, there is for Sartre "no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity."[12] According consciousness this foundational role, Sartre repeats a form of Cartesianism whereby human being evinces its own realisation through decisive action. Upon this teleological view, of agency and causality, the world becomes a kind of blank canvas for the activities of a subject-creator. Such a view is naturally antipathetic to Heidegger. In the "Letter on Humanism" the mistake of humanism was forcefully clarified, Sartre's outstretched palm resolutely rejected. And with this clarification came a more overt attack upon instrumentalist attitudes. Mistakenly, "[W]e view action only as causing an effect. The actuality of the effect is valued according to its utility."

> But the essence of action is accomplishment. To accomplish means to unfold something into the fullness of its essence, to lead it forth in this

[11] Gadamer, "*Destruktion* and Deconstruction", trans. Geoff White and Richard Palmer, *Heidegger Reexamined*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall, Routledge, 2002, p.74. Paper originally presented in Rome, 1985.

[12] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism", originally delivered by lecture in 1946, reproduced in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman, trans. Philip Mairet, Penguin, New York, 1989. p.368.

> fullness-*producere*. Therefore only what already is can really be accomplished. But what "is" above all is Being.[13]

From the perspective of fundamental ontology, Sartrean anthropocentrism is really no less detrimental to the question of Being than the kind of theoretical scepticism, structural and scientific determinism to which it was so obviously opposed. All such attitudes emerge from the same epochal fall into forgetfulness, where onto-theology gives way to the categories of technocratic thought. The fact that humanism and theoreticism should represent antithetical modes of forgetfulness and obfuscation only points to their unity within the binary logic of this subsequent realm.

If we relinquish the causal view of activity as something that affects human identity, and consider its designation as accomplishment, we realise that as accomplishment, or *unfolding*, action is a form of disclosure or completion. Since unfolding presupposes *something,* and this something cannot yet be called subjectivity since its achievement depends upon the fulfilment of the unfolding, this something must simply be called Being. Subjectivity is constituted through its relation to Being; its cause is anterior and extraneous therefore. Human freedom stems from an already existing possibility which action discloses in its fulfilment.

In a move which echoes the emphasis on *Dasein* as our particular relation to Being, Heidegger proceeds to single out *thinking* as the specific action or accomplishment relating human consciousness to Being. Thinking is *the* action, over and above those forms implicated in Existentialism—where actions proceed to define identities and to confirm consciousness as the foundation of being—which "accomplishes the relation of Being to the essence of Man". Unlike Existential activity, thinking is not causally productive. Rather than cause or define the subject's relation to Being, thinking exposes what is already there, as it unfolds in the process. To refer back to the lived experience of *Being and Time*, thinking is just such a lived experience in that it is a form of immersion over and above the productive activity of habituated, technological attitudes. The relation to Being is realised in its character through thinking. Therefore thinking relates us to Being, expressing something essential concerning this relationship. Since thought cannot accomplish itself without language, language must play a decisive role in our relation to Being. Crucially,

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[13] Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, trans. Edgar Lohner, reproduced in *European Existentialism*, ed. Nino Langiulli, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1997, pp. 204-245.

Man's linguistic relation to Being should not be thought of in terms of mediation. Language does not mediate like some conveyor of messages, it does not represent Being or relay Being into human understanding, and it is not a substituted representative of Being. Rather, it presences Being, it is the enabling condition for the relation between Being and subjectivity, the possibility of Being's disclosure to human consciousness and the possibility for human understanding in terms of its relation to Being. It is not merely the case that language carries meaning, that Being is presented to our understanding *through* language, it is the fact that Being presents itself *as* language; "Being comes to language" in the activity of thinking. Language is principle to human being since it expresses our relation to Being such as it discloses itself in thought therefore. When Heidegger comes to characterise his work not as phenomenological hermeneutics, not as philosophy even, but as "thinking", it is because thinking is the pre-eminent action through which Being is said to disclose itself. Being's significance cannot be understood unless it is understood to be presented as language, consequently, the turn to language is simultaneous with the revised idiom of *thinking*.

The *Kehre*

By popular French consensus, Heidegger's self-professed turn or *Kehre*, with its idiomatic shift to "thinking" and "being", and eventually to philosophy's poetic margins, testified to a renewed but essentially different kind of coup on Descartes. For the second wave of French Heideggerians, who read *Being and Time* in the context of "The Letter on Humanism" and the wider theoretical landscape therefore, Heidegger was a consummate post-humanist; *Dasein*'s failure to surpass the scourge of metaphysics was squarely equated with a failure to uproot the Cartesian *cogito*.

In the context of France's own preoccupations it makes a great deal of sense to interpret the *Kehre* predominantly in terms of this discontinuity. French philosophy is built upon Teutonic pillars, but it has never failed to assimilate these giants—Hegel, Kant, Husserl, Nietzsche—in accordance with its own preferences and preoccupations (Cartesianism, Marxism), dictating the terms upon which these master–philosophers are met. And in the period of Heidegger's French receptions the pendulum of

intellectual persuasion swung from one decisive extreme to another. Tom Rockmore's analysis of the French Heidegger quite rightly situates the humanist debate within the context of France's rationalist tradition. "In French circles",

> Descartes is understood less as an epistemologist than as a humanist whose idea of reason dominates the later Enlightenment debate culminating in Kant's critical philosophy and continuing in our own time.[14]

Such a context certainly helps to explain the perception of radical discontinuity between the early and later Heidegger and also the deceptive complexity of a humanist/post–humanist debate. By this logic a renewed flight from the *cogito* signifies the dawn of new poststructuralist energies, filtered through Nietzsche, extracted by Derrida. Yet even as the self-profession of *Dasein's* failure seemed to reflect a distinctively French tendency for drastic revision, easily explicable within a narrative of growing radicality and postmodern irrationality, Heidegger's significance to French thought today is not and cannot be partitioned into separate spheres of influence, as if the *Destruktion* of the metaphysical framework was not, in its originality and ultimate failure, the most important precursor to the dominant themes of deconstruction. Derrida's literary idiom may speak more immediately to the later Heidegger, but is it not true that the founding aporia of deconstruction—the infinite deferral of *différance*, the fateful entrapment of metaphysics—are themes which Heidegger himself could only presage through the *failure* of *Dasein*?

Such questions cannot be answered here with any degree of satisfaction, but nor can they be forgotten in the context of the present analysis. This is because Derrida's validation of the later Heidegger, and his renunciation of "metaphysical Nazism", cannot fail to be significant in his popular representation as a post-humanist and an anti-realist, and as a consequence, in the propagation of a false polarity between hermeneutic and deconstructive interpretation within a post-Heideggerian age.

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[14] Tom Rockmore, *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Antihumanism, and Being*, Routledge, London, p.66.

3.4

FRANCE AND THE "HEIDEGGER QUESTION"

Forty nine years after *Sein und Zeit's* French publication in 1938, the floodgates were publicly opened on the question of Heidegger's war-time sympathies with the publication of Victor Farias' book *Heidegger et le Nazisme*. In Germany Heidegger's Nazi complicity was evident almost from the start, but still in France it was far from a new discovery either. Within academe the "Heidegger question" had rumbled quietly and consistently for many years, but speculation within the ivory tower proved no match for the populist outrage ignited by Farias.[15] Philosophers were ushered forward to explain, not only how—two years before occupation—France could have welcomed the pronouncements of a Nazi, but also how philosophy—as *the* discourse of intellectual scrutiny and conceptual purity—could have missed, apparently for so long, the ideological stain at the heart of this abiding enthusiasm. The "Heidegger question" in France as it arose in the 1980s was thus closely bound to the issue of philosophy's status within the Enlightenment tradition which Heidegger had himself condemned.

The details of Heidegger's French reception perhaps made the acknowledgement of his guilt more painful in France than in Germany, and not only because war retards the flow and translation of evidence between nations. Heidegger's war-time pronouncements as *Direktor-Führer* at Freiburg University were unequivocal acts of Nazi participation. But Heidegger in post-war Germany was one more—albeit high profile—criminal in a nation swathed by guilt: recrimination and punishment, the divestment of office and exile from public-life, formed part of a systematic process of de-Nazification. In France, where Heidegger's rectoral pronouncements were known only later, Nazi guilt was a rumour speculated upon solely amongst the most engaged Heideggerians. But it was not this late disclosure in itself which pained French philosophy as much as the fact that in its absence, France had adopted Heidegger as the father of its philosophical future, not once, but twice (once as existentialist and a second time as proto-deconstructionist). It is no small paradox—and no small failure for "philosophy"—that France first embraced

[15] Farias' book has been widely criticised as a piece of poor scholarship, sometimes through genuine concern but frequently as a means of deflecting the question it raises.

Heidegger in the spirit of Sartrean existentialism, interpreting *Dasein* through the lens of a socialist-humanist *praxis*. Retrospectively naive and horribly mistaken, there was none the less apparent and considerable justification for it at the time.

For the contemporary reader of *Être et temps* its immediate prescience resided in the themes of authenticity and *Dasein*'s comportment towards the world and others, in passages where, for example, Heidegger writes that "the question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself", and not in passages where say, the inhumanity of *Dasein* rises to challenge the flawed epistemology of the Subject, and the critique of existence extends beyond the existentialist critique of rationalism to assert the radical premise of an ontological "destruction". [16]

French readers specifically, could not be expected to recognise a fascistic undertone in the character of Heideggerian individualism, authenticity or fate, when such themes appeared to cohere so fluently with the home-grown vocabulary of existentialism, the avant-garde and the intellectual Left. Given the details of the French context at that time, it is possible to see how Heidegger's rejection of the "secure" cultural and industrial world of his forebears, could be misconstrued as a version of Sartrean authenticity, where the individual rallies against the constraints of the liberalist institution, and not in terms of its reality, as a form of Nietzschean assertion, compounded by National Socialism's intellectualist currents. Against the biological ideologues, the Nazi's Röhm faction, sought, like Heidegger, to promote Nazism as a philosophically venerable agenda. Strongly influenced by a bowdlerised version of the thought of Nietzsche, they proscribed the mythical confection of the Hellenic Fatherland, based upon a supremacy of culture, eschatologically underwritten in terms of an exclusive Greek destiny reserved only for the most powerful and the most Germanic. Sartre himself perceived an affinity with Heidegger where in reality there were merely common foes (liberal Man with his rationalist foundations, his ideology of progress, his inauthenticity) and assumed the humanist agenda as Heidegger's own. Doubtless, France's recent liberations from the great Cartesian bogeyman, most notably in the fields of anthropology and psychoanalysis, would have had a significant impact upon the way in which *Dasein* was interpreted there. The radicality of these disciplines lay in their departure from reflective

[16] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2005, p.33

philosophy and their promises of a more rigorous science of man. Their radicality lay in *replacing* the stable rationality of the *cogito* with a plenum of unstable, irrational socio-cultural, socio-institutional, tribal and historical interferences which could none the less be predicated and observed according to scientific procedure. Fundamentally, they still supposed the originality of the subjective stratum of experience, which the analytic of *Dasein* intended to dissolve. Given *Dasein's* historical structure it would be all too easy to assume an identity between it and the subject of an anthropological paradigm.

However, France's humiliation at the hands of Heidegger lies not in the misunderstanding of *Dasein*'s originality, but in its acquiescence to Heidegger's calculated encroachment after this point, when certain French philosophers, most notably the purported addressee of the "Letter on Humanism", Jean Beaufret, discipled themselves—unquestioningly in Beaufret's case—to a newly assumed post-humanism.[17] On the one hand Heidegger claimed Sartre to have misinterpreted *Being and Time* and to have failed to recognise the true radicality of the metaphysical *Destruktion*, but on the other, Heidegger asserted *Dasein*'s failure to access this very radicality; in comparison to Sartrean existence *Dasein* was radical, and yet it was not radical enough.

In recent years a good deal of scholarship has focussed upon Heidegger's pragmatic manipulation of the French intelligentsia, both in the "Letter" and elsewhere. Buoyed in the up-draft of Sartre's descent, Heidegger's "Letter" was an intellectual reproof communicating sincere convictions but it was also a conscious political act intended to increase his visibility in France and prepare the way for his political exoneration there. Anson Rabinbach writes that "The *Letter* exemplifies Heidegger's characteristic ability to assume a position of the highest philosophical rigor while positioning himself in the most opportune political light".[18]This of course was the light of philosophical purity, designed specifically with France, and the recent existential controversy in mind. In the 1940s, when Heidegger's politics were not widely known abroad, the damning documentary evidence not yet unearthed, France's

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[17] Richard Wolin suggests Beaufret's success in defending Heidegger against detractors' suspicions lay less in his intellectual force and more in his unimpeachable example as a former conscientious objector. The argument going that a man of such rectitude would not support a man of such moral turpitude. See Richard Wolin, "The French Heidegger Debate", New German Critique, No. 45, Autumn 1988, pp.135-161.

[18] Anson Rabinbach, "Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* as Text and Event", *New German Critique*, No. 62, Spring–Summer, 1994, p. 6.

misread enthusiasm provided the perfect foothold for a man increasingly unwelcome in his own land looking for reprieve elsewhere.[19] Sartre's mistake, and Beaufret's repetition of it, provided Heidegger the opportune platform from whence to "revise" (some might say "distort") the ideological implications of his philosophy on the basis of an intellectual correction.

The complicity of personal politics and Politics, politics and intellectual precision are the hallmarks of the "Letter". This complicity not only stands at the heart of the "Heidegger question" and the issue of Heidegger's philosophical worth, but also the very question to which all philosopher's have since been compelled, namely the very possibility of philosophy after Auschwitz. And it remains especially significant within the context of French poststructuralism, where Heidegger represents both a hateful nadir and the hopeful scion of its overcoming. The complicity of intellectual clarification, the continuation of thinking in its highest order, with degenerate madness and murderous perversion, is inexcusably vile. Interpretation of the "Letter" remains pivotal to Heidegger's repute, but for this insurmountable reason it must also remain important wherever thought shows a dependency on his influence.

France's leading Heideggerians did not wait to be called to justify Heidegger's intellectual validity. Before the Farias furore of the 1980s Derrida and Lacoue-Labarthe had both authored premonitory responses to the issue of Heideggerian complicity. Both deploy what sceptics may call a strategy of containment. In "The Ends of Man" Derrida's strategy is to exonerate the influence of Heidegger's later work by asserting the discontinuity of his earlier thought. Heidegger's Nazism could not be denied and nor could it be disentangled from the project of *Being and Time*. Containment of the political Heidegger relies upon an anthropological rendering of *Dasein*. Heidegger's failure to transcend man's end with the closure of metaphysics, his inability to exceed metaphysical thinking is linked directly to his Nazism. Given his absolute centrality within French poststructuralism, we can only speculate the extent to which French philosophers needed, for their own pride, to exonerate the later Heidegger. Whilst Heidegger's Nazism could not be separated from the project of *Being and Time*, it was possible to exonerate the influence of the later Heidegger by asserting the discontinuity of his earlier thought.

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[19] Ironically enough, in its capitulation to Heidegger, France can be seen to have embraced the less progressive option within German intellectualism. In Germany itself, critical theorists such as Adorno reviled Heidegger for the dangerously "anesthetizing" effect of his language. See Rabinbach, p.5.

Arguing for the validation of his post-war thought in this way is, as Rabinbach points out, remarkably orthodox to Heidegger's own intentions. In Derrida's "The Ends of Man" containment of the political Heidegger relies upon the very anthropological rendering of *Dasein* which Heidegger reproves (both himself and Sartre for) in the "Letter". Heidegger's Nazism is thus directly linked to the philosophical failure of the analytic of *Dasein* to overcome the *anthropos* of the metaphysical age. Perversely therefore, it is *Dasein's* residual subjectivity—in its proximity to Being, in the unavoidable self-reference—and Heidegger's residual *humanism* which is claimed to lead him to Nazism.

3.5

POETIC FREEDOM OF ANOTHER KIND

As a continuation of the ontological project, Heidegger's work on poetry was never intended as a "mere" poetics to stand alongside other such works. Its ambitions were every bit as grandiose as those of *Being and Time*; not a dialogue with the literary critical tradition but a gesture of utter dissolution, intended to sweep away the entire edifice upon which this tradition rested. Thus it was the conditions that fostered critical practice, shaping the questions it asked and the self-perceptions of its task, which Heidegger attacked. To this extent literary criticism was just one misguided symptom of the totality he sought to undo.

In my introduction I expressed reservations regarding the self-perceptions of Anglo-American literary theory (conceived as a pedagogic unity) and the ideological prejudices it presumes to have overcome. In its propagation as a coherent narrative (albeit one which readily concedes to the mixed character of its discourse) I suggest, the discipline of Literary Theory projects the same kind of teleocratic aspirations for which it condemns the prejudices of Enlightenment values.[20] As a narrative of increasing liberation, from the illusions of rationalism (of the self-certifying or self-creating ego), from the inconsistencies of subjective critique, the contradictions of historicism and the

[20] As the roots of this word suggest, "teleocractic" refers to the assumption that knowledge (in this context in the human sciences), can be pursued in view of predetermined objectives, and by implication, that even interpretive knowledge can be made to follow a linear progression.

limitations of formalism, literary theory posits the unveiling of the final illusion, namely the impossibility of ever actually doing away with illusion. In its final claim for openness, for indeterminacy and linguisticality, literary theory betrays a strong debt to Heidegger, but it also manages in the process to contradict virtually everything Heidegger himself decreed. What follows is not a defence of Heideggerian poetics, but rather an attempt to locate—from the source as it were—some of the deep-seated affinities which unite philosophical hermeneutics in its postructural, post-Heideggerian form, with the philosophical discourse of deconstruction, over and against the latent presuppositions of a unified literary theoretical, literary deconstructive practice.

Truth

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935-6) Heidegger projects his well-known thesis against instrumental attitudes. As products of our metaphysical tradition, we in the West interact with the world in an essentially anthropocentric and technocratic manner, treating our environment as a field of potential utility. And this attitude extends to the work of art. Critics, historians, aestheticians, in fact all of us treat the work of art as if it were a commodity for our consumption. Devoid of any usefulness in the ordinary sense, the work of art comprises a commodity of the intellectual kind, a kind of exercise in interpretive dexterity intended to replicate a pre-conceived set of ideas and associations. Upon this basis we approach the work of art as if it were a well of fixed proportions awaiting our excavation, as if that is, the work of art possessed a pre-determined and pre-existent content, ministered by the artist, consciously or unconsciously so, ready for our extraction as a determined message or content. In this way the critic replicates the prejudices of metaphysical dualism, treating the work as a culturally determined object, and what is more, an object in which form and content can be dismantled as the merely temporary union of the artist's endeavours. Whilst the work is granted a certain privileged distinction as regards this union, the critic's mode of interpretation ultimately works to circumscribe the artwork as just one more cultural artefact amongst an array of non-aesthetic objects. Like the legal document or the archaeological relic, the work works to confirm the logic of a cultural order of things; a deeply anthropocentric history of human progress and its correlate artefacts. In this light the critic acquires the role of cultural arbiter, piecing together the grand historical jigsaw of cultural conditions within which the most exemplary works of art must fit.

Accordingly the work's value is judged upon the basis of its conformity to this cultural narrative or lack thereof, the approach to the work of art predetermined by these incipient pressures.

Of course, this critique can be extended to the dominant strategies of literary criticism, where the literary work is filtered through the lens of a given interpretive context as an expression of latent drives or embedded imperialism, or the archetype of a given genre. [21] As much as these interpretations can and do expose certain truths regarding the production of literature or the dissimulating powers of language say, the overall tendency serves to neutralise those unique characteristics of the individual work which perhaps do not conform, or are less easily explicable in terms of the given model. Approached with certain ends in sight, the critic will naturally prioritise those features of the work which best behove the explanatory model in question and suppress or sideline those elements that do not. The critic thereby reflects upon the work in terms of its proximity to certain pre-defined criteria; the political anxieties of a turbulent decade, an incipient rejection of vanguard styles, or the artist's growing confidence in his own abilities. Consequentially, an implicit value-system takes root within the wider cultural discourse. The works which rise to the top, which generate the most discussion, tend to be those works which best represent, or best betray the cultural assumptions of their predetermined context. In this sense the work is tacitly contained by the surrounding preoccupations of its immediate history. Accordingly, the concept of the work itself becomes a kind of mediating device between the socio-cultural practices and mores of

[21] The novel is a case in point. As every student of literature knows, the novel is a modern phenomenon. It testifies to the rise of a new literate consumer class following the distribution of greater wealth within the industrial era. More wealth for more people, the emergence of leisure time amongst the working classes and liberal reform within education, these are the socio-economic factors which propelled the novel's consolidation as a literary type. Accordingly all analyses of the novel undertaken within the framework of this socio-economic explanation will ensure the prioritisation of certain themes—new wealth, class strife, the destruction of nature for industrial ends, even a presumed elevation in self-awareness within the society of ordinary people. In this way, everything—from the worker's misery, from Zola's urban penury say, to the inner turbulence of Hardy's "fallen" woman, or the more fanciful middle-class strife of the Austen heroine before her—can be subsumed within the logic of industrialisation. The evils reflected by the author thereby reflect a growing social conscience. Disregarding the liberal prejudice at work here, a more general prejudice exposes itself in the classical notion of canonical value. For whilst the canon is punctuated by works of unheralded originality, the canon's body comprises an inveterate continuity organised according to external historical criteria. In the case of the novel, the external criterion is history itself, but the demand for context, the tendency to review the work against external categories is every bit as prevalent within the canonical explanation of formalist and anti-representational artworks. Now the work may reflect the consistent failures of aesthetic norms or the "reality" of the work's virtuality, its own "constructedness" and artifice, the disintegration of the first person illusion, the work's failure to refer to anything beyond the parameters of its own self-reference. But even as they announce the failure of aesthetic categories, such tactics are canonised for their conformity to postmodern conventions.

its inception and the ideologies of its present location, a pure representation that is, serving recognisable and finite ends.

Against these relativising tendencies Heidegger asserts the need to approach the work with as few presuppositions as possible. In *Being and Time* Heidegger had sought to undercut the foundational illusions of subjectivity and clear the path to a more authentic perspective on Being, in order "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself."[22] This phenomenological maxim—"To the things themselves!"—is also the pivot upon which the Heideggerian poetic turns. If in philosophy, subjectivism constitutes a kind of circular inauthenticity, in which man posits himself, and in so doing finds himself—exactly as he supposed—then the work of the critic commits a similar infidelity to the truth of the art work's being. Approached with certain ends in sight, the critic legitimates the artwork as the re-presentation of certain cultural historical truths, confirming the work's status as the "reproduction of what exists."[23] For Heidegger of course, such a reproductive view of art misses the essential distinction of what art truly is. Not a thing like any other that is, but a mode of disclosure in which the truth of things and the truth of beings is unconcealed each time anew. "Is it our opinion that the painting draws a likeness from something actual and transposes it into a product of artistic-production?" Heidegger asks, "By no means."[24]

When Heidegger supplants the artwork's usual configuration in terms of form and content, with the all encompassing and purportedly more primordial relation of world and earth, it is not only our attitudes towards the work of art he seeks to revise.[25] For Heidegger, form and content are the aesthetic correlatives of the dominant, dichotomising orthodoxy shared by positivists and neo-Kantians alike, and what is more, the very dichotomy from which Heidegger claims art can rescue us. For Heidegger, art

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[22] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.58.
[23] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Clive Cazeaux, Routledge, London, 2000, pp.80-101.
[24] Heidegger, *ibid.*, p.88.
[25] In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger seeks to undermine the basic philosophical categories through which the artwork is usually conceived, jettisoning the usual divisions of form and content as the direct expression of an essentially anthropocentric and instrumentalist attitude towards the work of art. Upon the latter view the work's artistic character resides in its status as formed matter; its distinction from other such formed objects in the artistic harmony of its unity. Conceived in such a way, aesthetics betrays its metaphysical parentage, with form and content relaying—in varied permutations—the fundamental dualisms of an ego-bound tradition. But just as *Dasein* claimed to name the condition of our pre-understanding and a more primordial substrate of consciousness, so Heidegger claims to locate a more original condition for the division of form and content within the work of art. This is the thoroughly mutual and thoroughly dynamic relation of world and earth.

presages the possibility of our salvation from the false perceptions of the present technocratic era. Experienced in the correct manner, art is to evince our return to the understanding of a utopian time-before, a nostalgic sphere of pre-philosophical thinking where the thought of being remains unclouded by the obtrusions of subjective frameworks. The significance of art to thinking involves nothing less than the overturning of modern philosophy, with its presupposed, unanalysed conceptions of subjective and objective existence therefore. In order to think art correctly, in order for its exemplary status to shine through, it is first and foremost necessary to erase the aesthetic categories through which art has been predominantly understood since Kant, as a reflection of the artist's creative powers; as matter formed into the representation of a pre-ordained content.

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger writes of the vacillating co-dependency through which the work of art reveals itself. Contrary to the static logic of representation, whereby form and content would work to consolidate the work's conformity to pre-existent ideas, world and earth conspire within the fundamentally dynamic and open-ended experience of *aletheia*, that is, of truth as the unconcealment of beings. It is worth quoting Heidegger at some length here in order to grasp the transposition at work within the concept of unconcealment. He begins by writing of the Greek temple:

> A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley. The building encloses the figure of the god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico. By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. This presence of the god is in itself the extension and delimitation of the precinct as a holy precinct.[26]

Such a premise recalls the notion of spatial focalisation in the Wallace Stevens poem "Anecdote of the Jar": "The wilderness rose up to it/And sprawled around, no longer wild." There are, however, important differences. For one thing, Heidegger's temple-god model is a relationship of mutual and simultaneous re-enforcement; the temple makes the god a god, the god makes the temple holy; a rather different relationship to that of form and content, where the jar confers a *relative form* and hence a relative

[26] Heidegger, *ibid.*, p.88.

content upon the surrounding wilderness. Significance in the latter case takes the form of an entirely centrifugal grounding via the man-made object (the anthropocentric perspective), and is hence grounding relational to pre-existent terms. For Heidegger however, the relation of world and earth is intended to disclose an essentially un-grounded space or horizon of possibility within which man first makes himself at home in the world. This is no relationship of mere spatial organisation, of form, but of spiritual manifestation, in this case a divine evocation. What Heidegger intends with this patently spiritual example is to demonstrate the artwork's radical distinction as an original and self-founding phenomenon, as something essential and free, through which man first understands himself as man. Together temple and statue comprise the primal opening through which an essential spirituality is first made manifest to man. It is the temple-work which first makes sense of the world in human terms:

> It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and earth, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny of human being...Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm raging above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence.[27]

The work of art does not merely confer meaning through the formal ordering of human artistry, as if the "destiny of human being" were a thought in the mind's eye of the artist creator. Heidegger writes that "To be a work means to set up a world". There are two meanings to be read into this statement. On the one hand, the work of art, as our salvation from instrumentalist attitudes, can show us things about the world concealed by our way of being in life itself. This is why, when Heidegger writes of the peasant shoes in the Van Gogh painting in "The Origin of the Work of Art", he writes of how "This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be."[28] Heidegger is sure to emphasise that this greater reality or greater truth, is not a second-order projection read back into the work from worldly experience, but rather a primal experience which only the work can confer. The work for Heidegger can show us things which life itself cannot; something which clearly confounds the naturalistic order of *mimesis*. The work sets up a world, but the origins of

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[27] Heidegger, *ibid.*, p.89.
[28] Heidegger, *ibid.*, p.88.

this world are deeply mysterious insofar as it possesses no precedent. To this extent Heidegger both here, and in his work on Greek tragedy especially, makes a great deal of the notion of the uncanny or the *irreal.* Heidegger gestures towards this alien aspect of the art work in "The Origin of the Work of Art" when he writes of the work's proximity to the non-equipmental object, with its "self-contained" resilience to human projections. This "strange and uncommunicative" feature of the thing is precisely what Heidegger wishes to expose within the work of art over and against the usual predeterminations of our traditional responses.[29] The truth of the work, and the work's truth for being, rests in this capacity to break down the barriers of preconception and the derived metaphysical categories which support them. In order to do so, Heidegger claims that we must "keep at a distance all the preconceptions and assaults" of derived thinking (metaphysical dualism) and somehow approach the work unburdened.[30] The work of art is inscrutable and mysterious because

> The truth that opens itself in the work can never be verified or derived from what went before. In its exclusive reality, what went before is refuted by the work.[31]

Similarly,

> The ownmost reality of the work...comes to bear only where the work is preserved in the truth that happens through itself.[32]

In this respect the artwork is ontogenetic, it creates itself from out of itself, without prior terms and without prior foundations. It follows from this that the work not only sets up an aesthetic world, a world removed from the world of living reality, but that it is in fact world-making in the strong historical sense of transforming living reality. Because the truth of the work of art is self-creating, because it is not a subsequent representation of human projections, the truth revealed within the work of art refutes the classical distinction whereby the work would simply reflect human conditions as the artist sees them. This reaches to the very heart of Heidegger's aestheticist (not aesthetic)

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[29] Heidegger, *ibid.*, p.85.
[30] Heidegger, *ibid.*, p.85.
[31] Heidegger, *ibid.*,, p.99.
[32] Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p.42.

vision of radical freedom. For Heidegger the work is radically free precisely because it refuses such limitations, because our attempts to "translate" the work can never really be exhausted by the categories of interpretation which precede it. To use the Heideggerian idiom, the work "sets up a world" all of its own, founding itself as a pure origin against which all prior categorisations are rendered inadequate. Real freedom is the freedom to see, or to "listen" to the work in the absence of pre-determined criteria, against the teleocratic, ends-related attitudes of the classical approach. Because art is not a second-order reflection of man's historical perspective, because art is not distinct from the totality of human existence, but rather a self-creating power which alters man's perspective, which has the power to change historical trajectories, the work of art, as a revolutionary potential, speaks of the radical freedom subtending man's historical perspective. Man is not his own foundation, and whilst understanding is most certainly fielded by the hermeneutical horizon of our own historicity, historicality is in no way pre-determined by the limitations of an essentialist subjectivism. This is the truth which the work discloses when approached from beyond the constraints of the subjective aesthetic paradigm. The work sets up a world, but at the same time "*The work lets the earth be an earth*". It is in this respect that the work of art must be conceived as an ontological event. The work comprises a mutual vacillation between earth and world, between man's historical understanding within the world that is, and the unconcealment of that profound and limitless "un-worldly" freedom subtending it. In essence, earth constitutes the impenetrable and irreducibly alien core at the work's heart; it is that element which obstinately refuses to be reduced in terms of human interpretation, forbidding the possibility of the work's translation or reduction into a relationship of pure identity with what exists. The Italian hermeneutic philosopher Gianni Vattimo elucidates the hermeneutical attributes of world and earth in the following manner:

> While the world is the system of meanings which are read as they unfold in the work, the earth is the element of the work which comes forth as ever concealing itself anew, like a sort of nucleus that is never used up by interpretations and never exhausted by meanings. [33]

The transposition at stake within the Heideggerian work is an utter reversal, one which makes of all understanding, and all representations, the secondary consequence of the

[33] Gianni Vattimo, *Art's Claim to Truth*, ed. Santiago Zabala, trans. Luca D'Isanto, Columbia University Press, New York , 2008, p.68.

self-originating event. Most importantly, the notion of the work as auto-genesis, as ontogenesis, points towards the most profound freedom at the heart of human existence. As a world-making origin, free from the historical constraints of representation, the work of art constitutes the shining exemplar of a freedom obscured by the continuist presuppositions of historicism and cultural relativism.

Of course, Heidegger was not the first to promote a transformative view of the artwork as a happening or event of truth. As much as he sought to conceal the influence of his immediate predecessors, to promote himself as a radically original and "epochal" thinker, he was not the first to espouse the work of art in terms of this radical originality. In an early attempt to delineate the genealogy of such a position, Stanley Rosen situates Heidegger's later work within the context of Nietzsche's "cosmogonical poetry" and the earlier project of Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. The inversion—from Kant's separation of the aesthetic, to a full-blown ontogeneticism such as Nietzsche's—is mediated by the aesthetic-poetic sensibilities of the Jena romanticists for whom the work of art constituted an autonomous and self-founding absolute.[34] Like Heidegger, the Jena romantics placed the work of art and the work of poetry in particular, at the very centre of their philosophies. For them, the art-work constituted a unique and irreplaceable happening, an entirely autonomous production free from the constraints of prior investigations. In this way the uniqueness of the work was deemed to affect a mode of transcendence whereby the indissoluble unity of the work confirmed a manner of absolute identification between work and interpreter. For Heidegger however, the claim for the work's uniqueness and originality, its singularity, points to an altogether different modality of freedom from the one gestured here. Where the romantic union points towards the solicitude of art, nature and human understanding, to a mode of humanly-authored transcendence, the truth to unfold within the Heideggerian work of art gestures towards an essential alterity, to a region of truth in "which our knowledge and 'values' cease to apply."[35] Where romantic freedom designates a creative achievement, the artistic self-transcendence of the subject to unify the usually separate realms of nature, history and art, Heideggerian freedom names a resolutely inhuman freedom *from* subjectivity, a groundless motility or openness from whence the possibility of the *Aufhebung* is resolutely denied. For Heidegger there is no ultimate

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[34] Stanley Rosen, *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1969; cited by Alan Megill, *The Prophets of Extremity*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987, p.4.
[35] Timothy Clark, *The Poetics of Singularity*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2005, p.46.

assimilation to the work, for even whilst the work may itself command the absolutely original terms of its encounter, such an achievement would eventually signify the work's closure. On the contrary, Heidegger's ontological aesthetic is designed to prevent the foreclosure of this gulf, between the work and its interpretation, so that the work remains a consistent opening against the foreclosures of deterministic, instrumental attitudes.

Poetry

The work for Heidegger of course is not so much an entity with defined perimeters but a space in which something is *put to work.* It is this putting to work which defines the work of art over and above its object-status. Given the universal import granted the truth of the work, it is not surprising to find Heidegger, towards the end of "The Origin of the Work of Art", subsume artwork within the all-pervasive realm of *Dichtung* or "poetising". Not to be confused with poetry in the limited sense, poetising for Heidegger designates a way of being in the world or experiencing the world much the same as the open experience of the work of art when approached non-judgmentally. But whilst paintings and sculptures, operas and poems can all disclose something of this mode of being, they are in fact only smaller aspects of this wider phenomenon. Whilst the work sets up a world in the singular, human beings in the first instance always already inhabit the all-pervasive world of language. For Heidegger language is the all-encompassing environment or medium in which we live. Language shapes human understanding not because it enables us to codify the world, to measure it and to re-identify it (like the categories of form and content, these capacities are second-order abstractions of an understanding which has come to view itself in terms of representational identities) but because language is the ultimate fabric within which beings emerge into themselves and within which Being shows itself: "by naming things for the first time" language "first brings beings to words and to appearance."[36]

The mysterious origin of the work of art is but one instance of the all-encompassing mystery of language, in which Being speaks. For Heidegger, as for Ricoeur, language is thought and thought is language. To approach the mystery of language therefore is to approach the mystery of being-as-understanding. But whilst

[36] Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, p.98.

Heidegger eventually led Ricoeur to the onto-hermeneutical theme of speech and discourse, Heidegger himself, in the radicality of his proposition, demurs from all considerations of language in its formal theoretical attributes. To relate the ontological profundity of language to a theory of speech acts and stratified units of signification would be anathema to Heidegger. On the contrary, the naming power of language of which Heidegger writes is not a systematic capacity to correlate thought and phenomena;

> ...naming nominates beings *to* their being *from out* of their being. Such saying is a projecting of the clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the Open *as*.[37]

Like the work of the temple, this projective saying also brings to bear the "unsayable" features of the world in which a certain group of people, within their language, exist. These attributes are the features of its history, its mode of inhabiting the world, categorising reality and experiencing existence. This projective disclosure Heidegger calls essential poetry. "Language itself is poetry in the essential sense".[38]

> But since language is the happening in which for man beings first disclose themselves to him each time as beings, poesy—or poetry in the narrower sense—is the most original form of poetry in the essential sense. Language is not poetry because it is the primal poesy; rather, poesy takes place in language because language preserves the original nature of poetry.[39]

To understand the relationship Heidegger names, it is worth deferring to Gadamer, whose own philosophical trajectory repeats the move to a profound and non-judgemental form of poetic engagement. By no means an uncritical disciple, Gadamer's proximity to Heidegger no less provides one of the most thorough and lucid amplifications of Heidegger's progressively obscure idiom in the later works. "Language", Gadamer writes,

> always furnishes the fundamental articulations that guide our understanding of the world. It belongs to the nature of familiarity with the

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[37] Heidegger, *ibid.*
[38] Heidegger, *ibid.*, p.99.
[39] Heidegger, *ibid.*

> world that whenever we exchange words with one another, we share the world.[40]

It is common sense to extend this definition to poetry as an exclusive mode of world-disclosure or world-sharing; in the skill of its articulation and in its capacity for universal relevance, the work of poetry can make us feel at home in the world in new and unforeseen ways. However, poetry is not simply one mode of disclosure amongst many, on the contrary "poetry is language in a pre-eminent sense".[41] Gadamer's claim is that when we speak by means of standard language, language's essential character is to a greater or lesser extent obscured by the motivating factors propelling us to speak. In commanding or requesting or conversing, language is always guided by the ends we seek to obtain. But in poetry language exists for its own sake, free from motivation. This is not to deny that the poet in the act of creation intends a certain affect or the portrayal of a certain experience, but that as a work of art, the poem will always exceed these intentions. Indeed, to do so is the poem's unique competency as a genuine work of art; "any poem worthy of the name is quite different from all forms of motivated speech" Gadamer writes.[42] Few people would seek to deny this, but those of us schooled, from a young age, to read "suspiciously", "between the lines" of the work's self-evident declarations, the claim that we "have not even begun to approach the poem if we try to go beyond it by asking about the author and what he intends by it", is somewhat tendentious.[43] In its most neutral reckoning it is a call for intrinsic criticism, but in the full force of its ontological import Gadamer appears to be making the wholly unfashionable claim for the existence of a Kantian third realm, a realm of the pure aesthetic—precisely the kind of other-worldly experience which Gadamer and Heidegger claim to disavow:

> The poem does not stand before us as a thing that someone employs to tell us something. It stands there equally independent of both reader and poet. Detached from all intending, the word is complete in itself.[44]

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[40] Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. Robert Bernasconi, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p.114.
[41] Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, *ibid.*, p.106.
[42] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.107.
[43] Gadamer, "On the Contribution of Poetry to the Search for Truth", *ibid.*, p.107.
[44] Gadamer, *ibid.*

But to interpret this insistence upon the self-sustaining independence of the poetic as confirming the existence of an autonomous aesthetic realm is to miss the point entirely, since such a view requires us to overlook poetry's exemplary status as language "in a pre-eminent sense". "Language" Gadamer writes, "is the element in which we live, as fish live in water".[45] The exemplary status of poetry rests in its capacity to expose what the language of everyday usage obscures, namely the binding force of language and understanding. Gadamer argues that even in the context of everyday speech, true language is never just a simple communication of information or of well-defined facts, but rather a dialogue, through which and within which we come to an understanding with one another. Through the pursuit of common understanding, language binds us to one another, by placing "our own aspiration and knowledge into a broader and richer horizon."[46]

With poetry the hermeneutical situation is rather different since we do not possess any specific orientation towards a common goal beyond the work itself; in contrast to the motivated language of everyday speech "we are wholly directed toward the word as it stands."[47] The goal, insofar as there is one, is language itself. Where language usually surpasses itself in the completion of a message, the art of poetry rests precisely in the ability to make the word stand still. The arrangements of sound, rhythm, rhyme and assonance constitute what Gadamer calls "stabilizing factors" which serve to substantiate the word in its own right. The success of poetry as we know is not a question of subject matter, but of the unity in which the word can be seen to transcend itself in the signifying function. The word of poetry does not stand as the representation of an idea, therefore, but as the *instantiation of its own presence*. In this sense the notion of the word's poetic self-identity prefigures the identity named within the illocutionary performance of speech act theory. Like the pledge or the promise, the poetic word is a simultaneous saying and doing, an indissoluble unity from which form and content cannot be divided. Adopting Martin Luther's enigmatic phrase, Gadamer writes that "the word stands written":

> It is a saying that says so completely what it is that we do not need to add anything beyond what is said in order to accept it in its reality as language. The word of the poet is self-fulfilling. The poetic word is thus a statement

[45] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.438.
[46] Gadamer, "On the Contribution of Poetry to the Search for Truth", p.105.
[47] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.107.

> in that it bears witness to itself and does not admit of anything that might verify it.[48]

When in *Truth and Method* Gadamer criticises the errant subjectivism of Kantian aesthetics, he reiterates the Heideggerian (and before that Hegelian) distinction between aesthetic consciousness (*Erlebnis*)—an attitude wherein the work of art is subtracted from the living breathing totality of historical life, placed, so to speak, upon the pedestal of an unchanging aesthetic transcendence—and the contrary phenomenological concept of the *transformative experience* (*Erfahrung*). In this context the work's truth resides in its powers to rupture the smooth continuum of quotidian experience, to herald an experience perhaps best characterised as unprecedented. The work for Gadamer possesses "ontological vehemence", a kind of Husserlian irrefutability through which we the interpreters are compelled to engage or participate within the work's "binding force". For Gadamer this is the definition of artistic beauty and the justification for beauty's metaphysical proximity to the unconcealment of *aletheic* truth; not a Kantian conformity to natural laws, but a radically demanding experience of otherness, and of that which refuses all standard terms of reference.[49] Gadamer writes that,

> The word of the poet does not simply continue the process of..."making ourselves at home". Instead it stands over against this process like a mirror held up to it. But what appears in the mirror is not the world, nor this or that thing in the world, but rather this nearness or familiarity itself

[48] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.110.

[49] Between Heidegger and Gadamer there is a certain disagreement with regards the radicality of this unprecedented experience. For Gadamer the experience is unprecedented with regards the sense of insistent alterity wrought within the experience of beauty or autonomy. Historically speaking however, the work's genesis belongs within the dialectical continuum of tradition and innovation. Art does not break with the past in any dramatically precipitous sense therefore. For Heidegger however, the work is unprecedented in the more literal sense of being without historical precedent. Great art breaks with the continuity of history, not because it is unreal and out-of-time (as it would be from an aesthetic perspective), but because it is history-making; it announces historical movement by disrupting continuity and presaging new truths befitting of a new epoch. For example, in the figure of Hölderlin, one of Heidegger's most cherished poets, he finds the voice of a new beginning, in which thought would emerge poetically for the first time in the modern era; Hölderlin is "the pre-cursor of poets in a destitute time", wherein the language of philosophy faces exhaustion and art has deteriorated into mere decoration. Hölderlin is thus the epochal precursor and the voice of authentic thinking who "does not go off into a future; rather, he arrives out of that future, in such a way that the future is present only in the arrival of his words." (Heidegger, "What are Poets For?", *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, HarperCollins, New York, 2001, p.139).

> in which we stand for a while...the poetic word that thereby bears witness to our being.[50]

This is why for Heidegger and for Gadamer, the work of poetry presents thought with a fundamental philosophical task, one which requires us to approach the work free from the usual causal, historical representational projections of literary criticism. In its refusal of verifying facts, the alignment of poetic truths and "real" truths, the work of poetry testifies to Heidegger's conception of radical freedom. This is the depth historical truth of the work's world-making powers, the "nearness of familiarity itself". And yet to encounter this freedom is no mean feat. It requires the most tenacious patience, an ever-constant vigilance not to fall back into the familiarity of our most indoctrinated habits. The benchmark of Heidegger's later style, gnomic, tautological, and at times infuriatingly obscure, testifies to this desire to step outside of language's usual presuppositions—the unavoidable prejudices of grammar and pronouns, of language deployed as a mere device—and to engage with the work of poetry as freely and non-prejudicially as possible.

Theory

In a sense, Heidegger's refusal of all presumptions "simply takes to an audacious and arduous extreme that refusal of premature conclusiveness which is a basic scholarly ethic."[51] To understand a particular word within a given poem, it is not enough for Heidegger to simply situate the word in terms of its historical usage at the time of composition. One must also consider the "basic existential decisions that were at work in the origins of this term", and chart this sea of potentiality in accordance with other such depth terms.[52] But the philosophical aim of this arduous task constitutes the most thorough-going renunciation of this "scholarly ethic". To listen to words in the singular portent of their poetic summoning, this is the task of radical poetising; its aim, to reveal thought's poetic origins over and against the purported freedom of the sovereign subject.

The distinction between classical modes of literary exegesis and ontological poetics is unambiguous, their contrary claims for the realisation of historical freedom

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[50] Gadamer, *ibid.*, p.115.
[51] Timothy Clark, *The Poetics of Singularity, ibid.*, p.36.
[52] Clark, *ibid.*

equally so. As a discourse of liberation, cultural criticism posits its own freedom to transcend the cultural determinates of the work's production and reflect upon the conditions of historical knowledge. The freedom of the classical liberal paradigm is precisely the freedom to judge according to "what went before".[53] But for Heidegger such a notion of historical freedom is neither genuine nor really free. To situate the work of art, as the expression of an *oeuvre*, a genre, or a socio-cultural milieu, is really only a means to shoe-horning the work in accordance with subjectivist values. Accordingly the work's fecundity, its resistance to unitary interpretation, is neatly reduced to the univocal model of a predetermined content, its alterity—its insistence as an autonomous entity "free from all intending"—lost to the residual spectre of genius or creative transcendence.[54] Not really an index of freedom so far as Heidegger is concerned so much as a set of historicist constraints through which man measures his own self-legislated progress. In this light artistic understanding merely entails the capacity to parcel the work up within a circumscribed range of signification and to situate it within the historical continuum.

And yet it is quite clear to see why, from the rationalist perspective, the claim for a poetics of singularity must presage the very opposite of freedom, intellectual paralysis no less. To refuse the standard "way" to poetry, to reject the standard categories through which a work or indeed a word can be evaluated, to refuse the compositional logic of the artist's intentions, or indeed the nexus of signifying relations which could be said to arise inadvertently, as a symptom of authorial repression or historical distance say, then from the literary-critical perspective, there is only really one freedom which remains, namely the freedom not to understand, to allow the work to drift and eventually disperse upon the winds of a "liberating" multivocity. Of course, this is precisely what literary criticism cannot allow, since to do so would be to undermine the entire validity of its own standing.

The incompatibility of these modes of reading exceeds all localised dispensations and cuts to the heart of literary criticism's status as a dependent discourse. Criticism, by its very nature, serves as a mode of explanation and demonstration, rather than a mode of primary showing in the Heideggerian sense. Literary criticism is a secondary discourse given to the elucidation of primary works. Without certain basic

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[53] See Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p.99, *ibid.*

[54] Gadamer writes of the poetic word, "detached from all intending, the word is complete in itself" ("On the Contribution of Poetry to the Search for Truth", *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, p.107).

tenets—the relative discontinuity of work and world, a certain stability with regards signification and a sense of historical commensurability or commensurate change within signification—the critical enterprise would collapse. And this applies just as much to the more sceptical modes of psychoanalytic, Marxist or feminist critique as it does to classical scholarship. For in each instance, there is the presupposed backbone of a common language, a discourse of common consensus beyond the world of the text. Reflection upon a world not our own, upon a world within a world within definable borders, recognisable but ontologically remote, that is the reigning assumption upon which literary criticism supports itself as a dependent mode of intellection. Because criticism is not philosophy, because it is neither a free nor unified discipline, but rather a mixed discipline, determined each and every time by the work in question, sustained solely by the precedence of works in their plurality (their relative difference that is), the Heideggerian claim for singularity—with its dissolution of this fundamental parameter—could only ever serve to render criticism redundant. From within the literary critical episteme, where narrative takes the form of an *explanation* and not a modality of *showing*, a critical interpretation based solely upon the claims of singularity could only ever conclude in one way, regardless of the work in question. To explain singularity would be to demonstrate—in every single instance—the universality of singularity; a contradiction in terms and a complete dead-end in terms of critical practice. Quite simply, singularity fails to generate a critical discourse; a fact that has been most conscientiously observed by Heidegger's ideological detractors.[55]

This moral aversion to Heideggerian poetics, or the clear critical contradiction of literary singularity, could be proffered as justification for Heidegger's and indeed post-Heideggerian hermeneutics' relative absence from literary theory, were it not of course for the fact that without Heidegger, literary theory as we know it would not exist. After all, in the literary theoretical journey from rationalist formalism to postmodern irrationalism, it is literary textualism—the direct, albeit ironic, descendent of aesthetic singularity—which comprises the "final" dis-illusionment of Enlightenment certainties. Heidegger's vision of the work may be precisely the kind of illustrious origin refuted in the textualist order of simulacra, but in both instances one finds the work / text liberated

[55] Theodor Adorno's *Jargon of Authenticity* for example, whilst directed towards the ideology of German existentialism as a whole, institutes the important connection between Heidegger's refusal of the empirical (the empirical world of subjects and books), his idealism, and the inability to generate an ethic from beyond the bloodless proposition of *Dasein*. Heidegger's jargon of the Greco-German homeland, with all its fascistic connotations, is symptomatic of a backwards-looking irrationalism.

from its pragmatic enclosures and unleashed into a field of insurmountable openness. In textualism, as in singularity, the possibility for critical distancing, critical reflection and the production of critical discourse is denied thanks to the erosion of critical boundaries between work and world. As the reading practices of singularity and textualism both confirm, this primary dissolution naturally extends to the parameters of creation and critique. The result in both instances is the assertion of an essential and insurmountable complicity; a discourse which "extends" the work without ever leaving its territory. Because the work cannot be detached as a unitary content, because for Heidegger, the experience of the work is in each instance unique, literary-critical aestheticism distinguishes itself as an essentially anti-reflective *credo*. In each case, reading takes the form of a singular and performative engagement which refutes the pedagogue's need to separate out and repeat as a transmissible technique. In this way, singularity and textualism both deny the possibility of a relay-able practice.

And yet, with the rise of literary theory as a semi-autonomous discipline, neatly tranched into distinct periods and distinct modes of specialist interpretation, unified by its own specific narrative progression, textualism—coming as it does at the very end of this progression—represents the high-point not for a mode aesthetic singularity, within which the work would claim absolute precedence, but for something utterly more offensive, technocratic or instrumental than anything in singularity's original literary-critical target. With textualism, Heidegger's critique finds re-doubled justification, for now the work must succumb not only to the critic's interpretive pressures (to pin it down as this or that particular kind of work), but also to the discipline's very real pressures to demonstrate the distinct validity of this or that methodology. To its opponents, literary theory betrays an all too willing tendency to subjugate the work to the theoretical position it seeks to deploy; indeed it could be claimed that the work's logical priority over interpretation is all but inverted. Thanks to these theoretical pressures, we find ourselves twice removed from the kind of "authentic" relation named by Heidegger. What is more, because literary theory projects a narrative of increasing dis-illusionment, and a series of increasingly "suspicious" tactics, the work's capacity to exert itself as a singular phenomenon, and to project itself as an irreducible whole which could deflect these theoretical incursions, is increasingly denied. In the transition from singularity to textualism, there is a complete reversal of attitude towards the work in its openness, from the work as insurmountable origin to the secondary expression of a theoretical indeterminism.

The paradox of singularity's inimical, textualist descendent cannot be disentangled from the distinct context in which it arose; the same context in which literary theory first sought an independent identity for itself, as ideologically removed from aesthetics and the post-Kantian German tradition as it was from the hegemony of Anglo-American liberal pragmatism. But what these related extremes most clearly demonstrate is the difficult need to honour the work as a singular and potentially transformative phenomenon, without rescinding its status as a distinct entity, complete with its own social and historical contours and its own resolute identity; to articulate the work's capacity to remain the same without ever claiming to exhaust it through the work of concepts. This is precisely the view to which Ricoeur leads us in his *Rule of Metaphor*, where the scrupulously hard-earned distinction of "live" metaphor works to consolidate the work's ontological distinction from the critical interpretations it provokes. For Ricoeur, as for Heidegger, understanding always arises in language. But this immersion within language does not prevent us from articulating a certain critical hold over poetic language, from reflecting upon the literary work from a position of critical distance. The discontinuity of literature, or live metaphor, and non-literature, be it philosophical or literary-critical, is the condition for literature both as a transcendent experience, and as a provocation to further thinking, and further conceptualising.

Whilst Ricoeur does not himself develop an explicit poetics, it is certainly possible, between his critique of Heidegger in *The Conflict of Interpretations* and his justification for the discontinuity of literature and non-literature within *The Rule of Metaphor*, to infer one. It is with this in sight that we turn to Ricoeur's assertion of the wounded or mediated *cogito* as a reflective agent, over and against the radical priority of Heideggerian *Dasein.*

3.6

RICOEUR'S CRITIQUE OF HEIDEGGER

Against a rising tide of political sensitivity and revisionism, Ricoeur's relation to Heidegger remains consistent throughout the course of his career. For more febrile minds, distinguishing the early Heidegger from the late was a duty of conscience or practical necessity for the safeguarding of their own philosophical

integrity. From the start, however, Ricoeur reads Heidegger *contra* Heidegger, and in such a way that the critique of *Dasein* situated at the beginning of *The Conflict* relates directly to *Dasein*'s retrospective connotations in the eyes of Heideggerian apologists. In this way Ricoeur's philosophical critique of fundamental ontology prefigures the political characterisations read back into it in latter years. Furthermore, it is upon the basis of this critical relation that the Ricoeurian "methodology"—from semantics, to reflection, to existential knowledge—is ontologically vindicated against the charge of a programmatic and therefore derived imposition. In order to understand Ricoeur's ontological justification for a "conflict of interpretations", interpretations which, from the vantage of primordial understanding must be deemed derivative, it is therefore necessary to understand the manner in which Ricoeur develops ontological hermeneutics against the Heideggerian corpus.

The measure of this relation can be gauged by the deceptive approbation of the following line. "The ontology of understanding" writes Ricoeur,

> is implied in the methodology of interpretation, following the ineluctable "hermeneutic circle" which Heidegger himself taught us to delineate.[56]

Naturally from a hermeneutical perspective the salient word here is "ineluctable": interpretation and understanding hold a mirror up to one another and like adjacent mirrors, what they disclose is the space of historicity inhabited by *Dasein*. But of course Ricoeur is eliding interpretation with the very thing that Heidegger (and Gadamer) abjure: method. For Heidegger, the ineluctable relation proper to fundamental ontology behoves *Dasein*'s pre-subjective status as the unguarded fealty of pre-understanding; methodology is a subsequent curtailment at the ontical level of epistemology. In *Being and Time* the understanding of *Dasein* is categorically discontinuous with the particularity of any one discourse. Or to put it another way, it is only understanding in its formal relationship to existence which occupies Heidegger:

> This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential *fore-structure* of Dasein itself...The 'circle' in understanding belongs *to the structure of*

[56] Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, *ibid.*, p.18.

> *meaning*, and the latter phenomenon is rooted in the existential constitution of Dasein—that is, in the understanding which interprets.[57]

For this reason, "Heidegger has not wanted us to consider any particular problem of the understanding of this or that being."[58] Herein lies the basis for Ricoeur's criticism; Heidegger "taught us to retrain our eye and redirect our gaze", teaching us "to subordinate historical understanding to ontological understanding, as the derived form of a primordial form."[59] In so doing, Heidegger wished to return philosophy to the origins of thought. Supplanting epistemology with the question of Being, the hermeneutical question of understanding underwent its transmogrification from question to ontological trait. But within the radicality of this undertaking, there is no room from a consideration of the methodological "how?" through which the understanding of *Dasein* emerges. And so the questions of hermeneutical enquiry—"How...can an organon be given to exegesis, to the clear comprehension of texts? How can the historical sciences be founded in the face of the natural sciences? How can the conflict of rival interpretations be arbitrated?"—are lost from sight.[60] By design, Heidegger's fundamental hermeneutics "*are intended not to resolve them but to dissolve them.*"[61] Heidegger writes that

> Ontically of course, Dasein is not only close to us—even that which is closest: we *are* it, each of us, we ourselves. In spite of this, or rather for just this reason, it is ontologically that which is farthest.[62]

In the naming of ontological difference—between Being and beings, existence and existents—Heidegger abrogates the presumed unity of the *cogito ergo sum.*[63] The technocratic attitudes intended to reflect the *cogito's* assumed transparency are duly redressed. Epistemology is a second order derivation stemming from the primordial groundlessness of ontological difference, the relation which conditions the division of

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[57] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, *ibid.*, p.195.Emphasis added in the second instance.
[58] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.10
[59] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[60] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, pp.9-10.
[61] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.10.
[62] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.36, quoted by Ricoeur, "Heidegger and the Question of the Subject", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.226.
[63] Heidegger only treats ontological difference explicitly in the work subsequent to *Being and Time.* Never the less, *Dasein*'s ontological distance from itself and its ontical locality is premised upon the same distinction between ontical being, existents, and the ontological relation to Being obscured in the metaphysics of presence. Furthermore, Ricoeur's critique of Heidegger is also an assertion of the continuity between *Being and Time* and Heidegger's subsequent work.

subjects and objects in the first place. The problem as far as Ricoeur is concerned is that Heidegger

> gives us no way to show in what sense historical understanding, properly speaking, is derived from this primordial understanding.[64]

Because *Dasein* is ontologically farthest from itself, because it is mediated by historical understanding, it is not possible to demonstrate the priority of this more primordial mode in any direct sense:

> ...if the reversal from epistemological understanding to the being who understands is to be possible, we must be able to describe directly—without prior epistemological constraints—the privileged being of Dasein, such as it is constituted in itself, and thus be able to recover understanding as one of these modes of being. The difficulty in passing from understanding as a mode of knowledge to understanding as a mode of being consists in the following: the understanding which is the result of the Analytic of Dasein is precisely the understanding through which and in which this being understands itself as being. [65]

In lieu of any direct description of *Dasein*, there is only the immanent circularity within which the understanding posits its own being-as-understanding; we cannot supersede the understanding which alone facilitates the proposition of *Dasein's* "privileged being", for which understanding would be a theoretical modality distinct from its means. The absence of this direct means forms the basis for Ricoeur's critical departure, for what he terms a "grafting" of hermeneutics and phenomenology. Lacking direct access to *Dasein*'s ontological opening, Ricoeur asks,

> Is it not better, then, to begin with the derived forms of understanding and to show in them the signs of their derivation? This implies that the point of departure be taken on the same level on which understanding operates, that is, on the level of language.[66]

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[64] Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.10.
[65] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[66] Ricoeur, *ibid.*

Ricoeur's proposition is a "more indirect route" towards ontology, an "ontology by degrees" which begins with the derivations of historical understanding and which seeks, through reflection, to relate these derivations to the structure of historical understanding itself. In this way Ricoeur's path of mediation, which he calls a "grafting" of hermeneutics and phenomenology, is to entail a reading backwards through the documents of historical understanding, through the universe of competing discourses, otherwise known as the conflict of interpretations. For this reason, it is the universal derivation of language which determines the course of hermeneutical ontology. For as Heidegger himself decreed, "It is first of all and always in language that all ontic or ontological understanding arrives at its expression."[67] In this way, language is accorded a dual status as both primordial, the most primordial, and the most derived.

It appears paradoxical that Ricoeur's departure from Heidegger should in fact fulfil one of Heidegger's deepest wishes—to understand language not as a system of representation but as the all-encompassing medium or environment in which we dwell—whilst at the same time averring the need to consider language in its formal semantic attributes. In reality no such paradox exists. According to popular consensus, Heidegger's transition from *Being and Time* to his later radical poetising confirms a progressive effort to uproot the vestiges of a recalcitrant self-reference. The move to poetising marks the moment of being's liberation, and for Heidegger's critics, the dawn of a new irrationalism. Immersion within language prevents the possibility for thought to take a hold of itself, to master itself and reflect freely upon the content of its own operations. Now reflection is precisely what Ricoeur's semantic analysis claims to lead to whilst at the same time confirming the postulate of linguistic mediation. How, to paraphrase Ricoeur in a different context, can thought be at once bound and free, mediated and yet reflective? The clue lies in Ricoeur's rejection of the *Kehre* and the critical relation which continues to govern his reading of the later Heidegger.

Ricoeur's circuitous journey through the documents of understanding is intended to embody and to *explain* the "intuitive description" of mediation named in the postulate of ontological difference.[68] For Heidegger, ontological difference was the means to formulating the *destruktion* of the *cogito* as self-presence. For Ricoeur,

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[67] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.11.
[68] Ricoeur, "Heidegger and the Question of the Subject", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.225.

however, it represents the potential for an inherently positive process of reconstitution. Indeed, Ricoeur's appropriation of Heidegger entails the elevation of the very self-reference for which *Dasein* was latterly condemned. Contrary to popular interpretation, Heidegger's denial of the *cogito* "implies more than a mere rejection of the notion of the ego or of the self".[69] Ricoeur writes that,

> (Heidegger's) destruction of the *cogito*, with the destruction of the age to which it belongs, is the condition for a justified repetition of the question of the ego.[70]

It would be entirely wrong to assume that Ricoeur, writing this in 1966, worked under the same anthropological illusions that once beset his French compatriots, for whilst the movements traced within the hermeneutical formulation—of understanding and interpretation, of pre-understanding and reflection—comprise the basis for a reformulation of consciousness, they only do so on the basis that they embody the very traits of ontological difference and historical mediation which anthropological readings override. Since thought cannot assert itself as a radical and neutral opening within the field of questioning, Heidegger can deny the self-certainty assumed in the opening and closure of the Cartesian self. But whilst the Heideggerian question of Being negates the "I think" as first truth, it also implicates the presence of an alternative reference within the subject of enquiry. This is the two-fold reference of *Sein* and *Dasein* which brings to light the circular relation of Being, as both the subject of enquiry and a participant feature of the enquiring existent. It is within the movement of this ontico-ontological relation, within the movement of inquiry itself, where "the meaning of Being oscillates...as the mode of being of a possible ego", that Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the wounded *cogito*, of the "I am" (as opposed to the "I think") operates.[71] What is more, because the pattern of circularity within the Analytic of *Dasein* continues to govern the relation of Being and language within the later Heidegger, Ricoeur can extend his critical relation to encompass the claim for linguisticality.

In the analytic of *Dasein* the location of the self presents a problem; the ego is a question in that it remains hidden and other, in that what is ontically immediate is

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[69] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.219.
[70] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.226.
[71] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.222.

ontologically distant and obscure. The problem of the self in *Dasein* lies in the to-ing and fro-ing relationship of the one who asks and the subject being asked about; the self is a transient apparition most "there" in the moment of its flight. But the self-reference which implies self-consciousness is not a problem unique to *Dasein*, as if *Dasein*'s grammatical structure (universal, proper noun) was somehow responsible for invoking a self, and obstructing the path to a more primordial relation *qua* Being. The fact is not that *Dasein* inhibits this relation but that *even Dasein*—as the very name for this relation—forbids such a possibility. On the contrary, therefore, the self-reference which prevents *Dasein* from its own pre-subjective neutrality is not a unique trait, it is the proposition of *all* language. Riceour writes that

> ...the rise of Dasein as self and the rise of language as speech or discourse (parole) are *one and the same problem.*[72]

Accordingly,

> The word represents in the later Heidegger exactly the same problem as the *Da* of *Dasein*, since the word is the *Da.*[73]

The word is where being must rise to prominence (like the self-reference of *Dasein*), but it is also the point of a maximally perceived distance; just as the word presages a being's interconnection with Being, bringing it to light in the process of naming, the name likewise fixes, constrains and constricts this being in the preservation of the name. The circle of language and being are closed off as one and the same problem at the moment when the fixity and so-called violence of naming give rise to the speaking subject; where being is brought into language through the disclosure of naming and the finitude of language, the "speaking existent" is born. Man the speaking subject thus arises in the same structure of objectification or foreclosure of the *cogito* in the age of the world of view. Ricoeur writes that,

> ...naming [*denomination*] designates the place and role of man into language, and a finite, speaking existent is born. In forming a name, we have both disclosure of Being and enclosure in the finitude of language.[74]

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[72] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.220.
[73] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.228.

Just as the analytic of *Dasein* strove to deconstruct the conceptual system behind the *cogito* in favour of a more "authentic" historical modality, so the later Heidegger seeks to reinstate a more authentic relation to language than the subjective utility of naming, founded not in the language of demotic consensus—where the sign assumes the position of a "standing for"—but in the multiplicity of poetry and in the ideal of the poetic life (*Gelassenheit*), where language resists the singular coherence of naming to shine and tremble with the myriad potentials of being. For this reason, Ricoeur's critique of the *Being and Time* and his hermeneutical appropriation of ontological difference are just as much of a critical appropriation of the later philosophy of language, where Heideggerian primordialism repeats itself in the manner of a direct "hearing" and is once more corrected by the assertion of a methodological detour.

Against relativism, Ricoeur confers the postulate of an "internalised" conflict of interpretations with ontological significance. Confirming the possibility of an indirect ontology which *follows* from the articulations of understanding in language, Ricoeur confirms Heidegger's claim for a positive conception of linguistic mediation. Hermeneutical interpretation therefore is neither relativistic nor as the contrary critic would have it, dogmatic. Against Heidegger however, Ricoeur rejects the claim for a direct ontology, wherein the orders of epistemological explication and ontological understanding are collapsed. By demonstrating the fundamental continuity of the early and later Heidegger, Ricoeur can be seen to make a claim for explanatory method within the realm of poetic truth also. Moreover, Ricoeur's critique of direct ontology and a direct, radical poetising behoves an appreciation of the same ethical inadequacies attached to Heidegger's philosophy in the light of his political failings. The criticism relating to *Dasein*'s impersonality and essential isolation from fellow *Dasein*, to Heidegger's failing to account for moral considerations of the ethical Other in *Being and Time*, and to the impossibility of generating a critically reflective discourse from within a poetics of singularity, are all problems relating to Heidegger's "direct" ontology, where questions of discursivity and method are silenced. Ricoeur's claim for a mediated ontology, which seeks to proceed *via* the realm of rational explication, should be read as an ideological corrective as well therefore.

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[74] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.228.

If it is true that many post-Heideggerians felt it incumbent upon them to make a break from the early Heidegger, whilst Ricoeur, due to the nature of his critique, did not, then Heidegger's infamy provides a clue to the variant timbres of poststructural hermeneutics and deconstruction, and by extension, to the dissymmetry of their affect within the wider cultural discourse.

If we follow Ricoeur's rejection of the *Kehre*, and confirm the continuity relating fundamental ontology and radical poetising, then it is clear that Ricoeur's critique of Heidegger relates as much to the question of poetic disclosure as it does to the issue of *Dasein*'s self-understanding. Ricoeur's path to poetry must be read in accordance with his path towards the question of Being, in the manner of that most circuitous journey described in the opening movements of *The Conflict of Interpretations*. Indeed for Ricoeur, the path to poetic truth and to self-understanding manifest one and the same task, for if all understanding reaches expression within language, and the ontological aim of hermeneutics must go by way of those derived expressions which testify to that understanding, then it is first of all within language, or rather with the question of language, that a hermeneutics of self-understanding must begin. Since all self-understanding takes the form of an *interpretation*, so it is to language at the level of interpretation, where the fecund potentialities of language give rise to both the specialist languages of competing interpretations and the language of everyday usage and everyday ambiguity, and not to the limited case of scientific precision (where all interpretive potentiality has been extracted) that Ricoeur must turn.

As we shall see, Ricoeur's refusal of direct ontology and his refusal of a direct poetic "listening"/ "hearing" in fact work to confirm the essential structure named by Heidegger in terms of that "relatedness backwards" and later in terms of a simultaneous revealment and concealment within the work of poetry. But where Heidegger starts by describing the structure of understanding in terms of a fundamental relation between being and Being/Truth, poetry and Being/Truth, Ricoeur seeks access via the indirect route of its manifest productions, tracing the lineaments of its affectivity within the structures of interpretive discourse. As we know, the relation of revealment and concealment names the condition for the possibility of understanding for finite beings; it is another way of naming the principle

of historical and linguistic mediation. In his deviation from the direct route of ontology and poetising therefore, Ricoeur's departure from Heidegger in fact serves to honour this fundamental insight at the level of his own methodology.

The task in the next chapter will be to demonstrate how Ricoeur's epistemological detour through the derived expressions of understanding rehabilitates the Heideggerian relation of being and poetry against some of its more sceptical and irrationalist treatments, confirming hermeneutics' phenomenological postulate of the life-text (of self-interpretation and the inherently interpretive character of *Dasein*) as the postulate of Man's poetic dwelling. And finally, how this dwelling points towards the possibility of the *logos*, of rational consensus and self-reflection, not just the aleatory transcendence of the poetic.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POETRY OF REASON: RICOEUR AND THE THEORETICAL IMAGINATION

4.1

INTERPRETATION AND THE SEMANTICS OF DISCOURSE

> Is it not once again *within language* itself that we must seek the indication that understanding is a mode of being?[1]

For Ricoeur, the path to a conception of *Dasein's* self-understanding must go by way of an indirect analysis of those derived manifestations of the understanding which together comprise the hermeneutical horizon of our intelligibility. What Ricoeur seeks to find is the principle of unity within language which permits understanding and rational consensus in the face of a diverse range of apparently conflicting interpretive possibilities. Such a principle must therefore account for both the openness of interpretation and its regulative limits. As a philosopher who reads the suspicions of Freud and Nietzsche, as testaments, not only to the lie of transparency, but by the same token, as testaments to the lifeworld's inherently symbolic basis, Ricoeur asserts that the conditions of our intelligibility and the possibility of a reformulation of the *cogito* at the level of the "I am", must be sought indirectly, by way of an explanation of this shared symbolic structure, what he calls the "common architecture" of double meaning which accounts for both the diversity of interpretation and the unity of its origins within experience. Ricoeur writes that

> It is first of all and always in language that all ontic or ontological understanding arrives at its expression.

The problem of multiple meanings and their relation to existence is a problem as old, or perhaps older than philosophy itself. On the face of it therefore this claim is perhaps as empty as it is true; the gift of speech is the gift of human understanding, the same gift of which the Christian church speaks when it speaks of the *felix culpa*, of man's happy fall into time, equivocation and *poiesis*, and a trope which exceeds

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[1] Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, Continuum, London, 2004, *ibid.*,p.10.

the parameters of doctrine tenfold. The spiritual link which once propelled the exegesis of religious texts as a holy task marks the point at which a predominantly allegorical Christianity encountered metaphysics (the problematic notion of the Logos—a term which intends only the unity of an unambiguous truth—testifies to the complex interferences of these traditions). Within its infancy, hermeneutics was inculcated within a system which Heidegger would come to characterise as the accumulated metaphorics of the metaphysical; the task of interpretation heavy with the burden of its projected transcendence. Saint Augustine recognised the multiplicity of historical and literal meanings within the consecrated text to form the basis for a "transferral" of spiritual meanings.[2] A metaphysics of clarity likewise compelled interpreters of legal texts to pursue the *spirit* of justice beyond the imprecision of the written word. In this context, the exegete upheld the office of communicant, ministering to the many the inaccessible truths of a written and canonical content, a content largely predetermined by the institutional unity and continuity of a clerical tradition. But hermeneutics could not have acquired its properly philosophical character had it not been for the collaborative energies of humanist reform from whence the intercessor's dispossession, and the path to a productive rather than merely reduplicative mode of understanding in the romantic period were first made possible. As a democratic vocation, interpretation was opened up to the problem of heterodoxy and the heterogeneity of historical perspectives. Modern hermeneutics as we know, begins at this juncture, at a point when history intersects with rhetoric. For Schleiermacher these paths were destined not to meet, and he forsook the "grammatical" approach of his early years for a mode of psychological transference or recreation. When Heidegger rejected the task of psychological recreation, upon the basis of a spurious metaphysics, the question of interpretation was at one and the same time pushed even further "inwards". Interpretation was no longer a mere modality of consciousness but the fundamental condition of an existence forged in the continuum of multiple meanings, in the medium of a language which speaks Being. In this way he returned the question to its pre-metaphysical origins, recalling the Aristotelian paradox that "Being can be said in many ways". It is to this Aristotelian dictum that we must relate the Ricoeurian concept of discourse and the projection of an indirect path towards self-understanding.

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[2] See Ricoeur, *ibid,* p.4.

We recall from our previous discussion of discourse and semantics that the *instance* of discourse marks the point at which an immanent potentiality of meaning is actualised, and when an enclosed system of signs is transcended by the word and its syntagmatic relations. By design, the concept of discourse works to repel the reductive tendencies of idealist theories of truth, theories which seek, like the early Husserl's, to minimise the historical particularities of interpretation and establish univocal meanings. Within discourse it is the free combination and generation of the sentence, wherein the temporal and locutionary indicators of speech refer meaning towards an outside reference, which constitutes the smallest unit of discourse.[3] Contrary to the formal paradigm of the structuralists, for whom the sign represents an eminently repeatable structure of meaning, an identity of meaning transcendent of historical particularities, discourse presents the creation of meaning in terms of a dialectical interplay between a grammatically *repeatable structure* and an *historically singular event.* Because the sign belongs to a different level of intelligibility to that of the sentence, because it finds its limits within the construction of the syntagma, Ricoeur can limit the sign's epistemological remit over and against the advancing parameters of Lévi-Strauss, of Barthes and the like. For Ricoeur as for Benveniste, the sentence therefore marks the point at which an ideal potentiality of meaning surpasses itself within the historical moment of communication. It is in speech, where the finite structures of an immanent system are surpassed, where reference emerges, and where the integration of the sentence gives rise to an almost infinite possibility of expression, Ricoeur tells us, that the sign dies and language is born. For Ricoeur it is the interplay between language's internal regulative properties and the singular properties defining the historical reference of speech, which comprise the totality of meaning within the given instance. Against the formal-idealist model of identity-truths, the Ricoeurian dialectic of structure and event, like Heidegger's historico-ontological relation of revealment and concealment, corroborates the fundamental template of *poststructuralist* signification, namely the simultaneous perception of identity and difference, presence and absence.

Insofar as the event of discourse forbids a univocal "translation" beyond the frame of reference, discourse confirms the singularising operations of historical

[3] Ricoeur writes, "The moment when the turning from the ideality of meaning to the reality of things is produced is the moment of the transcendence of the sign. This moment is contemporaneous with the sentence." "Structure, Word, Event", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 85.

participation common to both Heidegger and Gadamer, presenting us with a linguistically conceived corollary of aesthetic singularity. The phenomenality of discourse, like the instantiation of the Gadamerian word, stands opposed to the immanent manifestation of a unitary spiritual truth which could somehow be extracted and redeployed at the level of a meta-language. As we know however, the Heideggerian vision of singularity promotes a picture of understanding and truth from which the fields of conceptual knowledge and methodological explanation are problematically excluded, thereby endangering the ontological retrieval of interpretation with an all out irrationalism. Where singularity points towards a fundamental resistance to rationalising thought, towards a distinctively aesthetic realm of the irrational and to the opposition of identity-truths and explanatory method, Ricoeur's semantics of discourse will eventually lead to a non-oppositional construction of understanding and to a *non*-aestheticist elaboration of the imagination. Understood as such, the dialectical character of discourse, of structure and event, designates a condition for the possibility of productive creativity *and* rational consensus. Here the concept and the symbol, the philosophical and the poetic will stand unopposed, as the related potentialities of a "regulated dynamism" within the dialectic of structure and event.[4]

In order to demonstrate the continuity between the critique of aestheticism, Ricoeur's theory of language, and his "indirect" semantically based path towards the recuperation of the "I am", we must begin by clarifying Ricoeur's precise definition of the symbol and its relation to interpretation. Once we have done this, it will be possible to relate the symbol's resources for exegesis, and the conflicting modes of interpretation to which it gives rise, to the projection of a mediated and indirect ontology, and to a mode of being for which the fundamental structure of double meaning conditions the possibilities of rational reflection and poetic insight alike.

[4] Ricoeur uses this term in "Structure, Word, Event", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 87. See Chapter One.

4.2

"THE SYMBOL GIVES RISE TO THOUGHT"[5]

> First there is being-in-the-world, then understanding, then interpreting, then saying. The circular character of this itinerary must not stop us. It is indeed true that it is from the heart of language that we say all this; *but language is so made that it is able to designate the ground of existence from which it proceeds and to recognize itself as a mode of the being of which it speaks.* The circularity between *I speak* and *I am* gives the initiative by turns to the symbolic function and to its instinctual and existential root. But this circle is not a vicious circle; it is the living circle of expression and of the being-expressed.[6]

Eschewing the possibility of a direct description of understanding (Husserlian reduction or Heideggerian ontology), Ricoeur's "indirect route" must begin with the "derived forms of understanding" which together comprise the hermeneutical horizon of conflicting interpretations. It is only within the context of these absolutist claims, where the work of interpretation already presumes, upon the basis of its own interpretive logic, to have cleared the muddied waters of multivocity and to have laid the path to understanding, that an inductive philosophy of interpretation may seek to explain the conditions of their co-existence.[7] Thus it is by looking backwards, from

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[5] "The symbol gives rise to thought" is a favoured expression of Ricoeur's which comes to prominence within his work *The Symbolism of Evil.* Published two years before *The Conflict of Interpretations* Ricoeur's aim in this book is to enact a phenomenology of the primary symbols which attest to human fault, to defilement, sin and guilt. The classical Ricoeurian gesture of "grafting" is here already present, for what he seeks to achieve is something to which neither a pure phenomenology of fault nor a comparative hermeneutics of symbols of fault alone can. Where the purely reflexive approach fails to relate the theme of error ontologically, to man's situation "in the being of the world", a comparative hermeneutics evades the question of truth and forbids any genuine recuperation of content at the phenomenological level (Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Harper and Row, New York, 1967, p.355). What Ricoeur seeks by contrast is a phenomenology that can account for the primordial experience of error and its relation to man's fundamental constitution by way of symbolic manifestations. The particular subject of this analysis, error, concerns us very little, save to say that sin is a primordial and universal experience and that these characteristics speak of the level of experience to which the notion of symbol adheres within the Ricoeurian hermeneutic, at a rudimentary and universal level.

[6] Ricoeur, "The Question of the Subject: The Challenge of Semiology", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.259. Emphasis added in the first instance.

[7] I use the word "inductive" for want of a better one. For whilst it is true that Ricoeur's philosophy begins with examples drawn from "life itself", with derivations which may point to a unifying principle for cognition, it is also true that they are drawn forth in the conviction that there is no such thing as a

the presuppositions of their declared intentions and stated conclusions, that Ricoeur aims to uncover a principle of commonality rooted within the conditions of their simultaneous possibilities.

In every hermeneutics, Ricoeur tells us, from Schleiermacher's to Nietzsche's, Dilthey's to Freud's, interpretation takes the form of a translation, wherein a hidden content is brought to light only by means of a preliminary objectified signification. This common interpretive structure, of "the shown-yet-concealed", Ricoeur defines as the symbol, as a

> ...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. [8]

The work of interpretation within every hermeneutics consists in "deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning." [9] It is this processional, dialectical character, by which a hidden meaning is brought to light by means of a preceding signification, which primarily distinguishes the symbol from tropes where interpretation is predetermined, such as simile and allegory. Successful reading in these instances depends upon the apprehension of a resemblance; a simultaneous equivalence in which each term participates equally. "Allegory", writes Ricoeur, "is a rhetorical procedure that can be eliminated once it has done its job".[10] By contrast

> ...there is no symbolic knowledge except when it is impossible to directly grasp the concept and when the direction towards the concept is indirectly indicated by the secondary signification of a primary signification.[11]

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strictly particular or strictly general example; such a case would contradict the governing figure of the hermeneutic circle, which makes the general a precondition of the particular and the particular a precondition of the general; the fundamental historicity of interpretation, and thus the very possibility of ontological disclosure (the possibility that interpretation may disclose something of *Dasein's* own historical constitution) depends upon it.

[8] Ricoeurr, "Existence and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations.*, p.12.

[9] Ricoeur, *ibid.*

[10] Ricoeur, "Metaphor and Symbol", *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, trans. David Pellauer, Texas Christian University Press, Fort Worth, 1976, p.56.

[11] Ricoeur, *ibid.*

By this definition the symbol operates akin to metaphor; in each case a resemblance is drawn upon the basis of an initial contrast, a conflict between "some prior categorization of reality and a new one just being born".[12] Double meaning in these instances involves the active interpretation of the recipient in such a way that they are participant within the figure's success. But whilst the symbol's profundity for thought can and indeed must be clarified in terms of the metaphorical process, the symbol's preliminary distinction for self-understanding lies in its resistance to a *purely* linguistic account of interpretation. The symbol contains both a semantic and a non-semantic element. Whilst the symbol's semantic aspect evinces the capacity for interpretation, for "distanciation", the symbol's non-semantic aspect points towards a pre-linguistic stratum of understanding, towards a more profound, a more primordial order of signification. In seeking to relate the structures of competing symbolic interpretations, Ricoeur's aim is a formal and ultimately ontological reflection upon the symbolic-interpretative relation. Before elaborating the semantic continuity between double meaning and interpretation one must therefore recognise the symbol's unique distinction from the purely linguistic construct of metaphor. Ricoeur's cardinal examples of symbolic interpretation—in psychoanalysis, the phenomenology of religion, and literary interpretation—all testify to a structure of double or multiple meaning which is in some way "bound" to or conditioned by a non-linguistic function. Whilst language is the medium for all expressions of self-understanding, symbolic interpretation always involves the recognition of a pre-verbal mode of signification wherein the categorial clarity of language does not yet exist.

> Thus psychoanalysis links its symbols to hidden psychic conflicts; while the literary critic refers to something like a vision of the world or a desire to transform all language into literature; and the historian of religion sees in symbols the milieu of manifestations of the Sacred, or what Eliade calls hierophanies.[13]

Where the relativist would treat these conflicting modes of interpretation as little more than language games, Ricoeur reads a common structure of ontological import. Fundamentally, what these competing modes of interpretation all confirm is our implication within an order of pre-verbal signification. What the relationship between

[12] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[13] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p. 54.

the content and the interpreter confirms is a certain historical relation between the primary immediacy of this non-verbal content and its subsequent clarification within language. Whilst the symbol attests to the immediacy of our "belonging" within the pre-linguistic, pre-conscious realm of hermeneutical pre-understanding, the demand of rival hermeneutics also confirms the symbol's command for linguistic interpretation.

Whilst the symbol is rooted within the non-semantic, it is the symbol's capacity to be articulated which enables this content to be thought-out and externalised. Ricoeur writes,

> There is no symbolism before man speaks, even if the power of the symbol is grounded much deeper. It is in language that the cosmos, desire and the imaginary reach expression; speech is always necessary if the world is to be recovered and made heirophany. Likewise, dreams remain closed to us until they have been carried to the level of language through narration.[14]

Rooted as it is within experience, dependent as it is upon the moment of interpretation, it is true to the say that the Ricoeurian symbol *assimilates* us to it. For Ricoeur as for Shelley, the symbol partakes of the reality it renders intelligible. But this assimilation or moment of belonging is always followed by the objectifying and distancing process of verbalisation. It is this dialectical process of belonging and *distanciation,* which enables the process of interpretation. As a correlative of interpretation, the Ricoeurian symbol stands in stark contrast to the principle of historical transcendence and ineffability beloved of the romantic poets.[15] It is the task of the interpreter to

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[14] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.13.

[15] Coleridge believed the symbol to partake of the reality it rendered intelligible, thereby constituting a vital bridge between the natural world and authorial consciousness, reality and imagination. With some important modifications Ricoeur does too. But this participatory mode of presentation for Ricoeur is not the emanation of a synthetic union between nature and intellect. The phrase of which he is so fond, "the symbol gives rise to thought", clearly gestures to the plenitude and dynamic productivity of its common honour, yet it also transgresses the metaphysical framework upon which the symbol was once borne aloft as a final accomplishment of thought, and what is more, an accomplishment that stood in diametrical opposition to the clarity of concepts. The imaginative transcendence of everyday consciousness in romantic poetry is an achievement premised upon the synthetic connectivity of spirit and nature within the symbol. Even when such a thing is cast into doubt, as in Shelley's "Mont Blanc", form and structure conspire to affirm this transcendent modality *in abstentia*; alienation falls away as the categories of mind and nature disintegrate in the construction of a highly controlled polysemia. Whilst the final reconciliation in "Mont Blanc" falls short of symbolic elation, the trajectory from despair to tranquillity still reflects the premise of a rhetorical hierarchy, upon an increasing metaphoricity which ensures the symbol's intellectual triumph. Here the symbol sits aloft, at once rhetoric's greatest achievement and the mark of its poetic sublation within the unity of an Absolute.

bring these inchoate or quasi-intuitive contents into rational coherence, reducing the polysemic variables in accordance with the interpretive frame of reference (for example, repression, literary unity or revelation). Of course what the early modern hermeneuts and the hermeneuts of suspicion have all demonstrated is the fundamental impossibility of a "direct translation"; all self-reflective certainties dissipate within the very mechanism of articulation. Whilst the Ricoeurian symbol presents a "gift" to thought, it is by no means the gift of transparency or pure intellection proper to the symbol of the romantic idealists. The symbol, writes Ricoeur, "hesitates on the dividing line between *bios* and *logos*".[16] Rooted within the pre-semantic, the symbol must in fact be seen to *vacillate* between the immediacy of its intuitions and the clarity of its verbal elaboration. The symbol therefore has a dialectical structure. But as the reservoir of an inchoate and over-determined content, this dialectical interpretative structure can never in fact complete itself. This is why, by outflanking the possibility for total identification, the symbol transcends the order of human interpretation. But this is also why, contrary to the symbol of romantic aesthetics, the Ricoeurian symbol never in fact *synthesises* the realms of *bios* and *logos*. In this way the symbol must not be taken as a kind of transcendent achievement or a principle of unity.

The symbol's gift is not the completion of thought therefore, but rather the large reserve of its complex content. Operating as a kind of attraction or magnetic pull, the symbol over time gathers around it a series of ever-more varied and derived connotations. Whilst these connections find their grounding affiliations within abstruse sensible contexts—for example, fire as a symbol of life, of purgation and of damnation—,a second-order symbolic rationale nonetheless emerges. The qualities of life and purgation, purgation and death, now find a second-order continuity borne of the symbol's powers of assimilation. Here we are reminded of what Heidegger says when he speaks of the work of art as a symbol;

> The work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory. In the work of art something other is brought together with the thing that is made. To bring together is, in Greek, *sumballein*. The work of a symbol. [17]

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[16] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.56.
[17] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", reproduced in *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Clive Cazeaux, Routledge, London, 2000, pp.80-101.

Thanks to the powers of interpretation, a new symbolic rationale emerges at the semantic level. For this reason, the symbol "hesitates on the dividing line of *bios* and *logos*." For this reason too, the symbol

> ...testifies to the primordial rootedness of Discourse in Life. It is born where force and form coincide.[18]

As a pre-condition of discourse, interpretation facilitates a bringing into language of a content that is logically anterior but which the actuality of language can alone manifest. This content, strictly logical in its anteriority, emerges through language into the configured sense of grammatical structures, into the event of discourse. What Ricoeur suggests, is that this movement into language is in some way parallel to, constitutive even, of the dialectic of interpretation and understanding. In this way the symbol's non-semantic moment is akin to the hypothetical pre-understanding of our phenomeno-ontological orientation within the world, whilst the semantic moment corresponds to the mediating role played by language in the movement from interpretation to understanding and explanation. The non-semantic is to the semantic what pre-understanding is to understanding, with language in both instances the mediating vehicle from whence thought takes a hold of itself, distancing itself from the immediacy of this phenomeno-symbolic order. So whilst the symbol, like the order of pre-understanding, must be understood in terms of an initial immediacy, it is not to be opposed to the order of a subsequently mediated mode of thinking. With language cast in this mediating interpretive function, the symbol's relationship to language is therefore rather different to those pre-eminently aesthetic characterisations for which the symbol constitutes a mode of ineffability, resistant to verbal translation. Whilst the symbol is defined in its immediacy, it does not oppose translation, indeed the symbol is not a counterforce to the order of language, grammar and conceptuality but a pre-condition. Ricoeur writes

> There is no need to deny the concept in order to admit that symbols give rise (*donne lieu*) to endless exegesis. If no concept can exhaust the requirement of "thinking more" borne by symbols, this idea signifies only

[18] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.57.

> that no categorization can embrace all the semantic possibilities of a symbol. But it is the work of the concept alone that can testify to this surplus of meaning.[19]

Thus the structure of double meaning proper to the symbol is the correlative of interpretation. Without the interpretation proper to its verbalisation there is no symbol, without the multiplicity of the symbol's content there is no scope for interpretation. Since all interpretation must go by way of language we can go further and say that the symbol constitutes the founding condition from whence both the *form* and the content of the dialectical relation of interpretation and understanding emerge. Speech, or rather the living instance of discourse, presents the interpretive movement through which an immanent potentiality of meaning—the symbol's inchoate profundity—is made manifest.

Yet whilst language mediates the symbolic content, admitting of its interpretation and thereby resisting any romantic conflation to the ineffable, the symbol is still determined by its resistance to any complete translation. Where a purely rhetorical trope such as allegory can be "contained" at the level of authorial design, the symbol bears within it an historical richness which neither author nor interpreter can fully surmount. The symbol is thus joined to interpretation in a movement of dialectical reciprocity which at once connects the interpreter to the field of inquiry and forecloses the possibility of any complete translation. Whilst a framework of contextual limitation such as the psychoanalyst or the poet constructs will reduce the symbol's currency within that field, it cannot exhaust the symbol's significance beyond it (the diverse and contradictory significances which accumulate around the most primitive symbols testify to this overdetermination or "surcharge"). To this extent it is not inaccurate to say that the symbol "lives" before and beyond these instances of interpretation. Its philosophical importance for Ricoeur rests in the relation between this unfathomable and unsurpassable fecundity and the interpretive process of verbalisation, between the symbol's *force*, the well of potential meanings rooted within the non-semantic, and its *form*, the mode of semantic and hence categorial clarification one finds within the different modes of interpretation such as Ricoeur names. The symbol's relevance to a hermeneutics that rejects linguistic determinism pivots upon this fundamental distinction of the symbol's

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[19] Ricoeur, *ibid.*

overdetermination. By dint of its categorial ambiguity and semantic richness, the symbol in its non-semantic aspect persists as a well of potential meanings, and as the provocation to a "thinking more". It is in this respect that the symbol can be said to "give rise to thought". In so far as the formalist structure of the structuralists can be called a condition for univocity, the Ricoeurian symbol opposes it as transcendental structure for plurivocity, interpretation and the hermeneutical condition. Moreover, the symbol's dual status as both a semantic and a non-semantic entity broaches thought's formal linguistic parameters to expose the phenomenological link between experience and signification. "In this way, symbolism, taken at the level of manifestation in texts, marks the breakthrough of language toward something other than itself—what I call its *opening*." This opening must be understood in terms of the existential:

> Symbolism's *raison d'être* is to open the multiplicity of meaning to the equivocalness of being.[20]

Elsewhere Ricoeur characterises the movement of symbolic interpretation as an *assimilation to*, rather than a translation of the symbol's multiplicity. Unlike those uniquely semantic structures of double meaning such as metaphor and simile, the symbol does not necessarily depend upon a perfect "fit" between its terms. Symbolic relations are "not nicely articulated on a logical level."[21] This categorial confusion, which distinguishes the symbol's inherent opacity when compared to metaphor, means that the bond to the interpretive instance is all the more pronounced. With the symbol we share in a latent meaning "without our being able to intellectually dominate the similarity" upon which it is based; it is only the interpreter's "primary intentionality that gives the second meaning".[22] The symbol operates by means of an assimilation which forbids the kind of intellectual "containment" proper to the rhetorical. Where the rhetorical structure of double meaning apprehends a resemblance between contrary significations, interpretation in fact involves an assimilation to which we ourselves are subject and which, by extension, implicates us

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[20] Ricoeur, "The Problem of Double Meaning", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.65.
[21] Ricoeur, "Metaphor and Symbol", *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, p.56.
[22] Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: I", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 287.

within the historicity of the symbol's diverse significations. Symbolic interpretation is itself caught up within the movements of the symbolic content therefore. In the symbolic order "all the boundaries are blurred – between the things as well as between the things and ourselves."[23]

Whilst assimilation would once more appear to endow the symbol with a redolently romantic, anti-representational connotation therefore, we can say once more that the Ricoeurian symbol is not to be confused with the totalising syntheses of its romantic aesthetic import. The symbol is not ineffable, even if it is unsurpassable in terms of its content. In fact the symbol's myriad currency, its "semantic surcharge" as Ricoeur calls it, is a consequence of its "rootedness", its discursive historicity. As Leonard Lawlor writes, symbols "resist conceptualisation more than other metaphors because life is the basis of their increase, their augmentation, their excess."[24] In this way the symbol is historically implicated within the interpretations which feed it; whilst the symbol's historicity transcends the historicality of individual interpretations, it can never be said to transcend history itself since the symbol and its interpretation exist in reciprocal dialogue. In the essay "Metaphor and Symbol" Ricoeur characterises this auto-implication in terms of sense and sensibility; the symbol occurs where sense and sensibility intersect. The life from which the symbol is drawn is also the very principle of its dissemination back into life. Thus the symbol and its interpretation confirm the mode of finite transcendence integral to the hermeneutical critique of historical objectivism and aesthetic transcendence alike. Within the experience of the symbol, one encounters "the finite transgression of finitude".[25]

Ricoeur's "Indirect Path".

Heideggerian poetics, like romantic aesthetics, begins in the recognition of the work's power as a unified entity and its distinction from all others; herein lies the work's truth for being. As the realization of language's true essence, poetry for Heidegger is language at once at its most accomplished and primordial; poetry is the

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[23] Ricoeur, "Metaphor and Symbol", *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, p.56.
[24] Lawlor, *Imagination and Chance; The Difference Between the Thought of Ricoeur and Derrida*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1992, p.71.
[25] Lawlor, *ibid.* p.70.

unity of an opening which reveals something of language's essential relation to being. As we know, this relation is also one of partial concealment, never the less, or perhaps precisely for this reason, this originality is conditioned by a description of the work's unity first and foremost.[26] An analysis of double meaning focussed upon discourse and its constitutive levels proceeds upon the basis of an ascending order, starting with the smallest elements of language and building up to a consideration of structures and finally of systems or processes. "By going further in the same direction, one would meet the problems posed by Heidegger concerning the ontology of language. But these problems would demand not only a change of level but a change of approach." For Heidegger

> ...follows another order—perfectly legitimate in itself—which consists in beginning from spoken being, from the ontological weight of established languages such as that of the thinker, the poet, the prophet.[27]

By rejecting the radicality of the *Kehre*, and confirming the link between self-understanding and the interpretation of symbolic forms, Ricoeur refuses this approach. Confirming the path towards a mediated and indirect ontology, in which "double meaning is the means of detecting a condition of being", Ricoeur clarifies the relation between symbolic interpretations—in psychoanalysis, in the phenomenology of religion or literary interpretations—and self-understanding and furthermore, the relationship between a hermeneutics of competing symbolic interpretations and the hermeneutical relationship of being-as-interpretation.[28]

> In contrast to philosophies concerned with starting points, a mediation on symbols starts from the fullness of language and of meaning already there; it begins from within language which has already taken place and in which everything in a certain sense has already been said; it wants to be thought, not pre-suppositionless, but in and with all its presuppositions.[29]

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[26] I say "never the less" because the work's descriptive priority appears to contradict the ontological priority of poetry, but then I say it is perhaps precisely for this reason because such an ontological priority must by its very nature involve that element of concealment to which an ontic description of the work conforms. In effect what I am saying is that the aesthetic mediates ontological disclosure and that the disclosure of poetry is mediated by the poem.

[27] Ricoeur, "Structure, Word, Event", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.92.

[28] Ricoeur, "The Problem of Double Meaning", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.65.

[29] Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: I", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.285.

This is why a clarification of the symbol and by extension Ricoeur's hermeneutical detour towards self-understanding must entail both semantic and non-semantic analyses. It is for this reason that we find the otherwise abstruse fields of symbolism, of structural linguistics and anthropology, psychoanalysis and the phenomenology of religion rise and fall between the covers of the one book. Without linguistic analyses there is little or no means to interpreting the unity of common structures within conflicting interpretations; "it is only in a conflict of rival hermeneutics that we perceive something of the being to be interpreted", and this we know is Ricoeur's reasoning against Heidegger's "unified ontology".[30] But likewise, one has no means of accessing the being of an "implied ontology" without ultimately breaching those linguistic parameters:

> A linguistic analysis which would treat these significations as a whole closed in on itself would ineluctably set up language as an absolute. This hypostasis language, however, repudiates the basic intention of a sign, which is to hold "for", thus transcending itself and suppressing itself in what it intends. Language itself, as a signifying milieu, must be referred to existence.[31]

Ricoeur's hermeneutics thus takes wing on the back of two critiques, the one levelled at an ontological absolutism, the other—in "Structure and Hermeneutics" and "Structure,Word, Event"—at the enclosure of a formal linguistics. In "Existence and Hermeneutics" (the primary statement of Ricoeur's intent at this time) he defines the project of an "implied ontology" of interpretation in terms of three distinct phases. These phases are intended to reflect procedurally the proposed relation of a hermeneutically conceived interpretation and self-understanding.

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[30] Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Intepretations*, p.18.
[31] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.15.

The Semantic Phase

> Rival hermeneutics conflict not over the structure of double meaning but over the mode of its opening, over the finality of showing.[32]

Interpretation, we have said, is by definition an activity of the symbol. If interpretation is a fundamental trait of existence such as Heidegger suggests, then ambiguity must itself be such a trait. This means that the symbolic structure of double meaning must be irreducible yet at the same time not unsurpassable, for how else could one speak of self-knowledge in the face of ambiguity? It must, to use Ricoeur's terms, be at once bound and free.[33] The symbol's irreducibility is thus the condition for a mediated ontology; the postulate of ontology the grounds for a non-aesthetic theory of the symbol. This is a theory in which the classical aesthetic conception of the symbol, as a synthesising *image* is replaced by the notion of an irreducible signifying content.[34] As we have said, the symbol is bound by the activities of its non-semantic and pre-linguistic aspect; the processes of sleep, of *dichten* (the German verb for poetic composition, for versifying or lyricising) and of religious behaviours, attest to the need across diverse disciplines to "reveal the lines that attach the symbolic function to this or that non-symbolic or pre-linguistic activity."[35] A unified theory of symbols (thence of interpretation) for this reason is not possible. Nevertheless, Ricoeur claims that an analysis of the symbol's semantic aspect will enable a clarification of "the structure common to these diverse modalities of symbolic expression" and thenceforth the relative "shape" of a symbolically mediated self-understanding independent of its particular manifestation.[36]

Such an analysis involves both an enumeration of symbolic forms (in psychoanalysis, in poetry and the phenomenology of religion especially) and a criteriology in which the symbol and its related forms, such as metaphor and allegory and simile, are semantically distinguished.[37] Its purpose will be to establish the relational functions and structural similarities operating within separate hermeneutics.

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[32] Ricoeur, "The Problem of Double Meaning", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.65.
[33] See Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: I", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.296.
[34] The Ricoeurian symbol and its distinction from "aesthetic" conceptions I go on to explain below.
[35] Ricoeur, "Metaphor and Symbol", *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning, ibid.*, p.58.
[36] Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.13.
[37] Ricoeur, *ibid.*

What, for instance, is the relation between Freudian "dream work" and the symbolic function within the phenomenology of religion, do they attest to the same operation or the same semantic field? In turn, this criteriology of rhetorical structures calls for what Ricoeur terms "a study of the operations of interpretation". If interpretation is a natural correlative of symbolic structures and symbolic structures conform to different operations and different regions of intelligibility, then so too must the interpretive activities accompanying them.[38]

Now the question of symbolic structures must be related to the competing methodologies by which these interpretive activities are reflected. Interpretation gives rise to conflicting methods, such is the condition of multiple meaning. These methodological contrasts may measure an initial difference of interpretation as regards a preliminary symbolic structure, but more importantly, they testify to the relative operations between a specific form of interpretation, for example psychoanalysis, and the way it constructs its methodological procedure.

Interpretation starts from the realisation of multiple potential meanings and proceeds to reduce this multivocity by means of a translation according to its own frame of reference. Such a "reduction" is no different from that of the interpretation of ambiguous meanings within conversation, within the instance of discourse, except that the *form* of interpretation within the methodological context is systematically relative to the theoretical structure under consideration. For example, in psychoanalysis interpretation is governed by the overarching theme of desire. The content it translates, in art, dreams or religion say, will ultimately return all modes of symbolic expression back to this fact. What this essentially means is that the mode of rhetorical detour it perceives in the work of repression or transference and the mode of rhetorical decipherment it prescribes are both consequences of the thematic frame of desire. The psychoanalytic journey will always be a journey that returns thought and its mediations to desire; accordingly the structure of this journey is predestined by a certain modality of reading. Henceforth the question of explanatory models and methodologies, maligned by Dilthey, by Heidegger and Gadamer, loses its deductive neutrality and its oppositional contrast to interpretation. Method in Ricoeur's hands is

[38] The reciprocal relation of symbol and interpretation is transcendental in so far as it designates necessary regions or operations of intelligibility. In this way the Ricoeurian symbol possesses a distinctly Kantian character; as in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where the schema mediates between a necessary category of thought (a non-empirical concept) and an empirical fact, so the Ricoeurian symbol mediates the empirical experience and its interpretation.

interpretation. For Ricoeur, we can say that method emerges at the interchange of multivocity and its projected reduction.[39]

If, for example, we place the Freudian economy side by side with that of Nietzsche, we can immediately apprehend their philosophical affinity. They are hermeneutically pertinent precisely because they link the impossibility of any complete self-identification to the duplicity of signification at the level of their respective fields. But in each instance the structure of double meaning is driven by a different affective force with consequently different implications for the philosophy of consciousness; between the two, the presumed symbolic content or the criterion of its translation does not provide an equal claim for self-consciousness. The Nietzschean will to power may wrap itself within the illusions of Christian rationality but the recognition of its lie cannot admit of any higher authenticity; all life takes the form of an unsurpassable but at the same time self-confirmatory self-translation. The repression of *eros* within society provides Freud a similarly universal structure of symbolic repression, but where Nietzsche rejects the possibility of self-recovery, Freud's clinical postulate of disorder presupposes the possibility of the medically assisted redemption; the recovery of an original meaning based, as in classical exegesis, upon the intercession of a specialist decoder. Disorder is a disordering of the symbolic economy as it usually functions within healthy individuals.

Whilst Freud and Nietzsche provide variant philosophical positions with regards the possibility of self-understanding, and whilst the Freudian position provides the clearest affinity to the Ricoeurian projection of a symbolically mediated *cogito*, it is foremostly their structural affinities which concerns Ricoeur and not the philosophical implications they independently draw for consciousness. But this is not an admission of pluralism by any means; a structural semantic equivalence is altogether different from a philosophical equivalence, in which the semantic content, not just the semantic structure, would conform. A semantics of double meaning which asserted their equivalent validity as interpretations upon the basis of a common structure would be no more expedient than a description of a direct ontological relation, wherein the question of method and any subsequent arbitration of methods is voided, or indeed a philosophical structuralism whereby all meaning and the

[39] The second phase of the Ricoeurian hermeneutic, the "reflective phase", will clarify the dialectical nature of interpretation and (methodological) explanation. Self-knowledge emerges in the dialectic of consciousness and its objectifications; methodology conforms to a moment of objectification through which man interprets himself.

possibility of self-interpretation would be thoroughly pre-conditioned by the structure; where the one denies theoretical scrutiny the other debars the possibility of an autonomous judgement.

By way of a semantic analysis of the symbol however, Ricoeur proposes to relate the range of conflicting hermeneutical methods back to the structure of their corresponding theories of interpretation, to a principle of interpretation (such as transference) and its referential determination (desire) and in so doing, to define the parameters of each interpretation. A semantics of double meaning will thus lead to an interpretation of interpretations which has as its aim the "mapping" of interpretive theories relative to their cognitive and experiential domains, and relative to one another. With the preliminary stage of semantic analysis hermeneutics thus

> ...prepares itself to perform its highest task, which would be a true arbitration among the absolutist claims of each of the interpretations. By showing in what way each method expresses the form of a theory, philosophical hermeneutics justifies each method within the limits of its own theoretical circumscription.[40]

With an elucidation of double meanings Ricoeur will assert the co-existence and in some instances the co-validity of conflicting interpretations without succumbing to relativism. Philosophical hermeneutics

> ...begins by an expanding investigation into symbolic forms and by a comprehensive analysis of symbolic structures. It proceeds by the confrontation of hermeneutic styles and by the critique of systems of interpretation, carrying the diversity of hermeneutic methods back to the structure of the corresponding theories.[41]

Such is the profoundly important epistemological role with which the Ricoeurian hermeneutic charges itself.

But this critical function does not yet satisfy the ontological postulate of self-understanding upon which Ricoeur's sights are eventually set. The relationship between double meaning and self-interpretation remains a question if the structures of double meaning and their successive interpretations are not somehow shown to have a

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[40]Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.14.
[41] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, emphasis added.

validity beyond the locality of their particular methodological frameworks, and beyond the linguistic mechanisms they purport to demonstrate. If understanding is to broach the rhetorical prison-house of language then language must be shown to transcend itself; "Language itself, as a signifying milieu, must be referred to existence".[42] Likewise if the interpretation of interpretations is to be existentially significant, if it is to lead to self-understanding rather than mere plurality or relativism, it must be shown to somehow reflect *transcendental* conditions of understanding. Beyond the task of comparison and arbitration therefore, the multiple expressions, multiple theories of understanding must be made to conform to different areas, or different levels of intelligibility. "My hypothesis" writes Ricoeur,

> is that each (interpretation) is legitimate within its own context. We cannot, of course, content ourselves with a simple juxtaposition ... it is necessary to set up a dialogue between them and demonstrate their complimentary functions.[43]

It is the task of Ricoeur's second, reflective phase to establish how these "complimentary functions" may participate within a philosophy of consciousness and how they may reflect the dynamics of an implied ontology. Moving beyond the relatively extrinsic proposition of the *Lebenswelt,* where interpretations are limited to the "external" conditions of their socio-historical, socio-cultural horizons, Ricoeur aims to "graft" or "implant" the initial semantic analysis of interpretations within a reflective phenomenology. But unlike Husserl, who sought to reduce the multivocity of interpretation to a univocal theory of meaning, meaning for Ricoeur is to remain irrevocably plural.[44] After all, it is this irrevocable plurality or plurivocity which first propels the proposition of a phenomenological hermeneutics and a semantic analysis of double meaning in the first place. For Ricoeur, double meaning is both irreducible and constitutive; it is, he asserts, the means to detecting a condition of being. And yet a semantic analysis alone is not itself enough; it remains

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[42] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.15.
[43] Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: II", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.319.
[44] This of course is the crucial difference between phenomenology and a hermeneutical phenomenology. In the *Logical Investigations* Husserl's aim is a theory of signifying expressions which would ultimately reduce all multivocity to the ideality of univocal acts or intentions. What Husserl seeks therefore, is a metalanguage through which to translate multivocal expressions "according to ideal models" (Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations* p.15). For Ricoeur on the other hand, multivocity is utterly irreducible, utterly constitutive.

> ...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. [45]

When Ricoeur writes that it is through language that all ontic and ontological understanding arrives at expression, it is upon the condition that such an understanding automatically involves an interpretation of Being, and that such an interpretation is in some way constitutive for our own being. It is at this point that Ricoeur's relation to Heidegger becomes apparent. To simply state the proposition of self-understanding within the understanding of double meaning would be to follow the "direct" path of Heideggerian ontology, whereby understanding is transformed into an ontological trait cut off from methodological considerations and opposed to the self-presence of the Cartesian *cogito*. Such a direct statement upon interpretive being cannot speak directly of the modalities of expression which testify to this being; it cannot specify *how* a particular modality of discourse, a particular structure of double meaning, relates to other such structures, or indeed how such structures give rise to the methodologies of their interpretation. For this reason Ricoeur wishes to remain "in contact with methodologies as they are actually practiced", without separating the hermeneutical "concept of truth from the concept of method." [46] It is for Ricoeur to demonstrate, through an elaboration of his reflective approach, how an understanding of the structural operations of multivocal or symbolic expression can facilitate the recuperation of a "wounded" *cogito*, and a mediated form of self-consciousness.

The Reflective Phase

> Reflection is the appropriation of our effort to exist and of our desire to be by means of the works which testify to this effort and desire.[47]

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[45] Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 11.
[46] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p,14.
[47] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p. 17.

In the "reflective" phase, Ricoeur tells us that a semantics of double meaning and interpretation is to be "grafted" to a phenomenology of consciousness. By necessity such a grafting has immediate consequences for the question of the *cogito*; if double meaning is an irreducible and productive trait for understanding, consciousness itself must be irreducibly interpretive. No longer may a phenomenological *cogito* conform to the projected unity of the early Husserl. Rather, the self that may be recovered in a hermeneutics of self-understanding always follows as the secondary consequence of an interpretation. Whilst the self in fact guides this interpretation in the first place, it may only collect itself in the manner of a subsequent recognition. The hermeneutical self finds itself in the manner of a *being-interpreted*; the self that interprets thereby self-interprets.

Ricoeur's reflective phase thus presents an intractably mediated form of self-recognition. Reflection is a mode of critical appropriation of the works and acts which testify to our own existence, which testifies to our desire to understand ourselves—"our effort to exist and our desire to be"—and which serves to countermand the principle of an internal and auto-affective self-consciousness. The *cogito*

> ...is a vain truth; it is like a first step which cannot be followed by any other, so long as the *ego* of the *ego cogito* has not been recaptured in the mirror of its objects, of its works, and finally, of its acts. *Reflection is blind intuition if it is not mediated by what Dilthey called the expressions in which life objectifies itself...Thus, reflection is a critique...in the sense that the cogito can be recovered only by the detour of a decipherment of the documents of its life.* [48]

[48] Ricoeur, *ibid.* Emphasis added. This statement also reinforces Ricoeur's critical distance from Heidegger; the description of *Dasein* remains an intuitive description of the understanding which requires an explanatory detour through the expressions of understanding as they objectify themselves within competing interpretations. Ricoeur repeats this argument when writing directly of symbols. In "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection: II" he writes; "*...reflection is not intuition*...reflection is the effort to recomprehend the *ego* of the *ego cogito* in the mirror of its objects, its works, and ultimately its acts. Now, why must the positing of the *ego* be recomprehended through its acts? Precisely because the *ego* is not given in psychological evidence or in intellectual intuition or in mystical vision. A reflective philosophy is precisely the opposite of a philosophy of the immediate. The first truth—*I think, I am*—remains as abstract and empty as it is unassailable. It must be "mediated" by representations, actions, works, institutions, and monuments which objectify it; it is in these objects, in the largest sense of the word, that the *ego* must both lose itself and find itself. We can say that a philosophy of reflection is not a philosophy of consciousness if, by consciousness, we mean immediate self-consciousness." (*The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.323.)

Reflection is therefore an "intermediary step", between consciousness and self-consciousness, expression and self-understanding; in every instance consciousness must be mediated by the works and acts which testify to its existence. Thus an analysis of symbolic language and its conditions for interpretation is to be related to the question of the being that interprets. Between the symbol and the self there is a dual relation of manifest and implicit interpretation; of manifest symbolic interpretation and implicit self-interpretation. A semantic elucidation of the "shown yet concealed" within language must now be related to the illusion of the self-evident *cogito* therefore.

> In proposing to relate symbolic language to self-understanding, I think I fulfil the deepest wish of hermeneutics. The purpose of all interpretation is to conquer a remoteness, a distance between the past cultural epoch to which the text belongs and the interpreter himself. By overcoming this distance, by making himself contemporary with the text, the exegete can appropriate its meaning to himself: foreign, he makes it familiar, that is, he makes it his own. It is thus the growth of his own understanding of himself that he pursues through his understanding of the other. Every hermeneutics is thus, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others.[49]

The exegetical foreclosure of historical distances and psychological differences is now the task of the self exiled from its own significations. It is now the implacable distance by which our own historicity and our own linguisticality holds us from within ourselves that a post-structural, post-Heideggerian hermeneutics must overcome. Thus the *cogito* may be recaptured only by the decipherment of the documents of its life, and in full recognition of that false consciousness which would presume to implant itself as a precondition of thought. For this reason reflection upon consciousness must be "doubly indirect", and consciousness itself, doubly mediated.

It is at this point that we find Ricoeur's critique of formalist linguistics and his assertion of an existentially grounded concept of discourse converge with a critique of consciousness based upon the rhetorical illusions of the self-positing ego. The deconstruction of ideas into pre-conscious linguistic configurations need not debar the path to self-understanding if the systematicity of language is shown to transcend itself

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[49] Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.16.

and suppress itself within the instance of discourse. The ontological demand to relate interpretation to self-understanding need not languish in the face of a pre-reflective grammar and a constrained articulation if they are treated, in the manner set out by Heidegger, as positive preconditions of our "being-there".

Finally, Ricoeur claims that the act of appropriation within reflection confirms the transcendental status of double meaning. If self-understanding always take the form of a mediation, a detour through the express signs of our existence and our understanding in general, then double-meaning—say the work of art's overt content and its indirect significance for self-understanding, its ontic and its ontological imports—constitutes the necessary condition from whence self-understanding alone proceeds. Thus it is at the reflective level alone that double meaning can be called transcendental, and it is for this reason that the symbol presents thought with a "gift" which exceeds the movements of a semantic translation. To reflect upon the double-meaning inherent to the symbol is to reflect upon the conditions of self-understanding from whence the symbol's inter-signifying relations first emerge. To interpret these relations is to be caught up within the movements of "world-making" named by Heidegger in the context of the work of art; it is to find ourselves—always already—standing within the contours of our own horizon of intelligibility.

The Existential Phase

> It is behind itself that the *cogito* discovers, through the work of interpretation, something like an *archaeology of the subject.* Existence is glimpsed in this archaeology, but it remains entangled in the movement of deciphering to which it gives rise.[50]

The symbol, we know, gives rise to interpretation, what is more the interpretive methodology of every hermeneutic is determined through the referential frame of each interpretation. This is what a semantic analysis of symbols shows us. To reflect upon the knowledge of symbolic interpretation is to recognise the double-

[50] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p. 20.

movement of interpretation and self-understanding within symbolic knowledge. This is the circular movement of *Dasein's* being-there. And yet this relation remains an intuitive sketch if it is not shown how, "in every instance, each hermeneutics discovers the aspect of existence (the frame of reference) which founds it as method."[51] This is the demand Ricoeur puts to himself in the refusal of a direct ontology; "The ontology of understanding is implied in the methodology of interpretation", but because ontology must take its indirect route via the competing claims of rival hermeneutics "a unified ontology is as inaccessible to our method as a separate ontology."[52] And yet for Ricoeur there is still an "implied ontology" to be gleaned from the interpretive movement from symbol to self-understanding. Competing hermeneutics rival one another over the symbol's mode of "opening" within the world, over the frame of interpretive reference and its mode of methodological engagement, but in each instance the path to self-understanding confirms the same essential pattern; "a true dismissal of the classical problematic of the subject as consciousness; then a restoration of the problematic of existence" in accordance with that particular mode of opening. In every hermeneutic, "the self must be lost in order to find the "I" [*le je*]. [53]

In psychoanalysis for example, narcissism constitutes a mode of false consciousness, a false *cogito* which presumes to set itself up as an origin of meaning. Through the work of psychoanalysis, through the interpretation of dreams, fantasies and their symbolic contents, the ego succumbs to the disclosure of latent drives, to the unconscious with its instinctual roots in the impulses of desire; to the psychoanalyst's original frame of symbolic reference that is. In this way the false consciousness of the ego is surpassed in the movement of reflection, seconded to the more original relation of language and desire. In each hermeneutic, claims Ricoeur, the self is surpassed in the movement of reflection to be reinstated as a secondary affect.

Clearly, from the Ricoeurian perspective psychoanalysis does not present philosophy with a radical renunciation of the subject, nor can its philosophical implications for consciousness be read in any absolutist manner. Psychoanalysis testifies to the onto-hermeneutical relation of backwards relatedness, of interpretation and understanding outlined in *Being and Time*, where consciousness finds itself in the

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[51] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p. 19.
[52] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p. 18.
[53] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p. 19.

midst of its own questioning. In psychoanalysis consciousness may surpass itself in its own origins of longing but to this mode of self-interpretation Ricoeur adds what he calls a teleology of the subject, a kind of interpretive self-surpassing which draws the subject "in front of itself, toward a meaning in motion".[54] Here interpretation takes the form of a projection towards a future horizon of self-understanding, an anticipatory interpretation such as one finds in Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Pitched in terms of this prospective horizon, interpretation takes the form of a guided teleology. Read hermeneutically, the spirit of Hegel's phenomenology is the achievement of a self-understanding realised solely through the interpretation (Hegel's dialectic) of successive figures. There is of course no ultimate moment of realisation for Ricoeur; interpretation is the non-finalisable condition of human historicity. Once more it is not Hegel's essential philosophical conclusions that count but the extent to which the Hegelian trajectory conforms to the hermeneutical model of understanding as interpretation, via the detour of double meaning; as "a reading of the hidden meaning inside the text of the apparent meaning."[55] Psychoanalysis and the phenomenology of spirit confirm the essential movement of interpretation and self-understanding and the essential detour through which understanding founds the self as a mediated *cogito*.

For the self to find itself it must lose itself, only to find itself in the movement of interpretation from which it cannot be detached. This is what rival hermeneutics, in all their divergence, confirm. For Ricoeur, the symbol comprises that deep resource of potential significance where "force and form collide"; the interpretation of symbols which founds every rival hermeneutic as method occurs at the interchange of multivocity and its reduction in accordance with the frame of reference. "True symbols", Ricoeur writes,

> contain all hermeneutics, those which are directed toward the emergence of new meanings and those which are directed toward the resurgence of archaic fantasies.[56]

Indeed what the true symbol testifies to is the historicity of interpretation from whence its own unsurpassable content arises. In its unceasing augmentation, the

[54] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p. 21.
[55] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[56] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p. 23.

symbol confirms the irreducible multiplicity of human experience and the unending *will* to interpret this experience. In its resistance to conceptualisation, in its excess, the symbol confirms the impossibility of a "unified ontology" which would presume to level the multiplicity of symbolic interpretation to a single formula or conceptual framework. Thus it is only in a "conflict of rival hermeneutics"—where such historical diversity manifests—"that we perceive something of the being to be interpreted." [57] The task of philosophical hermeneutics is to bring these rival interpretations into philosophical coherence, not for the sake of arbitration or some dry intellectual exercise, but in order to reflect upon the vital interchange to which the symbol attests, between life and understanding, *bios* and *logos*. As we know, the symbol's power for Ricoeur belongs within the purview of Kant's schematism and the theory of conceptual synthesis. Whilst the symbol always resists conceptual limitations, the symbol does not contradict the work of the concept.

Inexhaustible in its content, the symbol presents thought the gift of further thinking, but it also imparts a sense of finitude within the mind of the beholder. Thinking, in its failure to drain the infinitude of this resource, comes up against its own limits. Through doing so, we gain a fleeting sense of the infinite, of what Ricoeur calls the totally other. This is why symbols cannot be fully explained by a semantic theory of interpretation. Nevertheless, if symbols could not be in some way accounted for, this sense of alterity and infinity would pass us by. This is the fundamental dialectic of being and non-being, identity and difference. For this reason, the symbol must be thought of as same and other. Since human understanding must always pass through language, so too must the understanding of the symbol. For this reason it is necessary to look to the symbol's semantic aspect as metaphor.

Ricoeur will go on to define metaphor as the figure of discourse *par excellance*. But this semantics of metaphor will not restrict itself to the verbal. In reaching beyond the verbal constitution of metaphor towards a semantics of the non-verbal, Ricoeur will return the question of double meaning to its non-semantic aspect.

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur moves from a consideration of classical rhetorical theories and their repetition within latter-day semiotic analyses towards a cognitive semantics in which he questions not only the function but also the ontological import of metaphorical, that is to say literary or fictional truths. Once

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[57] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.18.

again, Ricoeur moves slowly, meticulously, from the formal quarantine of semiotic linguistics, via a semantics of discourse and double meaning, towards a picture of human understanding. In fact, what he establishes is the basis for a *phenomenology of imagination*, something which, as Richard Kearney points out, both Heidegger's radical poetising and Gadamer's critique of aesthetic idealism gestured towards, but which neither accomplished in a positive or constitutive manner. For Kearney,

> Ricoeur's tentative and always provisional probing of a poetic hermeneutic of imagination represents, we believe, the ultimate, if discreet, agenda of his entire philosophical project. [58]

The current investigation enjoins itself to that "we". The explication of a dynamic, *productive* theory of metaphor, in which new semantic possibilities arise, presents the justification for a transformative view of cognition. Opposing classical theories of a metaphorical redescription, Ricoeur's theory of the semantic imagination designates man's fundamental power to create, and the most compelling indictment of linguistic determinism.

[58] Richard Kearney, *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva, ibid.* pp.36-7.

4.3

METAPHOR AND THE QUESTION OF PHILOSOPHY

Postructuralism: Derrida / Ricoeur

If Ricoeur's critique of structuralism, his interpretation of Heidegger, and his reformulation of a "wounded *cogito*" condemned him to the peripheries during France's formalist hay-day of the 1960s, one may expect the shift towards *post*-structuralism in the early 1970s to have exiled him further. But as much as Derrida's practice began as a radicalisation of structuralism—as a critical "super-structuralism"[59] intent upon the exposure of trenchant logocentrism (in structuralism's founding texts no less)—deconstruction was also a reversal of structuralist dogma insofar as the principle of *différance*, of the restless mobility of the signifier, recast the signifying structure in terms of a dynamic and hence temporally implicated system of relations.[60] The claim for diachrony, subordinated by Saussure, suppressed altogether by Hjemslev, was thus reinstated. Furthermore diachrony's role was no longer subordinate to the vertical framework of the structure; with the assertion *différance*, Saussure's spatial logic of synchronic difference was not only temporalised but ineradicably subverted, movement within the system pointing to the impossibility of a final identity.[61] The progress towards fixed meaning was based upon a system of differences in which the marriage of the differential relation was infinitely deferred. *Différance* named both a dynamic movement within the system and the impossibility of the system's stability or closure therefore. And whilst the qualification of an internal diachrony appeared to uphold the formalist opposition to extrinsic genetic accounts of meaning, the concept of *différance* itself worked to erode the parameters upon which these founding distinctions lay. As the watch-word for a deconstructive "logic" and practice, *différance* was more than a linguistic principle or a textual strategy for reading, it was a means to questioning the conditions for the possibility of meaning and reality; whilst deconstruction was a critical outgrowth of structuralism,

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[59] "Super-structuralism" was the title of Richard Harland's early work on Derrida and the new generation of post-structuralists.

[60] Derrida writes that "the theme of *différance* is incompatible with the static, synchronic, taxonomic, ahistoric motifs in the concept of *structure*". *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981. p.27.

[61] Derrida propounds this pivotal perspective in the *Writing and Difference* essay "Force and Signification". See *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Routledge, London, 2001, pp.1-35.

the notion of *différance* was as much a critical descendent of ontological difference within the Heideggerian corpus as well.

Where Heidegger's assertion of ontological difference after *Being and Time* asserted the absent conditioning of a present being, of being's relationship to the absent, timeless essence of being, and with it, an end to the unitary presence of Western onto-theology, Derrida's assertion of *différance* proclaimed both fidelity to Heidegger and a radicalisation of his critique. According to Heidegger, ontological difference confounds the horizon of metaphysics, as the primary un-thought that metaphysics itself cannot think: "The essence of presencing, and with it the distinction between presencing and what is present, remains forgotten. *The oblivion of Being is oblivion of the distinction between Being and beings.*" [62] Accordingly Being's resurrection marks the possibility of a new departure, into that singularising and pre-onto-theological modality of poetic and apophatic thinking. But with *différance,* Derrida announced something more akin to the beginning of an inextricable albeit radicalised return to metaphysics, one which must follow in pursuit of this repression of difference at the site of its inception. In Derrida's early work this suppression goes by the name of the *phonè*, or rather the privileging of speech—as the locus of a full and self-present meaning, and a natural identity with thought—over the abstract and graphic re-presentational character of writing. The binary associations of speech and writing (of presence, identity, immediacy and naturalness on the one hand, of absence, non-identity, mediation and artifice/technique on the other) for Derrida confirm the system of suppression named by Heidegger not in terms of being and beings, but of signification and the split between signifier (writing) and signified (speech). "The formal essence of the signified is *presence*, and the privilege of its proximity to the logos as *phonè* is the privilege of presence."[63] With this linguistic permutation, of being as the logos, as *phonè* (logocentrism), Derrida claims his advance upon Heidegger. If the privileging of presence and speech is also the privileging of the *signified* (the existent), then it follows that these terms must themselves be preceded by the cognate terms of the *signifier*. Thus Derrida asserts a more radical pre-condition to the condition of ontological difference; the onto-theological

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[62] Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi, Harper and Row, New York, 1975, p.50. Quoted by Derrida in "Différance", *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Harvester Press, Brighton, 1982, p.23.

[63] *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1997. p.18.

determination of being as presence could not have lodged itself as the origin of metaphysics without the prior suppression of writing and the signifier. It is this suppression of the sign or "trace" within logocentrism, which gives rise to onto-theology not vice versa. Now *différance* and the pre-existent trace provide the condition of presence's metaphysical privilege *and* the pre-condition for the possibility of differentiation in the first place. In this way Derrida claims *différance* to name a more "original" and a more radical relation which founds the apprehension of ontological difference and its suppression.

Yet whilst Derrida could be seen to draw the order of signification "further back", this radicality was not to be thought of in the straightforward manner of a more primordial origin. As a relation, as a principle of the signifier's constant deferral and difference, the radicality of *différance* rests in its refusal of spatio-temporal determinations. Accordingly the indices of origin and end, *archia* and *telos*, metaphysics and its closure are disrupted, the relation of one to another depending upon the relative stability of its terms. In this way deconstruction worked to vitiate the standard hermeneutical/semantic account of meaning, subverting the rectilinear procession of signification and reference within the traditional historical framework and challenging the teleological assumptions implicit to both a generalised hermeneutical account of signification and interpretation (the dialectical progression from part to whole) and structuralist accounts of the code's composition as a series of discrete identifiable units.

With Derrida, the theme of history was thus reintroduced against its monolithic inscription within classical philosophy, as a series of plural, partial histories, incapable of being synthesised or any way completed because of the unceasing motion within the order of signification itself. In the absence of a unified and stable order of signification, and thence a unitary interpretive directive, significations must co-exist within multiple orders of historical interpretation, within distinct signifying chains, each with their own historicity, their own relation to other signifying orders. With Derrida the Heideggerian critique of anthropocentrism within Western metaphysics, in Kant as much as Descartes, became the deconstructive critique of logocentrism, of the speaking subject as the presumed origin of meaning and the point of a presumed fixity within history. In this way Derrida went on to expose and to deconstruct the operational prejudice for presence and being within the Western tradition and with it the cognate concepts of origin and end. In the absence of

determinate origins, points of present fixity, there could be no determinate point of finality, only the infinite deferral named by *différance*. As a principle of historical mediation the Derridean movement enjoins the critique of historicism and objectivism initiated by the hermeneutic philosophers of the previous century. But as a post-Heideggerian, critical of *Dasein's* true radicality as a departure from the anthropological viewpoint, the onto-phenomenological emphasis of historical critique in *Being and Time* is supplanted by the more radical proposition of linguisticality, the order of signification and its infinite non-identity. Where *Dasein* emerges within the movement of Being, in the historicity of its relation to Being, the preceding conditions of signification and interpretation arise within the indeterminacy of the already emergent *trace*. Unlike the Heideggerian relation of Being and beings, the trace functions as a limit concept, intended to debar the possibility of a clear distinction between the two terms; the trace is neither before nor after, present nor absent.[64] Thus Derrida's Heideggerian affiliation, like Gadamer's in this respect, belongs to the work of radical poetising subsequent to *Being and Time*. But as we shall see, Derrida's relation to the later Heidegger is not a matter of straightforward complicity.

In *Prophets of Extremity*, a work dedicated to the aestheticist or singularising turn in Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida, Alan Megill introduces Derrida by way of an assimilation to Maurice Blanchot, an author and critic for whom the boundaries of the literary and the critical were consciously indistinct. In Megill's words, Blanchot is a "negative Heideggerian", "for while he insists, like Heidegger, on the 'impersonality' of art, he at the same time rejects the notion that art has 'truth value'".[65] If this is an accurate portrayal of Derrida too (and there are many who challenge the repudiation of truth in Derrida's texts) then Derrida's relation to Ricoeur takes the form of more or less straightforward opposition with regard to the project of philosophical rationalism. As regards the question of literary theory and the textualist hegemony, Derrida's prominence within literary theory will present the straightforward paradox of a discipline enthralled by the literary rhetoric of an essentially anti-literary thinker, one for whom the literary text is an impersonal, autotelic, irreducible and generically indistinguishable proliferation of chance significations. But if Derrida's renunciation of aesthetic truth is not of itself a

[64] Whilst the trace works to negate the ruse of the transcendental signified, it is not necessarily wrong to read it de-ontologically, as a transcendental negativity.
[65] Alan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987, p.281.

rejection of all truth, if double meaning does not condemn us to a radical heterogeneity, then Derrida's characterisation within the textualist paradigm will amount to a doubly paradoxical situation for literary theory: to a predicament wherein Derrida has been read both inaccurately and what is more, to the unnecessary detriment of literature's aesthetic distinction.[66] By calling Derrida's scepticism into question, we thus call into question Derrida's relation to Ricoeur, and by extension, the issue of Ricoeur's relative exclusion within the literary theoretical paradigm. It is with their debate regarding double meaning and the metaphoricity of philosophical language, that this relation clarifies itself.

As fellow post-structuralists and fellow post-Heideggerians, both intimately schooled in the doctrine of Husserl, the proximity between Derrida and Ricoeur is confirmed by their respective theories of mediated signification. Together Ricoeurian distanciation and Derridean *différance* testify to the turn to a linguistically enriched mode of philosophical enquiry and a return to those questions of ultimate import previously excluded from the formalist enclosure. What Derrida's enormous success facilitated was a return to the theme of reference (albeit deferred) and with it, language's ontological relation; the mode of linguistically enriched philosophical enquiry they both practised rose to the fore, and signification was once more connected to its referential function within the philosophical arena. It is possible to see how in this light, Ricoeur's project of a universal hermeneutic may have begun to look rather different, the attempt to connect the smallest unit of signification to questions of the largest philosophical import appearing less like an outmoded schematics and more like a modish expression of our ultimate implication within signification. But the overlap between *différance* and distanciation was by no means unanimous or thoroughly clear, and whilst it is possible to locate a profound sympathy between their grounding propositions (that signification is inherently mediated, that historical mediation is the condition for the possibility of meaning, of interpretation and historical consciousness, in essence the basic historicity of structure and the basic structurality of history), they strongly disagree over the contingency of these relations and the nature of their manifestation within the world/text/reader.

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[66] I say all truth rather than aesthetic or literary truth in the conviction that Derrida *does* characterise all language as literary, but that such a characterisation is not an automatic condemnation of all truth claims.

Like Derrida, Ricoeur rejects the hypothetical completion upon which the code's viability depends; signification is inherently unstable and therefore incomplete for both thinkers. But where Derrida accounts for this incompletion in terms of a negatively charged historical mediation (dissemination and deferral), Ricoeurian distanciation provides an all together more positive account, guided by the Kantian principle of imagination. For Derrida, *différance* points to the primacy of an irreducible semiological stratum, a restless "first term" or more accurately, "first relation" within signification. Crucially this relation of differences is not a simple negation which would prevent the possibility of signifying relations all together. *Différance* implies "an economic system of differences which in fact presupposes the intervention of the same."[67] For Derrida however, the semiological relation founds the possibility of signification and the signifying subject in the first place. Conditioned by this primary relation, there is no subsequent act of discourse which could presume to curtail its affect. For Ricoeur by contrast, the differential relation propelling signification constitutes a "functional instrument of discourse" itself. This means that the differential relation, the negative charge of signification, is in fact preceded by the positive charge of a projected identity. With the act of discourse, with predication, denomination, with shifters and indexicals, one seeks to fix meaning and to establish an identity. Whilst Ricoeur and Derrida agree over the essential composition and the essential historicity or movement within signification, they disagree over the primacy of the semiological relation (between identity and difference) and the order of its affect. *Différance* names an irreducible precedence from whence the signifying intentions of discourse first emerge. Distanciation on the other hand names the process or act whereby a projected identity works to limit difference and diminish instability for the time being. It is a dialectical exchange of identity and difference located in the schematising powers of the mind itself. Ricoeur's semantic re-working of imagination testifies to this power to interpret and to re-interpret signification according to the infinite demands and infinite contexts of human experience. This power to describe and to re-describe the world for Ricoeur testifies to the existence of a regulative horizon or a principle of identity rooted within the wilful act of discourse itself. Like the new combinations of the Kantian schema, Ricoeur's theory of

[67] Derrida, Round-table Discussion Between Ricoeur and Derrida, Fifteenth Congress of the Association of the Society for Philosophy in the French Language, Montreal, 1971, reproduced by Lawlor, *Imagination and Chance*, *ibid*, pp. 131-163, quoted by Lawlor in the same text, p.49.

semantic innovation testifies to the powers of assimilation borne of similarity and difference. And it is in the experience of poetic language, of metaphor—where semantic ambiguity and intellectual control enjoy their most intense complicity—that this principle of imaginative enlargement is most readily felt. So it is that metaphor provides the semantic kernel at the very heart of Ricoeur's theory of imagination and understanding, and the nodal point of intersection with Derridean deconstruction.

Looking to Ricoeur's text therefore, we intend to gain a clearer understanding of the Ricoeurian hermeneutic as regards literary interpretation, and with regard the implied polarity of hermeneutics and deconstruction within textualist discourse.

Metaphor and Poststructuralism

That metaphor should have proved hermeneutics' point of intersection with deconstruction was no coincidence. With a return to the issue of reference, in Derrida, Ricoeur and the Anglo-American philosophers whom they both discussed, came a necessary return to the question of fictional reference, at the heart of which metaphor in its unrestricted definition lies. Save for some notable exceptions, the question of metaphor within philosophy had heretofore remained a theme upon which very little had been said within the Continental tradition. For this reason it was an obvious topic for a discipline seeking to re-evaluate its own parameters and prejudices. But metaphor was not just an incidental issue to be drawn into the philosophical fold like an overlooked interest. As the principle figure of rhetoric, and the figure which intersects most readily with philosophy, the question of metaphor resuscitated the question of disciplinary parameters. As Ricoeur writes, "rhetoric is philosophy's oldest enemy and its oldest ally. 'Its oldest enemy' because it is always possible for the art of 'saying it well' to lay aside all concern for 'speaking the truth'".[68] Whilst past philosophers had sidelined metaphor as a superfluous stylistic device of little or no philosophical import, metaphor's growing centrality within non-philosophical contexts—in psychoanalysis, in linguistics and structuralist poetics for example—suggested an altogether more motivated and tactical suppression within the text of philosophy, one which chimed in perfect harmony with the overlapping critiques of

[68] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, SJ, Routledge, London, 2003, p.10.

Marxist theorists and structuralists at the time. On this view, metaphor's potential cognitive imports had not been underrated or overlooked, but consciously suppressed by a discipline seeking to safeguard the propriety of its own language, its own concepts and thus its own epistemological hegemony. If metaphor was in any way constitutive of rational thought, it would severely jeopardise the purity of its own distinctions, and not only for the Platonist or the objectivist who held conceptual truths to exist in a ready-made manner. And so one finds both the British empiricists and the French rationalists studiously ignoring metaphor or exiling its claims outright. By the logic of this argument even Hegel, notable and rare in his direct attentions to metaphor, is complicit within the suppression of its disruptive powers. By this account one reads of Hegel's entire dialectical effort in terms of a kind of neutralising of metaphor's affect. Rather than exiling metaphor outright, Hegel incorporates it within the dialectical progress towards Spirit. With Hegel metaphor is granted a positive role within the process of concept formation, but one which is then neutralised and absorbed by the concept's teleological advance. In this way metaphor is accredited but it is also controlled in such a way that any threat to the stability of the concept is quickly repudiated. Whilst Hegel's incorporation of metaphor within philosophy was a rare exception, from a postructuralist vantage it represents the ingenious ruse of a conquering and repressive metaphysics all the same.

Whilst there were certain exceptions to the rule, a handful of figures who sought to address metaphor as a constitutive power, none were powerful enough to foment a serious challenge to its negative treatment as a mere accessory explicable by formal rhetoric. A philosophical irrelevancy or a philosophical danger, the dominant theory of metaphor function and its affectivity remained virtually unchanged until the rise of Kantian phenomenalism and philology in the nineteenth century conspired to challenge the governability of rhetoric's formal relations, between language and ideas, "proper" meanings and their immutable references. Indeed, with the rise of romantic aesthetics, metaphor's horizon expanded to incorporate the very act of creation itself, taking on the associated values borne of a radical aestheticism. The governing and substantive position to which art ascended in this period, thanks to the concentration and enlargement of the Kantian aesthetic in Schiller and Schelling most notably, transformed the process of artistic representation into a glorified mode of immediacy, into an instance of re-presentation, wherein the work itself was equal to the essential truth it described. This represented not only a transformation of the classical concept

of *mimēsis* in its dubious Platonic light therefore; it was also a radical inversion of the concept's hierarchical priority within philosophy. By this account concepts belie their phenomenal status, dissimulating what is in fact an insupportable mode of humanly-independent truth. But with the *disordering* of conceptual categories within the imagination, the aesthetic process reawakens the complex multiplicity of potential truths that have been shut down within the determination of concepts. What is more, the mode of recognition within the aesthetic experience is deemed to be one of vital immediacy. Romantic aesthetics in fact inverted the priority of conceptual knowledge over artistic pleasure, placing art in the role of an unmediated and original experience. An actuality rather than a mere copy, aesthetic truth was deemed to surpass the purported truth of concepts insofar as concepts, in their rigidity, confined the complex reality of perception to the ordered categories of its unique epistemic viewpoint.

And yet in spite of this dramatic inversion, or perhaps precisely because of it, the borders of metaphor's postructural renaissance are circumscribed not by the romantics, but by the lone precursor Friedrich Nietzsche, whose complex relations to the romantics can be seen to bridge the claims of an aesthetic immediacy and an infinite mediation. Nietzsche's most celebrated pronouncement upon philosophical metaphoricity demonstrates the reversal proper to this shift from a positively productive view of metaphor, in which the metaphor would participate in the prioritisation of an aesthetic immediacy, in the unification of subject and object, of heretofore unconnected categories within the transfer of the name, to a sceptical aestheticism wherein the figure of the trope exposes the lie of intuition, and the humanly authored illusion of conceptual transcendence. Man "strives to understand the world as something analogous to man, and at best he achieves by his struggles the feeling of assimilation".[69] It is this feeling of assimilation that bears the lie of idealism, the lie of transcendent concepts:

> What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which

[69] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense", extract from Clive Cazeaux (ed.), *The Continental Aesthetics Reader,* Routledge, London, 2000, p.57.

> have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins.[70]

Now the figure of the trope is not a means to intellectual unity, but a testament to the concept's illusory grasp. With this pronouncement Nietzsche thereby opened the way for a discourse of unlimited metaphoricity, for an interpretive relativism in the manner of Richard Rorty, and for the scepticism of the textualists. But what the latter group missed was the fundamental irony of Nietzsche's position. The illusory character of the concept does not *condemn* man, rather it confirms him in his humanity, creating him within the culture to which man and his concepts give rise. To this extent a flatly nihilistic reading of Nietzsche depends upon the hidden continuity of the romantic framework, one in which the impossibility of the concept would exile man from the natural universe. Paradoxically, given the romantic prejudice against hermeneutics, it is the perpetuation of these romantic values (and their origins) which determines the measure of the rift between textual scepticism and a postructural hermeneutics.

When Nietzsche re-launches the question of metaphor under the aegis of deicide and metaphysical apocalypse (in *The Gay Science*), it is the Platonic aspiration to transcendent knowledge he deconstructs, not historical man in his imperfect knowledge, and certainly not the poet maligned by Plato. This paradox rebounds upon our own question regarding the literary-theoretical reception of poststructuralist discourse. For one may argue that metaphor's disruption of the metaphysical concept, of philosophical truth, is ultimately premised upon the same polarising framework established by Plato himself; one must choose literature *or* metaphysics, metaphor *or* concepts. The logic of the Nietzschean deconstruction of metaphysics, when read non-ironically, implicates the same framework, for the impossibility of a capitalised truth within philosophy is an assertion premised upon the same Platonic irreconcilability of concepts and metaphors; genealogically speaking, metaphysics is thwarted by the concept's "contaminated" root in sensible meanings. The paradox of *counter-Platonism* within a postructural context, the kind exemplified by Derrida, is that it utilises the same criterion of discontinuity. Revoking the possibility of pure discourse upon the grounds of an inherent metaphoricity, it too confirms the intransigent opposition established by Plato. *It remains to be seen how accurate a picture of Derridean deconstruction this really is.* But there is plentiful evidence to suggest—in

[70] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense", *ibid.*, p.56.

the form of primary readings and subsequent counter-readings—that the conditions of literary theory were ripe to interpret matters in this way.

This paradox rebounds upon our own perplexity concerning the literary-theoretical preoccupation with certain modes of deconstruction at the expense of a poststructural hermeneutics. As we have said, the question is predominantly one of reception histories; why should literature departments have taken so readily to elements of a discourse in which literature's ontological distinction is voided, in which all discourse becomes "merely" literary upon the basis of an unbounded metaphorics? Why should theoreticians of literature have chosen to import the most philosophically sceptical approaches to the literary work, approaches grounded in Nietzschean scepticism and the projected rivalry of literature and philosophy? Why limit poststructuralist critique to the rivalry of a Platonic framework?

It would be facile and unduly cynical to suggest (as a great many have) that literary theorists simply misread deconstruction or chose to exaggerate the anarchic aspects of Derridean practice for their own enthrallment; literary postmodernity, the call of radical heterogeneity, radical metaphoricity and radical instability—in Paul Muldoon, in Angela Carter, Paul Auster, Don DeLillo or any other author of lit.-theory's high-noon—were surely responses to, rather than prompts for a suitable philosophy? Doubtless Plato's injunction against the poets, representing as it does a kind of agonistic and heuristic foil to the history of the liberal canon, has something to do with this. If literary-critical history has been shaped by this Platonic preoccupation, if, as the examples of Shelley and Eliot both attest, Platonism constitutes the unifying rebuke of all ages, then it is clear to see how the Nietzschean inversion, in its powerful contrariety and conformity to the rule, could come to dominate the literary imagination, and perhaps misconstrue deconstruction in terms of a similar inversion.[71]

But perhaps the most coherent explanation for the paradox of "inverted Platonism" and an unbounded metaphoricity within literary studies, follows from the theoretical core of its own long-held, yet speedily jettisoned aspirations for epistemological probity, and the long-tenanted formalism upon which this ideal was premised. Surely the more radical, more irrationalist readings of deconstruction within

[71] It follows from our own postructural eyes that we look upon romanticism as the most luminous rebuttal of Plato, but one which all the same remains fixed within the Platonic framework; in his inordinate originality, Shelley's poet conquers the statesman not by contradicting him but by outflanking him. If this latent fidelity fuels the critique of metaphysics in Nietzsche, then Nietzsche's relation to Heidegger and Derrida, and their own pronouncements upon metaphor, could quite easily be read in terms of this continuity also.

literary theory were not a product of poor reading, but the logical consequence of a discipline indoctrinated by its own claims for autonomy? With their shared desires to jettison the jargon of metaphysics, the New Critics and the structuralists in fact proceeded to *confirm* the very character upon which the poets' civic exile was based, namely a non-standard relation to "reality" and truth. The poet's dissimulation of reality, the criterion of intrinsic form and the arrested or rather short-circuited reference of the Jakobsonian *autotelic* all confirm literature's status as a deviant, irregular or unique mode of signification in which the standard relation between naming and things/ideas is in some way subverted. That the formalists transform this into a positive trait—the grounds for an autonomous and quasi-scientific discipline—does not effect the fundamental framework upon which the distinction rests in the first place, that is between standard reference (in Platonic terms primary representation) and a subverted metaphorical self-reference (secondary representation, a duplicity that fails to speak of the thing it names). For both Plato and Jakobson it is the inner metaphoricity of literary language which debars it its truth claims. It is only this Platonic equation of truth and standard reference, fiction and metaphor, which enables the so-called collusion of metaphor and metaphysics named by Nietzsche, Heidegger and arguably Derrida, to be interpreted as an indictment of *all* truth claims anywhere. Inverted Platonism repeats the Platonic prejudice against metaphorical reference therefore. That the proponents of literary studies should have shot themselves in the foot so to speak, anointing the professed collusion between metaphysics and metaphorics, confirming the inherently literary nature of philosophy, and thereby reducing literature's unique status within the liberal-humanist paradigm (beyond the repetitious claim of singularity), follows from the metaphysical refusal of metaphorical reference. Against this refusal, Ricoeur and Derrida postulate an historically mediated mode of reference. It remains to be seen however, how these modes of mediation differ with regard to the character of their manifestation and their ultimate implications for philosophy and literature. It is not until the very end of *The Rule of Metaphor* that Ricoeur contrasts his own theory of metaphorical reference and philosophical truth with that of Derrida, and it is only once the dynamics of this rule and its pivotal role for thought have been digested, that Ricoeur's true relation to Derrida can be appreciated.

To best appreciate Ricoeur's and Derrida's common departure from the Platonising equation of truth and standard reference, from idealist metaphysics and

modern formalisms, it is worth attending to the opening movements of *The Rule of Metaphor*. Here we find Ricoeur attacking metaphor's superficial reduction as a non-standard reference and preparing the way for a theory in which metaphor is philosophically fundamental. Central to this move is the invalidation of the standard substitution theory of metaphor from whence both a self-referential poetry and a deceitful poetry arise.

Rhetoric Old and New

Perversely, it was not Plato but Aristotle who furnished metaphor's defining characterisation, as "the *epiphora* of the name", a transfer or substitution of a non-standard figurative name for a standard name. The critical issue surrounding this definition for subsequent critics—Ricoeur especially—relates to the issue of what today we would call its semantic content. A substitution theory of metaphor focussed upon the word, the exchange of one word for another, determines a fundamentally extrinsic, formal view of metaphor in which the meaning or content of the message remains the same. Upon a substitution view, metaphor can be translated into a literal utterance without any loss or deviation to the message. This is because the logic of substitution is understood upon the basis of a shared and pre-existent resemblance between the two terms. So whilst metaphor is apprehended upon the basis of a predicative deviation it is understood upon the basis of a predicated resemblance. In this way the meaning of the substituted term is extended to incorporate the literal meaning it replaces. Equally, the substituted term can easily be translated or re-substituted for the literal term without any change to the overall meaning. "Hence the substituted figure does not represent any semantic innovation".[72] By extension the metaphor cannot be seen to have any particular cognitive function within the apprehension of reality. Of course for the ancient realists and the ancient idealists this was just so, and for the modern rationalists who followed—keen to ensure the validity of their own concepts—there was no cause to revise this theory of minimal philosophical disturbance.

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[72] Ricoeur, "Metaphor and Symbol", *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, p.49.

Accordingly Aristotle's treatment of metaphor does not actually arise within the compass of philosophy but between the pages of the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. It was the veritable success of Aristotle's distinctions between the two, and more importantly their distinction from philosophy, which Ricoeur claims to have sealed metaphor's fate as a superficial stylistic phenomenon and a philosophical irrelevancy. The persistence of a substitution theory of metaphor in which the content does not change, is intimately bound up with rhetoric's progressive independence from (or depending upon one's view, growing containment by) philosophy. For Ricoeur, whose entire argument is built upon the opposing view—that metaphor is not a simple substitution between words, but constitutes an integral phase within the creation of new meaning and the apprehension of new ideas within philosophy—a critique of this disciplinary segregation is a crucial corrective to the presumed incompatibility of metaphor and philosophy.

But whilst Aristotle provided rhetoric's founding distinction, instituting the classificatory divisions of rhetoric, poetry and philosophy, curtailing metaphor's affectivity as an external substitution of terms, rhetoric's decline into little more than a hierarchy of tropes, "defunct" and "amputated" from the realm of reflective thought, was the work of subsequent minds. In Aristotle, Ricoeur informs us, rhetoric still retained a strong link to philosophy insofar as he defines it against the empty flattery and seduction of sophistry.

> With Aristotle we see rhetoric in its better days; it constitutes a distinct sphere of philosophy, in that the order of the 'persuasive'...is solidly bound to logic through the correlation between the concept of persuasion and that of the probable.[73]

Upon the basis of this link between the rhetorical concept of persuasion and the logical concept of the probable, Aristotle constructed "the whole edifice of a philosophy of rhetoric".[74] Furthermore, the basis for rhetoric's distinction from logic was grounded upon the dialogical, that is to say inter-subjective and dialectical character of persuasion, a criterion that once more disabuses rhetoric of its sophistic connotations upon the basis of its responsiveness and engagement with the other.

Similarly Aristotle grants poetry, and by implication poetic metaphor, its own

[73] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, *ibid.*, p.31.
[74] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.11.

degree of reflective and cognitive validity, defining it as the presentation of *valid truths* by fictional means. Rescinding the Platonic characterisation of *mimêsis* as an inferior modality of presence and an imitation based upon pure resemblance, Aristotelian imitation exists as the reciprocal element of a creative *process*. What poetry intends is not the static imitation of an extrinsic reality, but rather "to speak the truth by means of fiction, fable, and tragic *muthos*". [75] Accordingly, the measure of the poetic work's truthfulness is not a measure of its fidelity to the living world but rather its capacity to articulate genuine truths fictionally. For Aristotle "the work of art can be judged on purely intrinsic criteria, without any references (*contra* Plato) from moral or political considerations, and above all, without the burdensome ontological concern for *fitting the appearance to the real.*"[76] Aristotelian *mimêsis* "preserves and represents that which is human, not just in its essential features, but in a way that makes it greater and nobler":

> There is thus a double tension proper to *mimêsis*: on the one hand, the imitation is at once a portrayal of human reality *and* an original creation; on the other, it is faithful to things as they are *and* it depicts them as higher and greater than they are.[77]

From the double bind of *mimêsis* and *muthos* comes the suggestion that poetry exceeds the parameters of resemblance, instantiating new and previously unforeseen meanings. Such a thesis inevitably leans towards a productive rather than a reduplicative view of literary language. By extension, it would seem to oppose those predominantly rhetorical theories to which metaphor belongs as the merely decorative

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[75] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.13.

[76] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.47. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle distinguishes three spheres of knowledge, the theoretical (*episteme*), the productive (*techne*) and the practical (*phronesis*). Where the theoretical pertains to necessary truths, to things that cannot be other than they are, the practical realm of ethics and the productive realm to which art belongs both admit of things being otherwise. Art and ethics contrast with one another according to the relationship between their means and their ends. In ethics, means and ends are indissociable; the ethical act is an end in itself. With art, where means and end do not coincide, Aristotle opens the way for a debate surrounding the possibility of art's ethical end, which would distinguish it both from its technical production and from its subordinate position within the Platonic scheme. This is precisely what Wordsworth and Coleridge advocate when, acknowledging poetry's status as *techne*, they assert poetry's distinct ethical force. As Ricoeur's quote makes plain however, such an interpretation is inspired by ambiguity more than any definitive statement on Aristotle's part; in Aristotle the poetic work has truthfulness, but at the same time such truthfulness need *not* reflect extrinsic moral, political or ontological criteria. See David P. Haney, "Aesthetics and Ethics in Gadamer, Levinas, and Romanticism: Problems of Phronesis and Techne", *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, Vol. 114, No.1, January 1999, pp. 32-45.

[77] Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, p.45.

appendage of a referential content. Indeed, whilst Aristotle defines metaphor in terms of a substitution, Ricoeur tells us that he also grants metaphor two distinct *functions* (one pertaining to persuasion and rhetoric, the other to poetic presentation). Not only does metaphor not compromise these disciplinary parameters, it actually founds them. By this reading, metaphor's function precedes the mode of representation to which it appears to belong. In this determinative role metaphor can be seen to inculcate an important distinction between modes of re-presentation and representation itself, between what are in fact modalities of presence, distinct from the representations they offer. By implication, the supposed complicity of metaphor and dissimulation, be it the rhetorical deceit or the poetic illusion, is borne of a partial metaphysics, wherein the primary instantiation of the metaphorical function is mistaken for the sensual form in which it is clothed.

For those familiar with the theory of discourse, there is a compelling parallel to be drawn here: as modes of discourse, rhetoric and poetry possess separate functions, but as discourse in general, they share the same operations. Most importantly, these operations are granted ontological independence from the representations they bear. Just as the theory of discourse works to combat the formalist claims of structuralism within Ricoeur's critique of semiology, so the implied parity within Ricoeur's Aristotelian opening, with its emphasis upon metaphorical function, presents a challenge to the perpetuation of Platonic values within modern formalist accounts of metaphor, accounts which must, by virtue of the code's distribution, subscribe to the cognitively superficial theory of substitution common to rhetoric. By privileging synchronicity at the expense of diachrony, structural semiotics must also privilege a paradigmatic model focussed upon the relations between individual signs. Even whilst the sign's referential autonomy exorcises the metaphysical association of the literal with the "proper", of a word's natural correspondence to an object or an idea, it is still treated like a word in so far as the sign represents the fundamental bearer of signification to which all other levels of organization within language are deemed homogeneous. Where English language authors followed the example of propositional logic, and focussed their attentions upon the sentence, "the overriding preoccupation" of Saussure was "to identify, to define, to demarcate the fundamental linguistic unit, the sign".[78] Whilst this formal

[78] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.119.

emphasis would become increasingly radicalised, Saussure's dedication to the single unit was also compounded by French semanticists, who framed the science of signification entirely upon words and their deviation, and by whom Ricoeur claims the initial Saussurean science of signs to have been influenced. Whilst the theory of the sign would later absorb the semantic theory of the word, Ricoeur claims "the Saussurean sign is *par excellence* a word".[79] It is this word or sign monism which forbids the possibility of an interaction theory of metaphor at the level of the sentence in French linguistics and which, in spite of itself, repeats the basic theory of substitution named by Aristotle. The possibility of an interaction theory of metaphor is thus debarred upon the basis of the presupposition that there is no greater level of organization than the primary difference upon which signs depend. By refusing the possibility of a higher level unit such as the proposition, French linguistics was confined to a theory of figuration based upon the substitution of one name for another.

In postulating the co-existence of two signifying units, the sign and the sentence, Benveniste's theory of discourse overlaps with the propositional emphasis of the English language philosophers without denying the important role of the sign. As an irreducible unit within its own right, the sentence is by definition more than the sum of its parts. By necessity the metaphor must be construed as an affect of the sentence in its entirety and not as the transposition of a word's figurative counterpart. And so Ricoeur's Aristotelian opening within *The Rule of Metaphor* serves a purpose beyond historical excursus. Whilst Aristotle himself granted rhetoric and metaphor philosophical profundity, the very success of the distinction of poetics and rhetoric in fact predisposed rhetoric to the reduced status it eventually held, as a superficial, and by extension philosophically inimical stylistics, an etiolated taxonomy of tropes divorced from the reflective movements of thought itself. This lament, for the philosophical depletion of rhetoric and metaphor, a depletion which furthermore was not inevitable but was rather the drawn-out consequence of a defensive and imperialistic Platonism, also serves as a premonitory caution and a paradoxical foreshadowing of latter-day metaphor theories within French linguistics. And this paradox, which Ricoeur turns against some of the more recent characterisations of metaphor—portrayals consonant with the wider critique of metaphysics—also turns upon the over-riding paradox by which our own current study is propelled.

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[79] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.120.

Why, we ask, did literary studies enshrine themselves within the self-abnegating scepticism of textualism and relativism, positions which read double meaning as a condition of irreducible despair? The treatment of metaphor within philosophy, between the movements of romanticism and anti-romanticism and an anti-metaphysical formalism, brings this history into focus. But what the question of metaphor brings into real focus is the line of continuity by which these vacillating impulses are fixed within the same Platonic paradigm. In classical rhetoric as in structuralism, metaphor is limited to a word for word substitution. If metaphor is a simple substitution, then by necessity, the transposition from a literal to a metaphorical nomination is of no intrinsic cognitive value; substitution presupposes a pre-existent value and a pre-existent sign for that value. Metaphor deviates from standard reference but it does not innovate. By extension, the work of literature constitutes a necessarily derived and imitative representation, a translation, creative only to the extent that it deploys an interesting or unusual choice of figurative window-dressing. In textualism, where the idea of intentional rhetoric is discarded for the irrepressible logic of an autonomic grammar, the idea of metaphor as a conscious act, or as a work of creativity is conclusively lost from sight. Unmoored from design and intention, all language falls into the chasm of an unfathomable metaphoricity, to the detriment of both literature and the critical discourse by which it presumes to know itself. All language is "contaminated" by metaphor, all interpretive discourse "mere" literature. At one and the same time metaphor is universal and necessary but cognitively really rather superficial.

It is against this homogenising drift, with its reductive implications for literature and creativity, that Ricoeur's renunciation of the substitution theory and the elaboration of an *interaction* theory of metaphor at the level of the sentence (the minimal unit of discourse), rather than the single word, militates.

Metaphor and Discourse

Of course the structuralists would reject the philosophical implications inherent to the interaction thesis not because they wished to safeguard metaphysics, on the contrary, but because the parameters of its field debarred the external postulate of the predicative act. With the sign undergoing its absolutist expansion in the years subsequent to the *Cours de linguistique générale*, the disciplinary boundaries that

Saussure had once himself set were, as we have noted, essentialised into something more akin to ontological conditions. With the subject of predication supplanted in favour of a structural systematicity, the indissoluble unity of the predicate would have been an entirely alien and contradictory proposition based upon the logical anteriority of the subject and its cognitions. What divides the theories of substitution and interaction and what makes them representative of the wider gulf between the two traditions concerns the issue of the code's autonomy. Within a substitution theory of metaphor a sign may be replaced by another sign without interference from surrounding signs. Because substitution confers no actual change upon the message, upon the signification as such, the change that does occur only exists as a temporary, localised and superficial alteration to the extrinsic relation of signifier and signified. Essentially metaphor confers no lasting change upon the code or the internal relations between its signs. In this sense the code retains its synchronic autonomy from the creative designs of language-users. Alterations exist as deviations to be minimised and ironed-out by the code. Upon a substitution theory, metaphor remains beholden to the code it subverts, its impact as cosmetic and ephemeral as it was for classical rhetoric.

In Jakobsonian linguistics, the binary rule may stipulate the sign's dependency upon other signs, but it is still the unitary signifier which bears the particular weight of a given signification. Change to the system is synchronic, affecting every unit simultaneously and individually; the sign therefore never integrates with other signs. In the 1953 article "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbance", Jakobson famously transformed metaphor from a limited operation within language into one of language's two constitutive modes of distribution. The production of meaning for Jakobson could be aligned along one of two poles, the one metaphoric, wherein signs arrange themselves paradigmatically, according to a criterion of selection (and hence substitution) based upon resemblance, the other metonymic, where a syntagmatic arrangement is drawn from the combination of contiguous elements. In consequence Jakobson not only ramified metaphor's classical definition as a word for word substitution based upon similarity, overlooking the Benvenistean distinction of semantics and semiotics (for Jakobson all units are reducible to the sign, hence the idea of interaction at the level of the sentence is lost within a generalised account of metonymic or metaphoric arrangements between signs), he also entrenched metaphor's characterisation as a synchronic structure,

which, in its configuration as a substitution, must oppose the metonymic pole of contiguity and combination just as the synchronic opposes the diachronic. Just as rhetoric's decline from a philosophical discipline focussed upon speech, upon the "intertwining" of nouns and verbs (Aristotle's definition of the *logos*), to a taxonomy of tropes divorced from the dialogical situation, was the product of a growing preoccupation with the single word, with naming and attribution, so the formalist drift away from speech repeated this tendency.

Within the interaction theory by contrast, new meanings emerge from a set of particular and possibly unique combinations forged in the historical instance; signs interact with one another in heretofore undiscovered ways leading to a revision of the code's internal relations. The code's synchronicity is subordinated to the historical movements of an external, historical principle. For the structuralists, studiously aloof from the logical positivist and ordinary language traditions of Britain and America, the proposition of an interaction theory of novel meaning would have opposed the substitution theory with all the contrary indications of a subject-bound metaphysics, with semantic innovation gesturing squarely towards the kind of reflective and productive powers of a Kantian epistemology. Without the cross-fertilizations of phenomenology and structuralism within poststructuralist hermeneutics and deconstruction therefore, the paths of the French linguists and the Anglo-American language philosophers may have remained as intellectually removed from one another as their precursors, Saussure and Frege, had once been.[80] A rare collaborator and co-respondent amongst his peers, Ricoeur's dialectical vision in *The Rule of Metaphor* is staunchly focussed upon bringing these two theories and the traditions they represent into dialogue with one another. In a less ecumenical spirit, Derrida was also bringing the Anglo-American challenge to the forefront of French thought at this time. Ricoeur was unique in taking these claims and appropriating them to the wider policy of a general hermeneutics of existence. Once more, it was the example of Benveniste and the dialectical potentialities of discourse which facilitated this symbiosis.

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[80] The Fregean tradition, being directed towards the external world, towards reference as well as sense, towards Austinian "speech acts", chimed with the existential emphases of phenomenology without opposing the objectivity asserted in formal theories. Ricoeur writes of their polarity within the French tradition: "The 'return to the speaking subject' which Merleau-Ponty foresaw and began, following the later Husserl, is conceived in such a way that it rushes past the objective science of signs and moves too quickly to speech...Because from the beginning the phenomenological attitude and the objective have been placed in opposition...". "The Challenge of Semiology", *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p.242.

If the smallest unit of discourse comprises the sentence and the sentence is irreducible to the semiotic unit of the sign, then a discursive treatment of metaphor must automatically challenge the classical and formal monism of rhetoric and structuralism. Discourse's in-built capacity to transcend the constraints of language's systematic and formal aspect, to "touch" the reality it names, and for language users to reflect upon the mechanisms of this feat, all conform to the hermeneutical movement of thought characterised by Ricoeur's own methodology in *The Conflict of Interpretations*. Just as the study of multiple interpretations entails a semantic, a reflective and an existential stage, so the function of double meaning within Ricoeur's rule of metaphor operates according to a principle of reflective interpretation, wherein metaphor's referential (and existential) reality—for thought and perception—both confirms and is confirmed by the reflective abilities innate to language-users. True to the logic of *The Conflict,* Ricoeur grounds metaphorical function within the theory of discourse, repeating the characteristics there distinguished as formative traits for a consideration of the semantic, the reflective, and ultimately the existential traits of metaphor. It is from these existential traits that Ricoeur will eventually gesture towards his own poetic ontology, and it is from these implications that a Ricoeurian perspective of literature and literary interpretation will eventually be drawn.

The dialectic of immanence and transcendence, potentiality and actuality to which Benveniste's semiotic/semantic distinction attests, and its justification for a discursive treatment of metaphor at the level of the sentence, are compounded by ordinary language philosophers, some of whom Ricoeur enlists in his earlier critique of formal linguistics in *The Conflict* essay "Structure, Word, Event". Once again Ricoeur starts by stipulating the fundamental dialectic of event and meaning which distinguishes discourse from *la langue*; Benveniste's criterion of the instance of discourse speaks of an event in meaning. Whilst meaningfulness makes the event "eminently repeatable", this repeatability is not to be confused with an element's identity within a system. The event in each instance is singular to the extent that someone speaks forth from the particularity of their context. We recall that the intentionality of the speaker conditions the possibility for language to transcend itself in speech, and for language to "stick" to the world. For Ricoeur, Paul Grice's delineation between utterance meaning, meaning of utterance and utterer's meaning corroborates the discursive interplay and separation of meaning and event and the designation of a subject. It "belongs to the very essence of discourse to allow these

distinctions" he writes. Another "fundamental polarity" of discourse is borne out by P.F Strawson's "identifying function" and "predicative function". In the "interlacing" of nouns and verbs within discourse, one always finds the identification of individuals and the predication of universals. Every proposition bears upon a "logically proper subject" and the predication of universal properties such as relations, adjectives of quality or classes to which the individual belongs. "The notion of existence" Ricoeur writes, "is linked to the singularizing function of language. Proper logical subjects are potentially existents".[81] On the other hand, the predication of universals concerns the nonexistent; there is thus "an ontological dysemmetry of subject and predicate" which has its equivalent within the distinction of semiotics, with its generic function, and semantics' "view to the singular", where there is always a subjectivity designated within the act of speech. It is only within discourse that a universal term can take on singularising qualities therefore.

The theory Benveniste himself assimilated to discourse very easily was J.L Austin's conception of speech acts. With the locutionary act of saying one is able to "anchor" within language a corresponding mental or illocutionary act. Discourse provides a content (of predication and identification) whilst distinguishing the particular act of the locutionary agent. Within discourse the same locutionary content can apply to different illocutionary acts. Such a distinction points to the moment of transcendence in discourse, when a potential meaning is actualised and individualised through the realisation of agency in the instance of speech. Whilst Frege's famous separation of sense and reference applies to the content of speech, to the message rather than the relation of message and messenger, it too substantiates the same movement from a potential generic meaning to its specific realisation. In order to distinguish *what is said* (sense) from *that of which one speaks* (reference) one must first acknowledge the sentence as a fundamentally distinct and indivisible unit; it is only in the full composition of the sentence that one may speak of sense and reference. And it is only in the actualisation of speech that reference to an outside world can distinguish itself from an immanent sense. The pairing of sense and reference thus confirms the sentence—as the possibility of this interplay—as the unit of discourse, and discourse as the rightful model through which to analyse communication. In the concept of reference one finds a postulate of transcendence, of a relationship between

[81] Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p.82.

language and the world, signs and things such as discourse and semantics promote, whilst sense delivers one once more to immanence and the intra-linguistic relations of semiotics. The pairing of sense and reference hence confirms the existence of two non-homogenous levels of signification such as a semantics of discourse upholds, the one pertaining to combination/integration at the level of discourse (semantics), the other, to the differential system of signs, phonemes and morphemes at the semiotic level distinguished by Saussure.

Ricoeur's final two pairs of traits are not attributed to other philosophers but certainly overlap with the former in their implications. Within reference itself there is both reference to reality and reference to a speaker.

> To the extent that discourse refers to a situation, to an experience, to reality, to the world, in sum to the extra-linguistic, it also refers to its own speaker by means of procedures that belong essentially to discourse and not to language.[82]

These procedures include personal pronouns and the tenses of verbs, both of which are "auto-designative". Personal pronouns in themselves possess no significance, they are "asemic", but in the instance of discourse "I" serves to designate a reference to the one who is speaking. It is only when someone speaks and self-designates that "I" signifies. Because discourse is distinguished by its eventhood, as the moment of speech, Ricoeur asserts "the personal pronoun is the function of discourse essentially". With verb tenses and many adverbs, speech is anchored within the present, confirming the actuality of the present instance of discourse. "Insofar as it is auto-referential, discourse establishes an absolute this-here-now" and a definite subject. This referential dialectic between speaker and reality recalls the theory of speech acts, for the illocutionary modalities of the sentence express the way in which a speaker engages with his discourse. Ordering, asking, and imparting are all modalities of the I-here-now, communicative acts dependent upon the auto-referential aspect of discourse.

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[82] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.86. By "language" Ricoeur means the linguistic system named *la langue* by Saussure, but discourse is not commensurate with Saussure's counter-concept of *parole*. The latter does not involve discourse's dialectical relation to the system. Only in discourse is the sentence accredited as an irreducible unit.

The traits with the most immediate consequences for metaphor Ricoeur saves until last. Benveniste's distinction of semiology and semantics calls for a revision of the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic such as they are understood by semiotic linguists such as Jakobson. According to the structuralists' binary law, paradigmatic relations belong to the semiotic sphere (to the synchronic system), the syntagmatic to the arrangements of meaning within sentences. If, as so many have previously claimed, metaphor is a matter of substitution, and substitution is a paradigmatic law, then substitution is a semiological operation. This means that a discursive treatment of metaphor would have to call its operations syntagmatic. As a phenomenon of discourse, therefore, metaphor is no longer a paradigmatic case and the process of metonymy it follows can no longer be called syntagmatic. For if discourse stipulates the sentence its smallest measure, then metaphor must be considered the meaning effect of word interactions within a sentence, that is, syntagmatically.[83] Whilst semiotic units are homogeneously organised, all conforming to the law of internal difference, and are therefore reducible amongst themselves, the sentence marks the point at which a new integrative signifying function emerges. The justification for a discursive treatment of metaphor based upon syntagmatic relations within the sentence rather than the paradigmatic law of substitution—which follows if one does not recognise the unity of the sentence—once more revolves around the limitation of Saussurean linguistics and the consolidation of alternative models. The opening to metaphor's philosophical reawakening comes not with the growth of linguistic science, therefore, but with I.A Richard's bold and revisionary rehabilitation of rhetoric in the 1930s. Against the hemmed-in and superficial listings of a degenerative tropology, Richards introduces a distinctly discursive vision in which the mechanisms of trope acquire profound cognitive implications. Dominant amongst these processes is the metaphorical, which Richards calls—in stark contrast to its

[83] The question of the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic, metaphor and metonymy was raised to a level of paramount importance in Paul de Man's major publication *Blindness and Insight*. It is testament to Ricoeur's distance from American deconstruction that de Man insists upon metaphor's ultimate reducibility to metonymic structures. For de Man, the idea that metaphor creates irreducible innovations in meaning is an illusion, a kind of wish fulfilment inherited from the romantics. For de Man the illusion of metaphor–a symptom of unrigorous reading–is a correlate of the romantic symbol, with its presumed synthesis of disparate categories. Unscrupulous reading belies the aporetic irregularities with which the text itself resists such easy assimilations.

prior determination as a deviation and as a work "done on" language—"a talent of thinking" and "the omnipresent principle" of all linguistic constructions.[84]

Turning away from the dominant formalism of French linguistics, Richards provides Ricoeur with the first major consideration of metaphor beyond substitution, and the first opening towards an interactive theory fit to accommodate the principles of Benvenistean discourse. Ricardian rhetoric is discursive insofar as it confirms the reversal of word/sentence priority named by Benveniste. With this reversal Richards attacks what he calls the "proper meaning superstition" upon which a classical word substitution theory of metaphor operates. This is the false belief that words in their literal form adhere to fixed entities and ideas and that a metaphorical "deviance" entails the substitution of an "improper" name for that of the "proper". It is the same intransigent relation which dominates naming within the *Cratylus.* By contrast Richards formulates a "context theorem of meaning" based upon a principle of "delegated efficacy". Now what a word signifies is a function of context and not a "fixed association with data" (Ricoeur). But this is not an argument based upon associative psychology by any means. Delegated efficacy names the range of potential meanings salient to the word in a given context where context names "a whole cluster of events that recur together".[85] Context thus enables one to refine a word's current determinations by means of the interpretive instance rather than convention. What a word means at any one time is "the missing parts of the contexts from which it draws its delegated efficacy".[86] Delegated efficacy and context thus confirm a sentential unity in which words together comprise the context's missing parts. In discourse different contexts (attached to different words) interpenetrate within the sentence, but they do so with varying levels of stability. As products of their contexts therefore, the interpretability, clarity and "stability" of words in a given discourse are contingent upon the stability of word-context. And context stability within discourse grants the measure of discourse's semantic character, its degree of ambiguity, figuration or its univocity. The more interaction there is between different contexts within the sentence, the less stable and the more multivocal its discursive character. By contrast, a low interaction amongst contexts produces univocal, scientific and technical discourse. Contrary to classical wisdom, it is the extreme

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[84] I.A Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 90, quoted by Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p.92.
[85] Richards, *ibid.*, p.34, Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.89.
[86] Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric,* p.35, Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p.89.

stability attached to univocal meaning and not the relative instability of ordinary language which deviates from the norm. Literary language, which operates at the other end of the spectrum, consists in restoring "the interplay of the interpretive possibilities of the whole utterance".[87]

From this it follows that metaphor is the product of interaction amongst contexts. Far from being a special case, a departure from the norm affected for decorative or persuasive purposes, metaphor is pervasive and "omnipresent", a principle of language usage not a secondary product. A "transaction between contexts" is no "simple transfer of words" but rather "commerce between thoughts".[88]Metaphor is thinking itself. With metaphor however, there is not simply a convergence of two thoughts, two contexts within the one phrase however. The figure's distinction rests in a moment of disruption which, preventing a total synthesis leads to the partial obscurity of one of the two thoughts. One thought, the "tenor", is thus described through the other, the "vehicle". Crucially this vehicle does not conform to the usual decorative function since the metaphor results from the equal interaction of the two components. In metaphor, the vehicle is changed as much as the tenor. Literal meanings are now nothing more "proper" than instances in which tenor and vehicle are indistinguishable.

As well as quashing a theory of substitution based upon an illusion of proper meaning, Richards challenges the standing assumption that metaphorical relations pertain only to resemblance. Whilst the relationship between tenor and vehicle exhibits an underlying rationale or "ground", resemblance is just one amongst a range of possible connecting logics. It is connection itself, in what ever direct or tangential form it may take, which grounds the metaphor. "The mind" Ricoeur quotes from Richards,

> is a connecting organ, it works only by connecting and it can connect any two things in an indefinitely large number of different ways.[89]

Metaphor is the figure of thought *par excellence*. Ricoeur concludes,

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[87] Richards, *ibid.*, p.55, Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.91.
[88] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.92.
[89] Richards, *ibid.*, p.125, Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.93.

> There is no language, then, that does not bestow meaning on that which first created tension in the mind.[90]

But if tension is a pre-requisite of connection, Richards's does not elaborate this condition himself. Richards' rhetoric is primarily dedicated to the interactive functioning of the sentence itself. For Ricoeur, seeking to demonstrate the ultimately linguistic nature of understanding and imagination, it will be necessary to show how this tension is already a bestowal of language itself. Max Black's logical grammar provides a decisive advance in this direction.

Black's first refinement is to clarify the relationship between the metaphorical statement and the word. Even as an interaction at the level of the phrase, there is still undeniably a key word upon which the metaphor hinges. It is the presence of this word which justifies a metaphorical interpretation. Thus Black gives us a terminology with which to distinguish the metaphorical statement, the "frame", from its operative word, the "focus" without returning thought to the old illusion of proper names. The focus word functions in relation to the rest of the phrase, thus confirming and clarifying Richards' interaction theory.

For Black, the theory of interaction opposes the classical model of substitution irreconcilably. Substitution involves replacing the literal expression with an expression which in its usual usage covers a different sense. The equivalence of these expressions means that it is possible to translate the one into the other. There is thus no cognitive gain involved in metaphor. Models based upon similarity and analogy are just expressions of a more fundamental substitution in which likeness is presumed to pre-exist the trope itself. As Black intends, the example of similarity, always a subjective quality in any case, emphasises the false mode of mimetic realism underlying the substitution theory. In Richards' context theorem the principle of substitution is rejected but still the metaphorical rationale is one of comparison; the vehicle leads us to apprehend relative qualities within the tenor. Reducing comparison to a mode of substitution (on the basis that comparison draws forth analogy and that analogy produces a literal translatable equivalent) Black rejects all theories which postulate, like the rhetorical taxonomists and like Richards's notion of context and rationale, that metaphor depends upon the existence of a common "ground". There is

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[90] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.95.

no such pre-existent entity for Black, only the edict borne of the metaphor itself, which tells us to "connect two ideas" in some way.

Black entrenches the polarity of substitution and interaction, of semiotics and semantics, providing us with a theory in which a distinctly living, discursive system of "associated commonplaces" supplants the predetermined grounds of substitution. Within every community of language-users there exists this system of connections, opinions and preconceptions borne of language usage itself rather than pre-existent facts. In a metaphor one finds these systems operating in complicity with literal word uses governed by linguistic laws. In combination they invoke a "system of implications that lends itself to more or less easy invocation".[91] So to call a man a wolf as Black demonstrates, evokes a lupine system of associated commonplaces. But to speak of them, semantic and syntactical laws command the deployment of a wolf-language which screens the field of potential associations, suppressing some whilst accentuating others. This constitutes an irreducible operation of the intellect which paraphrase cannot match.

Black's theory leads to sizeable questions concerning the validity of his stark distinctions between the semiotic and the semantic, substitution and interaction. Whilst Black equates his method of "logical grammar" with semantics and opposes this semantics to both syntactic and "physical inquiry", he cannot in fact provide a purely grammatical analysis which could identify metaphorical values independently of utterance contexts, actions and speaker-intentions. And as Ricoeur points out, the existence of certain metaphors across language divides points to a phonetically and grammatically independent constitution, to the importance of "pragmatics" as much as semantics. What is more, a system of associated commonplaces does not strictly fit within a semantic model. Whilst the implications and preconceptions of commonplaces are "governed by rules to which the speaking subjects of a linguistic community are 'committed'", they are not themselves lexical entities.[92] Black may wish to stress these rules against a psychological view of commonplaces but what they in fact point to in Ricoeur's view, and what Black fails to elaborate, is the "creative activity", cognitive but not psychological, that such a system implies. And this problem relates to other issues concerning the production of meaning within Black's theory. How, for example, can Black account for the creation of genuinely

[91] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.101.
[92] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.104.

novel patterns of association such as one expects of the greatest literary productions? Can common associations account for the rare, epoch-changing moments by which our literary and social history is punctuated? What of Eliot's opening lines in *Prufrock*—lines which draw themselves, figure themselves between the failing sky of old and the muted aspirations of a new idiom—or what of Shakespearean innovation, for that matter?

Black's theory does not surpass the enigma of creativity, "of novel meaning beyond the bounds of all previously established rules".[93] In fact neither Black nor Richards are capable of joining the semantic thrust of their analyses to the existential implications of a metaphorical mode of cognition. This is an inability which Ricoeur attributes to the absence of any clarification of the semantic relation to reference, or rather, the obliteration of reference within a purely sense-orientated semantics. This lack is what motivates Ricoeur's final example of a non-substitutional theory of metaphor, taken from the literary critical perspective of Monroe Beardsley. Clearly the question of meaning within a literary critical semantics will always implicate referential concerns at *some* level. Hermeneutical questions of truth and meaning are the obvious consequence of an analysis directed, as literary criticism is, towards the whole work; provenance and consequence belong to the work's totality, after all.[94]

Because the primary concern for Beardsley is the meaning of the work in total, and because he takes the metaphorical utterance and the work as homogeneous units—the metaphor comprising a poem in miniature, the poem an expanded metaphor or the organon of multiple irreducible metaphors—metaphor analysis is to provide him with a test case for the work in total. And the question he puts to the work is precisely one of truth content or lack thereof. Beardsley wishes to justify the process of literary interpretation against relativism. If metaphor can be shown to have a determined and explicable content, then so too can the work of literature. From our own vantage point, we find a focal confluence of themes within Beardsley's approach. Our own concern for Ricoeur follows precisely the same impulse against literary critical relativism as Beardsley's. And Ricoeur's interest in Beardsley is catalysed by the clarity which a literary critical attitude towards the work sheds upon a semantics of metaphor. Beardsley's is a significant signpost along the path to an implied

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[93] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.104.
[94] A formal semiotics is the exception, of course.

ontology—an implied ontology of the work—within a detour through metaphor therefore.

But Beardsley's overarching concern for the work in total is intersected by the philosophical distinction of his discipline; for literary critics the meaning of the work and the meaning of the language are not one and the same thing. As a hermeneutics, literary criticism distinguishes itself from naïve readings upon the basis that it temporarily suspends the passage from sense to reference. Bracketing reference in this way, literary criticism reverses the order of priority between the two Ricoeur claims. In literary criticism the ontological import of the work's meaning is suspended in favour of its verbal design, as discourse comprised of an "intelligible string of words". Whilst spontaneous discourse automatically moves towards its referential fulfilment, literary criticism forestalls this fulfilment, subordinating the referential function to the internal semantic functioning of sense. In this way the question of reference is only taken up again in light of an explication of sense; splitting up the movement from sense to reference, a semantics of literature then reverses their priority. But what significance does this hold for metaphor or indeed for metaphor's cognitive import?

The prioritisation of sense over reference, of internal semantic configurations over referential objects, clearly compounds the philosophical commitments attached to the principle of discourse, gesturing, like Richards's and Black's theories, towards a semantically mediated mode of cognition. In Black and Richards however, sense remains an internal property sealed off from the metaphor's proposed reference. Ultimately, whilst gesturing towards an interactive theory, the incompatibility of metaphorical sense and literal reference only conforms to another mode of the substitution theory; metaphor has sense upon the basis that it cancels out a literal reference. But with Beardsley's concern for the overarching work, metaphorical sense and literal reference acquire their own dialectical productivity; with Beardsley metaphor leads to the reassessment of the work's reference *in terms of* its sense.

With his aspiration for a non-emotive and non-relativistic definition of literature, semantics for Beardsley, as much as Ricoeur, holds the key to a non-psychologistic account of interpretation. Defining the work semantically—in terms of a sentence to which the work itself is homogeneous—Beardsley draws the external opposition between cognitive and emotive interpretations into the internal workings of the sentence itself. Semantically speaking, the sentence comprises an explicit

primary *statement* and an implicit secondary *suggestion.* In a correlative move, Beardsley divides the word into an explicit *denotative* function and an implicit *connotative* function. The interplay between connotation and denotation within a given word is determined according to the specific contextual character of the sentence to which it belongs, with the context exerting a kind of filter effect upon the range of potential connotations. As with Richards, it is the degree of stability within this context, between its components, which determines the variable degree of connotative or denotative value within its range. The more determined the sentence's context, the fewer the connotations. The stronger the words' denotative values, the more determined the sentence's context. Accordingly in technical discourse one finds connotation at a customary zero degree, whilst literature conforms to a maximal degree of connotative "liberation". But whilst the liberation of connotative powers promotes a degree of ambiguity within literary discourse this is not a justification for relativistic criticism; connotative liberation is by no means a mode of confusion or irreducible heterogeneity. On the contrary, literature is the construct of a pre-eminent design, in which the primary and secondary, the denotative and connotative, are of concurrent value. Finally, whilst Beardsley confirms the basic pattern of Richards' and Black's theories—metaphor as a kind of attribution comprised of a primary subject/focus/tenor and a secondary modifier/vehicle/frame—he also revises the presumed character of the relations between the two components, asserting the role of *incompatibility* over and above any shared similarity or resemblance between the subject and the modifier.

With the stress upon incompatibility, the Ricoeurian vision of productive interpretation truly sets sail. If metaphor is a form of "logically empty attribution", or a "self-contradictory attribution", then it automatically presents thought with a work of interpretation. Metaphorical sense is the production of thought alone, the projection of a heretofore unprecedented meaning forged in the initial clash of primary meanings.[95] It is the reader's resulting impulse to sift the context of connotations for a secondary meaning adequate to the requirement of sense. And it takes the literary critical practitioner of semantics, a practitioner who arrests the movement towards

[95] Ricoeur points out that whilst numerous tropes conform to the criterion of empty or contradictory attribution—none more so, for example, than the oxymoron—metaphor's distinction rests in its greater degree of ambiguity. Unlike the oxymoron, metaphor does not point to the direct contradiction of a "living death" for example, but to a range of possible connotations which indirectly contradict the subject.

reference in order to analyse the sense of words alone, to perceive this productive function.[96] According to Beardsley, "metaphor transforms a *property* (actual or attributed) into a sense".[97]

With the criterion of similarity neither Richards nor Black could broach the logic of association within metaphor. This meant that neither of them could account for the emergence of new and perspective-altering metaphors. Upon such theories metaphor could only clothe a pre-existent sense within a deviant form, a "proper" meaning within a "figurative" one. Because Beardsley situates the figurative within a relationship of incongruity, because he elevates the role of sense over reference, and because this transposition deposes the standard ontological hierarchy of the literal and denotative as the "proper", Beardsley enables Ricoeur to anticipate a theory of fictional reference premised upon the temporary suspension of an actual reference within the mind of the interpreter.

> It is the reader, in effect, who works out the connotations of the modifier that are likely to be meaningful.
>
> ...
>
> For this reason, metaphorical attribution is superior to every other use of language in showing what "living speech" really is; it is an 'instance of discourse' *par excellence*. Accordingly, Beardsley's theory is directly applicable to newly invented metaphor.[98]

It is for this reason that Ricoeur entirely disregards the cognitive import of dead metaphors and catechresis, for in such instances the impertinence, the initial semantic clash within the predicate, has been almost entirely neutralised, either by usage or necessity. Because it is only the instance of novel, live metaphor which activates an interpretive command upon the reader, and thence the possibility for re-orientating one's view of the world, it is only the live metaphor which arouses questions of

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[96] If one wishes, as the literary critic does, to attend to the work's semantics properties, one must first suspend the question of its ontological import. There is thus a duality within the notion of meaning which corresponds to the work's verbal design on the one hand, and its reference on the other. The possibility of this duality is a condition of discourse itself. A semantics of the sentence within literary criticism gives rise to two possible notions of meaning; what the work intends, its reference to an outside world, and its immanent sense. In contrast to natural language, where sense automatically passes over into reference, literary criticism splits these traits and suspends the spontaneous motion towards reference, thereby reversing the order of their priority.

[97] Beardsley, *Aesthetics*, p.302, quoted by Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p.113.

[98] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, pp.111-112.

genuine cognitive validity. According to Ricoeur dead metaphor is not strictly speaking metaphor but rather an element of the lexis; a metaphor that has so long ago lost its innovative edge as to have been entirely standardised or literalised. Between the live metaphor and its lexicalisation there lies a gulf of historicity, of usage, so vast as to render them epistemologically discontinuous, a thesis corroborated by the theory of speech acts and one from which the semiotic, that is to say synchronic account of metaphor is necessarily exiled. As we shall see, dead metaphor is the concept's hope, not its despair.

Imagination and the Birth of the Figure

Whilst Beardsley "accentuates the inventive and innovative character of the metaphorical statement", a semantic theory of sense alone cannot justify the transition from a predicative impertinence to a new predicative pertinence.[99] Semantics cannot explain interpretation itself, even if it constitutes the pre-eminent possibility for such a task. Following the pattern established in *The Conflict*, the semantic moment of interpretation must be exceeded, or mediated, by a subsequent reflective moment. It belongs to the power of reflection alone—albeit linguistically mediated—to facilitate the hermeneutical passage from interpretation to that which eventually confirms philosophy's highest task, namely ontological understanding. If metaphor founds the possibility for new disclosures regarding our perception of the world, then metaphorical interpretation must proceed along similar lines. With this transition we are led into a territory of thought hitherto unmentioned, but one which implies itself every time we speak of metaphor in terms of a "work" or a "production". To the reflective moment of live metaphor Ricoeur appropriates the Kantian theory of productive imagination. By means of this appropriation the relationship of mediation between language and consciousness can be seen to revolve full circle, for where language mediates the procession of thoughts and meanings according to the vicissitudes of form and historical happenstance, so the generation, both of language's formal distribution and its semantic evolution, are mediated by the offices of productive imagination.

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[99] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.112.

For Ricoeur, imagination is the "third term, the intermediate term" between sensibility (sensory perception and experience) and understanding (intellection).[100] To put it another way it is the principle of distanciation in psychic actuality. Since understanding is a capacity to put matters into words, and this capacity is itself conditioned by imagination, Ricoeur can assert an innate circular dependency between imagination and predication. This model is no more apparent than in the production of metaphorical meaning, where Ricoeur claims imagination to mediate and *assimilate* an initial impertinence, or "category mistake", to an eventual pertinence, where one finds the creation of new relations between categories. [101] The Kantian schemata are thus transposed from an order of pure self-presentiality (idealism) to the language-orientated horizon of postructural hermeneutics.

There are three distinct moments to chart within the procession of semantic innovation, the first being the predicative assimilation of an initial impertinence. Within the metaphor one finds an ill-fitting order of categorization between the subject and its predicate (between the focus and its frame), two clashing "categories" that must somehow be reconciled. But in order to understand the metaphorical value of this "mistake", "one must continue to identify the previous incompatibility *through* the new compatibility".[102] The good metaphor retains a tension within the mind of the interpreter, between the literally incongruous and the metaphorically valid, between a prior order of categorisation and its re-organisation. Upon the basis of this tension a likeness can proceed to emerge.

> The insight into likeness is the perception of the conflict between the previous incompatibility and the new compatibility. "Remoteness" is preserved within "proximity". To see *the like* is to see the same in spite of, and through, the different. This tension between sameness and difference characterises the logical structure of likeness.[103]

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[100] Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles Kelbey, Henry Regnery, Chicago, 1965, p.57

[101] Ricoeur borrows the term "category mistake" from Gilbert Ryle. See *The Rule of Metaphor*, p.201 and "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination and Feeling", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.5, No.1, Autumn 1978, pp.143-160, p.148; the concept of "category mistake" "consists in presenting the facts pertaining to one category in the terms appropriate to another. All new rapprochement (between terms) runs against a previous categorization which resists, or rather which yields while resisting..."

[102] Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling", *ibid.*, p.148.

[103] Ricoeur. *ibid.*

The restructuring of categories is a dialectical operation which retains the previous order of categorisation in tension with the new order. Such is "the schematism of metaphorical attribution" in its semantic, "quasi-verbal" aspect.[104] In metaphor, it is schematization that enables the birth of a new predicative pertinence to rise from the ashes of impertinence. At this point Ricoeur defers to the Kantian schema, one function of which is to provide images for a concept. The schema is a *method* for giving an image to a concept. It is, Ricoeur writes "the very operation of grasping the similar, by performing the initial predicative assimilation answering to the initial semantic shock. Suddenly, we are seeing as...; we see old age as the dusk of day, time as a beggar, nature as a temple with living pillars."[105]

In the second phase this newly apprehended similarity proceeds to grant a "pictorial dimension", a "quasi-optical" image but an image that is none the less still a "being pertaining to language". [106] When one encounters the poetic image, the schematisation of metaphorical language creates what he calls a "reverberation". The imagination is "diffused in all directions, reviving former experiences, awakening dormant memories, irrigating adjacent sensorial fields."[107] Within the image there is what Ricoeur calls a *projection* of possible meanings and a schematic synthesis of these potentials, of semantic fields which have hitherto been unconnected. Where the initial semantic interaction conforms to the play of Black's division of frame and focus—the clash between the contextual setting of the phrase as a whole, and the particular term which bears the shift in meaning—the production of the image, of metaphor's "iconic" aspect, constitutes a second order interaction between the conceptual import of Richards's tenor and the contrasting modality of its quasi-sensible vehicle.[108] Whilst the image does not form a part of the initial semantic operation, iconic presentation is none the less controlled, limited and guided by the potentials of the semantic field; the image is "bound or tied to the emerging meaning"

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[104] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.149.
[105] Ricoeur, "Imagination in Discourse and in Action", *From Text to Action; Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, The Athlone Press, London, 1991, p.173.
[106] Ricoeur adopts the latter phrase from Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. See Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling", *ibid.*, p.149.
[107] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[108] But this relationship is not condemned to the endless vacillation of interpretive possibilities; the over-riding context of the metaphorical statement, the frame, restricts the play of potential projected meanings between image and schema, enabling an eventual determination or synthesis according to a criterion of fittingness.

and is thereby integral to the emergence of any future conceptual identification to follow from the metaphorical predicate.[109]

> By displaying a flow of images, discourse initiates changes of logical distance, generates rapprochement. Imaging or imagining thus, is the concrete milieu in which and through which we see similarities. To imagine, then, is not to have a mental picture of something but to display relations in a depicting mode. Whether this depiction concerns unsaid and unheard similarities or refers to qualities, structures, localizations, situations, attitudes, or feelings, each time the new intended connection is grasped as what the icon describes or depicts.[110]

As a novel synthesis and a new production, Ricoeur's Kantian image conforms to the kind of poetic instantiation attributed to the totality of the poem such as one finds within a poetics of singularity. We may recall Gadamer's reference to the Lutheran proclamation of the word as "standing written" in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*; as a pure presence, the poetic word transcends the usual division of its sensible and intelligible aspects to become a kind of icon, an unmediated presence that must be opposed—irreconcilably—to the sign's representational and referential character. In a similar fashion, the poetic image of the Ricoeurian imagination is neither a copy of some naturalistic phenomenon nor a kind of psychological replica or memory. In those instances, the image, like the sign, merely represents a form of pre-existent reality, an absent reality, but a reality no less. With the novel synthesis of the metaphorical image, however, no such absent presence pertains. Although the metaphorical image is almost certainly comprised of elements that are drawn from reality, the metaphor, being irreducible to its components, has no such basis within the real world. Lacking reference to the real world therefore, the metaphorical image, unlike the representational image with its absent original, is deemed both fully present and *unreal*.[111] Of course the Ricoeurian image is not to be confused with the word of Gadamerian poetics; the image is a psychological consequence of the word, lacking in

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[109] Lawlor, *Imagination and Chance: The Difference Between the Thought of Ricoeur and Derrida*, *ibid.*, p.67.

[110] Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling", *ibid.*, p.150.

[111] The mental actualisation of the image and the objective content of expression participate within a dialectical relationship therefore. But this relationship is not to be condemned to the endless vacillation of interpretive possibilities either; the over-riding context of the metaphorical statement, the frame, restricts the play of potential projected meanings between image and schema, enabling an eventual determination or synthesis according to a criterion of fittingness.

materiality. Nevertheless, in their depictions of an unprecedented signification, the Ricoeurian image and the Gadamerian word confirm their rootedness within a shared attitude towards the nature of imagination.

True to the Gadamerian model, the Ricoeurian image is certainly not that mode of pure origin named and shamed within the "misguided Kantianism" of the idealists. The Ricoeurian image is intrinsically intertwined with the predicative process, with the objective limits of expression and the formal limits of predication. These are the productive constraints upon which the emergence of the image depends. Equally, the success of the predicative assimilation is a response to the insistence of the image. From the "thickness of the imagining scene displayed by the verbal structure" comes "the intuitive grasp of a predicative connection".[112] Image and predicate are thus engaged within a relation of dialectical dependency catalysed by the initial "grasp" of intuition. Whether we use the Kantian term or the more hermeneutical term of "pre-understanding" named in the hermeneutic circle, it is the specific hermeneutical status of intuition which founds both Ricoeur's theory of the semantic, metaphorical imagination and the Gadamerian poetics of singularity.

Somewhat before the purported turn in his thinking, roughly between the years of 1926 and 1936, Heidegger had immersed himself in what has become known as his "Kantian decade", a period upon which he would reflect—with somewhat uncharacteristic humility—that it was "as though scales fell from my eyes and Kant became for me an essential confirmation of the rightness of the path on which I searched."[113] His reading of Kant was characteristically iconoclastic however. In true provocation he re-wrote Kant's theory of productive imagination in terms of an "aesthetic ontology", in which Heideggerian Being and Kantian productive imagination were drastically elided. Projecting his own fundamental postulate of temporality over the condition of pure imagination, Heidegger wrote that "The imagination forms in advance and before all experience of the object, the aspect in the pure form (*Bild*) of time and precedes this or that particular experience of an

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[112] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p.151.

[113] Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Winter Semester 1927/28, *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 25, ed. Ingtraud Görland, Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1977, p. 431, quoted (and translated) by Daniel Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Kantian Turn: Notes to his Commentary on the *Kritk der reinen Vernunft*, Review of Metaphysics, 45:2, Dec. 1991, pp. 328-361, p.329.

object".[114] Against the reductive polarity of a purely productive or a purely reproductive imagination, Heidegger wrote that,

> As a faculty of intuition, imagination is formative in the sense that it produces a particular image. As a faculty not dependent on objects of intuition, it produces, that is forms and provides images. This "formative power" is at one and the same time receptive and productive (spontaneous). In this "at one and the same time" is to be found the true essence of the structure of imagination.[115]

In a most enlightening and useful text, Richard Kearney attributes the genuine development of the hermeneutical imagination—as an historically constrained and yet critically autonomous operation—almost solely to Ricoeur and his theory of semantic innovation.[116] Unqualified though I am to comment upon this, the third and final step of Ricoeur's rule of metaphor certainly presents a critical development away from Heidegger and Gadamer, and one which must surely contribute to the qualification of this high accolade. Although, as Kearney relays, Heidegger himself confirmed imagination as the ultimate source of *all* knowledge, and although Gadamer rejects the aestheticist implications of Kantian idealism, neither thinker in fact develops a theory of imagination which could adequately explicate the link between poetic disclosure and non-poetic modes of understanding. Ricoeur's rejection of the *Kehre* and the continuity of his critique of Heidegger, between *Being and Time* and *The Origin of the Work of Art*, here asserts itself. For where the early Heidegger failed to demonstrate the link between ontological understanding and historical knowledge—"as the derived form of a more primordial form"—the later Heidegger fails to *show* the connection between the most primordial of poetising and language in its derived forms. Indeed, with Heidegger's turn to thinking and poetising the demand for such a link all but disappears.

The truth of poetry for Heidegger and Gadamer rests in its capacity to open up new modalities of being, ways which are all too often obscured by our technological and verificationist attitudes towards language. In this way the truth of poetry stands in irreconcilable opposition to the order of conceptual determination. This opposition,

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[114] Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. J. Churchill, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1962, p.140.
[115] Heidegger, *ibid.*
[116] See Richard Kearney, *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004, p.36.

between standard representation and poetry was fomented in the altogether abstruse context of structuralism. We recall that Jakobson distinguishes the poetic according to an essential deviation in the referential function. For the most radical structuralists the poetic and the referential were mutually exclusive terms; the function of poetry being to elevate the code, the function of reference being to efface the code and to name an external reality.[117] Whilst Ricoeur's *Rule of Metaphor* testifies to a unique mode of signification within poetry, Riceour does not place this distinction in irreconcilable opposition to standard reference. Rather, in the third and final stage of the metaphorical process Ricoeur espouses a theory of "split reference" consequent to the production of the image and the instance of iconic augmentation.[118]

Ricoeur is keen to point out that Jakobson himself did not so much oppose the referential to the poetic as he distinguished an alternative, non-standard mode of reference within the poetic. The ambiguity of the poetic message does not destroy the referential function so much as render it *doubly*, that is to say ambiguously, referential. It is from Jakobson himself then, that Ricoeur draws the final stage of "split reference" within the metaphorical process. True to the hermeneutical path outlined in *The Conflict* (from the semantic to the reflective to the existential), this conclusion comprises a kind of phenomenological *epoché*, or suspension of the metaphor's direct (literal) reference. As with the production of metaphorical sense, the emergence of metaphorical reference at once abolishes and maintains the initial literal significance; the standard literal reference is the negative condition from whence, in Ricoeur's terms, a more primordial reference is born. Just as metaphorical sense is not a flat-out oxymoron or contradiction, but rather the birth of a new semantic pertinence forged in the ruins of a literal impertinence, so the failure of the metaphor's literal reference, the initial suspension of reference "is the negative condition for the emergence of a more radical way of looking at things".[119] Ricoeur writes that

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[117] Given the antinomial pressures these discourses otherwise exert, it is little wonder that literary theory should have fortified the assertion of these ivory tower limitations, against the contrary indications of the Ricoeurian hermeneutic.

[118] Iconic augmentation being the point at which Heidegger and Gadamer make their claims for poetic singularity.

[119] Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling", p.154.

> there is no other way to do justice to the notion of metaphorical truth than to include the critical incision of the (literal) "is not" within the ontological vehemence of the (metaphorical) "is"...[120]

Ambiguous reference calls for a mode of what W. Bedell Stanford calls "stereoscopic vision" between a false literal reference and a supposed figurative reference. It is their interplay alone which creates a new "vision" of the world.

> Imagination does not merely *schematize* the predicative assimilation between terms by its synthetic insight into similarities nor does it merely *picture* the sense thanks to the display of images aroused and controlled by the cognitive process. Rather, it contributes concretely to the *epoché* of ordinary reference and to the *projection* of new possibilities of redescribing the world.
>
> In a sense, all *epoché* is the work of imagination. Imagination is *epoché*. As Sartre emphasized, to imagine is to address oneself to what is not. More radically, to imagine is to make oneself absent to the whole of things. Yet I do not want to elaborate further this thesis of the negativity proper to the image. What I do want to underscore is the solidarity between the *epoché* and the capcity to project new possibilities. Image as absence is the negative side of image as fiction. It is to this aspect of the image as fiction that is attached the power of symbolic systems to "re-make" reality, to return to [Nelson] Goodman's idiom. But this productive and projective function of fiction can only be acknowledged if one sharply distinguishes it from the reproductive role of the so-called mental image which merely provides us with a re-presentation of things already perceived. *Fiction* addresses itself to deeply rooted potentialities of reality to the extent that they are absent from the actualities with which we deal in everyday life under the mode of empirical control and manipulation. In that sense, fiction presents under a concrete mode the split structure of the reference pertaining to the metaphorical statement. It both reflects and completes itself. [121]

In Kearney's words Ricoeur's semantic imagination represents an "act of responding to a demand for new meaning, the demand of emerging realities to *be* by *being said* in

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[120] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p.302.
[121] Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling", *ibid.*, p.154.

new ways".[122] On the one hand, Ricoeur can be clearly seen to corroborate the ontological argument promoted in texts such as *The Origin of the Work of Art*, where Heidegger elevates poetry—as a disclosure comprised of language, of the language within which we "dwell"—as the highest and most ontologically profound mode of *aletheia*; in his rule of metaphor Ricoeur characterises a wholly semantic theory of imagination, to which linguistic innovation corresponds as a similarly effulgent mode of disclosure. But on the other hand, whilst the theory of split reference confirms the ontological structure of poetic truth as both revealment and concealment, as both an "is" and an "is not" determined by the absence of an original referent, it also works to abrogate the ultimate postulate of singularity, of a total discontinuity between *aletheia* and conceptual verification. Insofar as metaphorical reference (and sense for that matter) incorporates the literal "is not", the literal reference can be seen to participate, albeit negatively, within the production of the metaphorical truth. This is a slightly different proposition from the one Heidegger presents when he describes the ontological structure of poetic truth in terms of a revealment and a concealment. In that instance the dialectical presentation of poetic truth can be seen to oppose the postulate of direct reference altogether, with direct reference heralding precisely that mode of conceptual mastery he condemns. Since direct reference presupposes an identity between a given intellectual/semantic content and its referent, it must, by its very nature conform to that modality of inauthentic truth borne of the presumed mastery of conceptual thought.[123] For Heidegger, the arrow-like notion of reference as a kind of intrinsic pointer would simply be wrong-headed; we do not deploy language after all, we dwell in it.

With Ricoeur, however, the assertion of split reference implies a potential continuity between the poetic function and the outwardly-directed descriptive function named by Jakobson. In short, whilst the metaphor enables a more "primordial" vision of the world, such ontological prestige is only possible upon the condition of a dialectical interplay between the symbolic realm of double meanings and a second-order realm of conceptual determination. This is evinced by the critical instance of the referential *epoché*, where the incision of the "is not", the negative suspension of the referent, is preconditioned by the prior determination of a pre-

[122] Richard Kearney, *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva*, *ibid.*, p. 40.
[123] If technological thought is premised upon the intellectual grasp of concepts, and concepts confirm the unanimous identity of thoughts and their signs, then technological thinking presumes within the sign a direct reference to the real.

existent conceptuality; were such an apparatus not in place, the comparison upon which the suspension depends would not itself be possible.

Ricoeur and Derrida on Metaphor and Philosophy

We know that Heidegger opposes the progression towards conceptual identity as something at once inimical to ontological disclosure and extrinsic to the mode of understanding he champions. It is inimical not only because it obscures potential ways of being in the world—ways which, as the Russian Formalists would concur, poetry vivifies—but because it also obscures the postulate of being-in-the-world, as that more primordial mode of existence to which the very distinction of metaphor and concept is a foreign derivation. This is why, in *The Principle of Reason* (*Der Satz vom Grund*), Heidegger makes the celebrated and proximally Nietzschean assertion that "the metaphorical exists only in the metaphysical".[124] The propinquity of Heidegger and Nietzsche is a pressing issue for the fate of literary theory, and none more so than in the particular instance of metaphor, where the tenor of Heidegger's assertion and the level of scepticism it arouses, cuts to the very heart of Ricoeur's exchange with Derrida. When Ricoeur finally introduces the issue of Derrida and the deconstruction of metaphor within "White Mythology", he leaves no uncertainty as to the alliance he perceives and to the distinction of his own debt to Heidegger. Circumscribing Nietzsche and Derrida within a "'genealogical' manner of questioning", Ricoeur makes sure to insert his own critical précis of Heidegger before moving on to the Derridean text. Now Ricoeur's main aim is to demonstrate precisely why Heidegger's aphorism is not the startling denunciation of truth it at first appears to be. The logic of genealogy generates a pretty unambiguous interpretation: the metaphorical exists only within the metaphysical because the presumed transfer of a "proper" literal meaning into a deviant figurative meaning is only recognisable within the remit of metaphysics, more precisely Platonic and neo-Platonic metaphysics, where the highest forms of knowledge correspond to a transfer from the sensible to the intelligible, the visible to the invisible. Metaphor and metaphysics involve one and the same transfer. Rhetoric, and the rhetorical definition of metaphor are implicitly Platonic therefore. Now

[124] Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, quoted by Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*,p.331.

Nietzsche's point was that the interdependency of metaphysics and metaphor rendered the truth of metaphysics little more than forgotten metaphors; metaphysics generates its truths according to a metaphorical transfer from the sensible to the intelligible, thus the Platonic ontology is itself a mere metaphor that time forgot. But from the surrounding context of Heidegger's assertion Ricoeur finds a rather different target, not metaphysical truth itself so much as the metaphysical-rhetorical definition of metaphor as a "mere" transfer, from the proper to the improper, and from the sensible to the intelligible.

This is borne out by Heidegger's treatment of the principle of sufficient reason. In fact the principle of sufficient reason really only furnishes an opportunity for Heidegger to demonstrate why all metaphor is not a "mere" transfer. "Nothing is without a reason" the principle states. Now Heidegger claims that this statement exemplifies how one can sometimes *see* a situation clearly, but not really *grasp* what is at issue. In order to really grasp a situation one needs insight, and such insight in fact requires a more distinct form of *hearing*. When one stops *seeing* and starts really *listening* to the principle of sufficient reason for instance, we gain a true grasp of the situation when we "perceive [...an auditory...] harmony between 'is' and 'reason'." Now when we read this principle we hear "*Nothing is* without a reason" rather than "Nothing *is without* a reason". Those committed to the standard rhetorical view of metaphor will certainly object that seeing and hearing are only thinking insofar as they are transpositions, metaphors involving the transfer of an initial sensible activity into a subsequent intellectual one. "To which the philosopher replies"—in conformity to Kant—"that there is not first sensible seeing and hearing, which would be transposed to the non-sensible level. Our hearing and our seeing are never a simple reception by the senses."[125] Only the Platonist (or the empiricist) may therefore denounce metaphor as a "mere" transposition and an un-truth, for it is only the Platonist who presupposes a rectilinear hierarchy from the sensible to the intelligible. By Ricoeur's reckoning the denunciation of Platonism must apply every bit as much to Nietzsche as to the tradition he denounces. For Heidegger, as we know, the point about metaphor is that the very notion should be abandoned; truth is neither metaphysics nor metaphor. For Ricoeur, however, "the constant use Heidegger makes

[125] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.332.

of metaphor is finally more important than what he says in passing against metaphor."[126]

Against his contrary protestations, Heidegger's use of metaphor, his deployment of metaphor in the fight against representationalist attitudes, corroborates the fundamental principles laid out in *The Rule of Metaphor*: that metaphor is absolutely vital to philosophy, precisely in its distinction from concepts. Heidegger's metaphorics attests to the fundamental poverty of the substitution theory enshrined by metaphysics. The critic who objects to Heidegger's metaphors, objects to them upon the basis that they transpose a "proper" meaning into an "improper" meaning, a visible and sensible impression into an invisible idea. By extension, by necessity, the critic who condemns Heidegger must also assume metaphor's classical rhetorical definition, as a substitution of one term for another. Rejecting this paradigm, Heidegger's metaphors, and as a case in point, his treatment of the principle of sufficient reason, testify to Ricoeur's semantic theory of metaphor as a vital cognitive operation involving the inter-animation of the whole phrase. More than anything, Heidegger's mode of radical poetising lends its support to the philosophical profundity of *living metaphor* over and against the morbid preoccupations of Nietzsche. "Is not the entropy of language just what a philosophy of living metaphor wants to forget?"[127] And yet, because Heidegger has absolutely no interest in salvaging the concept of metaphor from metaphysics, metaphor—in name at least—must ultimately go the same disreputable way. In their interdependency, the *destruktion* of metaphysics is the *destruktion* of metaphor, just as Nietzsche demonstrated.

This is why, according to Ricoeur, Heidegger's "restrained criticism" facilitates both an ontologically orientated theory of live metaphor such as his own *and* Derrida's "unbounded 'deconstruction' in 'White Mythology'". Here Derrida proceeds "to enter the domain of metaphor not by way of its birth but, if we may say so, by way of its death."[128] Accordingly, Ricoeur's debate with Derrida has a lot more to do with the status of so-called dead metaphors than it does to do with semantic innovation. Upon a cognitive semantic theory, the dead metaphor is philosophically redundant, the predicative impertinence of the initial semantic "shock" having long

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[126] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[127] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.336.
[128] Ricoeur, *ibid.*

since been assimilated and "fixed" within the lexicon. According to the (anti-) logic of *différance* and dissemination, however, the notion of the figure as ever in any way "completing" itself, of ever really neutralising its affect, is a metaphysical illusion dreamt-up and perfected in the pristine history of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. By demonstrating metaphor's fundamental complicity within the Hegelian sublation, within the model of concept-formation it describes, Derrida appears to consummate Nietzsche's ironic mode of scepticism; metaphysics cannot regulate the metaphorical foundations of its own concepts. "What then is truth?" Nietzsche decries most famously, but an ever-shifting parade of tropes, a dissimulation of figures, akin in their reduction to the defilement of old coins?[129]

In "White Mythology" Derrida chooses to translate the double-play of economic value (the coin's reduction to mere metal, the figure's dissimulation into concepts) in terms of an *effacement* of the figure; of "coins which have their obverse *effaced* and now are no longer of account as coins but merely metal."[130] The figurative complicity borne of the economic metaphor—of figures as coins that have lost their value, that have become effaced and de-valued, of figures as linguistic currency—both here, and in the more arcane context of Anatole France's *The Garden of Epicurus*, furnishes Derrida's notion of metaphorical *usure* (from usury). As with all Derrida's monikers, this is a completely ambidextrous term, a limit concept intended to draw the myriad tangents of his text together within the force-field of one central aporia. As Derrida makes plain, usure "belongs to the concept of metaphor itself".[131] It too must suffer "the paradox of the auto-implication of metaphor" as Ricoeur calls it.[132] The paradox proper to metaphor is this: because metaphor never truly loses its efficacy, because conceptuality is a metaphorical illusion, all attempts to inscribe metaphor within a philosophical, conceptual framework involve the deployment of metaphor. "There is no non-metaphorical standpoint from which to perceive the order and the demarcation of the metaphorical field."[133] In Derrida's words,

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[129] See Nietzsche as quoted on p.168.
[130] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense", *Complete Works of Nietzsche*, ed. D. Levy, London, 1911, Vol. 2, p.180. Quoted by Derrida, "White Mythology", *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Harvester Press, Brighton, 1982, pp. 238-271, p.217.
[131] Derrida, "White Mythology", *Margins of Philosophy*, *ibid.*, p.215.
[132] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.338.
[133] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.339.

> Metaphor has been issued from a network of philosophemes which themselves correspond to tropes or to figures, and these philosophemes (assuming that the quotation marks will serve as a sufficient precaution here), cannot be dominated. It cannot dominate itself, cannot be dominated by what it itself has engendered, has made to grow on its own soil, supported on its own base...If one wished to conceive and to class all the metaphorical possibilities of philosophy, one metaphor, at least, always would remain excluded, outside the system: the metaphor, at the very least, without which the concept of metaphor could not be constructed...[134]

The paradox of metaphor discloses the metaphoricity of the concept. Now beneath every philosophical figure an infinity of exegesis opens up, "The field is never saturated".[135] Usure is not the mere erosion of the figure—indeed not, this is the lie of the metaphysical *Aufhebung*—contrary to the laws of lending it is also the unpredictable generation of unforeseen values; a fluctuation that neither the metaphorics of metaphysics nor the metaphysics of rhetoric can control. Usure is another name for the law of *supplementarity*. For Derrida as well as Heidegger then, metaphor and concept are derivations of an earlier precedence; not the difference between Being and beings this time, but the "more original" relation which enables the perception of ontological difference in the first place, namely the formal relations of *différance*.

Turning the full force of his semantic theory, with its emphasis upon imagination and the originary powers of the hermeneutical imagination, against the aporia of supplementarity, Ricoeur rejects the efficacy of dead metaphor and with it, the supposed collusion of metaphor and metaphysics. In the first instance, the hidden fecundity presumed of dead metaphor is a symptomatic exaggeration of semiotics. It is only in semiotic theories, where the order of the code limits metaphor to a theory of substitution, to a transposition of the name, that this over-exaggeration can occur. What is more, this over-emphasis upon denomination must carry along with it the implicit metaphysical distinction between a primary "proper" meaning and its figurative transposition. Of course, for Ricoeur the real issue of metaphorical innovation involves the whole predicate, the transition from an initial impertinence to

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[134] Derrida, "White Mythology", *ibid.*, p.220.
[135] Derrida, *ibid.*

a new predicative pertinence. If a metaphor no longer arouses the initial demand for assimilation, if it is no longer incongruous, then its cognitive status as metaphor is severely limited, the semantic instability of the initial shock having been absorbed at the site of its inception. Here a sceptic may wish to align these rationalising powers of assimilation with the illusory refinement of the figure's metaphysical effacement, and to thereby unleash upon Ricoeur the full force of Derrida's critique. But in fact Ricoeur is in no disagreement as to the illusory powers of effacement; dead metaphors may not command interpretation, but effacement alone does not make for concepts. The dead metaphor enjoys neither a subversive afterlife nor a spiritually rarefied one. Rather, it enters the lexicon of standard usage, where the imaginative heuristic function is all but lost.

In lexicalisation the predicative context is shed, all that remains is the original focus upon which the subsequent contrast centred.[136] As with Ricoeur's example of the French word for head, *tête*, the metaphorical origins of which must be re-traced etymologically (to the Latin *testa*, meaning "little pot"), common usage causes us to forget the similarity within the difference and "to overlook the deviation in relation to the isotopy of the context." Now when the French refer to *la tête*,

> the metaphor has been lexicalized to such an extent that it has become the proper word; *by this we mean that the expression now brings its lexicalised value into discourse, with neither deviation nor reduction of deviation.*[137]

Because metaphor is defined in terms of a command for interpretation, a semantic theory based upon usage dispels the association of literal with "proper". Semantically speaking, the literal meaning is the lexicalised meaning not the original meaning. Whilst lexicalisation renders the usure of metaphor "more seductive than earth-shaking", Ricoeur does not deny the potential for metaphors to be re-activated or de-lexicalised (indeed were this not possible lexicalisation would amount to conceptualisation), but what he does deny is the co-existence of standard lexicalised usage and the subterraneous fealty of the supplement:

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[136] Being mistaken for the whole operation, this remnant or after-effect is one reason why the substitution theory has proved so endurable.

[137] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p.343. Emphasis added.

> The reanimation of a dead metaphor...is a positive operation of de-lexicalizing that amounts to a new production of metaphor and, therefore, of metaphorical meaning.

Furthermore,

> De-lexicalization is...in no way symmetrical to the earlier lexicalization.[138]

This is of no small consequence for literature and the creative powers of the author. Raising metaphor from the sediments of familiarity, is an affect obtained "by various concerted and controlled procedures – substituting a synonym that suggests an image, adding a more recent metaphor, etc."[139] From this we could say that metaphor's heuristic function is doubled, with a reference being made to the relation of real properties in the first instance, and a meta-linguistic, historical relation between metaphor and the lexis in the second.[140] The re-animation of past metaphorical values is in no way an autonomous or chance occurrence, some unplanned slippage within the global *hors-texte*, but rather a concerted design stemming from the author's imaginative and tutelary powers. In the case of philosophical metaphor Ricoeur proclaims a similarly conscious re-deployment. By way of demonstration he takes the conspicuous example of false etymologism common to Heidegger, to Hegel and to Plato. Bearing witness to a false or fictional history within the once figurative and now sedimented term, the philosopher effectively seeks to create a new meaning, a living metaphor. The figure's return is thus an independent procedure from the term's more unconscious passing into the lexicon. This, then, is the true remit of the dead metaphor for Ricoeur.

Concept formation is a process equally independent of lexicalisation and revived metaphor. With the justification of this process and the claim for its autonomy from the dead metaphor, Ricoeur seeks to dispel the presumed collusion of metaphor and metaphysics, and to consecrate the fundamental discontinuity of poetry and philosophy. Within concept formation there is not one but two processes. The

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[138] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.345.
[139] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[140] Ricoeur does not make this point but it is none-the-less coherent with his theory of split reference, where, against a purely autotelic reference, he defines the operations of a fictional reference forged in the simultaneous reality of the image and unreality of its original. The image is unreal and yet it exists.

first (which Derrida accuses Ricoeur for falsely assimilating to "White Mythology"), "takes a proper meaning and transports it into the spiritual order".[141] From this metaphorical transfer both lexicalisation and concept formation may follow. But whilst both processes emerge from the reduction of the so-called dead metaphor, their paths remain distinct. Deferring to Hegel's concept of the *Aufhebung*, Ricoeur characterises concept-formation in terms of a second operation of "suppression-preservation", in which a new abstract meaning is drawn from the initial transposition from the sensible to the intelligible. In the initial metaphorical stage the sensible sense remains in tension with the intelligible sense. The second process therefore accounts for the suppression of the sensible and the preservation of the intelligible. Just as the Kantian schema provide thought with an initial symbolic (quasi-sensible) framework, and the production of an intelligible concept in no way reducible to its schema, so the secondary stage of suppression-preservation creates an autonomous abstract concept.

> What must be realized is precisely that giving up sensible meaning does not simply give us an improper expression but rather a proper expression on the conceptual level. The conversion of this process of wearing away into thought is not the wearing away itself. If these two operations were not distinct, we could not even speak of the concept of wearing away, nor of the concept of metaphor; in truth, there could be no philosophical terms. *That there are philosophical terms is due to the fact that a concept can be active as thought in a metaphor which is itself dead.*[142]

In conclusion, Ricoeur attributes the supposed collusion of worn-out metaphor and philosophy, in part at least, to the unfortunate endurance of the substitution theory. The "supposed collusion between the metaphorical pair of the proper and figurative and the metaphysical pair of the visible and invisible" dissipates entirely once the predicative theory has worked to shatter the affinity between substitution and dialectical overcoming.[143]

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[141] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[142] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.346. Emphasis added.
[143] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.348.

"Regulated Dynamism" and *Différance*

Understandably, our focus so far has been trained upon Ricoeur's arguments in the "Eighth Section" and his perceived distinction from Derrida in "White Mythology". Before we elaborate the wider implications of Ricoeur's thesis, for imagination, for philosophy and most importantly, for literary theory, it is only right that we say a bit more about Derrida's own views on metaphor and the law of supplementarity. Throughout this study we have repeatedly, if sometimes only implicitly, questioned the tendency to polarise poststructural hermeneutics and Derridean deconstruction. It is only right therefore that we gauge the true measure of Derrida's assertions and the character he himself perceives in his relation to Ricoeur. We must acknowledge straight off that Derrida's response to Ricoeur, in a subsequent essay called "The *Retrait* of Metaphor", threatens our own rather more ecumenical view of their relationship. Derrida criticises Ricoeur for some more or less wanton misreading, for over-simplifying his argument in the first place, for falsely eliding it with Heidegger's, and for failing to appreciate usure's productive, positive aspect for philosophical thought. To put it most brutally, Derrida accuses Ricoeur of making some of the same simplifications that we ourselves levy against deconstruction's more vulgar stereotypes. But then again, Derrida himself is never shy of working a situation to its best intellectual, best rhetorical affect, even if this distorts his interlocutor's message slightly.[144] What then, is the true measure of Ricoeur's relationship to Derrida? How are these two distinguishable, how are they proximal? And what does their relationship say about Ricoeur's omission from the literary-theoretical canon?

In an excellent display of concision and erudition Leonard Lawlor has characterised the gap between Ricoeur and Derrida as one of imagination and chance.[145] We are now very familiar with the role of imagination in the Ricoeurian theory of semantic innovation. As we shall see, imagination also fuels Ricoeur's liberal affirmation of critical discourse, the capacity that is, to stand back, to hold at a distance and reflect upon the *conditions* of the production of discourse. We may reject

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[144] Generally speaking, an element of mis-reading is usually attributed to both sides. Lawlor writes that Derrida and Ricoeur "speak at cross-purposes" (48), that Ricoeur "too hastily equates Derrida with Heidegger" (44) and that each thinker fails to do full justice to the other's theory of mediation (48). Lawlor, *Imagination and Chance; The Difference Between the Thought of Ricoeur and Derrida.*

[145] See Lawlor, *ibid.*

the romantic connotations that attach themselves to theories of imagination, but mercifully we need not deny Ricoeur's place within a venerable tradition of liberal Kantianism. Oceanic *jouisance* and hard, critical clarity are the *twin* gifts of imagination. But what of chance?

What the opposition of chance and imagination conjures so effectively is the fundamental distinction between the orders of Ricoeurian and Derridean mediation. For Ricoeur, mediation is a dialectical process which has its formal origins within the synthetic operations of imagination. Consciousness is mediated by language and by historical effect, but still the recognition of these traits is conditioned by our capacity to distance, or rather to distanciate ourselves from these affects, to form concepts and to reflect upon the predicament of our being-in-the-world. Such is the philosophical importance attached to the possibility of concept formation.

Whilst operating dialectically, distanciation must, in the strictest of theoretical senses, be understood to mediate, as a third term, between the power to act and the power to interpret. To put it another way, distanciation mediates the dialectic of event and meaning[146] Utterly irreducible, it is a transcendental or essential condition. Ricoeur likens this essential character to the Husserlian notion of intentionality, where Husserl describes the capacity for consciousness to transcend itself through the apprehension of repeatable structures. For Ricoeur as for Husserl, the power to delineate objective and universal structures from the purely subjective and singular, signals the birth of the subject as a self-transcending intellect.[147] For Ricoeur, as we know, there is no understanding, subjective or otherwise, beyond the field of language. The possibility in life, as in the text, for repeatable structures of meaning, belongs to the possibility for linguistic identities, in spite of, and furthermore as a condition, of difference. Ricoeur's entire *oeuvre* organises itself around this central dialectic of identity and difference; belonging and distanciation, predicative impertinence and semantic pertinence, and the split reference of fiction, all testify to a rational capacity to stabilise the inherent indeterminacy of the signifying system. Placing signification within the frame of discourse, distinguishing between *modes* of discourse—the lexical, the symbolic, the metaphorical and the conceptual, all with their independent *aims*—Ricoeur posits a fundamental order within an otherwise seemingly heterogeneous

[146] Elsewhere Ricoeur writes of this dialectic in terms of force and form. See *Interpretation Theory; Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, p.59 and "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text", in *From Text to Action; Essays in Hermeneutics II*, pp.144-167.
[147] See Lawlor, *ibid.*, p.53.

universe of signification. In the final section we shall see how speculative discourse fields this dialectic or "regulated dynamism" against the Wittgensteinian chaos of language games. As Stellardi writes,

> Speculative discourse relies on language's ability to produce a distance from itself, and to consider itself as a totality related to the totality of being: It is *the knowledge of its own relation to being.* The fact that there is no linguistic space outside language, and that all utterances *on* language are by necessity included *in* language, should not justify any intellectual paralysis. The philosophy of language, and philosophy *tout court*, find their respectful space and task in the *capacity of distantiation* that is inherent to language.[148]

For Ricoeur the epistemological consequence of this distanciating capacity is the hermeneut's ability to articulate the deeper ontological relations uniting the multifarious discourses of human understanding. In *The Conflict of Interpretations* Ricoeur seeks to co-ordinate conflicting interpretations according to their mode of signification and their level of phenomenological manifestation. Superficially, Ricoeur's confidence in stipulating the discontinuity of say structuralism and psychoanalysis, may appear like an act of violence; what "superior" vantage enables such a judgement after all? Contrariwise, unless one fully absorbs the phenomenological argument within the theory of semantics, unless one accepts the postulate of a semantically mediated ontology, the fundamental unity Ricoeur posits of human discourse, and the capacity he proclaims on behalf of the hermeneut—to reflect upon the ontological implications of these manifest expressions of understanding—may only muster the faint damnation of relativistic good-will.

Whilst signification for Derrida is premised upon a very similar relation of identity and difference, whilst Derrida and Ricoeur both confirm the innate indeterminacy of signification (that the signified of each signifier is another signifier in turn), Derrida parts company regarding the governability of this instability. Whilst distanciation names a fundamentally regulative condition for the possibility of intellection, the mediating powers of *différance* are conceived in terms of an intractable precedence which puts the primary categories of subject and object,

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[148] Guiseppe Stellardi, *Heidegger and Derrida on Philosophy and Metaphor; Imperfect Thought*, Prometheus Books, New York, 2000, p.88. N.B: Stellardi writes of "distantiation" whilst I employ the alternative "distanciation".

identity and difference in abeyance from the off. *Différance* is a relation of deferment that has always already proceeded to destablise the production of meaning and its interpretation. To compare it to the formal triangulation of Ricoeurian mediation, we must say that Derridean mediation precedes the terms of mediation in themselves. For Derrida, the difference, the *différance* of the semiological strata, always precedes the positing act. In its precedence, in its autonomy, the production of meaning within the signifying milieu is a wholly unregulated, avowedly non-linear and chance occurrence. This is why in "White Mythology" Derrida addresses the metaphorical process genealogically, from the vantage of dead metaphor and the un-thought, un-said within the predicative process, rather than from the position of the "live" predicative act.

For the textualists, the aestheticists, the nihilists and the postmodernists of the 1970s, '80s and '90s, the postulate of chance proved an invitation to reject the authority of reason as little more than an illusory fiction. All truths are metaphorical and all metaphor subverts the referential function. For some this was not only an illusion but a pre-contractual dogma arranged by the powers that be (a position ill-equipped to explain its own assent to such partial, prior insight). But Derrida's claim for metaphoricity is not an assertion of all out nihilism. Derrida "does not merely refer metaphor to a linguisticality more fundamental than meaning; metaphorization designates the very movement that produces presence, identity and sameness in the first place".[149] If metaphors cannot be externally regulated, if their semantic surcharge cannot be set and fixed determinately within the purity of the concept, and if this semantic surcharge does not in fact die, but subsists subterraneously, then the dissemination of metaphor is also responsible for the creation of semantic innovations. Metaphor's relation to philosophy in "White Mythology" is entirely uncontrollable, but at the same time wholly productive for thought. And this is where the postmodernists, the textualists and the relativists misread Derrida. Derrida's, like Ricoeur's, is still a philosophy of *conditions*. Following Heidegger, both thinkers reject the easy certainties of Romanticism and the Enlightenment with equal measure, but neither one rejects the integrity or indeed the sustained rigor of philosophical enquiry. For both Derrida and Ricoeur, mediation not only condemns the identity of transcendent truths (truths which theoretically pre-exist language), it also founds the

[149] Lawlor, *Imagination and Chance*, p.91.

condition for the possibility of meaning in the first place. Their point of disagreement stems from the different characterisations they bequeath this condition and their subsequent implications for the signifier.

To a certain extent, the perceived gulf between Ricoeur and Derrida can be attributed to an element of personal misunderstanding between the two. Whilst Derrida criticises Ricoeur for an over-hasty assimilation between Heideggerian metaphor and *White Mythology*, it is fare to say that Derrida never really comes to grips with Ricoeur's argument for distanciation. The focus of their debate rests heavily upon the question of dead metaphor, of unconscious ambiguities rather than the creative tensions elaborated in the Ricoeurian thesis of live metaphor. Had Derrida said more about this creative element, it is just possible that his own philosophy might not have been so readily absorbed within a generalised textualism, where the idea of a constrained or controlled productivity must be squarely opposed.

Ricoeur and Derridas' true point of departure then concerns the status of the transcendental *Aufhebung*, the simultaneous preservation and elevation of the Hegelian dialectic. As philosophers of mediation, both thinkers subscribe to the innate circularity of interpretability, but it is only for Ricoeur that this circular path can be called progressive in the sense that it facilitates an orderly, self-conscious detachment from the enquiry undertaken. The Ricoeurian power to reflect can be likened to the orderly progression of a spiral staircase. To mount, one must pass various levels, but at the same time, it is only possible to proceed if these levels are preserved at the level of their own distinction. The end result is the spatio-temporal remove, the capability to reflect backwards upon the intellectual journey. Thought for Ricoeur is dialectical from the ground up, and this reflective ability is a power of the mind itself, more importantly, of the imagination. Live metaphor is the beating heart of this power. The infinite freedom to which the structure of double meaning attests, to endlessly renew itself in the exchange of interpretation, confers testament to the infinite task of being-as-interpretation. But similarly, this freedom to create, confirmed in the process of semantic innovation, in the dynamism of the semantic "clash" and the birth of a new semantic pertinence, is also the freedom to identify and re-identify determinate meanings, to grasp language and to reflect self-consciously.

As we have seen, this freedom to create new semantic pertinences (and concepts potentially) is thoroughly dependent upon the assertion of a discursive theory of metaphor, upon the assertion of interaction between the composites of the

sentence or phrase, and not the word for word substitution of conventional rhetoric. In their adherence to substitution theories, rhetoricians of the classical and indeed the structuralist guard confirm their loyalty to Platonism, to the reductive sphere of a purely representative *mimesis.* Here the metaphor is merely the striking outer-garment of a pre-existent idea, a superficial transformation from the mundane to the exotic. Furthermore, this shuttling between standard and novel form arrests the referential thrust towards a world beyond. Repeating the gesture of aestheticism, we find Jakobson exiling the literary work from the living totality; in its failure to refer beyond itself, the work of literature must remain detached from the discourse of historical reality. If, by contrast, metaphor is shown to create new meaning, then literary art, like Heideggerian art, is world-constituting. It is thoroughly apposite, given Ricoeur's disregard for conventional parameters, to find him confirming this purportedly romantic thesis with theories drawn from the so-called Analytic tradition of Britain and America, from the interaction theory of I.A Richards and the refining modifications of Max Black. With his background in psychology and literature, Richards was the first to furnish a theory of metaphor which inscribed the process of interpretation as an intrinsic element of the metaphorical function. Rejecting the word as the bearer of intransigent values, Richards re-envisaged the word in terms of its inherent relativity to other words. Metaphorical significance was now the product of a delegated efficacy conferred through absence, from the "missing links" of the surrounding context and the interpretive drive to make sense. Anchoring meaning within the historico-phenomenological act of interpretation, whilst by-passing interpretation's subjectivistic connotations, Richards's context theorem proved a remarkable precursor both to speech act theory and Benvenistean discourse. It is this existential grounding, within the instance of discourse and within the aims of the speech act, which founds the absolute centrality and profundity of the live metaphor within Ricoeurian hermeneutics. Metaphor testifies to the powers of imagination, to create new meanings and to liberate itself from the strictures of conceived conceptual norms. But most importantly, the powers of imagination are only liberating insofar as they can be constrained or fixed by the reciprocal powers of distanciation, the power that is, to identify and re-identify signifying elements. Without this capacity, without the power to conceptualise, imagination could be neither theorised nor liberating. It is this dialectic of creation and reflection, metaphor and concept, which is lacking from the Heideggerian poetic. Heidegger's erosion of critical parameters (between work,

author and critic) and the subsequent failure to generate any kind of ethical leverage from within the discourse of aesthetic singularity both confirm this. It is towards literary reflection's ethical re-investment that we turn to Ricoeur's account of speculative discourse.

4.4

SPECULATIVE DISCOURSE AND CRITICAL AUTONOMY

Having dissociated the live, poetic metaphor from the commonplace banality of dead metaphor, Ricoeur assures the discontinuity of literary and philosophical discourse. Only where there is a demand for interpretation and the deployment of certain sense-making apparatus does true metaphor really exist. In all other instances, the absence of the interpretative demand only confirms the moribund afterlife of the lexicalised figure and the process of lexicalisation itself. In this way the dead metaphor functions like any other literal word, its residual connotative force being no more "threatening" or unstable than any other standard usage. Accordingly, Ricoeur puts paid to the presumed metaphoricity of the metaphysical concept-based upon the metaphoricity of the *Aufhebung*—as a concept founded by the same movement. But it is only with Ricoeur's final proposition of speculative discourse, that the process of lexicalisation, and more importantly of concept-formation, is explicitly dealt with. It is here that Ricoeur's literary-critical, literary-theoretical value comes fully to light.

Because semantic innovation depends upon the pre-existence of a regulative horizon, because metaphor exists in dialectical reciprocity with concepts (both at the level of innovation, where a tension of pre-existent values exists, and at the meta-level of conceptualising this process), Ricoeur's theory of the metaphorical imagination would not be complete if it failed to elaborate the process of concept formation whereby signification is stabilised and in those final, rare instances "fixed" to a unanimous content. Innovation and preservation are dialectically wed. Since all understanding comes to expression through language, Ricoeur asserts that this process must conform to its own level of discourse; in turn such a discourse must, as the expression of understanding, reflect the transcendental claim for distanciation itself.

This is the intermediate space of speculative discourse which mediates the gulf between poetry and philosophy.

Ricoeur writes that speculative discourse

> ...is the discourse that establishes the primary notions, the principles, that articulate primordially the space of the concept...[T]he speculative is the condition of the possibility of the conceptual. [150]

On the one hand, "speculative discourse has *its* condition of *possibility* in the semantic dynamism of metaphorical utterance"; without new metaphors, without the condition of double meaning, understanding would encounter no interpretive demand, no requirement to disambiguate multivocal expression.[151] On the other hand however, Ricoeur writes that speculative discourse "has its *necessity* in itself."[152] Confirmation of Ricoeur's transcendental commitment, speculative discourse reflects "resources that doubtless belong to the mind itself, that are the mind reflecting upon itself."[153] With the elaboration of speculative discourse Ricoeur will thereby elaborate a semantic account of distanciation. In turn this reflective, distanciative function will lead once more to the ontological question of the being that interprets. There is no direct ontology to be gleaned from the semantics of metaphorical utterance itself. To locate the being of interpretation it will be necessary to "erect a general theory of the intersections between spheres of discourse", in order to understand how–against the thesis of radical heterogeneity–the multiple fields of discourse relate one to another. These relations will then speak for the operations of the mind itself.

Throughout the various stages of Ricoeur's analysis one common motif stands out, namely the tension or conflict upon which all dialectical models are generated. Beyond the principle of comparison, metaphor has proved itself to be a fundamental innovation wrought through conflict. Semantically speaking, metaphorical utterance betrays an initial "impertinence", a conflict amongst the terms of the utterance. In order to make sense, it is necessary to impose a "twist" upon the non-sensical

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[150] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p.355.
[151] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.349. Emphasis added in first instance.
[152] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[153] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.350. If conflicting hermeneutics testify to different regions of intelligibility–the claim of *The Conflict of Interpretations*–then speculative discourse reflects the primary condition from whence these multiple modes of understanding organize themselves; it is *the* discourse to found all others. At the same time however, it is not really an identifiable discourse so much as a mediating movement between discourses.

predicate. This new metaphorical sense subsequently creates an alternative tension between the metaphorical reading and the literal reading of the same utterance, proceeding to grant the "stereoscopic" vision of the referent, the split reference of the metaphorical "is" and the literal "is not". The generation of new semantic pertinences and new meanings for the referent emerge within the interplay of predicate and reference. To consider standard language acquisition, new and increasingly abstract predications are mastered comparatively, by relating unfamiliar predicates to the entity they designate. Through reference, Ricoeur tells us, we gain predicates. Likewise, we investigate new referents by describing them as accurately as possible, by utilising past predicative experience. The reciprocity of predicate and reference is the process by which we gain more rigorous, more refined and indeed more abstract ascriptions of reality. This possibility resides in the instability of signification itself and designates its rightful historicity. Now meaning "appears less like a determined content" and more "like an inductive principle capable of guiding semantic innovation."[154]

"If it is true that meaning, even in its simplest form, is in search of itself in the twofold direction of sense and reference", then it follows that "the metaphorical utterance only carries this semantic dynamism to its extreme."[155] Far from subverting reference, metaphor presents the common dynamic of standard reference in an exaggerated, and for that reason exemplary, form.

Where standard predication pertains to the one referential field, metaphorical utterance functions in two referential fields at once. This is the result of the tension between the statement's metaphorical and literal readings. In the latter case, reference applies to a known referential field, but in the metaphorical reading the referential field remains unknown. Without knowledge of the referential field, the usual dynamism of predicate and reference is therefore denied. In order to work out this unfamiliar field it is necessary to extend the predicate in question to a "network of predicates that already function in a familiar field of reference."[156] Although the referential field of the metaphorical predicate is unknown, it possesses a semantic "scope", an as-of-yet unclarified force which exerts "pressure" upon the known field and a transfer of its predicates. A "semantic potential" therefore arises from the

[154] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.353.
[155] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[156] Ricoeur, *ibid.*

gravitational pull of the metaphorical utterance upon the known field. The dynamism of signification present within the process of standard predication is thus doubly apparent within the metaphorical transfer, where the literal predicate and reference combine with the metaphorical predicate to create a new reference. The resulting aim in meaning is thus "doubly sketchy", extending the already constituted meaning (which may itself lack conceptual clarity) into an unknown field of reference. But it is through this process that speculative discourse works to clarify the uncertainties of poetic ambiguity, providing thought the preliminary sketch of a conceptual determination. The condition of the possibility of this competency rests in the instability of signification itself. But whilst this is so, it is absolutely crucial to recognise the fact that instability itself cannot explain the operations of the speculative realm; signification does not simply engage itself within the process of transfer and exchange. At the origin of this process resides what Ricoeur forcefully clarifies as the "ontological vehemence of [the] semantic aim".[157] It is this vehemence which determines the primary scope of the metaphor's semantic range, catalysing the process of clarification with its eventual "sketch".

> An experience seeks to be expressed, which is more than something undergone. Its anticipated sense finds in the dynamism of simple meaning, relayed by the dynamism of split meaning, a *sketch* that now must be reconciled with the requirements of the concept.[158]

In this way speculative discourse enables an implicit poetic discourse to be made explicit in its aims, and to distinguish the work of metaphorical interpretation from the determination of the concept. To reiterate, speculative discourse "is the discourse that establishes the primary notions, the principles, that articulate primordially the space of the concept."[159] Because speculative discourse testifies (by virtue of its explanatory power) to our ability to reflect upon this process, to reflect upon the inherent dynamism of signification, it is possible to deflect the usual cynicism attached to the instability of the signifier, the same cynicism that is, which refutes the possibility of the concept beyond the laws of mere convention and which decries the

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[157] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.354.
[158] Ricoeur, *ibid.*
[159] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.355.

possibility of ever attaining a standpoint "outside of language" from which to reflect upon its operations.[160]

For Ricoeur, speculative discourse "expresses the systematic character of the conceptual in a second-order discourse" which itself is neither conceptual nor metaphorical. Whilst speculative discourse articulates a regulated dynamism within the field of signification, whilst it deals with signification and of course emerges within its own order of signification, the speculative expresses the operations of the mind itself, the process of distanciation whereby the mind reflects upon its own articulations:

> If, in the order of discovery, the speculative surfaces as a second-level discourse – as meta-language, if one prefers – in relation to the discourse articulated at the conceptual level, it is indeed first discourse in the order of grounding...Even if one does not recognize that it can be articulated in a distinct discourse, this power of the speculative supplies the horizon or, as it has been called, the logical space on the basis of which the clarification of the signifying aim of concepts is distinguished radically from any genetic explanation based on perception or images.[161]

Speculative discourse grounds the power to predicate in the first instance; not on the basis of an extended "act of seeing" (Husserl's *Erklärung*), where the identity of the concept would be image-bound, but on the basis of a reflective "act of knowing" (Husserl's *Aufklärung*), whereby ambiguity is reduced through the exchange of referent and predicative field:

> If a sense that is 'one and the same' can be discerned in a meaning, it is not just because one sees it that way but because one can connect it to a network of meanings of the same order in accordance with the constitutive laws of the logical space itself...The speculative is what allows us to say that 'to understand a (logical) expression' is something other than 'finding images'.[162]

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[160] Paul de Man writes of this convention: "The innumerable writings that dominate our lives are made intelligible by a preordained agreement as to their referential authority; this agreement however is merely contractual, never constitutive. It can be broken at all times and every piece of writing can be questioned as to its rhetorical mode." (*Allegories of Reading*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979, p.204).

[161] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.355.

[162] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, pp.355-6.

In the metaphorical utterance, new meanings are forged in the assimilation of abstruse contexts, in the projection of a known referent into an unknown predicative field or vice versa. This "predicative assimilation" constitutes the kernel of Ricoeur's semantic theory of imagination. Where the Kantian imagination involves an image-bound schematism, Ricoeurian imagination involves the schematism of semantic predicates. Because predicates are always themselves the consequence of an exchange of referent and prior predicates, the historicity of understanding is semantically mediated through and through. "*Imaginatio* is a level and an order of discourse" writes Ricoeur.[163] We can conclude that this innate productivity finds its most assured and self-conscious deployment within the language of literature, where understanding is time and again challenged to elicit new referents from within the highly organised and pre-arranged predicative networks of the author's design. *In Ricoeur's definition of speculative discourse we find something approaching its critical counterpart.*

Where metaphor schematises, assimilates and enlarges, speculative reflection involves the systematization of this enlargement. "Because it forms a system,"

> the conceptual order is able to free itself from the play of double meaning and hence from the semantic dynamism characteristic of the metaphorical order.[164]

As we have seen, the success of the schematism is grounded by the regulative principle of the speculative. Without the "horizon of the speculative *logos*" there could be no imaginative enlargement. This means that the speculative grounds the possibility of the poetic-metaphorical whilst at the same time ensuring its own autonomy. Semantic reflection conditions both metaphor and concept, assuring their discontinuity through its own powers of articulation at a non-metaphorical level.

In speculative discourse, in the interpretation of metaphor, meaning emerges thanks to the regulative limits of the predicative horizon, but it does not serve to abolish the structure of double meaning or to clear away the symbolic base. This is the distinction to be drawn between speculative interpretation, where the play of

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[163] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.357.
[164] Ricoeur, *ibid.*

double meaning is elucidated, but also emphasised, and conceptual analysis, where one strives to negate the symbolic base altogether.

> Interpretation is then a mode of discourse that functions at the intersection of two domains, metaphorical and speculative. *It is a composite discourse, therefore, and as such cannot but feel the opposite pull of two rival demands. On the one side, interpretation seeks the clarity of the concept; on the other, it hopes to preserve the dynamism of meaning that the concept holds and pins down...where understanding fails, imagination still has the power of 'presenting' (Darstellung) the Idea.* It is this 'presentation' of the Idea by the imagination that forces conceptual thought to *think more.* Creative imagination is nothing other than this demand put to conceptual thought...Metaphor is living not only to the extent that it vivifies a constituted language. Metaphor is living by virtue of the fact that it introduces the spark of imagination into a 'thinking more' at the conceptual level. *This struggle to 'think more,' guided by the 'vivifying principle,' is the 'soul' of interpretation.*[165]

Interpretation is a movement which parleys between the "gift" of figurative discourse and the speculative probing of new and unforeseen ways of understanding. We may conclude that this pull of rival demands is the very challenge alluded to in the introduction of this study, namely the critic's task of staying true, whilst saying differently. For this reason, literary critical discourse must remain an essentially mixed discourse of the kind condemned in the articulation of a unified literary "science" or philosophy. This does not indicate a weakness on the part of the interpreter, nor does it refer to the kind of positivistic "importation" from other disciplines maligned by formalist critics such as Paul de Man. Literature's claim for universal significance does not rest in the appropriative projection of pre-defined categories, in its powers to confirm the thought of other disciplines (psychology or psychobiography say) but in the articulation of the hermeneutical relationship of imagination and understanding, innovation and interpretation, outlined in Ricoeur's theory of metaphor. *The relationship between literary text and literary interpretation is then the paradigm for hermeneutical understanding. Vice versa, within Ricoeur's elaboration of the speculative we find the justification for a literary critical practice*

[165] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.358. Emphasis added.

capable of honouring the singularity of literary works, without rescinding the critical distance, the critical autonomy, upon which its judgements depend.

As a self-conscious interrogation, speculative discourse testifies to language's self-conscious, reflective capacity to "place itself at a distance", to relate to language "in its entirety" and to ultimately relate this entirety "to the totality of what is": Language designates itself and its other.[166] Semantically speaking, the other of language is the referent denied by formal linguistics, summoned in the act of speech and the instance of discourse. Ontologically, it is the alterity of which Heidegger speaks when he writes of poetry in terms of an upsurge in Being, where language pushes through the veneer of representation to utter existence in its very becoming. In the Heideggerian treatment however, the unity of Being and language professed of poetry threatens to shut down the very "hold upon nearness" it claims to disclose. Such a hold, for Ricoeur, is the self-same hold of the speculative, where language places itself at a distance and reflects upon its relation to existence.

For Ricoeur as for Heidegger, poetry possesses the power to re-make the world; to make Being unfold as a projection and a creation. This power for invention does not testify to a radically original ego, but to our rootedness within the historical horizon which makes us.

> Poetic discourse brings to language a pre-subjective world in which we find ourselves already rooted, but in which we also project our innermost possibilities. We must thus dismantle the reign of objects in order to let be, and to allow to be uttered, our primordial belonging to a world which we inhabit, that is to say, which at once precedes us and receives the imprint of our works. In short, we must restore to the fine word *invent* its twofold sense of both discovery and creation.[167]

As invention, literary criticism delivers this creation to a wider community; the critic's logical dependency upon the literary work is also the very possibility by which future works are conditioned.

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[166] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.359.
[167] Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p.362.

CONCLUSION

> I think that we too can say that there is no mystery in language; the most poetic, the most "sacred", symbolism works with the same semic variables as the most banal word in the dictionary. But there is a mystery *of* language, namely that language speaks, says something, says something about being.[1]

During his lifetime Ricoeur published over thirty works of philosophy, a monumental output spanning seven decades and three distinct phases within the course of European philosophical debate. *The Conflict of Interpretations* and *The Rule of Metaphor* comprise just two works from Ricoeur's early-middle period. In the context of wider philosophical debate they confirm the greater trend away from pure reflection towards what has been called both a linguistic and a hermeneutical turn in continental thinking. It is wrong of course to treat philosophical discourse as if it were a series of neatly articulated projects; a subtext of this study has been the refusal of just such compartmentalising attitudes. No one demonstrates the poverty of this temperament quite like Ricoeur. Whilst moving beyond the explicit debates of the linguistic epoch, beyond the dialectic of structure and event, linguistic immanence and speaker's transcendence, and beyond the theory of semantic innovation, these arguments remain at the heart of the Ricoeurian vision as it develops in his later works. There may be no mystery *in* language, but still the mystery *of* language remains the fulcrum of the hermeneutical project. Beyond the formal, analytical attributes of linguistic function, there remains the irreducible *act* of language understood in its widest sense, as meaningful exchange and fellow understanding. This is the activity by which the most historically and geographically distant texts as well as the most intimate conversants are brought into meaningful dialogue with one another. It is this activity which marks us all as translators, interpreters and literary critics. In the hermeneutical philosophy of Ricoeur, the "existential" theme of activity, and the philosophical questions which cling to the acts of communication and understanding are never far from the surface of their enquiry.

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[1] Ricoeur, "The Problem of Double Meaning", *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde, Continuum, London, 2004, p.75.

It was language in this wider acceptation which characterised the philosophical landscape of Ricoeur's later years. The third distinct phase to which Ricoeur's work testifies is the transition in European debate from strictly linguistic considerations of dialogue and interpretation to the wider ethical implications of meaningful exchange. Titles from Ricoeur's later career— *The Just* (1995), *Love and Justice* (1996), or *The Course of Recognition* (2004) for example—certainly conform to this wider "ethical turn". The themes of Derrida's later works were in similar accord with this newly emergent ethical imperative. In Derrida one finds the aporia of linguistic exchange (between signifiers, or between figures and concepts) give way to the essentially non-linguistic exchanges of hospitality and gift-giving and the ethical aporia of debt and gratitude which surround them.

From the close and perhaps premature perspective of the present, one figure who appears to have influenced this turn more than any other is the French philosopher and Talmudic commentator Emmanuel Levinas. For Levinas ethics is not something to be prescribed in the manner of an inductive code; beyond the verbal commands of ethical statutes, ethics as "first philosophy" begins in the silent and unparalleled encounter with the Other. This deceptively simple yet uncompromising demand of the face to face is for Levinas the philosophical *sine qua non* to which all other considerations must defer.

Levinas' distinctly ethical brand of phenomenology may only have risen to prominence in the years following the great structuralist/poststructuralist debate of the mid-twentieth century but he was in fact a contemporary of this period. Significantly, from the generation of structural/postructural philosophers who surrounded him, it was Ricoeur whom Levinas identified as the singly most important.[2] What this fact attests to is the wider ethical framework within which all Ricoeur's work, even in its most linguistically abstract, theoretical moments, belongs. It is the Ricoeurian theory of imagination, scrupulously delivered in *The Rule of Metaphor*, which resides at the heart of this wider concern. With its rejection of the pure intellectual image (in Kant and Husserl), Ricoeur's semantic imagination may confirm the irreducibly mediated character of human understanding, but it also constitutes a most rigorously and hard-won victory for the imaginative freedom upon which all ethics must turn. Ricoeur's demonstration of a "regulated dynamism" within signification, and for the speculative

[2] See Dosse, *The History of Structuralism*, Vol.2, trans. Deborah Glassman, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1998, p.311.

distinction of poetry and concepts, presents the justification for this freedom. The fastidious demarcation of the "live" metaphor, of genuine poetry and non-poetic forms of discourse, ensures both the work's autonomy, its "singularity" as a distinct mode of discourse, and the theoretical independence of the critic's reflections. Like the face to face encounter, the realisation of such autonomy is conditioned dialectically, through the recognition and exchange of self and other. Construed linguistically, this exchange is governed by the corollaries of linguistic identity and pre-established semantic norms, and the non-identity or difference of the predicative impertinence within creative language. In the interpretation of these initial "clashes", an imaginative enlargement of one's individual understanding, and of one's own interpretive horizon emerges. This possibility of seeing things anew, of creating the world anew, confirms our freedom as moral agents.

In Britain and America, the demand for an "ethical turn" within postructuralism—in literary-theoretical circles especially—gathered momentum with the posthumous discovery of Paul de Man's anti-semitism. Like the "Heidegger question" a few years earlier, the dismal correlation between de Man and his works, his politics and his philosophy, could not be overlooked. As with Heidegger, an unflattering relation emerged. The 1990s witnessed a return to the implications of writing and authorship as acts of intentionality and historical consequence. As much as these questions served to extend the literary theoretical conversation, breathing new life into the theoretical fortress, they also served to erode the once monolithic divide of Theory and criticism, Text and subject.

It has been the aim of this study to diagnose the historical and philosophical conditions which enabled such a false dichotomy to take root, and to place these claims in critical counterpoise to the dialectical vision of Ricoeurian interpretation. Three defining arguments support this vision, recommending Ricoeur's greater inclusion within literary-theoretical, literary-critical debate. The first concerns Ricoeur's ontological commitment to interpretation, the second, to the conviction that poetry and philosophy, poetry and literary-critical discourse can and must function as independent discourses. Both of these claims pivot upon the third, seemingly narrow conviction that language oscillates between structure and event, between the immanent and impersonal relations of the code and the reflective power to take a hold of language within the act of discourse and make it mean anew.

If the flight from the romantic subject facilitated the false impasse between subject and Text and an imputed irrationalism within the heyday of literary theory, it also assured very little appetite for a poststructural hermeneutics such as Ricoeur's. With the subject held in such mistrust, with the Theory moniker being made to represent all creditable forms of literary consideration, there was little or no room for a mode of interpretation which challenged the autonomy of theoretical method and which strove to validate the subject beyond the claims of intention and psychology. This, at least, is the thesis underpinning the present assessment of Paul Ricoeur and his place within the history of the theoretical revolution.

From the ashes of the Text-subject divide a series of literary alternatives have been mooted in more recent years. Against the absolutist claims of their forbears, a new generation of literary thinkers have set about reconceiving the aims and practices of literary studies, mindful of the dangers inherent to the radicalised, at times over prescriptive and even alienating rhetoric of an autonomous Theory. The task expressed by this later generation relates to the need to honour the particularity of the work of literature without foregoing the social, political and moral considerations which surround the work. Balancing the literary work's aesthetic properties with its historical dimensions, moving "beyond" Theory without resorting to a kind of philistine *anti-theory*, of somehow putting the lessons of literary theory to a positive, but less autocratic, more reflective and indeed more humble usage at the service of literature; these are the questions which impel literary-theoretical, literary-critical debate of more recent times. In his *Reading After Theory* (2002), Valentine Warner asks "What now? What do we readers do, what should we do, what might we do, in the wake – the huge wake – of theory?"[3] His diagnosis is a careful re-balancing of the work/theory relationship and a call to better, closer readings of the work itself. Under the banner of *The New Aestheticism* (2003) John Joughin and Simon Malpas express the need to consider "the equiprimordiality of the aesthetic",

> - that, although it is without doubt tied up with the political, historical, ideological, etc., thinking it as other than determined by them, and therefore reducible to them, opens a space for an artistic or literary

[3] Valentine Warner, *Reading After Theory*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2002, p.1.

> specificity that can radically transform its critical potential and position with regard to contemporary culture.[4]

This claim for a re-conceptualised aesthetic discourse, in which the false distinction of aesthetic and non-aesthetic response is overturned, betokens a return to the site of aesthetics itself and a re-evaluation of aesthetic categories. In a different work, Isobel Armstrong calls for a similar re-consideration of the presumed distinction of aesthetic and non-aesthetic categories. Her thesis in *The Radical Aesthetic* (2000) takes a familiarly Gadamerian turn: the rejection of aesthetic categories universal to the age of theory was premised upon the spurious alliance of Kant and the subjective idealists of the romantic era. In this regard the theoretical objection to aesthetic categories is based upon a false association in need of overturning.[5]

Common to all of these new directions is a claim for the mutuality of historical and aesthetic reflection, and a strong desire for dialogue not competition with philosophy. Strangely these new voices make little or no reference to Ricoeur.[6] From the tenor of their debate however, it would seem that now more than ever Ricoeur's philosophy of imagination, of an imagination that has "worked through" the implications of theory, of linguistic scepticism and *aestheticism,* emerging "wounded" but wiser for it, commands our literary-critical, literary-theoretical recognition.

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[4] J. Joughin and Simon Malpas, *The New Aestheticism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2003, p.3.

[5] See Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2000.

[6] Valentine Warner makes a passing reference to Ricoeur when he uses the term "the hermeneutics of suspicion" in *Reading After Theory*, but his point in doing so is to demonstrate the sense in which all "post-theoretical" discourse necessarily invokes the language of earlier "theoretical" debate. Warner's reference to Ricoeur has nothing to do with an alternative "post-theoretical" Ricoeurian imagination and everything to do with the more general point regarding our belated position within critical debate. In our posteriority, certain "theoretical" terms and phrases have entered the general lexicon, and with them the propositions which found them. The need to cite Ricoeur within the context of a "hermeneutics of suspicion" no longer exists therefore.

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