

THE PROBLEM OF MEANING IN NARRATIVE AND RICOEUR'S HERMENEUTICS

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摘 要

呂格爾 (Paul Ricoeur 1913-) 的詮釋學近年來被廣泛應用到社會科學、宗教學科和文學批評各方面，可謂當代顯學之一。敘事文 (Narrative) 在文學類型上佔重要地位，涵蓋史詩、神話、小說、歷史文獻……等等。本文從呂格爾的詮釋學出發來探討敘事文的意義問題，指出其中包含「涵意」與「指涉」兩個相互辯證的層次。「涵意」乃由敘事文之結構所規定，結構分析涉及了知識論上「解釋」的運作。至於「指涉」的問題則由於存在的詮釋而引起，涉及知識論上「理解」的運作。本文並檢查布洛普 (Propp) 的形式主義解析與布勒曼 (Bremond)，葛萊瑪斯 (Greimas) 和李維·史陀 (Levi-Strauss) 的結構主義解析，依據呂格爾的詮釋學予以批判反省，指出其中詮釋上的假設，並從敘事者和歷史性的角度來討論敘事文的指涉問題。

Summary

In this article, the author tries first to mark the difference of Ricoeur's Methodological Hermeneutics from Heidegger and Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, in order to assure the philosophical background on which Ricoeur orients his studies of the interpretation of text – especially narrative texts. Sense and reference are two aspects of a text in dialectical interaction. For Paul Ricoeur, the sense of a narrative text is determined by its structure, and any structural analysis contains the epistemological operation that we call "explanation". Now the problem of reference emerges with the interpretation of the narrative text which obliges another epistemological operation, namely "understanding". We examine first the formal or the structural analyses proposed by Propp, Bremond, Greimas and Levi-Strauss, in order to explain the structural framework in which the sense of a narrative text appears. Then we follow Ricoeur's hermeneutics to make explicit the function of interpretation implied in the above structural explanation. The problem of reference will be discussed and re-interpreted in the light of Ricoeurian hermeneutics.

I. Methodological Detour, Text, and the Narrative

Paul Ricoeur (1913–) identifies his own approach as a kind of Methodological Hermeneutics, thus differentiating his method from Heidegger and Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics. This difference doesn't mean sheer opposition. It means rather a methodological detour which aims finally at the same philosophical horizon – Being and its Truth – already traced out by Heidegger and Gadamer.

In his *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger has proposed a fundamental ontology, that is, a phenomenology of Dasein having the character of a hermeneutics, through which “the authentic meaning of Being, and also those basic structures of Being which Dasein itself possesses, are made known to Dasein's understanding of Being.” (Heidegger 1962, p. 37) Therefore, the Philosophical Hermeneutics of Heidegger is a phenomenological way of getting Being manifest itself through an interpretation of Dasein's understanding of Being, especially through an analytic of the existentiality of Dasein's ex-istence. (Ibid., p. 38) In this perspective, hermeneutics in the sense of methodology of human sciences, as in the case of Dilthey, is treated by Heidegger as derivative, secondary and therefore inessential.⁽¹⁾

It is the same case with Gadamer. In his *Wahrheit und Methode*, Gadamer takes the part of Truth against Method. In other words, he is for the revealing of Being through historical tradition, through our experience of playing, and through language, and is against any objective tentative in human sciences by mere methodological considerations. As Ricoeur puts it: “the alternative underlying the very title of Gadamer's work *Truth and Method*: either we adopt the methodological attitude and lose the ontological density of the reality we study, or we adopt the attitude of truth and must then renounce the objectivity of the human sciences.” (Ricoeur 1981, p. 131)

Heidegger and Gadamer, in devaluating Method, have missed their relevance to some actual needs in human sciences which owe their development partly to the methodological and epistemological reflections since modern times. Though they have, without doubt, pointed out a more original, that is to say, an ontological dimension which transcends the dominant epistemological approach and the philosophy of subjectivity since Descartes, their deliberate negligence of the methodic dimension divulges a certain impotence vis-à-vis some urgent demands of contemporary minds. These demands, as Ricoeur formulates them, are: “Comment donner un organon à l'exégèse, c'est-à-dire à l'intelligence des textes? Comment fonder les sciences historiques face aux sciences de la nature? Comment arbitrer le conflit des interprétations rivales?” (Ricoeur 1969, p. 14)

In stead of the short way to Being and Truth practiced by Heidegger and Gadamer, Ricoeur takes a long way by reconsidering the Method in order to be more relevant to the above mentioned problems. This methodological detour takes depart from that which is most objective— the linguistic and semantic level, and then, by the mediation of subjective reflection, arrives at the ultimate determination of the existence of Ego and that of the world on the ontological level. (Ricoeur 1969, pp. 15-28) With this detour, Ricoeur tries to establish a Methodological Hermeneutics which could respond to the actual development in various domains like biblical exegesis, historical researches, psychoanalysis, phenomenology of religion, and even literary criticism. But after rendering justice to this methodic dimension, his ultimate concern points to the same ontological horizon delineated by Heidegger and Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics. For Ricoeur's hermeneutics, methodic distancing and ontological co-belongingness are two essential points in dialectic interaction.

In view of his methodic distancing, Ricoeur has set up a new paradigm for contemporary hermeneutics— the text—, in stead of the old ones— the analytic of Dasein for Heidegger and the situation of dialogue for Gadamer. A text is any discourse which is fixed by writing, and thereby enjoys a certain autonomy with respect to its original author and its original readers. It is the most objective and therefore most distancing expression ready for any methodic analysis and epistemological reflection. A text demands always the interplay of writing and reading, thus gives us a most convenient example for the dialectics between the objective structure and the subjective interpretation. It shows us how the syntactic structure interweaves with the semantic significance, and thereby prepares a common ground for both the natural sciences and the human sciences, and assures us of their continuity. Besides, a text is also the way we record our history. It is our actions as fixed and automatized. Thereby our actions attains their objective importance beyond their initial relevance in concrete situations. It is by the surplus of meaning as discovered in the objective context that we have to define the meaning of our existence and the meaning of Being in itself. Taking up the text as new paradigm, Ricoeur assumes that "hermeneutics is the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts". This is Ricoeur's working definition of hermeneutics. (Ricoeur 1981, p. 43.)

Among all sorts of texts, the narrative is the most privileged one, not only because of its large extension from epics, myths, novels etc., to historical writings, but also because it offers an excellent example of the articulation between the narrated content and the act of narration, articulation that gives rise to a new

image of the interplay between structural explanation and existential interpretation. This is what has to be verified in this research on the meaning of narrative texts.

II. The Meaning as a Dialectical Movement Between Sense and Reference

Two English authors, Scholes and Kellogg, define "Meaning in narrative" as a relation between the fictional world and the real world. "Meaning, they say, in a work of narrative art, is a function of the relationship between two worlds: the fictional world created by the author and the 'real' world, the apprehendable universe". (Scholes and Kellogg 1966, p. 82) This definition treats the problem of meaning only in terms of reference, that is why it proposes the representational and the illustrative as two possible meanings of narrative. "The connection between the fictional world and the real can be either representational or illustrative". (Ibid., p. 84) But they ignore completely that the fictional world might have its own proper structure which determines and produces a sense immanent in itself, as is suggested by the structuralists. Their definition neglects the sense-aspect of meaning.

For Ricoeur, the problem of meaning is a much more complicated matter. In a broader sense, meaning has its subjective side and also its objective side. The subjective side of meaning consists of the threefold meaning of utterer (or narrator): the self-reference, the illocutionary dimension of the speech act, and the intention of recognition by the hearer. The objective side of meaning – which is meaning *sensu stricto* and meaning properly speaking in the narrative – consists of two different but related aspects: sense and reference. "We may mean the 'what' of discourse or the 'about what' of discourse. The 'what' of discourse is its 'sense', the 'about what' is its 'reference' ". (Ricoeur 1976, p. 19)

Ricoeur's distinction between sense and reference is based on a philosophical synthesis of Gottlob Frege's logical distinction between *Sinn und Bedeutung*⁽²⁾ and Emile Benveniste's linguistic distinction between *les mots et les phrases*.⁽³⁾ Only beginning from the sentence level are we permitted to distinguish what is said and about what it is said. From this level up we are facing semantic problems and we have to distinguish sense from reference. On the semiological level, there is no problem of reference; signs only refers to other signs within the system. "With the sentence, however, language is directed beyond itself. Whereas the sense is immanent to the discourse, and objective in the sense of ideal, the reference expresses the movement in which language transcends itself. In other words, the sense correlates the identification function and the predicative function with the sentence, and the reference relates language to the world". (Ibid., p. 20)

In the case of narrative, the sense is surely more complicated than what is mentioned in the quotation. The latter concerns only the sense on the sentence level, the sense that correlates the identification function and the predicative function in a sentence. But a narrative text is composed of a series of innerconnected sentences. Under the structural analysis of Levi-Strauss, the sense of a myth-narrative consists in the determination of the structural law which combines a finite number of contradictory "mythèmes"—shortest sentences which are constitutive elements of a myth in question. For the formalist analysis of Propp, the sense of a folktale-narrative is determined by the enchainment of their functional actions. All these have to be analysed later. The meaning of narrative has its structural aspect and is suitable for structural analysis. "The first way of reading is exemplified by the various structural school of literary criticism. Their approach is not only possible, but legitimate." (Ibid, p. 81) Ricoeur doesn't invent his own structuralism. His discussions of structural analyses are but a way of pointing out the sense, the structural aspect of meaning in narrative, and more over a way of making explicit the condition of possibility of such analyses and thus preparing them for a hermeneutical reflection.

According to Ricoeur, sense and reference are in a situation of dialectics. Language has a reference only when it is used, that is, when it is realized in the act of speech (*parole* in Saussurian sense). But this act of speech receives its structure from the meaning as sense. "To refer is what the sentence does in a certain situation and according to certain use. It is also what the speaker does when he applies his words to reality. That someone refers to something at a certain time is an event, a speech event. But this event receives its structure from the meaning as sense. The speaker refers to something on the basis of, or through, the ideal structure of the sense. The sense, so to speak, is traversed by the referring intention of the speaker." (Ibid., p. 20) This concerns more the case of speech. But the situation is analogical in the case of narrative, of which the sense is on the structural side, and its reference is connected with its narrator-implication and its ontological conditions.

For Ricoeur, a narrative text postulates a narrator and his ontological condition of being in the world. Scholes and Kellogg call a narrative work "a fictional world." But Ricoeur doesn't consider it as a world of its own. It is not even a world. "But because we are in the world, because we are affected by situations, and because we orient ourselves comprehensively in those situations, we have something to say, we have experience to bring to language". (Ibid., pp. 20-21) For Ricoeur, this "bringing experience to language" is the ontological condition of reference. In a narrative work, it is the narrator who brings his experienced world, either historical

or fictional, into the narrative, and by thus doing, brings the dimension of reference into a narrative work.

The sense of narrative is determined by its structure, and any structural analysis responds to the epistemological operation we call "explanation". Now the problem of reference emerges with the ontological or the existential interpretation of narrative which demands another epistemological operation called "understanding". Since sense and reference are in a dialectical situation, the corresponding explanation and understanding must also be in the same type of situation. That's why Ricoeur sets up the continuity between explanation and understanding, between natural sciences and human sciences, both were divorced since Dilthey because of the latter's naturalist view of explanation and subjectivist view of understanding. Ricoeur considers the semiological sciences, in place of the natural sciences, as a new model for the explanation both in the natural and the human sciences, and thereby establish their continuity. Likewise, taking Heidegger's philosophical achievement as decisive, he considers understanding not as Diltheyan empathetic transference of ourselves into another's psychic life, but as a grasp of being-in-the-world. Taking together these two epistemological operations, the analysis of meaning in narrative must, for Ricoeur, begin with the structural explanation of its sense-aspect and end with the ontological understanding of its reference-aspect.

III. Sense and the Structural Explanation of Narrative

According to Paul Ricoeur, the condition of possibility of the structural analysis is based on the distinction between narrative (*récit*) and discourse (*discours*), a distinction made in an important article of Emile Benveniste: "Les relations de temps dans les verbes Français" (Benveniste 1959). According to Benveniste, the discourse is defined as "toute énonciation supposant un locuteur et un auditeur, et chez le premier l'intention d'influencer l'autre en quelque manière". (Benveniste 1966, p. 242) It uses freely all forms of the person of the verb: I, you, he, . . . etc. This refers always to the situation of narration. As to the temporal forms of the verb in discourse, all forms are possible except one, the aorist, banished nowadays from discourse to be the typical form of historical narrative. Present, future and perfect tenses are three fundamental temporal forms of discourse, and all of them are excluded from historical narrative. On the other hand, the narrative concerns "la présentation des faits survenus à un certain moment du temps, sans aucune intervention du locuteur dans le récit". (Ibid. p. 239) Therefore, it never uses neither I nor You, "on ne constate donc dans le récit historique strictement pour-

suivi que des formes de 3^e personne". As to its temporal forms, Benveniste remarked: "L'énonciation historique comporte trois temps: l'aoriste (=passé simple ou passé défini), l'imparfait (y compris la forme en -RAIT dite conditionnel), le plus-que-parfait. . . . Le présent est exclu, à l'exception- très rare- d'un présent intemporel tel que le présent de définition. (Ibid.) Now we take some example from G. Glotz's *Histoire grecque* and Voltaire's *La princesse de Babylone*:

1. Example of historical narrative:

"Pour devenir les maîtres du marché méditerranéen, les Grecs *déployèrent* une audace et une persévérance incomparables. Depuis la disparition des marines minoenne et mycénienne, l'Egée *était* infectée par des bandes de pirates: il n'y *eut* longtemps que des Sidoniens pour oser s'y aventurer. Les Grecs *finirent* pourtant par se débarrasser de cette plaie: ils *donnèrent* la chasse aux écumeurs de rivages, qui *durent* transférer le principal théâtre de leurs exploits dans l'Adriatique. Quant aux Phéniciens qui *avaient fait* profiter les Grecs de leur expérience et leur *avaient appris* l'utilité commerciale de l'écriture, ils *furent* évincés des côtes de l'Ionie et chassés des pêcheries de pourpre égéennes; . . ." (Glotz, 1925, p. 225)

2. Example of fictional narrative

Dès que l'empereur de la Chine *eut appris* que la princesse de Babylone *était* à une porte de la ville, il lui *dépêcha* quatre mille mandarins en robe de cérémonie; tous se *prosternèrent* devant elle et lui *présentèrent* chacun un compliment écrit en lettres d'or sur une feuille de soie pourpre. Formosante leur *dit* que, si elle *avait* quatre mille langues, elle ne *manquerait* pas de répondre sur le champ à chaque mandarin; mais que, n'en ayant qu'une, elle les *pria* de trouver bon qu'elle s'en *servît* pour les remercier tous en général. Ils la *conduisirent* respectueusement chez l'empereur. (Voltaire 1978, pp. 396-7)

3. Example of discourse

Vous *pourriez* faire ici autant de mal que vous en *avez fait* ailleurs: vous *êtes venus* prêcher des dogmes d'intolérans chez la nation la plus tolérante de la terre. Je vous *renvoie* pour n'être jamais forcé de vous punir. Vous *serez reconduits* honorablement sur mes frontières; on vous *fournira* tout pour retourner aux bornes de l'hémisphère dont vous *êtes partis*. *Allez* en paix si vous *pouvez* être en paix, et ne *revenez* plus. (Voltaire 1978, p. 397)

Seen from the above example, it becomes clear that in the case of discourse, the narrator plays an important role. This is testified by the use of the person JE/VOUS and the temporal forms which refer to his present experience and his interpretation of it. Whereas in the case of narrative, historical as well as fictional,

the narrator has no importance, since the events are narrated in a way that they seem to happen and narrate themselves. Just as Benveniste says: "A vrai dire, il n'y a même plus alors de narrateur. Les événements sont posés comme ils se sont produits à mesure qu'ils apparaissent à l'horizon de l'histoire. Personne ne parle ici; les événements semblent se raconter eux-mêmes. Le temps fondamental est l'aoriste, qui est le temps de l'événement hors de la personne d'un narrateur". (Benveniste 1966, p. 241)

The structural explanation which determines the immanent sense of a narrative text is possible only under the condition that the subjectivity of the narrator and his interpretation of the narrated events are excluded in advance. Upon the split of the narrator's act of narration with the narrated content, the structural analysis operates principally on the signs that express the latter.

Propp's formal analysis of Russian stories⁽⁴⁾ precedes the structural analyses practised by Bremond, Greimas, and Levi-Strauss. In order to arrive at a systematic classification based on a system of formal signs, Propp proposes a functional description, which is neither intuitive, nor empirical. An empirical description gives birth to only superficial catalogues. By contrast, a functional description is systematic in the sense that it subordinates the variable values to the constant values. The variable values are inessential attributes and actions of a character: his name and appearance, particularities of his coming on the scene. . . etc. All these depend on the constant, stable values which Propp calls functions. "Function" is to be defined as an action of a character viewed from its significance for the unfolding of the plot. Propp has presented an inventory consisting of 31 functions which are organised into an order of obligatory succession. The linear enchainement of these functions produces a Proto-story of all good stories. It forms a logic of narrative. And then, keeping the chronological succession of Propp's functions but changing its unilinear order to a multi-linear and arborescent order, this is what the structural analysis of Bremond and Greimas does. Besides, by dechronologizing this narrative logic into a combinatory logic of several non-temporal oppositional elements, we have Levi-Strauss' structural analysis of myths—which is also a kind of narrative.

Bremond suggests that every function opens up another alternative, and every action either opens or closes the alternatives. The structure of a story is determined by its pivotal actions disclosing new alternatives. Thus the linear succession of Propp is switched to an arborescent scheme composed of a series of contradictory options. (Bremond 1964) Bremond tries to establish "la logique des possibles narratives" the task of which is to study the "contraintes logiques que toute série d'événements ordonnés en forme de récit doit respecter sous peine d'être inintel-

ligible". (Bremond 1968, p. 60) In so doing, Bremond offers us a richer definition of the narrative: "tout récit consiste en un discours intégrant une succession d'événements d'intérêt humain dans l'unité d'une action". (Bremond 1968, p. 62) Succession, integration and human interest are three fundamental themes in this definition. Their unity suggests to us that all actions are human projects.

In his famous *Semantique structurale*, Greimas schematizes Propp's inventory of functions in a way to formulate a logic of narrative composed of contradictory alternatives which follows an order determined by the model of transformational linguistics.⁽⁵⁾

Greimas' reformulation of Propp's inventory is based on a systematic pairing according to a binary model: interdication vs violation. The new inventory is:

1. absence
2. interdiction vs violation
3. reconnaissance vs delivery
4. fraud vs complicity
5. villainy vs lack
6. mediation, the connective moment vs beginning counter action
7. departure
8. the 1st function of the donner vs the hero's reaction
9. the provision, receipt of magical agent
10. spatial translocation
11. struggle vs victory
12. marking
13. the initial misfortune or lack is liquidated
14. return
15. pursuit, chase vs rescue
16. unrecognised arrival
17. the difficult task vs solution, a task is accomplished
18. recognition
19. exposure vs transfiguration
20. punishment vs wedding

After applying the laws of transformation to these simple relations, Greimas has elaborated an actantial structure as in the following list:

This actantial structure dechronologizes in a sense Propp and Bremond's chronological succession, but there remains a diachronic residue, under the form of a functional pair: confrontation vs success. . . which cannot be transformed into a elementary semic category. (Greimas 1966, p. 205) The total dechronologization of the logic of narrative is effected by Levi-Strauss' structural analysis of myth-

Rupture de l'ordre et Aliénation	Réintégration et Restitution de l'ordre	
Epreuve principale		
$\overline{p}\overline{A}\overline{C}_1\overline{C}_2\overline{C}_3p\overline{A}_1p_1(A_2 + F_3 + \text{non } c_2)d\overline{\text{non } p_1}(F_1 + c_1 + \text{non } c_3)\text{non } p_1dF_1p_1(A_3 + F_3 + \text{non } c_1)C_2C_2A(\text{non } c_3)$		
Qualification	Quête	Requête
<p>A = contrat (mandement vs acceptation); F = lutte (affrontement vs victoire); C = communication (émission vs réception); p = présence; d = déplacement rapide.</p>		

narrative.

Levi-Strauss dechronologizes the logic of narrative and make it a combinatory logic of atemporal elements, what he calls "mythèmes": "Comme tout être linguistique, le myth est formé d'unités constitutives; ces unités constitutives impliquent la présence de celles qui interviennent normalement dans la structure de la langue à savoir, les phonèmes, les morphèmes, et les sémantèmes. . . . Pour cette raison nous appellerons les éléments qui relèvent en propre du mythe et qui sont les plus complexes de tous: grosses unités constitutives". (Levi-Strauss 1958, pp. 232-233) For Levi-Strauss, every myth-narrative is composed of a chain of "mythèmes", which are the shortest sentences in subject-predicate form, arrangeable into contradictory couples in mathematical proportionality. For example, in reconstructing the myth of Oedipus, Levi-Strauss put the "mythèmes" into 4 columns: in the first column we find the over-estimated kinship (Oedipus marries his mother, Antigone buries Polyneices.); in the second, under-estimated kinship (Oedipus kills his father, Eteocles kills Polyneices); in the third, human autonomy which denied his rooting on earth (Cadamos' kills the dragon, Oedipus slays the Sphinx); in the fourth, human beings are rooted on earth like plants (Oedipus' foot swells). In the combination of these oppositionary relations, the fourth column to the third is just as the second to the first. This mathematical proportionality is the structural principle of the myth in question. The myth-narrative is therefore a kind of logical operation of mediation between contradictory terms. There are certain myths which tend to

exhaust all the possible modes of passage from duality to unity. The objective of myth is therefore, according to Levi-Strauss, to furnish a logical model for dissolving a contradiction.⁽⁶⁾

In the above schematic exposé of the formalist analysis of Propp and the structuralist analyses of Bremond, Greinfas and Levi-Strauss, we could extricate two essential points from their arguments:

First, the condition of possibility of a structural explanation of (the sense of) narrative is based on the pre-effected disjunction between the narrated content and the act of narration, between the signs of narrative and the narrator. In other words, it is based on the pre-exclusion of their ontological implications.

Second, from Bremond to Levi-Strauss, there is a progressive tendency to dechronologize the logic of narrative. This means that a structural explanation tends to be systematic and synchronic, in reducing little by little the historical and diachronic dimension of narrative. Losing all reference to our historicity is the prize that the structural explanation has to pay for its own success.

Ricoeur's hermeneutics attempts to envisage these two points by, first, rediscovering the narrator and his act of narrating, and second, by rejoining the historicity of human existence through an existential interpretation of the logic of narrative.

The problem concerning the reference of narrative can attain its full solution only in this rediscovery of the narrator and his participation of human historicity.

IV. Reference and the Existential Interpretation of Narrative

The structural explanation of narrative presupposes the disjunction of the narrated content from the narrator and his act of narration. The narrative is separated from the present of the first person. It is narrated in a way, as Benveniste said, that the events seem to unfold and narrate themselves. Any reference to the narrator, as Barthes does, is treated merely as sign of narrator to be integrated into the whole system of linguistic signs. Now the existential interpretation of narrative texts, in Ricoeurian hermeneutics, begins by rediscovering the narrator and his act of narration. These are two ontological postulates of narrative texts. The act of narration is an act that communicates a vision, a reconstituted world. A narrative text presupposes a narrator and his receiver. As Barthes well remarked: "De même qu'il y a, à l'intérieur du récit, une grande fonction d'échange (répartie entre un donateur et un bénéficiaire), de même, homologiquement, le récit, comme objet, est l'enjeu d'une communication: il y a un donateur du récit, il y a un destinataire du récit". (Barthes 1966 pp. 18-20) But we have to take notice of the fact that,

for the structuralist analysis of Roland Barthes,⁽⁷⁾ the question is how the signs of narrator and receiver are integrated with other signs into a structural whole. He is interested, neither in the subjective motivation of the narrator, nor in the effect that the narration has produced on the receiver. . .etc., but in the code of organization through which the signs of narrator, receiver, and other signs are integrated together. For Ricoeur, this is just the limit of semiology, which can ask only questions about signs and their codes. But for the hermeneutics, the system of signs presupposes, on the ontological level, a narrator who brings his world to light through the usage of signs and shares this world with his receiver(s) by means of communication. Being-in-the-world and being-together are two ontological conditions of communication in a narrative manner.

The categories of WITNESS and TRADITION justify this rediscovery of the narrator and his ontological implications. A narrative of witness or a work in auto-biographical form is always written in the perfect tense of the first person --for example, Camus' *L'étranger*--, in place of the aorist tenses. The perfect tense establishes a living relation between the past event and the narrating present. As Benveniste suggests: "C'est le temps de celui qui relate les faits en témoin, en participant; c'est donc aussi le temps que choisira quiconque veut faire retenir jusqu'à nous l'événement rapporté et le rattacher à notre présent". (Benveniste 1966, p. 244) Auto-biographical narrative points directly to the existence of the narrator and his interpretation of the experienced world.

Moreover, it is by connecting with the tradition⁽⁸⁾ that the narration belongs to the same historical course of the narrated events. The narrator belongs to the same history that he narrates as history. By way of tradition, the narrated events are related significantly to the narrator.

The structuralist analysis of the narrative begins with the disjunction narrative/discourse. On the contrary, the existential interpretation of Ricoeur's hermeneutics has rediscovered the narrator and his act of narration. With this rediscovery, the narrative becomes a kind of discourse, a narrative-discourse.

After rejoining narrative and discourse, it becomes more easy to discern the aspect of reference. From the level of sentence up, we have to distinguish *what the text says* from *about what it says*. The narrative text has its own denotative function. Having a denotative function doesn't mean necessarily that a narrative work is a kind of representation of the real world. To look at the problem of reference from the point of view of representation has long been a prejudice among certain writers. This prejudice has two questionable presuppositions: first, that *mimesis* means imitation in the sense of copy; second, that the reality is something well-done

and well-known before the discourse or the act of narration.

The first presupposition has long distorted our reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*, confounding *mimesis* with *copy*. In fact, Aristotle's *mimesis* is not a kind of copy. Aristotle taught⁹⁾ that the task of a poet is to create a *muthos* which has its own logic— a beginning, an order and an end — that we cannot find in the real life. The *muthos* is something like a logic of narrative. It is a work of invention, a *poiesis*, as Aristotle called it. The tragedy is not an imitation of human actions in the sense of a copy, a representation, a duplication of human action. A *mimesis* of human action is a remaking of human action in a grander and better way. The *mimesis* of the narrative work is a creative imitation.

On the other hand, the second presupposition supports a static view of reality. But the creative imitation of a narrative text brings to light new aspects of reality unknown to any representational language. It is by the creation of the story of Oedipus that man knows he has oedipian drives. Fiction doesn't represent the reality—as Erich Auerbach claims in his famous *Mimesis*— but it remakes the reality. As Nelson Goodman calls it in his *Language of Art*: a “reality remade”. He says: “The copy theory of representation, then, is stopped at the start by inability to specify what is to be copied. . . . In representing an object, we do not copy such a construal or interpretation — we achieve it.” (Goodman 1976, p. 9)

In this new concept of *mimesis*, Ricoeur thinks that there are *mimesis* of functions (in Propp's and Bremond's sense), *mimesis* of actions (in Greimas' sense) and *mimesis* of characters. The narrative work is structured by the *mimesis* of characters. And with the characters, there is finally the *mimesis* of existence. All stories unfold themselves in accordance with pivot notions like absence, interdiction, violation, fraud, complicity, villainy, lack, departure, struggle, victory. . . (cf. p. 12), all these are just what Karl Jaspers calls boundary situations of human existence. Man suffers from these situations and orients his own history among these decisive situations. True history and fictional history cross upon the basic historicity of human existence. According to Ricoeur, both are different in that history opens us to the possible by opening us to what is different, whereas fiction leads us to what is essential in reality by opening us to the unreal. (Ricoeur 1981, p. 296) Nevertheless, we could say that in both cases, there is “a certain mutual belonging between the act of narrating (or writing) history and the fact of being in history, between doing history and being historical. In other words, the form of life to which narrative discourse belongs is our historical condition itself.” (Ibid., p. 288) “In other words, historicity is the form of life correlative to the language-game of narrating”. (Ibid., p. 289) Function, action, character, and existence, all

these connect the narrative activity to our historicity. Mimesis as creative imitation is the essence of narrative. "There is mimesis only where there is 'doing' or 'activity'; and poetic 'activity' consists precisely in the construction of plots. Moreover, what mimesis imitates is not the effectivity of events but their logical structure, their meaning." (Ibid., p. 292) By its creative construction and its manifestation of the logic of human historicity, a narrative work contributes to the movement of our history. That's why there exists a tradition of narration.

In this perspective, the myth too, has its reference in our historicity and our boundary situations. The myth is a narrative of origin. The fundamental event narrated in the myth has no place in history, but is rather placed in a time before history. It begins always with temporal suggestions like: *in illo tempore*, once upon a time. . . . The myth is essentially constituted by a narrative which connects this primordial time to our time. Besides, the myth is always linked with rites. The narration of myth has its ritual aspect. By ritualization, the myth continues to act upon the life-world of the social community as a paradigm of action. With the narrative of origin, man emerges from everyday life time to the primordial time, from the profane time to the sacred time. The narration of it renders people contemporaneous to the origin, and the meaning of myth is also reactivated in the rites connected with myth. Therefore the myth refers also the boundary situations of our existence.

In short, we could affirm that for Ricoeur, the reference of a narrative work lies in the world of human existence and its historicity. This could make itself manifest only when we undertake an existential interpretation of the narrative text.

V. Conclusion

From the above analysis, it becomes clear that Ricoeur holds a more balanced view of the meaning of narrative. For him, the meaning of narrative comprises a sense-aspect and a reference-aspect, both are in dialectical interaction.

1. All narrative works have a sense determined by their own immanent structures. The structuralists' explanations are divided into two different approaches: the one works out a logic of succession; the other a dechronologized structural law. But among the structuralists, it seems that the development tends to dechronologize and to attach to the configurational side. Not satisfying with them, Ricoeur holds the view that a narrative work has both sides: succession and configuration (or sequence and figure). "Any narrative combines, in varying proportions, two dimensions: a chronological dimension and a non-chronological dimension." (Ricoeur 1981, p. 278)

And these two dimensions are in dialectical relation: "Indeed, this structure is so paradoxical that every narrative can be conceived in terms of the competition between its episodic dimension and its configuration dimension". (Ibid., p. 279) Therefore the dialectics of sense is, according to Ricoeur, a dialectics between the sequential logic and the configurational logic.

2. All narrative works have their own reference. The structuralists, who lead their analysis only within the limit of the linguistic signs, can not help but stay on the level of sense and neglect totally the level of reference. Ricoeur's existential interpretation consists first in reintegrating the narrative in discourse and in looking at it as a kind of communication. By thus doing, the narrator, his act of narration, and the receiver are rediscovered. Philosophically speaking, this is the reaffirmation of Being-in-the-world and Being-together as the ontological conditions of any narrative work. Secondly, Ricoeur reintegrates the narrating activity into the historicity of human existence, and establishes the mutual relation of narrativity and historicity.

3. After the rediscovery of the narrator and his historicity, we could have a new light to look at the structural explanation of narrative. From now on, what is interesting in the narrative logic or in the structural law is not the structure or the law itself, but its relationship to human historicity. Here we touch upon the problem of the constraint and the freedom of human action. Human action has its constraints in that it must follow certain structural norms and is to be integrated into a system of co-actions. Human action is free in that it has the last word to say in the process of taking the decision before the alternatives and thereby creates an original interpretation of the system. The interaction of these two sides of human action is best illustrated by the meaning of narrative. First, the narrative has some definite constraints in its proper structure. It's by this reason that the narrative works have a sense. Second, the narrator is free in choosing among the alternatives, in giving his proper interpretation of the system,in order to create a world of his own. For example, in the case of Propp's formalist analysis, the constraints are: the order of functions; the obligation to define the characters according to their role in the whole narrative work; finally the obligation to begin and to finish the narrative in terms of the initial situation. On the other hand, the narrator is free to omit some functions, to realize each function by variable means, to diversify the characters, and finally to change the style of narration. Just as our historicity in general, the narrative is composed of determinism and freedom.

Man is free, but with constraints. Man is also determined, but he still has freedom. This interplay of freedom with determinism in our historicity is best

explained by one of the greatest modern philosophers, A. N. Whitehead, who says: "The concrescence of each individual actual entity is internally determined and is externally free . . . that in each concrescence whatever is determinable is determined, but that there is always a remainder for the decision of the subject-superject of that concrescence . . . This final decision is the reaction of the unity of the whole to its own internal determination. This reaction is the final modification of emotion, appreciation, and purpose. But the decision of the whole arises out of the determination of the parts, so as to be strictly relevant to it". (Whitehead 1978, pp. 27-28) I think this interplay between the determinism and the freedom of human existence is the best lesson we could have learnt from the above discussion on the dialectical relation of the structural explanation and the existential interpretation in narrative works.

NOTES

1. In *On the Way to Language* (Heidegger 1971), Heidegger has distinguished his hermeneutical approach in *Sein und Zeit* from his later development. See the included article: *A dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer*.
2. Cf. G. Frege, *On Sense and Reference*, trans. Max Black, in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, Peter Geach and Max Black(eds.) Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1970.
3. Cf. Benveniste, *Les niveaux de l'analyse linguistique* in Benveniste 1966. Ricoeur thinks that the words belong to the domain of semiology, and the sentences to that of semantics.
4. Cf. V. Propp, *Morphology of the folktale*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1958.
5. Cf. Greimas, 1966, pp. 172-221; Greimas, 1970, pp. 157-230.
6. Cf. Levi-Strauss, 1958, ch. xi
7. Cf. Roland Barthes, *Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits*, in *Communication*, n° 8, 1966.
8. "Tradition" is a very important concept in Gadamer's hermeneutics, cf. Gadamer, 1960, 1963, 1967.
9. Cf. Aristotle, *De Poetica*, (1924).

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