PAUL RICOEUR'S DIALECTICAL UNDERSTANDING OF TIME AND SELF AS A BASIS FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

BY

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Ricoeur's dialectical, phenomenological and hermeneutical method of forming notions of time and self is shown in this thesis to form a sound basis for interreligious dialogue. This thesis shows how this basis enables participants from diverse religious perspectives to enter into dialogue and increase self understanding and understanding and respect of the other. Ricoeur's thoroughly Western background is outlined in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 presents his approach to Time and Narrative and Chapter 3 his understanding of self and other. In Chapter 4 the needs of interreligious dialogue are explored in relation to his method and applied to various eastern orientations to the absolute. The conclusion is that from radically different orientations to the absolute Ricoeur's methodology opens up productive space for interreligious dialogue.

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The amount of time required to bring a project such as this to completion is significant and entailed a considerable sacrifice on the part of my whole family (Dianne, Daniel, Derek, Rachel and Brandon as well as the extended family). A word of thanks is not nearly enough to express the profound gratitude this author has for them.

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INTRODUCTION

THESIS STATEMENT

My contention in this thesis is that Ricoeur's notion of time and self, and his methodology, (which is dialectical, phenomenological and hermeneutical) form a basis for interreligious dialogue. The problem will be to show that Ricoeur's dialectical notions of time (psychological — cosmic[1]) and self (idem-ipse [same--self[2]]) provide openings for dialogue which enable participants from fundamentally different religious perspectives to enter into dialogue increasing self understanding and understanding and respect of the other. What is required is an atmosphere in which truth is sought in a non-polemic or non-apologetic manner. Ricoeur's dialectical approach helps to create such an atmosphere by holding opposing concepts such as self and other or time (cosmic) and time (psychological, narrative) in a state of tension such that each pole is not ultimately autonomous but dependent on the other. Clearly the concepts of time and self are basic to religious thought in that they are essential for understanding relationships to the divine and to other human beings and also set the direction for the specific understandings of salvation, justification or liberation. Ricoeur's unique phenomenological approach is vital

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[1]On the side of cosmic time, religious views that want to overcome the illusion of time, that is, that envisage time as having no enduring reality, would be located. On the side of psychological time those that want to establish the value and reality of the individual would be located.

[2]On the side of sameness for example the religious hope to overcome all differentiation would be located, on the side of self the establishment of the individual in an eternal relation with the divine would be located.

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in that it acknowledges a variety of valid and sometimes opposing views thus preventing

any one particular view from being regarded as the one and only true view. Ricoeur's

dialectical and phenomenological philosophy informs and shapes his hermeneutics.

Of the three giants of hermeneutic philosophy (Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur),

Ricoeur presents an approach which is most open to the other. Don Ihde explains in 'Paul

Ricoeur's Place in the Hermeneutic Tradition' (Hahn 67-8):

> One way of putting it is to say that with Heidegger, for example, one must
>
> fully enter into Heidegger's world. ... Ricoeur's world, on the other hand,
>
> has enough commonalities with many others that it is easier to enter: it
>
> does not have a single or single-minded opening, but rather has many
>
> openings and is thus more communitarian.
>
> Gadamer's world falls between the differences described between
>
> Heidegger and Ricoeur, but it is also a very 'Western' or Eurocentric
>
> world. Its respect for tradition is one which mutes the revolutionary. And
>
> even in the fusion and interplay of horizons, the Gadamerian world is
>
> potentially one which includes and which eases the transitions. Ricoeur's
>
> world does not reduce or ease such transitions. Its very nonsynthetic
>
> character respects differences, although the necessary result is also one in
>
> which the rough edges remain, in which resolution is more hoped for than
>
> achieved. It is one in which, even within oneself, there remain multiple
>
> voices.

Interreligious dialogue is dialogue that seeks a greater understanding of the other and of

the self in relation to the divine. An adequate ground for interreligious dialogue would have to allow for many openings to dialogue since there are many different views of the divine which result in various approaches to self understanding and understanding the other. At the same time as there is an allowance for many openings to dialogue there must also be a strong respect for the other. If it is true that Ricoeur's dialectical phenomenological hermeneutics is the hermeneutical approach which best respects the differences of the other and has many openings making it most accessible, it would only make sense to explore this approach as a ground for interreligious dialogue. I will show that Ricoeur's dialectical thought applies to both Western and Eastern thought and provides a common ground from which interreligious dialogue may be conducted.

Although attempts have been made to apply Ricoeur's thought on language, symbols, time and self to aid in the dialogue between others there has not been an attempt to use his methodology along with his notions of time and self as a basis for interreligious dialogue. My procedure will not be to critique Ricoeur's philosophy but rather to apply it to an area to which he himself has not paid a great deal of attention but which appears as a natural next step in his dialectical development.

RICOEUR'S STANDING IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP

Two highly respected anthologies on hermeneutics both give prominent place to Ricoeur's contributions. The *American Academy of Religion* produced a two volume work by David E. Klemm with the title *Hermeneutical Inquiry* in 1986. A little more recently (1990) the State University of New York Press published *The Hermeneutic*

Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur and *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy* edited by Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift. Their comments on Ricoeur will provide a clear understanding of Ricoeur's importance to the hermeneutic tradition.

Within the hermeneutic tradition David E. Klemm (*Hermeneutical Inquiry* 1: 225) describes Ricoeur as "one of the more important thinkers in the current cross-disciplinary debate over the methods and theories of interpretation." Klemm points out that Ricoeur has made major contributions to recent discussions in a variety of fields:

> He has made major contributions to recent discussions in the history of
>
> philosophy and religion, philosophy and history and religion, Marxist
>
> theory, Freudian theory, behaviorist psychology, social ethics, political
>
> theory, philosophical anthropology, the study of symbol and myth, biblical
>
> criticism, philosophy of language, structuralism, literary criticism, theory of
>
> metaphor, philosophy of action, and theology (225).

The diverse interests reflected in Ricoeur's thought revolve around his quest for meaning in human existence, that is, self understanding, from the perspective of finitude. Self understanding for Ricoeur is always a matter of interpretation and is thus indirect, mediated through a multitude of perspectives. His particular talent of mediating opposing perspectives and resisting the temptation to regard any particular point of view as absolute helps to set his method apart and make it a promising vehicle for interreligious dialogue.

For the purposes of this thesis, Ricoeur's innovative thought in grafting the hermeneutical method onto the phenomenological method are of key importance. Klemm

recognizes this contribution in his second volume of *Hermeneutical Inquiry: The Interpretation of Existence.* He notes that it is from the influence of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur that understanding came to be regarded as "a *social activity* that we engage in as human beings, as a *dialogue with others* about a subject matter that interests us, and as an ongoing *event of appropriation* in the medium of language" (1). He includes Ricoeur's essay "Existence and Hermeneutics" in his anthology to show how Ricoeur bridges the gap between the modern hermeneutical concern with the text and the postmodern hermeneutical concern with existence. Klemm states "Ricoeur intends to mediate between modern hermeneutics as epistemology-methodology [understanding as a mode of knowing which presupposes an ideological basis] on one hand and postmodern hermeneutics as practical philosophy or speculative ontology on the other hand [understanding as a mode of being which places a strong emphasis on existence]" (177). Ricoeur finds a point of mediation between the modernist and postmodernist perspectives in the Husserlian notion of signifying expressions. In keeping with his ontology of finitude, however, he does not follow Husserlian phenomenology to a transcendental reduction where the transcendental subject is revealed as the source of meaning. Rather the source of meaning for Ricoeur is the notion of human existence. Ricoeur's approach remains throughly grounded on the temporal level and focuses on language as a key aspect of human existence.

In agreement with Husserl, Ricoeur understands meaning as being conveyed through linguistic expressions. Linguistic expressions bear meaning through signs which carry a sense and reference. Husserl, operating from ideological presuppositions, argues

that from various acts of intending ("meaning-conferring acts") the content, self-identical and logically objective aspect of meaning is revealed. Klemm notes that "a meaning is not a mental act or a psychological event but the objective and ideal content of mental acts" (181). Language contains within its structure the possibility for double or multiple meanings. The phenomenological level strives towards the univocal (logical expression) nature of language, the hermeneutical level arises out of the polyvalent nature of language. While Husserl would regard "expressions of life" (Dilthey) and "symbols" as deficient expressions (that is figurative), Ricoeur, wanting to preserve the practical, temporal nature of reality, argues that they must be added on. In other words, Ricoeur argues that the upper logical level and a lower figurative level of language may be grafted together (grafting hermeneutics onto phenomenology). I see Ricoeur's innovative methodology as opening a way for the absolute nature of religious thought to be brought into play with the practical, everyday concerns of human existence.

In the Ormiston and Schrift collection, Ricoeur's contribution is presented as providing a reconciliation between Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics with its claim to universality grounded in language and Habermas's critique of ideology which sees language as bound to ideologies and distorting the balance in relationships. Ricoeur in his essay, "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology" shows that even though the approaches of Gadamer and Habermas were opposite (Gadamer sought to overcome alienation or distanciation from tradition with a hermeneutics of ontology while Habermas sought liberation from tradition through a critique of ideology) there was common ground in the critical dimension of both. The critical ground was not immediately apparent in

Gadamer's hermeneutics since its roots were in Heidegger's initial critical stance towards onto-theo-logical prejudice and had to be re-appropriated vis-à-vis the text. Thus, although distanciation from the tradition for Gadamer was the fault that dialogue seeks to overcome, distanciation created by the writing of a text, giving it an autonomy from author, historical context and original audience, is what makes interpretation possible. The text as an embodiment of tradition thus provides an instance for critique within the hermeneutic tradition. A connection between hermeneutics and ideological critique will be very useful in an attempt to bring various traditions into dialogue with one another, especially one that recognizes the validity of both approaches. For Ricoeur, while both hermeneutics and ideological critique make universal, opposing claims (universal ontological scope of linguisticality, for Gadamer and a universal unrestricted and unconstrained communication, for Habermas) both projects are legitimate and in fact complement one another. Since religious traditions make universal and opposing claims Ricoeur's approach looks promising for our project of bringing various traditions into dialogue.

One further major work concerning Paul Ricoeur must be mentioned in situating him in contemporary scholarship. *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* is the title of Volume XXII of *The Library of Living Philosophers*. Lewis Edwin Hahn is the editor of this 1995 volume which contains 25 critical essays and Ricoeur's responses to those essays. This work shows that Ricoeur has made substantial contributions to hermeneutics, semiotics, semantics, literary criticism, ethics, and religious language. Ricoeur's dialectical hermeneutical-phenomenological method stands out throughout the work. This is not to

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say that his method is beyond critique. L. Jonathan Cohen in his review of this volume notes that it is Ricoeur's ambition to mediate between opposing views rather than to discover the best supported truth about some controversial issue. He notes that Ricoeur's method is more about sense modification rather than truth-validation. For analytic philosophers whose main concern is truth-validation Ricoeur's method will seem slippery. For those who are open to a broader and more fluid understanding of truth Ricoeur's method will provide valuable insights. In the realm of interreligious dialogue I believe it is important not to assume too rigid a definition of truth. For this reason it is not the purpose of the present work to defend Ricoeur against this type of criticism. Rather, the purpose and innovation offered in this thesis is the application of Ricoeur's method to the area of interreligious dialogue. Certainly there remain questions to be answered about Ricoeur's method but the influence his thought has had on the hermeneutic tradition and his contributions to many fields of study commend his method to be considered for its applicability to interreligious dialogue.

In terms of introduction a brief description of Ricoeur's method and the way it relates to interreligious dialogue is called for.

RICOEUR'S METHOD

For Ricoeur the dialectical project of expressing the meaning of a human subject and its actions reaches into all areas of human existence including the sacred. His theological thought has been guided by a feeling of "absolute dependence" with the conviction "that the word of man had been preceded by the 'Word of God'" (Hahn 5).

Faith and reason form different levels of discourse within Ricoeur's dialectical phenomenological hermeneutic understanding of human existence, yet both faith and reason strive to answer the fundamental question of who we are as human beings.

Ricoeur's contention is that the human self is essentially a mediating being, creating its own story through drawing out of the flux of events a coherent order. The self is an intersection between opposing viewpoints. It is through mediation and the creation of a new order that the essence of the self arises with its own meaning. This mediation is not some free floating construct but is drawn from a depository (tradition) of prior understandings of the interconnected nature of "reality".

To illustrate the process of mediation we may turn to Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* Volume 1. Here he shows that from a chronological point of view time and eternity appear mutually exclusive if time is considered as a series of instants with no duration or extension and eternity is considered to be the ever present (only duration or extension). From a temporal point of view, however, time appears as giving rise to endless discordance while eternity is the state of concordance and time is seen as a limited distension of a three fold present formed through intention (memory, attention, expectation) while eternity is regarded as endless distension. Mediation between time and eternity occurs on the temporal level since time is in a dialectical relationship with eternity to set its direction, create hierarchies and set its limit. On the temporal level time participates in the concordance of which eternity is the fulfilment. On the chronological level the instant has no duration and therefore no dialectical relation with eternity. The move from chronological time to temporality is a move from the realm of random events

to the realm of the human organization of events, the realm of mediation.

The self as a fundamental mediating being lies at the heart of Ricoeur's dialectical method which might be generally viewed as the dialectic of same and other. The dialectic of same and other takes many different forms and there is no absolute resolution of each dialectic. One dialectic leads to or prepares for another thus resulting in an expanding and interrelated dialectical universe.

Ricoeur's dialectic develops through a unique synthesis of the thought of Hegel and Kant. Ricoeur borrows the structure of Hegel's dialectic but not what he perceives to be its outcome, the collapse of the dialectic into absolute knowledge or spirit. In other words, Ricoeur differs from Hegel in that he views the dialectic as ongoing, not able to reach Absolute Knowledge. Absolute Knowledge, for Ricoeur, is a limit concept that may be approached but not achieved, just as for Kant the knowledge of the "thing in itself" could only be approximated. The "thing in itself" is unconditioned and thus atemporal. For Kant reason constantly seeks the unconditioned or atemporal but does not attain it. Thus for Kant there exists an unbridgeable gap between the temporal and the atemporal. Likewise Ricoeur's dialectic does not come to an end, it achieves finite syntheses which he recognizes to be insecure and open to subsequent modifications. Hegel's dialectic may be characterized in terms of the pride of absolute knowledge, Ricoeur's dialectic is one of hope, a hope that cannot be reduced to knowledge.[3]

Since the temporal and atemporal poles of Ricoeur's dialectic cannot be collapsed,

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[3]Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* states: "The irreducibility of religious symbols to concepts, of hope to knowledge, forces Ricoeur to turn from the hubris of Hegel to the humility of Kant" (40).

the one into the other, but are nevertheless related, this implies that there is an element of reciprocity in each pole such that one pole can only exist in relation to the other. Ricoeur's connection with Kantian thought in this respect is especially strong. Kant identified time and space as fundamental a priori intuitions from which an individual produces a synthetic understanding of reality. Ricoeur presents a view of reality that is also moulded by synthetic understanding as imagination. He explores the idea that time is an extension of the soul and that the self evolves through an imaginative process in which possible worlds and possible ways of being are proposed. These proposed ways of being provide guidance for human action in shaping reality. It appears, then, that Ricoeur's recent work on the dialectical relation of time/non-time and self/other develops from the fundamental a priori Kantian intuitions of time and space (space deals with that which separates one from another and thus with the relation between self and other).

RICOEUR'S DIALECTIC AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Our first glance at Ricoeur's dialectic shows that he is looking for meaning by considering fundamental aspects of human existence such as time and self. The meaning of human existence is also a chief concern of faith. What is the relationship between Ricoeur's thought and faith? Does the level at which Ricoeur derives the meaning of the human subject and action allow for a mediation between various faith stances? Can Ricoeur's dialectic strengthen current understanding and practice of interreligious dialogue?

Ricoeur's early religious perspective focussed almost exclusively on Christianity,

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and he still identifies himself as a Christian philosopher. He considers himself as being

bound to biblical faith but seeks to practice an autonomous "philosophical approach" so

that philosophy is not subordinate to theology.[4] He thus strives to present to his readers

arguments alone "which do not assume any commitment from the reader to reject, accept,

or suspend anything with regard to biblical faith" (*Oneself* 24). Indeed throughout all his

philosophical work Ricoeur strives to maintain an "agnostic (*agnostique*)" (24) or an open

approach to the question of God. In other words, the question of God is not approached

in Ricoeur's philosophy in terms of discovering or articulating an exclusive and all-

inclusive belief. It is the open ended nature of Ricoeur's dialectical methodology that

makes him one of the most productive and creative philosophers of the 20th century.

Does East meet West? Are the two necessarily related? Are they nurtured and

sustained by each other, or are they independent, autonomous and opposed to each other

in a way that no exchange or dialogue is necessary? The march of time toward a goal, as

the linear, historical, Western way of thinking, is often contrasted to a great cyclic view of

birth, death and rebirth, as the basis for an ahistorical, mystical Eastern thought pattern.[5]

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[4]Cf. *Le conflit des interprétations* (403). Concerning the task of the philosopher Ricoeur says:
  I am not inclined to say that he brackets what he has heard and what he believes,
  for how could he philosophize in such a state of abstraction with respect to what is
  essential? But neither am I of the opinion that he should subordinate his
  philosophy to theology in an ancillary relation.

[5]The cycle of birth, death and rebirth — *saṁsāra* — is one of the early and basic presuppositions
in Indian thought. Although this doctrine was articulated in the Upaniṣadic period it no doubt
originates from earlier beliefs (cf. Noss & Noss 90). Reality is viewed in terms of this cycle and
mokṣa (liberation) is conceived as a release from this cycle.

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Although this contrast may be somewhat of an oversimplification[6] it does reflect the fact

that Eastern and Western ways of thinking result in fascinating and differing perspectives

on the most common and basic aspects of reality such as time, self and other. Do those

who traditionally look westward improve their vision by also glancing eastward?[7] Do they

who traditionally look eastward improve their vision by also glancing westward? In other

words, is dialogue helpful?[8] One might even go so far to inquire, as we will in this thesis, if

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[6]Of course both circular and linear ways of thinking exist in the East and West. Reinhold Niebuhr, a theologian who had a far reaching effect on the development of American political thought, wrote in *The Self and the Dramas of History*:

> In the history of Western civilisation the efforts to comprehend history ontologically have been many; but they all fall into two primary categories: A) the classical idea of the historical cycle, and B) the modern idea of historical development. This modern idea which has been elaborated since the Renaissance takes such various forms as the Hegelian dialectical view of historical development and the supposedly unmetaphysical and purely scientific idea of development in the thought of the social Darwinists (62).

Niebuhr views the cyclic and forward movement patterns as dimensions on which the drama of life is played. The cyclic pattern corresponds to the biological cycle of birth, life and death and the forward movement pattern corresponds to the steady growth of natural forces. If Niebuhr is correct it is clear that the two thought patterns are reciprocally related in explaining the dimensions of human life.

Ricoeur's thought also is both circular and linear. The formation of a narrative identity is accomplished through the circular mimetic activity and the cycle of time and narrative as he states at the beginning of *Time and Narrative*, *Volume 1* "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience" (3).

[7]The different perspective might be illustrated by the role of Christology in the West which deals primarily with the problem of how Jesus the man can also be truly God versus its challenge in the India where there is a whole host of incarnations or *avatāras* which raises to the fore the problem of the uniqueness of Christ.

[8]Harold Coward argues that it is becoming even more clear that dialogue is essential to understanding one's own tradition. He states:

> many Christian theologians are concluding that Christian theology cannot continue to be formulated in isolation from the other religions, and that, in fact, future developments in Christian theology will be the direct result of serious dialogue with the other religions (13). In footnote 1 on page 113 he cites Paul Tillich, *The Future of Religions*; J.M. Carmody, "A Next Step for Catholic Theology," *Theology Today* 32 (1967) 371-81; Klaus Klostermaier, "A Hindu Christian

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dialogue does not in fact constitute the ground upon which any view of time, self and other is formed.

In his book *Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions* Harold Coward shows that while theistic religions by focussing on God may have a point of contact for interreligious dialogue, the gap between nontheistic religions such as Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta[9] remains. For Coward, nontheistic thought such as Mādhyamika Buddhism and Freudian analysis make clear that there are limits to the human cognitive process which renders human thought incapable of absolutely conceptualizing reality. He rejects silence as an answer to this situation.

> The implication of this discussion is that the Mādhyamika Buddhists are correct. When the limitations of theologizing are taken seriously, all future theologizing with the intent of establishing ultimate claims to knowledge must cease. Is the correct vision for the future one in which thousands of theologians of the various religions all around the world simultaneously put down their pens? What then, silence? While the Mādhyamika Buddhists and modern skeptics and positivists might approve of this option, silence must be rejected as the correct vision for the future of theology and

Dialogue on Truth," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 12(1975) 157-73; R.H. Drummond, "Christian Theology and the History of Religions," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 12(1975): 389-405 and several other prominent theologians.

[9]"But one point, not yet recognized by theologians taking this approach, is that centring on God is a serious obstacle to Buddhists (26). "However, a potential problem is Hick's use of the term 'God' as an a priori in a way that seems unacceptable to the Buddhist and to Advaita Vedānta Hindus" (30). "Throughout the preceding chapters the problem of the divergence between the theistic religions and the nontheistic religions, such as Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta Hinduism continually reappeared" (98).

religions (105).

Coward argues that through critical dialogue we can come to a better understanding of our own particular understanding of transcendent reality. In *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur gives serious attention to the skeptics' point that the human cognitive process is not able to absolutely conceptualize reality and shows clearly how dialogue not only enriches one's self understanding but is an intrinsic aspect of it. In this thesis I will show that Ricoeur's work provides a direction and a rationale for interreligious dialogue, especially between theistic and nontheistic religious views.

Living religious traditions are in an ongoing dialogue with that which is other than the tradition. To the extent that members of a religious tradition refuse to engage the present issues they will find that their practices become less and less understandable and meaningful within their culture. Dialogue, engaging the other dialectically, is a fact of life for religious traditions. If one is looking for a common feature among religions, dialogue and dialectic would fit the bill. A phenomenological-hermeneutical investigation suggests itself as an appropriate way to understand this common factor among religions. Since religions are dialectical in nature a better understanding of the process of dialectical thought and its limitation should lead to a better understanding and communication among the various world religions.

Hermeneutics, under the influence of Heidegger and Gadamer, developed from its initial concern with understanding the theory of interpretation of texts (especially sacred texts) to an inquiry concerned with the mode of being that discloses a world. The hermeneutical shift involves a shift in fundamental presuppositions regarding the nature of

reality. Sacred texts, often making claims to provide comprehensive and exclusively true interpretations of reality, provided the starting point from which hermeneutical theories were developed prior to the shift. Hermeneutics in that context was subservient to a particular tradition. With the hermeneutical shift, however, there is an increasing recognition of the interdependent nature of reality and the relativity of the point of view of various interpreters.[10] Different times, different cultures result in different views of reality and these different views are both deposited in and grounded by sacred texts. From sacred texts all-inclusive interpretations of reality, which one may call faith stances, are often posited or maintained. The awareness that other texts are making authoritative claims regarding the fundamental nature of reality and that other faith stances exist offer challenges to any authoritative claim. Questions and critiques arise regarding the various exclusive claims. What become the criteria for finding truth? The present age of pluralism, grounded in science and technology, stands opposed to one or even any religious text providing comprehensive truth. Reason, logic, science, empiricism, technology are among

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[10]Interdependency seems to be one of the most fundamental facts of life. Each person comes from other persons and thus each person is related to all other persons. The whole biological/ecological life cycle shows an interdependence. The food we eat and the air we breath form a complex interdependent net in which human beings play a significant role. Not only are people biologically interdependent but also physically. Matter, space and time take on meaning in relation to human consciousness. Clearly then the dialectical-hermeneutical view of human beings as essentially mediating beings (i.e. beings of eros/faith/imagination) has a strong fundamental basis. Interdependency puts one in a position between being a distinct individual -- an other and being a part of the same. When sameness is emphasized the self may be regarded as an aspect of the whole. This aspect from some points of view may be regarded as essentially containing the whole (Śaṅkara, for example) or it may be recognized as having some real and distinct features as it participates in the whole (Rāmānuja, for example). The stress on otherness in its radical form, denies that it is possible to unify the whole in any way. The celebration of difference and the view that difference cannot be synthesized without doing violence to the individual forms a counter pole to the attempt to see interdependency as ultimately culminating in oneness. Ricoeur's dialectical hermeneutical view attempts to mediate between these two poles.

the key words or canons of truth for our present era. Notions of faith and the authority of sacred texts are being called into question by the thought patterns surrounding these key words. In this modern context hermeneutics becomes an attempt to situate the interpreter within an interconnected, interdependent historical reality and expose the possibilities of understanding and choices that exist for the interpreter. From a modern hermeneutical viewpoint the essence of the 'subject' is understanding. Understanding is not just something that a 'subject' does. Rather understanding is the way a subject constitutes reality for itself. Reality is not that which exists outside of the 'subject', but the being that the 'subject' participates in and to some extent forms and creates. Being in tension with tradition produces the truth of reality which surpasses the truth which may be obtained through any particular method.

In other words, with the world becoming smaller through improved communication, the hermeneutic approach of attempting to understand sacred texts has become expanded in the face of many sacred texts. Hermeneutics, once a method in the hands of individuals for articulating and understanding a particular tradition or a faith, has become a philosophy which grounds various methodologies, but cannot itself be comprehended through any one methodology. It is my contention that philosophical hermeneutics is beginning to take on the formal characteristics of a meta-religion. As a meta-religion it is no longer determined by a single tradition which it serves but transcends individual traditions and links them together. While the presuppositions of a particular religious tradition which aim toward a comprehensive explanation of reality are not able to be maintained easily in a multi-cultural world, the presuppositions of hermeneutics, which

include relativism, contextualism, interrelatedness etc are much more compatible with a multi-cultural, scientific, technological milieu. Hermeneutics itself, then, for Ricoeur and hermeneutic philosophers in general moves from a secondary role of interpreting certain religious texts to a more primary role of interpreting reality itself. Through hermeneutics one is able to situate various traditions and traditions of interpretation within an interconnected whole. This hermeneutical view of reality stresses the claim of others for recognition and opens up self-concepts to criticism. For some this view appears very de-stabilizing since reality appears to be founded on shifting sands with no rock of certainty to provide orientation. Nevertheless, the interconnected nature of reality presses itself upon us with increasing force in a pluralistic society.

The focus of this thesis is an investigation of the possibility and grounds of interreligious dialogue stemming from Ricoeur's conception of dialectic. If interreligious dialogue is to be successful there must be at least some minimal common ground on which various discussion partners can meet and evaluate one another. I propose as a meeting place and criterion of evaluation the notion of well being and wholeness since well being and wholeness are qualities that are desirable in any culture. Although the terms "well being" and "wholeness" are very vague and take on different meanings in varying contexts, they do, however, convey a fundamental human need which is common but cannot be adequately articulated in any single way. In light of the criterion of "well being" and "wholeness" we may ask: "In what ways do Ricoeur's dialectic and its consequences for interreligious dialogue improve the lot of the individual or group on the various levels of existence (i.e. personal, social, cosmic, spiritual)?" Employing the notion of well being

and wholeness allows for an evaluation of the spiritual aspect in terms of other aspects of being.[11] Thus while revelation may produce a circle which founds the faith act on the act of faith itself, the act of faith does not found the whole person and thus there are other criteria (i.e. psychological or sociological) which may be employed by the believer to reflect on and evaluate faith.[12] Ricoeur, himself, continually examines reality from various levels or perspectives as his *Le conflit des interprétations: Essai d'herméneutique* (Paris 1969) illustrates. By maintaining an agnosticism as to the identity of the other or Other in the various dialectics he refuses to end the conflict of interpretations. He invites interlocutors to draw their own partial conclusions on their path towards wholeness. The various religious views such as Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism may thus be used to critique and enrich each other vis-à-vis the well being of nations or individuals. The entire religious perspective may likewise be passed through the sieve of critique and enriched by way of psychological and sociological theories. What I have been referring to as the notion of well being, Ricoeur considers as the goal of "ethical intention." He defines "ethical

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[11]An attempt will be made to avoid combining an essentialist view which defines religion as "the sacred" or "ultimate concern" with the comparative approach. Sam Gill "The Academic Study of Religion" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LXII/4 (1994: 970) remarks that such a combining:

> tends to be blind to any potentially negative (as evaluated in these same terms) aspects of religion, blind not only to the Jonestowns and the Wacos, but also to the poverty, suffering, oppression, and violence that are aspects of almost every religious tradition.

In light of Gill's comment, the sense of well being we are using as a criterion of evaluation should not be held as the ultimate and only criterion of evaluation but as one which provides a temporary focus in appreciating the uniqueness of each discussion partner.

[12]Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx *The Understanding of Faith: Interpretation and Criticism*, trans. N.D. Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1974) 150-155.

intention": *"aiming at the 'good life' with and for others, in just institutions"*[13] (*Oneself As Another* 172). What we are looking for is a way to relate the various methods that people employ to understand and shape reality within a comprehensive and ever expanding dialectic.

The question naturally arises as to what extent the deconstructing of absolute positions distorts the pole. This is where Ricoeur has been accused of sleight of hand and of redefining concepts in such a way as to make them meaningless. Certainly Ricoeur's approach involves a degree of distortion. Indeed, any dialogue, as we will see, involves stretching certain concepts or views. Ricoeur is well aware of this and seeks to articulate ways in which the stretching may arise from within the tradition. One way he does this is by recognizing that dialogue takes place on a certain level and allows for another level in which the radical claims of absoluteness may be appreciated. In other words, Ricoeur's dialectic in the temporal realm moves toward an absolute position but in not completely escaping the temporal flux retains an element of relativism.[14]

The otherness of the other is approached in many different ways in each culture. The vast variety of methods and their corresponding methodologies may be open to a meta-methodology, that is a methodology which allows for the appreciation of each

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[13]Ricoeur is following Aristotle's use of the term "good life" or "living well." He appeals to Aristotle's reasoning as a defense against the charge that these terms are too vague to have any real meaning. "Is the discussion threatened, once again, by vagueness? Not at all. The first great lesson we receive from Aristotle is to seek the fundamental basis for the aim of the 'good life' in praxis. The second is to attempt to set up the teleology internal to praxis as the structuring principle for the aim of the 'good life'" (172-3).

[14]Time represents change and thus has the aspect of relativity, others by their mere presence also relativize. Non-time or eternity represents stillness, no growth and the self considered as the same focuses on unity or absoluteness.

specific methodology vis-à-vis its particular subject and also provides a way to harmonize the various methodologies within a dialectic aimed towards wholeness.[15] On the other hand, it may be that some methodologies are irreconcilable with others in every respect. Jacques Derrida's method of deconstruction, for example, privileges the otherness of the other to such an extent that dialogue which assumes or searches for common goals or viewpoint is ruled out. [16]

Derrida argues that simply to invite the other into dialogue or the dialectical situation is to no longer respect the other as other. In this case dialogue and dialectic are not considered as desirable options for they presuppose a meeting place from which a whole could be posited. For Derrida, however, there is no concept of a whole which subsumes the other and he thus rejects any idea of mediation. Rather a relationship of otherness is realized by recognizing only the play of difference, that is, through respecting

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[15]Ricoeur's methodology, because its essence is mediation, may thus qualify as a meta-methodology.

[16]Derrida is inspired by Nietzsche's refusal to search for a founding truth. Gabriel Marcel, one of Ricoeur's teachers, offers a critique of Nietzsche's approach:

> Nietzsche's thought can only be judged consistent if in spite of everything it recognizes that a certain type of truth, for example, scientific truth, must be transcended. But does not this movement of going beyond inevitably end up with the founding of a superior truth? If one imagines that he can escape this necessity, is he not inevitably setting off on a road which leads to delirium? [Gabriel Marcel *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond* trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Northwestern University Press, 1973) 18].

It should also be added that certain types of Buddhist thought are compared to deconstructionist thought (cf. Roger Jackson "Matching Concepts: Deconstructive and Foundationalist Tendencies in Buddhist Thought." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion.* LVII/3, (1989) 561-589 and Bimal Krishna Matilal, "Is *Prasaṅga* A Form Of Deconstruction?" *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 20 (1992): 345-362.

the integrity of the other and not trying to bring it into any form of synthesis. The problem which deconstruction identifies is that in any form of synthesis something is left out or excluded for the sake of harmony. To fully respect the otherness of the other would not involve an attempt to place that other in a dialogue or dialectical relationship and it would ultimately rule out any form of community.

If the deconstructionist attempt to fully respect the otherness of the other is fully embraced it would spell an end to any dialectical mediation and indeed to the idea that any methodology would be a path to truth. The radical deconstructionist stance would certainly stand opposed to an idea of hermeneutics as a meta-religion and as a space in which dialogue could take place. To adopt a radical deconstructionist stance, however, would be to arbitrarily opt for an absolute stance from which reality is to be judged. Ricoeur's stress on reality as interdependent is at least as possible as the radical deconstructionist stance and it also makes it possible for others to get along with others and to communicate with them. The deconstructionist critique may serve, then, as a reminder of the limits of methodologies and mediation. Methodologies and a meta-religion are ultimately prevented by otherness from providing an absolute or total mediation of various views or traditions. In other words, each method or religion will leave some remainder, for it is not able to exhaust the otherness of the other and even the combined effort of methods applied from different levels and viewpoints will still leave a remainder for the "essence" of otherness is to resist synthesis. The challenge then, in a postmodern world is for dialogue to continue despite fundamentally different viewpoints.

CHAPTER ONE -- BACKGROUND

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES ON RICOEUR'S DIALECTIC

Western thought develops in a number of directions out of a variety of opposing

approaches to reality (i.e. monism, dualism, realism, idealism, analytic philosophy,

existentialism). Similar issues are dealt with in Eastern philosophy but from a different

perspective. For example, similar issues arise in the Western discussion between monism

and dualism (based on differing interpretations of reason and reality) as arise in Eastern

philosophy between Śaṅkara's Advaita (Monism) philosophy and Madhva's Dvaita

(Dualism) philosophy (based on differing interpretations of reason and reality as expressed

in Vedānta). Both monistic perspectives must deal with the appearance of diversity and

dualistic perspectives must deal with the drive of reason towards unity. Although

Ricoeur's methodology arises out of Western thought it will be shown how his

methodology is appropriate to Eastern thought as well.

As a way to become more familiar with Ricoeur's methodology it will be helpful to

consider the contributions to his thought from some of the key Western thinkers.[17] In

order to situate his philosophical position we will draw to attention the main philosophers

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[17]John W. Van Den Hengel *The Home of Meaning: The Hermeneutics of the Subject of Paul Ricoeur* (New York: University Press of America: 1982) ix states: "To engage the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur is to insert oneself into the complex history of Western thought ..."

who had a formative and lasting effect on his dialectical approach. In chronological order[18] we will consider: Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Jean Nabert (1881-1960), and Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973). The brief summaries of the contributions of these thinkers to Ricoeur's dialectic will lay the basis upon which the fundamental dialectics of time and narrative, self and other are developed (in chapters 2 and 3) with respect to thinkers such as Aristotle and Augustine, Descartes and Nietzsche, Spinoza and Lévinas. In chapter 4 Ricoeur's development of these fundamental dialectics will be applied to interreligious dialogue.

Immanuel Kant — Limits

Questions about the relationship of thought (whether based on self evident laws or revealed truth in Scripture) and the empirical world are fundamental to both philosophers and religious thinkers. If Ricoeur's methodology is to act as a ground for interreligious dialogue it will have to be able to mediate various perspectives from rationalism, empiricism, idealism, and metaphysical thought. Ricoeur's modification of Kantian thinking provided guidance in this respect.

During the 17th and 18th centuries the intellectual world was stretched between the two poles of French Rationalism and British Empiricism. German Idealism, proclaimed and developed by Immanuel Kant, stood in the middle. Kant, in his quest for certain, universal and necessary knowledge, continued the Cartesian vision of philosophy which

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[18]Chronological order was chosen to reflect the flow of Western philosophical development in Ricoeur's thought.

stressed the gap between subjectivity and objectivity. He took subjective reasoning with its

a priori principles as the focal point in the quest for universal and necessary knowledge.

Kant argued that the content of knowledge comes from experience but the form of

knowledge lies in subjectivity.

> That all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt. ...
>
> But, though all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means
>
> follows that all arises out of experience. For, on the contrary, it is quite
>
> possible that our empirical knowledge is a compound of that which we
>
> receive through impressions, and that which the faculty of cognition
>
> supplies from itself (sensuous impressions giving merely the occasion)
>
> (*Critique of Pure Reason* 14).

According to Kant, knowledge is a transcendental synthesis that is occasioned by

experience. That which is experienced, the phenomena, is not the thing-in-itself (*Ding-an-*

sich, noumena) for according to Kant there is no way of knowing if the *a priori* intuitions

of time and space and the *a priori* categories (which make up subjectivity) are applicable

to the noumena. With his arguments that *a priori* principles form the conditions for the

possibility of knowledge, the Kantian view of reality is from the perspective of an *a priori*

subject. This a priori subject is a subject devoid of any psychological resonance and

autobiographical reference. It is the transcendental deduction states alone that accompany

the acts of the transcendental subject. Ricoeur does not follow Kant in this respect.

According to Ricoeur, the Kantian conception results in an exalted *cogito* but the price

paid for this is "the loss of its relation to the person who speaks, to the I-you of

interlocution, to the identity of a historical person, to the self of responsibility" (*Oneself* 11). The real self for Kant consists of the universal principles of rational procedure, the real self for Ricoeur is more complex, both subjective and objective.

For Kant, perceptions are primarily of a subjective nature, occasioned by some object which in itself is unknowable, for the human mind is only able to receive it in terms of the *a priori* categories available to it and there is no guarantee that these categories are entirely adequate to provide the knowledge of the thing-in-itself. Kant thus draws a sharp distinction between the noumenon (the thing-in-itself) and the phenomenon (the representation of the thing-in-itself). Since understanding starts with *a priori* principles (that is principles that are based on theory and not experience), pure reason is unable to bridge the gap between the noumenon and the phenomenon. Thus, according to Kant, reason has its limits, and these limits are determined by the given -- that is through our representations of "things-in-themselves." We cannot have any knowledge of things-in-themselves, we can only construct representations of them.

Kant's approach provides no immediate and intuitive access to existence. The Cartesian *cogito*, in Kant's view, was only able to provide a feeling of existence which accompanies representations. This feeling did not amount to self knowledge. The feeling which accompanies representations was for Kant subject to the critique of reason. Ricoeur, with a phenomenological approach, makes use of the division between being and the subject in the form of *époché* (in which accurate description is called for while holding questions about the thing-in-itself in suspension). The *époché*, then, is the opportunity for an indirect route towards self knowledge. Since, however, things-in-themselves can not be

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known, the route to the self is ongoing. Description is a process which employs the imagination to bring out similarities and differences with various objects and properties. From a phenomenological approach, then, the imagination plays a key function in understanding reality. As we will see (120) the creative imagination plays a key role also in Ricoeur's thought especially in regards to metaphor and narrative theory.

With no immediate and intuitive access to existence the question arises as to "How are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible?" Kant felt that his answer to this question solved all metaphysical problems and effected a Copernican revolution in philosophy.[19] Indeed, Kant's critique of dogmatic metaphysics destroyed the scholastic philosophy of the eighteenth century. His solution to all metaphysical problems is that they are completely beyond the grasp of the human mind. He argued against the possibility of knowledge arising from applying the categories to noumena. Likewise to apply the a priori intuitions space and time or the categories to things that are not directly experienced by the senses, realities beyond the spatio-temporal world, such as God or immortality, cannot result in knowledge. Kant illustrates what happens when the categories are applied to that which is not experienced with 'antinomies' -- that is to say, mutually contradictory propositions each of which can apparently be proved. These antinomies, according to Kant,

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[19]In *Critique of Pure Reason* 7, Kant states:
> We here propose to do just what Copernicus did in attempting to explain the celestial movements. When he found that he could make no progress by assuming that all the heavenly bodies revolved round the spectator, he reversed the process, and tried the experiment of assuming that the spectator revolved, while the stars remained at rest. We may make the same experiment with regard to the intuition of objects. If the intuition must conform to the nature of the objects, I do not see how we can know anything of them *a priori*. If, on the other hand, the object conforms to the nature of our faculty of intuition, I can then easily conceive the possibility of such an *a priori* knowledge.

demonstrate the impossibility of metaphysical knowledge.[20] Although Kant strongly

argued that reason was limited to this finite world he did not wish to demolish belief in

God. Although knowledge of God was not possible there was still room for faith, the basis

of which is to be found in the human moral sense, the 'practical' as distinct from 'pure'

reason. These Kantian insights are very important in Ricoeur's project of developing his

view of the self and truth within the practical and moral realm. They provide a distance

from metaphysical or absolute concepts so that they do not control the realm of

knowledge but leave room for perspectives from the metaphysical realm in practical life.

Thus, Kant's contribution to the critique of subjective consciousness is that he

firmly established knowledge as something different from all thinking about the self apart

from experience. Although experience is necessary to occasion knowledge, knowledge for

Kant consisted only in that which was *a priori* certain. Self reflection of the Cartesian

type, which is not occasioned by the empirically given, then, cannot result in knowledge.

The grounding of all knowledge, even the existence of God, in the Cartesian *cogito* is thus

ruled out. The realization that the self positing subject is not the most fundamental reality

helps to open up for Ricoeur a conception of the self such that the self may be dialectically

constituted through various experiences. For Kant, however, if the existence of the self is

not the most fundamental reality, what is?

Although Kant did not begin with the question of Being and indeed discounted the

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[20]Keith W. Clements, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Pioneer of Modern Theology* (London: Collins, 1987) 11 nicely sums up Kant's view: "We are endowed with awareness of a 'categorical imperative', the voice within of moral obligation, which, when obeyed, signifies our acknowledgment of a moral lawgiver. God is thus an inference from the moral sense, not a conclusion to an abstract argument of 'pure' reason."

question of Being as the basis for a 'foundationalism', he nevertheless taught a 'foundationalism'. His foundationalism was strictly formal in nature. Through his distinction between form and content, and locating the absolute cause in form, Kant believed that he could avoid the infinite regress that results in searching for an absolute cause (*Critique of Pure Reason* 155). Form would be of a non-temporal nature.

Ricoeur employs a Kantian model for showing the possibility of holding temporality and non-temporality, as well as other opposing points of view such as freedom and nature, together in reciprocal dialectical tension. Ricoeur, however, does not focus on the concept of form as containing the absolute but rather on the idea of the good. Ricoeur's dialectic brings together the opposing points of view by orienting them towards the 'highest good'. For Ricoeur this highest good finds its ultimate expression in Jesus Christ who represents the self-temporalization of God. In Jesus Christ is seen the ideal unity of the human person, the closest approximation to the absolute. In Jesus Christ, Ricoeur sees the relationship between temporal experience and a non-temporal - empirically unknowable reality symbolically expressed.

Locating the link between reason and sensibility in Jesus as the Christ provides a basis for understanding the fundamental nature of human beings. In this light human beings may be described as beings with two aspects that are not perfectly mediated but strive towards the perfect mediation as exemplified in Jesus Christ. It would seem that Ricoeur's reciprocal dialectical approach gives a certain embodiment to the ideal to which a person is oriented. In *Freedom and Nature* the type of freedom which the human being aimed for was not an absolute freedom but a freedom to acknowledge the fundamental structures of

human existing and to consent to them. Likewise the idea of the Good is an embodied idea - Jesus Christ - which represents the rational aspect of the dual human nature. It thus seems that Ricoeur assumes a conception of Christ as being uniquely and exclusively the essential mediator between God and humankind. This, of course, is one of the main themes of the Reformation and reflects Ricoeur's Calvinist background. It brings to mind, however, certain questions. What about the idea of Good in other cultures? Does Buddha represent the embodied idea of Good for Buddhists? Īśvara for Hindus?[21]

The idea of goodness provides direction and meaning for human existence and self understanding. To increase understanding is to gain an enlarged self, a self which develops towards the non-temporal. Ricoeur states: "To understand ... is to receive an enlarged self from the apprehension of proposed worlds which are the genuine object of interpretation" (*Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences* 182-3). The growth of the self then, must be a growth towards the perfect mediation as exemplified in Jesus Christ and from the point of view of other cultures what they consider to be the embodiment of goodness. A 'Kantian' limit is placed on this growth, however, since it is not possible for the self to know itself in-itself.

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[21]Ricoeur believes that there is an original bond between human beings and the sacred which is understood as the awareness of the reciprocity between the 'temporal' and the 'non-temporal'. The state of innocence in Ricoeur's view would be 'non-temporal' reality. Regeneration restores the state of innocence and goodness. Ricoeur thus believes that the state of innocence and goodness is more fundamental, and constitutes human beings at a deeper level than sin. Evil, according to Ricoeur, is not inherent in sensibility, nor does it arise from a complete perversion of the rational. "Rather evil comes about when the free will (Willkür) adopts a maxim which subordinates the pure rational motive, respect for the moral law, to sensible motives" (Anderson 216). In other words, rationality remains intact when mixed with sensibility but becomes misdirected. The Fall for Ricoeur, depicts the loss of humankind's relationship with non-temporal reality which does not literally occur with the actual fall of an historical individual (i.e. Adam). Ricoeur argues that evil, as radical as it may be, is not as primordial as goodness (Cf. *The Symbolism of Evil* 156).

Historical activities of reconstruction take place on the temporal side of the dialectic and rational activities of reconstruction take place on the non-temporal side. The non-temporal is ultimately represented as myth and within the various frameworks of myth various rationalities are operative to guard against error. The rationalities can not, however, provide a basis for truth, which, if it is absolute, must originate atemporally. Myth, representing the atemporal, provides an orientation for temporal activity. The time of myth is radically different from the time of history for the time of myth has continuing influence in the present. The truth to which the myth points is a truth that is always happening. Myths, then, cry out for interpretation in order to be made relevant to the present historical time.

Ricoeur's Kantian understanding that the knowledge of objective experience is grounded upon certain unknowable *a priori* categories of the mind leads him to conclude that human history cannot be determined solely in terms of causality within the empirical (spatio-temporal) world but must include in its organization a non-temporal aspect, an orientation towards an unchanging relevance. This transcendental idealist approach to knowing implies that temporal intuitions are mutually related with non-temporal categories. For example, the human experience of freedom according to this approach would be dependent upon non-temporal conditions, that is ideals. The mutuality between the temporal and the non-temporal, however, prevents these ideals from being absolutized and the dialectic ending up finally in the atemporal or spiritual pole, as in Hegel's absolute idealism. Ricoeur states: "between absolute knowledge (which is claimed by Hegel and by Barth) and hermeneutics it is necessary to choose" (*Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*

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193).

In Ricoeur's hermeneutics, reason is constantly seeking the unconditioned but it is

not able to achieve it. Ricoeur's view of truth is a dynamic or a concrete one of

approaching an absolute. The absolute may be manifested in a variety of ways but any

manifestation does not completely capture the absolute. Another way of expressing

Ricoeur's approach is that it is an acknowledgement that the limited character of self-

knowledge necessitates a path of deciphering not only interior signs (which would provide

a direct route to the absolute) but also exterior signs (an indirect route) as one moves

towards the absolute. If the absolute cannot be completely captured the question arises as

to how one distinguishes a 'true' cognition of the self, God or ultimate reality from a

'false' one. Kant argued in his first *Critique* that knowledge was limited to phenomena and

that noumena - the thing in itself - could not be known. Thus a person may have

knowledge of the 'phenomenal self' but knowledge of the 'noumenal' or 'transcendental'

self is cut short. People are not often content with limits. Christian hope as 'deliverance'

from the temporal flux may represent an attempt to go beyond the 'Kantian limits'. Hope

is hope, however, because it falls short of absolute certainty.

G.W.F. Hegel -- Dialectical Mediation

Hegel was initially deeply impressed by Kant's philosophy, but later became

convinced that the Kantian limitations which barred reason from the realm of metaphysics

were unjustified. Hegel reacted against Kant's understanding of reason by developing a

phenomenology of mind or spirit which was in the process of coming to know itself in-

itself. For Kant the knowing subject was excluded from the metaphysical realm (thus consigned to the temporal), for Hegel the subject constituted the metaphysical realm. Ricoeur's concept that the subject is essentially mediating between temporality and non temporality is thus situated between the thought of Kant and Hegel. A review of the influence of Hegelian thought on Ricoeur's methodology will help to clarify the way Ricoeur relates to the absolute which is a key element in interreligious dialogue.

In Kantian dialectics the mutually contradictory character of temporal acts and non-temporal states is manifested as these are extended to metaphysical realities. On the other hand, according to Hegel, the dialectical process is one of a continual unification of opposites which ultimately belong to a whole. Ricoeur reads the Hegelian movement in terms of diverse aspects of temporal reality reaching an absolute unity in an atemporal whole. Ricoeur, however, with his own dialectical approach, stops short of an ultimate Hegelian reconciliation of opposites and situates human beings within a continual conflict of interpretations. In short, Ricoeur's dialectic is not merely recognition of contradictory natures nor simply a synthesis of opposites.[22] Ricoeur's mediating approach between Kant and Hegel leads him to regard the duality between the temporal and non-temporal poles of his dialectic as reciprocally related with the human subject as the mediator. Ricoeur along with Kant assumes that in order for there to be experience and knowledge of an objective world a structure of connectedness is required. Kant describes this connectedness as the 'transcendental unity of apperception'. Ricoeur's task is to show how the temporal

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[22]Ricoeur does, however, feel that his thought is closer to Kant than it is to Hegel (Cf. *Conflict* 412-15). He states: "For my own part I feel myself closer to Kant finally - to the Kant of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* - than to Hegel" (481, 490).

(experiential) and non-temporal (rational) poles may be dialectically mediated without one being collapsed into the other and what this means for the understanding of the self. Ricoeur's method for arriving at self-consciousness is similar to Hegel's with the dialectical movement towards absolute spirit. Ricoeur, however, ultimately resists the attainment of this absolute spirit (Ricoeur reads Hegel as proposing a collapse of the dialectic with the attainment of absolute spirit) in a totality. In other words, Ricoeur does not regard the mediation of same and other as finally ending up in a whole where otherness is completely effaced. Within a conscious whole there are always contradictory movements such as a teleological movement towards meaning opposed to an archeological movement towards origins.

Hegel, in his *Phenomenology of Mind*, considers spirit or mind as an indirect way to understand the process of becoming conscious (Husserl's phenomenology was a direct phenomenology of consciousness). Hegel's phenomenology does not then regard consciousness as the centre of meaning. In psychoanalysis there is also a decentring of consciousness. The Freudian psychoanalytic view sees consciousness as arising out of the unconscious. Consciousness arises from a realm that precedes it. Ricoeur explains:

> Here too consciousness is intelligible to itself only if it allows itself to be set
>
> off-centre. Spirit or *Geist* is this movement, this dialectic of figures, which
>
> makes consciousness into "self-consciousness," into "reason," and which,
>
> with the help of the circular movement of the dialectic, finally reaffirms
>
> immediate consciousness, but in the light of the complete process of
>
> mediation (*Freud & Philosophy* 462-3).

For Hegel the spirit is sequentially constituted by various figures "master and slave, the stoic exile of thought, sceptical indifference, the unhappy consciousness, the service of the devoted mind, the observation of nature, the spirit as light, etc" (*Freud & Philosophy* 463). As consciousness moves through each of these figures it enters the process of self-recognition in another and is thus doubled. Consciousness becomes a self. Ricoeur explains: "An exegesis of consciousness would consist in a progression through all the spheres of meaning that a given consciousness must encounter and appropriate in order to reflect itself as a self, a human, adult, conscious self" (*Freud & Philosophy* 463). The home or centre of the self is not located in the psychological ego but in the figures themselves. Consciousness is a movement through external structures which becomes internalized. Self-consciousness for Hegel is achieved at the end of a process. The real self, according to Hegel, does not consist of the particulars along the way to self-consciousness but is a self of universal mind.

Ricoeur finds a counterpart to Hegel's archaeology in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* by drawing out of Freudian psychoanalysis an implicit teleology. Ricoeur reads Freud as providing a thematized archaeology of the self, a dialectical counterpart of Hegel's unthematized teleology (cf. *Freud & Philosophy* 461). It will thus be useful to review Ricoeur's reading of Freud in *Freud & Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* in our attempt to understand Hegel's contribution to the formation of Ricoeur's dialectic.

Uncovering Origins – Freudian Archeology

Ricoeur situates Freud's psychoanalysis (which he regards as an archeology of the self from the unconscious) within the realm of language and hermeneutics. Within a

comprehensive philosophy of language, psychoanalysis is located in the realm of symbols or double meanings. This sphere of symbols and double meanings requires deciphering in the form of interpretation if understanding is to take place. One symbol, however, may be capable of many different and even conflicting interpretations. Interpretations may be of two different sorts. On the one hand, there are those that seek to unmask, demystify or reduce illusions (psychoanalysis initially falls within this group for Ricoeur) and those which seek to expand meaning (Hegelian phenomenology will fall mainly within this category). Symbols should not be understood merely in terms of analogy. While analogy provides a more or less direct or simple relation between the apparent and latent meaning, dream work is much more complex, cunning and open to distortion. Interpretation of dreams requires a deeper understanding of symbols. What this means for hermeneutics is that reflection is not intuition but interpretation. One must not assume that the subject and object are as they present themselves in the dream-text. The subject then is not the locus of certitude but is itself an object of desire.

Interpretation scrutinizes signification in an attempt to determine the essence of what it points to. The concept of essence implies a unity. On its own signification would reduce interpretation to logical atomism. In opposition to signification stands the equivocalness of symbols. Ricoeur states: "It is not enough to struggle against sophistic equivocity; a second front must be opened against Eleatic univocity" (*Freud and Philosophy* 21). The question that arises about the equivocity of symbols is whether they are covering up something as agents of deception, or do they indeed provide a revelation, an expansion of meaning. Hermeneutics of suspicion seeks to disclose what is being

covered up while hermeneutics of rational faith seeks to expand meaning.

Symbols call not only for interpretation but also for philosophic reflection because they are embodied not only in rituals and emotions but also in myths, the great narratives about the beginning and the end of evil which derive their true meaning from the symbol of salvation. Reflection and symbols are interdependent. Ricoeur defines reflection as "the appropriation of our effort to exist and of our desire to be, through the works which bear witness to that effort and desire" (*Freud and Philosophy* 46). The two hermeneutic enterprises of reduction of illusions and expansion of meaning both shift the origin of meaning from the immediate subject of reflection -- 'consciousness'. The origin of meaning in the hermeneutics of suspicion may be the will to power, or the generic being or the libido and in the hermeneutics of expansion it may be the 'sacred' as something other than consciousness.

The internal psychical world and the external world of reality are brought into contrast by the id and the ego. Reality as the opposite of fantasy is regarded as factual. Reality is first the correlate of consciousness and then of the ego. "Whereas the unconscious -- the id -- is ignorant of time and contradiction and obeys only the pleasure principle, consciousness -- the ego -- has a temporal organization and takes account of what is possible and reasonable" (*Freud & Philosophy* 324). The unconscious is structured like a language. Ricoeur states: "I have tried to show that psychoanalysis is a unique and irreducible form of praxis; as such, it puts its finger on what phenomenology never perfectly attains, namely, 'our relation to our origins and our relation to our models, the id and the superego'" (*Freud & Philosophy* 418).

Expansion -- Hegelian Teleology

Psychoanalysis, by focussing on a hermeneutics of suspicion, does not tell the whole story of the self and consciousness. Suspicion does not live on its own, it requires a conception that is relied upon to critique. It is necessary to place this hermeneutics of suspicion into a dialectical relation with a hermeneutics of faith to bring the story of self-consciousness closer to completion.

> It seems to me that the concept of an archeology of the subject remains very abstract so long as it has not been set in a relationship of dialectical opposition to the complementary concept of teleology. In order to have an *arché* a subject must have a *telos*. If I understood this relationship between archeology and teleology, I would understand a number of things. First of all I would understand that my notion of reflection is itself abstract as long as this new dialectic has not been integrated into it. The subject, we said above, is never the subject one supposes. But if the subject is to attain to its true being, it is not enough for it to discover the inadequacy of its self-awareness, or even to discover the power of desire that posits it in existence. The subject must also discover that the process of "becoming conscious," through which it *appropriates* the meaning of its existence as desire and effort, does not belong to it, but belongs to the *meaning* that is formed in it. The subject must mediate self-consciousness through spirit or mind, that is, through the figures that give a telos to this "becoming conscious" (*Freud & Philosophy* 459).

Hegel and Freud agree that "the self already prefigures itself and moves toward itself within desire -- *Begierde*" (*Freud & Philosophy* 465). Although there are points of correspondence between Hegel and Freud regarding the movement within desire towards culture, Freud's economic perspective sees the genesis of the movement as a return from the object-libido to narcissistic libido whereas for Hegel "spirit is the truth of life, a truth that is not yet aware of itself in the emergence of desire, but which becomes self-reflective in the life process of becoming conscious" (*Freud & Philosophy* 465). For Freud the restlessness of life (*Unruhigkeit*) is defined as a drive or impulse, for Hegel it is noncoincidence with one's self. Noncoincidence with one's self implies a negativity, a rival consciousness. The dialectic of the two consciousnesses reveals desire as *human* "only when it is desire for another consciousness" (*Freud & Philosophy* 466). This desire for another consciousness is the desire to overcome pure self-division thus ultimately consciousness desires itself through the mediation of the other. The dialectic of archeology and teleology provides a perspective from which one may understand the complementarity, rather than a purely antithetical relationship (a nonmediated opposition), of the hermeneutics of suspicion with the hermeneutics of faith.

Ricoeur's notion of complementarity is not simple for he respects the integrity of each system of thought and looks only for relations of homology such as a dialectic of archeology and teleology (which clearly appears in Hegel but must be brought out in Freud). Ricoeur states: "Whereas Hegel links an explicit teleology of mind or spirit to an implicit archeology of life and desire, Freud links a thematized archeology of the unconscious to an unthematized teleology of the process of becoming conscious" (*Freud*

& Philosophy 461). Ricoeur's aim here of showing a dialectical relationship between the temporal (archeology of consciousness) and the non-temporal (teleology of meaning) in psychoanalytical thought helped him to better understand the constraints to speculative thought and guide him in his project of articulating dialectical relationships or conflicts of interpretation in other areas, such as structuralism.

The skill involved in successfully showing a dialectical relationship within a realm of thought involves coming to a thorough understanding of the basis of that thought and the dynamic life of that thought. In order to respect the integrity of a way of thinking the dialectical relationships must be drawn out of the thought and not imposed on it. Respect for the integrity of each system of thought is a vitally important feature especially when we come to the topic of interreligious dialogue. Respect for the integrity of each system and an understanding of the constraints to speculative thought opens up an area for dialogue between partners that may have opposing concepts of the divine or absolute.

Edmund Husserl -- Phenomenology

In interreligious dialogue one of the problems is to understand what the self is in relation to the other and to the divine. How do people with opposing understandings of the self bring their self-understanding into dialogue. Ricoeur employs a modification of Husserlian phenomenology for working out a philosophical anthropology equal to this task. A review of Husserl's phenomenology is thus called for before an examination of Ricoeur's modifications is presented.

Edmund Husserl argued that thought was not dependent on the external world and was not determinable through approximate and statistical regularities. The foundation of

thought, according to Husserl, was in the ideal realm with its certain, formal laws of logic. This ideality is not subjectively created by individual acts of thought but is formed from strict, general and objective laws. It is comprehended in the correlates of intentional acts and in the inherent movement of consciousness "in thought" with its meant-objects.

Husserl's method is to first focus his attention on an investigation of meaning. This turn towards meaning implies an *epoché* -- a suspension of the question of empirical facticity. This is the *phenomenological reduction*. It is followed by an *eidetic reduction* which employs a method of free variation[23] of acts of consciousness (perceiving, judging, wishing, and imagining) on the instances of a phenomenon of acts of consciousness to determine an invariant structure (*eidos*). The subject, then, is not simply a passive consciousness but rather the "I" actively constituting experience by applying a priori essences to empirically given data. As a constituter of experience, the "I" is not open to reflection nor is it an object of reflection or intuition. Husserl, nevertheless, argued that the "I" could be investigated through a third form of reduction, the *transcendental reduction*. This reduction seeks to uncover the structures of subjectivity from which a priori essences originate. The structures of consciousness, then, are universal and are those from which the self-world structure of consciousness emerges.

Freudian psychoanalysis of the unconscious and Structuralism, however, cast suspicion on the priority and foundational nature of the transcendental subject. This suspicion provided a strong impetus for Ricoeur to look not so much towards the

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[23]Free variation is a technique of imaginatively considering a phenomenon from various angles and observing what remains constant through the various changes.

transcendental subject as the ground for knowing but towards language (a communal creation) as the transcendental ground. Ricoeur articulates a philosophy of the subject in terms of a theory of discourse and a theory of text. The individual subject emerges from the realm of the inexpressible and the communal, structural realm of language through the creative power of metaphor and the order creating power of emplotment. Ricoeur's phenomenological approach stands between Hegel's and Husserl's since it is not a direct phenomenology of self-consciousness locating its figures in the transcendental I nor is it a phenomenology of Spirit locating its figures in the historical movement of world events. Language, in Ricoeur's mediating philosophy, is regarded as a mediator between self-consciousness and world and with this transcendental ground for phenomenology he preserves it from idealism.

Ricoeur explains that phenomenology has its root origin in Cartesian doubt but "in Husserl the *cogito* becomes something other than a first truth upon which other truths should follow in a chain of reasons. The *cogito* is the only field of phenomenological truth, and within it all claims to sense are brought before the presences which make up the phenomenon of the world" (*Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology* 4).

For Husserl the *cogito* is the only field of phenomenological truth whereas for Descartes the *cogito* was the first truth upon which other truths should follow. For Husserl the goal of logic is to separate out the general conditions of deduction. Phenomenology is the unfolding of the ego, thereafter termed "monad" in the Leibnizian manner. It is the "explication of self." The constitution of the Other plays the same role in Husserl as the existence of God does in Descartes in preserving the objectivity of my

thoughts. But if the ego appears able to be transcended only by another ego, this other ego must itself be constituted precisely as *outsider* but still *in* the sphere of experience belonging to the ego.

With Descartes the gap between subject and object became radicalized. In what way is an incarnate *cogito* related to objectivity? For Ricoeur this question involves the fundamental relation of the voluntary and the involuntary. It is not that a subject is merely considered in terms of the voluntary and an object in terms of the involuntary, rather there is fundamental reciprocity between the voluntary and the involuntary constituting the subject. Ricoeur approaches the question of the relation between the subject and object with a descriptive strategy rather than an explanatory procedure for the latter does damage to the phenomenon. The descriptive strategy aims at revealing essential structures which are involved in the voluntary-involuntary relation.

The body is a structure which is capable of objective determination (involuntary) and it is precisely this aspect of the body which loosens its ties with the *cogito*. Phenomenology, however, focuses on the intentional (voluntary) character of the consciousness in relation to an objectivity. Consciousness then is necessarily "consciousness of …" and is outwardly directed. One of the ways this outward movement may be expressed is through willing. Ricoeur's analysis of willing reveals that the one of the will (voluntary) organizes the many of the involuntary.

In order to get at the essence of the will, Ricoeur brackets the passions which enslave the will and strive to nullify it. The passions are therefore a distorting influence, a fault, a principle of disorder fragmenting the will, ridiculing its autonomy and striving to

manifest its weakness. Ricoeur wants to consider the will before its fall, before it is

distorted by the fault. The fault then is not part of the eidetics, rather it is an empirical

human condition, it is not a necessity of existence but an accident. The fault cannot

essentially distort freedom. Rather the fault arises in the sphere of empirics which flow

from the physical body. The fault is a self-mortification of freedom. Consciousness being

consciousness of something thus opens the door for the fault to enter. Against the

empirics of the fault (passions) myths of innocence are constructed to highlight its

captivity and dramas of salvation are constructed to show its transcendence.[24] Ricoeur

regarded captivity and deliverance of freedom as one and the same drama and sought to

arrive at a poetics of the will through bracketing (this is the second bracketing) this drama.

The will, however, receives its freedom as a transcendence, that is, freedom is

grounded in transcendence. In other words, transcendence is an essential aspect of

freedom. Since the will is an essential aspect of the *cogito* and freedom is an essential

aspect of the will a ground of being cannot be established simply from the resources of the

cogito. An attempt to ground being only on the *cogito* necessarily fails for it must draw

from the sphere of the fault in order to account for freedom. That is, freedom exists only

in relation to a bondage or potential bondage. Thus, when the *cogito* is posited by the

cogito it forgets that it is a being possessed prior to possessing. Ricoeur writes: "We

should form an absolutely false idea of the *cogito* if we conceived of it as a positing of the

self by itself; the self as radical autonomy, not only moral but ontological, is precisely the

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[24]It thus appears that the empirics of the fault constitute a basis upon which myths are formed. That is, myths are employed to explain or explore the empirical reality in its relation to the eternal.

fault" (*Freedom and Nature* 26). Empirics are thus an essential aspect of the self or *cogito* and the idealism of Husserl's phenomenology will prevent him from coming to an adequate conception of the subject.

Ricoeur's poetics strive to articulate the self in terms of a gift of being. His poetics is an attempt to recapture a philosophical way of speaking that has been forgotten by those who seek to ground the self in the self positing *cogito*. In *The Voluntary and the Involuntary* Ricoeur seeks to re-situate the *cogito* in reality "as a hope lived out under the act of consent to a necessity which it neither creates nor dominates" (Scott 28).

Ricoeur's poetics is a project in which the will strives to grasp its own essence. But the will is precisely this act of self-understanding. The will comes to recognize its ground in nature which is the locus of a radical necessity. In recognizing nature as its ground the possibility opens up of an affirmation and admiration of being which poetry expresses.

Ricoeur's phenomenology is in accord with Husserl's focus that spirit (in terms of logic and necessity) has ontological priority over nature (which is empiric and thus accidental). Ricoeur, however, argues for this priority in a different way. The involuntary is for the sake of the voluntary. That is, although ontologically one starts with logic and necessity for understanding nature, logic and necessity serve the empiric and accidental nature. The law of gravity may be described logically and in terms of cause and effect, however the existence of gravity is accidental, it could have operated differently or not have existed at all. It seems to me that Ricoeur's point is that some sort of cosmic will made things be the way they are and one cannot go beyond that will for a cause and effect

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or an explanation in terms of necessity. Ricoeur's view thus differs from Husserl's belief

that "Nature is relative to absolute spirit" because spirit is essentially self individuating

(self positing) whereas a thing is not essentially an individuality and receives its essence

only in terms of a perceiver. Ricoeur's project, in distinction from Husserl, is to replace

Husserl's empty "I think" (the voluntary aspect of the "I think" with no direct connection

to the involuntary) with a phenomenology of the "I am" which involves a reciprocal

relationship between the involuntary and the voluntary.

Ricoeur seeks to show how speech constitutes the essential element of freedom in

which the "I am" grasps itself and its world. For Ricoeur, the soul is *"anabasis,* the rising

toward being" (*Fallible Man* 13) because it suffers from the loss of being. In other words

there is a gap between the finite and infinite. The gap is not absolute, however, because

neither the finite nor the infinite can be isolated on its own. The coming together of the

finite and infinite is where the meaning of life resides and this region is articulated in

myths. Ricoeur states: "Today, for us, myths are no longer explanations of reality, but,

precisely because they have lost their explanatory pretension, they reveal an exploratory

signification; they manifest a symbolic function, that is, a way of expressing indirectly the

bond between man and what he considers sacred" (*Conflict* 426). Reflection thus has a

mythic base without which it cannot exist. Reflection strives to interpret the works in

which human beings have sought to understand themselves. This striving for

understanding makes it apparent that the *cogito* is not utterly self-possessed and

transparent. Archaeological, teleological and sacred symbols constitute the source for

reflection. "The symbol gives reason to think that the *Cogito* is within being, and not vice

versa" (*Symbolism of Evil* 356). Ricoeur's belief is that the bond between human beings and Being is one that is ruptured and restored and this loss and restoration is proclaimed in the symbols of the sacred. Symbols are bound to the primordially sayable and to the unsayable so that something both speakable and unspeakable gives to symbols their density and opacity. Recognition of the "I am" thus occurs after the self understanding of the "I am." The "I am" is spoken to from out of the preconstituted richness of speech. This self understanding is reached through an appropriation of meaning which is accompanied by a disclosing of Being. This ontology is a logos or discourse about Being which human beings do not command. An ontology may be worked out because human beings are at once both desire and saying.

For Ricoeur, phenomenological hermeneutics is bound to the task of appropriation motivated by the will to believe in order to advance ideal meaning toward real reference:

> This advance of (ideal) meaning toward the (real) reference is the very soul
>
> of language ... the ideal meaning is a void and an absence which demand to
>
> be fulfilled. By such fulfilling, language comes into its own, that is to say,
>
> dies to itself... what we thus articulate is a signifying intention that breaks
>
> the closure of the sign, which opens the sign onto the other, in brief, which
>
> constitutes language as a saying, a saying something about something
>
> (*Conflict* 87).

Speech is something mysterious: "The upsurge of saying into our speaking is the very mystery of language" (*Conflict* 96). As opposed to Husserl's imperious *cogito* depositing and reactivating meanings (a responsibility beyond its inherent power), Ricoeur

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regards appropriation not so much an action by a subject but rather an action on a subject. A text has an autonomy which impinges on a *cogito*. A subject is thus appropriated to or appropriated by the matter of the text. Ricoeur states: "So I exchange the *me, master* of itself, for the *self, disciple* of the text" (*Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences* 113).

Husserl's failure to reach a transcendental subject and Ricoeur's articulation of why his project had to fail has important implications for the concept of the self in interreligious dialogue. On the phenomenal level Ricoeur shows that the self is linked to the involuntary, natural world and is constituted (not simply posited). It is on the phenomenal level that discussion about the self can take place between different faith stances which on the level of salvation, justification or sanctification (which some may regard as a freedom from the involuntary) regard the self in radically different ways. In other words, the relation of the self to the absolute may not be a good place to start inter-religious dialogue since on this level there may be mutually exclusive views as to how the self relates to the absolute (i.e. the self may be regarded as the absolute itself or it may be regarded as an illusion). On the phenomenological level or philosophical level (the level of temporality) the relation of the self to the voluntary and involuntary is an issue and all religious thought would have to give some account of this relation. In other words, there is a common need to explain the meaning of human actions on the temporal level and this common need could provide a point of departure for a dialogue that could result in an enriched conception of the temporal self and its relations.

Jean Nabert -- Originary Experience

A methodology that forms the basis for interreligious dialogue must be able to take into account the various forces that drive the participants forward in their quest for salvation, justification or liberation. Jean Nabert's understanding of philosophy as reflection strongly shaped Ricoeur's methodology in this respect. Nabert's article *Les Philosophies de la Réflexion* in *Encyclopédie Française* (19.04-14 - 19.06-3) begins by distinguishing two basic approaches to reflection:

> ... de distinguer une réflexion où c'est l'absolu qui se réfléchit dans le
>
> mouvement d'une conscience particulière et une réflexion qui constitue,
>
> d'abord, le sujet lui-même et ressaisit, après cela, immanentes à ses
>
> opérations, les lois et les normes de l'activité spirituelle dans tous les
>
> domaines (19.04-15).

For Nabert, reflection does not lead back to an individual realizing through intuition his or her origin or destiny within a static absolute. Rather the individual recognizes within him or herself an originary dynamism -- a desire to be. Nabert thus regards human existence fundamentally as the embodiment of feeling, a feeling that affirms the goodness of life and is expressed by the actions of the individual. Through reflection an individual comes to realize that the structures that he or she affirms reflect that desire to be. When value, for example, is placed upon the family structure, the fact that the family structure was created and valued reflects the desire to be. In other words, the belief that infants are to be cared for and nurtured and taught is an expression of the desire to be and the affirmation of the goodness of life. Nabert thus argues for reflection to be understood as desire and not mere

intuition. Nabert was the first to alert Ricoeur to the idea that reflection must be interpretation, that reflection is indirect, mediated through symbols and signs. He explains Nabert's view in his introduction to Nabert's *Elements for an Ethic* (xvii-xviii):

> The philosopher of reflection does not seek the radical point of departure. He has already begun, but in the mode of *feeling*; everything has already been experienced, but everything remains to be understood, to be "regrasped" - using the happy phrase of Jean Nabert - clearly and rigorously. These initial feelings are evidence that reflection is desire and not intuition of self, enjoyment of one's being. Reflection is justified as reflection by what seems to precede it, to obscure and limit it. It is this same movement which gets hold of itself within its initial confusion and "directs itself to the affirmation toward which the entire moral experience is ordered" (*Elements for an Ethic* 4). For reflective philosophy, to begin is not to state a first truth; it is "to reveal the structures" of what precedes reflection, the structures of spontaneous consciousness. To begin is to show that in this consciousness there is an order which can be understood and which can help one understand why this self has not yet attained satisfaction, why reflection is desire.

An individual self does not struggle arbitrarily to overcome its ignorance of self but is guided by an ethical aim.[25] In other words, the history of an individual struggling to

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[25]The ethical aim is distinguished from the moral duty. Moral duty evolves in the Kantian scheme of things through a "critique" of the good. For Nabert ethics means "the reasoned history of our effort to exist, of our desire to be" (Ricoeur's introduction to *Elements For An Ethic* xxi).

overcome errors, seductions and failures operates, perhaps unconsciously, with the

guidance of an ethical aim in an attempt to find true orientation and deep will. Nabert's

dynamic self stands between Kant's rational self and the interiorist self of Maine de Biran

(1766-1824). Reflection for Nabert is not a critique of knowledge and on the other hand it

is not diminished to a "dimension of inwardness". Ricoeur explains:

> It is because reflection on action cannot give birth to a critique of
>
> knowledge that the two modes of reflection can aid each other. "A just
>
> conception of the relationships between reason and consciousness depends
>
> on their solidarity." This "complementarity of reflective analysis applied to
>
> the order of knowledge and of reflective analysis applied to the domain of
>
> action" distinguishes Nabert both from the critique which reduces the
>
> "dimension of inwardness" to transcendental knowledge and from
>
> Biranism, which professes to derive transcendental consciousness with its
>
> exigencies of objectivity from the primitive fact of willing (xxi-xxii).

For Nabert human existence is to be understood from a standpoint that transcends both

rationality and existence. Ricoeur regards Jean Nabert as being the only French

philosopher who successfully mediated the antithetical trends of intellectualism and

interiority, judgment and life, truth and existence. In Nabert's philosophy the self is freed

from dependence upon the structure of theoretical reason and its source is located in a

primary originary affirmation which is an act that is ever prior and never given.

Nabert's unending project of recapturing the originary act may be thought of as a

type of archaeology but it is not phenomenology since phenomenology focuses on present

meaning separated from the act as such. By approaching the originary act Nabert hopes to bring about a healing of the non-coincidence of the self with itself. Ricoeur believes that the non-coincidence is not to be healed on the philosophical level and thus retains an aspect of phenomenological reflection modeled on Marcel's 'second reflection'. Like Husserl's 'epoche' this 'second reflection' introduces a *distance* within reflection itself but does not assume Husserlian idealism or concept of the life world.

Nabert's reflective philosophy opens up an area between the transcendental self and a purely rational self. This area is the area of human action, the action of reflecting on the origin of being and living with the "desire to be". This aspect of temporal human existence is also the concern of religious thought as may be clearly seen with the many different myths of the origin of human existence. Dialogue between different faith perspectives within this area could also result in better understanding of how the self is situated in the world. Ricoeur's refusal to find healing on the temporal level indicates the essential non-coincidence of human existence with itself. This area is an area of seeking for salvation, justification or liberation, this is the area of the self seeking itself. Is not this the theme also of Eastern philosophies -- a quest for the true self or the perfection of the self? The true self is found when the self is in tune with the ultimate source of existence (Brahman, Buddhahood, Heaven or Tao).

Gabriel Marcel -- Concrete Existence and Reflection

Dialogue takes place when people with different life experiences and perspectives encounter one another. Dialogue partners are joint participants in some aspect of life

experience and hope to gain a better understanding of their endeavour and the endeavour of others. Gabriel Marcel's existential approach helps Ricoeur develop the dimension of participation in his methodology. Participation helps Ricoeur ground his methodology in experience.

Participation is a key word for Marcel. Participation, as openness to others and involvement with them, is what characterizes personhood. This stress on participation implies rejection of the Cartesian autonomous subject[26] and a rejection of the Kantian alternative of autonomy versus heteronomy. (This again supports Ricoeur's contention that the self is constituted.) The human person for Marcel is the being who is both free and dependent.

As opposed to the existential point of view, the technological point of view (which focuses on the techniques for manipulating objective reality) regards the individual as "an agglomeration of functions" (*Tragic Wisdom* 12). The technological focussing on function causes despair for function alone is empty. There is a deep need within human beings which can only be engaged through reflection and imagination.[27] The technological view suffers under illusion, the illusion that "this world bears its own justification in itself" (*Tragic Wisdom* 26). When Marcel expresses his concerns about the technological race to conquer space as an attempt to escape earthly reality, he states: "The truth is that I can

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[26]Marcel states:

> I would go so far as to ask if the *cogito* (whose incurable ambiguity can never be too clearly exposed) does not really mean: 'when I think, I am standing back from myself, I am raising myself up before myself as other, and I therefore appear as existent.' Such a conception as this is radically opposed to the idealism which defines the self as self-consciousness (*Being and Having* 104).

[27]For Marcel reflection cannot operate where there is no imagination. Cf. *Tragic Wisdom* (133).

find my true self again only on condition that I become attuned once more to the reality in which I participate" (*Tragic Wisdom* 194). In the foreword to Gallagher's biography of Marcel, Marcel makes the poignant comment: "*We do not belong to ourselves:* this is certainly the sum and substance, if not of wisdom, at least of any spirituality worthy of the name."[28] For Marcel human reality is the visible unity of being and having.

Marcel discovered that experiences and interests in life, especially poetry and drama, constitute a kind of secondary reflection which enables the philosopher to deal with what is yet ineffable. Primary reflection is purely analytical and reductive. It dissolves the concrete into its elements. Secondary reflection, on the other hand, is reconstructive or synthetic opening up to the philosopher an area for thought and imagination similar to the Husserlian epoché. Ricoeur's narrative theory perhaps has its origins with Marcel's philosophy in which everything comes from drama and everything leads to it as well (Cf. *Tragic Wisdom* 230).

For Marcel reflection is an aspect of experience. He states in *The Mystery of Being*[29]:

The more we grasp the notion of experience in its proper complexity, in its active and I would even dare say dialectical aspects, the better we shall understand how experience cannot fail to transform itself into reflection, and we shall even have the right to say that the more richly it is experience,

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[28]Kenneth T. Gallagher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel: Foreword by Gabriel Marcel* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1975) viii.

[29]Quoted in *Tragic Wisdom* xxiv.

the more, also, it is reflection.

Experience as mediated through the body is for Marcel the primary focus of his reflection on existence. Ricoeur, on the other hand, takes experience as mediated through language as his primary focus for reflection. In light of Marcel's stress on experience understanding becomes the sympathetic experiential penetration of the essential structures of the situation. In other words, comprehension is above all compassion.

Marcel's stress on participation implies that an experience of existence cannot stand completely on its own.[30] In other words the notion of an autonomous self is an abstraction and not an essence. The "essence" or ego of the self is rather given in experience as a being-by-participation. It is not, however, specific behaviours that define what it means to be human but rather "*exigences*, like those embodied in the idea of truth, which go beyond all behaviour" (*Tragic Wisdom* 34). According to Marcel, ontological exigencies like love, hope, and fidelity are not recognized by a solitary ego but only by a subject-in-communion. In other words, it is the I-thou relation that gives access to being.

Freedom for Marcel is defined as the absence of any form of self-alienation. He states: "I act freely if the motives of my act are in line with what I can legitimately regard

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[30]Marcel explains his conviction regarding the irreducible nature of existence:
> That is to say, I have never been able to understand the question that certain philosophers have asked, notably Schelling and more recently Heidegger, the question that goes, "How is it that something exists, that an entity is?" From the beginning my answer has been that this question today makes no sense at all because it implies a possibility which is not granted to us, the possibility of abstracting ourselves in some way from existence or of placing ourselves outside existence in order to behold it. But what we are able to behold are objects, things which share in objectivity. Existence, however, is nothing of the sort; existence is prior. ... existence is not only given, it is also giving -- however paradoxical this sounds. That is, existence is the very condition of any thinking whatsoever.
> (*Tragic Wisdom* 221)

as the structural features of my personality" (*Tragic Wisdom* 86). Intersubjectivity exists only when there is freedom, the freedom for the individual to be open to others. This freedom comes by way of a fundamental or structural assurance which is not necessarily easy for an individual to discern.

> Whenever we try to translate it into a general proposition we greatly risk distorting it. To speak of structural conditions, as I have just done, seems to involve a commitment to a formalism. But an existential assurance is opposed to any formalism whatever. To attain such an assurance we must again turn to poetry, to poetic experience (*Tragic Wisdom* 39).

On the other hand there is the existential assurance of finitude and the sinister possibility of being so preoccupied with death that the concerns of others seem stupid. For Marcel a philosophy of anxiety must be balanced by a philosophy of hope which is perhaps the primordial existential assurance.

Participation may be multi-levelled but at each level it is only participation which allows there to be a self. An attempt to comprehend reality within a system, as so many philosophies do, is to abandon participation in the concrete. The attempt to observe reality in a detached way is misdirected because it is an abandoning of existence. Marcel's philosophical method is to trace out the richness and depth of the experience of participation.

For Marcel, Being is not some sort of abstraction, it is not a problem that may be solved through applying appropriate techniques but it is mystery that is essentially related to the self. Marcel states:

A problem is something met with which bars my passage. It is before me in

its entirety. A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find

myself caught up, and whose essence is therefore not to be before me in its

entirety. It is as though in this province the distinction between *in me* and

before me loses its meaning (*Being and Having* 100).

The distinction between problem and mystery is central to Ricoeur's philosophy, it brings

out the intrinsically unfathomable nature of a finite self, constantly creating itself, related

to an infinite whole. While Marcel acknowledged the possibility, indeed the necessity of

despair, (Cf. *Being and Having* 119) he also saw hope as an essential aspect of concrete

human existence. Faith and hope spring out of what Marcel calls "...une expérience

existentielle de la joie, de la plénitude" (*Entretiens* 87).

Marcel helps Ricoeur to articulate the understanding that the temporal area of

human acting is an area of participation, mystery and hope. The mystical as the source of

the self is a common theme throughout world religions even in the East[31]. In Upaniṣadic -

Vedāntic thought the mystery of Brahman, the source of the self, is that Brahman is both

"qualified" and "unqualified." This further confirms my argument that this area which

Ricoeur maps out, the area of human action, is an area where interreligious dialogue is

necessary and fruitful. As an area of mystery this philosophical level invites explorations

and discoveries through dialogue and dialectic. Dialogue and dialectic are recognized as

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[31]Lik Kuen Tong in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, Hahn, states: "We find almost everywhere in the Eastern traditions of reflective thought the identification of the ultimate source with the mystical." He goes on to point out that "the mystical is really not something that is alien to us but is essentially constitutive of our own existence: it is indeed the quintessence of existence itself" (513).

giving rise to the self and in this way an understanding of the self is further clarified. As an area of hope it is an area where one may be participating with others on a journey towards justification, sanctification or liberation.

VARIOUS LEVELS OF RICOEUR'S DIALECTICAL THOUGHT

The brief survey of some of the major influences in the development of Ricoeur's dialectic provided an understanding of the major structural features of his thought. As his dialectic developed it went through a series of changes in its focus.

In high school Ricoeur took the side of Aristotle in the battle between realism and the idealism expounded by Descartes and Kant (cf. Hahn 4). In his early work on Husserl's phenomenology, following WW II, he attempted to extract the descriptive essence of phenomenology from its idealist interpretation by exploring the dialectical relationship between the voluntary and the involuntary with the intent of widening the eidetic field to include the practical sphere of human activity. He focussed on the themes of the disproportion and fallibility of the human subject that arose in the dialectic between the finite and infinite. Evil did not appear to be a structural aspect of finitude but contingent and historical. The concrete form of evil could not be obtained through a direct reflection on the human subject but had to be reached through symbols and myths regarding its origin. Evil, then, as a part of the ontological constitution of the self, showed that the self could not be reached through direct reflection but required a detour through symbols and myth. This ran directly contrary to Husserl and Descartes who proclaimed the immediateness and transparence of the subject to itself and set Ricoeur off in the direction of language especially the creative power of poetics.

Ricoeur's search for the meaning of the subject continued in the 1970's despite the critiques of philosophy of the subject launched on many fronts which regarded linguistic

and social structures as irrelevant to the subject's search for meaning. During this period, Ricoeur, partially as a result of his work on evil, turned to Freudian psychoanalysis to expand his symbolic mediation of the subject in the direction of all sign systems. Through Freud's work he uncovered a dialectic of a reductive interpretation in Freud's search for the origin of the subject which was opposed to the amplifying interpretation he employed when focussing on the surplus of meaning in the symbol. The self then came to be located between the conflict of interpretations of a teleology of meaning and an archeology of consciousness. Acknowledging the contributions of conflicting interpretations, one setting limits to the other, to the ontological status of the self helped Ricoeur to overcome the critique of the philosophy of the subject. Each interpretation operates at a certain level. Applying this understanding of the levels of interpretation to structural analysis, Ricoeur realized that on the objective and systematic semiotic level signs operate within a system made up of internal relations. On the semantic level, however, the primary unit of meaning is not the sign but the sentence, made up of signs. Through the sentence "someone says something to someone about something in accordance with rules (phonetic, lexical, syntactic, stylistic)" (Hahn 22). The self comes to understand itself through the mediation of signs by the sentence. In other words, the self is drawn out of the objective, atemporal realm of events (the level of signs) into the temporal realm of meaning (the level of the sentence).

In 1975 Ricoeur published *The Rule of Metaphor*. The meaning of the metaphor arises as the level changes from that of the word to that of the sentence. The impertinent attribution of the metaphor was not a mere rhetorical ornament but rather opened up by

seeing-as an extralinguistic order of "being-as". This redescription of reality is the reference of metaphor.

After 1975 Ricoeur came to look to larger units of discourse -- the text. He found that the dialectic between explanation and understanding, played out on this level, became the major concern of hermeneutics. At the time of Dilthey explanation pertained to the natural sciences alone and understanding to the human sciences creating an ontological dualism between spirit and nature. Ricoeur recognized that understanding a text called for explanation. The text functioned as a mediator between explanation and understanding. Around 1977 Ricoeur began to expand the notion of the text to include action. The acting subject became the focus of Ricoeur's thought, hence another shift in the focus of hermeneutics to human action.

With the shift to human action the issues of time and self, central issues in philosophical and religious thought, emerge as the governing themes of Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics. Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (written in the 1980's) focusses on time and *Oneself As Another* (written in the early 1990's) focuses on the self. It is these fundamental dialectical relations, providing mediation on various levels of reality that I will look to in my attempt to further clarify the necessity, place and role of interreligious dialogue in human culture. A detailed look at these dialectics follows.

CHAPTER 2 -- TIME AND NARRATIVE

COSMOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TIME

Does Ricoeur's dialectical concept of time and narrative open up a dialectical

space in which the integrity of various Eastern religious views (dealing with fundamental

issues and the way reality is perceived) may be respected and at the same time brought

into dialogue with Western perspectives? Ricoeur's three volume work on time and

narrative draws from the history of Western thought on time and brings together the

concept of time in the natural world (time as movement) and the psychological

understanding of time (extension) through his concept of narrative identity. The levels of

movement and extension are mediated in the self and it is through this mediation that the

self is formed.

In the Western world time is characteristically thought of as historical and linear.

Furthermore, from its Judaic roots, time is conceived of as a creation of God, who is in

personal relationship with Israel. The identity of the nation of Israel is rooted in history

mediated through many genres of narrative, deposited in their tradition and canonized in

their scriptures. Israel's identity unfolds throughout the development of history and is

anchored in stories such as the deliverance from Egypt, the giving of the Law on Mt.

Sinai, wandering in the wilderness and entering the Promised Land. The identity of the

Israelites is maintained through the retelling of these stories in their contemporary

situations. These stories affirm the faithfulness of God in bringing salvation to the Israelites. Salvation is conceived of as being in harmony with the personal creator of all being. In this respect Western thought on time is rooted in a psychological approach which involves memory, intention and expectation.

Eastern thought often considers time as circular movement ruled by an impersonal and all-encompassing order. The problem of the identity of the self may be tied to the instant, as in Buddhism, where the self is continually recreated each instant. An abiding identity is then seen as an illusion and the goal of overcoming the illusion is realized with no-self. On the other hand, as in Advaita Vedānta thought, the self may be identified with the creation of time itself and the self may be seen as the whole. The goal is to realize that the individuality of the self is an illusion, the self is ultimately the whole reality, including time and space. In both Hindu and Buddhistic thought there are many stages or levels that individuals pass through on the way to the realization of the absolute. The various levels of overcoming the temporal self to bring it back to its roots in the absolute moves in the opposite direction of personal temporal Western self-understanding which strives towards its roots in temporality.

Ricoeur's narrative theory provides a meeting place for these diverse views. He leaves in suspense the understanding of the Other (a personal God or an impersonal cosmic process) and focuses on the practical level, the level of human action. It is on this level that our self-understanding or self-overcoming is worked out and it is on this level that we form our understanding through our interaction with others.

Modern Views of Time

Reciprocity between being and time is the foundational building block of Ricoeur's philosophy. This theme was pioneered by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) who believed that the importance of the question of being was obscured to the extent that time was neglected or taken for granted as the possibility for an understanding of being. In other words, if being is conceived of only as presence, and the other dimensions of time (i.e. past and future) are not taken into account, then a narrow and misleading conception of being results. Heidegger, as Ricoeur explains[32], in his thought on time:

> reserves the term temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) for the most originary form and
>
> the most authentic experience of time, that is, the dialectic of coming to be,
>
> having been, and making present. In this dialectic, time is entirely
>
> desubstantialized. The words "future," "past," and "present" disappear, and
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> time itself figures as the exploded unity of the three temporal extases (*Time*
>
> *and Narrative* 1: 61).

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[32]Ricoeur acknowledges that a fundamental difference between his project and Heidegger's is that while Heidegger seeks for an understanding of Being in general, he himself is more focussed on an anthropology. Ricoeur states:

> I am well aware that a reading of *Being and Time* in a purely anthropological
> sense runs the risk of completely missing the meaning of the entire work inasmuch
> as its ontological aim may be misconceived. *Dasein* is the "place" where the being
> that we are is constituted through its capacity of posing the question of Being or
> the meaning of Being. To isolate the philosophical anthropology of *Being and*
> *Time*, therefore, is to overlook this major signification of the central existential
> category of that work. Yet in *Being and Time*, the question of Being is opened up
> precisely by an analysis that must first have some consistency as a philosophical
> anthropology, if it is to achieve the ontological breakthrough expected of it (*Time*
> *and Narrative* 1: 61).

According to Heidegger time and being are intrinsically related, it is metaphysical thought, having forgotten the basic question of Being since Plato and Aristotle, (Cf. *Being and Time* 2) which seeks to maintain a seductive, deceptive, and inauthentic dualism of enduring substance and thought. Heidegger, seeking an understanding of Being from its authentic perspective, locates thought and understanding within the sphere of temporality. Understanding according to Heidegger, always involves projection upon an horizon, in fact understanding is projection and vice versa. For Heidegger (Cf. *Being and Time* 185), it is this projection which constitutes the basic nature of Dasein (the being for whom its very Being is an issue[33]) which is self-transcendence. Projection upon an horizon, always involves self-projection.

The horizon for all beings is Being. Being is the context in which an entity may manifest itself, that is be given or understood. The understanding of Being, however, can only take place when Being itself is projected onto another horizon, that is the horizon of time, which is the horizon of Dasein's temporality. Heidegger terms this horizon Temporality.[34] It thus becomes clear that ontology, the science of Being, directs us back to the temporality of a specific being, Dasein. Heidegger states: "it is precisely the analysis of the truth-character of being which shows that being also is, as it were, based in a being, namely, in the Dasein. Being is given only if the understanding of being, hence Dasein,

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[33]Heidegger, *Being and Time* (32): "Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it."

[34]Part One of *Being and Time* is titled "The Interpretation of Dasein in terms of Temporality, and the explication of time as the transcendental horizon for the question of Being." Also cf. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) xxv.

exists" (*Basic Problems* 19). Heidegger concludes in *Being and Time* that access to Being is through Dasein. In other words, ontology is established through an ontical being and it is precisely in this ontic-ontological relationship that understanding appears as a mode of Dasein. Ontology itself is thus based in temporality and any thought of an abiding presence is misleading. Temporality is not pure presence but a unity of past and future.

For Heidegger, time properly belongs to the sense of being itself and he strove through examining *Dasein* (the place where Being itself poses the question of the meaning of Being to itself) to show the intrinsic connection between being and time. In other words, Heidegger identified Dasein as the locus of mediation between time and being and sought to show how time and being are to be understood in terms of their reciprocity. When they are understood as separate phenomena contrasting one another, being is understood simply as permanence and time is determined through movement and the possibility for the disclosure of being is overlooked. For Heidegger, being-toward-death provided the direct access to authentic human existence. The linking of time and being forms a foundation and a goal in Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology articulated in *Time and Narrative* and *Oneself As Another*. He does not, however, follow Heidegger in taking a direct route to the authentic self through being-toward-death but takes an indirect route through narrative mediation.

Heidegger's approach towards an understanding of "temporality" plays a key role in shaping the hermeneutical tradition which Ricoeur follows. Hans-Georg Gadamer (b. Feb. 11, 1900, Marburg, Germany), who was a main influence in the development of Ricoeur's hermeneutical thought, developed hermeneutics as understanding occurring

within a temporal framework [effective-historical consciousness (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*), application, fusion of temporal horizons]. Temporality has important consequences for the relation between truth and method since if truth is temporal in nature then it cannot simply be found by following a prescribed method[35] which would be appropriate if truth were static and absolute. Truth as static and absolute directs us towards a oneness of reality, a oneness that could conceivably be discovered through a prescribed method. Temporality, which implies change, directs us towards the multiplicity of reality. In a situation of multiplicity, a prescribed method will not necessarily lead to truth.

Gadamer, in agreement with Heidegger, believed that understanding is the essence, the mode of There-being (Dasein -- human being), not merely a possible behaviour. Gadamer seeks to discover what "is common to all modes of understanding and to show that understanding is not subjective behaviour toward a given 'object', but towards its effective-history -- the history of its influence" (*Dialogue and Dialectic* xix). Gadamer's understanding of effective history and emphasis on the value of tradition sparked a lively debate with Jürgen Habermas, a debate which we might characterize as between temporal and nontemporal methodology. The issue was the way in which truth may arise out of dialogue. Does it arise, as Gadamer argued, from the free play of language or is there a methodology that may be followed in dialogue which results in universal consensus as

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[35]If the questions that one poses to reality are temporal in nature and reality itself is temporal in nature, one cannot simply assume that a particular method would be able to adequately reveal truth in every instance. Cf. Otto Pöggeler *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, trans. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press international, Inc., 1987) 220-221.

Habermas contends?

According to Gadamer, the centre from which our whole experience of the world

unfolds is finite language which is intimately related to the totality of beings. The

belonging of thought to language and language to world makes truth possible. Language is

thus the mediator between thought and world and Gadamer believes that this mediator is

adequate or capable of expressing all truth. Furthermore, belonging to a speech

community is all that is required for one to have a dialogical equality. Hermeneutics then is

ontological in nature and universal in its scope.

Language opens up to human interpreters a specific limited horizon from which

new insights into reality may be gained. Language is not to be regarded as a tool but

"something that proceeds us and whose play we submit to" (*Dialogue and Dialectics* x).

Although we live wholly within language, language is not a captivating force but a door of

liberation. It allows us to question, that is, it makes it possible for us to be conscious of

our world and of the history of which we are a part[36].

Tradition for Gadamer is a form of authority embedded in language and is not

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[36]Gadamer's assertion in *Truth and Method* that "being that can be understood is language" is based on the understanding that the qualities that give language its special characteristics of disclosure are: i) essential self-forgetfulness [by this he is referring to its structure, grammar and syntax which are not at all conscious to living speaking] ii) its I-lessness [whoever speaks a language that no one else understands does not speak - speaking does not belong to the sphere of the I but to the sphere of the we — the form of operation of every dialogue can be described in terms of the concept of the game]; iii) the universality of language, so that an act of meaning cannot transcend the bounds of language ["language is not a delimited realm of the speakable, over against which other realms that are unspeakable might stand. Rather, language is all-encompassing. There is nothing that is fundamentally excluded from being said, to the extent that our act of meaning intends it."(Cf. *Truth and Method* 64-67)]. Language thus plays the role of the transcendent.

necessarily a distorting force for knowledge but is a necessary requirement. Gadamer's connection of authority with knowledge rubs Habermas the wrong way. Habermas, who holds to nontemporal principles of symmetry neither agrees with Gadamer that merely belonging to a linguistic community guarantees dialogical equality nor does he agree that authority has a place in knowledge. Habermas thus disagrees with Gadamer's belief that language is a door of liberation, and thus he does not agree that hermeneutics is the way to discover truth. He sees rather, tradition, with its idealism, as an oppressive force seeking to assert its authority, aiding a corrupt establishment to legitimize its claims by an appeal to tradition or ideals. Tradition becomes an oppressive tool in the hands of those who dominate, and since tradition is embedded in language, Habermas seeks to find a way of conversing which frees one from such distortion. In other words he seeks to find a way to conduct a dialogue which exposes hidden presuppositions, unmasks prejudices and frees from the tyranny of tradition. The issue is whether language with tradition is able to reveal temporal truth through dialectic or whether language and tradition must be transcended to reach an atemporal truth. This is a basic question also for interreligious dialogue. The issue is of levels. On the atemporal level there is no room for an ongoing dialectic. Contrarily, the temporal level consists of an ongoing dialogue.

The question of the universality of hermeneutics, for Ricoeur, comes down to asking whether one assumes a condition of finitude as Gadamer does which implies that one must take seriously historicity, pre-understanding, and prejudice or to say no to the condition of finitude and search for a regulative idea that is capable of opening up a future of freedom from the past and indeed from finitude itself.

Ricoeur argues that language is our way of organizing and making sense out of the flux of reality. Through narrative, significant events are chosen and linked together to form a story with a beginning a middle and an end. Language is the way human beings situate themselves in the world. Language is the way the self is constituted. Hermeneutics for Ricoeur leads to self-understanding. Language involves appropriation of that which is alien in order to arrive at a new self-understanding, a new situation in being. The past does not close off the future, rather for Ricoeur, the future remains open. A text presents to the reader new possibilities for being which may be appropriated.

The perspective of the temporal/atemporal is brought into question. Ricoeur seeks mediation but regards understanding on the side of the temporal. The atemporal is a source of critique but is beyond understanding. For analytic philosophers that makes it meaningless, for Ricoeur it is a source of hope. Others, such as Derrida, attempt to understand the self, or lack of self, from the atemporal.

In an attempt to get away from any idea of presence in the constitution of a self, Jacques Derrida (1930-) argues against a temporal view of the self or any concept of an abiding self. For Derrida, a present moment of consciousness cannot serve as a ground for knowledge because it is composite (a unity of past and future) in nature and changing. That which drives the process of change must be something different from the present since the present never really arrives. This aspect of difference which both differs from the present and defers the present and thus creates time is called by Derrida "différance."[37] If

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[37]Cf. Jacques Derrida *Margins of Philosophy*:
    We know that the verb *différer* (Latin verb *differre*) has two meanings which seem quite distinct; for example in Littré they are the object of two separate articles. In

the present does not ground knowledge, the things that are perceived or intuited as present are not able to ground knowledge.

Derrida focuses his attention on language as a locus for the deconstruction of the concept of presence. According to Derrida,[38] even the structure of the signifier-signified presupposes a metaphysical concept of presence. Nietzsche, as Derrida understands him, was trying to get away from the idea of presence by regarding reading as a process of "originary" operations. Originary operations do not require grounding in some pre-existing abiding presence so meaning is not determined by an external abiding sign or referent. In other words meaning springs forth from creativity. According to this way of reading Nietzsche, he was outside of the metaphysical tradition. Heidegger, however, read Nietzsche as one who was still within the metaphysical tradition. For Heidegger, according

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this sense the Latin *differre* is not simply a translation of the Greek *diapherein*, and this will not be without consequences for us, linking our discourse to a particular language, and to a language that passes as less philosophical, less originally philosophical than the other. For the distribution of meaning in the Greek *diapherein* does not comport one of the two motifs of the Latin *differre*, to wit, the action of putting off until later, of taking into account, of taking account of time and of the forces of an operation that implies an economical calculation, a detour, a delay, a relay, a reserve, a representation — concepts that I would summarize here in a word I have never used but that could be inscribed in this chain: *temporization*. *Différer* in this sense is to temporize, to take recourse consciously or unconsciously, in the temporal and temporizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfilment of "desire" or "will," and equally effects this suspension in a mode that annuls or tempers its own effect. And we will see, later, how this temporization is also temporalization and spacing, the becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time, the "originary constitution" of time and space, as metaphysics or transcendental phenomenology would say, to use the language that here is criticized and displaced.

The other sense of *différer* is the more common and identifiable one: to be not identical, to be other, discernible, etc. ... (8).

[38]Cf. Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976) 19-26.

to Derrida, sense still resided outside of language, Heidegger thus continued the tradition

of breaking the unity of the word into signifier and signified. The later Heidegger,

however, came to see that the difference between being and the entity (signified and

signifier) is space which precludes presence. Derrida explains:

> Western metaphysics, as the limitation of the sense of being within the field
>
> of presence, is produced as the domination of a linguistic form. To question
>
> the origin of that domination does not amount to hypostatizing a
>
> transcendental signified, but to a questioning of what constitutes our
>
> history and what produced transcendentality itself. Heidegger brings it up
>
> also when in *Zur Seinsfrage*, for the same reason, he lets the word "being"
>
> be read only if it is crossed out. That mark of deletion is not, however, a
>
> "merely negative symbol." That deletion is the final writing of an epoch.
>
> Under its strokes the presence of a transcendental signified is effaced while
>
> still remaining legible. Is effaced while still remaining legible, is destroyed
>
> while making visible the very idea of the sign. In as much as it de-limits
>
> onto-theology, the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism, this last
>
> writing is also the first writing (*Of Grammatology* 23).

Clearly then, one of the main features of deconstructionist thought is the

questioning of any form of permanence. Being is flux and any thought of an abiding self is

an illusion. Meaning arises through creativity and has no permanent ground.

Deconstructionist thought questions all claims to legitimacy that rely on unchanging ideals

or customs especially those that claim some form of universality. The basis for its critiques

lies in the belief that *différance* has the last word and there can be no abiding presence in the moments of time. Looking to the moments of time as the source for the self results in a self with no duration and here we can see a kinship with some Eastern thought.

Ricoeur does not seek after metaphysical absolutes but searches for a way to understand identity in a dynamic way through narrative. He tries to mediate between the theoretical laying to rest of metaphysics on the basis of a cosmological view of time and the abiding presence of the idealistic Cartesian self by looking to the practical realm, the realm of human action, as the place where the self is constituted and meaning is created. The meaning of the self cannot be found on the cosmological level since there is no abiding presence and the abiding presence on the idealistic level of the Cartesian self is unable to connect with the empirical world (as we will see in Chapter 3). If an understanding of the self is to occur it must be sought in the practical level, the level of human action and interaction. Ricoeur presents a theory of action, and it is through action and narrative that selves acquire an identity. In his book *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur elaborates his theory of narrative as a refiguration of time which results in an identity for a subject. Ricoeur further elaborates his theory in *Oneself as Another* in which he connects the identity of the subject to action. Ricoeur changes the concept of subject [(moves from the Cartesian scheme of subject-object) which assumes a distinct inner and outer world (mind and body)] to that of a self which is disclosed through the dialectic of self and other than self. This indicates the irreducible significance of one's own body as one body acting

among others. The story of these actions gives definition to the self.[39] For Ricoeur, intentionality (why an action takes place) is intrinsic to action and is nevertheless related to causality (which may lead back to a who) being intrinsic to events. Ricoeur states: "The power to act consists precisely in the connection between these two inquiries and reflects the necessity to tie 'who?' to 'why?' through the 'what?' of action" (*Oneself* 110).

Derrida's thought pushes toward the pole in which all is regarded as flux. To believe that this is the ultimate nature of reality is an act of faith. Similar views may be encountered in Buddhist doctrines of impermanence and nothingness. What aspects of existence do we extrapolate towards an ultimate view? The decision is not clear cut as the existence of many different religions pointing to different concepts of ultimate reality attest to. If Derrida is correct his view of reality amounts to a theoretical construct to critique claims to legitimacy grounded in presence. The ultimate views, fundamental beliefs regarding the nature of reality, play a role of providing a theoretical construct from which a critique of experience or a grounding of experience may take place. On the level of experience the critique and ground are complementary. The critique requires the ground to formulate itself as critique and the ground requires the critique to give it identity. Ricoeur's mediating approach has limits, it stops short of ultimate reality which is the domain of faith. Ricoeur's belief is that the ultimate cannot be known, the human mind

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[39]A self as one body acting among others has history which gives it a permanence in character (brought out through narrative) as opposed to a substance, permanence in time. Ricoeur argues that the interconnection of events constituted by emplotment allows us to integrate with permanence in time what seems to be its contrary in the domain of sameness-identity, namely diversity, variability, discontinuity, and instability.

     The self also has an ethical aim (teleological perspective) which is primary over morality defined by obligation to respect the norm. Narration serves as a natural transition between description and prescription.

cannot transcend the polarities that give rise to existence.

PAUL RICOEUR'S NARRATIVE THEORY

For Ricoeur the hermeneutical circle which yields meaning for life does not revolve around time and eternity or finite and infinite as constituting mutually exclusive poles but rather focuses on the mutuality of discordance and concordance as mediated in a dialectic of time and narrative. Ricoeur states: "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 3). The mysterious and ungraspable movement of time prevents an ordering of the present into a unified whole for the movement of time yields only a vanishing present which ultimately has no extension. Narrative, on the other hand, creates an order out of disorder, brings brute events into a unified logical whole. On the temporal human level, the interplay between time and narrative creates meaning. Meaning is associated with the creation of order, a space in which we live. As we create order through narrative activity we also discover order as coming to us. In other words, if there is to be meaning, there must be some fundamental order that precedes our subject-object view of the world. The fundamental order as an absolute, however, must be mediated if there is to be space in which to live. In other words, human life requires an opening between the stillness of eternity and the dissonance of time.

Ricoeur's narrative theory has particular interest as an instrument for interreligious dialogues since the great traditions of the world have in common the feature of being communicated by means of narrative. At least for preliminary purposes narrative is employed in pointing the way towards truth or in revealing truth. On the one hand,

Western traditions generally approach a concept of an abiding self from a psychological view of time and thus seek to overcome the discordance of time as movement . On the other hand, Eastern traditions often focus on time as movement and approach a concept of the individual self as illusion. They seek to overcome the psychological conception of time. What is common to both is the use of narrative (attested to by sacred books within their traditions) to communicate their understanding. Ricoeur acknowledges the integrity of both poles, time as movement and time as extension. He views narrative as not leading directly to one view or the other but as mediating between two opposing but valid views. Ricoeur's view of reality involves a fundamental dualism.

Ricoeur's Dualism

For Ricoeur reality that can be grasped by the human mind arises out of a dualism manifested as concordance and discordance. This dualism is mediated on the temporal level through narrative as opposed to the Cartesian mind-body dualism which looks to the metaphysical level for resolution. Ricoeur's mediation occurs at various levels of human experience such as the levels of linguistics, praxis, narrative and ethics.

When different poles exist in a tension with one another there is a resistance within each pole vis-à-vis the other by which identity is maintained. The resistance may have the structure of mutuality as Ricoeur has shown with his analysis of the voluntary and the involuntary. This has implications for human relations which are polar in nature. In human relations resistance may be manifested as a violence towards the other, a seeking to overcome the other in order to secure one position from being dominated or absorbed by

another. If, on the other hand, there is a recognition that each position exists not only in distinction from the other but also in dependence on the other, the necessity to maintain identity through violence is overcome. An attempt to destroy or absorb a different position would be seen not as a victory of one over the other but as a distortion. When those who hold a position rest assured with the knowledge that its ultimate ground is not threatened by another position then they are free to appropriate insights which originate from those whose thought emerges from a devotion to the other position.

Ricoeur's approach towards others is educational. Rather than maintaining a distinction through violence towards the other Ricoeur advocates learning more about one's self from the other, really listening to the other. This means having enough confidence in one's own identity that one is willing to risk engaging others. Identity has fluid aspects and inevitably goes through change. Change may come about even when there is no awareness or conscious reflection on it. Ricoeur's approach is that it is better to reflect and engage than to be tossed about by unconscious reactions to events and positions of others. The educational view provides more control for the identity of the self.

Discordance - Time

In order to understand the dialectic Ricoeur is proposing as the creative milieu for meaning, it will be helpful to examine his theory of time (discordance) and its relation to eternity (concordance). Ricoeur argues that there cannot be a pure phenomenology of time. He states: "A constant thesis of this book [*Time and Narrative*] will be that speculation on time is an inconclusive rumination to which narrative activity alone can

respond. Not that this activity solves the aporias through substitution. If it does resolve

them, it is in a poetical and not a theoretical sense of the word" (1:6). Cosmological time

is something external to the mind and cannot be totally grasped as a phenomenon.

Ricoeur's analysis of time does not have the metaphysical goal of discovering its essence

but rather articulating its aporias. A dialectic that resides among aporias will clearly be

fluid. Ricoeur's view is that in this environment hope is what leads to meaning. The

aporias set a terminal difficulty to thinking, the solution to the aporia must be sought on a

different level - the level of action. With the activity of organizing events into a unified

narrative whole the discordance of time is resisted. The aporia directs the work of thinking

to the realm of action but the action of resisting discordance cannot achieve a complete

victory. The complete victory can be hoped for in the realm of faith.[40]

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[40]Ricoeur in his 'Reply to Stephen T. Tyman' in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (475) explains the meaning of aporias in relation to the problem of evil. This explanation would seem to apply *mutatis mutandis* to the problem of time.

> Karl Jaspers employed the verb "to fail" (*scheitern*) in a dynamic sense, making the aporia a *terminal* difficulty, produced by the very labour of thinking. Action and feeling are summoned to give to this aporetic situation not a solution but a *response* destined to make the aporia productive, that is, to continue the work of thinking in the domain of action and feeling.

> For action, evil is above all that which is but should not be and must be combatted. In this sense, action reverses the orientation of the gaze. While speculative thought asks: where does evil come from? Action strives to reply to the sole question: what is there to do against evil?

> Action, however, cannot be the final word. Moral evil is not the whole of evil. Even the conversion of a bad will would leave unanswered unjust suffering. Lamentation and complaint give it a distinct voice from that of confession and accusation. It is then the task of practical wisdom to purify these poignant affections, to accompany what can indeed be called the work of mourning. Is there a wisdom capable not only of teaching but of accompanying a complete renunciation of complaint? Several paths are open here, no longer within the limits, but beyond the limits of reason alone: participation in the suffering of Christ, even in that of God, in accordance with one or another of the great traditions of Christian mysticism? Renouncement of the desires that give rise to suffering, in accordance with certain traditions of Far East mysticism?

Ricoeur chooses Augustine as the one who best articulates the aporias of time. St. Augustine (354-430) meditates on time in *Confessions* XI.

> What then is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I wish to explain it to one
> that asketh, I know not; yet I say boldly that I know that, if nothing passed
> away, time past were not; and if nothing were coming, a time to come were
> not; and if nothing were, time present were not. Those two times then, past
> and to come, how are they, seeing the past now is not, and that to come is
> not yet? But the present, should it always be present and never pass into
> time past, verily it should not be time, but eternity. If time present (if it is to
> be time) only cometh into existence because it passeth into time past, how
> can we say that either this is, whose cause of being is that it shall not be;
> so, namely, that we cannot truly say that time is, but because it is tending
> not to be? (XIV. 17)

For Augustine eternity means that all things are together, there is no succession. What then is time and how does it exist? If it exists as present how long does the present extend? He starts his answer by considering years as present and keeps reducing[41] the extent of the present looking for an indivisible point that may be called present:

> If an instant of time be conceived which cannot be divided into the smallest
> particles of moments, that alone is it, which may be called present. Which

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[41]Time seems to be something that one may be aware of only in a limited way. It is something one can not quite grasp. As soon as it seems like you have it, it disappears. If time is a mediating or harmonizing force it could be likened to a melody which has the ability to make a person happy or alter one's mode but the melody is fleeting, it keeps withdrawing and the only permanence it has is through repetition.

yet flies with such speed from future to past, as not to be lengthened out

with the least stay. For if it be, it is divided into past and future. The

present hath no space. Where then is the time, which we may call long? Is

it to come? Or if we do not say, "It is long" because it is not yet, so as to

be long; but we say, "It will be long." When therefore will it be? ... then

does time present cry out in the words above, that it cannot be long. (XVI

20)

He is thus led to the problem of how time is measured. He states:

"I know that we do not measure, nor can we measure, things that are not;

and things past and to come are not." But time present how do we

measure, seeing it hath no space? It is measured while passing; but when it

shall have passed, it is not measured; for there will be nothing to be

measured. (XXI 27)

When we seem to be measuring time by movement, such as the rising and setting

of the sun, we are not measuring present time in itself (since it has no extension), we are

not measuring something real. Only things present exist. Augustine argues that past and

future must exist since they may be talked about and they must exist in the present and in

the soul.

In the soul there are these three aspects of time, and I do not see them

anywhere else. The present considering the past is the memory, the present

considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the

future is expectation. If we are allowed to use such language, I see three

times, and admit they are three (XX 26).

The concepts of past, present and future appear as present to the mind. Augustine

concludes that the measuring of time occurs in the mind. Time is thus an extension of the

mind:

> It is in thee, my mind, that I measure times. ... In thee I measure times; the
>
> impression, which things as they pass by cause in thee, remains even when
>
> they are gone; this it is which, still present, I measure, not the things which
>
> pass by to make this impression. This I measure, when I measure times.
>
> Either then this is time, or I do not measure times. (XXVII 36)

Time is considered from the perspective of an interior human reality with Augustine's

conception of time as an extension of the mind.

Augustine, as we have seen, first meditates on the being and nonbeing nature of

time and then on the problem of measuring time. He at first remarks that it is only the past

or future that can be measured since they may be said to be long or short. "Later, by

placing the past and the future within the present, by bringing in memory and expectation,

he will be able to rescue this initial certainty from its apparent disaster by transferring onto

expectation and onto memory the idea of a long future and a long past" (*Time and*

Narrative 1: 18). Augustine thus proposes to the enigma of time lacking being the thesis

of a threefold present. To the enigma of measuring that which has no extension Augustine

proposes the thesis of the distension of the mind. The idea of time as a distension of the

mind is opposed to the concept that time is movement or the measurement of movement

of celestial bodies.[42] Ricoeur sees Augustine as concluding:

> We now know that the measurement of time owes nothing to that of
>
> external motion. In addition we have found in the mind itself the fixed
>
> element that allows us to compare long periods of time with short periods
>
> of time. With the impression-image, the important verb is no longer "to
>
> pass" but "to remain". ... We must not think that this recourse to the
>
> impression terminates the inquiry. The notion of *distentio animi* has not
>
> been given its due so long as the passivity of the impression has not been
>
> contrasted with the activity of a mind stretched in opposite directions,
>
> between expectation, memory, and attention. *Only a mind stretched in*
>
> *such different directions can be distended* (*Time and Narrative* 1: 18).

The present then is not a point but a "present intention." The impression remains in

the soul through the actions of the mind in expecting, attending, and remembering.

Ricoeur quotes Augustine:

> Suppose that I am going to recite a psalm that I know. Before I begin my
>
> faculty of expectation is engaged by the whole of it. But once I have begun,
>
> as much of the psalm as I have removed from the province of expectation

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[42]For Augustine time is the comprehensive background in which movement occurs. He states (*Confessions* XI..xxiv):

> Do you command me to concur if someone says time is the movement of a
> physical entity? You do not. For I learn that no body can be moved except in time.
> ... when a body is moved, it is by time that I measure the duration of the
> movement, from the moment it begins until it ends. ... a body may at one point be
> moving, at another point at rest. We measure by time and say 'It was standing still
> for the same time that it was in movement', ... Therefore time is not the movement
> of a body.

and relegated to the past now engages my memory, and the scope of the

action which I am performing is divided between the two faculties of

memory and expectation, the one looking back to the part which I have

already recited, the other looking forward to the part which I have still to

recite. But my faculty of attention is present all the while, and through it

passes what was the future in the process of becoming the past. As the

process continues, the province of memory is extended in proportion as

that of expectation is reduced, until the whole of my expectation is

absorbed. This happens when I have finished my recitation and it has all

passed into the province of memory (*Time and Narrative* 1: 20).

Ricoeur concludes:

Augustine's inestimable discovery is, by reducing the extension of time to

the distention of the soul, to have tied this distention to the slippage that

never ceases to find its way into the heart of the threefold present --

between the present of the future, the present of the past, and the present

of the present. In this way he sees discordance emerge again and again out

of the very concordance of the intentions of expectation, attention, and

memory (*Time and Narrative* 1: 21).

If time is the source for discordance, what becomes of the concept of eternity?

Ricoeur identifies three major ways emerging out of Augustine's *Confessions* in which his

meditation on eternity affects the speculation concerning time:

Its first function is to place all speculation about time within the horizon of

a limiting idea that forces us to think at once about time and about what is other than time. Its second function is to intensify the experience of *distentio* on the existential level. Its third function is to call upon this experience to surpass itself by moving in the direction of eternity, and hence to display an internal hierarchy in opposition to our fascination with the representation of a rectilinear line (*Time and Narrative* 1: 22).

Augustine assumes that eternity exists as that which was not created, has no before and after, is not subject to change and from which time and change have been derived. As with time, the existence of eternity is not Augustine's problem, rather how it exists is the puzzle. Time exists because God created it out of nothing, but this leaves the question of how a temporal creature may be made through the eternal Word. While time is never still eternity is for ever still, all is present, since nothing moves into the past. The threefold present of time contrasts with the present of eternity which has no past or future. God's act of creating time then has no before since before God created time God created nothing. This nothing allows time to have a beginning and an ending, time therefore is *transitory* and this allows it to be fully experienced as *transition*.

The radical difference between time and eternity accounts for the ontological difference that separates the creature from the creator, yet there remains a link. Augustine states: "What is the light which shines right through me and strikes my heart without hurting? It fills me with terror and burning love: with terror inasmuch as I am utterly other than it, with burning love in that I am akin to it" (*Confessions* XI.ix).[43] There is the

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[43]Quoted in Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* 1:27.

possibility of being more or less like the eternal. One can thus move towards or away from the pole of eternity. Ricoeur comments: "At the very heart of temporal experience, it produces a hierarchy of levels of temporalization, according to how close or how far a given experience approaches or moves away from the pole of eternity" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 28).

For Augustine, conversion and ecstasy do not put an end to the temporal condition of the soul, they only eliminate wandering and then send the soul off again on a journey. Ricoeur states: "Peregrination and narration are grounded in time's approximation of eternity, which, far from abolishing their difference, never stops contributing to it" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 29). Ricoeur aims at "extracting from the very experience of time the resources of an internal hierarchization, one whose advantage lies not in abolishing time but in deepening it" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 30).

Eternity as a limiting idea defines the creative milieu. Being defined it has a limit but creativity desires to go beyond limits into forbidden territory. The forbidden territory of the eternal puts an end to dialogue for those who dwell there. For the seekers of the eternal (as opposed to those who believe they have grasped the view of ultimate reality) dialogue is the path. Ricoeur's dialectics has limitations, it is valid only in the temporal realm. Those who take as the basis for relating to others their own faith commitment grounded in ultimate reality will have to resort to polemics, not dialogue, in their relations with others.

Concordance - Narrative

In contrast to the discordant experience of time Ricoeur examines Aristotle's

concepts of emplotment (*muthos*) and mimetic activity (*mimesis*). *Muthos* refers to the

plot of drama (tragedy and comic) while *mimesis* refers to the plot of lived temporal

experience[44]. *Mimesis*, in Aristotle's usage, is not a copy but a creative imitation or

representing of something that takes place in one stage -- the human creativity of

organizing events by emplotment. The organization of events stresses the element of

concordance over discordance.

Ricoeur examines *muthos* to discover how mimetic activity takes place. He hopes

to show through Aristotle's theory of *muthos*, which he describes first in *Poetics* in terms

of tragedy, that the "paradigm of order, characteristic of tragedy, is capable of extension

and transformation to the point where it can be applied to the whole narrative field" (*Time

and Narrative* 1: 38). This investiture of order in the narrative field is observed in

Aristotle's tragic model apart from every temporal characteristic. Here, then, is an extreme

contrast with the Augustinian *distentio animi* which pictures the discordant experience of

lived time dispersing concordance. Aristotle's muthos is the creative ordering of

discordance. The features of concordance derived from muthos are: "completeness,

wholeness, and an appropriate magnitude" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 38).

Ricoeur sees the notion of the whole as being pivotal. A whole has a beginning,

middle and an end. These are not temporal but logical and necessary. The time that is

required to move from beginning to middle to end is not the time of the world but the

work's time. That is, only the time of the necessary events is considered, vacuous times,

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[44]Aristotle's *mimesis* differs from Plato's in that for Plato *mimesis* indicates a copy or identical
replica which is two fold different from the ideal model (things imitate ideas, and works of art
imitate things). Ricoeur's goal will be to show the interweaving of muthos and mimesis.

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such as what a character did between two events, are excluded. The internal connection of

the plot then is not chronological but logical, logical not in the theoretical sense but in the

practical sense. The universals that practical logic seeks are "poetic" in nature. "That they

are universals is beyond doubt since they can be characterized by the double opposition of

the possible to the actual and the general to the particular" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 40).

The opposition of the possible to the actual is illustrated by the poet who tells of such

things as might be as opposed to the historian who tells of things that have been. The

things that might be are things that might have happened according to what a certain kind

of person might say or do either probably or necessarily. Ricoeur concludes: "In other

words, the possible and the general are not to be sought elsewhere than in the organization

of events, since it is this linkage that has to be necessary or probable. In short, it is the plot

that has to be typical" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 40-41). Universals are thus generated by a

plot and are based on the internal connections of the action of the plot. Ricoeur states:

"To make up a plot is already to make the intelligible spring from the accidental, the

universal from the singular, the necessary or the probable from the episodic" (*Time and*

Narrative 1: 41).

Ricoeur assumes that underlying the world there is an accidental or probable

aspect which exists in a dialectical relationship with an ordering possibility. The possibility

for Ricoeur's dialectic thus stems from a fundamental view of reality. The difference

between Ricoeur's approach and fundamental religious faiths is that Ricoeur holds this

view as provisional within the realm of hope and not certainty. The temporal realm is not

where fundamental reality can be known absolutely but is the realm of hope. Dialogue then

is valid when it operates within the realm of hope but it breaks down when a faith stance is asserted as absolute. Ricoeur's dialectic mediation does not lead to a clarification of absolute reality but to better ways of living within a particular view which cannot be absolutely proved or refuted.

Dialectical Mediation

Having articulated the temporal character of human experience and the activity of narrating a story Ricoeur now goes on to test his basic hypothesis that there exists between the two "a correlation that is not merely accidental but that presents a transcultural form of necessity. To put it another way, time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and a narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 52). Ricoeur explores the mediation between time and narrative after the model of the threefold mimesis (mimesis$_1$, mimesis$_2$ and mimesis$_3$) based on prefigured, refigured and configured time. Ricoeur's plan is to draw out the temporal aspects of textual configuration (which Aristotle ignored in his understanding of emplotment). The time of emplotment, according to Ricoeur, plays a mediating role between linear time in the practical field of events and the refigured time of our temporal experience. He states: "*We are following therefore the destiny of a prefigured time that becomes a refigured time through the mediation of a configured time*" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 54).

Temporal succession describes the temporal elements onto which narrative time grafts its configurations. It is these temporal elements in action that, as it were, beg for narration. Augustine's three fold present can easily be rewritten in terms of the three

temporal structures of action. The present of the future may refer to goals, the present of

the past to motivation and the present of the present to the agent. The ordering of these

temporal elements in interdependence on one another forms the ground for narrative (Cf.

Time and Narrative 1: 60).

Ricoeur describes in detail each of these temporal elements. He begins with

mimesis$_1$:

> To imitate or represent action is first to preunderstand what human acting
>
> is, in its semantics, its symbolic system, its temporality. Upon this
>
> preunderstanding, common to both poets and their readers, emplotment is
>
> constructed and, with it, textual and literary mimetics (*Time and Narrative*
>
> 1: 64).

The prefiguration of actions arises out of the realm of mimesis$_1$ which is the nexus of

structure, symbols, and temporal succession.

Mimesis$_2$ is concerned with the "as if" of the plot. The plot serves a mediating

function between the preunderstanding of the order of action and its temporal forms and

likewise its post understanding. The plot mediates between individual events and the story

as a whole[45]. It mediates by bringing together heterogeneous factors such as agents, goals,

means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results[46]. Finally the plot mediates by

combining two temporal dimensions, one chronological and the other not.

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[45] Or as Ricoeur says, "emplotment is the operation that draws a configuration out of a simple
succession," (*Time and Narrative* 1: 65).

[46] "A narrative makes appear within a syntagmatic order all the components capable of figuring
in the paradigmatic tableau established by the semantics of action" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 66).

The episodic nature of narrative time pushes towards the linear representation of

time while the configurational dimension pushes in the opposite direction. The factors on

the side of the episodic nature of narrative are: 1) the phrases which suggest that the

phases of action are in an external relation ("then, and then" to answer "and then what?"),

2) the episodes constitute an open series of events ("then, and then" to add "and so forth")

and 3) the fact that episodes linearly follow one another as in the time common to physical

and human events.

On the side of the configurational dimension Ricoeur points out that 1) the

transformation of "the succession of events into one meaningful whole which is the

correlate of the act of assembling the events together and which makes the story

followable," (*Time and Narrative* 1: 67) 2) "the plot imposes the 'sense of an ending' on

the indefinite succession of incidents" and 3) the repetition of the story contradicts the

'arrow of time'.

Mimesis$_3$ focuses on the reader who completes the work by joining mimesis$_3$ to

mimesis$_2$. Mimesis$_3$, however, as a theory of reading must be complemented by a theory of

reference. A work projects a world which constitutes its horizon. A work or a speaker

seeks "to bring a new *experience* to language and share it with someone else" (*Time and

Narrative* 1: 78). The experience has an internal horizon in that more and more details

may be given to describe the experience and an external horizon in that the experience is

potentially related to everything else within the entire world. Ricoeur concludes that

language does not constitute a world for itself but attests the otherness of the world.

History has its reference to what did happen "through the traces of the past that have

become documents for the historian" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 82). Narrative, on the other

hand, is told as though it had taken place. Ricoeur states: "In this sense, fiction would

borrow as much from history as history borrows from fiction. It is this reciprocal

borrowing that authorizes my posing the problem of the *interweaving* reference between

history and narrative fiction" (*Time and Narrative* 1: 82). Ricoeur argues that it is human

time that history and literary fiction in common refigure.

The imitation of action is more than just the organization of events since it takes

into account the role of a spectator or reader (mimesis$_3$) in reaching its fulfilment.

Mimesis$_3$ functions as a criterion of the probable or possible of mimesis$_1$ and thus

considers how the work is received. Poetics cannot lock itself up within the closure of the

text. Ricoeur argues that "The *Poetics* does not speak of structure but of structuration.

Structuration is an oriented activity that is only completed in the spectator or the reader"

(*Time and Narrative* 1: 48).

The moments in Ricoeur's dialectic may be sketched as follows:

time	muthos	application
prefiguration	configuration	refiguration
paradigmatic	syntagmatic	
mimesis$_1$	mimesis$_2$	mimesis$_3$
● innovative force of poetic composition within the field of our temporal experience	● the kingdom of the "as if" ● organization of the events ● does not bring into play the problems of reference or truth ●mediating function	● intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader

Ricoeur's analysis of temporality acknowledges the validity of the poles being and non-being and affirms that human existence requires both and is essentially mediating. For religious views that appeal to an absolute in the form of one of these poles faith requires a stepping out of existence. One pole on its own does not explain existence, both are required. This indicates an incompleteness to any particular religious view. A faith stance which tries to present a comprehensive view of existence from one particular view is necessarily incomplete according to Ricoeur's understanding of temporality.

Revelation as Narrative

In the context of Christian theology, the gap between the creator and creation is mediated by revelation through canonized scriptures and by the supreme revelation of the incarnation. Karl Barth and Paul Tillich have each influenced Ricoeur's approach to revelation. Barth, with his emphasis on God as wholly other, highlights for Ricoeur the integrity and irreducible character of the other who remains unknowable from the side of human reason. Thus, Barth helps Ricoeur to understand the limits of human comprehension through reason and dialogue. Tillich with his method of correlation provides an interesting contrast with Barth and presents what amounts to a direct route to understanding the divine. Ricoeur will opt for an indirect route and maintain on the temporal level an agnosticism concerning the ultimate character of the divine. Both Tillich and Ricoeur are influenced by existentialist thought, especially its development of the concept of care as the fundamental structure of Dasein, and Martin Heidegger's approaches to time. Heidegger sought to explicate Being within the horizon of time,

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although Tillich would go on to ground Being in the divine whereas the early Heidegger

would not.[47] Ricoeur views revelation as taking place in a creative way in the context of a

refiguration of the flux of reality vis-à-vis Christ as the ideal exemplar of the highest good.

Ricoeur acknowledges that temporal beings cannot fully grasp the highest good but can

strive towards it. Christ as the exemplar of the highest good is God's revelation to human

existence in the form of attesting to the fundamental nature of goodness. Certain founding

events, the Exodus, Mt. Sinai, and supremely for Christian revelation, the incarnation,

attest to God's faithfulness, goodness and eternity and these revelatory events are

mediated to the community of faith through narratives.

The views of Barth and Tillich will also serve as exemplers of different approaches

to dialogue. Barth's emphasis on the wholly other results in an approach to dialogue

which may be described as exclusivist. Tillich's correlation and view of Christ as the

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[47]While Heidegger attempts to answer the question of the meaning of Being, he does not attempt to answer the question of what transcends Being. Tillich, however, is concerned with the question of what transcends Being. Clayton explains the difference between Heidegger and Tillich on this point: "According to Heidegger the existential is grounded in the ontological. According to Tillich, the ontological in which the existential is grounded is itself grounded in the theological." (Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, 173.)

For Heidegger, the ontological difference results in an awareness of the finiteness of Dasein and with this awareness the fear of death. Tillich's thought is parallel to Heidegger's at this point since for Tillich ultimate concern is an intrinsic aspect of Dasein and reflects Dasein's estrangement from essence, that is, true Being. Both Heidegger and Tillich view understanding or theological knowledge (as Tillich refers to it) as arising through a transcendence of the gap between existence and essence. For Heidegger transcendence has the nature of projection, for Tillich transcendence has the nature of participation in the transcendent. Transcendence, then, for both Heidegger and Tillich, does not reach for something that lies spatially beyond human existence but rather is the essence of existence. For Tillich, theological knowledge is concerned with a return to essence, the transcendent ground-of-Being. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1:157 n9 states: "From the beginning to the end, knowledge means 'union with the unchangeable,' with the 'really real.'"

exemplar of the highest good leads to an attempt to include other religions and for other religions to find their ultimate meaning in Christ. Both the exclusivist approach of Barth and the inclusivist approach of Tillich stress the atemporal pole, the ultimate ground of reality. Ricoeur's philosophical approach is to take more seriously the temporal pole — the pole of the particular — and place it in an unresolved dialectic with the ultimate ground.

Karl Barth

Karl Barth (b. May 10, 1886, Basel, Switz. -- d. Dec 9/10, 1968, Basel) is one of the most important of the 20th-century theologians and is generally regarded as the leader of the Neo-orthodox movement. Barth's thought developed out of the context of dialectical theology which was wrestling with the tension between the Word of God and the word of humanity. On the one hand the Orthodox or Fundamentalist theologians emphasized the infallibility of the word of God, on the other hand the Liberal theologians emphasized the word of humanity and saw merit in the human endeavour to reach up to God. The question for the dialectical theologians was how these opposite words were to be related to each other. As we will see, Barth's understanding of the relationship calls into question fundamental assumptions of both the Liberal and Orthodox theologians.

The doctrine of the *autopistia* of faith, taught to Barth by Wilhelm Herrmann (his most influential teacher) became fundamental for Barth. Rumscheidt describes the doctrine: "Its basic factors are the absolute transcendence of God and the impossibility of proving his existence scientifically. Faith is in no need of an ancillary science for its

legitimisation."[48] Barth thus emphasizes the autonomy of two poles and this autonomy will shape his thought on the way they relate or do not relate to one another.

The influence of a dialectical methodology is seen throughout the writings of Karl Barth in the many fundamental contrasts such as Yes - No, negative - positive, finite - infinite, above - below, human - divine. These contrasts imply that there is a gulf that must be bridged or transcended if there is to be a relationship between the infinite and the finite, the divine and the human.[49] Revelation, according to Barth, is that bridge. Clearly then, a focal point of Barth's dialectical thought is his understanding of revelation. We proceed to clarify what Barth means by revelation and why it is necessary, the meaning of transcendence in general and Barth's particular understanding of it.

The term transcendence, which Barth applies to God, may have several different senses.[50] The verbal root (transcend) of the noun 'transcendence' has the sense of 'passing-beyond', 'surpassing', 'excelling', or 'exceeding' some fixed boundary or limit. The noun, however, often does not stress the dynamic aspect of 'movement beyond' but rather indicates a more static, and to the extent that the dynamic aspect is retained, relative quality of superiority. If the dynamic concept is completely removed from the noun the idea of absolute excellence or perfection is indicated. This latter sense of transcendence is what Barth has in mind when he uses the term in reference to God.

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[48]H. Martin Rumscheidt *Revelation and Theology: An analysis of the Barth - Harnack correspondence of 1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 4.

[49]Harnack, according to Rumscheidt initially saw Barth's dialectic as "a recurrence of a dualism which, as in ancient gnosticism, tears God and the world apart" (*Revelation and Theology* 58).

[50]Cf. Robert P. Orr *The Meaning of Transcendence A Heideggerian Reflection*, AAR Dissertation Series 35 (Scholars Press: Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1981) 8-9.

The perfection or absolute excellence that is ascribed to God by Barth with this use

of the term transcendence, lies beyond the sphere of this world. This notion of

transcendence was termed meaningless by logical positivists and analytic philosophers.

The devaluation of the 'absolute transcendence' of God is also seen in the increasing

secularization of our society. It was Barth's aim to re-establish the meaningfulness of the

transcendent God for human beings. Only a transcendent God can provide a basis for life.

Only a transcendental view can bring the manifold of existence into oneness that can be

considered foundational. Barth sought for an absolute ground for truth, but admitted that

human beings may only possess truth in a relative form.

Barth's understanding of the fundamental contrasts is such that there is no way to

move from finitude or humanity to eternity or divinity. It is, however, possible for the

divine to reveal itself and make its own point of contact in order to establish a relationship.

This relationship is the subject of revelation. The point at which revelation occurs, that is

where the various contrasts meet, is, according to Barth, in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is

the focal point of revelation and thus the focal point for the relationship between the

human and the divine.

According to Barth "revelation itself creates of itself the necessary point of

contact" (CD 1.1, 28). That point of contact is the Church (the body of Christ), in which

the content of revelation, dogmatics, is made known. God's revelation as Lord is made

manifest in the Church's understanding of the triunity of God. The content of revelation if

it is to be expressed in its most general form, is "God with us":

What does the revelation attested in Holy Scripture and proclaimed in preaching

and sacrament say to me? What is revealed to me in it? "God with us" is how we

stated generally the content of God's Word (CD. 1.1:160).

According to Barth, revelation is always concrete and it occurs in time. Barth thus

rejects the notion the scriptures contain myth which he characterizes as timeless truth.

Revelation is not timeless truth but is what is said to a particular person at a particular

time in particular circumstances. Revelation is not speculation, it is not something that

humanity creates, it is not the development of a natural capacity[51] but rather is a particular

gift given to a particular people at a particular time.[52] Since Revelation comes down from

the divine and enters human reality, human understanding does not ascend from human

reality to the divine. Revelation is not achievable through human reason.

Paul Tillich

Tillich's particular understanding of revelation is coloured by his understanding of

God in terms of the ground of Being. Ontology (Cf. *Systematic Theology* 1:71), and

therefore essentialism, plays a leading role in Tillich's thought. His conception of God as

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[51]Wolfhart Pannenberg in *Revelation as History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968) 136-137, in agreement with Rudolf Bultmann takes quite the opposite approach. "Bultmann has rightly insisted that Paul never describes faith as a gift of the Spirit, but rather that the Spirit is described as the gift received by means of faith, in that which the gospel proclaims, which for its own parts belongs to the sphere of the Spirit so long as it relates to the eschatological event. The paradox that there are persons who will not see this most evident truth does not absolve theology and proclamation from the task of stressing and showing the ordinary, and in no way supernatural, truth of God's revelation in the fate of Jesus. Theology has no reason or excuse to cheapen the character and value of a truth that is open to general reasonableness."

[52]Barth thus denies that scripture contains myth since he regards myth as indicating something that is true at all places and for all time. Cf. CD 1.1 327.

the ground of Being leads him to an understanding of revelation in terms of a correlation of the eternal, unchanging ground of Being with finite, changing human reality. In Tillich's ontological thought, human beings are defined as beings that are ultimately concerned about their being and meaning (Cf. *Dynamics of Faith* 106). The nature of the relationship between the ground of being and the changing temporal is that of Ultimate Concern[53]. In this way Tillich brings an existential aspect into his essentialist ontological approach and the two formal criteria for every theology become: 1) "The object of theology is what concerns us ultimately. Only those propositions are theological which deal with their object in so far as it can become a matter of ultimate concern for us" (*Systematic Theology* 1:12). 2) "Our ultimate concern is that which determines our being or not-being. Only those statements are theological which deal with their object in so far as it can become a matter of being or not-being for us" (*Systematic Theology* 1:14).

Tillich's thought is related to the classical correlation of essentialism (in that he

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[53]One of Tillich's basic assumptions is that the relationship of the contingent to the absolute is that of ultimate concern. For the contingent human being, ultimate concern takes the form of scepticism as the despair of reason "trying autonomously to create a world to live in" (Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1:85). Scepticism, according to Tillich, is the supreme expression of the human quest for spiritual autonomy (Cf. Thompson, *Being and Meaning* 53) and scepticism has its answer in the revelation of the Absolute. The Absolute reveals itself in human ultimate concern with being and meaning. Ultimate concern highlights the existentialist aspect of Tillich's thought.

Existential doubt plays a vital role for Tillich and is not to be considered as an antonym of faith. Rather, existential doubt, as an expression of ultimate concern with truth and with the quest for the Holy, is constitutive of faith. Thompson comments about the importance of existential doubt in Tillich's thought:

> Such doubt Tillich argues is a doubt that justifies just as faith justifies the believer. Because such doubt 'does not reject every concrete truth, but is aware of the element of insecurity in every existential truth', it expresses both humility and courage: the humility that eschews claims to proprietorship of the truth and the courage that can include doubt about itself.

Ricoeur also stresses the fact that absolute certainty is not possible and that attestation for him would express both humility and courage.

argues for an unchanging ground for existence although the ground is beyond existence) and existentialism (since the ground of being is of Ultimate Concern). For Tillich the existential situation is one of brokenness but through correlation its essentialist foundation and wholeness is made manifest. Tillich then identifies revelation with salvation (healing) and states that the "history of revelation and the history of salvation are the same history" (*Systematic Theology* 1:144). For Tillich, revelation is more dynamic than it is for Barth, since it is founded in the *event*[54] of Jesus as the Christ. Tillich states:

> Revelation has an unshakable objective foundation in the event of Jesus as the
>
> Christ, and salvation is based on the same event, for this event unites the final
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> power of salvation with the final truth of revelation (*Systematic Theology* 1:146).

Revelation is not some information that one must receive before one can be saved or reunited with the ground of Being, but rather revelation as an "event" is already participation in the ground of Being.

Tillich's view of ultimate concern as constitutive of human existence indicates a fundamental openness to the divine. This openness knows no religious boundaries, but Tillich still regards it as founded in the "event" of Jesus Christ. Although Tillich would include other religions within the event of revelations they are still not valued in and of themselves. Their value comes from being included in the Christian revelation.

Tillich regards his method of correlation as a true dialectical method of doing theology. Correlation is not so much between a negative and a positive, but between two

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[54]The use of the word 'event' is common among theologians in this context. It would be more accurate, however, to replace the word 'event' with 'action of God', thus what is being referred to is the "action of God in Jesus as the Christ".

positives. The existential questions for theology originating on the horizontal plane are correlated with the answers provided by revelation from the vertical plane. Question and answer belong together. The questions are not possible without the presupposition of the answers. Tillich explains:

> For in order to be able to ask about God, man must already have experienced God as the goal of a possible question. Thus the human possibility of the questions is no longer purely a human possibility, since it already contains answers. And without such preliminary half-intelligible answers and preliminary questions based thereon, even the ultimate answer could not be perceived (Taylor, *Paul Tillich*, 110).

Existential questions then, are more than just interrogative statements. Rather, they contain within themselves a preliminary understanding (*Vorverständnis*) which constitutes a framework or horizon (in the sense of a boundary which may be temporal in nature) which the questioner or interpreter seeks to clarify. A suggestion of the answer, whether it be very vague or largely erroneous, is thus presupposed in the question.[55] It would then follow, according to Tillich's reasoning, that questions about a transcendent God presuppose that God has or has had ontological or historical contact (or both) with human beings, otherwise human beings would be incapable of forming questions about God. Revelation is God making God's self known to human beings. According to Tillich's

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[55]Cf. Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the search for Ultimate Reality* (University of Chicago Press, 1955), 11. "He who asks has and has not at the same time. If man is that being who asks the question of being, he has and has not the being for which he asks. He is separated from it while belonging to it."

method of correlation, revelation is possible because there always remains at least a trace

of a mutual relationship between the human situation and the divine. It is this trace of a

mutual relationship that gives human beings the capacity for receiving answers from the

divine and asking questions of the divine[56].

Tillich strives to point us beyond the subject-object split in order to effect the

healing power of revelation[57]. Subject and object are preceded ontologically by existence.

That is, subject and object are abstracted from existence and have no independent reality

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[56]Barth, on the other hand, argues that because of the fall the image of God has been lost. There is no trace of that image left. The image is restored only through revelation. Furthermore, Barth refused to make human questions normative. Human beings might never dare to ask the critical questions (Cf. Rumscheidt 151).

[57]The nature of the gap between essence and the existential situation is further brought out in Tillich's ontology and cosmology. Tillich understands the transcendence of the "ground of Being" in such a way that while the ground of Being transcends human reality it is not unrelated to human reality. The transcendence of the ground of Being, God, means that in some way God is estranged from human reality. According to Tillich (Cf. Paul Tillich, "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," in *Theology of Culture*, 10) there are two different ways of approaching this estrangement. If God is indeed a stranger (that is, nothing essential is shared between human beings and God) then the encounter with God is accidental, no certainty is possible, only probable statements can be made about God. Tillich calls this approach the cosmological approach.

On the other hand, if estrangement is overcome in that a person discovers oneself when one discovers God then one discovers something identical, yet transcending oneself and at the same time inseparable from the self. This approach to overcoming estrangement Tillich calls the ontological method and he argues that this method is basic for every philosophy of religion.

Tillich stresses the "eternal" as foundational and the temporal situation is the situation in which human beings receive the eternal truth (Cf. *Systematic Theology*, 1:3). Tillich's thought has been termed 'belief-ful realism'. For Tillich then, the universals are reality. The universals emerge in the face of boundary situations such as ultimate anxiety, despair and meaninglessness. Tillich states that on the boundary "all ideological veils are torn down and self-deception is no longer possible, truth can appear and can be acted upon." Tillich admits, however, that beliefs, to the extent that they are subject to formulas in words and symbol, are liable to demonic distortion (Cf. Ian Thompson, *Being and Meaning* 20). It thus appears that the form of what Tillich says is idealist since God is more fundamental in the world than any created thing, but the substance of his thought is realist since the universal grounds the material world. Although Tillich maintains that the "eternal truth" is in a polar relationship with the "human situation", his stress seems to lie on the eternal, the timeless, since this is what he regards as foundational. Being itself is the ground of all reality.

(Cf. Thompson, *Being and Meaning* 29). Ricoeur attests to a realm beyond subject-object split but this attestation is held out as a hope, as a goal, and there is no direct access from the temporal side. The indirect way will open up possibilities but will as it remains on the temporal level end in agnosticism. Revelation for Ricoeur occurs within the temporal realm and opens up possibilities for existing within the temporal realm. Revelation is not meant to heal or mend the gap between the temporal and atemporal but to open up new possibilities for existing in the temporal with the hope that goodness results in meaning. According to my reading, Ricoeur would raise several questions for Tillich.

Ricoeur would question Tillich as to why revelation (receiving the external message of New Being) is required since human beings already participate in the New Being or the ground of Being[58]. In other words, why does existential separation preclude a recollection of the New Being? If, indeed, the essential is already in some way present in the existential situation, how is it possible for the fragmented nature of the existential situation to exist at all? In other words, would not the presence of the essence preclude the existential estrangement? The nature then of the gap or separation between essence and existence must be that of a presence which is at the same time not present. Tillich's task is thus to articulate in a meaningful way the precise nature of the split, that is the

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[58]Tillich discusses Being in three ways. God is Being-itself in the sense of the power of being or the power to conquer non-being. Human beings are a mixture of essential being and existential being. Christ is the New Being. The New Being has been sought in two different ways. On the one hand it has been sought as being above history, that is, as predominantly non-historical, on the other hand it is sought as the aim of history. Christianity is the historical type of the expectation of the New Being and it includes the non-historical type. In other words, Christianity unites the historical type of the expectation of the New Being with the vertical one (*Systematic Theology* 2:89). Ricoeur's focus is on the historical, Jesus as exemplar of the good in the aim of history. The human stresses creativity towards this goal. Human existence, if it is grounded in anything, is grounded in creativity, not an atemporal absolute.

essential in contrast to the existential situation and the way in which divine revelation relates to the finite situation through correlation.

For Ricoeur, Revelation leads to a better self understanding and an understanding of humanity and of the other bond between the being of humans and the being of all beings (Cf. Ricoeur, *Essays* 2). The exact nature of the ultimate nature of reality is not so much in question but is hoped to be goodness or well being. Leaving the nature of ultimate reality or the divine vague provides space for interreligious dialogue to the extent that the dialogue partners are willing to leave that nature vague. Yet for many a more defined nature of ultimate reality is precisely the object of their faith. Interreligious dialogue then is opened up on the level of hope but on the level of faith confronts serious obstacles.

Ricoeur's narrative theory has profound implications for the way in which the process of understanding (especially self-understanding and revelation) takes place. The mediation of opposites also calls for a rethinking of the concept of revelation which, as we have noted, has often been framed in concepts of time-eternity and the spatial concepts finite-infinite. The focus of revelation was from the eternal/infinite to the temporal/finite. Karl Barth, as we have seen, extensively employed the conceptual opposite of finite-infinite in his attempt to articulate how revelation was possible. One of the questions for Barth was 'where is the point of contact between the human and divine?' Barth argued that on the human side there was no point of contact, Paul Tillich, on the other hand, argued that the point of contact occurred part way as Divine answers to human

questions.[59] Tillich argued that there is always a trace of the divine in the human.

A focus on care as the locus for being moves the origin of revelation into the temporal realm. For Ricoeur, it seems that the point of contact is in the self whose focus is care and is constituted by language which reflects experience. Language is the point of contact. Language creates. Human beings create themselves and their world through narrative. Revelation comes as the self begins to know itself in the face of the other. For Ricoeur, revelation restores one to a sense of "participation-in or belonging-to an order of things which precedes our capacity to oppose ourselves to things taken as objects opposed to a subject" (*Essays* 101). In other words, revelation unfolds being anew before us. Revelation discloses another consciousness to us which precedes us. Ricoeur regards revelation as occurring through poetic language, which refers not only to poetry but to all genres.[60]

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[59]Ricoeur *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980) 96-97
There is another way that I also will not follow - the way of an existentialism based on the wretchedness of the human condition, where philosophy provides the questions and religion the answers. No doubt, an apologetic based on the wretchedness of existence does satisfy the existential conditions imposed by the level of discourse we attained in our first section. Furthermore, it numbers among its practitioners such worthy names as Pascal and Tillich. But its apologetic character is suspect inasmuch as it is apologetic. If God speaks by the prophets, the philosopher does not have to justify His word, but rather to set off the horizon of significance where it may be heard. Such work has nothing to do with apologetics.

[60]For example, revelation through narrative points to events -- election of Abraham, the Exodus, the anointing of David, the resurrection of Christ. Events mark an epoch and engender history. Through narrative an emphasis is placed on the founding event or events as the imprint, mark, or trace of God's act (Cf. *Essays* 79). Prescriptive discourse such as the articulation of the Law provides the practical dimension of revelation. Wisdom discourse is the intending of that horizon of meaning where a conception of the world and a conception of action merge into a new and active quality of suffering. Ricoeur states: "This symbolic order can conjoin cosmos and ethos because it produces the pathos of actively assumed suffering" (*Essays* 86). Hymnic discourse reveals the relation between sentiments that are expressed and their object.

The genre in which revelation is communicated has a profound affect on what revelation is. Ricoeur rejects the idea that revelation is an authoritative, dogmatic pronouncement from an heteronomous divine. The prophetic model, where the prophet speaks in the name of God leads to a concept of revelation in terms of dual authorship where God is the one who dictates the words and the prophet is merely a scribe. The prophetic model is where the concept of revelation is most often derived and it easily leads to a view of revelation as authoritative pronouncement from beyond mundane existence. Ricoeur argues, however, that revelation also occurs through historical narrative. In historical narrative the author is not the most important element. In fact, in historical narrative the author fades into the background and the events that are being narrated appear to narrate themselves. If revelation occurs through historical narrative it is no longer as easy to see it in terms of a heteronomy from above but in terms of events that have had formative and lasting influence. Ricoeur also sees revelation as occurring through wisdom literature where the divine is revealed in the created order and through suffering which leads to the confession that human beings are not able to grasp the mystery of God. In hymnic literature revelation occurs as a harmony between the divine and the human in the depth of the soul. The songs that are sung express that deep harmony.

The concept of revelation that Ricoeur holds to contrasts to the common concept of revelation that calls for a sacrifice of intellect and the embracing of authoritative dogma. The common concept of revelation is often contrasted to the philosophical spirit which stresses the autonomy of consciousness and the exaltation of reason. Ricoeur in his typical

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dialectical fashion seeks to mediate these two positions through a concept of revelation

which recognizes that consciousness is constituted by events which precede it and that the

truths of revelation are not dogmatic but suggestive. Revelation, in Ricoeur's

understanding, employs the concept of testimony and testimony implies that it will always

be necessary to make judgments.

The dialectic that Ricoeur sees operating in revelation is between poetic discourse

on the objective side and the experience of testimony on the subjective side. The truth that

results from this dialectic is a truth of manifestation, not of verification. The truth of

verification is truth that requires a will to submit. The truth of manifestation is truth which

opens up to imagination new and better ways of being. In Ricoeur's concept of revelation

what is being revealed is the world that lies before the text. Considering revelation in this

way breaks down the subject/object duality which presupposes an autonomous conscious

as subject over a passive predicate.[61] The idea of truth as manifestation invites dialogue for

it leads to a better situating of oneself in reality.

There is mutuality between the sacred and profane for Ricoeur. The great task of

revelation is seen in terms of bringing concordance out of discordance, it is a creative,

imaginative task. It seems that for Ricoeur, God is the great organizer and human beings

participate in bringing order to the flux of cosmic time. Revelation helps human beings

find their place in the order which precedes them and this order is revealed through

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[61]Ricoeur points out the traditional gap between a concept of reason and revelation:
    If consciousness posits itself, it must be the "subject" and the divine must be the
    "predicate," and it can only be through an alienation subsequent to this power of
    self-production that God is projected as the "subject" for whom the human being
    becomes the "predicate" (*Essays* 109).

interaction with an other. Ricoeur's view thus puts us in close relationship with others and promotes a religious view which is not primarily centred on the individual and his or her own salvation. One is then really encouraged to love one's neighbour, for it is through our neighbours that we come to know ourselves and we bring order to our lives and to the world. The way in which the other is respected is vitally important to revelation and ultimately is a matter of faith.

CHAPTER 3 — SELF AND OTHER

REFLECTION AND MEANING

Questions about self are uppermost in religious thought. How does the self relate

to the absolute? How does the self relate to other selves? What is the origin of the self or

how is the self constituted? What is the destiny of the self? Questions about the self are

also a main concern of Ricoeur's. As we review Ricoeur's approach to the self we will

have in mind the questions of its possibility for mediating various religious approaches.

Ricoeur's complex approach toward understanding the self and others is one of

reflection and perception. Reflection is a way of knowing the self and perception is the

means of knowing others. Reflection tends to bring into question what at first glance is

often assumed to be a unity.[62] For example, it is in reflection that notions of autonomy

vis-à-vis body and soul arise. The complexity which arises when reflection on human

existence occurs may be further illustrated with the act of speaking. When words come

forth from my mouth I do not wonder who is speaking, I just know. But if I reflect further

on the question of who is speaking problems arise. "Is it I as an unchanging unified subject

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[62]In the Psalms, for example, the poet says "I say to my soul." The act of reflection thus implies a separation of a unity, an analysis of an interior relationship.

who speaks?" or "Is it I as the son of my mother and father or I as husband of my wife or I as father of my children, or I as writer of a thesis who speaks?" or is it, as the later Heidegger suggested, language that speaks? Upon reflection, then, that which initially appeared as a simple unity may become very complex. Who is the self that this I represents and how does the self relate to the world?

It is understandable that sometimes the concepts "soul," "I," "subject," "person" and "self," are used more or less synonymously. However, as we have seen with the terms "I" and "self", when one reflects on the nature of human existence a difference in focus is found for each term.[63] The various terms characterize perspectives of human existence. In ancient Greece the soul was considered primarily as the place of intersection of various functions, both bodily and psychic. In later Greek thought the intellectual soul came to be regarded as somehow autonomous from the temporal body and thus took on an aspect of immortality. With Descartes the idea of separation continued and developed in the context of a mechanistic view of life. For Descartes the point of intersection between the divine and human occurs in the "I" which is separate from the "mechanical" life process. It is with Descartes that the concept of the modern consciousness is articulated in which the "I" appears as the one before whom the world is a spectacle. With Kant the concept of a knowing subject arose, the subject being the perspective from which sensory perceptions are received and synthesized in a particular way according to the intuitions of time and space. The knowing subject became critical as Kant reversed the focus of interpretation

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[63]When we consider the concept of person, the focus shifts to the psychic qualities that characterize a specific individual. The aspect of personality comes to the fore and the ways in which an individual is recognized.

toward a search for the security of the cognitional operations. The consciousness of the subject became key to knowledge,[64] will and freedom were excluded from the realm of knowledge. The identification of the subject with consciousness was undermined by Freud, Nietzsche and Marx who pointed out that the subject was also constituted by unconscious or preconscious factors. Marcel and others argued that the self participates in existence and is not autonomous.

The main concept we will be focussing on is self. The word "self" is reflexive and posits a distance between the "I" and experience. In other words, reflection opens up an ontological distance between oneself and lived experience resulting in an aspect of individuality and autonomy. For Ricoeur this puts the self in a state of dislocation. He regards the self as not the Cartesian self-constituting "I" nor the Kantian subject as the transcendental principle. Rather the self is in a position of seeking to discover the actual "I" that accompanies all representations, and is not in fact the master of consciousness but is shaped by the world.

Taking into account Eastern and Western perspectives, the self may be understood in many ways. Self may be thought of as being an autonomous distinct unique subject or "I."Then again, self may be thought of in terms of personality in a dynamic relationship dependent on others and affecting others. Perhaps the self is some combination of autonomous and dependent aspects. Another possibility is that the self may be thought of

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[64]In terms of Kant's distinction between theoretical and practical reason, Ricoeur gives priority to practical reason as a recovery of the self on the level of doing (praxis) as opposed to the recovery of the subject on the level of seeing (theoria). Van Den Hengel observes:
> If in perception we encounter a subject who constitutes meaning, after first being constituted by meaning, in the world of praxis we are presented with a subject of praxis which is both source and not source of itself (149).

as an illusion, having no reality and being a phenomenon of deception. Yet another possibility is that all of reality may be regarded as self and the task of the self is understood as comprehending its all encompassing nature, discriminating from illusions which lead one to think of individuality.

Clearly religious reflection has resulted in a variety of perspectives regarding the notion of the self. Reflection may take place either directly or indirectly. Often, especially in mystical thought, religious reflection employs the direct route. First we will consider the direct way. When a self, by immediately positing itself as subject, begins to regard itself as an inward reality, stressing autonomy as opposed to its dependence on others, the question of the nature or ontological status of the self arises. On the one hand the inward turn may point in the direction of denying the reality of the self. On the other hand the inward turn may attempt to posit the self as the ground or foundation of reality. This inward turn looks to an intellectual type of goods (such as creativity and expressivity) as opposed to being oriented to goods in external reality (such as the goodness of the order of nature). The self takes on an autonomy from temporal reality and considers itself as an atemporal whole. As an atemporal ground for reality the question of certainty and the ontological status of the self is of the utmost importance. The question of what it means to be a self is directed towards the possibility and manner of the self relating to otherness. The certainty of the self is assumed but the certainty of reality, of otherness, is called into question. Direct reflection thus leads either to the self being regarded as illusion or to the self as being reality but the reality of the rest of the world cannot be established. For this reason, Ricoeur argues that the direct route of reflection to the self is not satisfactory. He

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prefers the indirect route of reflection grounded in temporality.

Ricoeur offers the indirect way of reflection as being more encompassing and providing a more secure foundation for the self. He approaches the mystery of the self by asking "What does it mean to be a self?" Clearly the self is a way of perceiving and acting. The self constitutes a certain perspective from which everything else is "other" and the self acts in certain ways. The self, then, is regarded as a unique way of relating to what appears as otherness, categorizing this otherness and even judging it in fundamental ways and through action to help shape the other. To be a self means having an orientation. Being oriented means turning towards something, and turning towards something is to regard that as good (good not only in terms of something to do but also in terms of something to be[65]). To be a self, being oriented is to strive towards a goal, to act either towards or away from something. The self is an acting and suffering self, acting towards a goal but at the same time affected by circumstances. For Ricoeur orientation is displayed through action and feelings. He states: "While we oppose ourselves to objects by means of the representation, feeling attests our coaptation, our eclectic harmonies and disharmonies with realities whose affective image we carry in ourselves in the form of 'good' and 'bad'" (*Fallible Man* 88). In other words, orientation, which is an intrinsic aspect of being, is manifested by feelings and action. The self is constituted in terms of its relations with others and comes to know itself reflectively through its actions and feelings. The indirect route to self understanding is through reflection upon the actions of the self which reveal a

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[65]Cf. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self:The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard University Press, 1989) Part 1 'Identity and the Good'.

self in search of itself, a self constituting and creating itself.

At the heart of the finite self lies both a sadness for existence which corresponds to negation and nothingness and a passion for existence which corresponds to affirmation and being. Ricoeur argues for the primacy of being over nothingness. He admits that nothingness lies at the heart of existence, as indeed constituting the "sadness" (Spinoza) of existence, but maintains it is not as the first and last reality. For Ricoeur being and existence are the first reality, the primary affirmation.[66] The passion to exist grounds human acts and thus history. Existence is primordially good. Van den Hengel points out:

> Ricoeur articulates this foundation of the "I am", "the being in question of
> man's being", particularly subsequent to his analysis of Freud, as the desire
> and effort to be. Human existence, he says, is both an effort and a desire. It
> is an effort - Spinoza's *conatus* - because existence must be posited only
> out of itself. Effort is the positive act whereby we constitute or posit our
> existence and being. This affirmation of our existence seeks nothing other
> than the duration of existence. We are this constituting affirmation. ...
> Desire here has the meaning of Plato's and Freud's *eros*, i.e., a lack or need
> (163).

While Ricoeur contends that existence is the primary affirmation, the duration of existence being the goal of existence, the opposite approach based on the assumption that overcoming existence is the goal of existence is also possible. This opposite approach

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[66]Cf. Ricoeur *History and Truth* 301. Ricoeur employs Jean Nabert's term 'primary affirmation'.

would not negate the dialectic but it would give it a different direction, a direction that is more common in Eastern thought, a direction towards an undifferentiated type of unity that precedes existence.

Just as reflection may end up with an illusory self or an absolute self (Ricoeur's constituted self mediating these two), so also perception may be oriented towards the same or other. Experience is by nature a duality or multiplicity as opposed to understanding which is by nature a unity. Understanding seeks to make things the same and thus experience becomes other. Acknowledgement of the Other or others brings out the realization that human reality is constituted with differences. Despite these differences there remains a quest for unity, for truth, for a centre from which a global understanding of being may arise. For Ricoeur this quest cannot take the form of a general hermeneutics. A general hermeneutics (because it is general) would entail the collapse of the other into the same and this is what Ricoeur resists. The quest for a centre is an ongoing quest, which if it were totally realized would put an end to understanding. The idea of ultimate unity remains a limit idea which is to be approximated but never reached, i.e. an asymptote. In this way Ricoeur's thought remains open to different types of ultimate unity. While Ricoeur's orientation is toward some form of unity he acknowledges the pole of the other which prevents the attaining of an ultimate unity. For those who would set their direction towards difference the pole of unity would act as a limit to prevent ultimate dissipation.

Ricoeur's thought differs from those who, in the context of a general hermeneutics would posit a centre as a unitary *cogito* which would be capable of assimilating the other

without being changed by it. Ricoeur rejects this approach because this would in effect

negate the significance of the other. Ricoeur's approach, on the other hand, would be to

acknowledge a multiplicity of others each of which decentred meaning from immediate

consciousness. The ongoing appropriation of others expands the conscious, moves it

towards a global unity, which it will, however, never fully achieve. This implies that

consciousness can no longer be taken as the centre from which all 'others' may be reduced

and included within a totalizing scheme of thought. The totalizing scheme is not given.

Consciousness becomes a task of organization, a locus of assimilation in which each new

'other' assimilated changes the whole. Consciousness is not a given from which to

subsume reality. Mary McAllester's statement in 'Bachelard twenty years on: an

assessment' in *Revue de littérature comparée* (No. 2, 1984) "... we can no longer say 'je

pense donc je suis', but rather 'je pense la différence, donc je deviens différent, et étant

différent, je pense d'autres différences'" (169) could be taken as a concise summary of

Ricoeur's reflective approach to the other.

For Ricoeur, reflection yields meaning through an indirect route to the self, thus

reflection is coordinated with a non-idealistic phenomenology. The direct route results in

an absolute self distanced from temporal existence and possibly as a non reconcilable view

with other conceptions of the absolute self based on direct reflection. From the direct

route the self really only finds its meaning in the posited absolute. Ricoeur, however,

insists that there is meaning in the temporal and that through describing and reflecting on

human action this meaning may be found. The indirect route does not negate the direct

route but enriches the concept of the absolute by bringing in other presuppositions and

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points of view.

Religious traditions often attempt to give comprehensive accounts of the world and these accounts serve as an ultimate foundation. Ricoeur, however, views traditions as a symbolic grate through which the self comprehends itself. In "Le sujet convoqué A l'école des récits de vocation prophétique" (*Revue de l'Institut catholique de Paris* Oct-Dec. 1988:83-99) Ricoeur explores some of the implications of viewing tradition as a symbolic gate. The notion of self he finds in biblical tradition is that of "evoked subject". He states "Avant toute explication ou interprétation, ce terme s'oppose diamétralement à l'*hybris* philosophique du soi qui se pose absolument" (83). Nor does the prophetic call serve as a substitute for the philosophical absolute self. The person of faith is one who responds to a call which does not give an absolute guarantee.

Some adherents to biblical faith, particularly fundamentalists, who hold to a "literal reading of scripture" will not share Ricoeur's view of religious traditions as merely a symbolic grid through which the self comprehends itself. For them the biblical tradition is the truth and their focus is on the absolute. They do not see truth as arising on the temporal level of human action. Their view would be comparable to that of the Cartesian view where the self is simply given and there is no room for creativity in the development of the self. The challenge for the fundamentalist view would then be to articulate what meaning human actions have. The actions of a temporal self that finds its essence on the atemporal level would not affect the essence of the self and hence lack meaning. In order to find meaning for human action the fundamentalist would have to direct the gaze from the atemporal and consider the temporal realm of development and change. At this level

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the tradition could be seen as a symbolic grid to better self understanding. The "true" self understanding that is given through scriptures would be given a greater depth by understanding which has its origin on the temporal level.

Ricoeur's approach implies that every tradition and every believer is necessarily incomplete in and of itself on the temporal level. The issue of pride naturally arises but the more fundamental question is whether or not there is an absolute and unitary reality. Ricoeur's approach would suggest that if there is an absolute and unitary reality it would be inaccessible on the temporal level. This limit may be hoped for and approximated indirectly but a claim to be grounded in it directly results in an uneasy and narrow existence.

RICOEUR'S CONCEPT OF ONESELF AS ANOTHER

Dialectical Development

The recognition of the priority of the practical level is the key factor in Ricoeur's

methodology allowing it to be open to a wide variety of perspectives. In the *Rule of*

Metaphor (262) Ricoeur, discussing Aristotle's concept of being, states: "The abstract is

in the concrete potentiality; its inherence too is tied to the obscure ground of individual

substances." For Aristotle human acts take priority over theoretical knowing.[67] It is not an

essential structure that is prior but creative acts. Aristotle was the first to reflect on the

specificity of the human *act* reached only through a reflective method, in which a person

recognizes him or herself as the author of his or her acts.[68]

Ricoeur is particularly influenced by Aristotle's conceptions of creativity, action

and being. Ricoeur is fond of quoting Aristotle's statement that 'being may be expressed

in many ways'[69] and the Aristotelian doctrine of the analogical unity of the multiple

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[67]For Aristotle, *theoria*, that is, contemplation of the unchanging order, brings human beings close to the divine. The value of theory is in bringing order and value to primordial existence, while the realm of praxis forms the origin of the free and responsible subject. Theory and practice are thus two ways of relating to the real world, but priority is given to practice. Act takes priority over nature, essence or form. When act is stressed the notion of creativity arises since human action effects and creates.

[68]Cf. Charles E. Reagan and David Steward, editors, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978) 61.

[69]Aristotle states "There are many senses in which a thing may be said to 'be' ..." (*Met.* IV. 2.) and repeats it in *Met.* VI.2 and *Met.* VII. 1. Ricoeur cites this statement frequently i.e. *Rule of Metaphor* 260.

meanings of being[70] is central to his ontology for it precludes a direct route to understanding being.[71] With the understanding that human action is a fundamental way of human being, Ricoeur sets out to answer the question "whether the great polysemy of the term 'being,' according to Aristotle, can permit us to give new value to the meaning of being as act and potentiality, securing in this way the analogical unity of acting on a stable ontological meaning" (*Oneself* 20). Ricoeur follows Aristotle in viewing being in terms of actuality/potentiality rather than in terms of categories relating to substance and he also follows Aristotle's lead in not abandoning *theoria* and *poiesis*. He states: "the kind of plurality that Aristotle preserves by leaving *theoria, praxis,* and *poiesis* side-by-side seems to me to agree better with the sort of philosophy I prefer, one that is not too quick to unify the field of human experience from on high ..." (*Oneself* 312).

Ricoeur develops Aristotle's ontology by modifying its "Heideggerian" reappropriation (authentic/inauthentic vis-à-vis being-toward-death, which Ricoeur regards as too direct) by way of Spinoza's *conatus* (effort to be).

> Welcome indeed the thinker who would be able to carry the "Spinozist" reappropriation of Aristotelian *energia* to a level comparable to that now held by the "Heideggerian" reappropriations of Aristotelian ontology. For if Heidegger was able to join together the self and being-in-the-world, Spinoza - himself of Jewish more than Greek origin - is the only one to have been able to articulate the *conatus* against the backdrop of being, at

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[70]This doctrine is the ancestor of the medieval doctrine of the analogy of being.

[71]Cf. *Rule of Metaphor* 258-60.

once actual and powerful, which he calls *essentia actuosa* (*Oneself* 317).

Through his alignment with Aristotle's emphasis on being understood in terms of human

action Ricoeur establishes his position in opposition to an inward turn which developed

from Plato's emphasis on ideas and passed through Augustine's thought and from

Augustine to Descartes.

With Augustine the inward turn was intensified. Taylor states "For Augustine as

for Plato, the vision of cosmic order is the vision of reason, and for both the good for

humans involves their seeing and loving this order" (*Sources* 128). Augustine, however,

takes the Platonic opposition spirit/matter, higher/lower, eternal/temporal,

immutable/changing and describes them in terms of inner/outer. For Augustine the road to

God is inward. God is the underlying principle of our knowing activity. "So the light of

God is not just 'out there', illuminating the order of being, as it is for Plato; it is also an

'inner' light" (*Sources* 129).

> Augustine's turn to the self was a turn to radical reflexivity, and that is
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> what made the language of inwardness irresistible. The inner light is the
>
> one which shines in our presence to ourselves; it is the one inseparable
>
> from our being creatures with a first-person standpoint (*Sources* 131).

Augustine established the first-person standpoint as fundamental to our search for

the truth but his concern was not so much to establish a mind-body dualism as Descartes

later did. Augustine's purpose was to show that God could be found not primarily in the

world but, most importantly, at the very foundations of the person, in the intimacy of self-

presence. Augustine modified the Platonic notion of memory and developed the doctrine

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of innate ideas. These innate ideas lie deep within us and guide us as we move from our original self-ignorance and previous self-misdescription to true self-knowledge. Taylor states: "God can be thought of as the most fundamental ordering principle in me. As the soul animates the body, so God does the soul" (*Sources* 137).

René Descartes (1596-1650) considered certainty to be of the utmost importance for comprehending and confidently manipulating reality. He sought the design for the ideal society and the best life. His thought is oriented around a quest for certainty of existence by way of an indubitable Archimedean anchor. Descartes's fascination with an indubitable anchor for knowledge arose in a context in which certainty and the human place in the universe had been fundamentally undermined by events such as the Reformation and the Copernican Revolution. Furthermore Descartes's mathematical brilliance and his interest in the mechanical arts, architecture and social engineering guided and inspired his quest for certainty. Descartes wanted to begin his quest for certainty independent of philosophical and theological dogmatic views and of the representations of reality provided by the senses. He located his Archimedean point in *res cogitans*. The problem then became to insure that experiences external to the thinking substance were not merely speculation of that *res cogitans*. He strove to find the point of contact for the "I think" and the "I am."[72] From his Archimedean foundation it was Descartes's desire to understand reality so that

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[72]Descartes locates the point of contact in a specific part of the brain:
> I remark, in the next place, that the mind does not immediately receive the impression from all the parts of the body, but only from the brain, or perhaps even from one small part of it, viz., that in which the common sense (*sensus communis*) is said to be, which as often as it is affected in the same way, gives rise to the same perception in the mind, although meanwhile the other parts of the body may be diversely disposed, as is proved by innumerable experiments, which it is unnecessary here to enumerate (*Meditations* 139).

he "might be able clearly to discriminate the right path in life, and proceed in it with confidence" (*Discourse* 9). For Descartes the power of the intellect was the starting place for renewing and improving society. Descartes was seeking to discover the common blueprint of the human self image (*res cogitans*) and external reality (*res extensia*). He wanted to uncover the one plan that is realized in a multiplicity of elements. Descartes's procedure resulted in a rethinking of the concept of the human soul, which previously was thought of in terms of a principle of life and the world of thought. The function of the soul as embodying the principle of life was replaced, for Descartes, by the concept of machine. It remained for Descartes to connect the world of thought which belongs to the soul to the world of things. In other words, Descartes strove to understand how and where the *res cogitans* connected with the *res extensia*.

Descartes began his *Discourse on Method* with the statement "Good sense [the power of judging aright and of distinguishing truth from error] is, of all things among men, the most equally distributed ..." (*Discourse* 3). What differed among people, according to Descartes, was the method of thinking they employed and the objects upon which they thought. He began with the presupposition that the power of judging aright and of distinguishing truth from error, in other words, thinking, was a unity and was essentially the same in all people. This unity did not account for the variety of personalities but rather was a universal impersonal substance in which all human beings partook as an essential aspect of their being. The Cartesian "I", then, was an homogeneous "I" that constituted any act of human thinking and a disembodied "I" that may exist apart from corporeality. Access to this common "I" was gained through reflection.

The reflective method that Descartes employed in his attempt to discover the Archimedean anchor was to subject all things to the most radical doubt with the aim of ascertaining if there was anything which remained indubitable. That which remains indubitable is universal because there can be no possible condition in which it can be doubted. In order to discover this universal indubitable truth Descartes turned to the individual instance of a person thinking.[73] For Descartes, in a particular act of thinking, the universal indubitable truth may be perceived. This perception comes about not through the senses which may give deceptive impressions, nor through imagination which may produce unreal combinations but through conception which provides clear and distinct ideas.

Descartes's quest for certainty produced a *res cogitans* (which through Kant and Schopenhauer would develop into a knowing subject[74]), functioning as the point from which all reality was judged. For Descartes, the "I" is clearly an inward reality since this I is known through reflection and not perception. On the other hand, external reality came to be viewed wholly in terms of mechanics which left it open to being regarded as neutral in terms of an orientation by the "I" and as merely an object to be manipulated.

Descartes's philosophy is a "philosophy of the *cogito*" and not yet a philosophy of

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[73]Descartes believes that his project is in accordance with scripture. In his dedication of *Meditations of The First Philosophy* [66], he cites Romans 1 - "*That which may be known of God is manifest in them* - we seem to be admonished that all which can be known of God may be made manifest by reasons obtained from no other source than the inspection of our own minds."

[74]Descartes does not have in mind the knowing subject as the subject that receives impressions and orders them according to its own principles. For Descartes the word subject refers to subject matter as that which one might be mistaken about. It is his aim not to be subjective, that is to be reduced to his own prejudices, but to be completely objective.

the subject or the self. Ricoeur, in *Oneself As Another*, begins with a grammatical

approach in understanding philosophies of the subject and considers the subject

formulated in the first person. On the basis of this approach he considers "philosophies of

the *cogito*" as equivalent to "philosophy of the subject":

> I hold here as paradigmatic of the philosophies of the subject that the
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> subject is formulated in the first person - *ego cogito* - whether the "I" is
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> defined as an empirical or a transcendental ego, whether the "I" is posited
>
> absolutely (that is, with no reference to an other) or relatively (egology
>
> requiring the intrinsic complement of intersubjectivity). In all these
>
> instances, the subject is "I". That is why I am considering here the
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> expression "philosophies of the subject" as equivalent to "philosophies of
>
> the *cogito*." (4)

Defining "philosophy of the *cogito*" as equivalent to "philosophy of the subject" opens up

the field of study to a wide range of thought but may lead to a less accurate reading of

Descartes. Reading Descartes from the perspective of a philosophy of the subject may lead

to an underestimation of Descartes's intention of understanding the "I" as a place of

mediation between the world of thought and the occasion of things. Ricoeur's view is that

the self essentially acts as this mediator and that Descartes's thought typifies only one of

the poles. There may be more possibility of mediation in Descartes's thought than Ricoeur

admits. Since Descartes did not focus on the problem of the constitution of the subject or

self it is questionable whether his thought properly falls under the umbrella of "philosophy

of the subject". Descartes's reflection focuses on the "I" that necessarily arises at the

intersection of *res cogitans* and *res extensia*, which is simply posited. Descartes's primary

concern was not with the constitution of the subject as the knower or judger of perception

but with what is essential to being human, that is the "I" as the point of contact between

thinking substance and extended substance. This "I" as the point of contact has of course

implications for the understanding of the "subject" and the "self." The question of which is

the most fundamental, the "I" or the "self" would depend on the context. For Descartes

the "I" forms a necessary connection between the world of thought and the world of

things and is thus fundamental, forming an absolute ground for knowing. For Ricoeur the

question focuses on how the self is constituted in a complex way. This complexity

precludes an absolute ground. Descartes emphasizes simplicity and purity, Ricoeur

emphasizes complex relationships.

As a result of Descartes's turn towards understanding the *res cogito* inwardly and

as a unity, mind-body dualism became a fundamental presupposition for many

philosophers. With a mind-body dualism a view of knowledge or the world as

representation became possible, particularly after Kant and with Schopenhauer, and the

accuracy of representations became a central issue. It is with Schopenhauer that the

concept of the subject as the knower of all things, clearly emerges. He defines the subject:

> That which knows all things and is known by none is the *subject*. It is
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> accordingly the supporter of the world, the universal condition of all that
>
> appears, of all objects, and it is always presupposed; for whatever exists,
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> exists only for the subject. Everyone finds himself as this subject, yet only
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> in so far as he knows, not in so far as he is object of knowledge. But his

body is already object, and therefore from this point of view we call it representation.[75]

With Hegel the self becomes a central focus in German philosophy. Hegel saw the process of history as absolute spirit coming to know itself. He saw Descartes's *Cogito ergo sum* as the real beginning of modern philosophy. "With Descartes, thinking begins to plumb its own depths. *Cogito ergo sum* are the first words in his system; and it is precisely these words which express modern philosophy's difference from all its predecessors" (*Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy* 183). Hegel sees a fundamental opposition between thinking and being which in earlier Greek philosophy were unconsciously presupposed to be joined.

The idealistic reading of Descartes, as we have indicated, is not the only possible reading. For Descartes the "I" is the locus of the direct relation between Being (the thing-in-itself in Kantian terms) and thought. Certainty is located and grounded at this junction, but this junction is not yet the subject that the idealistic reading, which influences Ricoeur, assumes.

Nevertheless, beginning with Descartes certainty became the goal for knowing. Locating the ground of certainty in the knowing "I" lead to the possibility of a dualism between thought and being or mind and matter, with the mind as receiving and judging representations of body or matter. This mind/body dualism has not remained unchallenged, of course.

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[75]Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, two volumes, trans. E. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1969) , vol. 1: 5.

Freud, Marx and Nietzsche, whom Ricoeur refers to as the masters of suspicion, reacted against idealism's equating of the subject with consciousness. They each thought to show that the locus of reality was actually located elsewhere than in the consciousness. Freud, for example, regarded the subject as that which desire sought. Dreams and neurosis originated from a pre-linguistic realm of the unconscious or preconscious and thus indicated that there exists a more primordial subject than that indicated in the conscious. The conscious subject was not itself the ground of certainty.

The linking of certain knowledge with self knowledge not only results in a strong dualism between thinking subject and material body but also implies a depreciation of any understanding which one may possess prior to self understanding. In other words, the certainty of the thinking "I" becomes the first truth as opposed to the existing or extended self and the existing or extended world. Knowledge of the "I" as existing or extended is depreciated as doubtful at best, as is knowledge of the world.

Knowledge of ourselves as existing and knowledge of the world became for Descartes obstacles that had to be overcome in order to attain correct knowledge. When knowledge of the "I am" and "external reality" are bracketed, the pure "I think" is left as a foundation. But, as has been noted, for Descartes, absolute certainty requires passing through a sieve of absolute doubt. This method of proceeding according to requirements of certainty is termed *ratio cognoscendi*. It proceeds through analyzing complex concepts and reducing them to a simple or pure concept, which alone may be indubitable. Clearly this is a reductionist method and is founded on the premise that reality is fundamentally simple rather than complex. Ricoeur's view is that "there is no simple idea, simple being, a

monad from which one can start" (*Fallible Man* 13). He characterizes the human situation of lacking a simple starting point as the *pathétique* of misery. Descartes's ambition, however, was to find the simple starting point (which is also the ambition of many religious views).

When Descartes goes on to subject all things to radical doubt and to discover the indubitable in the act of thinking itself (I think therefore I am), the "I" that is thinking is impersonal, pure, and radically distinct from the body and all corporeality so that it can be clearly and distinctly known (i.e. it can be radically separated from everything that is not it). This radical mind-body dualism poses a challenge for Descartes, and for all who locate ultimate certainty in radical subjectivism. The problem is to articulate a way in which external reality may be known with certainty. If one is not concerned with external reality then the certainty which Descartes has attained is solipsism and is of little interest. But solipsism certainly was not Descartes's intent. Although I may have complete certainty of the existence of subjectivity I am left completely in the dark as to the certainty of my corporeality and the certainty of the existence of external reality. If in the quest for certainty one does not wish to remain in solipsism, a way to demonstrate the certainty of external reality must be explicated.

Descartes's criterion for certainty included a demand for clear and distinct ideas. The corporeal self and external reality are not pure but complex notions. Any notion that is complex may be doubted since a combination does not necessarily have a real manifestation. It may exist only as a fiction in the mind, such as a horn and a horse to form a unicorn. For Descartes external reality is known by imagination while pure concepts are

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known through conception. He illustrates the difference between imagination and perception:

> ... when I imagine a triangle I not only conceive that it is a figure
> comprehended by three lines, but at the same time also I look upon these
> three lines as present by the power and internal application of my mind, and
> this is what I call imagining. But if I desire to think of a chiliagon, I indeed
> rightly conceive that it is a figure composed of a thousand sides, as easily
> as I conceive that a triangle is a figure composed of only three sides; but I
> cannot imagine the thousand sides of a chiliagon as I do the three sides of a
> triangle, nor, so to speak, view them as present [with the eyes of my mind]
> (*Discourse* 127).

While conception (the mind turning upon itself and considering the ideas it possesses) is essential to thinking, that is, thinking could not take place without conception, imagination requires a special effort of the mind to turn towards a body "and contemplates in it some object conformed to the idea which it either of itself conceived or apprehended by sense" (*Discourse* 128). Imagination for Descartes, is not an essential aspect of the mind. Imagination, however, helps one to know oneself better and also the author of the self. Imagination is a key concept for Ricoeur, intimately related to language (that is, imagination is a way of using language). Ricoeur views reality as a complexity which is not to be reduced to a simplicity. For Ricoeur a human being is a mediating being not "between angel and animal; he is intermediate within himself, within his *selves*. He is intermediate because he is a mixture, and a mixture because he brings about mediations"

(*Fallible Man* 3).

Ricoeur's poetics strives to articulate the self in terms of a gift of being. For Ricoeur the *cogito* which is wounded, which does not coincide with itself is healed by an 'other', but this healing is not a final cure. Ricoeur's poetics attempts to recapture a philosophical way of speaking that has been forgotten by those who seek to ground the self in the self positing *cogito*.[76] In the *Voluntary and the Involuntary* Ricoeur seeks to resituate the *cogito* in reality "as a hope lived out under the act of consent to a necessity which it neither creates nor dominates" (Scott 28).

Ricoeur's poetics is a project in which the will strives to grasp its own essence. But the will is precisely this act of self-understanding. The will comes to recognize its ground in nature which is the locus of a radical necessity. In recognizing nature as its ground the possibility opens up of an affirmation and admiration of being which poetry expresses.

For Ricoeur the healing of the subject is equivalent to salvation. Since healing is an ongoing process is salvation something that may only be hoped for but not fully achieved? On the philosophical level Ricoeur would hold this to be the case and stubbornly resists any final mediation. On the level of faith, hope is intensified to belief that salvation may be achieved. Salvation in many of the world religions is not only something to be hoped for but it is often believed that it is possible to "be saved" or to "be enlightened."

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[76]As we have seen it was Descartes's intention to discover what was essentially human in the intersection of the *res cogitans* and the *res extensia*. From this point he wanted to discover the best way to live, which meant acquiring certainty. His intention was not to ground the self as a unique individual but rather from the "I" that necessarily appears at the intersection of *res cogitans* and *res extensia* to establish the way to live in a world where deception was possible.

Interreligious dialogue would be possible and desirable for bringing healing to the subject on the philosophical level. It seems that when a commitment of faith is made to a particular form of the cure a distance between various views is heightened. When the commitment to a particular form of healing is very strong it may be very difficult for an individual or a group to engage in dialogue (which involves listening) with others. If one is sure that one has found "the way" for ultimate healing then dialogue is replaced by attempts to convert. Listening is eclipsed by propaganda. "Truth" becomes a weapon and defence.

Ricoeur's attempt to maintain a dialogue on the philosophical level is to approach truth from the bottom up. That is, the philosophical level reminds us constantly that any commitment to an absolute truth may not in fact lead to salvation. The various ideas must be tried out and tested through experience. The direct access to Being, as Heidegger attempts, is not the path for the philosopher but rather for the mystic. For Ricoeur the path towards healing is a long path which employs attestation. Those who claim to have arrived at an ultimate oneness through introspection have taken a short path which cannot be verified.

For Ricoeur, the Cartesian *cogito* is both a climax and an origin in terms of an understanding of the self vis-à-vis nature broadly conceived of as living experience. Ricoeur observes that the human self has a characteristic of freedom which draws out the various meanings of nature. The Cartesian *cogito* represents the ultimate point of reduction or isolation of the self from nature. The successive stages towards this Cartesian *cogito* begin as humanity distinguishes itself from nature. In the first stage nature appears

to be opposed by the state, tools and language of humans. In "Nature and Freedom" Ricoeur states that "as opposed to the institution nature appears as a 'state' ... prior to any law."[77] In this state passions run unchecked, it is a state of fear, violence and war. Tools bring out the opposition between *artefacta* and *naturalia* and nature is conceived of as "production according to an internal principle" ("Nature and Freedom" 25). When nature is opposed to discourse it becomes the ensemble of things, of bodies, of existence. In other words, what *is* is opposed to that which is *said*, "with its order, its logic and its claim to truth" ("Nature and Freedom" 25). This first stage, however, despite its oppositions, despite what it has removed from the concept of self, still allows for a connection with nature in that there is a "human nature co-ordinate with nature, both characterized by inclination toward a perfected existence" ("Nature and Freedom" 26).

A more radical opposition between causality through freedom and natural causality according to laws constitutes the second stage in the removal of nature from the concept of the self. Yet even here this opposition is not complete for the concept of human nature provides "a continuity between the immutability of the laws of nature or the transcendental lawfulness of nature and human order in some sense *analogous* to it."

The third and most radical stage is the removal of human nature from the concept of the self. This stage takes place with the Cartesian concept of the *cogito* and its indifference to all external order. The body, the determinations such as son, daughter, occupations, etc. which from one point of view define what I am, are separated from the I

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[77]Paul Ricoeur, "Nature and Freedom" in David Stewart and Joseph Bien eds. *Political and Social Essays by Paul Ricoeur* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974) 24.

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am viewed from the perspective of the thinking substance. Ricoeur states: "When I can say, 'I am not that which I am,' the rupture between the *quod* of existence and the *quid* of essence completes the downfall of the last meaning of 'nature,' that is, the essence, the immutability of the *raison d'être*, the lawfulness of order" ("Nature and Freedom" 30). The Cartesian dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* forms the climax in a series of stages leading to the removal of nature from the pure self. Ricoeur states:

> Thus, having withdrawn from things, the *cogito* now withdraws from that
> which in itself is a thing. Having absented itself from *nature*, it now absents
> itself from *its own* nature and, lacking a nature, surrenders itself to the
> throes of self-determination. A *pure I* is born at the moment when all
> internal and external nature is negated.
>
> This is the final limit of the reductive analysis and, at the same time,
> the zero point of nature ("Nature and Freedom" 30).

The accomplishment of this removal of nature from the self is that "the most unreal, the most impotent of freedoms" ("Nature and Freedom" 30) has been won. If from this point one travels in the other direction freedom may be made affirmative, real and effective. What will have been gained in travelling this route is a passing from a first naïveté understood in terms of oppositions to a deeper understanding of the reciprocal relation between nature and freedom.

The first stage in this return route is the recovery of the active meaning of being. Ricoeur argues that to exist is to act. He asks: "Does not being, in the first instance, signify an act?" ("Nature and Freedom" 31). He appeals to the Leibnizian notion of

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appetition and the Spinozistic notion of effort -- *conatus*. He argues: "Being is act before it is essence, because it is effort before it is representation or idea" ("Nature and Freedom" 32).

The next stage in the synthesis of experience is to show that the real order of action is not being-there but potency. He appeals to Jean Nabert's description of the dialectic of the coming-real of freedom "as the *appropriation* by the ego of a certainty of existing which constitutes the ego, but of which it is in many ways dispossessed" ("Nature and Freedom" 33). He regards Ravaisson as having the most profound insight on the actualizing of freedom. He cites *De L'Habitude* «En toute chose, la Nécessité de la nature est la chaîne sur laquelle se trame la Liberté. Mais c'est une chaîne mouvante et vivante, la nécessité du désir, de l'amour et de la grâce.»[78] "In all things, the necessity of nature is the warp on which freedom weaves. But it is a living and moving warp, being the necessity of desire, love and grace" ("Nature and Freedom" 38).

The third stage challenges the primal opposition between human beings and nature and argues that the real order of action is not being-there but potency or works. Thus there is a connection with Aristotle's way of thinking. Ricoeur concludes: "The relation of mediation between freedom and nature is more fundamental than the relation of opposition. Every other answer to the question of the relation between them deals only with a truncated freedom which exhausts itself in denying an inert nature" (*Freedom and Nature* 43).

These stages open up an important level in which interreligious dialogue may take

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[78]Félix Ravaisson *De L'Habitude* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1933) 57.

place. The level where being is conceived of as act and where the focus is not on being there but potency is precisely the temporal level in which human beings live and form their self understanding, indeed their very selves. The self that is constituted on the temporal level is a mediating self, mediating between the posited absolute self and the shattered self. This approach to the self then suggests itself as a position from which dialogue could take place between opposing views of the absolute or the goals of salvation or liberation. This is illustrated by the way Ricoeur mediates between Descartes's and Nietzsche's approach to self understanding.

In *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur announced that one of his main goals was to show that "*self*" arrived at through reflective meditation is more basic than "*I*" which is immediately posited. He appealed for initial support for this thesis to language itself. [79] On the philosophical level, Ricoeur considered the positive view of the *cogito* in light of Descartes's foundational thought and the shattering of this foundational *cogito* by Nietzsche in order to show that the reflective self stands at an equal distance from both these positions.

Ricoeur observed that Descartes's "philosophy confirms that the *crisis* of the *cogito* is contemporaneous with the *positing* of the *cogito*" (*Oneself* 5). By this he means that the separation of the *cogito* from the body is a placing of the *cogito* in its proper relation to other objects. In other words, Descartes affirmed a dualism at the foundation of

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[79] In French grammar the term *se* is linked to the infinitive which expresses the broadest meaning of the verb and *soi* is an omni reflexive personal pronoun. He seems to take the breadth of the application of *se* and *soi* as an indication that the use of the reflexive concept of self has a much broader base than the use of the first person singular pronoun and thus the concept of "self" is more basic than "I."

knowledge. This dualism was radical in nature in accordance with the hyperbolic character of doubt that Descartes used to derive it. By hyperbolic Descartes referred to a doubt which is systematic and generalized. This hyperbolic doubt treats "as *absolutely false* what is merely *doubtful*, rejects *universally* as *always* deceptive what could have deceived me *sometimes*..." (Gueroult, *The Soul and God* 20). In other words, by beginning with hyperbolic doubt Ricoeur understands Descartes as being led to the purity of a doubting subject whose certainty was independent of its own body and all physical bodies.

Ricoeur comments: "the 'I' who does the doubting and who reflects upon itself in the *cogito* is just as metaphysical and hyperbolic as is doubt itself with respect to all knowledge. It is, in truth, no one" (*Oneself* 6). This "no one" is not related to any sort of other, it is no longer anchored in the speech conditions of dialogue and remains a free-floating "I" which doubts what seems to be in order to discover one thing that is certain and indubitable. Having established the shortcomings of Descartes's positing of the *cogito* as foundational it is now time to look a little more closely at the other side, the shattering of the *cogito*.

For Ricoeur, Nietzsche is the master of suspicion who decentres the *cogito*. Along with Freud and Marx, Nietzsche argues that the consciousness of a subject is in fact a false consciousness. Contrary to Cartesian thought, for the masters of suspicion there is no immediate presence of existence and thinking. This means that the subject is not truly known through an immediate consciousness, Ricoeur thus refers to it as a wounded subject. Ricoeur has considered and utilized Marx's critique in several of his political writings. Marx's contribution was to show a false consciousness by way of an

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interpretation of reality in terms of economic alienation. Ricoeur has also written

extensively on Freud and his calling into question the primacy of consciousness by

focussing on dreams and neurotic symptoms. Freud saw within the consciousness an

economics of instincts and sought to relocate the subject through a therapy of

consciousness.

Ricoeur seeks to heal the subject which has been variously wounded by the

masters of suspicion. In *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur does not look so much to Marx and

Freud as the primary critics of the *cogito*. Marx and Freud then fade into the background

in *Oneself as Another* and Ricoeur's dialectic is concerned with Nietzsche and those

whom he inspired as providing the most fundamental counterpart to Descartes.

Nietzsche's criticism focuses on the level of language which has been a central interest of

Ricoeur in his latest works and is also a key concern for interreligious dialogue. It is also

from Nietzsche that many deconstructionist and post modern views take their inspiration.

Nietzsche approached the problem of certainty not from the point of view of trying

to discover some pure or simple basis for certainty but to question the various foundations

that certainty had been erected upon, specifically, Christian doctrine with its absolute

moral standards. Nietzsche viewed life as being complex. He felt that life's only

justification was purely aesthetic, that is, it was purely a surface phenomenon with no

recoverable or absolute depth. Art for Nietzsche is the realm of illusions which

acknowledged its nature as illusion and is thus more truthful than other realms which do

not acknowledge illusion as their foundation. He states in his 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism'

of his first published book, *The Birth of Tragedy:*

In truth, nothing could be more opposed to the purely aesthetic

interpretation and justification of the world which are taught in this book

than the Christian teaching, which is, and wants to be, *only* moral and

which relegates art, *every* art, to the realm of *lies*; with its absolute

standards, beginning with the truthfulness of God, it negates, judges, and

damns art. ... Christianity was from the beginning, essentially and

fundamentally, life's nausea and disgust with life (23).

For Nietzsche, life is to be affirmed apart from and even opposed to absolute

standards. The truly human metaphysical activity was for Nietzsche, not morality but art

as a surface phenomenon with no absolute standards. Nietzsche's position was based on

the premise that existence is absurd, a flux which swallows up any truth or meaning.[80] One

might still say that Nietzsche was looking towards a unity or totality, but this unity or

totality would be flux, not ruled by any absolute principles.

It is in individuation that one is driven to look for certainty, to secure one's

distinctness from the flux. Individuation breeds a type of scientific optimism which looks

to absolutes as its saviour. Socrates was the villain who argued that knowledge should be

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[80]Karl Barth, like Ricoeur, recognized Nietzsche as articulating an extreme position regarding the absurdity of life. Barth, however, argued that Nietzsche's view should be passed over without argument. For Barth the self does not exist in isolation rather humanity requires the fellowman. Nietzsche, however, as Barth reads him, offers an antithetical view in which "I am, that I am for myself, and neither from nor to others" (CD III-2, 229-42 reprinted in James C. O'Flaherty, Timothy F. Sellner and Robert M. Helles eds. *Studies in Nietzsche and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition* 353). Barth sees that for Nietzsche the "other" has no constitutive function for his view of humanity. In *Human, All To Human* Nietzsche wrote "Delight in things, it is said, but what is really meant is delight in oneself through the medium of things" (Quoted by Barth in CD III-2). Here the "I am" is privileged but in a way quite different from Descartes. The "I am" exists not as a foundation for establishing external reality but for recognizing oneself as ultimately the only source - autonomous from all other beings and thus illusionary in nature.

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framed within a teleology of an individual concern -- the goal of living happily. The overvaluing of the individual was the source for ethics (cf. *Philosophy and Truth* 18). Prior to Socrates the concern was not for the happiness of individuals. Rather the Hellenes were concerned with the correct proportion of unhindered talents and the greatest possible happiness of the people with the aim of creating great works. It seems to me that what Nietzsche is saying is that individuation leads to a metaphysical absolute and a quest for certainty. He argues rather for a view of unity in which the greatest possible happiness of people is sought through correct proportion of creative talents and thus the ultimate is not a metaphysical absolute but the state. The greatest happiness is not attained through striving for preset, illusory metaphysical goals as rhetoricians may try to convince people to attain but rather through the creative inspiration of poetry.

In "Nietzsche's Lecture Notes on Rhetoric,"[81] Nietzsche contrasts rhetoric with poetry and defines rhetoric as:

> the art of transacting a serious business of the understanding as if it were a free play of the imagination; poetry that of conducting a free play of the imagination as if it were a serious business of the understanding. Thus the orator announces a serious business, and for the purpose of entertaining his audience conducts it as if it were a mere play with ideas. The poet promises merely an entertaining play with ideas, and yet for the understanding there insures as much as if the promotion of its business had been his one

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[81]"Nietzsche's Lecture Notes on Rhetoric," trans. Carole Blair *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 16(1983).

intention (97).

Nietzsche's preference for poetry over rhetoric stems from the intention of rhetoric. Rhetoric strives to convey an opinion which is to be taken as the truth. Language does the same thing for the very words it uses are actually tropes, rhetorical devices, in themselves. "But, with respect to their meanings, all words are tropes in themselves, and from the beginning" ("Lecture Notes" 106). Words have no intrinsic proper meaning, rather all language is at root figuration or metaphor. Language is not a vehicle which delivers timeless truths about things in themselves. Rather, language artfully constructs a reality in which people may live. Nietzsche states:

> What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and
>
> anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been
>
> poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and
>
> which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and
>
> binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are
>
> metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous
>
> force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as
>
> metal and no longer as coins (*Philosophy and Truth* 84).

Nietzsche's discourse on truth itself, however, may be subject to the paradox of the liar. If it is, Nietzsche's revelation (apology of Life, Will to power) does not represent an immediacy which may replace the old Cartesian immediacy of reflection. Rather, Ricoeur believes, Nietzsche's own philosophy remains at the mercy of a gesture of deconstruction. Just as figurative language, in *Course on Rhetoric*, "could no longer be

opposed to any sort of literal language, the language of the liar no longer has as its reference a nondeceitful language, for language as such has come from the substitutions and inversions" (*Oneself* 13).

With Nietzsche's hyperbolic doubt, Descartes's question 'how can I find certainty?' is completely undermined for the "I" itself which asks the question is a linguistic construction which is based on tropes and thus lies. If the "I" becomes questionable in this way then the whole inner outer distinction, subjectivity and objectivity are put in a new light. The act of thinking itself is now seen as an arbitrary abstraction from a multiplicity of instincts.

Ricoeur explains that Nietzsche's phenomenalism of the *inner world* means that everything that reaches our consciousness is utterly and completely adjusted, simplified, schematized, and interpreted. Also for Nietzsche, the external world does not constitute an objectivity in a Kantian sense but is viewed as a phenomenon and is thus adjusted, simplified, schematized, and interpreted. Ricoeur points out that Nietzsche says "There are no facts, only interpretations" (*Oneself* 15). Ricoeur continues:

> To assume the phenomenality of the internal world is to align the
>
> connection of inner experience with external "causation," which is also an
>
> illusion that conceals the play of forces under the artifice of order. It is, as
>
> well, to posit an entirely arbitrary unity, that fiction called "thinking," apart
>
> from the bristling multiplicity of instincts. ... In the exercise of hyperbolic
>
> doubt, which Nietzsche carries to its limit, the "I" does not appear as
>
> inherent to the *cogito* but as an interpretation of a causal type (15).

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The subject then is not a unified pure autonomous entity but is rather a multiplicity. If language is indeed founded on tropes which are constituted by simplifying and thus falsifying the multiplicity of life, there can be no absolute guarantee against doubt. Language and the constitution of the self thus become a central focus for Ricoeur's mediation between the posited "I" of Descartes and the shattered *cogito* of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's radical doubt undermines the certainty of thought which occurs in the medium of language. Since human beings communicate ideas primarily through language absolute certainty is not achievable on the level of dialogue. Ricoeur's identification of Nietzsche's thought as an expression of a fundamental pole in his dialectic has important implications for applying his understanding of dialectic to interreligious dialogue. At the level of dialogue absolute certainty about fundamental reality cannot be communicated. Direct mystical experiences of the absolute may determine one or both partners direction in a dialogue but through the medium of language a decisive determination of the nature of fundamental reality is not possible. If the fundamental nature of reality cannot be decisively determined in the temporal/practical realm then the direction of dialectical development also is not certain. While Ricoeur understands that the self is coming to establish itself in its actions through a dialectical development it is also possible that the self may strive to transcend itself or overcome itself as it moves in the direction of the absolute. Language is a creative medium in which possible worlds and directions may be expressed.

Ricoeur's dialectical approach and his stress on creativity make it possible for him to really listen to others as he attempts to creatively appropriate what they have to offer

even if their ultimate direction is opposed to his own.[82] An approach such as his is

extremely valuable if interreligious dialogue is to occur in any meaningful way. Ricoeur's

stress on creativity is brought out in his understanding of language. For Ricoeur, language

is essential. Ricoeur's fascination with language focuses on its power to open up the

world, indeed to create reality. Ricoeur believes that language as discourse appears as an

open process of mediation between mind and world. A word as a lexical entity has nothing

to do with reality whereas a word in a sentence is a bearer of meaning and shares the

referential function of the whole discourse. Ricoeur states: "When *Sprache spricht*, then

words themselves co-operate in the shaping of reality."[83]

Reference and Hope

Ricoeur's hermeneutics which focuses on interpretation of symbols and texts

embodies his search for meaning in human existence, a search which is common to many

religious traditions. Ricoeur argues that symbolic thought is effective in articulating the

meaning of a human subject since it is capable of referring at once to opposing poles such

as discordance, concordance, or temporal, atemporal. Ricoeur does not believe in

absolutizing either the self (which leads to scepticism) or the text (which leads to

idolatrous credulity). He seeks to acknowledge the limitations of both text and interpreting

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[82]Taylor (34) states:
> Michel Philibert highlights Ricoeur's ethical, values his 'attention créatrice': he
> knows how to 'listen' to Others: 'Ricoeur se met au rang de ceux qu'il écoute avec
> une attention si réverencieuse et si exigeante qu'elle les contraint de se dépasser
> eux-mêmes'.

[83]Paul Ricoeur, "Word, Polysemy, Metaphor: Creativity in Language" in *A Ricoeur Reader:
Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdés (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) 70.

self and believes that they are interdependent, each correcting the other. Hope for a complete appropriation of symbolic and textual meanings drives his hermeneutics on but suspicion that symbols and texts may be misleading causes him to proceed with caution. Ricoeur realizes that texts and symbols cannot bestow *absolute* knowledge or the *fullness* of being so his hermeneutic remains continually under the sign of hope, hope that it is advancing toward the absolute. Ricoeur thus adopts a vision similar to that of Hegel's dialectic but firmly rejects any premature closure upon an Absolute Idea. Ricoeur places his hope in the God to come. Ricoeur does not then regard the present as the necessary unfolding of existence, rather he looks to a vision of the possible future. He states: "freedom in the light of hope, expressed in psychological terms is nothing else than this creative imagination of the possible" (*Conflict* 408).

Ricoeur's philosophical grasp of freedom takes the form of a dialogue between a philosophy of reason (Kant and Hegel) and a theology of hope (Moltmann, who sees the task of a hermeneutics of the Resurrection as reinstating the potential of hope). The first rational approximation to hope involves an exploration between thought of the unconditioned and thought of objects. The second rational approximation of hope resides in the connection between morality and happiness, a connection which is necessary but not yet given. The third rational approach to hope is that of religion within the limits of reason alone "What can I hope for?"

The postulates express a demand for completion, for totality "which constitutes practical reason in its essential purity" (*Conflict* 418). Ricoeur states that it is postulated freedom which we are looking for.

The "postulate" of freedom must henceforth cross through, not only the night of knowing, with its crisis of the transcendental illusion, but also the night of power, with its crisis of radical evil. *Real* freedom can spring up only as hope beyond this speculative and practical Good Friday. Nowhere are we closer to the Christian kerygma: hope is hope of resurrection, resurrection from the dead (*Conflict* 422).

Possibility thus becomes for human beings a direction for the discovery of meaning. In other words, one of the most important tenets that sets the direction for Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology is that there is a surplus of being to human existence, and this surplus of being is nothing other than *possibility*. It would also seem, however, that an opposite direction is possible. Rather than hope and possibility driving a person on to self fulfilment the opposite direction would be a letting go of desire, hope and possibility to overcome the self. Rather than increasing the meaning of the individual self an overcoming of the meaning of the individual self would be sought. Dialectical movement to this end would still apply, only in this instance in the opposite direction to that of Ricoeur's quest. Although that which drives Ricoeur's dialectic is a hope for the fulness of being, the dialectic which he articulates can also be driven by the reverse orientation if liberation is to be found by transcending the individual self.

Selfhood and Sameness

Before closing this chapter on self understanding a few words must be said aobut the problem of identity in modern Western and Eastern philosophical thought. Ricoeur's

approach will provide another perspective and way of mediating between two radically different approaches and indeed showing a relationship between them.

The modern problem of identity, for many philosophers, is focussed upon the task of conceiving of a relationship in which two person stages are considered as one person. It is often assumed in the modern Western context that whatever relation between person stages makes them stages of one person would also be able to hold between entities that are distinct as substances. The modern debate, therefore, thinks in terms free from the search for a continuous substance distinct from body, mind and senses which constitutes the soul (which earlier debate centred upon). Even still, the discussion goes on without being clearly resolved.

Ricoeur argues that the impasse arises from an inadequate conception of identity, that is, a one- sided view in terms of sameness or idem. His claim is that there is another aspect to identity which he calls self-hood or ipsite.

Sameness can be thought of numerically or qualitatively. As *numerical* identity, its contrary is plurality. It is with sameness as *numerical* identity that recognition becomes the important aspect of cognition, for it is the same thing which is being recognized over and over again. Qualitative identity as extreme resemblance, is not focussed on oneness but on interchangeableness. Ricoeur states:

> we say that *x* and *y* are wearing the same suit -- that is, clothes that are so
>
> similar that they are interchangeable with no noticeable difference. To this
>
> second component corresponds the operation of substitution without
>
> semantic loss, *salva veritate* (116).

Although numerical and qualitative identity are not reducible to each other, Ricoeur, in his typically dialectical way of thinking, conceives of them as being linked with a common temporal factor. It is the passing of time that creates doubt so that re-identification of the series of the numerically same is required and this re-identification may employ the criterion of extreme resemblance in its presumption of numerical identity. The criterion of similitude becomes less and less reliable with the passing of time. Ricoeur cites the trials of war criminals which deal with the problem of identification after a long period. Another criterion is therefore called for as a third component of the notion of identity, that of "*uninterrupted continuity* between the first and the last stage in the development of what we consider to be the same individual" (*Oneself* 117). Development from an acorn to a tree would be an example of this type of continuity but the differences that are apparent at the various stages illustrate that time is a factor of dissemblance, of divergence, of difference.

> The threat time represents for identity is not entirely dissipated unless we can
> posit, at the base of similitude and of the uninterrupted continuity, a principle of
> *permanence in time*. This will be, for example, the invariable structure of a tool, all
> of whose parts will gradually have been replaced. This is also the case, of supreme
> interest to us, of the permanence of the genetic code of a biologic individual; what
> remains here is the organization of a combinatory system. The idea of structure,
> opposed to that of event, replies to this criterion of identity, the strongest one that
> can be applied (*Oneself* 117).

The structure remains the same. Change happens to a structural relational invariant

that does not change. It is this relational invariant that is the subject of search for those concerned with the problematic of personal identity in the context of sameness. When the question of identity is raised in the context of the issue of *permanence in time* the analytic theories consider only idem identity.

The search for the idem identity results in an answer that is appropriate to the question "What am I?" The "What I am" is not a person but rather is the schema of the category of substance. As a structure it is atemporal, the schema is *what* endures through time. Ricoeur, however, argues that there is also an answer to the question "Who am I?" This is the question that pertains to a person -- to a self. The question of "Who am I?" is answered in terms of *character* and *keeping one's word. Character* and *keeping one's word* are not reducible, the one to the other, yet they are mutually interdependent as aspects of the permanence of persons. In other words, the permanence which belongs to persons can be recognized in each of these concepts yet the concepts are different. Ricoeur states:

> My hypothesis is that the polarity of these two models of permanence with
> respect to persons results from the fact that the permanence of character
> expresses the almost complete mutual overlapping of the problematic of
> *idem* and *ipse*, while faithfulness to oneself in keeping one's word marks
> the extreme gap between the permanence of the self and that of the same
> and so attests fully to the irreducibility of the two problematics one to the
> other (*Oneself* 118).

Under the new question of "Who am I?" character corresponds to the quest for

sameness, idem, in an almost complete mutual overlapping with the schema of selfhood

(ipse) that endures through time. Character, however, is brought into a reciprocal

relationship with keeping one's word as a form of selfhood freeing itself from sameness.

The polarities of idem identity and ipse identity are brought together (but not reduced the

one to the other) in narrative identity.

Here Ricoeur defines character as the set of distinctive marks which permit the re-

identification of a human individual as being the same. The sameness of a person is

designated emblematically in terms of numerical identity, qualitative identity, uninterrupted

continuity and permanence in time.

Ricoeur has dealt with the concept of character at several stages in his career. In

The Voluntary and the Involuntary, Ricoeur, on the theoretical plane, regarded character

as a finite, unchosen perspective through which one accepts values, an essential aspect of a

person along with the unconscious and being alive. Character then could be described as

fate that constitutes a person and to which a person consents. In *Fallible Man*, on the

plane of practice, character as perspective and opening was on the side of the finite in its

non-coincidence with the infinite, constituting the fault in human existence. It was a

"limited openness of our field of motivation taken as a whole" (60).[84] Now in *Oneself as*

Another he situates character in the problematic of identity, and reinterprets it in terms of

acquired dispositions. Here the aspect of the immutability of character will be closely

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[84]Ricoeur defines *character* as: "... la perspective singulière selon laquelle toute valeur apparaît; loin de pouvoir être changé, le caractère est à chaque instant la formule originale de mon efficacité." (L'Unité, 10)

scrutinized.

Character, I would say today, designates the set of lasting dispositions by

which a person is recognized. In this way character is able to constitute the

limit point where the problematic of *ipse* becomes indiscernible from that

of *idem*, and where one is inclined not to distinguish them from one

another. It is therefore important to ask ourselves about the temporal

dimension of the disposition, which will later set character back upon the

path of the narrativization of personal identity (121).

Ricoeur first considers the disposition known as habit since it brings out an aspect

of temporality. Habits have a history since they are formed and then sedimentated so as to

cover over the innovation of formation. In sedimentation Ricoeur sees the overlapping of

ipse by *idem*.

This overlapping, however, does not abolish the difference separating the

two problematics: precisely as second nature, my character is me, myself,

ipse; but this *ipse* announces itself as *idem* (121).

Habits, as lasting dispositions, are known as *traits* which are distinctive signs

constituting character. They originate with the self but are crystallized into a continuity of

the same. It is possible, however, for the two poles of identity (ipse and idem) to be in

accordance with one another and this occurs in the notion of disposition known as

acquired identifications.

With *acquired identifications* the enduring same is constituted by that which is

recognized exterior to the person. These others may be such things as values, norms,

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ideals, models, and heroes to which one through evaluative preference develops an element of loyalty. That which was exterior thus becomes internalized. This loyalty takes on an aspect of maintaining the self and is thus fidelity. The others then form the basis for which self recognition occurs. Ricoeur concludes:

> By means of this stability, borrowed from acquired habits and
> identifications -- in other words, from dispositions -- character assures at
> once numerical identity, qualitative identity, uninterrupted continuity across
> change, and finally, permanence in time which defines sameness (*Oneself*
> 122).

For Ricoeur, character is the "what" of the "who," and in being this "what" it is distinguished from the "what" external to the "who." The distinction of the "what" of the "who" from the external "what" lies in the aspect of the what" of the "who" having a history. In the process of sedimentation the "what" of the "who" has been contracted and this contraction can be unfolded through narrative.

When *idem* and *ipse* no longer overlap and are entirely dissociated from one another so that selfhood is no longer based in sameness the model of keeping one's word in faithfulness is employed. Ricoeur states:

> I see in this keeping the emblematic figure of an entity which is the polar
> opposite of that depicted by the emblematic figure of character. Keeping
> one's word expresses a *self-constancy* which cannot be inscribed, as
> character was, within the dimension of something in general but solely
> within the dimension of "who?" (*Oneself* 123).

The ethical nature of promise justifies it being firmly held to despite the desire to change. This ethical justification thus develops a modality of permanence in time independent of the permanence of character. Keeping one's word is thus able to stand in polar opposition to permanence of character and is the point at which selfhood and sameness cease to coincide. Between these polar opposites resides an *interval of sense*, which must have a temporal mediation (narrative identity) since the polarity is oriented around two models of permanence in time. Ricoeur states:

> we will not be surprised to see narrative identity oscillate between two
>
> limits: a lower limit, where permanence in time expresses the confusion of
>
> *idem* and *ipse*; and an upper limit, where the *ipse* poses the question of its
>
> identity without the aid and support of the *idem* (*Oneself* 124).

Apart from narrative mediation, Ricoeur believes that the question of personal identity is cast into paralyzing paradoxes as Locke and Hume demonstrated. John Locke linked personal identity to memory and held to a singular idea of the identity of a thing with itself:

> When therefore we demand whether anything be the same or no, it refers
>
> always to something that existed such a time in such a place, which it was
>
> certain at that instant, was the same with itself (*An Essay concerning*
>
> *Human Understanding* New York: World Publishing, 1964, 207).

For Locke, the oak tree which grows has a permanence in its organization which involves no substantialism but for personal identity the "sameness with itself" is ascribed to instantaneous *reflection*. The instant of reflection is extended via memory. Thus, two

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person stages are the same person if one contains memories of experiences that belong to the other. Ricoeur charges that Locke is here trying to substitute selfhood defined in terms of reflection for sameness which implies permanence in organization. Clearly sameness in organization is something that may be detected by an external observer and thus is thought of as the corporal criterion of sameness, whereas reflection is strictly an internal event and is thought of as the psychological criterion of sameness. (One should note that for Ricoeur idem and ipse play a role in both sets of criterion.) Locke's contribution to the question of identity then is chiefly in introducing the concept of a mental criterion which will be opposed to the external criterion which looks for an observable permanence of organization. Now the question becomes which criterion is decisive, but they seem to be equally plausible.

One way to get out of (or deeper into this aporia as Ricoeur argues) was proposed by Joseph Butler. He argues that what is recognized in memory is a substantial enduring self. John A Taber ["The Mīmāmsā theory of self-recognition" *Philosophy East & West* 40(1) 1990 35-57] argues that Butler's view is in accordance with the Mīmāmsā theory of self-recognition. In this theory memory reveals (not presupposes) a single subject of experience that both had the remembered experience and now remembers it. Here then is a direct appeal to a certain intuition which seeks to prove a permanent self, a soul-substance. This appeal to intuition is precisely what Ricoeur critiques in the Western tradition especially with Descartes who posits a self which exists apart from the temporal body. Ricoeur's indirect method of detours through psychoanalysis, structuralism, etc is his way to show the inadequacy of this method of direct intuition. Furthermore the direct

positing of a unitary self is open to severe difficulties as he illustrates by hypothetical cases such as that of

> a prince whose memory is transplanted into the body of a cobbler; does the
>
> latter become the prince whom he remembers having been, or does he
>
> remain the cobbler whom other people continue to observe? (*Oneself*
>
> 126).

The case remains undecidable for one must still choose between two opposing criteria of identity (physical or mental) which are equally plausible.

For Hume sameness is the only model of identity but he assigns degrees of identity depending on the extent and suddenness of mutations. Hume's principle, as an empiricist, is that every idea requires an impression. In terms of the self, however, Hume finds no invariable expression and concludes that the self is an illusion. Hume attributes the illusion of the self to imagination and belief. Ricoeur explains:

> To *imagination* is attributed the faculty of moving easily from one
>
> experience to another if their difference is slight and gradual, and thus of
>
> transforming diversity into identity. *Belief* serves here as a relay, filling in
>
> the deficiencies of the impression (*Oneself* 127).

Hume's argument that the self is an illusion, however, is paradoxical, for he presupposes in the argument the self he denies. He claims that he can never catch the self apart from a perception whether it be heat or cold, light or shade. However, when it is asked who is it that is stumbling, observing, and not finding, it becomes evident that the self has reappeared. Clearly if the goal is to overcome the self, to realize the self as an

illusion, it is something that may be aimed at as a dialectical goal but it is not something that is demonstrable to temporal experience. Through the concepts of idem and ipse Ricoeur skilfully shows how opposing approaches to the self are actually interdependent. The implications for interreligious dialogue are obvious. A participant in dialogue can learn from and deepen his or her own understanding of self by considering the perspectives of the other, perspectives which prove to be interrelated on the temporal level.

In this chapter we have considered important dialectical features in Ricoeur's understanding of the self. Opposing approaches, such as Descartes's positing of the self and Nietzsche's shattering of the self are shown to have a point of intersection. Even approaches such as sameness as opposed to selfhood are shown to be interdependent. Ricoeur's mediation of these fundamentally different perspectives further commends his methodology as a ground for interreligious dialogue.

CHAPTER 4 - A PHILOSOPHICAL GROUND FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

A possibility for a philosophical ground of interreligious dialogue which is applicable to fundamentally different understandings of ultimate reality would be one that provides a more basic perspective than the different views which it grounds. Since religious views are grounded in understandings of ultimate reality they, themselves, claim to be the most basic ground and are that which grounds and are not grounded in anything else. It would thus seem to be impossible to find a ground on the level of ultimate reality that could encompass opposing views of ultimate reality. Rather than looking for a ground that encompasses various views of ultimate reality it would be more profitable to look for a perspective which feels the pull of various stand-points and does not make a claim to be ultimate reality. Temporal existence is just that -- standing outside the sphere of ultimate reality in a realm of ambiguity.

Religious thought has explicit or implicit ontological presuppositions which are central to its nature. This ontological understanding may be directly linked to the understanding of the absolute (i.e. Śaṅkara's belief that Ātman is Brahman). With opposing understandings of the absolute it is unlikely that common ground could be found on the ontological level. However, if one looks at ontology on a temporal level -- a level where the human being is struggling to find its absolute nature, there appears an ontology which cannot claim to be a full blown ontology revealing the absolute or fundamental

nature of being. A partial ontology looks at the level of existence where human beings are struggling to find their absolute nature, a level where practical needs bind people together or set them in opposition to one another. A partial ontology which reveals a self struggling for its true being is an ontology that would be common to all religions.

The partial ontology that Ricoeur develops and sets on the level of temporality provides a way to ground interreligious dialogue in an ontology without committing to a particular metaphysical view. Ricoeur demonstrates that on the temporal level thought and action are polar in nature with a dialectical movement toward an absolute. Since there is a dialectical movement Ricoeur's ontology remains partial. The partial nature of the ontology opens up a space in the temporal realm for development in different and even opposing directions towards different conceptions of the absolute. My thesis is that it is this space that grounds interreligious dialogue. In this final chapter we will compare the space required by interreligious dialogue with the space that Ricoeur's dialectical philosophy opens up.

Ricoeur has shown that temporal existence is intrinsically dialectical and that the self is constituted and understood through dialectics. Dialectical interaction can occur in a number of ways between outright hostility and friendly interchange with mutual enrichment. Violent confrontation has been the way of dialectical development for much of human history. In recent years it has brought humanity to the brink of extinction as was illustrated with the Cuban missile crisis and the cold war which brought the famous doomsday clock perilously close to midnight. In the interests of saving lives and advancing the well being of citizens of various cultures and faiths interreligious dialogue should be

promoted as the preferred and dominant form of dialectical development.

In accordance with the goal of this chapter (that is, to show how Ricoeur's dialectical phenomenological hermeneutics can provide a philosophical underpinning for the practice of interreligious dialogue) a definition of dialogue in general and then interreligious dialogue in particular followed by a consideration of particular problems in interreligious dialogue will follow. From these descriptions we will extract what appear to be essential elements in interreligious dialogue. A brief look at the presence and place of these elements in Biblical and Upaniṣadic literature will hopefully accomplish three things: i) reveal these elements in the traditions; ii) reveal points of contact through which interreligious dialogue may be conducted; and iii) clarify the limits of interreligious dialogue. The relationship between temporal understanding and the absolute will be illustrated by comparing three very different orientations to the absolute all claiming to be based on the same scriptures, the Upaniṣads. The hermeneutical approach that is taken towards the scriptures will be shown to be dependent upon the view of the absolute that each tradition upholds. While the metaphysical nature of the absolute is beyond the realm of empirical verification and logical determination the area of hermeneutics (the realm of temporal understanding) may be profitably discussed to come to a clearer understanding of one's own views and the views of others. In other words, self understanding on the temporal level is grounded in a partial ontology. The conclusion that will be drawn from this is that Ricoeur's concept of oneself as another offers itself as a suitable ground for interreligious dialogue.

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Dialogue is commonly described as a conversation, an exchange of ideas with the goal of reaching a mutual understanding or harmony. Those who are engaged in dialogue are in a quest for truth. Wilhelm Dupré writes "Whether it is carefree curiosity or hard necessity which motivates us to extend the scope of knowledge and to deepen the sense of understanding, in the end it is the truth of - and in- either one which decides on the worth and the validity of our achievements" (*Absolute Truth and Conjectural Insights* 323). A quest for truth implies that the truth is something the participants in the dialogue are approaching and have not yet completely grasped. Truth is more the atmosphere in which dialogue may occur than a fixed point or view that may be comprehended. In an atmosphere of truth and openness different orientations may be considered and tested in various ways as an aspect of real, deep dialogue.

Dialogue is a way of expanding self understanding and knowledge. Through presenting one's own views and listening to the views of another dialogue partners hope to be enriched with a greater self understanding and a greater understanding of the other. The greater self understanding comes through gaining information previously unknown or considering view points previously overlooked. The new information and viewpoints challenge the existing self understanding and add to that self understanding or perhaps change the direction of self understanding somewhat. Dialogue also enriches self understanding by presenting the challenge to articulate that self understanding in different contexts bringing about a clarification of one's position in those contexts. The different contexts help the self to understand its limits, that is, where the self ends and the other

begins. Self understanding is also enriched through encountering diverse expressions of wisdom in other cultures and religions. Understanding the way another tradition is dealing with common problems may inspire new approaches and insights to one's own problems. Encountering this wisdom and different ways of achieving goals results in dialogue partners discovering common commitments and values that motivate changes in life for the common good.

In recognizing self understanding, knowledge and harmony as goals of dialogue limits are set as to what dialogue is and what it is not. Dialogue is not polemics. The process of dialogue does not have the goal of destroying the views of an opponent, rather dialogue presupposes that there is some real value to the views of another, something that will be worthwhile to consider as one discovers more about one's own view. In a similar vein, dialogue does not have as its ultimate goal the conversion of the other. Dialogue is content to acknowledge the existence of other views that may not be ultimately subsumed under one's own. This leads to the presupposition that no one view is complete in and of itself. As finite human beings we do not possess a perspective from which we can grasp in its entirety the absolute truth. Dialogue is not apologetics. It does not engage in an explanation of itself with the view of defending and justifying its position in a hostile environment. Rather than taking a defensive stance the partners in dialogue seek to gain a clear self understanding with the help of other views. This presupposes a non threatening environment and a willingness to change or modify one's views according to what is learned.

Dialogue involves taking oneself and the other seriously. It involves recognizing

the real value of a different perspective. Acknowledging the value of other perspectives suggests an understanding of the interconnectedness of human life and this further suggests the view that human beings are ontologically in communion. "Man is a social being. Already ontologically he is communion, relationship, fellowship with others. *Koinonia* is an intrinsic dimension of the *person*. There is no 'person' apart from communion with others. Man discovers himself, realizes himself only in meeting with others. And the deeper the meeting, the more man finds himself and blossoms into a 'person'." (Abhishiktananda *N.A.B.E.W.D.* 3). This is not an entirely new understanding of personhood, Aristotle pointed towards it in Book 1, ii of the *Politics* (Sinclair translation, Penguin edition, 1986, 59-61):

> It follows that the state belongs to the class of objects which exist by
>
> nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. Any one who by his
>
> nature and not simply by ill-luck has no state is either too bad or too good,
>
> either subhuman or superhuman--he is like the war-mad man condemned in
>
> Homer's words as having no family, no law, no home; for he who is such
>
> by nature is mad on war: he is a non-cooperator like an isolated piece in a
>
> game of draughts....For the real difference between man and other animals
>
> is that humans alone have the perception of good and evil, just and unjust,
>
> etc. It is the sharing of a common view in these matters that makes a
>
> household and a state.

> Furthermore, the state has priority over the household and over any

individual among us. For the whole must be prior to the parts. Separate

hand or foot from the whole body, and they will no longer be hand or foot

except in name, as one might speak of a 'hand' or 'foot' sculptured in

stone....

Certainly Aristotle was arguing that the best life can be reached only within

community but it is not clear that he would go so far as to say that community is an

intrinsic or necessary aspect of personhood. In Western thought there has been a tendency

to regard the rational and logical as independent and prior to community. An ontological

grounding of a person in community has not generally been assumed in Western thought,

rather the autonomy of the individual and rationality have been a major focus.[85]

Discussion continues over the issue of the relationship of the individual to the

community as is illustrated by the views of Derrida, who might be considered as a radical

individualist contending that the best life can be found apart from community and

Gadamer, who places a high value on community. Gadamer's thought focuses on the

practical temporal realm (effective historical consciousness) which is the realm where the

interdependence of people is clearly realized[86] and is also the realm in which dialogue

takes place. Derrida, it seems to me, strives to advance a position which takes its point of

departure from the realm of physical time and autonomous events where all can be

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[85]Eastern thought may be more receptive to a view that community is an ontological aspect of personhood through its familiarity with non-dualist orientations. A stress on non-dualism opens up the possibility to extend personal boundaries beyond the individual and this extension of personal boundaries fits in well with the idea of personality continuing over many embodiments or personal identity being linked with extended family and cast (cf. Fort *The Self and Its States* 8-9).

[86]Infants, for example, require the care and nurture of others if they are to survive.

regarded as the play of difference and the value of tradition is diminished[87]. The debate

between Gadamer and Derrida[88] illustrates the fact that dialogue is bound to a temporal

perspective which recognizes the interconnectedness of life while difference arises from

the atemporal sphere. In the Gadamer-Derrida encounter, Gadamer is striving for understanding

through a dialectical exchange in which a fusion of horizons is the goal. All that is required of the

participants in the dialogue is that there be good will, a willingness to understand the other. This

fusion of horizons is not an atemporal abstraction but is a temporal or ever changing horizon. Even

still, as a fusion of horizons it is a levelling out of difference. Because understanding is a levelling

out of difference, Derrida does not want understanding to occur. Derrida does not regard thought

as a unity. Derrida argues that hermeneutics has a track that makes it metaphysical. The

metaphysical is an attempt by life to leave out life. The metaphysical strives to keep away from the

biological. Because of the different approaches, Derrida and Gadamer did not successfully engage

in a dialogue. Rather there was a missing — like two different languages being spoken — each not

comprehending the other. Gadamer and Derrida did not enter into dialogue since Derrida

rejected the temporal level as a medium for discussion and chose to only defend his "faith"

position which regards reality as flux with no hope of permanence and therefore no

opportunity for self understanding.

Ricoeur in *Oneself As Another* shows that the self as narrative identity is

constituted in relation to others. He thus extends Aristotle's thought that the good life can

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[87]For Derrida, differential space, not temporality, becomes the source for a multiplicity. In other words, multiplicity is not grounded in temporality which constitutes the unity of past, present and future, but in space which allows an absolute difference, an autonomy of one entity to another.

[88]Cf. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

only be found in community and provides a detailed argument to show that community, the other, is an ontological aspect of person, however, he shows that only an incomplete or partial ontology of the self is possible and that dialogue or dialectic plays a fundamental role in that ontology. This support for dialogue as a fundamental aspect of the constitution of the self opens up a space for interreligious dialogue in all religions, even those which seek to overcome the tendencies to understand the self as a reality. The fact that Ricoeur insists that only a partial ontological grasping of the self is possible leaves room for views which desire to move in the opposite direction of the constitution of the self. Since self understanding is an essential aspect of all reflection religions are necessarily involved in dialogue. Ricoeur views the self as a mediating being, dialogue incarnate as it were, and this means that dialogue is an intrinsic aspect of religion which seeks self understanding. The self becomes manifest through the process of dialogue between same and other. There is an ongoing dialectic concerning the limits of self and objectivity, the finite and the infinite. These are central issues in religious life. From a temporal perspective it is clear that interreligious dialogue is a necessary aspect of religious life.

Interreligious dialogue may take place at various levels. On the level of the individual, religious understanding may be a private concern and thus people could enter into "interreligious dialogue" with other individuals even within the same tradition. On the corporate level religious traditions may maintain an independence from other traditions and relate to others primarily as competition and thus have very little or very shallow interreligious dialogue. Some traditions may see themselves as basically independent from other traditions but recognize that some common areas are shared and enter into

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interreligious dialogue at the level of mutual respect. Some other traditions may see themselves as having a lot in common with differing traditions, discover common ground and work harmoniously together to achieve mutual objectives. Some traditions may discover in other traditions a spiritual unity and realize that the differences are only surface phenomena and then go on to conduct interreligious dialogue on the spiritual level.

The practical necessity for interreligious dialogue is becoming clearer. As our world becomes smaller through technology and ease of transportation, as our cultures become more and more intermixed, better ways of interacting with others are necessitated. Every culture is sustained by some religious or ideological centre. In the past dialogue aimed at self understanding and generally occurred between individuals with similar ideologies or religious beliefs. Contact with different religious or ideological beliefs was more on an apologetic or polemical level. The other was often regarded as enemy as is witnessed to by thousands of years of conflict and mutual denigration. Dialogue allows for the other to be regarded with a kind of equality and diffuses the violent reaction to the other. Now we are entering a new era in which dialogue is expanding to the religiously/ideologically/culturally other. The goal is no longer to demonstrate superiority of one view over another but that of harmony between different perspectives.

Interreligious dialogue is increasingly seen as a necessary step towards world peace. Steven C. Rockefeller, in *Spirit and Nature* (168-9) states:

> In this new ecological age of developing global community and interfaith
>
> dialogue, the world religions face what is perhaps the greatest challenge
>
> that they have ever encountered. Each is inspired by a unique vision of the

divine and has a distinct cultural identity. At the same time, each perceives the divine as the source of unity and peace. The challenge is to preserve their religious and cultural uniqueness without letting it operate as a cause of narrow and divisive sectarianism that contradicts the vision of divine unity and peace. It is a question of whether the healing light of religious vision will overcome the social and ideological issues that underlie much of the conflict between religions.

In the *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook*, (1993) it is reported that 40 out of 41 of the world's violent conflicts and wars in 1991 were intrastate/civil conflicts or internal wars, many of which involved different cultures with different religions. Clearly there is still a need for peaceful exchange between cultures and religions.

It is not only the lofty goal of world peace that raises the necessity and urgency for increased interreligious dialogue but, in an increasingly technological and interrelated world common concerns arise for faith communities. How will specific religious values be transmitted to following generations as technology spreads throughout the world and pressure arises for a more materialistic orientation to life? How can young people be educated to respect the faith of others when it differs from their own? How can we commit ourselves to the service of humanity, to every person and to the whole person, on the basis of our faith? Interreligious dialogue appears as a way to help come up with answers to these practical questions.

Interreligious dialogue is taking place on many levels of human interaction in both formal and informal ways. A few of the interreligious dialogue organizations currently in

operation are: a) national and international "Interreligious Dialogue Network" of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, b) North American Interfaith Network, c) Interreligio, d) World Conference on Religion and Peace, e) Temple of Understanding, f) International Association for Religious Freedom, g) World Congress of Faiths, h) Centro Pro Unione, i) National Conference (formerly National Conference of Christians and Jews). The internet, which can serve as an instrument to bring people from different cultures together provides various forms for interreligious dialogue such as The Global Ethics Forum (g-ethic@vm.temple.edu).

I see Ricoeur's dialectic as contributing to the development of a philosophy of dialogue which accommodates every sort of diversity and point of view, bringing them together in the context of temporality. Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics invites dialogue as a method of interpretation and self understanding. I believe that Ricoeur has exemplified through his own writings a genuine respect for the other and a genuine learning from the other. The openness and respect reflected in Ricoeur's work arise out of his phenomenological hermeneutical method and his dialectical understanding of reality. The comprehensiveness, openness and respect in his work commend it to be considered as a philosophical ground for interreligious dialogue.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Interreligious dialogue faces special challenges in terms of i) the absolute nature of the object of faith, ii) the claim of faith to be universal in scope and iii) the dogma of faith which sets limits as to what is inside the faith and what is outside.

Most reflective religious traditions have an aspect of mysticism where the believer attains a oneness with the absolute. The transcendental, mystical absolute, however, is understood in different ways.[89] In Ricoeur's theistic Christian background mysticism often conceives of this union with God in a way that the one united with God retains some individual attributes but is nevertheless brought into harmony with the oneness of God. In other theistic or non-theistic approaches the "absolute" or "other" may be seen as absorbing the individual attributes. Different understandings of this "oneness" reflect different understandings of the absolute. How is one to know what ultimate reality is really like? Our fundamental visions of ultimate reality tend to affect our thinking about our experiences and our practical experience forms a point of departure for our thinking about the absolute. Clearly then, experience does not act as an undoubtable guide because the thought that tests the experience determines its value. Nevertheless, thought apart from experience can go in almost any direction, and thus needs guidance. The vast variety of experiences and the various ways the absolute may be conceived puts us in the humble position of being open to many different possibilities. The various possibilities may be judged and discussed according to any criteria one choses, for our purposes we chose the notion of well being and wholeness. The success of interreligious dialogue is measured by its ability to enhance well being and wholeness.

If interreligious dialogue, which results in a genuine understanding of the other and a deeper understanding of the self, is to take place it would be necessary to respect the

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[89]Some traditions hold that the absolute is existence others claim that the absolute is non existence and others claim that it is neither existence nor non existence. Some claim the absolute is personal others impersonal. Some claim the absolute is one others many.

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fundamentally different views and be open to learning what the questions and depth of other views say to one's own presuppositions. Michael Barnes *Christian Identity & Religious Pluralism* structures his work around two principles "openness to the other and faithfulness to one's own" (4). He points out that the temptation in interreligious dialogue is to "regard the other religion as at best a pale reflection of my superior religion, or at worst, the work of the devil" (6). On the other hand, if one does not maintain a faithfulness to one's own one may be set adrift in a sea of relativism and indifference to all religions. Understanding oneself in the face of the other involves taking seriously both poles in the openness/faithfulness dialectic. This understanding, however, profits only on the level of experience and language. Perhaps if one has reached the level of oneness with the divine such understanding is no longer necessary. For practical purposes of getting along in the world and for communicating the depth of religious insight dialogue is necessary and desirable. For this reason I believe Ricoeur is right to hold the dialogue as open ended, not coming to a conclusion, but enabling us to live together in greater harmony, peace and mutual understanding. Although it is essential to have direction in one's faith as an orientation to the absolute, for the practical purposes of dialogue it is necessary not to assert or insist that others grasp the absolute in the same way.

I believe that Ricoeur's dialectical approach is valuable in that it refuses to unify or level out the differences of individuals and traditions. Ricoeur makes it clear that although on one level differences may be irreconcilable on another level there is room for discussion. Fear of being absorbed by an other is one of the strongest barriers to interreligious dialogue and this fear is also the inspiration for violence. If dialogue is to be

successful there must be mutual respect for each other and an attempt to minimize violence.

STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

From the description of dialogue and the special problems religion brings to dialogue several factors present themselves as being necessary for the practice of interreligious dialogue: i) there must be a quest for truth which implies that there is a recognition that one perspective cannot grasp an absolute truth at least on the temporal level; ii) a quest for increased self understanding through dialogue implies that complete self understanding is not immediately and completely given to the dialogue partners;[90] iii) there must be an understanding that there is an intrinsic, irreducible value to others; iv) knowledge of the absolute, which is not gained through dialogue but comes as an immediate revelation, is an area to be respected but should be humbly presented as a hope, as an articulation of the direction one is travelling.

The task is to show that Ricoeur's dialectical approach to reality provides a ground for these elements. All these elements appear as key moments of Ricoeur's thought and are grounded in his hermeneutical ontological approach. A reflection on the way in which these elements are present in Biblical and Upaniṣadic literature will help to indicate the universal nature of these hermeneutical features. It will also be noted that various conceptions of the absolute are possible even in traditions working from the same

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[90]The temporal self is in a state of development, thus only a partial ontological view of the self is appropriate. From the temporal point of view it appears that the self is in a state of constituting itself.

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text. Thus a look at three different interpretations of the absolute which are based on Upaniṣadic literature will help to show the place of dialogue and hermeneutics within traditions and help us to gain a perspective on how dialogue has sharpened and developed various senses of self understanding and relation to the absolute.

RICOEUR'S HERMENEUTICS AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Revelation or illumination holds out the goal of knowing what lies beyond or at the hidden depth of temporal human existence. On the level of faith human existence is viewed from the perspective of the absolute. The absolute is what is adored and longed for in the various levels of human existence. An orientation towards the absolute allows for the ordering and setting of levels in the human experience of moving toward the absolute. As was just pointed out, the nature of the absolute is not agreed upon by all human beings. From the temporal perspective, apart from revelation, we have no way of telling for sure what the absolute is like since our thought is pulled in different directions. On the temporal level our orientations to the absolute are within an attitude of hope -- hope that our orientations will lead to truth.

The role of theology, the role of revelation, as Ricoeur has argued, is suggestive rather than authoritative. Acknowledging revelation as suggestive appears to be a more honest, yet humbling position for theology. The hostile manner of interreligious encounters in the past is due to a mixture of hubris and fear of being overpowered intellectually or physically by an other. Certainly the adoption of a more humble approach, the approach of interreligious dialogue, would appear as a step towards peace and better

well-being for all.

One consequence of Ricoeur's approach is the recognition that the temporal philosophical level of human existence is the arena for dialogue, even interreligious dialogue which deals with the absolute and atemporal reality. If people from different faith perspectives recognize in Ricoeur's approach to dialogue an accurate description of what takes place in dialogue and they acknowledge the limits of dialogue then a space opens up in which a deep dialogue leading to greater self understanding between participants is encouraged.

A ground for interreligious dialogue can be uncovered from Ricoeur's dialectical understanding of time and self. The discordant nature of time and his understanding that only a partial ontology of the self may be obtained show why our reasoning and dialogue can only approximate the absolute. In other words, dialogue is firmly situated in the temporal realm and from the perspective of the temporal realm there is no certainty possible in terms of comprehending the absolute. In the temporal realm human thought is pulled in opposite directions at once: towards the one and towards the many, towards discordance and concordance, towards the same and other. The temporal situation grounds many levels of discourse, reveals the human being as a mediating being. Through symbols, myths, metaphors and narratives the human temporal dialectical self constitutes itself, understands itself and understands the other. Through these linguistic tools possible horizons of meaning are opened up, human action is interpreted as a route to meaning, the human being is recognized as being in a situation of desire and hope. The temporal situation is the stage or ground on which interreligious dialogue can take place. Levels of

discourse, the polyvalent nature of language, agnosticism, hope and desire are acknowledged in the sacred writings of various traditions. Rather than try to show the presence of these features in all traditions I will offer a few examples from Biblical and Upaniṣadic scriptures.

Levels of Discourse

In his reply to David Stewart's essay "Ricoeur on Religious Language" (Hahn 444) Ricoeur emphasizes the importance in his work of ordering philosophical discourse. He states: "I am thinking here of two things: of course the manner of arguing by a descriptive reflective, or speculative path (Hume does not argue like Spinoza, and so forth), but in a subtler fashion, the manner in which the philosopher hierarchizes the thematic concepts. The major concepts of a given philosophical discourse are not, in fact, on the same level." The recognition of various levels of discourse indicates various levels of self understanding. One level of self understanding connects to another level through aporias which appear at a certain level and require another level for a response. Ricoeur showed in *The Rule of Metaphor* that on the semiotic level the question of reference could not be addressed but on the semantic level the question of reference became important. On the semiotic level self understanding would find its meaning within a closed system of signs and thus a strong emphasis on the individual and autonomy. On the semantic level an aspect of transcendence is opened up for self understanding.

Various levels of self understanding arise from Biblical literature in regard to the different genres. Ricoeur brings this out clearly in his lecture "Le sujet convoqué: A

l'école des récits de vocation prophétique." For example, the self evoked through prophetic narrative is the self as an exception, torn from his desire. Wisdom literature, the Psalms and Gospel accounts will all evoke a different level of self understanding. Various levels of self understanding are also found in the Upaniṣads. The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, for example, articulates the gross, subtle and causal aspects of the Supreme Self corresponding to four states of consciousness, wakefulness, dream, dreamless sleep, and transcendental consciousness.

The Polyvalent Nature of Language

The polyvalent nature of language situates the human interpreter between a reference to the creation of self and the dissolution of self. This is particularly brought out in the context of cosmological time which tends towards the dissolution of self and psychological time which tends towards the creation of self. Cosmological time tends towards the dissolution of the self by situating the self on the level of sameness (idem). The uniform moments of time level out meaning. Psychological time creates an extension of the moment through memory, attention and intention and allows for an ordering of events and the creation of meaning. Language reflects the ambiguous situation of existing between ultimate chaos and ultimate order. In order to reflect this ambiguity words, symbols, phrases, metaphors and narratives must be capable of referring to opposite directions at once. The ambiguity which gives rise to the polyvalent nature of language is attested to through ancient creation myths found in Ancient Near Eastern texts as well as in Biblical and Upaniṣadic literature.

The well known Akkadian Creation Epic *Enuma elish* depicts a struggle between

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cosmic order and chaos. The poem begins:

> When on high the heaven had not been named, Firm ground below had not
>
> been called by name, Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter (And)
>
> Mummu-Timat, she who bore them all, Their waters commingling as a
>
> single body; No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared,
>
> When no gods whatever had been brought into being, Uncalled by name,
>
> their destinies undetermined -- Then it was that the gods were formed
>
> within them [E.A. Speiser, "The Creation Epic," in *Ancient Near Eastern*
>
> *Texts*, ed. by James Bennet Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University
>
> Press, 1955) 60-61].

An initial state of undifferentiatedness is indicated in the description "Their waters

commingling as a single-body" and from this single body the differentiated gods and world

come into existence. Note that before the creation of the gods their destinies had not been

determined. Creation then, as bringing out distinctions and then setting up an order may

imply the setting of destinies. Before the created order there is a mingling, a confusion. In

other words a separating or distinguishing is required to overcome chaos. To the extent

that chaos is overcome directions are set. The created order strives for a unity in terms of

harmony, nevertheless the differentiated elements may engage in battles to preserve their

integrity or assert their sovereignty.

The story of creation in Genesis chapter 1 shows order arising out of chaos

through the word. "In the beginning God Created the heavens and the earth. Now the

earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of

God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light'.... God speaking

brings light out of darkness, order out of chaos.

In the Aitareya Upaniṣad the creation of the world starts out from a oneness and

creation is seen as diversity arising from that oneness.

The self, verily was (all) this, one only, in the beginning. Nothing else

whatsoever winked. He thought, 'let me now create the worlds.' he created

these worlds, water, light rays, death and the waters. ... He thought, 'Here

then are the worlds. Let me now create the guardians of the worlds.' From

the waters themselves, he drew forth the person and gave him a shape"

(I,1:1-3).

Again, thought, expressed in words, is the means of creation. Creation, though is not so

much a bringing about of new order out of chaos as a creation of multiplicity out of an

absolute order or oneness. Creation then is seen as a movement towards chaos. The

ambiguity or polyvalent nature of language can be seen as arising with the creation itself.

Temporal reality is essentially ambiguous and this is clearly acknowledged in Biblical and

Upaniṣadic literature and reflected in language itself.

Agnosticism

The feature of agnosticism helps to characterize the temporal level of human

existence not only for Western thought but also Eastern. Throughout his career Ricoeur

was very careful not to mix faith and reason (philosophy). In his "Intellectual

Autobiography" (Hahn 13) he states: "My primary concern, which has never wavered, not

to mix *genres* together has instead drawn me closer to the notion of a philosophy without any absolute .... Any reflection on the status of a subject who is summoned and called to self-scrutiny must, therefore, be sought in my efforts at biblical exegesis." At the end of that autobiography he confesses: "Finally, I do not regret the agnostic turn of the final lines [of *Oneself As Another*], in which I state that I cannot say as a philosopher where the voice of conscience comes from — that ultimate expression of otherness that haunts selfhood!"(53). The ultimate other, the state of salvation which human beings strive for remains a mystery.

Agnosticism as to the state of salvation is also admitted by St. Paul quoting Isaiah 64:4: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" 1 Cor. 2:9. Although Paul had a strong faith in God he realized that his understanding was only partial due to the physical ways of knowing. The *Katha Upaniṣad* II.3.12 states: " Not by speech, not by mind, not by sight can he be apprehended. How can he be comprehended except by him who says, 'He is'?" In the *Subāla Upaniṣad* (XI.1) it is written: "In the Supreme there is neither existence nor non-existence nor existence and non-existence. This is the doctrine leading to liberation." It is only through faith that the supreme self, beyond temporal reality, which grounds existence and non-existence and is not either existence or non-existence, may be known. Both Biblical and Upaniṣadic writers testify to the inability of human beings to grasp the ultimate reality through sensible ways of knowing. On the temporal level this implies an agnosticism. Various things that are heard, seen or thought may point in two directions at once, toward an inner reality or an external reality, toward a permanent realm or an

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impermanent. As a temporal being we are mediating between the two and even though we may be faced in one direction the pull of the other prevents a full grasping of it. In both the Biblical and Upaniṣadic traditions temporal limitations are acknowledged. Ricoeur's approach would indicate that recognition of this limitation is a step toward opening the way to deep dialogue.

Desire

In earlier Greek thought ἔρως, as the human reaching for fulfilment was celebrated and was a central religious concept. Philosophical thought reflected a shift in focus from physical to spiritual desire Ethelbert Stauffer (TDNT I:35) sums up the importance of ἔρως to Greek thought:

> In every age the Greeks sung glowing hymns to sensually joyous and
> daemonic ἔρως, the god who is compelled by none but compels all. This
> god played a great role in the cult, became in philosophy from the time of
> Plato the epitome of uttermost fulfilment and elevation of life, and was
> completely sublimated and spiritualized in the mysticism of Plotinus to
> signify desire for union with the ἕν. ... All the forces of heaven and earth
> are forces of second rank compared with the one and only supreme power
> of *eros*. No choice is left, nor will, nor freedom, to the man who is seized
> by its tyrannical omnipotence, and he finds supreme bliss in being mastered

by it.[91]

While Stauffer's comments capture some of the dangers of the ἔρως tradition it is not a full representation of the depth of the tradition. The ἔρως tradition not only captures the freedom of the "self" but also explodes the "self" and thus liberates one toward a more authentic understanding of selfhood.

In the New Testament, the word ἔρως does not appear (clearly an attempt to distance Christian faith from 'pagan' religions). The New Testament writers wanted to stress God's love for human beings, God's love for the whole world (Jn 3:16) as opposed to self love (ἔρως). God's selfless love for people and the selfless love of people for one another, love that focuses on giving, ἀγάπη, was the type of love the New Testament writers advocated. What might be thought of as the kind of love that comes easier to most people, the love that loves to give in order to receive, a love that seeks self fulfilment and

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[91]Stauffer (36) further adumbrates the spiritualization of ἔρως in Greek thought:
>But the intoxication sought by the Greek in *eros* is not necessarily sensual.
>Already in the Greek mysteries, as so often in mysticism, erotic concepts are spiritualized in many ways as images and symbols for the encounter with the suprasensual. Plato works in this direction, devoting a whole dialogue to *eros*. For him, too, *eros* is an ecstasy which transports man beyond rationality, which has its source in an elemental need, and which finally issues in creative inspiration. ... Similarly, Aristotle frees it from the merely experiential and understands it as a cosmic function. It is the power of attraction in virtue of which the original principle maintains all being in order and movement: κινεῖ δὲ ὡς ἐρώμενον. This loving which inwardly holds the world together has nothing more to do with intoxication. It is an act which is strictly volitional in character.
>... The mystical understanding of *eros* recurs in Plotinus, in whom it finds its fullest expression. For him the true *eros*, the meaning of all love, is the impulsion of the soul beyond the world of sense and reason to the ὑπερβαλόν and ὑπεροχόν, beyond all limitations to the point of coincidence ... the original form of erotic religion is sensual intoxication and the supreme form ecstasy.

is thus self-centred, ἔρως, was repressed.

The expulsion of desire (ἔρως) from the main stream of Christian thought did not last long however. Augustine, the great synthesizer of Hebraic and Greek thought, through *Caritas synthesis* brought ἔρως into the main stream of Christian thought, restoring a dialectic of giving and receiving.[92] Prior to Augustine, however, the longing and desiring of Christians was expressed as hope (which we will look at next). Desire appears as a fundamental element of the Christian faith, despite the attempts to repress it.

Desire (*kāma*)[93] is also a fundamental aspect of Eastern Religions and enjoys an equally ambivalent position as ἔρως does in the West. Joanna Macy in her article 'The Dialectics of Desire' (*Numen*, Vol. XXII: 145-160) shows the centrality and dialectical nature of desire in Eastern thought. *Kāma* plays a central role in creation and is celebrated both in lore and in worship, but it is also set forth as the chief impediment to self-realization..

Macy cites the Vedic hymn RV 10:129 "Covered by void, that which was coming into being, That one was born through the power of heat (tapas). Desire (kāma), then, at

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[92]Anders Nygren *Agape And Eros* (London: SPCK, 1957) who unsuccessfully argued against the synthetic understanding of love acknowledges that Augustine was the one to be credited with bringing the ἔρως stream into mainstream Christian thought:

> [Augustine lived] on the frontier of two separate religious worlds, those of Hellenistic Eros and primitive Christian Agape, and his significance lies chiefly in the fact that *these worlds really meet in his person and form a spiritual unity.* Naturally, Augustine does not stand alone as regards this synthesis; some of the foremost men of the Early Church were occupied with the very same problem. But none succeeded like Augustine (451).

[93]Desire is a concept which may be expressed in a multitude of ways in Eastern thought. We are only looking at the word *kāma* in the present context but it should be kept in mind that there are several other ways in which desire may be expressed.

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first was evolved, Which was the first seed of mind (manas)" (146). Here desire is seen as

preceding the formation of the mind itself. Throughout the creation myths the role of

desire is central. Desire is that which gives form, differentiates, produces multiplicity and

movement. Macy points out that "even in the Upaniṣads where desire is largely seen in a

negative light as a hindrance to the soul, it is still, in the early literature, accorded a

cosmogonic function" (147). She cites the Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.1-3, 17:

> In the beginning this (world) was only the self, in the shape of a person.
>
> Looking around he saw nothing else than the self. He first said, "I am."
>
> Therefore arose the name of I... He verily had no delight. Therefore he who
>
> is alone has no delight. He desired a second. ... Therefore to this day a man
>
> [desires the same things -- wife, sons, wealth]. So long as he does not
>
> obtain each of these he considers himself to be incomplete.

Although desire denotes a sense of incompleteness, it is not here viewed as evil. The need

that desire makes known, however, can only be met on the spiritual plane. Later Vedānta

philosophers, such as Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, focus more on the ground of creation and

not how or why the creation came into being and thus rarely refer to the creative aspect of

desire.

Precisely due to its creative power, the power to multiply and make manifest, *kāma*

becomes the enemy of those who seek freedom in the One. This freedom is the main

theme of the Upaniṣads and desire from that perspective must be eluded for it binds people

to the objects of their desire. What is being sought in this instance is not more of life but

release from life. Macy points out that:

For all its recognition of the dangers of desire, the Hindu tradition, in the last analysis and in contrast (by and large) to Buddhism, does not seriously propose that desire can be swept aside. For all its drive to back-track to the formless unity that was before desire, Hinduism does not pretend to annihilate it. Perhaps that is because the Hindu respect for desire is too strong. Thanks to Shiva, the affirmation is made -- and reiterated in many ways -- that desire is with us, in us, and of us and cannot be escaped (155). Desire, either as the creative force of being or as the impediment to enlightenment plays a central and indispensable role in Eastern thought.

Desire is central to Ricoeur's dialectic. His archeological anthropology revealed desire as an effort to overcome self division. He realizes that the desire to overcome self-division is consciousness desiring itself through the mediation of the other. Ricoeur understands human beings as essentially desire. As we have seen he was strongly influenced by John Nabert's originary experience which posits the desire to be as the fundamental originary dynamic of human existence.

Hope

Responding to Protarchus's statement concerning writings and paintings, Socrates comments: "You mean to imply that all these representations are hopes about the future, and that mankind are filled with hopes in every stage of existence?" (Philebus 39e). What is being affirmed is that human existence is determined in the present by perception, in the past by memory and in the future by expectation. Hope is oriented to future possibilities. Hope looks to the end or goal of human existence.

The Old Testament Psalms often direct one to hope in God for deliverance and help. Hope is grounded in God's love and righteousness and not in self righteousness (Ez.33:13), riches (Ps. 51:7) or idols (Hab. 2:18). The messianic expectation was a corporate form of the fulfilment of hope for Israelites but it also contained a negative side, that of judgment. Salvation was not something that was certain, hope retains an element of uncertainty. The New Testament view of hope is in line with the Old Testament. Hope is linked with trust in God and leaves an element of uncertainty as is seen in Rom. 8:24 "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?" Hope indicates an element of humility in the acknowledgement that what is hoped for is not yet grasped. Hope sets the direction for thought and action.

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* hope is seen as springing from the self. (VII.26.1 "For him who sees this, who thinks this and who understands this, life-breath springs from the self, hope from the self, memory from the self, ether from the self..."). Hope is seen as an aspect of the self. In order to realize the transcendental potentialities of the self a student learns from the teachings of the guru. The expectation of the student may not be so much for the fulfilment of the self but for the overcoming of the individual self and the liberation into the one self.

From the Biblical perspective hope appears as an eschatological corporate expectation, from the Upaniṣadic perspective hope may be seen more as an interior individual return to the true origin. Hope, as we have seen, is a central element of Ricoeur's dialectic and his hope orientation is more in line with Western thinking as the fulfilment of the self. As a structural element, however, the important thing is not the

specific orientation of hope but its function of directing the dialectic in a specific direction, towards a particular end.

VARIOUS ORIENTATIONS TOWARD THE ABSOLUTE

In Hindu thought three different approaches to fundamental reality, each claiming to be grounded in the Upaniṣads, stand out. Advaita (Monism), brilliantly set forth by Śaṅkara in the 8th cent.; Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified Monism), which became well known through Rāmānuja in the 11th cent.; and Dvaita (Dualism), which was founded by Madhva in the 13th cent. Advaita and Dvaita thought approach the extremes of the opposition between monism and dualism. Viśiṣṭādvaita thought looks to a monism but recognizes real attributes of the one reality. Adherents to these three basic positions formulate, express and distinguish their teachings in dialogue with one another.

Śaṅkara

In most cultures belief in divinity as the embodiment of goodness, truth and knowledge provides coherence for life. This is no less true in Indian tradition. Viṣṇu or Śiva would become manifest through *avatāras* to restore the world to its moral order at times when the world was on the brink of destruction through sin and ignorance. Natalia Isayeva in *Śaṅkara And Indian Philosophy* points out that "many orthodox Hindus still believe that one of *the avatāras* of Śiva was Śaṅkara, the philosopher and religious figure of the early mediaeval period" (2).

Born at Kaladi (known today as Kalandi) probably around 686 C.E.,[94] but possibly

as late as 788 C.E., Śaṅkara's accomplishments in his 32 years of life are nothing short of

astounding. He founded ten monastic orders and many monasteries, his literary works

number over 400 and he travelled throughout South India, teaching and engaging in lively

polemics. Śaṅkara's philosophical position, Advaita Vedānta, was the corner stone of

what he perceived to be his task of reconciling various Hindu sects and "introducing the

so-called *pañcāyatanapūjā*, the simultaneous worship of Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Śiva, and

Devī, explaining that all deities were but different forms of the one Brahman, the invisible

Supreme Being" (Klostermaier 55). This reflects the orthodox position in Hindu thought

of the unity of all being. Natalia Isayeve comments: "It is Śaṅkara's preaching and

philosophic activity that, in the eyes of orthodox tradition, accounts for the ultimate

ousting of Buddhism from India in about the eighth century AD, and the revival of

Brahmanism" (2). With Śaṅkara, then, one may witness a drawing together or solidifying

of a tradition within certain bounds by establishing an opposition, despite some striking

similarities, with another tradition (Buddhism). Śaṅkara's methodology was thoroughly

dialectical, engaging and defeating opponents in public debate, and his principle of unity

became clarified through his debate. With Śaṅkara we see that his dialectics were

necessitated by the presence of other traditions, which lead him to rethink, reshape and

explore the depths of his own orthodox position.[95]

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[94]For example, Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood translators of *Shankara's Crest-Jewel of Discrimination: Viveka-Chudāmaṇī* (henceforth abbreviated *VCM*) 1.

[95]The dialectical nature of major religions is clearly seen when the origin of the tradition is considered. Klaus Klostermaier comments in *Liberation, Salvation, Self-realization* "Historically, however, the 'established religions' of today had been themselves successful rebellions against an

A good way to understand the heart of Śaṅkara's thought would be to summarize his teachings in the *Crest-Jewel of Discrimination: Viveka-Chudāmaṇī.* It begins with the disciple (Śaṅkara) wrestling with questions, questions which reflect his ignorance or delusion. He seeks clarification assuming that the guru has the answers and that when the questions have been clarified they will vanish and the disciple will attain oneness with Brahman, which is Reality. For Śaṅkara, knowledge or discrimination is the key to enlightenment, questions being like obstacles to be overcome on the path to direct perception. The Upaniṣads contain answers which seek to satisfy the intellect at the subject/object level regarding the various questions and implications which arise from the assertion that Brahman is the real and world-appearance is Māyā. When direct perception occurs the questions on the subject/object level disappear and the scriptures are no longer necessary. The validity of the answers to the questions cannot be affirmed on the subject/object level. It is only in enlightenment that the truth is realized. The sceptic may then ask "is enlightenment itself not an illusion?" To this question Śaṅkara might respond 'Ask your questions, be sceptical towards the delusions of the universe, become a disciple if you can and judge for yourself when you reach enlightenment.'

The disciple seeks revelation of "direct perception of the Ātman itself, continuous union with Brahman, final liberation" through knowledge of the scriptures (32). The disciple knows, however, that scriptural knowledge is just a stepping stone on the way to

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establishment of their time. Buddha's way has always been considered as a Protestantism rebelling against orthodox Brahminism. The major Hindu schools of today, especially the various Vedānta-schools, arose in protest against 'establishments' of their days. Christianity was considered in the days of its founder a rebellious movement breaking away from the faith and traditions of Abraham and Moses" (51).

the direct perception that "Brahman is real: the universe is unreal"(35).[96] Success in

attaining final liberation "depends chiefly upon the qualifications of the seeker"(34) who is

engaged in the struggle to overcome delusion through (cf. 33-36):

1) discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal;

2) a commitment to the eternal by renunciation of action and its effects;

3) *tranquility, self-control, mental poise, forbearance, faith* and *self-surrender*

(implied by renunciation);

4) longing for liberation.

Śaṅkara recommends, as the supreme means of liberation (36-37), that one find an

illumined teacher to show the way of devotion, the search for the reality of one's own

Ātman. The disciple begins by asking basic questions about that which is to be

discriminated, such as 'How does one reach liberation?', 'What should the disciple's goal

be?'(38), 'What is the nature and origin of bondage?' 'How is freedom possible?' "What

is the non-Ātman? What is the supreme Ātman? How can one discriminate between

them?" (39). The answers to these questions centre around the dispelling of ignorance

which is assumed universal and congenital and the realization of Brahman. "When a man

has been bitten by the snake of ignorance he can only be cured by the realization of

Brahman. What use are Vedas or scriptures, charms or herbs?" (41). The senses, Śaṅkara

believes, are servants of delusion and thus ignorance. Śaṅkara states: "The deer, the elephant, the moth,

the fish and the bee -- each of these goes to its death under the fascination of one single

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[96]Śaṅkara states "Therefore, let him who would know the Atman which is the Reality practice
discrimination. But first he must approach a teacher who is a perfect knower of Brahman, and
whose compassion is as vast as the ocean itself" (34).

sense out of the five. What then, must be the fate that awaits a man who is under the fascination of all five senses?" (43-44). The senses, which are an intrinsic aspect of the body, are deceiving and direct one away from Ātman which is pure consciousness. The task of the disciple is to realize that the body is not the Ātman. Śaṅkara asks: "This body is the 'physical covering'. ... It is a sense-object, which can be perceived, like a jar. How can it be the Ātman — the experiencer of all experiences?" (57). Śaṅkara asserts that Ātman is of another nature than the body and as the abiding reality it is self evident. Although Ātman appears to be the individual self, this is a delusion. This leads to the question: "Therefore this mistake about the individual soul's identity must be eternal, and its wanderings through birth, death and rebirth must continue forever. Then how can there be any liberation?" (64). The answer lies in the fact that the Ātman is forever unattached.[97] If sensory experience is not real, what is left. "How, then, can there be an existence which the wise man may realize as one with his Ātman?" (67). The response to this is that: "The Ātman is its own witness, since it is conscious of itself. The Ātman is no other than Brahman" (68). The Ātman, or Brahman, is thus beyond the subject/object dichotomy. In the subject/object scheme of things, the knower or the subject seeks evidence that can be verified regarding the object. The Ātman or Brahman, however, requires no verification.

How does one go beyond the subject/object dichotomy? Or, in Śaṅkara's words, "What can break the bondage and misery of this world?" (69). Śaṅkara argues, through the analogy of a jar made of clay, that the substance, the clay, remains essentially clay and

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[97]"By its nature, the Ātman is forever unattached, beyond action and formless. Its identity with objects is imaginary, not real. We say 'the sky is blue'. Has the sky any colour?" (64).

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that the form of the jar has no independent existence. "The reality is the clay itself" (70).

Śaṅkara concludes: "The universe does not exist apart from the Ātman. Our perception of it as having an independent existence is false, like our perception of blueness in the sky. How can a superimposed attribute have any existence, apart from its substratum? It is only our delusion which causes this misconception of the underlying reality." To mistake the form for the reality is a delusion, like a dream Śaṅkara explains: "Because of delusion, you may mistake one thing for another. But, when you know its real nature, then that nature alone exists, there is nothing else but that. When the dream breaks, the dream-universe has vanished. Does it appear, when you wake, that you are other than yourself?" (75). To realize that the ego, as a form, is only a superimposition upon Brahman and that Brahman is the only reality, liberates from the ignorance promoted by sense experience and thus even liberates from the cycle of death and rebirth (samsāra). "When a man has realized his oneness with Brahman, how can he harbour any seed of death and rebirth?" (90). One should therefore be devoted to Brahman, to control the senses. One will then realize that there is no abiding value for the things of this world. "What use is there in the things of this world? They are empty of happiness" (96). There is only one reality and it cannot be divided (100). When the ignorance which produces multiplicity is overcome, then one will no longer continue to do deeds of evil and one will be freed from all attachment. "When the heart's knot of ignorance is cut right through, a man is freed from all craving for material objects. When this has happened, is there anything in the world which can possibly cause him to feel any attachment?" (103). Even actions before illumination cannot affect the Ātman. "It is foolish, even, to think that the accumulated causes due to

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past actions can affect the body. How can this body be real when it has only an illusory existence? How can something die which has never been born? How can actions or their effects affect what is unreal?" (110).

Śaṅkara's questions thus focus on the universe which appears as illusion and hides the true oneness of reality. What one should be continually questioning with the help of a guru and the Vedas (until one reaches enlightenment) is the apparent multiplicity of the universe. It is knowledge, discrimination, which is the chief way to liberation.

On the question of the nature of the physical universe, which has been a matter of debate throughout the history of Hindu thought, we have seen that Śaṅkara champions the monistic position which argues that the phenomenal world of objects and events arises as a form of ignorance [superimposition (*adhyāsa*), projection or assumption (*adhyāropa*), inversion (*viparyaya*), error (*viparyāsa*), delusion (*bhrānti*), infatuation (*moha*), mistaken conception (*mithyā-pratyaya*), darkness (*tamas*) and wrong apprehension (*anyathā-grahaṇa*)] of the one reality -- the self. For Śaṅkara what is ultimately real is only that which neither changes nor ceases to exist (Cf. *Crest Jewel* 7). This does not mean that there is no reality to temporal existence. Ramachandra Rao explains:

It is generally imagined that he dismisses the world as a phantasm, as a mere dream, as an illusion. Nothing can be farther than the truth. If that indeed was his stand, he had little reason to combat fiercely the Buddhist position. ... Śaṃkara not only accepted the phenomenal reality of the world, but even admitted the role of Godhead (*Īśvara*) in its emergence, subsistence and dissolution. ... Śaṃkara regards the normal sources of

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correct knowledge with regard to the world we live in as valid

(*Consciousness in Advaita* 65).

Śaṅkara holds that there are two levels of truth. On the one level, the state of ignorance seems to correspond to what we might describe in Ricoeurian terminology as being in a state of non-coincidence of the self with the self. The other level, ultimate reality, lies behind and grounds the state of ignorance.

Śaṅkara focussed his attention on the ultimate reality as that which is ultimately important. That which is subject to change, is not, for Śaṅkara, the ultimate reality. Thus the universe of experience and things constitutes a lower level of reality than Brahman -- absolute existence. Brahman, the one thing that never leaves us, that is not subject to change, is deep consciousness.

Śaṅkara holds that the world both "is and is not" (*Crest Jewel* 8). On the phenomenal level the world is experienced as existing but from the point of view of one who is illumined the phenomenal world is not experienced and ceases to exist. Everyday consciousness, the consciousness that is necessary to get by in the world and communicate with others, is, from the perspective of one who is illumined, ignorance. The ignorance is not realizing the oneness of Brahman, not realizing that the finite world is merely a superimposition upon Brahman. "Brahman remains eternally infinite and unchanged. It is not transformed into this universe. It simply *appears* as this universe to us, in our ignorance. We superimpose the apparent world upon Brahman, just as we sometimes superimpose a snake upon a coil of rope" (*Crest Jewel* 12).

Brahman is subject and can never be anything but subject. There is an immediate

awareness of Brahman as the inner self but Brahman is never apparent to our everyday sense perception. The inner self is never an object of sense perception. From the perspective of temporal existence there must be an agnosticism as to the ultimate nature of the self. Immediate awareness of Brahman as the inner self removes the self from its temporal situation of being a distinct identity among other distinct identities and brings it into an atemporal oneness when individuality is overcome. It is in ignorance that human beings superimpose the idea of private individuality upon the immediate awareness of Brahman. It is superimposition of the ego-idea upon Existence that leads to the claim for individuality everywhere (cf. *Crest Jewel* 14). Overcoming the illusion of individuality is a movement toward the "real" and this movement provides the direction for ethical goodness. "If we recognize our brotherhood with our fellow-men; if we try to deal honestly, truthfully, charitably with them; if, politically and economically, we work for equal rights, equal justice and the abolition of barriers of race and class and creed, then we are in fact giving the lie to the ego-idea and moving toward awareness of the universal, non-individual Existence" (*Crest Jewel* 25). Ethical guidance for Advaita Vedānta thought is to be drawn from the oneness of Brahman. Ethical thought thus arises through an orientation to the absolute. It is this orientation that allows for a hierarchizing of the temporal. Śaṅkara's thought moves towards a monistic ontology which in its fullness would not be concerned with an ethics but on the practical level Śaṅkara sees ethics as a movement towards an awareness of Brahman.

Śaṅkara adopts a radical hermeneutics of suspicion. Things are not as they appear to be. Movement towards the true self occurs through discrimination or judging what is

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real. Śaṅkara assumes the real must be permanent but cannot find permanence in the world of appearance. The real must ground the appearance in a way that the real is left unaffected by change. In holding this view Śaṅkara must bring out a deeper meaning in Upaniṣadic texts which on the surface indicate a plurality in ultimate reality. In Chapter I section 3.1 of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, for example, two selves, the individual and the universal are said to exist on the level of the Supreme.

> There are two selves that drink the fruit of Karma in the world of good
>
> deeds. Both are lodged in the secret place (of the heart), the chief seat of
>
> the Supreme. The knowers of *Brahman* speak of them as shade and light as
>
> also (the householders) who maintain the five sacrificial fires and those too
>
> who perform the triple Naciketas fire.

On the surface this text points to real qualities which would indicate that plurality is compatible with the real. Madhva, as Radhakrishnan (622) notes, "finds support in this verse for his doctrine of the entire disparateness of the individual and the universal souls." Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja argue that what is encountered here is a loose usage of *chattri-nyaya.*

Śaṅkara's task is to explain his orientation to the non-dual character of Brahman as alone constituting ultimate Reality as opposed to the appearance of multiplicity and change in the non-sentient world. He can demonstrate the reasonableness of his view from the premise that only the permanent is real but he cannot demonstrate that this premise is true in a non tautological manner. His hermeneutics of suspicion which seeks to deconstruct the illusions of appearance has a counterpart in experience which is

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continually manifesting change and difference. Śaṅkara ultimately locates consciousness in Brahman and Brahman is self-validating (as opposed to everything else which needs validating). When the immediate understanding of the self as Brahman is attained there is no longer a need for scripture.

The acknowledgement of two levels of truth and reality is one of the ways in which Ricoeur's dialectical approach may be linked up with Advaita Vedānta thought. Advaita philosophers acknowledge two levels, the phenomenal and the eternal. The phenomenal self would correspond to the self as Ego, determined by space, time, birth, death, environment, body, senses, language. Ricoeur's work on the phenomenal level has the aim of constituting the self, while Vedāntic thought has the goal of overcoming the self and immediately realizing the unchanging ground, that is, to understand the self as Ātman/Brahman. Although they are for the most part pointed in opposite directions their operation on the phenomenal level is dialectical in nature and both sides of the dialectic need to be understood to arrive at a better understanding of the constitution of the temporal self or to deconstruct the individuality of the temporal self.

Rāmānuja

About three centuries after Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja (1017-1137 C.E.) brought different questions and presuppositions to the Vedas which resulted in a very different conception of what Brahman was like, the nature of nescience,[98] and the way to reach

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[98]Rāmānuja states:
    Consciousness, we maintain, though an inherent attribute of the individual is
    subject to real contraction and expansion by the force of karma. ... If the nature of

enlightenment.[99] Indeed he sees Brahman as one but he also sees multiplicity as a part of Brahman.[100] "The knowledge of the 'one' will lead to the knowledge of all."[101] His concern focuses on the relation of Brahman to the individual self on the one hand, and to the non-sentient world on the other. In his discussion of the *Upaniṣads* in *VS* Rāmānuja explains his views in contrast with others, particularly Śaṅkara. Swami Adidevananda, in his foreword to *Vedārthasaṁgraha* of Śrī Rāmānujācārya explains:

Śrī Rāmānuja recognizes that the passages declaring distinction between

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nescience is to veil, nescience, the agency that veils, must be, as urged before, destructive of the essential nature of consciousness itself. According to us karma, in the form of nescience, brings about the contraction of the consciousness that is an eternal attribute of the substantive nature of the ātman. By virtue of this contraction arises the wrong attitude to the self, taking it for gods, men, or any other empirical creature. (*Vedārthasaṁgraha of Śrī Rāmānujācārya*, trans. S.S. Raghavachar [abbreviated *VS*] (Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1956) §51).

He goes on to argue "nescience itself cannot be considered the fundamental and original defect, at the root of all illusion." (§53).

[99]Rāmānuja argues especially against Śaṅkara's belief that undifferentiated consciousness alone is Brahman and that the whole universe apart from Brahman is unreal. (Cf. *VS*, §3 and §§6-67.) It is not the illusion of differentiated reality that is to be overcome through knowledge that provides the way for liberation. Rather, individual souls, deluded into identification with their bodies are emancipated only through surrender to the supreme Lord. (Cf.§99).

[100]He, the supreme One, is unique, transcending in character every other entity, because his nature is opposed to all evil and is of the sole nature of supreme bliss. He is the abode of countless auspicious attributes unsurpassed in their perfection. He is Bhagavan Nārāyaṇa, the highest Spirit. He is presented by the entire Vedānta, through variations of terminology as the 'Soul of all'. 'Highest Brahman', 'Highest Light', 'Highest Reality', 'Highest Self' and 'Being'. Such is the nature of the inner controller. The Vedas devoted to the exposition of his glory, expound the fact that he controls all entities, sentient as well as non-sentient, as their indwelling self. (They do it in two ways): (1) They describe them as his 'power', 'part', 'splendour', 'form', 'body' and 'organism' and through such other terms. (2) They also affirm the oneness of these entities with him. [*VS*, §2.]

[101]*VS*, §8. Non-sentient entities acquire names and forms only because Brahman is there soul. (Cf. §10.) "All terms are denotative of the highest Self, which is qualified by inanimate nature and individual selves." (§16).

Brahman, the world and the self, and those affirming Brahman to be the same in the causal as well as effected aspects, do not in any way contradict the mediating passages which declare that the individual selves and the world form the body of Brahman, and they in their causal state do not admit the distinction of names and forms while in the effected state they possess distinct character. [102]

Rāmānuja himself explains the nature of Brahman, stressing Brahman's attributes which can only be real if differentiation is in some way comprehended by Brahman:

The highest Brahman is purity, bliss and knowledge in substance. Its grandeur is inconceivable. It is resplendent with countless auspicious attributes, like the will that irresistibly realizes itself, in surpassing perfection. It is immutable in nature. Still, out of its causal state, in which the sentient and non-sentient beings form its body in their subtle condition, undifferentiated in name and form, it, through its own will, passes in sheer sport into the state of the effect, by one of its aspects, and comes to possess the limitless and diversified world of moving and non-moving beings as its own configuration. With this idea in his mind he proceeds to propound how knowledge of Brahman leads to knowledge of all. As a preliminary step in exposition, he demonstrates the identity of cause and

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[102]VS, iv. The three lines of thought in the Upaniṣads which Rāmānuja recognizes are: 1) *analytical texts* which declare the distinction of world, self and Brahman; 2) *mediating texts* which present Brahman as the inner self of all entities; 3) *synthetic passages* which proclaim the unity of Brahman with the world. (cf. iii).

effect, a principle quite obvious to common experience (*VS* §9).

Rāmānuja thus argues for the reality of the world in its effected state [Brahman is

"The real of the reals"(*VS* §43)], while Śaṅkara argued that this empirical or effected state

was illusion (*māyā*)[103] and that there were two levels of truth. Rāmānuja argues that there

is a real multiplicity[104] [Īśvara, who is the Supreme Reality, *cit* which are the individual

selves (*jīvas*) and *acit*, the matter] in the oneness of Brahman while Śaṅkara argues that

Brahman is one with no multiplicity. On the one hand Śaṅkara's view contradicts the

human experience of multiplicity[105] and must thus explain away the appearance of reality

by appealing to a higher knowledge. Śaṅkara's concern focuses on the belief that absolute

unity grounds the truth. Rāmānuja's view on the other hand, is easier to reconcile with the

multiplicity of the world but must somehow then explain how Brahman is still one and

that there is only one truth. The non-dual character of Brahman constitutes ultimate

reality, yet from this non-duality there are a variety of attributes. The mystery for

Rāmānuja then involves being able to reconcile the many and one in a single concept

which transcends reason and experience, mind and matter, the subject/object realm.

Rāmānuja states:

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[103]Rāmānuja recognizes that Śaṅkara argument is to the effect that "all illusion rests upon the substratum of reality." (*VS*, §40) but he argues that this is impossible to maintain(§41).

[104]Cf. *VS* §47:
> Brahman has as the instruments of its mighty sport and as forming its own parts an infinite number of individual souls bound as well as free and also the physical universe, which latter has the power of passing through evolutions marvellous and boundless. Brahman is the inner ruler of the finite selves and the non-sentient mature.

[105]Rāmānuja argues that "there is no proof for an undifferented reality" on the basis of reason and scriptures. (*VS* §29). The perceived differentiation of reality is thus real.

The mystery of the divine is further praised, 'Who can comprehend that incomprehensible form of Brahman, which being one, is many and being many, is one'. ... He dwells in the transcendent realm as spoken of in the Vedic passages, 'Who knows him as treasured in the cavern of the highest sky' and 'In that imperishable and highest sky' (*VS* §106).

For Rāmānuja the struggle between unity and plurality involves finding a super-rational (not an irrational) way to understand the apparently contradicting statements in the Vedas as well as the difficulties of deciding on the basis of reason and experience the nature of Brahman. He relies on the valid knowledge of sense perception, the truth of revelation found in the Vedas and the validity of reason and intuition and seeks to harmonize them.

It may be asked, 'What is your final position? Do you uphold unity or plurality or both unity and plurality? Which of these three forms the substance of the Vedānta on your interpretation?' We reply that we uphold all the three as they are all affirmed in the Veda. We uphold unity because Brahman alone exists with all other entities as his modes. We uphold both unity and plurality, as the one Brahman himself has all the physical and spiritual entities as his modes and thus exists qualified by a plurality. We uphold plurality as the three entities -- the individual selves, the world and the supreme Lord -- are mutually distinct in their substantive nature and attributes and there is no mutual transposition of their characteristics (*VS*, §117).

Thus, while Śaṅkara argues only for the stream of thought in the Upaniṣads that

ultimate reality is one and undifferentiated but that there are two levels of truth, Rāmānuja

upholds that there are three streams of thought in the Upaniṣads, unity, plurality and both

but only one level of truth, one reality.[106] This one reality has at the same time subjective

(cit) and objective (acit) characteristics since it affirms the reality of the external world

and of external relations but also defines reality as a mental or spiritual construction.

Although the relationship between cit and acit is unitary and eternal, that is, they do not

have independent existence, they may be distinguished logically. Rāmānuja refers to this as

co-ordinate predication.

> Thus even here, in the case of the aphorism, 'That thou art', Brahman the
>
> cause of the universe, being the self of the jiva, as its inner ruler, involves
>
> no contradiction whatever. It is such unification of the import of terms in
>
> their natural significance that is brought out in co-ordinate predication
>
> (samanadhikaranya). The reference to the identity of the pure substratum,
>
> through the rejection of the natural significance of the co-ordinate terms, is
>
> not the meaning of co-ordinate predication. The experts on such matters
>
> define it thus: 'The signification of an identical entity by several terms
>
> which are applied to that entity on different grounds is co-ordinate

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[106]This one differentiated reality is capable of comprehending both perfection and imperfection.
Rāmānuja states:

> ...the same God is full of perfection in one part of his being and in another part he
> is equally full of imperfections. Both are equally parts of God. (VS § 76.)
> The question would arise as to how he, free from evil and change and abounding in
> all auspicious excellences, could be one with the world which is mixed up with
> evil. The position is explained in the text itself, 'He is the soul of all beings. He
> has the universe as his form, as he is imperishable'. (VS §161.)

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predication' (*Mahabhasya*).[107]

It seems then that Brahman, the supreme Sat or Existence, is essentially a

"relational unity"[108] of body and soul.[109] It is this relational unity that is both the efficient

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[107]*VS*, §24. Cf. also §82:
> Co-ordinate predication is the application of two terms to a single entity through connotation of its two modes. On our view co-ordinate predication is given its straight and primary significance. To explain: In the passage affirming identity 'That thou art', the term 'that' signifies Brahman, as the cause of the world, as the abode of all perfections. By the term 'thou' also, denotative of the individual self, Brahman itself is signified as the inner ruler of the jīva, as possessed of it as its body, as existing within the jīva as its self and as possessing the jīva as its mode.

Śaṅkara understands this well-known *mahāvākya* "That thou art" or "Thou art that" quite differently. Yoshitsugu Sawai "Rāmānuja's Hermeneutics of the *Upaniṣads* in Comparison with Śaṅkara's Interpretation," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 19(1991):94 explains:
> Śaṅkara argues that this *mahāvākya* encapsulates the essence of the whole *śruti*, namely, the identity of *brahman* and *atman*. Śaṅkara's *Upadesasahasi* explains the word "That" in the *mahavakya* as meaning *brahman*, i.e., Being (*sat*). The word "art" (*asi*) means that "That" and "Thou" have the same referent (*tulya-nidatva*). Since the word "Thou" is used in connection (*yoga*) with the word "That," the word "Thou" must also refer to *brahman*. This sentence is regarded by Śaṅkara as asserting the identity of *brahman* and *atman*, and thus the ultimate existence of a single attributeless Being in the universe.

[108]Cf. *VS*, §13. Rāmānuja affirms on the basis of scripture "that Brahman is the self of the world in terms of the relation of soul and body." § 236:
> The supreme Brahman, whose will becomes irresistibly realized, resolved by himself to take up many modes and thought, 'Let me become many'. In him were submerged the great elements in their subtle form, comprising the sum total of non-sentient nature. The aggregate of individual selves was also submerged in him. The Supreme bought them to manifestation through differentiation. Out of the subtle elements he created the great gross elements. He caused the individual selves to enter them as principles of their animation, He then brought into being the whole of this gross world out of those elements, animated by the conscious principles, through mutual permutations and combinations. Then the supreme Brahman entered into all those entities as their ultimate soul. Thus he exists in the state of effect as the supreme Self with all existence constituting his body. He exists characterized by these as his modes.

[109]Cf. *VS*, §95
> This is the fundamental relationship between the Supreme and the universe of individual selves and physical entities. It is the relationship of soul and body, the inseparable relationship of the supporter and the supported, that of the controller and the controlled, and that of the principal entity and subsidiary entity. That

and the material cause of the entire cosmos.[110] This of course spawns many questions, one

of which is 'If Brahman is the material cause of the universe, and to be the material cause

implies change, how then can Brahman be changeless and flawless?' (Cf. *VS*, §88).

Rāmānuja responds:

> (Brahman) inclusive of individual selves and the universe is maintained to
>
> be the cause as a whole. If Īśvara is admitted to transform himself into the
>
> individual self, the aphorism, 'The self is not originated, because the
>
> scripture denies origination of the self and also because the scriptural texts
>
> speak of the eternity of the self' is contradicted. The ascription of partiality
>
> and cruelty to Īśvara is repudiated on the ground of the beginninglessness
>
> of the individual selves and the responsibility of their karma for the
>
> inequalities and sufferings of individuals. The aphorisms connected with
>
> this issue are, 'Partiality and cruelty are not to be ascribed to Brahman,
>
> because of the dependence on karma', and 'If it be said, "There is no
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> karma, as there was no differentiation" we deny that supposition on the
>
> ground of beginninglessness; it is reasonable and so found in actuality'. It is

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which takes possession of another entity entirely as the latter's support, controller and principal, is called the soul of that latter entity. That which, in its entirety, depends upon, is controlled by and subserves another and is therefore its inseparable mode, is called the body of the latter. Such is the relation between the individual self and the body. Such being the relationship, the supreme Self, having all as its body, is denoted by all terms.

[110]Cf. *VS*, §§12, 88-93 & §97. Yoshitsugu Sawai, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 19(1991):90 states that "Śaṅkara... also calls *brahman* the substantial and efficient causes of the world, though he limits this characterization to the *saguna-brahman* [includes the world of the individual finite souls and finite matter] and emphasizes the singularity of *nirguna-brahman* [the only ultimately existent being, non-dual, impersonal, inexpressible and relationless]."

pointed out that if the individual self were to be non-eternal, there would

be actions, unproductive of fruits and experiences of fruits of action,

uncaused by action (*VS*, §89).

Rāmānuja's questions focus more on cause and effect and how the one (Brahman)

causes the world in all its variety. His concern is with how Brahman is related to the

world. His questions are directed not so much with a view to overcoming ignorance but to

realizing the multiplicity of the one. Śaṅkara, on the other hand, is concerned with how

Brahman is free from and in no way dependent on the world. All the appearances are not a

part of Brahman but they indicate at least that Brahman is there as the underlying

reality.[111]

In both Śaṅkara's and Rāmānuja's attempt to show the way to the ground of

Reality they are confronted with some very difficult questions. In order to maintain the

oneness of reality Śaṅkara must explain the appearance of reality as illusion and employs

the concept of superimposition.[112] Rāmānuja on the other hand is not willing to regard the

appearance of reality as essentially illusion but then his task is to show that the ground of

reality is one and yet includes multiplicity. He employs the concept of co-ordinate

predication. Both of these systems of thought focus around an unchanging ground of

reality. Assumptions must be made as how to reconcile reason and/or experience to the

absolute ground. If one accepts the appropriate assumptions related to each of these

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[111]T.R.V. Murti, *Studies in Indian Thought "The Two Definitions of Brahman in the Advaita"*, 77 uses the analogy of a crow perching on the house-top. The crow serves to mark a particular house from among several others but is not a permanent fixture of the house.

[112]Rāmānuja argues against the concept of superimposition in *VS* §29 and §59.

views, each view may appear as possibilities. Rāmānuja recognized this in respect to an

opposing view. He states:

> But Brahman indivisible, non-composite and changeless, becomes on this
>
> theory, subject to the evil of conjunction with an infinite number of limiting
>
> conditions without any determinate localization of effects. There is no way
>
> of escaping this consequence. The theory is only for the consumption of the
>
> believers and can withstand no open minded inquiry. The wise, learned in
>
> the philosophical sciences, do not have any esteem for it.[113]

Rāmnuja's and Śaṅkara's basic assumption that there is a non-composite,

changeless and indivisible Brahman are not unquestionable even from within Vedānta

tradition as we will soon see with Madhva.

Rāmānuja recognizes three lines of thought in the Upaniṣads: 1) analytical texts

expounding the difference between the world, self and Brahman 2) mediating texts which

expound Brahman as the inner self of all entities and 3) synthetic passages which proclaim

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[113]*VS*, §73. Cf. also Murti, *Two Definitions.* 73-74. Murti points out how advaitism seeks to justify its starting points by proceeding from the appearance to the real, a process of discovery or recovery. This process is similar that which the early Heidegger advocated except Heidegger's conception of Being itself is not necessarily that of a ground. Heidegger argues that phenomenology is the only way of access to ontology. He states [Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 60] *"Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible.* In the phenomenological conception of 'phenomenon' what one has in mind as that which shows itself is the Being of entities, its meaning, its modifications and derivatives." Heidegger goes on to explain (60) "'Behind' the phenomena of phenomenology there is essentially nothing else; on the other hand, what is to become a phenomenon can be hidden. And just because the phenomena are proximally and for the most part *not* given, there is need for phenomenology. Covered-upness is the counter-concept to 'phenomenon'." A theologian such as Paul Tillich has employed much of Heidegger's thought in arguing for the 'ground of being' but on the other hand, the humanistic thinker, Hans Georg Gadamer has developed Heidegger's thought in a direction which points away from an absolute ground, and Jacques Derrida's radical hermeneutics develops the later Heidegger's thought against any sort of ground for reality.

the unity of Brahman with the world. Rāmānuja summarizes his teachings in *Vedānta Dīpa*[114]:

> Of the three ultimate entities known to philosophy, the sentient individual soul is essentially different from non-sentient matter, and God, who forms the supreme soul of the universe is absolute, different from the individual soul by virtue of its being free from all imperfections and having the auspicious qualities as well as by its pervasion in all things that exist and by its being the support, the ground and substance of all existence. The essential difference thus existing between matter, soul and God are intrinsic and natural. God, who is the same as the supreme *Brahman*, is the cause of the Universe: and the Universe, which is made up of matter and soul, is the effect produced by Him. Matter and soul form the body of God: and this body is capable of existing in a subtle as well as in a gross condition. God with his subtle body constitutes the universe in its causal condition: and with His gross body He forms the created universe itself. The individual soul enters into matter and thereby makes it live: and similarly God enters into matter and souls and gives them their powers and their peculiar characteristics. The universe without God is exactly analogous to matter without soul, and in the world as we know it, all things are what they are, because God has penetrated into them and rules and guides them all from within, so much so that all things are representative of Him and all words

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[114]Quoted in *Rāmānuja's Teaching In His Own Words*, M. Yamunacharya 54.

denote Him in the main.

In attempting to hold a position between two opposing poles, Rāmānuja attempts to maintain a position of mediation between polar opposites. Unlike Ricoeur, however, he argues that the mediator (self) is given or posited by the creator[115] and has the task of discovering its true nature (in this way Rāmānuja's thought is close to Descartes's thought). Ricoeur's ontological understanding of the temporal self is that it is in a process of self-creation and is not simply posited or discovered.

The dialogue between monism and Rāmānuja's modified monism focuses on scripture. A discussion takes place on the way scripture is read. It is not on the level of experience which may be verifiable or falsifiable that decisions take place as to how one reads scripture but is at the level of faith that one's orientation is set. The scriptures can point in different directions at once because of the polyvalent nature of language. The object of the discussion may be not so much to convince the partner to adopt a different faith perspective but to open up new ways of looking at the truth one believes one has gained. Ricoeur's perspective is helpful because it makes clear the necessity of dialogue and the role it plays in forming consciousness of the tradition and at the same time places limits on power of dialogue (i.e. leaves dialogue on the level of temporality but does not determine the ultimate, eternal or infinite). In other words, Ricoeur's dialectical

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[115]Yamunacharya explains Rāmānuja's concept of the self:
> The Jīva is the finite self of the individual soul. It is distinct from the body the sense organs mind and vital breath. The Jīva is as eternal as Brahman. When we speak of Brahman creating the Jīvas what is meant is that they are projected into manifestation. The Jīva, prior to this manifestation, lies inactive like a bird whose wings have not yet grown. God awakens it from its torpidity and sets it on a career of creative activity (99).

understanding helps us to recognize that faith decisions are on a non temporal level and this indicates what may and may not be accomplished through dialogue.

Polemicists often approach debate with the intention of overthrowing the view of an opponent or justifying one's own position. This type of debate then may bring out fundamental presuppositions, (i.e. how scripture is to be read) and discussion about what counts as evidence but it does not necessarily lead to a real dialogue. It is possible for each side to firmly believe that it has the most comprehensive and satisfying concept (this is necessary if the tradition one holds to is able to situate one well in the reality of one's own situation), yet this assurance is enhanced, deepened or modified through the challenge of debate.

Occasionally through debate or dialogue, one discussion partner comes to embrace the view of the other and reject the fundamental presuppositions once held. One might wonder if this has more to do with the skill of the debater and/or changing situations of the one being converted, than with better content of belief, since, from the practical level the faith stance can not be falsified or confirmed. Nevertheless, when one embraces a different belief it is presumably because he or she feels that this new belief will better situate him or her in reality. The decision probably rests more on feelings, a sense of beauty of the whole which grounds reality than on any objective criteria.

Since Rāmānuja's view has some similarities with Christian theism a brief comparison is in order. Rāmānuja believes that the one god who is creator and ruler of the

universe is only known by revelation through scriptures[116]. Rāmānuja states "Brahman, being raised above all contact with the senses, is not an object of perception and the other means of proof, but to be known through scripture only"(S.Bh.I.1.3). His particular theistic thought has many similarities with other theistic systems including Christianity. Carman comments:

> Rāmānuja's conception of religious knowledge is representative of those of
> a large number of theologians belonging to various theistic schools. He
> affirms the reality of the created world and the capacity of imperfect men to
> apprehend its material correctly through both perception and inference.
> With a mind clarified by the knowledge of God given through Scripture,
> one recognizes that this real world around us is a part of the glory of God.
> The world adorns God's nature as a bejewelled garment adorns a king.
> Indeed, Rāmānuja maintains, the finite universe is the "body" of the infinite
> Lord; God is the world's inner self and its underlying reality. Yet
> knowledge of the Lord who is the cause of this magnificent universe is to
> be gained, not by observing the universe and reflecting on it, whether on its
> order or on its finitude, but by accepting what trustworthy Scriptures state
> concerning the Lord, Scriptures passed down and interpreted by a
> trustworthy line of learned and virtuous teachers (263).

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[116]Rāmānuja places a high value on testimony as a means towards authentic knowledge. For Rāmānuja the Upaniṣads are the reliable witnesses. Rāmānuja's thought is close to monism and in western terms could be said to be pulled toward the Cartesian pole of thinking substance. Ricoeur in his philosophical considerations regards testimony in a more general sense and does not go into as much detail as Rāmānuja in what constitutes a credible testimony.

The kinship of Rāmānuja's theistic thought with other theistic religions does not imply that dialogue comes easily between them. Carman compares Barth's notion of revelation with Rāmānuja's:

> The peculiar difficulty obstructing communication between adherents of different religions of grace is that they all belong to "religions of revelation" and to "religions of the true name of God." This is true of Hindu theistic movements, both Vaisnava and Saiva, and of Amida Buddhism (Jodo-shu and Shin-shu in Japan) as well as of Christianity. There are many other religious movements, not emphasizing a doctrine of divine grace, that also base themselves on specific Divine revelations. The very particularity of the theistic conception of deity leads many besides Barth to the conclusion that striking similarities between theistic movements are of no theological importance, since what is decisive is the unique Divine Name disclosed in the unique revelation to the unique community of those whom the Lord has chosen for His own (269).

Again the problem of particularity arises and although there is the desire that the truth revealed in the particular religion be shown to be universal truth a barrier arises which claims its legitimacy from the realm of Divine revelation. This is where Ricoeur's dialectical approach comes in. Ricoeur's dialectical understanding shows the necessity of dialogue even for religions of revelation and at the same time shows that the truth which they hold as decisive and unique is not necessarily undermined by the dialogue but is enriched. The decisive theological level is not the level of dialogue but in seeking to

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understand revelation or immediate awareness of the absolute temporal beings learn from each other.

In the Christian theological tradition the Roman Catholic Church has taught that something of God's nature may be known through reason. Other Christian traditions, such as Lutheranism and Calvinism have generally taught that Scripture is the sole source of the knowledge of God. Through the light of scriptures one can recognize God's glory in the creation but apart from God's graciousness in giving the scriptures knowledge of God remains hidden. Ricoeur's aim is not direct knowledge of God but knowledge of self. This is obtained indirectly through experience, through the other. For Rāmānuja knowledge of self is knowledge of God. Knowledge of God/Self comes only through scripture yet scripture is understood through dialogue with others. Dialogue and dialectic are involved in coming to a deeper understanding of the self and God. Ricoeur's understanding of the levels of dialogue and dialectic shows how dialogue with others is helpful, even necessary, in coming to a better understanding of self and God even when Scripture is regarded as the sole source for knowledge of God. It is through dialogue that the source can be better understood.

Madhva

Ānanda Tīrtha (1238-1317 CE), widely known as Madhva, founded the doctrine commonly known as Dvaita but also referred to as either Bheda (difference), Tattva (reality), or Bimba-pratibimba (splendour and its reflection). He taught that there are five eternal differences that constitute the universe. These differences are between: i) the

individual soul (jīva) and the Creator (Īśvara); ii) prakṛti (matter) and Īśvara; iii) various jīvas; iv) prakṛti and jīva; v) various prakṛti. The name Dvaita is loosely translated as dualism but the word dualism in the Western context contains some implications that are not applicable to the Dvaita doctrine. Sharma explains:

> Dualism, as understood in Western philosophy, is a "theory which admits two independent and mutually irreducible substances". In Indian philosophy, the Sāṁkhya Dualism would answer to this definition. But the 'Dualism' of Madhva, while admitting two mutually irreducible principles as constituting Reality as a whole, regards only *one* of them, viz. God, as Independent and the other as dependent. God or the Supreme Being is the ONE AND ONLY INDEPENDENT PRINCIPLE and all finite reality comprising the Prakṛti, Puruṣas, Kāla, Karma, Svabhāva etc., is dependent (Para-tantra). This concept of two orders of reality (*tattvas*) viz., "Svatantra" and "Paratantra", is the keynote of Madhva's philosophy (*History* 1).

As a youth Madhva did not accept many of the *Advaita* teachings of his guru. Even Rāmānuja's theistic teachings did not go far enough towards the fundamental duality of *Īśvara* and *jīvātman*; *prakṛti* and *Īśvara*; and individual *jīvas* and various inanimate objects that he saw reflected in the scriptures. Madhva regarded the effects of Advaita philosophy as detrimental to the Hindu community. Abandoning the realism of the Vedas for the world-negating Advaita philosophy resulted in the loss of the person as a real agent in the world shaping the future (cf. Sharma *Madhva's* 2). Furthermore "divided allegiance

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between Saguna and Nirguna is not conducive to sincerity of thought or belief. It could give no consolation to be told *in camera* that the God one is asked to worship, meditate upon, love and surrender oneself to is 'after all, imaginary' and is to be 'transcended' by a supra-rational state of consciousness that has no subject-object relation" (Sharma *Madhva's* 17).

Another factor that no doubt motivated him towards a strong dualism was the invasion of monotheistic Islam which would not be absorbed into Hinduism. He held strongly to his own opinions and used not only words but the sword to defeat opponents. Madhva's ontology is summed up in his statement "There are two orders of reality — the Independent and the dependent" (*Tattvaviveka* 1 quoted in Sharma *Madhva's* 27). Madhva views Moksa as achieved through the realization of dependence on the Supreme.[117]

The relationship of the two reals with the one and only independent substance (Supreme Being, Svatantra -- free) on the one side and everything else (Paratantra) is asymetrical. The asymetry of this relationship is what allows Madhva to reconcile the opposing trend in the Upaniṣads, the one towards a 'Monistic ideal' and the other towards realism. Madhva explains the language of transcendental monism which is encountered in the Upaniṣads as indicating the *primacy* of the Supreme and not to the Supreme's character as an *acosmistic* whole as Advaita thought contends.

Sharma (*History* 22) explains the situation with regard to the different trends in

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[117] "Whosoever realizes all finite reality to be essentially dependent on the Supreme is released from Saṁsāra" (*Tattvaviveka* quoted in Sharma *Madhva's* 32).

Scriptures as follows:

Indian commentators pledged to the belief in the infallibility of the Scriptures, have, naturally, assumed that the Upaniṣads have but one system to propound, one doctrine to teach. On this assumption, they have proceeded to unify the divergent and often hopelessly irreconcilable utterances of the Upaniṣads into a single system. The Advaita of Śaṅkara, the Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja and the Dvaita of Madhva, are all the outcome of such attempts. Each one takes his stand on texts or groups of texts that appear to him to represent and agree with the truth arrived at by him after deep independent reflection on the problems of philosophy, — the question of the degree and extent of spiritual satisfyingness, and the logico-metaphysical finality of one or more of the primary data of experience, in all their completeness — the Ego, Matter and God, — and the degree of philosophical prominence to be assigned to one or more of them, in any balanced metaphysical theory. Each one starts with a preestablished outline before him arrived at by intensive thinking and correlates the various groups of texts so as to fit in with such an outline. Each one takes his stand on texts which appear to him to represent the highest truth (arrived at on grounds of independent ratiocination and general view of the texts) and these he tries to harmonise with those less favorable to his position and explain (away) the rest which go against his views.

Madhva seeks for a single system, a metaphysical viewpoint from which the scriptures

may be exposited in a coherent manner. He tries to establish his viewpoint, an

asymmetrical dualism on the level of the eternal. He pictures an eternal dialectic between

the finite and the infinite, the dependent and the free. There is no dialectical movement

towards an absolute since the dialectic is itself absolute. There are clearly similarities with

Ricoeur's dialectical hermeneutical approach, however, the fact that Madhva considers the

dialectic as operating on the eternal level it becomes one more metaphysical view which

must be mediated on the temporal level.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

Various fundamental beliefs in world religion often stand diametrically opposed and it would seem if fruitful dialogue, dialogue which expands the self and helps the self to be better situated in reality is to take place, both sides must have a space in which they can be heard. Ricoeur's success in engaging opposites and bringing about a kind of mediation in which both opposing voices are heard and respected and self understanding is deepened is the success that is sought for in interreligious dialogue. His mediation is made possible by his underlying dialectical hermeneutical philosophy. The space for dialogue that Ricoeur's philosophical approach opens up is the kind of space required for interreligious dialogue and it is this space which acts as the ground on which interreligious dialogue can take place.

Ricoeur's dialectical understanding of temporal reality provides a philosophical ground for interreligious dialogue which is shown to operate not on the level of the absolute but remains on the level of hope, a level of humility and openness. The level of hope is the level on which people are journeying, are listening to one another, searching for possibilities and searching for a better way to live and a better way to engage the challenges of the present. The level of committed faith is where religious traditions generally strive to maintain their integrity. Adherents feel assured that their view of fundamental reality must be absolute and order all of reality. It is this feeling that keeps tradition alive. It is this feeling that both encourages and hinders interreligious dialogue.

Grounding interreligious dialogue along the lines of Ricoeur's dialectical understanding helps us to see how faith and hope can be discussed on different levels even though they belong together.

Ricoeur's methodology opens up a space in which various views of ultimate reality may be acknowledged, as we have seen in the Christian and Hindu traditions. People with fundamentally different conceptions of the ultimate ranging from absolute unity to absolute difference, or on the temporal level, those seeking unity and those finding their individuality, can learn from each other and deepen self understanding and understanding of others. In both the Eastern and Western traditions there are poles, and understanding in one direction means resisting or acting against influences in the other. The space which Ricoeur opens up is the space in which the various views intersect one another, the space of practical living. This space does not contradict or deny the insights gained from a mystical experience of the absolute but is the space in which that experience may be expressed, interpreted and understood. Experiences, interpretations and understandings are dialectical in nature and thus are not on the level of the absolute.

Ricoeur's methodology makes it possible for people in the West to learn from people in the East (and vice versa) what it means to be a self and what the deep questions are. Christians, for example, in a search for their individual self may be brought to a deeper realization of what it means to be in community and to find one's identity in community. There is a direction in the West not to loose the self to the oneness of community but to maintain the integrity of the individual self. Meaning is often sought through clinging to the individual self and a close group of others. In close relations with others (love of

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spouse, children, family, country) meaning is found in others. There is an attempt to draw the others into the realm of the individual self so that they are regarded as my spouse, my children, my family, my country. To make sacrifices for loved ones does not necessarily result in a loss of self but in an expanded self. Although the height of love may be thought of as giving one's life for another, the realization that loved ones are an expansion of the individual self, means that this ultimate expression of love is not necessarily seen as a loss of self.

Although Ricoeur's thought arises out of a thoroughly Western context his dialectical thinking calls out for a consideration of the self from the opposite direction, that of overcoming the individual self. This is where Ricoeur could learn from Advaita Vedānta thought. In an attempt to find greater wholeness and well being, Advaita Vedānta thought is able to bring to light an approach to the self which inspires deeper questions about the ultimate value of the individual self. On the other hand, Ricoeur's dialectical methodology would help Advaita Vedānta thought in its consideration of the value of the temporal level and in the day to day life of getting along with one another and understanding one another.

One area in which Ricoeur's methodology would open a space of dialogue between Western and Viśiṣṭādvaita thought would be around the theme of creativity and the eternal nature of the self. Both dialogue partners would be questioned as to the relation of a constituted self on the temporal level to an eternal true self on the level of ultimate reality. These questions would drive each side to a greater self understanding.

In relation to Ricoeur's methodology Dvaita thought opens up the area of discussion of the ontological status of temporality and dualism. Ricoeur's contribution to

interreligious dialogue at this point is his refusal to mix discussions of philosophy with faith. Interreligious dialogue can profitably take place at the level of temporality as opposed to the level of the absolute. Ricoeur shows that there are limits to discussion, his agnosticism at the end of *Oneself As Another* gives a clear indication that the absolute unknown cannot be captured at the level of dialogue. Within the limits of dialogue a better understanding of the self and its place in reality may be obtained.

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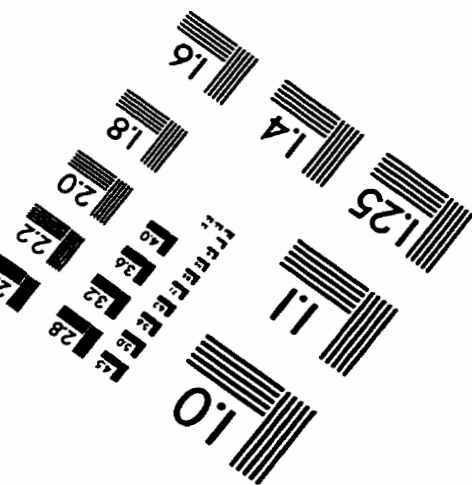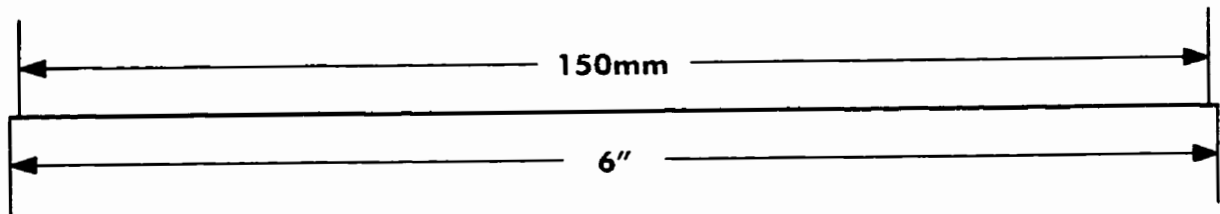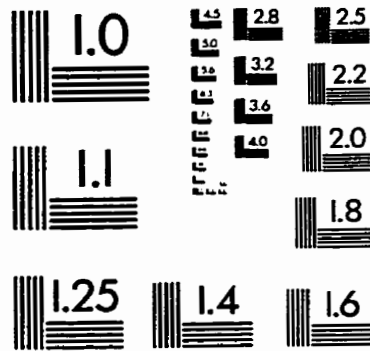Stewart, David. "In Quest of Hope: Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Moltmann." *Restoration Quarterly* 1970: 31-52..
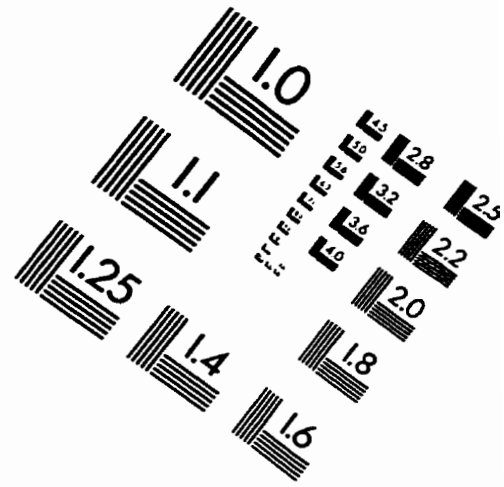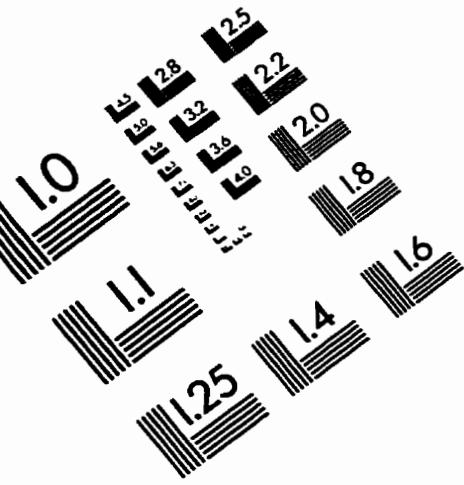
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