TITLE:

PAUL RICOEUR AND HERMENEUTICAL METHOD

THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis summarizes the present state of hermeneutical theory and concludes that, although hermeneutics has significance for the Humanities, it has an obvious defect: it has no clearly specified concept of man and human consciousness.

Paul Ricoeur (1913-) improves upon "traditional" hermeneutics first with his concept of man as limited freedom. The notion of man as incomplete consciousness rests upon this premise and gives hermeneutics its raison d'être: hermeneutics is the theoretical guide to man's practical search for his ontological roots. Ricoeur also instructs hermeneutics by his definition of symbol as multiple-meaning and double-intentioned expressions whose surplus of meaning demands interpretation.

This thesis proposes that Ricoeur informs hermeneutics especially with his concept of the Cogito, and also with his understanding of symbol because, as enigmatic expression, text and symbol function the same way.

PAUL RICOEUR AND HERMENEUTICAL METHOD

by

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PREFACE

It was the richness of symbolic content that first attracted me to the study of myth and symbol. And this preliminary interest found a release in Old Testament studies where the comparative study of the myths of the Ancient Near East caught my attention. But comparative study, informative as it is, did not satisfy my longing to hold in my hand the key to the secret meanings of those ancient myths. Gradually, as I began to read more deeply in the field of myth and symbol, especially in Eliade, Bultmann, Jung, and Ricoeur, it became clear that my excitement over the study of myth and symbol was coming to me because I could see that myths and symbols were not only a past and long-dead item of history. Their influence became evident all around me — in my life and in the life of our present culture.

A new spirit of adventure then took hold of me, a spirit that my training in the scientific attitude had persuaded me was a regretable part of childhood. My new discovery struck up an immediate interest for me in history — both personal history and cultural history — as well as a burning desire to answer two questions about myth and symbol. The first was, "Why are there myths and symbols? Why do they persist?" The second is, "How are we to know the meaning of a myth or symbol? How do they continue to unfold their meaning through time and history?"

An even larger question runs through my whole endeavour in this respect: "How does history change or affect the meaning of a myth or a symbol? And conversely: how does myth or symbol effect the events of history?"

As I was wrestling with these questions I came upon Paul Ricoeur's The Symbolism of Evil which first raised for me the question of the rigorous interpretation of symbols. If The Symbolism of Evil clarified the question, then Freud and Philosophy is the beginning of an answer. My discovery of Ricoeur coincided very happily with my readings in the general field of hermeneutical theory. I therefore conceived the idea of placing Ricoeur's work alongside the general theories of hermeneutics in order to discover if there was any way that his philosophy of interpretation could help hermeneutics out of its apparent methodological impasse. This was the inspiration for the research carried on by this thesis.

There are several people who have been instrumental in its writing, and I want to take this space to thank them for their help. First, thanks to Dr. J.C. McLelland, Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, for his encouragement to take up my intended subject of study at the time of its inception, as well as for his patient understanding and friendly advice while it was "in process." To the girls in the Faculty of Religious Studies Library, especially Mrs. Joanna Andrews and Mrs. Anne Youngstrom,

I say "Thank you" for their unceasing efforts to find me much-needed books and articles from universities the world over. The good people of Candiac United Church and St. Andrew's, Delson have had to endure many Sunday morning hardships, I fear, while this thesis was being prepared. I thank them sincerely for their understanding and salute them for the extent of their patience. Thanks to Mrs. Vicki Jorstad for the typing and proof-reading of the manuscript. She stepped into a breach left when the typist I had originally made typing arrangements with was transferred out of town. Even with time at a premium both for her and for me, and therefore working under pressure, Mrs. Jorstad has done a splendid job, for which I feel very grateful. And finally, but by no means least, without the loyal support of my wife, Beryl and our two boys, it would not have been possible for me to complete the task of writing this thesis. My heart-felt thanks to them.

G.L.R.

Montreal, Quebec
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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS WORK

AP . . . . . Paul Ricoeur, "The Antinomy of Human Reality and the Problem of Philosophical Anthropology."

BT . . . . . Martin Heidegger, Being and Time.

CS . . . . . Paul Ricoeur, "The Critique of Subjectivity and Cogito in the Philosophy of Heidegger."

FM . . . . . Paul Ricoeur, Fallible Man.

FP . . . . . Paul Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy.

GER. . . . . Paul Ricoeur, "Guilt, Ethics, and Religion."

HP . . . . . Don Ihde, Hermeneutical Phenomenology: The Philosophy Of Paul Ricoeur.

HPR. . . . . Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection."

HT . . . . . Paul Ricoeur, History and Truth.

NDP. . . . . Paul Ricoeur, "New Developments in Phenomenology in France: The Phenomenology of Language."

PE . . . . . David Stewart, "Paul Ricoeur's Phenomenology of Evil."

PH . . . . . Richard Palmer, Hermeneutics.

PM . . . . . Herbert Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement.

PRM. . . . . David Stewart, "Paul Ricoeur and the Phenomenological Movement."

PWD. . . . . H.A. Hodges, The Philosophyof Wilhelm Dilthey.

SE . . . . . Paul Ricoeur, The Symbolism of Evil.

SF . . . . . Paul Ricoeur, "The Symbol...Food For Thought."

SWE. . . . . Paul Ricoeur, "Structure-Word-Event."

UVI. . . . . Paul Ricoeur, "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea."

VA . . . . . Paul Ricoeur, "Volition and Action."

VI . . . . . Paul Ricoeur, The Voluntary and the Involuntary.

PAUL RICOEUR AND HERMENEUTICAL METHOD

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to explore Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy for some gain in the general field of study known as hermeneutical theory. The importance of maintaining a sharp distinction between "hermeneutical philosophy" and "hermeneutical theory" will become obvious as the work proceeds. However, it might be helpful for the purposes of this thesis to define hermeneutical philosophy now as the understanding of human experience through the the understanding of its expression. "In this situation language becomes a mediating function. [Something we must remember for later use.] The movement, never thoroughly clarified, is from prelinguistic experience to expression."[1] Philosophy, for Ricoeur, is hermeneutic because it is "...reflection upon existence and upon all those means by which that existence is to be understood. The aim is a rational ontology."[2] It is hermeneutical in its aim because man cannot understand directly either himself or the existence which is his. It is only by a series of detours that man learns about the fulness and complexity of his own being and of his relationship to Being.[3] Man is therefore an interpreting being-in-the-world, and he who would understand man most completely must study the signs of man's being which reflect the essential structure of his being. Ricoeur's philosophy is anthropocentric, i.e. his interest in the symbols of

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1 HP, p. 96.
2 Ibid., p. 11.
3 Ibid., p. 7.

man's being extends only as far as these signs reveal the essential being of man. Ricoeur is probably the best modern example of hermeneutical philosophy in practice and in theory that is available to us. It is for this reason that I take his work as the most likely to inform hermeneutical theorists on their intended subjects of study.

Hermeneutical theory, for its part, has a shorter view of the human expressions of experience than that of hermeneutical philosophy. It is methodology which most concerns hermeneutical theorists. They want to know how to extricate the true meaning from a given expression. In general the theory of hermeneutics has dealt with "text" and its "interpreting subject," and it has tried systematically to arrive at the best method of releasing the meaning of the text by relating in some way or other the text to the interpreter, and vice versa.

It is the intent of this thesis to discover to what extent, and in what ways, Ricoeur's philosophy can instruct hermeneutical theory. The proof that the latter stands in need of further clarification and more foundational work is the fact that there remain some critically important questions for hermeneutical theory which are as yet unanswered. There even seems to be a quiet despair hanging over the field of hermeneutics of ever solving these important problems! I will propose that hermeneutical theory and its practical application could make a dramatic improvement in its status as a foundational discipline by learning from Paul Ricoeur on two principal and related points: his understanding of man, and his method of interpreting the symbols of man.

PAUL RICOEUR AND HERMENEUTICS

1. A Purview of Paul Ricoeur's Work to Date (1971)

Herbert Spiegelberg, writing in 1959, emphasized that "the outstanding contribution [in France] to phenomenology, both in size and in originality, has been made by Paul Ricoeur. This contribution consists not only of his own phenomenological studies, especially in the field of practical and emotional phenomena; Ricoeur is also the best informed French historian of phenomenology."[4] It is all the more remarkable that this historian of philosophy should describe Ricoeur in such glowing terms when it is noted that up to the time of Speigelberg's writing Ricoeur had published only the first volume of La philosophie de la volonté, his major work in systematic philosophy. As well, he had written several smaller, though significant, books and articles. It has been since that time, however, that Ricoeur has accomplished the writing that has gained him the largest following of all the phenomenologists in France. Spiegelberg has proved to be a prophet in the case of Ricoeur.

Paul Ricoeur's career as a philosopher began shortly before the Second World War, was interrupted by it, and then resumed following the War. By his books and articles of the early period Ricoeur shows himself a keen scholar of the entire range of the history of philosophy by paying particular attention to Descartes, Kant, Husserl, Jaspers,

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4 PM, II, p. 563.

and Gabriel Marcel, the last of whom gave him his first inspiration to do philosophy. There emerged from this early period an interest which was to guide Ricoeur in the major project of his career: from Marcel he inherited a sense of bodily mystery and also the double orientation of incarnation found in Marcel. On the one hand incarnation provides a "density" and irreducible "opacity" to all objective schemes. On the other hand, it points to the individual's insertion in the Sacred — in Being. Incarnation — embodiment — forms a focal point of much of Ricoeur's thought, and the concept of "my own body" or the "owned body" is central to his analysis of the human will.[5] Ricoeur has followed the phenomenological method of Husserl, but with a significant difference. He faults Husserl on his failure to recognized the importance of limiting concepts. Particularly in his later period, Husserl reduced questions of ontology to questions of epistemology and in so doing destroyed the possibility of a "critique" in the Kantian sense. The tendency in the later Husserl was to shift the emphasis from the appearance of the object to its ontological validity in consciousness. Therefore, Ricoeur moved from Husserl to Kant who, unlike Husserl, was concerned with the ontological grounding of the appearances. Husserl's avoidance of the question of ontology gives rise to problems in his interpretation of history. If all beings, including that of history, and that of other intentional objects, are based in the Cogito, what meaning can

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5 PRM, p. 233.

history have? Man without a history of his thought, a history of language, or of any of the other expressions of man's experience would be inconceivable to Ricoeur. Hence, we might say that his interest in the mystery of the human body and its relation to its own consciousness and to the world of objects prompted Ricoeur to avoid the idealism of Husserl's transcendental reduction and instead to turn his attention to an analysis of the will of the body-in-the-world.

The Voluntary and the Involuntary, first published in French in 1950, had as its intention "to understand the mystery as reconciliation, that is as restoration, even on the clearest level of consciousness, of the original concord of vague consciousness with its body and its world."[6] Or again: "The conviction which runs covertly through the most technical analysis is that the recapturing of consciousness is a loss of being since consciousness is opposed to its own body and to all things, and seeks to close a circle with itself. The act of Cogito is not a pure act of self-positing: it lives on what it receives and in dialogue with the conditions in which it is itself rooted."[7] The analysis of which Ricoeur speaks here is his intentional analysis of man's fundamental possibilities. This stage of his Philosophy of the Will Ricoeur calls the "Eidetics of the Will" and it is carried out within double brackets suspending thought about two dimensions of human experience: the dimensions of transcendence and of the fault.

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6 VI, p. 18.
7 Ibid.

Taking his study of man to the extreme limits of the eidetic brackets Ricoeur shows that man's freedom is a willing, not a creative freedom. The key to having arrived at this conclusion rests upon his prior deduction that the involuntary and the voluntary are united reciprocally as incarnate Cogito by virtue of the ways the will (the voluntary) uses the involuntary as an organ and the ways the involuntary lends itself to such uses. That is to say, the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary is intelligible in the light of the voluntary which appropriates the involuntary in receiving and transforming it into an organ of its acts. Hence, the involuntary is an involuntary <u>for</u> a will, yet willing is possible only by reason of the involuntary organ it appropriates, and therefore Ricoeur is led to conclude that human freedom is "une liberté seulement humaine," and that it is not an ideal or a hypothetical freedom.

In this first volume of his ambitious project, Ricoeur adapts and retains the Husserlian notions of eidetic description and of intentional analysis. However, he subjects the phenomenological method to a limitation when he insists that neither the natural attitude nor the transcendental attitude is adequate to take account of my self-affirming existence as an embodied "I". The transcendental attitude avoids facing up to the mystery of incarnate existence; the embodied Cogito, the human personality itself, cannot be bracketed. The proper function of the phenomenological method, according to Ricoeur, is to allow "a reconquest of the total rapport of the Ego to its world." As David

their systematization in myths that concrete experience presents itself for philosophical analysis.[10] In this second part of volume two of La Philosophie de la Volonté Ricoeur sees evil as affecting man from the outside as "stain," as involving man in a broken relationship (sin) to which man consents (guilt). We see once again his formula for human freedom, but a freedom within certain limits, which Ricoeur developed in his first volume. In The Symbolism of Evil we see that the Adamic myth shows that man is both seduced and at the same time allows himself to be seduced (voluntary and involuntary). This myth expresses therefore the unity of the voluntary and the involuntary in existing man as "bound freedom," and this freedom-in-bondage as the central motif of human existence.

In dealing with symbols as the expression of the experienced fact of evil, Ricoeur had to make certain assumptions of hermeneutical method which he later explored under the title De l'interprétation. This volume, an aside from his project on the human will, details the two-layer structure of meaning characteristic of symbol which is neither a simple substitution of one set of signs for another nor any reference beyond the sign to an idea or an object, but rather a peculiar relationship of sharing in or representing a second layer of meaning. In De l'interprétation Ricoeur wants to show how and why this symbolic process operates.

There is a third part to Ricoeur's Philosophy of Will which he

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10 Ibid., p. 30.

Stewart says, "For an analysis of the embodied Cogito, Ricoeur wants to go beyond Husserl's transcendental phenomenology to problems of ontology."[8]

If this is the limit of human freedom (the reciprocal dependency of the voluntary and the involuntary for acts of the human will) which is to be found within the eidetic brackets, then the lifting of the brackets seeks to provide a view of the practical effects of the dynamics of the human will. Ricoeur's "Empirics of the Will" is found in two parts — Fallible Man and The Symbolism of Evil. Man is not only essentially an incarnate and limited freedom but an actual freedom under the actual, disruptive conditions of existence. Fallible Man deals with possiblity, as did The Voluntary and the Involuntary, but it is now the existential rather than the essential possibility — the possibility of evil. Here consciousness reveals the essential ambiguity of man's existence as the root of man's fallibility — his capacity for evil. Ricoeur shows that the Cogito in cognition, conation, and sensation is essentially a precarious, unstable synthesis of a finite and an infinite pole.[9] This ambiguity and instability of existence is the opening through which evil may enter, but need not.

The Symbolism of Evil is the attempt to reach for the very experience of evil. In seeking experience itself Ricoeur turns to an examination of those areas where the Cogito acts itself out rather than reflects upon itself. It is in the symbolic expressions of evil and

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8 PRM, p. 230.

9 Erazim V. Kohak, "Translator's Introduction," The Voluntary and the Involuntary by Paul Ricoeur (Evanston, Ill., 1966), p.29.

calls "Poetics of the Will" in which he will analyze the symbols of reconciliation in order to finish his project for a "rational ontology of human existence." Although it is impossible to say what form the forthcoming portion will take, we may infer a certain direction from his recent articles. To retrace our steps a bit, we can see that the kind of philosophizing Ricoeur was doing in The Voluntary and the Involuntary did not yet raise any particular problem of language, for a direct language was thought to be available. This direct language was ordinary language in which is found words like "purpose," "will," etc. Now the consideration of the problem of evil brought into the field of research new linguistic perplexities which did not occur earlier. These linguistic perplexities were linked to the use of symbolic language as an indirect approach to the problem of guilt. The fact is that Ricoeur in his early works could speak of purposive action without symbolic language, but he could not speak of a bad will or of evil without a hermeneutic. This is the first way in which the problem of language appeared in a kind of philosophy which was not at first a philosophy of language, but a philosophy of the will. Increasingly Ricoeur has turned his attention to the study of language as the key to understanding man and of understanding man's acts of cognition. At the stage of The Symbolism of Evil he tried to limit the definition of hermeneutics to the specific problem of the interpretation of symbolic language. On the one hand, a symbolism requires an interpretation because it is based upon a specific semantic structure, the structure of double-meaning expressions. Reciprocally, there is a hermeneutical problem because there is an indirect language. Therefore, Ricoeur identified hermeneutics with the art of deciphering indirect meanings.

But today he does not limit hermeneutics to the discovery of hidden meanings in symbolic language and would prefer to link hermeneutics to the more general problem of written language and texts. The variability of semantic values, their sensitivity to contexts, the irreducibly polysemic character of lexical terms in ordinary language, these are not provisionary defects or diseases which a reformulation of language could eliminate, rather they are the permanent and fruitful conditions of the functioning of ordinary language.[11] This "polysemic feature" of ordinary language now appears to Ricoeur to be the base condition for symbolic discourse and in that way, the most primitive layer in a theory of metaphor, symbol, parable, etc.

Ricoeur's interest in language represents a detour from which he hopes to derive an ontological phenomenology. His drive toward a rational ontology necessitates two important tasks. The first is that of an empirical study of lived experience by means of an analysis of the will. This Ricoeur has completed in The Voluntary and the Involuntary. The second task is to develop a descriptive anthropology which starts from eidetics but goes on to include the irreducible depth and profundity of bodily existence, including the existential avowal of man's brokenness. Ricoeur calls it the "fault" in the geological sense of "rift" or "rupture." But since man's own confession of his brokenness is always couched in symbolic language, phenomenological rigor must give way to other forms of description and interpretation — poetics

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11 For a fuller treatment of the structure of language see Ricoeur's "New Developments in Phenomenology in France: the Phenomenology of Language," trans. P.G. Goodman, Social Research, XXXIV (Spring, 1967), 1-30. My discussion of Ricoeur's understanding of the structure of language comes from this very crucial article.

and hermeneutics. The final task of Ricoeur's philosophical enterprise is to interpret the symbols expressing man's "fault" so that they can be incorporated into philosophic thought. Ricoeur expects that this analysis will point to a reconciliation in ontology.[12] Therefore, we might expect Ricoeur to extend his conclusions about language and his practice of the phenomenological method to work out a "Poetics of the Will" which will answer the questions of the relatedness of ontology to the rest of his work on the will. However, we must wait for its publication before we know to what degree his next volume will change his approach to the theory of hermeneutics.

With the brief foregoing discussion of Ricoeur's work completed, it would be wise for us to recall our original interest in his "hermeneutical phenomenology" — to place it systematically alongside hermeneutical theory, as we know it, in order to discover Ricoeur's value to hermeneutical theory.

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12 PRM, p. 234.

2. The Development of Hermeneutical Theory Before Paul Ricoeur

"Hermeneutics" as a technical term came into usage only in the seventeenth century when it was used to designate the principles of biblical interpretation, that is, the rules, methods, or theories governing specifically exegesis of the biblical text.[13] But while the term had a relatively recent beginning the practice of hermeneutics is very old. For example, the Old Testament, where there are canons for the proper interpretation of the Torah, and in the New Testament, where "correct" interpretations of Jesus were offered by the Gospels and by Paul, the science of interpretation was practised constantly. The seventeenth century restriction of rules for exegesis soon broadened to apply to secular texts as well as the Bible.

One of the disciplines attracted to hermeneutical method was philology, whose treatment of a text came to mean that the factual and empirical text was a means of grasping the outer and inner content of a text as a unity. The study of philology therefore became pedagogical and ethical: the reader ought to become more like the writer of the text. And only by looking at language can the spirit of another age come through to an individual.

Once hermeneutics was applied to secular texts discussion soon arose as to its usefulness as a necessary tool in understanding all the

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13 PH, p. 34.

various modes of man's behaviour. The rise in hermeneutical interest was facilitated by the enlightenment and the optimistic humanism of its best days. Thus, with the passing of time, even through less humanistic and less optimistic years, hermeneutics continued in its prominence, especially as practice rather than as a theoretical interest. However, direct discussion of hermeneutical theory was revived in the nineteenth century in the thinking of Frederick Schleiermacher and in the latter part of the same century by Wilhelm Dilthey.

The great and pressing task for hermeneutical theorists was to develop a procedure for the interpretation of objects (primarily texts) separated from the interpreting subject by space and time and/or differences of thought category. This would call for a rational system which could be logically coherent and consistent. By placing the absoluteness of the interpretive system between himself and the object-for-interpretation, the subject was thought to be unable to bring his own personal assumptions to bear upon the object.

But the question of a subject's life-experience of the text or object for interpretation is raised. For the observer to understand a text, no matter how objective his method seems, he must be translated into a foreign subjectivity, and through an inversion of the creative process, get back to the idea which is embodied in the object. Thus, to speak of an objectivity that does not involve the subjectivity of the interpreter is manifestly absurd. Yet the subjectivity of the interpreter must penetrate the foreignness and otherness of the object, or he succeeds only in projecting his own subjectivity on the object of

interpretation. This is to encounter the "hermeneutical circle" which Anselm expresses best: "I must understand in order to believe; but I must believe in order to understand." It is within this circle, which Ricoeur recognizes as always present, that there is the possibility of creative interpretation. In De l'interprétation he tries to weave the intricate tapestry for a creative interpretive process working from the hermeneutical circle as a starting point.

To allow the interpreting subject entry into the world of the object became the methodological problem for hermeneutical study in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) insisted throughout his career that hermeneutics should not be viewed as the science of interpreting a text, but rather as the foundational science for the humanities and social sciences. In short, a sound hermeneutical method seemed to him necessary for any discipline which attempts to interpret expressions of man's inner life, whether the expressions be gestures, historical action, religious activity, art or literature. Dilthey was one of those who was dedicated to searching for a method of valid and objective interpretation of the expressions of inner life. However, he affirms that concrete, historical, lived experience must be the starting point and ending point for such an interpretive study of man. How, we ask, can he insist upon "objectively valid method" and at the same time upon a contingent human existence as the Archimedian point for his study of the objective expressions of man?

It is by deepening his historical consciousness that man comes to know himself, says Dilthey, and therefore is able to interpret himself. There are units of "meaning" coming to man in the form of "text," "action," or "art" which require the context of their past and the horizon of their future expectation in order to be able to have "meaning." Thus, understanding is temporal and it is in man's historicality that modern hermeneutics finds the foundation for a science of interpreting.[14]

If we grant, with Dilthey, that there can be no interpretation without the subject's entry into the object's world (i.e. the hermeneutical circle) then there remain certain difficulties. First, this method does not overcome or move beyond the hermeneutical circle. In fact his call for a deepening historical consciousness turns the circle into a backward-moving spiral which permits understanding, but only at the expense of a total abandonment of subjectivity, which as we noted above is impossible if we are to have a hermeneutic at all. The backward tracing of the path that Dilthey recommends has no forward movement to it. That is to say, interpretation is closed off by reason of the loss of the subjective status of the interpreter.

The cause for this one-way action is Dilthey's epistemological assumptions which underlie his proposed method. There seems to be implicit in him the notion that the human rational powers have direct access to the objects of human expression, and that this is why they are so easily capable of being known, understood, and interpreted. But we must ask if this is an adequate conception for the process of

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14 PWD, pp. 43-45.

interpretation of man's expressions of his inner life? Is it not true, for instance, that man understands his history because of a unity of expressiveness from the time of the original act to the time of the interpreter? And that this unity holds together on a pre-linguistic, pre-expressive, or even on a pre-reflective level?

As a final comment upon the work of Dilthey, we can say that his argument for the temporal position of the interpreter is convincing while his epistemological and ontological foundation for his conclusion remains problematic. His strength is that he was the first philosopher with the daring to introduce the idea of temporality, or the historicality of the interpreter, to the realm of hermeneutics, representing a large gain for the field of study, and set future thinkers on a path that would yield the greatest reward for hermeneutics, if an answer to the riddle that his work proposed could be found. To complete the work that Dilthey began would require an effort in two directions. The first is a clearer understanding of man and how man "knows" an object. The other is the need for a fundamental ontology to account for even the possibility of knowing an object of the past. Thus we see that the two areas are related, and cannot be thought of as distinct and separate when used in connection with hermeneutical method.

In his later life Martin Heidegger turned more and more to hermeneutics as the foundation of philosophy and of philosophizing. It is to him that we look for a response to the second of our criticisms of Wilhelm Dilthey. According to Heidegger, what has the most meaning

for man is the present, the current "now," while those experiences which have passed away or are only coming along either are no longer or are not yet "actual."[15] But what of the connectedness of life? Heidegger answers that Dasein "stretches along between birth and death," thus linking up the disparate moments of the individual's life. Accordingly, it is within the horizon of Dasein's[16] temporal constitution that we must approach the ontological clarification of the "connectedness of life" — that is to say, the stretching along of Dasein. "The specific movement in which Dasein is stretched along and stretches itself along, we call 'historizing.'"[17] By extending this theme Heidegger has the interpreter relating to the objects of the past through the stretching-overness of Dasein. However, what the interpreter translates is Dasein and not some "fact of that past moment."

The methodological device by which Heidegger accomplishes the above-mentioned hermeneutical procedure is his notion of "world." "World" is not the whole of all beings but the whole in which a given human being always finds himself already immersed.[18] "World", then, is always present, ever pushing against man, but for the most part is unnoticed and transparent. It is in this world that the actual resistances and possibilities in the structure of being shape understanding. In this realm the temporality and historicality of being are radically present, and therefore it is the locus of the translation of being into

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15 BT, p. 425.
16 Dasein is a technical term of Heidegger's, used to mean "Being."
17 BT, p. 427.
18 Ibid., p. 114f.

meaningfulness, understanding and interpretation. In short, it is the realm of the hermeneutical process, the process by which being becomes thematized as language.

"Meaningfulness" for Heidegger, however, is deeper than the logical system of language; it is founded on something prior to language and embedded in "world"— the relational whole.[19] Language is merely a pointer to a system of meaning already present in the world. Meaningfulness comes from the ontological possibilities an object supplies to man. Hence, meaningfulness does not originate in the word-meanings man attaches to objects of the world. This is the prestructure of understanding which is always interpreting the world.

Man's temporality and historicality lie at the very heart of Heidegger's hermeneutic, for man cannot escape his own ever-interpreting presence in the world. Thus what appears from the "object" of interpretation is what the interpreter allows to appear and what the thematization of the world at work in his understanding will bring to light. Hermeneutics, with Heidegger, is really therefore a theory of ontological disclosure, and since human existing is itself a process of ontological disclosure, Heidegger will not allow us to see the hermeneutical problem apart from human existing.

In contrast to Dilthey before him, Heidegger removes the primacy of the human rational powers from the hermeneutical process; his is an ontological disclosure according to which the meaning of an object of

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19 PH, p. 134.

the world is revealed, not learned. (On this subject of the humiliation of the Cogito Ricoeur has a great deal to teach us, as we shall see.) Nevertheless, although Heidegger gives us an ontological basis for hermeneutical theory, he does not solve the problem of man as a "knowing" creature. It is fine to say that man has objects revealed to him, but this makes man a passive agent in the knowing process. Ricoeur has correctly noted that man is bound, and therefore passive. But at the same time man is active, although in a limited way. Heidegger does not allow for any possible acts of cognition. If we were to follow the reasoning of Heidegger we would be led to conclude that man is totally unable to perform an act of the Cogito, or to appropriate the world. We are still left with the epistemological problem which was first raised in criticism of Dilthey.

It has developed, through our short look at the history of hermeneutics, that the "historicality" of man in the hermeneutical process is of critical importance. Heidegger gives us an ontological basis for the temporal aspect of man, a problem first located and placed by Wilhelm Dilthey. But his is still a vague and inconclusive understanding of man's action in the hermeneutical procedures. What is lacking for a satisfactory and adequate hermeneutical theory which places man and his historicality at its centre is a proper epistemological grounding for such an understanding of man. If this is the question which we have singled out of hermeneutical theory, then let us look at the hermeneutical philosophy of Paul Ricoeur for guidance in the answering of it.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND KNOWING

1. Ricoeur and Phenomenological Method

Philosophical anthropology is the area where Paul Ricoeur places his interest, which leads him to a reflective study of man, his ontological and his existential possibilities. Ricoeur therefore focusses his attention upon the available "appearances" of man. As indicated at the conclusion of Chapter I, it is the question of an epistemological understanding of man which draws us to the work of Ricoeur, and since his method is phenomenological, where he touches the mainstream of the phenomenological movement is of more than passing interest.

In general, the phenomenologists have taken their method to mean the critical reflection of a philosopher upon a given "phenomenon" or appearance of an object. In this method an effort is made to allow the phenomenon to speak directly to the subject, which makes the Cogito "generatively passive." "Knowing" became the intuitive grasping of a phenomenon by the subject. To reduce the possibility of a circular subjectivity Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) introduced the phenomenological brackets which hang the fact of human existence in suspension. Within their brackets phenomenologists could speak only of the "possibilities of the appearances."

Ricoeur, for his part, believes that phenomenology is worthy of the name "only if it remains transcendental and not empirical," [20]

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20 NDP, p. 27.

which means that what appears to the knowing subject must be the key to understanding a whole series of phenomena through the knowing of this first one. Phenomenology which is empirical has the inherent danger of locking up the Cogito within itself in the style of Descartes' epistemology. Just the same, before this level of reflection can be reached there is necessary a basic act of the subject to take his distance, step back, which brings about a suspension of the spontaneous belief in the absolute existence of natural things. This reduction of the natural constitutes the act of the birth of the subject as subject. Henceforward phenomenological description concerns itself with the network of appearances (phenomena) corresponding to the network of intentions (or the lived). This noetic-noematic correspondence is the subject matter of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.

It is obvious that this method of "knowing" differs substantially from that of a philosophy of immediate consciousness: in phenomenology what is known by appropriation, by intuition, that is to say indirectly, is all that is known, while in a philosophy of immediate consciousness "...the subject is first of all a knowing subject, that is to say,ultimately, a look directed toward a spectacle; in such a philosophy, the spectacle is at the same time the mirage of self in the mirror of things."[21] The schema for the philosophy of immediate consciousness dictates that the primacy of self-consciousness and the primacy of representation be interconnected. Ricoeur is Husserlian in his placing of the Cogito at

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21 FP, p. 379.

the centre of his philosophical method; however, he takes a more radical view of the place of the Cogito in epistemological considerations, as we shall see. Ricoeur's concern for sound method and for epistemology seem to link up with those same concerns expressed in an earlier chapter. He writes:

> "The basic limitation of a critical philosophy lies in its exclusive concern for epistemology; reflection is reduced to a single dimension: the only canonical operations of thought are those that ground the 'objectivity' of our representations." [22]

A single question, then, rules the critical philosophy: What is a priori and what is merely empirical in knowledge?

Ricoeur's basic attachment to Husserl is not without reserve, but he nevertheless clings to his hope for clear and unambiguous method. For Husserl, the Cogito is operative prior to being uttered, unreflected prior to being reflected upon. What is more, in the period of the Krisis, intentionality in act is broader than thematic intentionality, which knows its object and knows itself in knowing that object; the first can never be equalled by the second; a meaning in act always precedes the reflective movement and can never be overtaken by it.[23] Ricoeur emphatically rejects the subjective idealism of Husserl's later period, but in spite of that he retains a position of prominence for the early work of Husserl which brought the eidetic and phenomenological brackets into phenomenological method. In contrast to Husserlian subjective idealism, Ricoeur looks outward to the

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22 Ibid., p. 44.
23 Ibid., p. 378.

world of phenomena for the completion of the Cogito's act of knowing and of being.

Husserl's method arrives at phenomenological descriptions reflexively rather than by introspection, since its goal is the examination of the structures of consciousness. However, phenomenology remains direct for Husserl: its explicit theme is the phenomena of consciousness. The function of the phenomenological reduction, according to Husserl's conception of it, brackets out explanation, causal relations and the like, and therefore it serves to focus attention upon the directly "seen" aspects of conscious experience. However, departing from this premise of Husserlian thought, Ricoeur holds that there are secret or hidden unities which lie at the base of conscious experience which remain the lost object for the philosophic endeavour. His philosophic strivings, therefore, spring from a conviction that philosophy is recuperative and unifying in its aim. If this is an accurate estimate of his philosophical foundations, then it is indeed clear that he departs a good way from Husserl's subjective idealism. Just how radical a departure he makes will soon be evident as we begin to study his philosophy thematically.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that the reflective philosophy to which Ricoeur appeals in his works is opposed to any philosophy of the Cartesian type based on the transparency of the ego (immediate consciousness), and to all philosophy of the Fichtean type based on the self-positing of that ego. His mistrust of immediate consciousness is reinforced by his conviction that the understanding of the self is

always indirect and proceeds from the interpretation of signs given outside the Ego in culture and history from the appropriation of these signs. Such a conviction must surely bring devastating criticisms to bear upon his implied epistemology. For example, his mistrust would seem to lead to the conclusion that it is not the empirical of the act of knowledge that is accessible to the knowing subject. If not, then knowledge must be a priori; but how, and in what way, does man come to know anything? Especially, how does the reflective thinker "know" the phenomena presented to his consciousness, when these phenomena are merely of another reality—namely, the Cogito? Ricoeur must answer to these questions at least, before he can begin to respond to the questions posed to him by Chapter I.

One way he might attempt to satisfy us would be by moving into a Heideggerian kind of ontology according to which the "knowledge" of the Cogito would be revealed, or ontically disclosed. But he refuses to take this route, just as he refused to follow Husserl's subjective idealism. In an article titled "The Critique of Subjectivity and Cogito in the Philosophy of Heidegger," Ricoeur writes of Heidegger's ontology:

> "The kind of ontology developed by Heidegger gives rise to an hermeneutics of the 'I am', which is both substitutive to the Cogito as a mere epistemological principle, and at the same time is located, so to speak, underneath."[24]

An ontology of the sort he finds in Heidegger would remove the problem of how an object comes to be known to the subject: in Heidegger's ontology the act of knowing is seen as disclosure of Being. But as a base

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24 CS, p. 62.

for this action there must be a clear idea of the Cogito, a concept which Ricoeur notes as the critical omission of Heidegger's philosophy of Dasein. He emphasizes a point made above; namely, that Heidegger has no clear and explicit philosophyof the Cogito in the reflective style, which is a necessary ingredient for a critical philosophy.

Ricoeur is convinced that Dasein is a part of each of us, and we a part of it. "But in spite of this, or rather just for this reason, it is ontologically that which is farthest."[25] It is because of this ontological placing of the Cogito with Dasein that the "I am" must be not only of phenomenological concern — that is to say, an intuitive description — but an interpretation, precisely because the "I am" is forgotten in the monistic concept of Dasein. It has to be rediscovered from its ontological root.

> "Dasein is ontically the closest to itself, but ontologically farthest. And it is in this distance that the 'I am' becomes the theme of a hermeneutics and not one of intuitive description only. Therefore a retrieve of the Cogito is possible only as a return from the whole phenomenon of being-in-the-world to the question of the Who."[26]

Around this question of the Cogito there is a difference of opinion between Heidegger and Ricoeur. While Heidegger concludes that the Cogito is related to Dasein as a particular is to the whole, Ricoeur sees another possibility emerging from Heidegger's critique of subjectivity and the Cogito. Since in Heidegger's philosophy Dasein has a certain priority in the question of Being, the priority of Dasein

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25 Ibid., p. 70.
26 Ibid.,

is an ontological one, mixed in or involved with the ontological priority of the question of Being. And this relation, says Ricoeur, is the origin of a new philosophy of the Ego.[27]

This new philosophy which Ricoeur sees for the Cogito raises an objection against the old conception of the Cogito — namely, that it starts with a previous model of certitude and places itself on the epistemological basis which has been raised as a mirror of certitude. Therefore the Cogito is not posited as certain of itself. That is to say, in the formula made famous by Heidegger, it is posited as being itself a being for which there is the question of Being. The rather tenuous position of the Cogito in the Heideggerian schema prompts Ricoeur to conclude that the "...destruction of the Cogito as self-positing being [self-conscious reflection], the destruction of the Cogito as an absolute subject, is the reverse side of an hermeneutics of the 'I am' as constituted by its relation to Being."[28] And perhaps it was his analysis of Heidegger's work that led Ricoeur to this later statement:

> "Phenomenology begins by a humiliation or wounding of the knowledge belonging to immediate consciousness. Further, the arduous self-knowledge that phenomenology goes on to articulate clearly shows that the first truth is also the last truth known; though the Cogito is the starting point, there is no end to reaching the starting point; you do not start from it, you proceed to it; the whole of phenomenology is a movement toward the starting point."[29]

Phenomenology, for Ricoeur, is a reflexive discipline whose methodology displaces reflection with respect to immediate consciousness.

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27 Ibid., p. 65.
28 Ibid., p. 74.
29 FP, p. 377.

And he is accordingly able to base his philosophy upon the premise that it is "...immediately as an 'I am' and not as an 'I think' that I am implied in the enquiry into Being."[30] Thus the priority of the being of the self has a certain priority over the question of Being, according to Ricoeur. But this priority remains an ontic priority; it is not an epistemological priority or even a shared priority. For Heidegger, Ricoeur is convinced, the priority of the Cogito remains at the ontological level, while Ricoeur himself believes that the ontological placing of the "I am" is correlative always to the "I think."

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30 CS, p. 65.

2. Reflection and Self-consciousness

There is a problem for Ricoeur in comprehending the complex relation between the Cogito and the hermeneutics of the "I am," as noted above. He wants to relate the problem to the restatement or retrieve of the ontological purpose, which was in the Cogito and which Ricoeur claims is the primary, but now forgotten, aspect of the original Cartesian formulation. In this section it is my intention to uncover the way Ricoeur links together reflection and the knowing subject (Cogito) in the ontological quest.

In his critique of the Cogito Ricoeur becomes convinced that the birth of the knowing subject is found in the centre of a remarkable"...backward and forward relatedness, which, asking about being, bears on the enquiry itself as a mode of being."[31] In this relation, Ricoeur contends, there is contained not only a contesting of the philosophy of the Cogito but its restatement on its ontological level, precisely because the problem for Descartes was ultimately "I am" and not "I think," since it is first an existential proof and only then one of the existence of God, of the existence of the world, and so on.[32] Therefore, in Ricoeur's estimation the question of epistemology is from the outset misunderstood if it is unrelated to Heidegger's formulations about the question of Being for being. But again we must emphasize that Ricoeur takes a

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31 Ibid., p. 66.
32 Ibid.

different view of the Cogito than does Heidegger. He begins with Heidegger: "The 'Who' of the 'I am' is not a given, but something we have to seek. It is not a proposition but remains a question for itself."[33] Nowhere is it more true than in this point that phenomenology is "hermeneutics" because nowhere the kind of closeness belonging to the Heideggerian ontology is more deceiving. But Ricoeur moves beyond Heidegger by insisting that the Cogito in its knowing commits an "act of existence." This is what reflection means for Ricoeur, and if an act of the Cogito is less than a reappropriation of self, then the ontological dimension is lacking and the Cogito only becomes further fragmented and frustrated in its quest for unity and wholeness.

What is the place of the subject in a philosophy of reflection? When Ricoeur says that philosophy <u>is</u> reflection he means, assuredly, self-reflection. But what does the self signify? Ricoeur assumes that the positing of the self is the "first truth for the philosopher placed within that broad tradition of modern philosophy that begins with Descartes and is developed in Kant, Fichte, and the reflective stream of European philosophy."[34] There is no doubt that this mainstream of European philosophy has as its foundational truth the absolute positing of an immediate consciousness. The world of objects then becomes accessible to this immediate consciousness through the various means of sense data, propositional truth, and so on. The main point

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33 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 71.
34 <u>FP,</u> p. 43.

of interest to us about the philosophies based upon the positing of immediate consciousness as the first truth is their implicit trust of consciousness. They depend without question upon consciousness as the first level recipient of reality and then as the adequate indicator of this same reality. Whatever does not agree with the data received from the objects of the world into consciousness and whatever cannot be correlated to consciousness' propositions of those experiences must be untrue or propositionally invalid. It is in opposition to this reduction of reflection to a simple critique that Ricoeur says, "...reflection is not so much a justification of science and duty (ethics) as a reappropriation of our effort to exist; epistemology [the 'I think'] is only part of this broader task: we have to recover the act of existing, the positing of the self in all the density of its works."[35] Accordingly Ricoeur calls for a reworking of the Cogito where its act of knowing is also its act of existing.

Ricoeur, in a phenomenological analysis of having, power, and worth, describes these three areas of human action as loci of man's search for unity of meaning. This is a possible exegesis of consciousness according to a method that is not a psychology, but a reflexive method that has as its starting point the objective movement of the figures of man. Of his method Ricoeur says: "Reflection is the means for deriving from this movement the subjectivity that constitutes itself at the same time that objectivity engenders itself."[36]

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35 Ibid., p. 45.
36 Ibid., p. 510.

This method is an attempt to move away from the kind of transcendental unity of consciousness which still remains very much short of the unity which a person could constitute in himself and for himself. It must also be said that the unity of the "I think" is no-one; the 'I' of the "I think" is not a person, a particular existing person: it is merely the form of the world, that is to say, the projection of objectivity insofar as it is a synthesis of the sayable and the perceptible. In short, the 'I' of the "I think" is only the project of the object so long as we cling to immediate consciousness or to Husserl's concept of the Cogito. In an effort to achieve a more total view of the Cogito, both as an "I think" and as an "I am," Ricoeur gives his analysis of θυμός, desire, as man's drive toward existential and ontological unity in the Cogito, that is to say, self-consciousness.

There is a sense in which moments of objectivity appear to man as these moments centre on having, power, and worth. To understand these affective factors is to show that these feelings internalize a series of object-relations that pertain not only to a phenomenology of perception, but to an economics, a politics, a theory of culture. At the same time that they institute a new relationship to things, the properly human quests of having, power, and worth institute new relationships to other persons, through which one can pursue the Hegelian process of the reduplication of consciousness.

Ricoeur says that "having" is the human relation involved in appropriation and work within a situation of 'scarceness.' In connection with these relations we see new human feelings arise that do

not pertain to the natural realm; these feelings proceed not from life but from the reflection into human affectivity of a new domain of objects, of a specific objectivity that is economic objectivity. What is important to note is that the areas where these feelings, passions and alienations multiply are new objects, new values of exchange, monetary signs, structures, and institutions. We may say, then, that man becomes self-conscious insofar as he experiences this economic objectivity and thus attains specifically human "feelings" relative to the availability of things as things that have been worked upon and appropriated. The feelings centring on the object known as "power" are specifically human feelings, says Ricoeur, such as intrigue, ambition, submission, and responsibility; so too the alienations produced by these feelings are specifically human alienations. Here is a case where the appropriation of an object produces a feeling of alienation, with a corresponding effect in the action of the knowing subject. Ricoeur believes that the constitution of the self is not completed in an economics and a politics, but continues on into the region of culture. This is the region of valuation for the self. The objects of culture are no longer <u>things</u>, as are the objects of the sphere of having or of power; they do not always have corresponding institutions, as do the objects in the sphere of power. These new figures of man are to be found in the work and monuments of law and art and literature.[37]

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37 FM, pp. 161-191.
FP, pp. 507-510.

In the three activities of man described here, Ricoeur sees an affective struggle of man to achieve wholeness, completeness, infinity. Man tries by his wish for having, power, and value to overcome his "bound freedom." This quest is activated by the Cogito, according to Ricoeur, and it takes place on the ontological level of being searching for itself.

The unity of man is only intentional in the Husserlian sense of intentional; that is to say, the unity is projected outwards into the structure of objectivity which it makes possible; but how is man for himself the intermediary necessary to the system Ricoeur is building? Ricoeur claims that the point of departure for a transcendental function of imagination, which allows the Cogito to see the possibilities for itself, is the split between sensibility and understanding introduced by reflection itself.[38] As soon as reflection intervenes it splits up man; it is one thing to <u>receive</u> the presence of things, another to determine their meaning. Every advance in reflection is therefore also an advance in the split. The disproportion between the word which expresses both being and truth <u>and</u> the glance bound to a particular appearance and perspective is the ultimate manifestation of the split between understanding and sensibility noted in reflection. Pure reflection which rests upon immediate consciousness is a purely epistemological concern with no question concerning the validity of positing the self as its first act. This idea of immediate consciousness' tendency to drive the Cogito ever farther from itself yields an

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38 AP, p. 393.

important consequence for Ricoeur which we shall develop further: namely, that for every gain in reflection there is a corresponding loss. The gain is in knowledge for self; the loss is the loss of self in a measure directly proportionate to the intensity of the epistemological gain.

It is at this point that Ricoeur's concept of the disproportion of the Cogito with itself calls for a direct ontology of human reality which unfolds its particular categories against the background of a formal ontology of the something-in-general. And it is in this context that his idea of the Cogito's action as "act of existing" as well as "act of knowing" will be of greatest interest to our analysis.

We have spoken of the Cogito as act, act of existing and act of knowing. We have also said that in Ricoeur's view the two acts are not in fact two, but one, like the obverse sides of a coin. The task of the Cogito — if the self is not posited as a first act, as with the philosophies of immediate consciousness — is "...to discover self, to 'become' conscious, through which effort consciousness appropriates the meaning of its existence as desire... The subject must mediate self-consciousness through spirit or mind, that is, through the figures that give a telos to this becoming conscious."[39] In other words, a bracketing of existence must mean the displacement of immediate consciousness, and to recover itself beyond the brackets the Cogito must begin by deciphering its own signs lost in the world of culture.

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39 FP, p. 459.

This reflection does not begin as science; in order to operate it must take to itself the opaque, contingent, and equivocal signs scattered in the cultures in which our language is rooted.[40] If this is the task the Cogito must undertake for it to be unified and whole, must we not speak of the embodied Cogito, the contingent Cogito? How does the contingent postion of the Cogito affect its knowing and its possibility of becoming conscious? To answer this we must investigate something of Ricoeur's view regarding the contingent position of the embodied Cogito.

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40 Ibid., p. 47.

3. The Body and Reflection

As we have already remarked, Ricoeur holds that consciousness spends itself in founding the unity of meaning and presence in the object. "Consciousness" is not yet the unity of a person in itself and for itself; it is not one person, it is no one. The "I" of the I think is merely the form of a world that is available to anyone and everyone. It is consciousness in general, that is, a pure and simple project of the object.[41] The meanings appropriated by the Cogito exist without being conscious, and when asked how they are appropriated, Ricoeur replies: "Its [meaning's] mode of being is that of the body, which is neither ego nor thing of the world. A meaning that exists is a meaning caught up within a body, a meaningful behaviour."[42] Since the Cogito is involved in reflection as epistemology/ontology, it tries to overcome the disunity created by perception and understanding. The means of overstepping this apparently inherent contradiction is to bring to light a third party, to complete a triadic dialectic. This third member is to be the body where "...every enacted meaning is a signifying or an intention made flesh."[43] This is so since it is through man's body that man is made aware of himself as finitude. That is to say, it is through his body that man sees at one and the same time his openness to the world and also his limitation as point of view.[44]

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41 FM, p. 70.
42 FP. p. 382.
43 Ibid., p. 382.
44 HT.

It is helpful in our consideration of the "body" in its relation to the acts of existing and of knowing to remind ourselves of Ricoeur's love of the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel who opposed problem and mystery. For Marcel the body remained a "mystery of incarnation": since the problem of the body is before me, I see the body, I understand it, but still its mystery surrounds me, since I who am considering it am one of its elements, it includes me.[45] Meaning meets the Cogito in the body, and this fact, Heideggerian by implication, has consequences for Ricoeur's epistemological assumptions.

Man is not only a thinking being, but a bodily presence. And the first thing one notices in man, says Ricoeur, is the two poles: thinking, sensing; in the object one first notices their synthesis.

> "I understand what is meant by receiving, being affected; I understand what is meant by intellectual determination. But as Kant says 'the two powers cannot interchange their functions, understanding cannot intuit anything, nor can the senses think anything'; their common root which constitutes precisely the humanity of man is unknown to us..."[46]

There is the act of perceiving performed by the Cogito; there follows the act of understanding which is the second level in the act of knowing, the co-instantaneous mixing of the two. This conclusion leads Ricoeur to believe that reflection is hermeneutical. It translates self to self, Being to being through the synthesis found in the object.

The body is the perceptual necessity of the Cogito's act of knowing, and therefore, of its being. It gives to the Cogito a bodily

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45 NDP, p. 8.
46 AP, p. 395.

finitude, a limitation in which

> "I form the idea of my perception as an act produced from somewhere; not that my body is one place among others; on the contrary it is the 'here' to which all places refer. The 'here' for which all other places are 'there.'"[47]

The correlation beteen the 'here' of perceiving and the unilateralness of a percept constitutes the specific finitude of the receptive body.

It is exactly because of this extension of the Cogito to include personal body in reality that Ricoeur deems it necessary to renounce the method of Cartesian immediate consciousness: "The Ego must more radically renounce the covert claim of all consciousness, must abandon its wish to posit itself, so that it can retrieve the nourishing and inspiring spontaneity which breaks the sterile circle of the self's constant return to itself."[48]

The factor which allows the circle of self-positing consciousness to break is the aforementioned perspectivity of the human body and its embodied Cogito. It would be impossible, for example, for a person to judge the placing of his perceiving and knowing body if he could not imagine another perspective; he would not therefore be able to escape his own point of view and imagine another. This means that his ability to transport himself imaginatively into another perspective and his ability to judge his own perspective as finite are one and the same power of transcendence.[49] We shall see how this discovery of pure

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47 HT, p. 308.
48 VI, p. 14.
49 HT, p. 313.

imagination existing as the mediation between the finite limitation of immediate perception and the transcendence of perception in the use of language is expanded epistemologically to an hypothesis for the possibility of evil. Our point for the moment remains that the body, in Ricoeur's thought, is an extension of the Cogito which gives a finitude, a perspective to consciousness which can only be overcome by the Kantian notion of pure imagination. For, in Kantian terms, this pure imagination is the reconciliation of the two perspectives (finitude and infinitude) but in a disproportionate way. Hence an epistemological non-coincidence is introduced by Ricoeur and we must go on to see how he tries to overcome it.

The body gives a certain perspective, and therefore a limitation to the perceiving work of the Cogito. A contributing factor to this perspectival limitation is bodily "feeling." The way one "feels" or finds oneself in a certain mood bestows on the perceiving body, on its point of view, "...a density which is the false profundity of existence, the body's dumb and inexpressible presence to itself."[50] In other words, an act of the Cogito is not called for in order for one to "know" a feeling of depression or joy. The feeling arises from within the body, and it affects the work of the Cogito such that the line of conscious "knowing" is deflected. Hence, objects which might be perceived at one time as having high value might not be perceived at all, or at least as having low value, when the same person is feeling depressed or sad.

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50 FM, p. 84.

That deep sensibility shows that the personal body is still something other than the letting-in of the world or the letting-be of all things; it is still immediate for itself and in this way seals up its intentional openness.[51] That is to say, the body, although it is primarily openness to the world, is pointed in a certain direction by the limitation of its perspective. Nevertheless, Ricoeur claims a function of high rank for "feeling": "The universal function of feeling is to bind together. It connects what knowledge divides; it binds me to things, to beings, to being. Whereas the whole movement of objectification tends to set a world over against me, feeling unites the intentionality, which throws me out of myself, to the affection through which I feel myself existing."[52] But within Ricoeur's own system of the synthesis of finitude and infinitude in the object, it is clear that by interiorizing all the connections of the self to the world, feeling gives rise to a new cleavage of the self from the self.

It makes perceptible the duality of reason and sensibility which found a resting-place in the object. "It stretches the self along between the two fundamental affective projects, that of the organic life which reaches its term in the instantaneous perfection of pleasure, and that of the spiritual life which aspires to totality, to the perfection of happiness."[53] By opening up this split Ricoeur necessitates a new synthesis of finitude-infinitude-world which will reconcile the interior cleavage caused by bodily sensibility.

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51 HT, p. 309.
52 FM, p. 200.
53 Ibid.

The road to effecting such a synthesis, Ricoeur believes, lies in the direction of "desire." In Freud and Philosophy Ricoeur searches for a semantics of desire which will be true at once to the bodily mediations affecting the Cogito and to the understanding and rational proposing of the bodily perceptions by the Cogito. The displacement of immediate consciousness makes way for another agency of meaning (of perceiving and making intelligible) — "the transcendence of speech or the emergence of desire."[54] Desire emerges from the split brought about by the interiorizing of all connections of self to the world through bodily sensibility as the third party in the synthesis to overcome the splitting off of self. Desire, affirms Ricoeur, is revealed as human desire (body-feeling-Cogito) only when it is desire for the desire of another consciousness. Ultimately this asks self-consciousness to posit itself as desire, and not as immediate consciousness. And therefore, what the act of perceiving and act of existing involves is not the pure act of self-positing, for the Cogito in its bodily extension lives on what it receives and in a dialogue with the conditions is which it is itself rooted. Hence, the act of myself is at the same time participation with the world; but always as a semantics of desire.[55] This is because self-consciousness is certain of itself only through sublating the ego-other, which is represented to self-consciousness as an independent life; self-consciousness is desire.[56]

Let us sum up Ricoeur's concept of the body as perspective, as mediation, and as the ground of feeling. The personal body is that

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54 FP, p. 422.
55 VI, p. 18.
56 FP, p. 470.

which holds man in the intermediate positon of a bipolar tension between the complex limits of the body and the pure imagination which allows the Cogito to transgress these same limits. The denseity of the Cogito through its dependence upon the body for perception gives 'feeling' the possibility of effecting the perceptual process. The result of "feeling" is the interiorizing of the connections of self to the world with a resulting duality of reason and sensibility which previously had found a resting place in the object. The emergence of desire as the first positing act of consciousness rescued the Cogito from this duality. But now we must explore in greater detail the "humiliation" of self-consciousness to understand how a bodily-based desire is to come out as the first object of the consciousness of self, and, after that, of the knowing objects.

THE HUMILIATION OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Man as Intermediary

In the previous chapter we have described the place of the subject (Cogito) in the act of reflection. We also saw that reflection is not pure, as imagined by immediate consciousness, but is rather perspectival or contingent, because of the reciprocal dependency of the Cogito upon the body for the acts of perception and of making them intelligible to self. Ricoeur tries to "transcend the act of reflecting, from the inside out as it were, so as to retrieve the ontological conditions of reflection in the mode of nothingness and of being."[57] But before a transcending of reflection is possible there is necessary the humbling of immediate consciousness which posits itself as its first act. The retrieving of the ontological conditions of reflection must be preceded by a decentring of the epistemological act of the Cogito, which will make for an elliptical tension between the Cogito as act of knowing and the Cogito as act of being.

According to Ricoeur, man makes himself "... intermediate by projecting himself into the mode of being of a thing; he makes himself a 'mean' between the infinite and the finite by outlining this ontological dimension of things, namely, that things are a synthesis of meaning and presence."[58] The presence (perception)

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57 HT, p. 306.
58 AP, p. 394.

and the meaning (the Cogito making the perception intelligible to itself) combine in reflection to give content to the "I am" of the Cogito. In other words:

> "Consciousness makes itself an intermediary primarily by projecting itself into the things' mode of being. It becomes a mean between the infinite and the finite by delineating the ontological dimension of things, namely, that they are a synthesis of meaning and presence: here consciousness is nothing better than that which stipulates that a thing is a thing only if it is in accordance with this synthetic constitution, if it can appear and be expressed, if it can affect my finitude [bodily sensibility] and lend itself to the discourse of any rational being."[59]

By using the problem of the disproportion of self, the moving of immediate consciousness away from itself, and by inviting a third party to the synthesis, an intermediary (the body), a reformulation of finitude becomes possible. To put it in a formula, Ricoeur doubts that "...the central concept of philosophical anthropology is finitude, it is rather the triad finitude-infinitude-intermediary."[60] One should not begin therefore with the simple, for example, perception, but with the couple, perception and the word (making perception intelligible to consciousness); not with the limited but with "the antinomy of limit and the unlimited."[61] This tension between finitude and infinitude which is built upon the Cogito's relation to the body, and the body's finite limitation coupled with the infinitude of pure imagination, constitutes the disproportion which is central to man.

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59 FM, p. 59.
60 AP, p. 391.
61 Ibid.

Moreover, it is this relation of finitude to infinitude which makes up the ontological locus which is between being and nothingness;[62] this position at the same time poses man's greatest problem for himself: how will he unite these two aspects of his being? Before we seek the answer to this question, perhaps it would be helpful to look further at Ricoeur's crucial concept of the de-centring of consciousness, for it is the key to the Cogito as act of knowing and act of being as one and the same act. Accordingly this point is of primary importance to this thesis.

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62 FM, p. 205.

2. The De-centring of the Ego in Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis

In De l'interprétation Ricoeur describes two systems of interpretation, the phenomenological and the psychoanalytic. The former he believes to be trying to restore the fullness of meaning while the latter he says is suspicious of first meaning. However, he seeks to reconcile these two apparently disparate methods in the act of reflection, which act, if understood as the Cogito's search for its ontological roots, does both — suspects and restores. The phenomenology of religion, he says, attempts to restore the intended meaning of religious symbolism; psychoanalysis, as its first movement, distrusts immediate meaning. The phenomenology of religion first posits an epochê, a suspension of belief, in order to perform a phenomenological description which would restore the intended meaning of religious phenomena. This suspension, or bracketing, amounts to a suspension of immediate consciousness, says Ricoeur.

> "Phenomenology joins with psychoanalysis in renouncing the so-called evidence of immediate consciousness and enters upon the pathway of suspicion against ourselves. We must assume we actually mean something other than we seem to mean and think we mean. The criticism of appearances, started by Descartes at the level of things in the world, has to be transferred to the level of consciousness itself; consciousness has to consider itself as appearance in order to reach the realm of meaning. This is the point where psychoanalytic interpretation, considered as an exegetical discipline, has to be incorporated into reflection; in other words, we have to substitute for immediate meaning mediate meaning, exegetical meaning. We don't know ourselves immediately: the first Cogito is a false Cogito."[63]

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63 VA, p. 32.

Ricoeur calls phenomenology a relexive discipline: the methodological displacement it sets in operation is the displacement of reflection with respect to immediate consciousness.[64] Psychoanalysis is not a reflexive discipline, but it too brings about an off-centring of the Ego, albeit with a fundamental difference from the phenomenological "reduction," in that it is very strictly constituted by what Freud calls the "analytic technique."[65] Ricoeur contends that both phenomenology and psychoanalysis perform a primary act of suspicion with respect to immediate consciousness. Let us see how he believes they accomplish that act.

As we have already noted, phenomenology begins with a methodological displacement, known as the phenomenological reduction introduced by Husserl. This "reduction" has some relation to the dispossession of immediate consciousness as origin and seat of meaning. The phenomenological bracketing or suspension is not concerned simply with the self-evidence of the appearance of things, which suddenly cease to appear as brute presence, to be there, to be at hand, with a fixed meaning that one is able to find. "To the extent that consciousness thinks it knows the being-there of the world, it also thinks it knows itself."[66] This is a critical point for Ricoeur because of his linkage of the "knowing" and "being" aspects of consciousness in the Cogito as "I am" first and as "I think" second. Immediate knowledge is not immediate for Freud, because it comes through the unconscious to the conscious as meaning or memory revived in dream or

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64 FP, p. 390.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., p. 377.

passion, when the first knowledge is retrieved from the unconscious and raised to the level of consciousness. This Freudian description Ricoeur accepts as holding true of the phenomenological reduction and its description. Thus, he concludes that immediate consciousness is deposed for phenomenology, along with the natural attitude. And phenomenology "... begins by a humiliation or wounding of the knowledge belonging to immediate consciousness."[67] Hence, phenomenology is a search for its own starting point — the Cogito — for the "I am" as well as the "I think." In this way Ricoeur points up the phenomenological disruption of the Ego.

The two interpretive enterprises — phenomenology and psychoanalysis — which at first Ricoeur opposed to each other, represent the restoration of the fullness of meaning and the reduction of illusion respectively. He finds in them, however, a common factor at the base of their respective methods, namely, their similar tendencies to shift the origin of meaning in reflection to another centre which is no longer the immediate subject.

"'Consciousness' — the watchful ego, attentive to its own presence, anxious about self and attached to self,"[68] is the proud possession of the immediate subject. "This hermeneutics, approached from its opposite poles, represents a challenge and a test for reflection, whose first tendency is to identify itself with immediate consciousness."[69] Accordingly Ricoeur looks to psychoanalytic methodology for reflective tools to help him find the pathway to a reflective hermeneutics.

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., p. 54.
69 Ibid.

In psychoanalysis Ricoeur finds a method which calls into question the very immediacy of consciousness, and then goes on to develop an indirect method which finally discounts the directness of consciousness.[70] He finds that the Freudian metapsychology splits the problem of the dispossession of immediate consciousness into two lines or paths. The first leads from the descriptive point of view, which is still that of immediate consciousness, to the topographic and economic point of view, in which consciousness becomes one of the psychical localities. The second path leads back from the instinctual representatives, which are already psychical factors, to their derivatives in consciousness.[71] This double movement becomes understandable in a discipline of reflection.[72]

The exchange movement, both in terms of topographical move and also by way of the economy of energy, constitutes for Ricoeur the dispossession of immediate consciousness. It is the relationship which Freud makes between the topographic explanation of the human psyche and that of the topographic point of view with the actual work of

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70 Don Ihde, "From Phenomenology to Hermeneutic," Journal of Existentialism, VIII (Winter, 1967-68), p. 113.

71 FP, p. 423.

72 "Topographic" to Ricoeur means that understanding of the various regions of which Freud supposes the human psyche is composed. The "economic point of view" is explainable by saying that it is a theory of Freud's according to which there is a given amount of psychic energy resident in the human psyche; whenever there is a change of consciousness from one topographical area to another there is an accompanying shift of energy, for example, from the conscious to the unconscious, or vice versa. However, according to Freud there is never any loss of psychic energy involved in such a shift; rather there is an economy of energy, a transference of it from one region to the other. Hence, Ricoeur speaks of the economic point of view.

interpretation which makes psychoanalysis the deciphering of a hidden meaning in an apparent meaning. Of course, the object in this activity is to restore order, to unify the decentred consciousness by bringing the unconscious to the level of consciousness. This means that "... it is in relation to the possibility of becoming conscious, in relation to the task of achieving conscious insight, that the concept of a psychical representative of an instinct [of the unconscious sphere] becomes meaningful. Its meaning is this: however remote the primary instinctual representatives, however distorted their derivatives, they still appertain to the delineation of meaning; they can in principle be translated into terms of the conscious psychism."[73] In this statement Ricoeur sums up why psychoanalysis is instructive for his own method of philosophical reflection within phenomenological brackets.

Let us bring together in summary form what Ricoeur believes to be the critical points of Freud's psychoanalytic theory for reflection. First, Freud maintains that the unconscious is not defined in relationship to consciousness as a state of latency or absence, but as a locality in which ideas or representations reside. Ricoeur believes this to be a reduction <u>of</u> consciousness and not a reduction <u>to</u> consciousness. Consciousness in this hypothesis ceases to be what is best known and becomes problematic for itself. Henceforward there is a question of consciousness, of the process of becoming conscious, in place of the so-called evidence of being-conscious. This moment, in

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73 FP, p. 430.

Ricoeur's terminology, must "... now be seen as a phase of reflection, the moment of the divestiture of reflection."[74] The second step in the destruction of the pseudo-evidence of consciousness, as Ricoeur describes the work of Freud, is characterized by the abandonment of the concept of object. The object, as it presents itself in its false evidence as correlate of consciousness, must in turn cease to be the guide of Freudian analysis. Here is another wound in the certitude of immediate knowledge. Finally, the last step of the dispossession of immediate consciousness is characterized by Freud's introduction of the concept of narcissism into his psychoanalytic theory. "In this theory we are forced to treat the ego itself as the variable object of an instinct and to form the concept of ego-instinct in which the ego is no longer the subject of the Cogito but the object of desire."[75] At this point psychoanalysis and phenomenology are in search of the same object, as Ricoeur has analyzed it — the Cogito, and the two systems of interpretation are therefore not opposed at all as they first appeared to be. In fact, they are united.

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74 FP, p. 424.
75 Ibid., p. 425.

3. Phenomenology's and Psychoanalysis' Common Aim: The Destruction of Narcissism

As we have noted, these two divergent systems of interpretation only appear to have opposing objectives — the one trying to restore the fullness of meaning and the other attempting to destroy illusion. In fact, neither method has these aims as expressed so starkly; for ultimately each, by its own particular technique, humiliates consciousness and decentres the origin of meaning, placing it either above or below, behind or ahead. Moreover, each system points in its own way toward the "ontological ground of understanding [the 'I am' of the Cogito]. A general theory of hermeneutics can show that both modalities belong to the problem of the ontological foundation of the self."[76] This second stage of phenomenology and psychoanalysis, which we designate the recovery of the Cogito, is to be introduced in greater detail in another section. But first, let us return for a closer inspection of Ricoeur's use of Freud's concept of narcissism.

In a section of Freud and Philosophy where Ricoeur discusses the archeology of meaning, he says that the climax of psychic archeology, viewed at the instinctual level, lies in the theory of narcissism.[77] Narcissism does not exhaust its philosophical meaning in its role of obstruction and blockage, which made Ricoeur call it the false Cogito. Narcissism also has a temporal meaning: it is the origin of desire to

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76 PE, p. 585.
77 FP, p. 445.

which one always returns. Narcissism is thus the condition of all our affective withdrawals and, as Ricoeur repeatedly asserts, of sublimation as well. Thus Freud states that object-choice by the ego itself bears the indelible mark of narcissism.[78] If object-choice itself becomes a concept correlative to narcissism, as a departure from narcissism, then from this point of view there are "only departures from — and returns to — narcissism."[79] This is again reminiscent of the phenomenological starting and ending point — the Cogito. Freud's concept of narcissism brings up a supreme test for a philosophy of reflection; what is in question with the application of narcissism to reflection is the very subject of immediate apperception. When narcissism is introduced into reflection we discover at the very heart of the Ego Cogito an instinct "... all of whose derived forms point toward something altogether primitive and primordial, which Freud calls primary narcissism. To raise this discovery to the reflective level is to make the dispossession of immediate consciousness, the subject of consciousness, co-equal with the dispossession of the intended object."[80] The raising of narcissism to the reflective level has the effect of clinching the dispossession of the Ego, or immediate consciousness; and this must be the first methodological act of both phenomenology and psychoanalysis.

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78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., p. 127.
80 Ibid., p. 525.

There seem to be two disproportions that Ricoeur finds in man. There is an ontological disproportion where man is "stretched out" between finitude and infinitude, where the body is the mediation between the Cogito and the world. This disproportion has one consequence. There is another disproportion — and it is found at the seat of meaning — in the Cogito itself. It is the dispossession of consciousness described in this section just above. This disproportion has another kind of consequence, as we shall see.

The first disproportion of man between the limitations of his body and his powers of rationality is the occasion for the possibility of man's fallibility, and finally of evil. "Man's disproportion is a power to fail, in the sense that it makes a man capable of failing."[81] To say that man is fallible is to say that the limitation peculiar to a being who does not coincide with himself is the primordial weakness from which evil arises. I will show in Chapter IV how this non-coincidence of man with himself gives rise to the possibility of evil, the fact of evil, and finally to the expression of that fact in symbols of evil. It will also be shown that, although the symbols of evil hold a privileged place in Ricoeur's thought, this same disproportion which he locates in man is the occasion of all symbolic expression, even of those with a less privileged status. A later section will be reserved for dealing with the second order of disproportion in man — that of the de-centred ego. There I will show

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81 FM, p. 223.

that the possibility of reappropriation of symbolic expression, produced by the first non-coincidence, arises precisely at the point of the dispossessed consciousness found in both phenomenology and in psychoanalysis. The root of the text is embedded in the first ontological non-coincidence; the origin of meaning is in the second, and this one begins the search for the ontological grounding of the Cogito.

THE SYMBOLS OF MAN

1. From Fallibility to Evil

As noted in the last chapter, Ricoeur considers man to be existing between his infinite fundamental possibilities, that is, his ontological status as a being created good and destined for happiness, and his existential or historical reality. This primary disproportion that is part of man's essential structure places him in a precarious position of bipolar tension between the possibilities of his being and the necessities of his existence.[82] Man therefore finds himself a "faulted" being, possessing a "rift" in the geological sense of the word. This "fault" is what makes possible the entry of moral evil into the existence of man. But to say that man has the possibility of evil does not necessarily lead to the fact or experience of evil. How does Ricoeur move from the fallibility of man to man's experience of evil?

The eidetic reduction of The Voluntary and the Involuntary, which produces an understanding of freedom informed and limited by nature, and the method of existential description employed in Fallible Man, cannot deal concretely with the real limit of freedom, which is actual evil. Ricoeur has to move along the indirect route to the conclusion that evil is indeed actual, and not an illusion. He says:

> "It is undeniable that it is only through the presently evil condition of man's heart that one can detect a condition more primordial than any evil (i.e. fallibility, or possibility for evil). It is always through the fallen that the primordial shines through. The 'through' is the correlate of a 'starting from'; and it is this 'starting from' that allows us to say that fallibility is the condition of evil, although evil is the revealer of fallibility."[83]

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82 SE, p. 163.
83 FM, pp: 220f.

This "leap" from fallibility to the already fallen makes an enigma for Ricoeur. He must enter upon a reflection which bears upon the avowal that consciousness makes of it and on the symbols of evil in which this avowal is expressed. In one sense fallibility is only the possibility of evil but in another sense it is a description of that region of man where, through its point of least resistance, evil finds its entry. So man's disproportion, his fault, constitutes his fallibility; therefore Ricoeur can conclude that man has an essential weakness in his nature such that, although man is created good and destined for happiness, he is existentially described as not-good and as being unhappy. Henceforward, Ricoeur lays the blame for this state of affairs upon the fact of evil and the human experience of it.

It is in the symbols of evil that Ricoeur discovers expressions of man's experience of actual evil. Hence he is able to conclude from his reflection upon the symbols of evil that man has an experience of evil, that evil is a power, already "there" for man. In contrast to the more traditional philosophical discussions, Ricoeur holds that the symbolism of evil escapes the identification of evil with non-being or the absence of being. Evil is positive because it is posited. Evil is contagious; it becomes a condition of life. Taken together, therefore, the symbols of evil point to something more than fallibility; they suggest that evil surrounds human freedom as something paradoxically prior to experience and yet a matter of human freedom. Ricoeur puts it this way:

> "What must be scrutinized in the concept of original sin is not its false clarity but its obscure analogous richness. Its force lies in intentionally referring back to what is most radical in the confession of sins, namely, the fact that evil precedes my awareness that it cannot be analyzed into individual faults, that it is my pre-given impotence. It is to my freedom that which my birth is to my actual consciousness, namely, always already there..."[84]

Paradoxically, Ricoeur says that evil cannot be analyzed into individual faults, but at the same time that Adam is the archetype of this "present, actual evil that we repeat and imitate each time we begin evil; and in this sense each one begins evil each time."[85] This is so because Adam is for all men the prior man, and not only that — he is the very priority of evil as regards every man. Although it is true that man-in-general is faulted, it is also the case that at the lowest level of primary symbols evil is already there for each individual man to be born into. It is this sameness of individual experience of"evil-already-there" that gives rise to a whole cycle of myths and symbols of evil. And we might reiterate what Ricoeur has said about their source, namely, that symbols arise as consciousness' desire to understand this already-there fact of evil and man's susceptibility to it. Thus the ontological rift located at the centre of the being of man is at one and the same time the point of entry for evil and the primary reason for consciousness' attempt to understand itself. The symbols of evil are the result of this attempt.

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84 HPR p. 211.
85 Ibid., p. 209.

Ricoeur takes symbols as involving the constitution of the consciousness of self. "The consciousness of self seems to constitute itself at its lowest level by means of symbolism..."[86] This means that symbols arise from the heart of the being of man; just where his disproportion is most pronounced, for symbols reveal new dimensions of the self. In fact, Ricoeur would say that symbols speak to man as an index of man's position at the heart of being, where he moves and exists. By inference, therefore, symbols exist as attempted interpretations of man's place in being, his ontological status, to himself.

To insure this move, Ricoeur makes use of Kant's "transcendental deduction" to show how symbols are expressive of a region of man's being that is thought to be inaccessible to rational thought. If "transcendental deduction" means justifying a concept by showing how it makes possible the framing of an area of objectivity, then the symbol used to express a part of human reality is "deduced" when it is verified through its capacity for evoking and lighting up and putting in order a whole field of human experience. The symbols of evil do just this, because they express the ontological displacement of man, which could not be proposed directly.

Man is a restless being who seeks rest; a broken creature in search of unity; one who sees the world first as chaotic but then looks for order and meaning. St. Augustine expresses it: "O Lord, Thou hast made me, for thyself; and my heart is restless until it rests in Thee."

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86 SE, p. 9.

This elusive unity, the ontological roots of man, is the "promised land" of Ricoeur's philosophy, and man's wanderings in search of it produce symbols as expressions of his condition. According to Ricoeur, man is aware at least on a 'subconscious level' of his faulted nature, and, at the same time, he hopes for ontological reconciliation.

Ricoeur claims that the imaginative 'word' which erupts from the rift in man comes forth as symbolic expression and opens up an understanding of himself that would not be possible directly. "Myth or symbol as an imaginative 'word' is the place within language from which Ricoeur seeks to understand man's self-understanding."[87] With symbolic language man understands and is understood through his expressions. These imaginative 'words' are not mere fables or fantasies but explorations in a symbolic and imaginative mode of man's very relation to Being.[88] Symbols arise out of man's disproportionate relationship to Being, in order to display his alienation and his hope for reconciliation. By this very fact the symbol "becomes more than a key to modes of human experience; it is the key to human depth because it brings out the point of articulation between the historical and the ontological..."[89] Here is Ricoeur's explicit statement that symbolic language arises out of man's location between his finite ('historical') status and his ontological (infinite) possibilities.

Ricoeur repeatedly assures us that language says something about

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87 HP, p. 103.
88 Ibid., p. 165.
89 SF, p. 206.

being. But, he says, symbols are pre-linguistic in the sense that they are the understructure which lies between man's experience of his ontological stature, his possibilities and his expression of that condition. It means this: there is a whole region of human experience that would remain without language if we did not have the symbolism which points up the faulted nature of man. The symbols of evil are therefore to be thought of as crucial for the comprehension of man's essential nature.

The symbols of evil, in Ricoeur's thought, are not only an example of a symbol, but a privileged example; they not only "attest to the unsurpassable character of all symbolism, but while telling us of the failure of our existence and of our power of existing, they also declare the failure of systems of thought that would swallow up symbols in an absolute knowledge."[90] The reason why an absolute knowledge is impossible is precisely the problem of evil.[91] In giving precedence to the problem of method in dealing with symbolism (rather than seeking the richness of symbolic content), Ricoeur reduces the entire symbolism of evil to the status of an example. However, it turns out that the results of his reflection are that the symbolism of evil is not one example of many, but a privileged example, indeed, "perhaps even the native land of all symbolism."[92] The symbols which first arise out of the ontological disproportion (the 'I am') in man are the symbols of evil; but even here there is not a clearly defined

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90 FP, p. 527.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., p. 40 (note).

statement to be found in the symbols of evil. Rather, there are various stages of the feeling and presence of the experience of evil which can be marked off as semantic stages. In The Symbolism of Evil Ricoeur shows how one moves to the experience of evil, sin and guilt through a series of symbolic progressions, marked off by the images of deviation, the crooked path, wandering, and rebellion; next by the images of weight, burden, and fault; and last by the image of slavery which encompasses them all. This cycle of examples concerns the zones of the emergence of symbolism, the one closest to ethical reflection, constituting what Ricoeur calls "the symbolism of the servile will."[93]

Defilement is the human feeling which man has about himself which reveals the presence or the experience of evil. Accompanying the feeling of defilement is fear — the fear of the impure, and this fear is a dread, one facing a threat which, beyond the threat of suffering and death, "aims at a dimension of existence, a loss of the personal core of one's being."[94] The fault, already acknowledged in defilement, opens up the condition for the dread described here, since the entry of the impure has the impact of driving the cleavage at the heart of man ever deeper and wider. Ricoeur calls this dread "the interdict." In his awareness of the interdict, man feels himself defiled, subdued, defeated, which in turn brings him to confession of his fault.

> "Consciousness, crushed by the interdict and by the fear of the interdict, opens to others and to itself; not only does it begin to communicate but it discovers the unlimited perspective of self-interrogation. Man asks himself:

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93 FP, pp. 13-14.
94 SE, p. 41.

> since I experience this failure, this sickness, this evil, what sin have I committed? Suspicion is born; the appearance of acts is called in question; a trial of veracity is begun; the project of a total confession, totally revealing the hidden meaning of one's acts, if not yet of one's intentions, appears at the heart of the humblest 'confession of sins.'"[95]

Ricoeur notes that the sense of defilement is the awareness of a positive power of evil that infects and contaminates by contact. The symbolic expression of this experience is found in "stain" which indicates "the positive character of defilement and the negative character of [man's] purity."[96] There runs ahead from the symbolism of stain a shift of emphasis from the positive sense of defilement (in which man is caught, that is, evil as an active force) to the idea of sin as rupture of a relationship, where man takes a more active role in creating the conditions necessary for his own feeling of defilement.

There is a Hebrew symbol (shagah) which designates the situation of man as having gone astray, as having acted to create his own state of sinfulness. The image of having gone astray directly envisages a total situation, the state of being astray and lost. Thus this symbol forecasts the more modern symbols of alienation, according to Ricoeur, where man is depicted as a being alien to his ontological place.[97] And here we return to our earlier point that the symbols of evil lay bare a sphere of human experience which without symbolic expression such as defilement, stain, deviation, and the like, would remain closed to man.

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95 Ibid.
96 SE, p. 70.
97 Ibid., p. 73.

The symbolism found at this primary source of man's experience is surely revealing: "It is the very logos of a sentiment which otherwise would remain vague, indefinite, non-communicable. We are face to face with a language that has no substitute."[98] Moreover, it is most remarkable that the symbolisms of stain, deviation, and guilt are not superadded to a consciousness of evil; rather they are the primordial language, constitutive of the confession of sins.

The climax of Ricoeur's progression of the symbols of stain and deviation is "guilt." The idea of guilt is a paradox, in Ricoeur's mind, because it points toward the concept of a man who is responsible and captive — one who is stained on the one hand, and so feels defiled, and is gone astray on the other hand, and therefore feels guilt. In the first instance man is a passive subject in the power of evil, and in the second he acts in such a way as to be responsible for the rupture of his relationship to Being. Man must first sense his defilement, which comes from the symbolic representation of his being stained; then with a shift of emphasis man believes himself responsible for his own state of sin (this is seen in the image of deviation) which gives birth to a sense of guilt. It can be said in very general terms that guilt designates the subjective moment in fault as sin is its ontological moment. There is therfore a joining of the two movements in the symbolism of evil — that of the objective fact of evil (stain) and that of the responsible act of man (deviation). The coincidence

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98 SF, p. 206.

of these two terms arrives at guilt, which admits to the ontological fact of the power of evil and at the same time expresses man's responsibility for his own erring ways. The "guilty man" then is the culmination of the progression which begins by the ontological disproportion which Ricoeur locates within man. Hence, the tension of the ontological disproportion gives birth to the symbols of evil.

2. Ricoeur's Criteriology of Symbols

For his reflection upon symbols Ricoeur must have some sort of understanding of "symbol" which guides his efforts. What is his definition of symbol? We now want to answer this question by saying that Ricoeur is concerned to define symbol neither too broadly nor too narrowly.

In the first place too broad a definition would be one like that of Ernst Cassirer (in his Philosophy of Symbolic Forms) according to which the "symbolic function" is the general function of mediation by which the mind or consciousness constructs all its universe of discourse. For Cassirer, "the symbolic" designates the common denominator of all the ways of objectivizing, of giving meaning to reality.[99] This is a definition of symbol which Ricoeur sees as being too broad, and the reasons for his judgement will come to light in a discussion to follow.

There is also a temptation to define symbol too narrowly which consists in characterizing the bond of meaning to meaning in a symbol as analogy. But strict analogy (A:B::C:D) is not applicable to symbolic structure, for symbolic structure is not equal to reasoning by proportionality.

> "It is a relation adhering to its terms. I am carried by the first meaning, directed by it, toward the second meaning; the symbolic meaning is constituted in and through the literal meaning which achieves the analogy by giving the analogue. In contrast to a likeness that we could look at from the outside, a symbol is the very movement of the primary meaning intentionally assimilating us to the symbolized, without our being able to intellectually dominate the likeness."[100]

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99 FP, p. 10.
100 Ibid., p. 17.

Casting aside the definitions that he finds too broad or too narrow, Ricoeur says that he will delimit the definition of a symbol by reference to the act of interpretation. "A symbol exists," he states "where linguistic expression lends itself by its double or multiple meanings to a work of interpretation."[101] What gives rise to this work of interpretation is an intentional structure which consists not in the relation of meaning to thing but in an architecture of meaning, in a "relation of meaning to meaning, of second meaning to first meaning, regardless of whether that relation be one of analogy or not, or whether the first meaning disguises or reveals the second meaning."[102] This definition can be made more explicit by a better knowledge of his understanding of sign and symbol, symbolic intentionality, and the double meaning of symbol. We shall examine "symbol" under these terms.

By unifying all the functions of mediation under the title of "the symbolic," Cassirer wipes out a fundamental distinction, which constitutes in Ricoeur's eyes a true dividing line: the distinction between univocal and plurivocal expressions. The difference between univocal and plurivocal expressions is precisely the difference between "sign" and "symbol" according to Ricoeur's understanding of them. A sign is "a sensory vehicle" which bears a signifying function that makes it stand for something else.[103] That is to say, a sign is merely a substitution of one meaning for another, the first being more easily accessible that the second which it represents. There is a fixed

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101 Ibid., p. 18.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., p. 12.

meaning attached to a sign. Thus, one does not interpret signs; one understands a sign, because signs are direct in their substitution and in our understanding of them. This is the unique problem which Cassirer denotes by "symbolic." His is the problem of the unity of language and the interrelationship of its multiple functions within a single universe of discourse. But this problem seems to be better characterized by the notion of sign or signifying function. How man gives meaning by filling a sensory content with meaning — that is the problem Cassirer deals with. Ricoeur contends that Cassirer understands no more with his "symbolic function" than he would have done with the "signifying function," for signs always have a direct, one-to-one relationship and meaning. In other words, sign has a single intentionality which remains constant in its relation between the sensory and the meaningful, between the signifier and the signified.[104]

Symbols, however, are more than signs, although they have the same primary structure. Ricoeur writes of this:

> "In contrast with completely transparent technical signs that say only what they want to say by indicating the thing signified, symbolic signs are opaque. The first obvious literal meaning itself looks analogically toward a second meaning which is found only in the first meaning. This opaqueness is the symbol's very profundity, an inexhaustible depth."[105]

To put it another way, the duality found in sign between the signifier and the signified gives birth to a higher duality in symbol. In

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104 Ibid., p. 11.
105 SF, p. 199.

a symbol the duality is added to and superimposed upon the duality of sensory sign and signification "as a relation of meaning to meaning; it presupposes signs that already have a primary, literal, manifest meaning."[106] Hence, Ricoeur deliberately restricts the notion of symbol to double- or multiple-meaning expressions whose semantic structure is correlative to the work of interpretation that explicates their second or multiple meanings. As an example of this dynamic, Ricoeur refers to his use of "stain" as a symbol of evil. The first and literary signification of "stain" is clear — it is a mark, a colour on a contrasting background. Built upon this first manifest meaning Ricoeur claims there is a second when stain is used with reference to evil. Stain denotes an unwelcome-ness, an unwanted-ness; it declares a blotted, besmudged being who is suseptible to the powers of evil. This second-level meaning comes from stain only through, and by means of, the first and literal meaning of stain. This provides us with a simple example of how Ricoeur sees symbol as differing from sign.

What gives rise to the second-level function of symbols is the specific structure which Ricoeur labels a "double-intentionality." "There is first or literal intentionality which, like any signifying intentionality, implies the triumph of the conventional over the natural sign... But upon this first intentionality a second one is built up... which points to a certain condition of man within the sacred."[107] The bottom and basic level of this intentionality is literal and derived

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106 FP, p. 13.
107 SF, p. 199.

from ordinary natural experience. This first level constitutes the definition of a sign. The symbol of evil, for example, starts from something which has a first-level meaning and is borrowed from the experience of nature — man's contact and orientation in space. Its analogical or symbolic intentionality arises from and in its literal base, without which there could be no symbolism. "The literal and obvious meaning... points beyond itself to something which is like stain, like a deviation, like a burden."[108] Double-intentionality, therefore, is both the structural source of the symbol's power and its puzzle; it far surpasses the conventionally significant. That is, the symbol extends beyond sign by having a first meaning which intends something in a direct and literal sense, but this object in turn refers to something else which is intended only through the first literal meaning.

To complete this first step of tracing Ricoeur's definition of symbol we must see clearly that he defines symbol by a semantic structure that all symbolic manifestations have in common, the structure of multiple meaning:

> "Symbols occur when language produces signs of composite degree in which the meaning, not satisfied with designating some one thing, designates another meaning attainable only in and through the first intentionality."[109]

The point being made by Ricoeur is of significance not only to his definition of symbol but also to his method of interpretation, since he defines one through the other. Hence, in spite of the danger of labouring the point, the separation of sign and symbol has to be clear, and

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108 SE, p. 194.
109 FP, p. 16.

especially so that the point where the distinction between them begins.

Ricoeur specifies that symbols are bound in a double sense: bound to and bound by. On the one hand, the sacred is bound to its primary, literal, sensible meanings. This is what Ricoeur says constitutes the opacity of symbols: the literal meaning is bound by the symbolic meaning that resides in it; this is what he calls "the revealing power of symbols, which gives them their force in spite of their opacity."[110] The revealing power of symbols opposes symbols to technical signs, which merely signify what is posited in them and which, therefore, can be emptied, formalized, and reduced to mere objects of a calculus. Symbols alone give what they say. There arises here an important point in our argument: signs are the result of man's conscious attempt to reduce meaning to its simplest and most readily available forms. Symbols, on the other hand, are neither consciously posited not understood directly by immediate consciousness. To define symbol as double-sense, as Ricoeur does, has an advantage: namely that the symbol as double-sense always aims at deciphering an existential movement, a certain ontological condition of man. This is particularly important, as was mentioned earlier, if the symbol is man's attempt to articulate his ontological status in the heart of being. The double-sense is the detector of a position in Being, and this is the force of symbol.

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110 Ibid., p. 31.

Ricoeur's analysis gives us a sense of the dynamic structure of symbol. We must now proceed to a survey of the kinds of symbols where this double-meaning structure is most evident. A simplistic typology of symbols must be guarded against, however, for Ricoeur makes no facile definition of symbols by arranging them according to types. Rather he distinguishes three levels of symbols, which to the casual observer might appear to be three types of symbols.

Remembering that Ricoeur has symbols acting as an index of man's position at the heart of Being, we might expect him to extend this thought by maintaining that all archaic or primitive symbols reveal an "objective" (in the sense of the Kantian transcendental deduction) understanding of their intention. In his understanding of symbol there is a kind of progression which begins at the widest, that is the universal, placing of symbols, and then narrows to the specifically subjective home of symbols, before amplifying outward again toward universal description in the symbolic mode. I speak here of the cosmological, the oneiric, and the poetic dimensions of symbol.

> "one cannot..understand the reflective use of symbolism...without reverting to its naive forms, where the prerogatives of reflective consciousness are subordinated to the cosmic aspect of hierophanies, to the nocturnal aspect of dream productions, or finally to the creativity of the poetic word. These three dimensions are present in every authentic symbol. The reflective aspect of symbols...is intelligible only if it is connected with these three functions of symbols."[111]

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111 SE, p. 10.

We must understand these dimensions not as types of symbols, then, but as different aspects of each and every symbol.

The cosmological dimension is the most archaic level of symbolic expression, being the sphere where the phenomenology of religion performs its work of description, as well as the dimension of all comparative work in symbolism. "These symbols, however, do not stand apart from language as values of immediate expression, as directly perceptible physiognomies; only in the universe of discourse do these realities take on the symbolic dimension."[112] For modern man these symbols are the lowest level, what Ricoeur calls sedimented symbolism, symbols so commonplace and worn with use that they have nothing but a past. Nevertheless, in a primitive sense they come to the linguistic level when they are narrated or acted out in the form of a fairy-tale, mythic narrative, folk story, and so on. By the constant repetition they lose their force for being directly grasped; the cosmic dimension becomes "sedimented" and is lost in the subconscious of man. The peculiar quality of the cosmic dimension of symbols is the fact that symbols at this level give order to the apparent chaos of the universe. These are the symbols of Carl Jung, which provide man with a cosmological locus.

The second dimension of symbol which is necessary to its definition Ricoeur calls the oneiric. This is the subjective reference of a symbol where it is seen in individual response to the cosmic dimension, and the response is recognizable in effects or feelings. This aspect of symbol

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112 FP, p. 14.

functions in everyday life, for here symbols have a past (cosmic) and a present (psychic) which serve as a token for the nexus of social activities for man. Man becomes consciously aware of the cosmic symbols in dreams; that is, they are raised from the objective outside (collective unconscious?) to the level of the individual consciousness where they may be told, analyzed, and interpreted. In this realm symbols reveal something about the individual, namely his search for an ontological grounding, a cosmological placing. Here the symbol begins to have a personal meaning, for it is the expression of personal desire for selfhood.

In the third and final stage of the movement of symbols, we find that the symbol becomes an expression which dramatizes these previous two understandings in an image. The poetic dimension of the symbol is this final stage where the individual has full awareness of the symbolic material whose true dimension is given to it by the oneiric and the cosmic. These poetic pronouncements of the symbol-conscious individual are creations of meaning that take up the traditional symbols with their multiple significations and serve as the vehicles of new meanings.

From Ricoeur's understanding of the dimensions of symbol we see the movement of symbol from the cosmic to the oneiric, and finally to the poetic. Each of these elements has been co-extensive with the problem of language, in that each concerns symbolic expression, but each in a different mode. We are helped to see the significance of symbols as the attempt of man to understand himself in relation to the totality of being.[113]

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113 FP, pp. 13-17, pp. 503-505.
SE, pp. 9-11.

A further note to be added in order to make for an even more complete idea of Ricoeur's conception of symbol is his definition of symbol by negation: Symbol is not allegory. There is a danger here, as far as Ricoeur is concerned, in understanding symbol in a reductive sense, that is, in such a way that symbol is "desymbolized." The result of believing that the reflective consciousness can add anything new to symbol is that interpretation comes only by reducing the symbol to allegory. In point of fact, it would be much more valid to speak about allegorizing interpretation than about allegory. Symbol and allegory are therefore not on the same level: the symbol precedes any attempt to understand and interpret it, while allegory is already hermeneutic. This is the case because "the symbol makes its meaning become transparent in quite another fashion than by translation. I should rather say that it evokes, it 'suggests': the symbol yields its meaning in enigma rather than by translation."[114] If symbols had the same simple structure as signs, then they could be reduced to a more direct meaning. But since they are defined by Ricoeur as having a double meaning and a double intentionality there can be no direct approach to symbol, nor from symbol directly to consciousness. David Stewart claims that the allegorical understanding of symbols is to be avoided within Ricoeur's frame of reference because allegory implies that the patent meaning of symbols is false; the true meaning is veiled.[115] Ricoeur says, "I am convinced that we must think not behind these symbols, but starting

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114 SF, p. 200.
115 PE, p. 579.

from symbols, according to symbols, that their substance is indestructible, that they constitute the relevant substrate of speech which lives among men."[116] Hence, there is no possibility of stripping symbols of their false logos, or of "demything" symbols for they constitute an irreducible language. And accordingly, with danger of relating too much to a later chapter, we emphasize, with Ricoeur, the point that symbols are not in themselves the allegorical understanding of a prior meaning, nor can the symbols which appear to us be interpreted allegorically.

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116 HPR, II (1962), 203.

3. The Place and Function of Symbols

Symbols, according to Ricoeur, are not a "something" which exist in time and space. In other words, symbols are not objects of perception in the ordinary sense of "perception." Nor are they propositions of any category whatever. Symbols exist somewhere between the body and the word, a double-intentioned 'word,' which springs from the Cogito, but is at the same time the object of the Cogito's quest for the "Sum." By thus placing symbol in the world of human culture, Ricoeur introduces into symbolism a radical contingency. He writes:

> "First, there are symbols; I encounter them; they are like the innate ideas of the old philosophy. Why are they such? Why are they? This is cultural contingency introduced into discourse. Moreover, I do not know them all; my field of investigation is oriented, and because it is oriented it is limited."[117]

We are immediately reminded by these lines from Ricoeur of the bodily limitation imposed upon the Cogito. No one asks question from nowhere; one must be in a position to hear and to understand. "It is a great illusion to think that one could make himself a pure spectator, without weight, without memory, without perspective, and regard everything with equal sympathy..."[118] Symbols are placed, along with man, within a system of discourse that has a radical contingency about it. This means that symbol is not an object existing outside of man, an object that can be "known" so much as it is a part of man and his world,

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117 SE, pp. 19f.
118 Ibid., p. 306.

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117 SE, pp. 19f.
118 Ibid., p. 306.

a significant part of his placing of himself in the order of things.

There is one final and significant addition to Ricoeur's understanding and definition of symbol. It is this: True symbols are at the crossroads of two functions — regression and progression. A connection is made between our earlier statement that Ricoeur believes a symbol must display cosmic, oneiric, and poetic dimensions to be called a true symbol. Again in a slightly different terminology he says that a symbol, to be a true symbol, must have an archeology and a teleology. Ricoeur further translates this dynamic function into Freudian language, or rather he derives from his Freudian analysis this conclusion:

> "Symbols both disguise and reveal. While they conceal the aims of our instincts, they disclose the process of self-consciousness. Disguise, reveal; conceal, show; these two functions are no longer external to one another; they express the two sides of a single symbolic function. Because of their overdetermination symbols realize the concrete identity between the progression of the figures of spirit or mind and the regression to the key signifiers of the unconscious."[119]

Symbols, then, function in two directions at the same time — one is in the direction of memory, the other that of hope; regression, progression.

Regression, as a necessary and important symbolic vector, moves us backward imaginatively to our own childhood or to the primordial beginnings of mankind. Our own childhood, in Freudian technique, is recaptured in dreams where the symbolic significance of the parental relationship is recalled in the form of oneiric symbol-expression. But at the same time, this remembering, this bringing to consciousness of a

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119 FP, p. 497.

personal history, has a universal tone to it, that is, a cosmic one. For example, the father image is for Freud a universal one, which recurs in almost every instance of an individual's recounting of his dreams to an analyst. Ricoeur carries Freud's work on dreams to the position where he maintains that "the force of a religious symbol lies in the fact that it recaptures a primal scene fantasy and transforms it into an instrument of discovery and exploration of origins."[120] Such symbols arise in dreams and in religious expressions to reveal the hidden, that is, the ambiguity of being and the multiplicity of meaning.[121] This multiplicity of meaning comes about because through "primal fantasies" man "forms," "interprets," "intends" meanings of another order, meanings capable of becoming signs of the sacred. This new order of "intentionality," through which fantasies are interpreted symbolically, arises from the very nature of the fantasies insofar as they speak of the lost origin, of the lost archaic object, of the lack which is inherent in the very nature of desire.[122] This bespeaks the ontological disproportion of man, for it is through the dynamic tension of this cleavage that symbols arise, or are possible, to "explain" the condition of man to himself. Hence, through their vestigial function the archaic and primitive symbols show in operation an imagination of origins which may be said to be historical, for it tells of an advent, a coming to being. Therefore the moment in the life of a symbol when it hopes for the "ontological retrieve" is absolutely contemporaneous with its arising from the disproportion to man.

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120 Ibid., p. 541.
121 Paul Ricoeur, "The Problem of the Double-sense as Hermeneutic Problem and as Semantic Problem," Myths and Symbols, ed. J.M. Kitagawa and C.H. Long (Chicago, 1969), p. 68.
122 FP, p. 541.

Accordingly, we are led to conclude that symbols not only recall; they also explore our adult life and its potential for approaching an ontological reconciliation. An advancement of meaning over the primary and archaic direction of symbols would constitute such an approximation to the ontological reconciliation. However, it ought to be noted that this advancement of meaning occurs only in the sphere of the projection of desire, that is to say, out of the derivations of the unconscious, out of the revivals of archaism. Thus, symbols represent a concrete unity between the apparently opposed directions of symbol (regression and progression).

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In this chapter we have outlined Ricoeur's definition of symbol. It is born of man's attempt to understand his own ontological disproportion. The symbols of evil are the privileged example of a symbolism arising out of man's essential cleavage, because they are the "imaginative word" which expresses man's "felt" relation to the totality of Being. We then went on to say, in an abbreviated account of Ricoeur's hierarchy of symbols, that the symbols of evil are expressed most regularly by man as stain, defilement, deviation and guilt. Ricoeur further defined symbol for us in a negative way by marking off the limits of a sign-function and the beginning of a symbol-function; and he also confirmed that a symbol is <u>not</u> an allegory, nor can symbol be interpreted allegorically.

In the positive sense we saw that symbols are double-meaning expressions with a double intentionality, and also that this double-sense tends on the one hand to disguise and on the other to reveal. There is a definite connection to be made on this point with the cosmic (regressive) dimension of symbol and the poetic (progressive, creative) dimension. If this gives us the outline of Ricoeur's understanding of symbols, we must now turn our attention to his method of interpreting them.

THE HERMENEUTICS OF SYMBOLS

In Chapter three an attempt was made to trace Ricoeur's methodological movement on two fronts. The first was on the ontological status of man (and man's correlative existential condition) which we saw him describe as ontologically disproportionate, that is, as stretched between finitude and infinitude. A later chapter showed that this condition brings forth symbols, particularly the symbols of evil. Included in Chapter three was a section called "The De-centring of the Ego in Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis" whose chief point was that the displacement of the Ego is the first step in each method. This is the second front whose contours concerned us in Chapter three. It may seem premature to have described the first step of interpretation for two disparate methods, but it was done in order to make abundantly clear that the second movement, the decentring of the Ego, is intimately associated with the first, man's disproportion. In that Chapter, it will be remembered, we saw that the technique of decentring the Ego is in reality a first step in the Cogito's reclamation of itself. Hence, the condition described by Ricoeur's "ontological disproportion" in man is the foundation which makes the quest for ontological reconciliation necessary. The decentring of immediate consciousness is the first step; a reflective interpretation is the remainder of the method. Therefore, it was not by accident that the displacements appeared together. However, there remains an entire region of Ricoeur's work which, although logically predictable from what we have said thus far, must now be provided, with a view to supplying a complete picture of his method for the interpretation

of symbols. It will mean a statement of his work on Freud, together with his conclusions on that very important project. It will mean also an expansion of some of the propositions made in Chapter three.

1. Hermeneutics As Recovery of the Cogito

Ricoeur asserts that symbols call for interpretation because of their peculiar signifying function in which meaning inherently refers beyond itself.[123] As noted above, symbols possess a multiple intentionality and therefore multiple meanings; there exists nowhere a symbolic language without hermeneutics. "In this respect, the hermeneutics of modern man is continuous with the spontaneous interpretations that have never been lacking to symbols. On the other hand, what is peculiar to the modern hermeneutics is that it remains in the line of critical thought."[124] This comment of Ricoeur's picks up an earlier point made in the development of our argument: namely, that hermeneutics before Ricoeur was particularly dependent upon immediate consciousness and its supposed ability to "know" an object directly. At the same time there is an oblique criticism of pre-Ricoeurian hermeneutics with regard to its understanding of a text (or written language) as concrete object. Ricoeur implies that modern hermeneutics represents the vanguard of criticism, as an awareness of myth as myth, and nothing more, and this is the value of Bultmann and his followers. But on the other hand, modern hermeneutics entertains the project of a revivification of philosophy through contact with the fundamental symbols of consciousness.

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123 FP, p. 495.
124 SE, p. 350.

This is seen most clearly in the French philosophers of culture and anthropology such as Jean Nabert and Claude Lévi-Strauss. The point is, if we can no longer live the great symbolisms of the sacred, we can, in modern time, aim at "a second naiveté," in and through the criticism. In short, it is by interpreting that we can hear again. Thus it is in hermeneutics that the symbol's gift of meaning and the endeavour to understand by deciphering are knotted together.

We have said that Ricoeur defines symbols as double meaning significations which arise out of man's ontological disproportion. They therefore become the visible sign of man's internal rift, and Ricoeur would say that man, to heal this cleavage, must view the Cogito's action as "act of existence" and not as "act of knowing." The work of the Cogito in both phenomenological and psychoanalytical terminology is to reach its own being, to become conscious of itself. Accordingly, it is to psychoanalytic theory, especially as expressed in Freud, that Ricoeur turns in order to develop a method of understanding and interpreting symbols. In discussing the place of psychoanalysis within hermeneutics, he writes:

> "In this way the place of psychoanalysis within the total sphere of language is specified: it is the area of symbols or double meanings and the area in which the various manners of interpretations confront one another. From now on we shall call this special area, broader than psychoanalysis but narrower than the theory of language as a whole which is its horizon, the 'hermeneutic field.' By hermeneutics we shall always understand the theory of the rules that preside over an exegesis — that is, over the interpretation of a particular text, or a group of signs that may be viewed as a text."[125]

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125 FP, p. 8.

Hermeneutics is therefore to be seen as a rational attempt to understand and interpret the "signs of man's condition at the heart of being." And as a consequence of this understanding of hermeneutics Ricoeur holds that no symbol qua symbol opening and uncovering a truth of man is foreign to philosophical reflection. Hence, he does not take the concept of original sin to be a theme extraneous to philosophy, but on the contrary, one subject to an intentional analysis, "to a hermeneutics of rational symbols whose task is to reconstitute the layers of meaning which have become sedimented in the concept."[126] Ricoeur describes this as the hermeneutical task, but even this task is built upon his understanding of man whose essential nature makes interpretation necessary in the first place, and possible in the second.

It will be remembered that the symbols of evil signify man's basic condition as that of a "stained" being or a "lost and wandering soul," one who is cut off from the ground of being, to use Tillich's terminology. These linguistic expressions in which man's condition of fault is brought to light, the most basic of which are primary symbols, can never be fully grasped by pure reflective thought, but can only be understood by an existential participation in these symbols as expressive of man's relation to the transcendental realm which thought is impotent to objectify. Hence the philosopher's task is to develop a symbolics or poetics of the will, a hermeneutical approach to the apprehension of man's status in relation to Being. Ricoeur puts it well himself:

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126 HPR, p. 210.

> "The situation between being and nothingness, to speak with Descartes, is the situation of a being who is himself a mediation between being and nothingness, between the infinite and the finite. This mediation is projected in the synthesis of the object, which is at once discourse and existence, meaning and appearance. The mediation is translated into action in the practical synthesis of the person who is at once end and existence, value and presence. This mediation is reflected internally in the feeling of a disproportion of self to self, of a non-coincidence or an interior 'difference' which attests to the original fragility of human reality."[127]

Man, as mediation between being and nothingness, attempts to affirm his existence by acts of the Cogito. However, it is by the retrieval of the "I am" and not of the "I know" that the possibility of ontological reconciliation exists. Interpretation involves the Cogito's search for the lost "I am." "It has to be unconcealed from its ontological root. Dasein is ontically the closest to itself, but ontologically farthest. And it is in this distance that the 'I am' becomes the theme of an hermeneutics..."[128] That is to say, the real task of a philosophy instructed by symbols is to make for a qualitative transformation of reflexive consciousness, which would mean, in effect, the approach toward an ontological grounding of the Cogito.

Hermeneutics, then, for Ricoeur, means more than the simple translation of a text, more than a strict relation of knowing subject with a knowable object. Hermeneutics is the search for the "self," and this intended goal of interpretation is not the narrow and narcissistic "I" of immediate consciousness but is the subject founded by understanding itself.[129]

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127 AP, p. 402.
128 CS, p. 70.
129 HP, p. xvii.

In the Cogito's search for its own being self-consciousness is, like the consciousness of a thing, an intentional consciousness. But whereas the intending of the thing was a theoretical intention, the intending of the person is a practical intention: "... it is not yet an experienced plenitude but an 'is to be'; the person is an 'is to be,' and the only way to achieve it is to 'make it be.'"[130] The Cogito acts to "make it be" with respect to man's search for his ontological home.

Man becomes aware of his broken and disjointed condition not so much by reflection, or by the powers of immediate consciousness, as he does by having a "feeling" about it. This feeling Ricoeur names "the ontological feeling," and it takes man in two directions. In the first place, Ricoeur asserts that ontological feeling is really the awareness of the "ontological difference," that is, the intuition by man of his own condition set over against his awareness of his own possibilities. This makes for existential anguish, the ontological feeling par excellence.[131] The ontological anguish is here engendered by man's awareness of his ontological disproportion, and symbols speak to man out of this anguish of man, being expressed as the symbols of evil. They are an index of man's position at the heart of being, where he moves and exists. The task of the philosophy guided by symbols is to break down the enchanted wall of self-consciousness and subjectivity, to strip reflection of its exclusive rights.

> "All symbols in fact aim at reinstating man within a whole, the transcendent whole of sky, the immanent whole of vegetation and death and rebirth. Briefly, I would say that symbols lead us to see that the Cogito is as

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130 FM, p. 110.
131 Ibid., p. 161.

> the interior of being rather than the other way round. Hence, our second naiveté is a second Copernican revolution: the being who stands out in the Cogito discovers that the very act by which he breaks away from the whole is still a part of the being that beckons to him in every symbol."[132]

Hence the ontological feeling comes from a recognition of man's status in the ontological order of things, and therefore feeling is "the most intimate point of the person, the place where the disproportion is concentrated, the point of culmination or intensity in human fallibility."[133] This feeling, then, begins with an awareness of a fact, man's non-coincidence with himself. But it is more too.

The second dimension of the ontological feeling is promise — promise of an ontological reconciliation. It does not mean that feeling is the actual possession of the retrieval of the "I am" but rather that it is felt to be possible. Ricoeur can only describe the ontological feeling paradoxically as the unity of an intention and an affection, "... of an intention toward the world and an affection of the self." This comes as a result of the whole of our language being worked out in the dimension of objectivity, in which the subject and the object are opposed and distinct. This paradox, however, is only the sign pointing toward the "mystery of feeling, namely, the individual connection of my existence with beings and being through desire and love."[134] The other beings are symbols of my own existential and ontological status inasmuch as they share with me my disproportion and my hope for reconciliation.

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132 SF, p. 207.
133 AP, p. 399.
134 FM, p. 134.

A basic quality of the ontological feeling, as Ricoeur points out, is the feeling of negativity, or the ontological possiblity of negation. Negativity in ontology and existentialism means that being is first of all absurd, and consequently is without reason, without direction, without hope. Being is a negative value. That is to say, my being has no archeology and most certainly no teleology. This is the distinctive point of Sartrian existentialism, the philosophy of nothingness par excellence. But Ricoeur, in contrast to Sartre, wants to follow negation, which he confesses to being a felt experience of man, not to a philosophy of nothingness but to the negation of negation in a new kind of affirmation. The ontological question, which arises from the ontological feeling, can be approached only on the basis of a prior reflection, which Ricoeur calls "transcendental," a reflection "from the inside," as he puts it, that would attempt to understand the ontological conditions of reflection in the mode of being and nothingness. Hence he writes,

> "under the pressure of the negative, of negative experiences, we must re-achieve a notion of being which is act rather than form, living affirmation, the power of existing and of making exist."[135]

What is meant here is that every negation of being, or of the acts of existence, presupposes a prior valuation, which in turn implies an affirmation of being. Hence, negativity is for Ricoeur the privileged road of the climb back to foundation; and this explains the necessity for a complex train of thought found in Ricoeur: to discover human transcendence

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135 HT, p. 328.

in the transgression of point of view, and a negativity in transcendence (if I am "the here" I must also be "the not-there"), then to discover in this negation the second negation of point of view as primary negation; and then to discover primary affirmation within this negation of negation.

Negation comes to mind first from the awareness of our perspectival limitations. From this first negation comes a second awareness, a firming up of our awareness of self, who now, as we know, exists within the limits of the primary negation. However, the transcendental imagination permits consciousness to extend imaginatively beyond our bodily limits to another perspective. This constitutes a negation of our limits. The transcendental movement constitutes a double negation, the negation which comes from point of view, and then the negation of this by means of transcendental imagination. This double movement makes for primary affirmation of being. In reflection man becomes aware of his finitude but by reflection he transgresses this finitude. The experience of finitude is shown to be implied in an act of transcending which, in its turn, shows itself as de-negation. Once this negative moment is brought into view, the properly ontological question can be elaborated: does denegation attest to a Nothingness or a Being whose privileged mode of manifestation and attestation is negation?[136] Ricoeur responds to this question by saying that denegation attests to a Being whose privileged mode of manifestation is negation. This is a necessary step in reflection, for Ricoeur is anxious to avoid the Husserlian subjective idealism.

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136 Ibid., p. 306.

It also has the advantage of a double effect upon the Cogito. First the Cogito must recognize its own impotence to posit itself as its own foundation and to be self-contained. On the other hand, the Cogito, by transcendental imagination and the double negation attending it, is now able to begin to work toward positing itself — but only in its acts of existing and knowing as they are bound together in the Cogito's acts of existing.

The Cogito, in its search for its foundations, begins to reflect upon the external phenomena which appear to it. The most enigmatic phenomena are also the most meaningful, for they are, by Ricoeur's definition, ontologically closest to the Cogito. Here is a methodological problem, for philosophy endeavours to create coherent discourse, but in the context supplied by enigmatic expression, philosophy must be at once hermeneutic recovery of the enigmas which precede, envelop and nourish philosophical discourse and also search for order, desire for system. In Ricoeur's own words,

> "Happy and rare would be the conjunction within one and the same philosophy of both the abundance of signs and retained enigmas and the rigor of a discourse without complacency. The crux of the difficulty lies in the relation between hermeneutics and reflection."[137]

The basic problem of hermeneutics and reflection is whether there is a necessary link between the interpretation of symbols and philosophical reflection. Why must reflection proceed from symbols? But what is reflection? Whatever else it is reflection is certainly centred on the self. To say Cogito ergo sum is both an ontological-existential and an

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137 SF, p. 201.

epistemological proposition. Reflection must be concerned with the act of existing, in Ricoeur's view, but, he goes on to add, this act can only be grasped in signs scattered in the world. The proper concern of reflection, therefore, is to recapture the act of existing, the position of the self in the whole breadth of its deeds and in doing this to root it firmly in Being. Ricoeur holds that reflection is the project or task of self-recovery through an interpretation of the acts of the self in which its fundamental act of existing and ontological status is expressed. "Reflection is the appropriation of our effort to exist and of our desire to be, across the works which testify to that effort and that desire... it reflects upon that act of existing which we display in effort and desire."[138] Accordingly, Ricoeur emphasizes the point that reflection is not immediate perception by consciousness of a thing; rather reflection is the apperception of things that are in a very real sense a project upon the Cogito. The Cogito is founded as it becomes aware of itself through these reflexive acts of apperception. This is especially so in the case of symbols.

> "I should say that existence is both willed and endured. My act of existing and my state of existing are fused in the 'I am.' And it is only in this sense that I can say that the Cogito as an act envelops the fact of existing; in this sense I can say Cogito ergo sum; but here ergo no longer designates an implication emerging from the realm of logic: it is the practical mediation itself, the pact, the connivance, which binds the consenting will to its situation, to the absolute involuntary element reasserted in its subjectivity.[139]

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138 FP, p. 54.

139 Paul Ricoeur, "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea," trans. D.J. O'Connor, Readings in Existential Phenomenology, ed. N.M. Lawrence and D.J. O'Connor Englewood-Cliffs, (1967), p. 105.

That the Cogito is a practical mediation means the Cogito is viewed by Ricoeur as the act of existence; this act has as its intention the object which is ontological and epistemological enigma. For, as he explains it, "... the object which is ontologically farthest is ontically closest" — this constitutes the height of enigma for Ricoeur.

Reflection, then, is the necessary act of the Cogito for interpretation, but reflection must be understood as the act of the Cogito to reappropriate the signs of its being in the world. The act of reappropriation moves the Cogito closer to its ontological foundations. The hermeneutical circle expressed here is essential for any concrete movement of the Cogito toward its roots, and accordingly toward its becoming self-conscious. Therefore, we can see how Ricoeur arrives at his conclusion that

> "The case for interpretation rests entirely on the reflective function of interpretive thought. If the double movement of symbols toward reflection and of reflection toward symbols is valid, interpretive thought is well grounded."[140]

Reflection then is seen by Ricoeur as the Cogito's act of existence, which act is the interpretation and understanding of the scattered signs in the world of the Ego's existence. Reflection means the reappropriation of self; the easing of the ontic tension created by the ontological disproportion. This reappropriation comes as a result of the apperception by the Cogito of the symbols of man's essential brokenness and of his hope for unity. However, reflection cannot be a

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140 FP, p. 53.

direct process, by virtue of the fact that consciousness cannot posit itself as its first act. Hence, reflection must proceed via the indirect route whereby consciousness is not pregiven but in process of becoming "self."

The first step in the process of the Cogito's becoming aware of itself is a technical device common to the two interpretive disciplines of phenomenology and psychoanalysis. We speak of the de-centring or dispossession of the Ego. "The dispossession of the Ego, which psychoanalysis more than any other hermeneutics demands of us, is the first achievement of reflection that reflection does not understand."[141] Ricoeur is firmly convinced that reflection is the philosophic starting point.

> "I am, I think; to exist, for me, is to think; I exist inasmuch as I think. Since this truth cannot be verified like a fact nor deduced like a conclusion, it has to posit itself in reflection; its self-positing is reflection; Fichte called this first truth the thetic judgement."[142]

But this first reference of reflection to the positing of the self, as existing and thinking, does not sufficiently characterize reflection. Ricoeur contends that we cannot understand why reflection requires a work of deciphering — an hermeneutics — as long as reflection is seen as a return to "the so-called evidence of immediate consciousness." To overcome this obstacle Ricoeur introduces a second trait of reflection, which he states thus: "Reflection is not intuition; or in positive terms reflection is the effort to recapture the Ego of the Ego Cogito

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141 Ibid., p. 55.
142 Ibid., p. 43.

in the mirror of its objects, its works, its acts."[143] A reflective philosophy is therefore the opposite of the immediate. The first truth — "I am, I think" — remains as abstract as it is invincible; it has to be mediated by the ideas, actions, works, institutions and monuments that objectify it. It is apparent from Ricoeur's mistrust of immediate consciousness and perception that he will recommend the suspension of immediate consciousness as the first rule for an hermeneutics of symbols. This first rule also makes the field of expression a theme apart from the immediate and individual consciousness. Expression is not only an expression of a consciousness but also an expression for that same consciousness; a dynamic which comes as a result of man's awareness of the human condition and the human hope for reconciliation. As a hermeneutic rule this suspension of conscious immediacy also makes the field of expression and understanding a field of double meaning. Immediate meaning "hides" another meaning. Both psychoanalysis and phenomenology make the same primary move in their methods: each attempts to force the individual to lose hold of consciousness and its pretension of ruling over meaning, in order to save reflection from its indomitable assurance. In other words, both methods of interpretation try to decentre consciousness to the profit of another home of meaning, which act Ricoeur names the first act of the Cogito in reflection.

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143 Ibid.

2. Two Systems of Interpretation

To gain a complete understanding of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of symbols it is necessary to realize that he sees at first two opposing systems of interpretation, each with its own aim in interpretation. Phenomenology, and particularly the phenomenology of religion, understands hermeneutics as "the manifestation and restoration of a meaning addressed to me in the manner of a message, a proclamation, or as is sometimes said, a kerygma..."[144] Psychoanalysis, on first reading, falls into line with the work of the great masters of suspicion — Nietzsche and Marx. The implied iconoclasm of a "suspicious" hermeneutics is directed against the Cartesianism of the primacy of consciousness. In function the suspicion is one which further posits some version of a barrier between consciousness and its intended meanings. The hermeneutics of suspicion calls for a deciphering of what underlies the illusion or is implied behind the barrier of false consciousness. The meaning of symbolism is other than first evidence and other than that which consciousness may intend. Hence, a hermeneutics of suspicion is one which dialectically opposes the tradition of transcendentalist philosophies of the general Cartesian orientation against the philosophies which arise from the Hegelian left.[145] The hermeneutics of suspicion begins in a severe criticism of consciousness in its immediacy and posits some version of a false consciousness which must be overcome through interpretation. Phenomenology has as its objective the

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144 FP, p. 27.
145 HP, p. 139.

construction of meaning from the hidden unity of meaning that is just below the surface of the appearances to consciousness. This constitutes the restorative function of phenomenology in its quest for the fulness of meaning.

Ricoeur maintains that, in spite of the apparent opposition of the two systems of interpretation, there is a homology between them — they both aim at the same thing. Reflection is the meaning of the unreflected, as avowed or uttered meaning; better, the subject doing the reduction is not some subject other than the natural subject, but the same. Phenomenology attempts to approach the real history of desire obliquely; starting from a perceptual model of the unconscious, it gradually generalizes that model to embrace all lived or embodied meanings, meanings that are at the same time enacted in the element of language. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, plunges directly into the "history of desire," thanks to that history's partial expression "in the derealized field of transference."[146] But both have the same aim, "the return to true discourse," in Ricoeur's words.

In his attempt to arbitrate the war between these two opposing systems, Ricoeur offers us a three-term relation, "a figure with three heads": reflection, interpretation understood as restoration of meaning, interpretation understood as the reduction of illusion. We might understand the dynamics better as dispossession of immediate consciousness, antithetic, and dialectic. These three terms constitute the reflective model for Ricoeur's philosophy. The decentring of the Ego is the first

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146 FP, p. 390.

technique of both psychoanalysis and phenomenology, as we already know. Then the two systems of interpretation, when applied to a symbol, reveal an antithetic arising from the symbol — two opposing and equally possible understandings of it. This antithetic of two opposing parties left external to one another is replaced by a dialectic in which they are interrelated, and by means of that dialectic, Ricoeur moves from abstract to concrete reflection.[147] The fact that two opposed (antithetic) interpretations can arise from symbol is the true process of creation. "This creation of meaning constitutes the true overdetermination of authentic symbols, and this overdetermination in turn grounds the possiblity of two hermeneutics, one of which unmasks the archaism of its fantasy content, while the other discovers the new intention that animates the material content."[148] The reconciliation of the two hermeneutics lies in symbols themselves. Thus one cannot stop with an antithetic that would distinguish between two sources of morality and religion, for the prophecy of consciousness is not external to its archeology, as Ricoeur would say.

From his analysis of the two opposing interpretations Ricoeur discovers two facts: one is that each has a legitimate claim to a "correct" interpretation of the symbol; the second is that they are really not so opposed as at first they appeared to be, inasmuch as each hermeneutics displaces immediate perception as the seat of meaning.

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147 Ibid., p. 341.
148 Ibid., p. 542.

> "Whether one looks back to the will to power of the Nietzschean man, to the generic being of the Marxist man, to the libido of the Freudian man, or whether one looks ahead to the transcendent home of signification which we designate here by the vague term the 'sacred,' the home of meaning is not consciousness but something other than consciousness."[149]

Psychoanalysis denies that consciousness can know the self from the beginning; it can be fully understood only as a regression from the conscious to the preconscious to the unconscious. Hence, we see that the meaning consciousness has can only be given through one or more "metapsychologies" which displace the centre of reference from consciousness toward either the unconscious of Freudian metapsychology or toward the absolute knowledge of Hegelian metapsychology. In these two apparently conflicting hermeneutics there is really no contradiction: the two represent two dimensions of symbols corresponding to two directions found in every symbol — the regressive and the progressive. Accordingly Ricoeur concludes that hermeneutics is animated by this double motivation: "willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow to rigor, vow of obedience."[150]

3. Freudian Psychoanalysis as Hermeneutics

Ricoeur's ability as a phenomenologist is considerable, and it may seem at first sight incongruous for him to look to the psychoanalysis of Freud in order to complete the work of hermeneutics begun by phenomenology. His reasons are logical, however, when it is remembered that

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149 Ibid., p. 55.
150 Ibid., p. 27.

the first aim of both phenomenology and of psychoanalysis is to locate the origin of meaning in a place other than immediate consciousness. Not only is the first aim similar, but also the last, for each discipline wishes to restore consciousness in its fulness, that is, to bring consciousness along the pathway to becoming self-aware. Since we have already sketched Ricoeur's relationship to phenomenological method, we now turn our attention to his analysis of Freud, especially where it is directly useful for the development of his own hermeneutical method. In psychoanalysis Ricoeur finds a concrete movement which carries it beyond phenomenology: "Phenomenology talks about the passive genesis, the meaning that comes about apart from me, but psychoanalysis concretely shows it."[151]

In our examination of Freud, according to Ricoeur's analysis, we shall concern ourselves only with those aspects which, in our estimation, contribute most significantly to Ricoeur's hermeneutics. This will mean that we must single out Ricoeur's conclusions, omitting the density of his arguments.

The first area of significance that Ricoeur finds in Freud's work and the one upon which he builds his later points, is that of energetics.[152] Ricoeur's interest in energetics is in relation to hermeneutics.

> "What is the relation between hermeneutics and energetics? It is a question of understanding how interpretation, its communication, and the gaining of insight are embodied in the dynamics of transference."[153]

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151 Ibid., p. 382.
152 For definition of Freud's concept of energetics see p. 45 above, note #72.
153 FP, pp. 413f.

This is where the "aporia" arises for Ricoeur in Freudian psychoanalysis: What is the status of representation or ideas in relation to the notions of instinct, aim of instinct, and affect? How can an interpretation of meaning through meaning be integrated with an economics (energetics), withdrawal of cathexis, anticathexis? As Ricoeur sees it the whole problem of Freudian epistemology may be centralized in one single question: How can the economic explanation be involved in an interpretation dealing with meaning; and conversely, how can interpretation be an aspect of the economic explanation?[154] Ricoeur concludes that for a critical philosophy the essential point about energy discourse is the placing of it. Its place, according to Ricoeur, lies at the intersection of desire and language, and he attempts to account for this place by the idea of an archeology of the subject. "The intersection of the 'natural' and the 'signifying' is the point where the instinctual drives are 'represented' by affects and ideas; consequently the coordination of the economic language and the intentional language is the main question of this epistemology and one that cannot be avoided by reducing either language to the other."[155] The notion of cathexis, that is, of the moving of psychic energy and awareness from one level of consciousness to another, expresses a type of "adhesion and cohesion" that no phenomenology of intentionality can possibly reconstruct. "At this point the energy metaphors replace the inadequate language of intention and meaning."[156] Conflicts, formations of compromise, facts of

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154 Ibid., p. 66.
155 Ibid., p. 395.
156 Ibid., p. 393.

distortion — none of these, says Ricoeur, can be stated in a reference system restricted to relations of meaning to meaning, much less of literal meaning to intended meaning.

> "...the distortion that separates the literal meaning from the intended meaning requires concepts such as dream-work, condensation, displacement, which are both hermeneutic and energetic in nature; the function of the energy metaphors is to account for the disjunction between meaning and meaning."[157]

Hence, there appear from Freud's energetics two decisive advantages for Ricoeur's hermeneutics. The first and most obvious is the necessity for the topographic-energetic discourse in order to conceptualize the movement of the Ego through localities other than immediate consciousness. The second, and less obvious, is the advantage of a discourse on energetics and cathexis which permits a discourse on the appearance of desire. For, Freud believed, dreams, facts of distortion, symbols appear as dimly-felt desire which surfaces in cathexis or redistribution of energy from one topographic locale to another. Hence, he came to say that the correlation between hermeneutics and energetics appears in a decisive manner on the level of praxis, as a correlation between the act of interpretation and the struggle against the resistance of narcissistic immediate consciousness, of the Ego: to translate the unconscious into the conscious and to "do away with constraint" resulting from the resistances are one and the same thing.[158] The positive gain from Ricoeur's study of Freud's discourse on energetics is his conclusion that "interpretation does not change in moving from the oneiric to the

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157 Ibid., p. 394.
158 Ibid., p. 408.

sublime: interpretation still consists in unmasking the superego, because it remains foreign; interpretation has changed its object, but not its purpose or aim."[159] In addition to the exploration of the hidden desires disguised in dreams and their analogues, interpretation's function is to unmask the non-primitive or non-primal sources of the ego, its foreign and alienating sources. This is the positive gain of a method of exploration that excludes at the start any self-positing of the Ego, any primal interiority, any irreducible core.

Another field of Freudian metapsychology which Ricoeur finds instructive for an hermeneutics of symbol is sublimation. Ricoeur defines sublimation as having two sides. "On the one hand it concerns the set of procedures involved in the constitution of the sublime, that is, the higher or highest aspects of man; on the other hand it concerns the symbolic instrument of this constitution of the sublime."[160] Sublimation is the movement the ego makes from instinctual representations, which Freud insists arise from sex drives, toward another object, a "higher" object in the eyes of the ego. Hence the instincts are directed towards an aim other than and remote from that of sexual satisfaction; in this process the accent falls upon deflection from sexuality.[161] The Ego is the necessary intermediary in this transformation. Thus, sublimation is connected with the alteration of the ego that Ricoeur calls identification; and as identification centres on the

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159 Ibid., p. 448.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid., p. 128.

model-image of the father in Freud's metapsychology, the superego is implied in the process of desexualization and sublimation. The more Freud distinguishes sublimation from the other psychic mechanisms, in particular from repression of instincts and reaction-formation in relation to these instincts, the more its own mechanism remains unexplained, according to Ricoeur. Sublimation is a displacement of psychic energy, but not a repression of it.[162] Whereas the economy of energy usually refers to the cathectic transfer of energy from the conscious to the unconscious, sublimation has as its reference point an object which moves energy to the "highest" psychic region — the superego. At the subliminal level the thinker realizes that in spite of the most obvious evidence (that of the Ego), a great deal more must constantly be going on in his mind than can be known to his consciousness. What is peculiar to Freud is that this insight must involve a "humiliation," since it has encountered a hitherto masked enemy, which Freud calls the "resistance of narcissism."[163] This contrariety of narcissism, as the centre of resistance to truth, gives to reflection the profound and significant connection between the appeal (of Freud) to a naturalistic model of the ego and the tactic of dislodgement and dispossession directed against the illusion of consciousness, itself rooted in narcissism. Sublimation, it must be remembered, is Freud's answer to the self-defeating strength of the narcissism of the ego. It is by idealization and identification that sublimation directs its energies

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162 Ibid., p. 487.
163 Ibid., p. 427.

away from the archaic instincts and their representatives toward emerging human figures that concretely demonstrate the deflecting of primitive desire. That is to say, the analytic technique enters into an "economy" by arousing new energies capable of overcoming the resistances, and by showing special paths along which to direct those energies.

There is a point where the question of force and the question of meaning coincide: it is the point where instincts are designated in the psychism by ideas and affects that represent or present the instincts. Freud calls these ideas "ideational representatives of an instinct."[164] The difficulty is that ultimately the task of becoming "I", of becoming the ego, a task set within the economics of desire, is in principle irreducible to the economics, because the economics is a circular understanding of energy which moves forward from the unconscious to consciousness. The task then is for consciousness to consolidate these newly released energies along lines that will encourage the ego in its task of becoming self-aware. What is asked for is the opposite of Freud's energy-movement in object cathexis; that is, the concept of progression:

> "Sublimation can be expressed in economic terms only as a regression to narcissism. But even when it is taken in the most economic and the least temporal sense, when it is conceived as...a return to the narcissistic reservoir, the regression calls for an antithetical concept that seems to have no place in the Freudian economy, the concept of progression."[165]

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164 Ibid., p. 429.
165 Ibid., p. 491.

To offset this problem, Freud introduces the important idea that the formation of ideals is brought about through the displacement of narcissism. This means at least this much: the ideal by which the subject measures his actual ego can be brought under the libido theory, precisely through the mediation of narcissism.[166] This connection between ideals and narcissism is extremely suggestive. It opens up a relation between ideals, narcissism, and sublimation. One can submit himself to an ideal without succeeding in sublimating his libidinal instincts; the neurotic is precisely the victim of the heightened demands imposed upon his instincts by the formation of an ego ideal, "demands accompanied by a low potential for sublimation. To be successful, of course, idealization requires sublimation; but it does not always obtain it, for it cannot enforce it."[167] In Freud's later writings it is clearly evident, Ricoeur assures us, that in an economics identification is understood "solely as a type of regression," whereas qua founding process it eludes the economics: "If one has lost an object or has been obliged to give it up, one often compensates oneself by setting it up once more in one's ego, so that here object-choice regresses, as it were, to identification."[168] This identification represents authority over the ego, and in Freudian theory the external fact par excellence is authority. The entrance of authority into "the history of desire," this acquired differentiation of desire, gives rise to a special type of semantics, that of ideals. Ricoeur's thesis is that this differentiation forms a dialectic homologous with the Hegelian process of the reduplication of consciousness.[169]

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166 Ibid., p. 128.
167 Ibid., p. 129.
168 Ibid., p. 481.
169 Ibid., p. 478.

There is a discordance here between Freud's concept of identification and the economics (energetics): for the "desire to be like" is irreducible to the "desire to have." Sublimation, Ricoeur contends, conceals an irreducibility of the same order: no derived formation accounts for either a primary identification or the primal power of sublimation. The relationship between sublimation and identification ennables us to relate the unresolved enigma of sublimation to the origin of self-consciousness in the dialectic of desire. Sublimation, in this context, must be seen as a gentle kind of conversion. To understand this is to see that sublimation is quite a different vicissitude from repression: sublimation is a way out, a way by which the claims of the ego can be met without involving regression, but by progression. Ideals, identification, and desire all proceed from the conversion of energy by the ego's desire to become self, which involves sublimation, or deflection of energy from the direction of repression and regression.

Ricoeur has said that consciousness cannot posit itself directly as its first act; on the contrary, the Cogito must "become." It is here that Ricoeur finds a similarity between phenomenology and psychoanalysis: each method disposes of the evidence of immediate consciousness and calls for consciousness to grow into its own being. We now want to inquire of Ricoeur what is the seat of meaning. He has already made it plain that for his phenomenology meaning is in the passive genitive. It exists outside of consciousness and comes to consciousness just as consciousness is able to grow into fuller awareness (reflexively) by apperceiving its objects of intended meaning. That is to say, meaning is found in a sort of "pro-conscious" which exists just ahead of or

just above (in spacio-temporal terms) immediate consciousness. But what is the seat of meaning for Freudian psychoanalytic method? Ricoeur concludes from his analysis of Freud's work on dreams that it is possible to understand dreams as leading us into the future, by picturing wishes as fulfilled, and this future is "molded by [the dreamer's] indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past."[170] Underlying this point is Ricoeur's thesis that no desire is efficacious unless it joins itself to the "indestructible" and "virtually immortal" desires of our unconscious. Ricoeur still hesitates to say that the unconscious is the home of meaning in Freud's metapsychology, for he claims that the reality of the unconscious itself is not an absolute reality, but is relative to the operations that give it meaning.

There are three degrees of this relativity. The first relativity involves the possibility of tracing the "derivatives" of the unconscious in the preconscious system back to their origin in the unconscious system. This relativity means that the reality of the topography constitutes itself within hermeneutics, but in a purely epistemological sense. The topography itself is relative to the hermeneutic constellation formed by the various signs, symptoms and indications together with the analytic method and explanatory models. The second relativity is an intersubjective relativity: The facts referred to the unconscious by the analytic interpretation are first of all meaningful for another; this witness-consciousness, which is the analysts' consciousness, is part

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170 FP, p. 442.

of the hermeneutic constellation within which the topographic reality is constituted. The unconscious is elaborated as reality by another person in accordance with the rules of interpretation. The third degree of the relativity of the unconscious is the relation of the unconscious to the transference of language.[171] Psychoanalysis is a work of speech; it is in a field of speech that the patient's story is "told"; hence the proper object of psychoanalysis is the effects of meaning — symptoms, dreams, illusions, delusions. For the analyst, behaviour is a segment of meaning. That is why the lost object and the substitute object are the constant theme of psychoanalysis.[172] The point here is that the linguistic interpretation has the merit of raising all the phenomena of the primary process to the rank of language; the very fact that the analytic cure itself is language attests to the mixture of the quasi-language of the unconscious and ordinary language.[173] It can therefore be maintained with some reservation that the unconscious is structured <u>like</u> a language. That is, there is no economic process to which there cannot be found a corresponding linguistic aspect and hence, the energy aspect is completely paralleled by a linguistic aspect that guarantees the correlation of the unconscious to the conscious. Thus, the very relativity of the unconscious assures us of its dynamic relation to consciousness, that is, of first meaning to second meaning, and therefore there is a home for meaning found in symbols, dreams, and other significations.

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171 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 436.
172 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 369.
173 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 405.

The seat of meaning in Freudian thought and method is definitely not consciousness, nor is it altogether the unconscious, although it is closer to the latter than to the former. The fact is that meaning in the Freudian model of consciousness originates in the backward and forward movement between consciousness and the unconscious; meaning emerges from the language which arises from the dynamic established in the economic correlation between the two topographical spheres.

What is the significance of the topographic point of view, apart from the search for a "place" of meaning that is off-centre with respect to the apparent meaning? The problem posed by wish-fulfillment is illustrative here, for the whole theory of the primary process is built upon its basis. An essential factor in this fulfillment is that fantasies have a relationship of substitution with respect to lost objects of desire; but they would not be derivatives, nor would those derivatives be remote or distorted, if they did not first of all have a relationship of meaning to something that presents itself as lost. Hence dreams, symptoms, delusions, illusions pertain to a semantics and a rhetoric, that is to say, to a function of meaning and double meaning.[174]

If it is the correlation of the unconscious and the conscious that raises the possibility of meaning, it is only through "desire" that the correlation itself exists. Ricoeur asserts that the inter-subjective structure of desire is the profound truth of the Freudian libido theory:

> "If desire were not located within an inter-human situation, there would be no such thing as repression, censorship, or wish-fulfillment through fantasies; that the other and others are primarily bearers of prohibitions is simply another way of saying that desire encounters another desire — an opposed desire."[175]

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174 Ibid., p. 368.
175 Ibid., p. 387.

The constitution of the subject in speech and the constitution of desire in intersubjectivity are one and the same phenomenon; desire enters into a meaningful history of mankind only insofar as that history is "constituted by speech addressed to the other." In return, it is because desire is desire of desire, hence demand, hence constituted by language addressed to the other, that analytic dialogue is possible; such dialogue simply transfers into the field of "a derealized discourse the drama of desire, insofar as it already was a spoken drama, a demand."[176] Desire, then, is from the very outset turned toward expression; it wishes to be expressed; it is in potency to speech. The work of psychoanalytic theory and technique is to place the work of interpretation within the region of desire. This is so because desire is expressed in distorted, illusory form; psychoanalysis has as its task the unmasking of the expressions of desire — symbols, dreams, and so on — that is, double meaning expressions.

> "Along with dreams is posited what I call...the semantics of desire, a semantics that centres around a somewhat nuclear theme: as a man of desires I go forth in disguise — larvatus prodeo. By the same token language itself is from the outset and for the most part distorted: it means something other than what it says, it has a double meaning, it is equivocal....Let us call this region of double meaning 'symbol.'"[177]

Thus, desire and symbol are linked by Ricoeur at a very basic level: Desire as unconscious energy goes forth in a disguised form; symbol is

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176 Ibid., p. 388f.
177 Ibid., pp. 6-7.

the name of the diguise. Interpretation has the aim of uncovering the hidden meaning, as it relates to the instinctual drives of the unconscious, but at this level reflective interpretation still does not bring the Cogito to self-consciousness. Another dimension is required, and that is the teleology of the subject and the symbol.

4. Symbols Give Rise To Thought

We may say that Ricoeur sees symbols as double-meaning, as representatives to consciousness of instincts of the unconscious, or as the expression of the ontological disproportion. However, if this is all we say, we omit an important part of Ricoeur's thought about symbols. For, as we have intimated from the beginning, symbols are not only objects which rank alongside things of the world, but are double-meaning expressions, whose very opacity gives us something to think about.

> "The symbolism of evil is also a symbolism of reconciliation. No doubt this reconciliation is given only in the signs that are its promise. But it is a reconciliation that always invites thought on the part of that understanding of faith which I describe as a threshold of understanding. Such an understanding does not annul its symbolic origin; it is not an understanding that allegorizes; it is an understanding that thinks according to symbols."[178]

It is as an index of the situation of man at the heart of being in which he moves, exists, and wills, that the symbol speaks to us. Consequently, the task of the philosopher guided by symbols would be to break out of

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178 Ibid., p. 527.

the enchanted enclosure of consciousness of oneself, to end the prerogative of self-reflection. "The symbol gives reason to think that the Cogito is within being, and not vice versa. Thus the second naiveté would be a second Copernican revolution: the being which posits itself in the Cogito has still to discover that the very act by which it abstracts itself from the whole does not share in the being that challenges it in every symbol..."[179] The task then is, starting from symbols, to elaborate existential concepts — that is to say, not only structures of reflection but structures of existence, insofar as existence is the being of man. At this point we recall Ricoeur's concept of the Cogito as act of existing, that is in search of the "I am" as well as act of knowing. Reflection is supposed to lead to the "becoming" of the Cogito.

> "I am convinced that we must think not behind the symbols, but starting from symbols, according to symbols, that their substance is indestructible, that they constitute the relevant substrate of speech which lives among men. In short, the symbol invites thought."[180]

The aphorism "the symbol gives rise to thought" ("La symbole donne à penser") suggests that "everything has already been said enigmatically and yet that it is always necessary to begin again in the dimension of thinking."[181] It is this articulation of thought given to itself in the realm of symbols and of thought positing and thinking that constitutes the critical point of Ricoeur's whole enterprise on the hermeneutics of

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179 SE, p. 356.
180 HPR, p. 203
181 SE, p. 349.

symbols. Ricoeur is concerned to answer this question: How can the immediacy of the symbol and the mediation of thought be held together? All symbols give rise to thought by their double meaning and double intentional structure. Because they are "overdetermined" symbols invite reflexive thought to discover the second layer of meaning bound to symbol by the structure of double intentionality. Thus a reflection upon symbols falls within a philosophy of reason where the Cogito "sees" by reflectively "knowing" symbols and other scattered cultural signs, and in the "knowing" the Cogito has its own existence confirmed.

> "All symbols give rise to thought, but the symbols of evil show in an exemplary way that there is always more in myths and symbols than in all our philosophy, and that a philosophical interpretation of symbols will never become absolute knowledge."[182]

There is no possibility for an absolute knowledge because there is no philosophy without presuppositions, especially a reflection upon symbols. A mediatation upon symbols starts from speech that has already taken place, and in which everything has already been said in some fashion; it wishes to be thought with its presuppositions.[183]

The fact that there can be no absolute knowledge proclaims again that man is absolutely contingent, even in, or especially in, thought. Ricoeur, in spurning the notion of absolute knowledge, must establish an alternative. His alternative is a knowledge and understanding of man. Ricoeur thinks that this can best be achieved by means of a thorough study of the symbols of man. The study of symbols introduces a radical contingency into philosophical discourse, because, as Ricoeur confirms, the

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182 FP, p. 527.
183 SE, p. 348.

thinker even to begin to understand a symbol must live under its influence. How does Ricoeur get beyond this circle of hermeneutics? By transforming it into a wager:

> "I wager that I shall have a better understanding of man and of the bond between the being of man and the being of all beings, if I follow the indication of symbolic thought. That wager then becomes the task of verifying my wager and saturating it, so to speak, with intelligibility. In return, the task transforms my wager: in betting on the significance of the symbolic world, I bet at the same time that my wager will be restored to me in the power of reflection, in the element of coherent discourse."[184]

There is what Ricoeur calls a "hiatus" between the understanding that we have of man's essential nature, and the avowal of evil's unfathomable contingence. This tension surfaces as a kind of battle between reflective rigor and symbolic richness, for the former would like to be able to define and understand symbols as a first level substitution of one sign for a natural event or thing.

What makes possible a reflection that begins with symbols, then, is that peculiar quality of symbols of possessing more than a single meaning. But to have an interpretation that informs philosophical discourse, and strengthens the Cogito in its growth, there must be a "logic of double-meaning."

> "The only radical way to justify hermeneutics is to seek in the very nature of reflective thought the principles of a logic of double meaning, a logic that is complex but not arbitrary, rigorous in its articulations but irreducible to the linearity of symbolic logic. This logic is no longer a formal logic but a transcendental logic established on the level

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184 Ibid., p. 355.

> of the conditions of possibility; not the conditions of the objectivity of nature, but the conditions of the appropriation of our desire to be. Thus the logic of double meanings, which is proper to hermeneutics, is of a transcendental order."[185]

At the reflexive level Ricoeur asks: "In what way does the comprehension of signs relate to the comprehension of self?" At this level the rigor of a transcendental logic or hermeneutic is called for to deal with equivocal expressions. But reflection must be transcended at the existential or ontological level where the movement towards an ontology of language parallels Heidegger. Ricoeur contends that the sole philosophical interest in symbolism is that by its structure of double meaning it reveals the eqivocity of being. "Being is said in multiple ways." The symbol shows being, and language is openness to being. The only thing that can come to the aid of eqivocal expressions and truly ground a logic of double meaning is the problematic of reflection. The only thing that can justify equivocal expressions is their a priori role in the movement of self-appropriation by self which constitutes reflective activity. This a priori function pertains to a transcendental logic, if by transcendental logic is meant the establishing of the conditions of possibility of objectivity in general, and not to a formal logic. The task of such a logic is "to extricate by a regressive method the notions presupposed in the constitution of a type of experience and a corresponding type of reality."[186] The connection which Ricoeur thus establishes between reflection upon the I think, I am, qua act, and the signs scattered in the various cultures of that act of existing, opens up a new

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185 FP, p. 48.
186 Ibid., p. 53.

field of experience, objectivity and reality. This is the field to which the logic of double meaning pertains.

We can therefore see the method by which Ricoeur raises the reflection upon symbols to the level of philosophical discourse: he places a wager that he will understand man better by understanding the signs of his being; then by means of transcendental logic he transforms the reflective gains from such a study into objective fact. He deduces, in the transcendental meaning of the word, the symbols of man and the reality to which they point. Transcendental logic allows symbols to present themselves for thought. "The requirement of univocity holds only for discourse that presents itself as argument: but reflection does not argue, it draws no conclusions, it neither deduces nor induces; it states the conditions of possibility whereby empirical consciousness can be made equal to thetic consciousness [that consciousness that posits itself]."[187] In the reflective use of multiple-meaning expressions there is no fallacy of ambiguity: to reflect upon these expressions and to interpret them is one and the same act. Hence, we must understand Ricoeur's interpretive method as reflective method and vice versa. It is important to remember that the understanding developed by reflection upon symbols is not a weak substitute for definition of any particular symbols, for reflection is not a type of thinking that defines and thinks according to "classes." Aristotle was the first, says Ricoeur, to see clearly that philosophical discourse is not subject to

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187 Ibid.

the logical alternative of univocal-equivocal, for being is not a "genus"; and yet being is said; but it is "said in many ways."[188] Thus we understand reflection as beginning with symbols to add to the Cogito, rather than having the Cogito posit itself as complete consciousness and then having the Cogito define a method of extricating a "true meaning" from symbols as with any other natural object.

5. Desire, Reflection, Interpretation

Ricoeur has said that desire is the desire to be or to become; on the other hand, "reflection is the appropriation of our effort to exist and of our desire to be, through the works which bear witness to that effort and desire."[189] That is why reflection is more than a mere critique of knowledge and even more than a mere critique of moral judgement; prior to every critique of judgement it reflects upon the act of existing which we deploy in effort and desire. The positing or emerging of effort or desire to restore the Ego is not only devoid of all intuition but is evidenced only by works whose meaning remains doubtful and revocable. This is where reflection calls for interpretation and tends to move into hermeneutics. Reflection must become interpretation, in fact, because I cannot grasp the act of existing except is signs scattered in the world. That is why a reflective philosophy must include the results, methods, and presuppositions of all the sciences that try to decipher and interpret the signs of man.

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188 Ibid.
189 Ibid., p. 46.

Freudian psychoanalytic method is one method of interpretation which Ricoeur finds instructive for a philosophy of reflection. It is because analysis starts from the puzzles of meaning "for this consciousness, from its symptoms for it, from the dream narrative it relates to the analyst.... What is crucial [in analytic method] is the suspension of that immediate meaning, or rather that choas of meaning, and the displacement of the apparent meaning and its meaninglessness into the field of deciphering constituted by the analytic work itself."[190] A hermeneutic method, coupled with reflection, goes much further than Ricoeur's eidetic method found in The Voluntary and the Involuntary. The dependence of the Cogito on the positing of desire is not directly grasped in immediate experience, but interpreted by another consciousness in the seemingly senseless signs offered to intersubjective speech. It is not at all a felt or perceived dependence, but rather "a deciphered dependence, interpreted through dreams, fantasies, myths which constitute somehow the indirect discourse of that mute darkness."[191] The rootedness of reflection in life is itself understood in reflective consciousness only in the form of an hermeneutic truth. If it is true that the language of desire is a discourse, which begins with the signs of that desire, then reflection, in order to get at the root of desire, must let itself be dispossessed of the conscious meaning of discourse and displaced to another home of meaning. But since desire is accessible only in the disguises in which it displaces itself, it is only by interpreting the signs of desire that one can recapture in reflection the emergence of desire and thus enlarge reflection to the point where it regains what it had lost, that is, self-consciousness.[192]

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190 Ibid., p. 432.
191 Ibid., p. 458.
192 Ibid., p. 424.

Ricoeur establishes the fact that self-consciousness is lost in the unconscious, that is, in the archeology of the subject, and found in its teleology. By combining in a dialectical interplay the dual concepts of archeology and teleology Ricoeur follows a path which already points through abstract reflection toward concrete reflection. He maintains that progression and regression are carried on by the same symbols — in short, that symbolism is the "area of identity between progression and regression." To understand this would be to enter into concrete reflection.[193] Saying that symbolism is the area of identity between progression and regression is the same as saying that a reflection stimulated by symbol displaces consciousness in two directions — a return to the unconscious and a hope for becoming self-conscious. Freudian analysis declares that symbols and dreams are fantasies that are revived as infantile and archaic desires, as we have seen in Ricoeur's analysis of Freud. There we saw that the centre of meaning was not immediate consciousness, but tending toward the unconscious. But regression and progression go together; they do not represent two truly opposed processes. They are rather the abstract terms employed to designate the two end limits of a single scale of symbolization.[194] Therefore a progression that would be equivalent to Freud's regression must be developed for a complete philosophy of reflection. Ricoeur finds this dialectic in Hegel's dialectical teleology, where self-consciousness has as its desire the desire for self. The dialectical teleology of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit gradually unfolds all the horizons of this desire which

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193 Ibid., p. 493.
194 Ibid., p. 522.

is the essence of self-consciousness. "Consequently when Hegel discovers in the otherness of desire the intending toward another desire, toward another desiring consciousness, he unequivocably states that we already possess, as philosophers in advance of the moment, the notion of spirit."[195] What Ricoeur wants to say is that the analysis of psychoanalysis cannot be understood in its strictly regressive structure, except by contrast with a teleology of consciousness which does not remain external to analysis but which analysis intrinsically refers to. Ricoeur thinks that this trait is evident only in a reading of Freud coupled with a reading of Hegel. In other words, Ricoeur takes Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit as the best example of an opposite phenomenology from Freud's reductive psychology, and as the one which best expresses the teleological nature of desire.

> "In the Hegelian phenomenology, each form or figure receives its meaning from the subsequent one....The truth of a given moment lies in the subsequent moment; meaning always proceeds retrogressively.... If phenomenology does not create but only makes meaning explicit as meaning discloses itself, it is because the later meaning is immanent in each of its anterior moments. Hence, phenomenology can make this later meaning explicit by examining the prior meaning; the philosopher can pattern himself on what appears, he can be a phenomenologist."[196]

The kind of teleological dimension of consciousness which Ricoeur found in Hegel was the answer he needed to complement the archeology of the subject which Freud developed. If indeed there is a connection between the subject's archeology and its teleology, that is, between two

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195 Ibid., p. 466.
196 Ibid., p. 464.

dispossessions of consciousness, then the war between the two modes of interpretation, which was Ricoeur's main problem of his problematic, is at the point of being solved. The true philosophical basis for understanding the complementarity of the reductive, demystifying hermeneutics in relation to the mytho-poetic formations of culture is the dialectic of archeology and teleology. It remains only to locate the concrete "mixed texture" in which we see archeology and teleology. This concrete mixed texture is symbol. The two opposing interpretations meet in what Ricoeur calls a "third term," which is the symbol itself. The symbol contains the multiplicity; it is at least double intentioned, and therefore has the potential for a double vector, which is necessary for consciousness to become self-aware in the appropriating of the symbol.

These two movements in symbol — regression and progression — offer the possibility for a kind of retrieve of self-consciousness which is possible only through the conversion of desire and fear.

> "For Freud, religion is the monotonous repetition of its own origins. His exclusive attention to repetition becomes a refusal to consider a possible epigenesis of religious feeling, that is to say, a transformation or conversion of desire and fear." [197]

Accordingly the historico-phenomenological evolution of symbol is also a history of the subject. Consciousness is not the first reality we can know, but the last. It is necessary for us to arrive at consciousness, not to begin with it. This thought is uppermost in Freud's tactics, and therefore he discounts only a particular or immediate consciousness.

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197 Ibid., p. 534.

But in the end psychoanalysis as hermeneutics reaffirms consciousness as that by which the hidden may become manifest. Hegel's phenomenology supplies the supplement to Freud's archeology of the subject, and according to Ricoeur Hegel's type of teleology was written into Freud's method from the start, although implicitly. The teleological aspect of subjectivity involves a displacement of consciousness too. Ricoeur concludes that these two movements have the same aim — the ontological reappropriation of the lost "self." He calls this the "promised land" of all philosophical endeavours, for man's search for his ontological roots is always bound to proceed to a point where the retrogressive action must cease. The action begins all over again there, for the ontological beyond, although more firmly felt as affectual influence, is still beyond our reflective grasp.

VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Ricoeur's thoughts on the knowing consciousness and its intended objects must now be collated and our conclusions deduced from them. There has been a single purpose guiding the course of this analysis of Ricoeur's work: to see in what ways, or at what points, his hermeneutical philosophy can be incorporated into a theory of hermeneutics, as that discipline applies to rules for the understanding and interpreting of a text. In a previous section it was concluded that the serious deficiency of hermeneutics before Ricoeur has been its lack of a clearly specified epistemology. Accordingly we have searched in Ricoeur for an adequate theory of how man "knows" and interprets a text, and in Ricoeur's case the object of interpretation is symbol, for he is the first to deal concretely with the epistemology of symbols. His findings are likely to surprise one who has been nurtured in the quiet confidence of a philosophy of immediate perception.

1. The Essential Nature of Man

Ricoeur's theory regarding man's method of "knowing" an object is entirely dependent upon his concept of the nature of man. To summarize Ricoeur's philosophy of man, we may say that he understands man as a "bound freedom," that is, as an only human freedom. What makes freedom human is the peculiar reciprocal relation of the voluntary and the involuntary in man's essential nature by which the involuntary limits his freedom while at the same time the involuntary is the medium of voluntary action: the one limits the other. The involuntary has its greatest

manifestations in spontaneous bodily actions which are unconsciously and unreflectively accomplished. Another very crucially important aspect of the involuntary is the perspectival limitation placed upon man by this same body. Man has no control over these aspects of his existence and they raise for him the certainty of the finitude of his existence. However, there is a voluntary (willful) aspect of man's nature which used the involuntary for the gain of the Cogito: the best that man can hope to achieve under the sign of the voluntary is the "way of consent," where man reflectively accepts the limiting perspective of his existence which the involuntary has placed upon him. Man therefore has a human freedom, and not an ideal freedom.

The recognition of this essential aspect of his nature creates in man a certain tension. He sees on the one hand that his limited perspective gives him a finitude which he can never overcome; and yet by means of imaginative reflection he is able to transgress the limits imposed upon him by natural existence: by the powers of imagination man is able to "see" an entire ideal realm where there is no question of the limitations of the involuntary. Accordingly man knows himself as existing in tension between two possible worlds — his historical reality and his transcendental possibilities, and he is torn between them not knowing where exactly he exists; this is the ontological disproportion which describes man as stretched tightly between his finitude and infinitude.

A consequence of this condition is that man is not able to "know" which is the true reality, or in other words, he does not know where the meaning for his existence comes from. Is it from the word which

calls man to the brute facts of his existence? Is the seat of meaning below (or behind) his present reality? Or is it above (or ahead)? Ricoeur concludes that man in his history has tended to locate the seat of meaning in his own immediate consciousness, with the result that for immediate consciousness things are precisely as they directly appear to be. For such a philosophy there is assumed a prior understanding of man according to which man's thought is not correlative to any involuntary aspect of existence, for his powers of thought are able to objectivize all the objects of the world so that it is absolutely ordered in accord with the will of man. But Ricoeur differs by saying that it is essentially a part of human nature for the seat of meaning to be some other place besides immediate consciousness.

The thinking and reflecting part of man is called the Cogito and traditionally in philosophy the Cogito has been understood as active only in the act of knowing. Ricoeur, however, by appealing to the original intention of Descartes, sees fit to reverse the action: the Cogito is act of existence first, and only secondarily act of knowing. (The priority is a logical and not a temporal one.) It is significant, though, that the Cogito only commits an act of existence insofar as it appropriates an object of the world, that is, absorbs an object which then becomes a project upon the Cogito. Therefore, the Cogito is not posited as the first act of the Cogito; instead the Cogito is in process of becoming self-aware. Hence the seat of meaning is not in consciousness, but in desire. For it is desire of the Cogito to become self-conscious which prompts the Cogito to act in appropriating the signs of its own being. It is thus the combination of desire and effort that first raises the possibility of meaning.

Ricoeur differs from traditional philosophy and hermeneutics in his understanding of man; it has been the norm for hermeneutical theory to propose man as a directly perceiving consciousness with respect to the text which he is knowing. Hermeneutical theory prior to Ricoeur has implied that man is capable of standing apart from the object of his investigation in a way that has furthered the subject-object dichotomy: man can know the text as an object which is antithetical to his own cousciousness. Even Dilthey who substantiated the necessity of accepting man's historical contingency in hermeneutical theory did not reduce the dichotomy, since man was still the beholder of a spectacle, albeit a spectacle to which he is historically connected. Being thus connected to a text does not remove the fact that it is an object which exists for the consciousness to know, a consciousness that exists independently of the object. Ricoeur claims that the Cogito is not a "finished product" that is able to "know" an object directly; the Cogito is informed by the object in such a way that it is better defined from each appropriation of another object. Ricoeur has the advantage of displacing the split between the subject and his object by way of his understanding that man does not directly perceive an object. Rather he desires to become conscious of himself and his possibilities, and to accomplish this the Cogito must apperceive its intended objects of the world, that is, it must reach out and fold them unto itself. The meaning of the intended objects in this dynamic is decided indirectly by desire, and it is "correct" if by the appropriation of meaning a greater self-consciousness is unfolded. The principal point to be remembered about Ricoeur is that he does not accept man as a given

quantity or quality, but he opens the being of man to question. By attempting to solve the "mystery" of man Ricoeur emerges with a concept of the nature of man which provides him with the base for a different theory of the knowing of man than the hermeneuticists have had hitherto: man is not a pre-given consciousness who can directly perceive objects; man is limited and unlimited at the same time, and consequently he is an ontological disproportion; this in turn gives rise to doubts about man's consciousness for knowing objects of the world; the disproportion brings forth the concept of the Cogito as act of existence and act of knowing in a joint act; and therefore the Cogito does not know itself as its first act. The Cogito is in search of itself; and desire for self-consciousness precipitates the action.

2. The Nature of Man's Knowing

If man is not immediate consciousness, then how does he know? The nature of the Cogito, as Ricoeur understands it, predicates that man's knowing is not the kind of knowing which is customarily spoken of by philosophies of immediate consciousness. The "knowing" of Ricoeur's phenomenology begins from the concept of an incomplete Cogito in search of its ontological home. Ricoeur concludes after his work in The Voluntary and the Involuntary that the Cogito wills its existence as desire to become whole, and this means that desire as desire for a consciousness is the basis for "knowing." Each act of the Cogito in apperceiving an object represents a gain for consciousness in its search for self-consciousness. Philosophies which presuppose a complete and whole consciousness in man do not see knowing as a gain of or in consciousness,

but as a gain for consciousness. For them consciousness does not grow, it perceives and then formulates its perceptions into objectively valid propositions. This is what "knowing" has meant for hermeneutics also: consciousness could gain an understanding of a text, and then formulate an understanding of it into a proposition that was then verifiable according to whether or not the proposition was sensible or verifiable. It is even possible for a hermeneuticist to admit the historicality of man in the interpretive action, and still have the text as an object which has no effect upon consciousness, that is, consciousness does not grow, it is posited as completely self-aware. The Cogito, when conceived as an expanding self-awareness, grows toward its self-awareness and its ontological roots with every appropriation of a text. By being known in the sense that immediate perception "knows," a text is merely perceived and remains an object external to consciousness; in the act of "knowing" consciousness remains unchanged. But by being "apperceived" or "appropriated" by the Cogito a text is taken into consciousness to become a part of the growth process of that consciousness, and therefore the text takes on a meaning that is directly related to the appropriating consciousness; the Cogito expresses its desire to become by the appropriation of an object (text): "I know" and "I am" are joined in appreception.

The desire for consciousness can lead to a distortion of meaning because of the narcissistic root of desire, however. It is therefore necessary for reflection to unmask the archaic and instinctual roots of distorted or illusory meaning, because they can and often do distort the meaning that desire derives from the intended objects of the Cogito's appropriation. Desire is the beginning-point for Ricoeur's epistemology/

ontology since it is the combination of desire and effort (will) that first raises the possiblity of meaning. Desire, however, is able to hurdle its self-enclosing narcissism only be deflecting the instinctual drives away from their archaic roots toward ideals which are identified as something which consciousness desires to become. This by-passing of instincts is called sublimation — the striving for "higher" goals in life, the creating of the building up of the super-ego. It is at this point that Ricoeur identifies an implicit teleology in Freud: as desire the Ego wishes to attain a position or condition which is other than its present one. Hence, Ricoeur can combine dialectically Freud's regression to the unconscious as the root of desire and Hegel's reduplication of consciousness where desire goes ahead of consciousness to find self-consciousness. Objects which allow consciousness to gain in self-knowledge are those which contain the possiblity of an interpretation in two directions — regressive and progressive. How then can any individual say that he "knows" anything if the Cogito's principal activity is the quest for the roots of its own existence?

Ricoeur responds to this challenge by use of Kant's "transcendental imagination." Although the individual consciousness gains in self-awareness as the "I am" with every apperception of an object, there is no automatic provision that this gain can be objectively demonstrated to another consciousness. The device known as transcendental imagination means that what is meaningful for the individual consciousness is then applied by that consciousness to a whole realm of objectivity such that that realm becomes meaningful. That is, what is meaningful to consciousness and contributes to its self-awareness objectivizes and orders a whole

realm of reality. Therefore, reflexive knowledge is capable of being proposed to another consciousness because it gives meaning to the existence of an objective sphere of reality.

Ricoeur sees consciousness as incomplete, as being in search of itself; hence the Cogito acts to unify the "felt" disproportion in man by appropriating objects of the world. This reflexive activity both builds up a self-consciousness and at the same time unmasks the narcissistic roots of desire and the distortion it produces. Therefore, desire is the Archimedian point for Ricoeur's epistemology/ontology, but to proceed in growth in consciousness desire must be deflected away from its primitive roots toward the Hegelian teleology of consciousness. This dialectic helps desire explore its primordial origins and its creative possibilities; transcendental imagination permits consciousness then to order an objective world around its apperceptions and to make propositions about this reality.

Up to this point it is possible to conclude that Ricoeur improves upon hermeneutical theory in the area of his concept of man and in his understanding of the process of man's "knowing" or "interpreting" a text to his own consciousness. He overcomes to some extent the subject-object dichotomy that is a perennial problem for hermeneutics by his phenomenological understanding of the Cogito as "act of existence," which means that self-consciousness is not posited as its first act. The self of consciousness does not exist in fact except in relation to the objects of apperception.

The conclusion emerges that Ricoeur's phenomenology of symbols and of human consciousness opens up new possibilities for a theory of interpret-

ation, and once again hermeneutics might return to being the foundational science that it was once thought to be. Ricoeur's understanding of the Cogito and the displacement of the origin of meaning are his greatest contributions to such a theory. He says that knowledge does not come to consciousness directly, but in an indirect process by virtue of multiple-meaning expressions which give us greater awareness of self in exploring our archaic origins and the progressive possibilities of our consciousness. Knowing is an act of existence ("I am") on the subconscious and pro-conscious* level, where the intended object calls for interpretation by reason of the several meanings contained in it. Symbols are the privileged example of multiple-meaning expressions because of their universal presence and influence and also because they expand consciousness as they are appropriated. Knowing symbols therefore means appropriating the meaning that desire puts to them, and then reflecting upon this meaning for a gain in self-consciousness.

3. The Nature of Symbol

Ricoeur claims that symbols, and indeed all language, is man's attempt a) to explore his existential condition, b) to express an understanding of his place in Being, and finally c) to grow into consciousness by reflection upon these same symbols. Symbols are opaque and misty because man does not clearly "see" his condition and his status in the world. He "feels" it; he intuits it. Symbols arise out of man's ontological disproportion as an index of man's status within the rest of Being; he is alone and broken off from Being. The symbols of evil are the particular attestation to this condition. At the same time there are symbols

* I use the term "pro-conscious" to refer to that area of consciousness which is not yet revealed to consciousness. This is the area which is continually being opened up to awareness with reflection upon the archaic origins of consciousness.

which refer to the obverse side of the symbols of evil, namely, the symbols of hope for reconciliation. Man is not only signifying the limitations of his nature, the brokenness of his being, but he also expresses his confidence in the possibility of ontological reconciliation.

Ricoeur defines symbols as double-or multiple-meaning expressions where there is a first layer of meaning which is obvious and literal; and upon this first layer there is built a second level of meaning which comes only through and by means of the first. What gives rise to the second level is "double-intentionality": symbol has a first meaning which intends something in a direct and literal sense (stain), but this object in turn refers to something else which is intended only through the first literal meaning. Ricoeur takes pains to separate symbol from sign and allegory. Signs are a mere substitution of one meaning for another; symbols are enigmatic, and therefore revealing for the Cogito which reflects upon their many meanings. Nor aresymbols allegory, because allegory is already an interpretation.

Symbols have a backward and forward motion to them: they help man explore his archaic origins as well as helping him make an advance in meaning, an advance which represents the unfolding of new creative images for his adult life.

Symbols are therefore seen by Ricoeur as the index of man's position at the heart of Being. They also express man's desire to improve this position. Symbols have multiple meanings which are found when one thinks of symbols as regressive to the unconscious of the individual or to the cosmological beginnings of mankind and as progressive, looking toward

the ontological reconciliation of man. It is the nature of multiple-meaning expressions that permits Ricoeur to say "la symbole donne à penser."

The fact that symbols are enigmatic, opaque, having more than one possible meaning, constitutes the necessity for reflection upon them. For if symbols have more than a simple meaning then reflection is called upon to decipher the meanings. Ricoeur also claims that everything has been said enigmatically that can be said, and therefore nothing new can be said discursively. Hence, philosophy is given something to think about by symbols, by the multiple ways of expressing being.

Symbols then are multiple-meaning expressions of man's essential condition and of his position at the heart of Being; symbols differ from signs because of their opacity, while signs have a simple relation of meaning to meaning; symbols have a double intentionality which relates two layers of meaning; symbols have an archaic and a progressive reference point; symbols say enigmatically everything that can be said about Being; the Cogito, by reflecting upon these signs of its being, can advance its self-consciousness; therefore symbols give us something to think about.

We have seen that Ricoeur is instructive for hermeneutics in his concept of man, and in his concept of man's act of knowing. Does he continue to teach hermeneutics by his theory of symbol? What is actually being asked here is how related his theory of symbol is to the hermeneutical theorists' understanding of "text." Is <u>symbol</u> (for Ricoeur) the same as <u>text</u> (for hermeneutical theory)?

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In his philosophical study Ricoeur has displayed an increasing interest in language, and it is this that concerns him: the ultimate presupposition of any structural linguistics is that language is an object, like other objects, that is, like the subject matter of the other sciences, where, also, the "thing" is resolved into a relationship, a system of internal dependencies. That is to say, the linguistic realm consists in moving within the enclosure of a self-sufficient universe and never encounters anything but intra-significant relations of mutual interpretation of signs. Consciousness is involved in such a system only as an ordering consciousness, a consciousness well established. There is no thought of consciousness' being expanded by encountering the language-object; consciousness has as its task the organizing of language so that it relates faithfully to the reality it speaks of. This has been the theory of language implicit in hermeneutical theory before Ricoeur. It is implied in the theorists' conviction that a "text" can be understood by my consciousness only insofar as it fits the rules of linguistic philosophy where immediate consciousness reigns supreme. If the text adheres to the rules, then it can be translated into its correct meaning by "knowing" its historical and literary context. In traditional hermeneutics there is no thought either that the text is enigmatic or that consciousness is in a process of growth.

Although in its fundamental options existential phenomenology is not primarily concerned with language, Ricoeur pushes it to a central position. Why? Because meaning — the problem of meaning and the order of meaning — primordially defines the field of all phenomenological descriptions, even if being and nothingness are the ultimate issue.[198]

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198 SR, p. 9.

For Ricoeur the phenomenological problem of language really begins "...when the act of speaking is taken on the plane where it establishes a meaning, where it makes a meaning clearly exist, apart from any explicit statements or uttered meanings. For phenomenology, as for psychoanalysis, the 'reality of language' is nothing other than the meaning achieved by behaviour."[199] The task of phenomenology, and for Ricoeur, with respect to language is to see that the positing of the subject, invoked by the whole tradition of the Cogito, is operated within language and not alongside it. The positing of the Cogito must be seen to take place in the instance or episode of communication, that is, in the act through which the potential system of language becomes the actual occurrence of speech.[200] For phenomenology, language is not an object but a mediation, that is to say, it is that by which and through which we move towards reality (whatever it may be). For phenomenology, language consists in saying something about something; it thereby escapes towards what it says; it goes beyond itself and dissolves in its intentional movement of reference.[201] This means, therefore, that language is a correlative of consciousness inasmuch as it advances beyond itself as consciousness appropriates its intended meanings: language seeks its own disappearance as an object.

Language then is not foundational and is not an object; it is mediation, it is the medium the "milieu" in which and through which the subject (Cogito) poses itself and the world shows itself.[202] Hence, the

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199 FP, p. 383.
200 SR, p. 27.
201 Ibid., p. 16.
202 SWE, p. 123.

Cogito seeks itself through language which mediates between the Cogito and the world. "For us who speak, language is not an object but a mediation. Language is that through which, by means of which, we express ourselves and express things. To speak is the act by which the speaker overcomes the closure of the universe of signs..."[203]

Ricoeur first turned his attention to language when he saw that a direct understanding of language was no longer possible: he could not speak of the symbols of evil or of a servile will without a theory of language, and a corresponding hermeneutics. Hence, he increasingly turned to language, to a phenomenology of language which should show in what function of speech the language system is reactivated, reconnected into an occurrence, restored to its role as living mediator. One would think that Ricoeur could turn to Heidegger for a hermeneutical understanding of the function of speech and language. But he cannot: although Heidegger takes understanding not only as a mode of knowledge but as a mode of being, his reduction of understanding to a mode of being destroys the distance between the interpreter and his object. Another question often raised for Heidegger is this: if ontological understanding is prior to historical knowledge, how is the latter derived from ontology? Ricoeur avoids the paradoxes of Heidegger's analysis by taking the route of analysis of language; Ricoeur's method is indirect and in a dialectic with, rather than an exclusion from, the linguistic disciplines. Heidegger's way is the short way toward what Ricoeur calls "a direct onto-

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203 Ibid., p. 119.

logy of comprehension," breaking all methodological debates and driving directly toward an ontology.[204] Hence, he must develop a theory of meaning and a semantic approach which must be supplemented by a criteriology whose concern is to investigate the semantic constitution of symbolic forms. Ricoeur finds that the semantic level is the one at which the problem of language can be "grafted" onto phenomenology.

Without tracing the details of his work on language, a précis would cover Ricoeur's significant points: he has worked through three strategic levels. He first operated as an exegete with the large units of philosophical discourse, with discursive texts; then as a lexical linguist with the sense of words, that is to say, with names; and finally as a structural linguist with semic constellations. His early work on language showed Ricoeur to be interested in the sentence as the basic function of speech. This large unit, he found, is in no way semiological, that is, understood as meaning anything relating to the internal dependencies of signs or their components. This large unit, he said, is "purely semantic, in its strong sense, that is, not merely of meaning, in general, but of saying something, of referring from the sign to the thing."[205] Gradually, however, there came about a perceptible shift in emphasis for Ricoeur from the sentence as the dispenser of meaning to the "seme" as used in ordinary language. It is not the process of change which interests us so much as the conclusions which Ricoeur arrives at. He says,

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204 HP, p. 171.
205 SR, p. 22.

> "The variability of semantic values, their sensitivity to contexts, the irreducibly polysemic character of lexical terms in ordinary language, these are not provisionary defects or diseases which a reformulation of language would eliminate, rather they are the permanent and fruitful conditions of the functioning of ordinary language."[206]

This polysemic feature of language, whereby words take on any number of meanings according to the contextual use, now appears to Ricoeur to be the base condition for symbolic discourse and in that way, the most primitive layer in a theory of metaphor, symbol, parable, and so on. He therefore alludes to the connection between the functioning of discourse on symbols and the multiple-meaning structure of our ordinary words. This parallelism extends further: understanding in the most ordinary sense of the word — let us say in conversation — is already an intersubjective process. Inasmuch as ordinary language differs from ideal language in that it has no fixed expressions independent of their contextual uses, to understand discourse is to interpret the actualizations of its polysemic values according to the permissions and suggestions proposed by the context. Ricoeur's work on language is by no means complete, but what is said here represents his progress to this point in time; whether or not his forthcoming "Poetics of the Will" will alter these results is mere speculation. But the implications for our question — "Is the symbol (for Ricoeur) the same as text (for the hermeneutical theorists)?" — are important in the light of the present stage of his development.

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206 Paul Ricoeur, "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language," Criterion, X (Spring, 1971), p. 17.

The theory of symbol implicit in The Symbolism of Evil gives the impression that there is only a hermeneutics of symbols, and Freud and Philosophy does little to correct this impression. Now after more thought and research on the general subject of hermeneutics, Ricoeur readily grants today that the interpretation of symbols is not the whole of hermeneutics, but he continues to hold that it is the condensation point, the place of greatest density, because it is in the symbol that language is revealed in its strongest force and with its greatest fullness. It says something independently of man, and it says more than he can understand. The symbol, for Ricoeur, is surely the place of the experience of the surplus of meaning. Ricoeur's move to a study of language therefore marks a progress in rigour and in scientific method. It would be false to say that he has eliminated symbolism; it has rather ceased to be an enigma. It is in truth a fascinating reality and mystifying "at its limit," where it invites explaining the obscure by the more obscure.

> "It [symbolism] is now exactly situated and doubly so: it is first situated by rapport to multiple sense, which is a question of lexemes, and therefore of speech. In this regard symbolism has nothing in itself of the remarkable; all words of ordinary speech have more than one signification.... Symbolism is situated a second time by rapport to discourse; it is in discourse that there is equivocality and not elsewhere: this is where it constitutes an effect of particular meaning."[207]

Hence, Ricoeur concludes that the possibility of symbolism is deep-rooted

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207 GER, pp. 77-78.

in a function common to all words in a universal function of language, namely, the aptitude of lexemes for developing contextual variations. If language and symbolism have a common function — the expression of extralinguistic realities — then it is plain that language, whether symbol or text, has for an interpreter a multiple sense. We can therefore answer our question in the affirmative provided we accept Ricoeur's understandings of the Cogito, of symbol, of language, and of text. The text, because of the polysemic nature of language, is an over-determined meaning just as symbol is. This means that the Cogito's act of appropriation signals an advance in the Cogito's self-consciousness with a text as with symbol. The text which is written in description of man's ontological or existential condition is by nature as opaque as a symbol which functions the same way.

In conclusion, there are fundamentally two points at which Ricoeur may alter the traditional theories of interpretation of text: first, his concept of man and the Cogito in the process of "knowing"; second, his understanding of language, symbol,and text as indicators of a reality existing within and without them,indicators with a surplus of meaning. Therefore it is concluded that Ricoeur gives hermeneutics the basis for a new theory. And finally, it is now recognized that it was in vain we searched in Ricoeur for an epistemology which would serve as the basis for a sound theory of hermeneutics. Ricoeur does not begin with knowing but with the Cogito's act of existence; man does not "know" the world, he appropriates it, and in so doing he expands the horizons of his consciousness. Hermeneutics is the phenomenological description of this reaching-out for an ontological grounding of our existence.

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