

A Topology of the Self : Text and Author in Paul Ricoeur

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Abstract: In order to respond to the question of the authorship, it is of interest to consider the conceptual relation of the author with the subjectivity for which the self has its place. How to place the self in the universe? As a fact, there is of no doubt a place of man in this universe. But how to determine its place arouses profound considerations. For Paul Ricoeur, who is attentive to the context of the metaphysics of the subjectivity, the facticity of the self is articulated in a repetitive questioning of the self. The self, origin of the subjectivity, is constantly constituted on several occasions. Having an ontological root, the self-identity continues the hermeneutical detour in the confrontation with the conflict of interpretations, keeps a mimetic trace of narration, is conducted in the mediation between ethics and morals, and finally finds a folded and unfolded recognition. We try to sketch the complicity of the problem of the self, which serves as a clue to understand the Ricoeurian motivation of hermeneutics. With the self, we are led to catch the self-understanding in the interpretation, which opens and enlarges the circle and manifests to itself a central interest of the existence. This hermeneutical move replaces the author function in an ontological level.

Key Terms: Author, Orientation, Other, Place, Spacing, Self

The problem of authorship overarches many different categories: proper name, anonymity, pseudonym mask, self-expression, signature, creativity, authenticity, and so on. The effect of the problem is not only confined in literature and arts, but also in jurisprudence and politics. Instead of finding out “who is the author?” a profound

skepticism takes place in asking “is there an author?” while excluding the case of collective work. In fact, this problem meets a radical challenge in the formula of Roland Barthes’ essay ‘The Death of the Author’ (1968). Barthes’ interest arises from his absorption of modern semiotics. The author, in its linguistic function, represents only a role in response to the question “who is speaking?”¹ Correlatively, writing is designated as being performative, and text is assimilated to “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash.”² In following the same direction, Michel Foucault extends the concept of author function to a juridical and political dimension. Foucault’s detailed analysis suspends the identification of the producer with the author by installing a space for “several selves” and positing “a series of specific and complex operations.”³ Almost fifty years later, when we reopen the debate, what do we assume to estimate the impact of this problem?

Our approach is philosophical. In considering the linguistic turn cast over the problem of authorship, a philosophical reflection may testify the destructive effect of the death of author and dig out the opponent, if not hostile, attitude toward a traditional concept of subjectivity implied in the authorship. Barthes himself, in “Authors and Writers” (1960), evoked the idea that “The author performs a function, the writer an activity” by ending with a paradox for language, “the institutionalization of subjectivity.”⁴ Foucault, in his last work *The Use of Pleasure*, includes the concepts of subjection (assujettissement)⁵ and subjectivation⁶ within subjectivity. What Foucault qualified as “a hermeneutics of the self”⁷ was rendered as “the Hermeneutics of the Subject” serving as a title for his lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982. In this

¹ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text*, tr. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p.142. *Œuvres complètes. Tome 2* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), p.491.

² Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” p.146. *Œuvres complètes. Tome 2*, pp.493-494.

³ Michel Foucault, *Essential Works. Vol.2*, ed. James Faubion (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p.216. *Dits et écrits, Tome 1 : 1954-1988* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p.804.

⁴ Roland Barthes, “Authors and Writers,” in *Critical Essays*, tr. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), p.150. *Œuvres complètes. Tome 1* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), p.1282.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, tr. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p.27. *L’usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p.34.

⁶ Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, p.32; *L’usage des plaisirs*, p.39.

⁷ Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, p.6; *L’usage des plaisirs*, p.12.

context, one can understand how a philosophical observation emerges from the problem of authorship and shifts to the original relation with the self (one may doubt if there is an origin?). The authorship can be seen as a radical questioning about the status of subjectivity in contemporary investigation on the reflexivity of human creation, be it literary or artistic.

Taking these questionings as clues, we try to approach the problem in the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, by borrowing the path of Paul Ricoeur's reflections. Our reason to choose Ricoeur as the access to the problem is not because that he answers the question directly but that he deepens the problem by his confrontation with the challenge from semiotics and structuralism. The problem of author opens a scope for the hermeneutics and also requires a reformulation for the concept of subject in the processes of self-understanding. Where is the place of an author for the work? This question corresponds to ask where does an author put himself or herself while writing a work? Does the voice of the author vanish entirely in the work or can it have certain echo in whatever form, although highly probably distorted or even turned opposite? The problem of author is related to the inscription of the otherness in the consideration, in forming the subjectivity. The risk of this investigation comes with the inclusion of the difference and the diversity in the concept of the subjectivity. Maybe there is a chance of modifying the concept of subjectivity implied in the authorship in the light of the relation with the self.

I. Framework of hermeneutical circle as problematic

Going back to the remote sources in history, in ancient Greece, a Delphic axiom "Know thyself" (gnothi seauton) determines the Socratic dialogue inherited by Plato. In ancient China, the self in contrast to the other is a touchstone of Confucian ethics, "To subdue one's self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue (*ren*, benevolence)," "Is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?"⁸ With the same

⁸ James Legge (tr.), *Confucian Analects*, in *The Chinese Classics. Vol. 1 containing Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1893), p.250 (Bk.XII, Ch.1).

emphasis, Confucius also said that “In ancient times, men learned with a view to their own improvement. Now-a-days, men learn with a view to the approbation of others” (Bk.XIV, Ch.25, p.285). Different from the Socratic “knowing thyself,” Confucius had advice that “I am not concerned that I am not known (by others), I seek to be worthy to be known” (Bk.IV, Ch.14, p.189) or “I will not be afflicted at men’s not knowing me; I will be afflicted that I do not know men.” (Bk.I, Ch.16, p.145) Nevertheless the discrepancy between oneself and the other reveals the moral selfhood in the communitarian interaction. The common ground of “care of oneself” in both Greek and Chinese contexts indicates the distinct orientation from the external world to the self. In both cases, can Socrates or Confucius be attributed as an author? By coincidence, both philosophers open a curious sphere for thinking about authorship. Socrates never left any manuscripts, so his “works,” his discourses and behaviors, are only conserved by Plato and Aristophanes. Similarly even though there are legends about the works written by Confucius, he saw himself not as a maker (inventor, in the sense of authorship) but as a transmitter. Other than writing in the modern sense, the ancient philosophers focused on speaking: to speak is to act. More concretely, the speaking happens in a dialogue in a community.

From the modern problem of author-work relationship, one may go back to another question: the question of reader. Authors and readers form a certain community. There arises an ontological question about the status common to authors and readers as mutually related and situated in their own world. Within the community, in regard to the relation of a human being with the world, a question is important: How to place the self in the universe? On the level of the ontic facticity, there is of no doubt a place of man in this universe. A fact stated ever since Archytas and confirmed by Aristotle, “to be is to be somewhere,” evokes the questioning of Max Scheler and Martin Heidegger. For Paul Ricoeur, who is attentive to the context of the metaphysics of the subjectivity, this facticity is articulated in a repetition of the question of the self. The place of the self, rather than a positioning in an ontological geography, involves an act of ontological understanding. The self, as the origin of the subjectivity, is constantly constituted on several occasions in Modern times and especially in Ricoeur’s works. Having an ontological root, the self-identity continues the hermeneutical detour in the confrontation with the conflict of interpretations, keeps a mimetic trace of narration, is conducted in the mediation between ethics and morality and finally finds a folded and unfolded

recognition. We try to sketch the complicity of the problem of the self, which serves as a clue to understand the Ricoeurian motivation of hermeneutics. With the self, we are led to catch the self-understanding in the interpretation, which opens and enlarges the circle and manifests to itself a central interest of the existence.

The place of the self is somewhat relevant for the discussion on the hermeneutical circle by using the metaphor of touching,⁹ since the limit of interpretation (particularly self-interpretation) is rather put in doubt under the model of touching oneself. To think again about the place of self in a hermeneutical perspective is to engage oneself in measuring the distance of the self with self, to ask about the possibility of appropriation.

The self, as a key term for Ricoeur to evaluate the concept of subjectivity in Heidegger, presupposes a reflexive relation. There is a doubling of direction: going out and turning back. The self not only presupposes a state of being “in itself,” but also that of being “for itself.” The double presuppositions here, before getting into a dialectics, must be examined by the tentative to maintain the “self” in a stable state. To stabilize oneself is in advance to keep oneself at home. Taking a sentence from a French phenomenologist Henri Maldiney, “To dwell, it is being at home (Heim), and the orientation is even the condition of being at home.”¹⁰ One might ask if appropriation in hermeneutics means a way of keep oneself at home. This question repeats the doubt of hermeneutical circle. One of the motivations to attribute a topology of self is to describe the place of the self in regard to the unsteadiness, the discomfort, in short, the threat of being not at home (unheimlich/unheimisch).

The situation becomes more urgent in the era of modernity. Modernity is described very often as alienation, i.e. being robbed of one’s own identity and, metaphorically, of one’s own home or mother land. In the same token, the orientation is used to give a fixed point to indicate where the home could be. Charles Taylor, in observing the self in moral space, sees in the identity crisis an acute form of disorientation.¹¹ The status of being in

⁹ Kuan-Min Huang, “Migrating Texts: a Hermeneutical Perspective,” in *Migrating Texts and Traditions*, ed. William Sweet (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2012), pp.305-320.

¹⁰ Henri Maldiney, “Topos-Logos-Aisthesis,” in Chris Younès, Philippe Nys, Michel Mangematin (dir.), *Le sens du lieu* (Bruxelle: OUSIA, 1996), p.22.

¹¹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.27.

moral space is to know questions “about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary.” (p.28) Taylor consciously indicates the reference of identity to its framework: “to speak of orientation is to presuppose a space-analogue within which one finds one’s way. To understand our predicament in terms of finding or losing orientation in moral space is to take the space which our frameworks seek to define as ontologically basic.” (p.29) What the framework decides is the formation of questions and the finding of answers. The selfhood, in relation to the identity framework, lies in Taylor’s belief that “we cannot do without some orientation to the good, that we each essentially are where we stand on this.” (p.33) Taylor’s analysis, despite his constant reference to Western traditions, connects the moral space and orientation to the end, to a moral teleology. The Aristotelian model finds the echo in Taylor as well as in Ricœur. The same metaphor is used by Kant in his *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?* (1786) in which Kant asserts the privilege of healthy reason over faith.¹² Extending the sense of orientation from geographical, through mathematical, to logical usage, Kant states the right of reason’s need (das Recht des Bedürfnisses der Vernunft, 8:137; p.6) as “a subjective ground” for “orienting itself in thinking” in a space (ex. suprasensible) “filled with dark night.” (ibid.) Similar darkness seen in Taylor’s view refers to the modern ideology of inwardness – “unexplored and dark interiors.” (p.111) There is apparently a contrary orientation in evading this darkness in Kant and Taylor; for the former philosopher of Enlightenment the supersensible faith is the source of darkness, while for the latter (who is counter to Enlightenment) the individual judgment urged by the mere reason is a phenomenon of disorientation, of being lost in darkness. The problem lies not in this apparent opposition, but in the assumed reflexive language in Kantian “orienting itself” (sich einrichten). The metaphorical terms “moral space”, “moral topography” offered by Taylor indicate an original concern. Instead of limiting the consideration on the boundary of the moral, one should explore the ontological significance of the self together with the pair of “losing oneself” and “orienting oneself.”

One basic observation of Taylor is significant: the orientation is relative to the

¹² Kant, *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?*, in Allen Wood and Gero di Giovanni (ed.), *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.4 (8:134).

framework; the place where the self is situated is relevant to itself. Guided by this clue, the concept of the self will not be steady, constant, and invariable. How can one describe the structure of this fundamental variability of self? One can see in Ricoeur's course of philosophical life an inner effort to answer to this structure, as Henry Isaac Venema has sketched a philosophy of selfhood¹³ through a presentation of the different stages of Ricoeur's works. I would not follow the temporal order to access the problem in order not to repeat what Venema and other scholars have done. Keeping in mind the temporal variation in the conceptual formation of the self in Ricoeur, I will try to draw out some traits of the dynamics of the self. The guideline goes back to the question if the reflexivity of the self is isomorphic with the hermeneutical circle. In relation to this framework, it is possible to indicate a presupposition for the hermeneutical orientation: toward a self-understanding. Inversely, to understand well oneself is to put oneself in an enlarged circle by various dialectical mediations.

II. Eccentric journey of the self

Starting from a Cartesian heritage, the self comes from a reflexive form: self-consciousness. To affirm the existence of an author will be to approach tentatively the intention and more profoundly, to ascertain the self-consciousness of the author. The early work *Freedom and Nature* (*Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, 1950), written under the influence of Jean Nabert and the motivation to extend the phenomenological method, has invoked the central concern of volition and freedom. Ricoeur designates the notion of the project by discovering the intentionality of the decision. His contention in the "capability for doing (pouvoir-faire)" refers back to the possibility of the self: "I am my own capability for doing." In this context, he finds an imputation of the self in the decision; to decide is to decide *myself* (make up my decision, se décider).¹⁴ This discovery of the self

¹³ Henry Isaac Venema, *Identifying Selfhood* (New York: SUNY, 2000), p.8, p.124. Venema argues that Ricoeur collapses selfhood into identity, p.9, p.130.

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* (Paris: Aubier, 1950), p.54 (VINV); Erazim Kohak (tr.), *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p.55 (NF).

in my decision is implied in a reflexive judgment “it is I who...,” in tight connection to the notion of responsibility. The reflexive form in semantic expression (French *se* in *se décider* and *moi* in *c’est moi...*) is initiated from an interior dialectic between the projecting subject and the projected myself (VINV, 58/FN, 60). Ricoeur observes that there is “an action on oneself (une action sur soi)” (VINV, 59/FN, 61) which carries out the self-consciousness. He asserts further that “Self-consciousness is the decisive moment of taking hold of myself which opens up a high vision of freedom: in a flash of light, the alienation is suspended” (ibid.). The dialectical process stated here is about the act of self-consciousness which repeats or produces the self. The ‘taking hold of oneself (reprise sur soi)’ is a repetition as a counter part to the self-affirmation; from self to self, the repeated self accumulates the existential and conscious intensity in its reflexive form.

By way of this analysis of self-consciousness, Ricoeur repeats a linkage of idealism. Vladimir Jankélévitch designates the “Odyssey of consciousness” in late Schelling who affirms in his youth that the Alpha and Omega of philosophy is freedom. Schelling likewise asserts that the whole of philosophy is the history of self-consciousness.¹⁵ The break that Ricoeur makes with the transcendental idealism lies in two aspects: he denies a Hegelian position despite his adoption of dialectical model and criticizes Husserlian way by absorbing the existential phenomenology of Heidegger.¹⁶ There is in fact a split in the consciousness for Ricoeur: not only due to the inner opposition between the subjective pole and the objective pole, but also belonging to the separation of the concrete consciousness from the transcendental consciousness. The latter position is rather rooted in Jean Nabert whose influences can be found in Ricoeur’s analysis of fault (VINV, 30/FN, 28).

The deviation from the philosophy of consciousness lies in the combination of phenomenology and hermeneutics. The criticism of the idealistic version of Husserlian phenomenology is present in four points: (1) the ultimate foundation of scientific knowledge is replaced by the hermeneutical experience of finitude under the relation of belonging; (2) the principle of intuition is mediated by interpretation; (3) the transcendental Ego (meditating ego in self-consciousness) meets its doubt lanced by

¹⁵ F. W. J. Schelling, *System der Transzendentalen Idealismus*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Band 3 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856), 331.

¹⁶ Cf. Venema, *Ibid.*, pp.25-26.

the hermeneutics of communication; and (4) the intention of an author is shifted to the meaning of a text.¹⁷ In regard to the place of the self, it is important to remark on the deviance from the ego. This deviance is methodic in the sense that Ricoeur operates a graft of hermeneutics onto phenomenology of which the effect is the detour.¹⁸ The contrast of direct holding in intuition with the linguistic detour of understanding confirms the considerations of Ricoeur. The detour does not end with the three levels—semantics, reflection, and existence—inserted to finish the graft. The hermeneutical detour happens with symbol, metaphor, narration, and text, including the dialogues with psychoanalysis, structuralism, biblical studies, critics of ideology, and analytical tradition.

The hermeneutic arc to integrate explanation and understanding (TA, 155/121), discussed under a general model for interpretation, is in fact a demonstration of praxis and application. Working through the theories of metaphor across different disciplines and schools shows a Ricoeurian arc of extending the power of metaphor. Meanwhile the core model remains the determinations given in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Phrase semantics, sentence semantics, semiotics are all put under the same ambitious arc of metaphor. Ricoeur himself goes into the hermeneutical self. He "interprets" all the divergent and sometimes opposite tendencies so that he finds a way out to appropriate himself among those contradictions. The dialectics of the self and the other is repeated in every step of the hermeneutic arc. As long as there is the other, there could emerge a new type of the self. In one sense, the self is already on its way to be, but in another sense, this self is always on the way of encountering the others. The self is understood in this way as imputed by various versions of reading. Even in the *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur also offers different stages and types of identity; from speaking subject to agent, articulated through narrative, moral norm, and practical wisdom, the self is under constant variation.

The variation, which can not be possible without a hermeneutic imagination, tells the story of displacement of the self. If the central problem for the self to be is to find a

¹⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Du texte à l'action* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), pp.44-54 (TA); Kathleen Blamey (tr.), *From Text to Action* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), pp.29-37.

¹⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Le conflit des interprétations* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p.10 (CI); Don Ihde (tr.), *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p.6.

place to locate, the displacement predestines the self to be nowhere (*atopos*).¹⁹ But the status of *atopos* is somewhat intended. The self in hermeneutic viewpoint is methodically urged to leave a previous position. It is more or less drawn into the dynamic arc. The eccentric journey belayed on the self meets more precisely the existential model. The self is meant to be ecstatic as it *ek-sists*. Under the title “ontology of understanding” established by Heidegger, Ricoeur enlarges the hermeneutical circle by adding a detour in which existence is the final moment. The memory to restore the ontological status is immanent in the structure. The forgotten being links the self to an ontological interpretation. But Ricoeur emphasizes the question of *who* in the concept of *Dasein*. The Cartesian ego is far from being the authentic ego, the existential ego. Only the *Dasein*, revealed in the light of question of being, has a self-reference (CI, 228/230). The ontological difference produces an inner distancing: “*Dasein* is ontically the closest to itself, but ontologically farthest. (...) A retrieval of the *cogito* is possible only as a regressive movement beginning with the whole phenomenon of ‘being-in-the-world’ and turned toward the question of the *who* of that being-in-the-world.” (CI, 229/231) Ricoeur infers by adding the distinction between the self hidden in *Dasein* and the “they” (*l’on*, *das Man*) that here lies the kernel reason why phenomenology is a hermeneutics. Through the detour on equalizing the other with the anonymous and inauthentic self, the regressive movement reaches at “the authenticity of the *who*,” at the finitude in face with death (CI, 230/232).

The existential moment in hermeneutical phenomenology demonstrates a necessity of the detour to save the self from the forgetting of Being. The importance of the recollection as gathering, i.e. the connection of *logos* (*legein*) to language, given by the *Da* of *Dasein* in parallel with the word (*mot*, naming) will be an occasion to get to the restatement (*reprise*, *répétition*; CI, 231/233). This existential moment serves as a leverage or Euclidean point to return to the authentic self. By the same token, Ricoeur provides a reading of psychoanalysis in the perspective of reflective philosophy. The lesson of Freudian topography presupposes a dialectical principle—“the self [*le moi*] must be lost in order to find the ‘I’ [*le je*]” (CI, 24/20)—, so that “the most archaic

¹⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), p.27, p.347 (SA); Kathleen Blamey (tr.), *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.16, p.299 (OA).

significations are organized in a 'place' of meaning (un « lieu » du sens) that is separated from the place where immediate consciousness reigns" (ibid.). Through the hermeneutic mediation in deciphering the true meaning rendered by psychoanalysis, the self remains a being-interpreted (être-interprété; CI, 25/21). The archaeology of subject requires that regressive movement to find out what is "behind itself that the cogito discovers." Ricoeur opposes nonetheless a teleology of the subject (adapting Hegel's phenomenology of Spirit) to that archaeology of the subject, it is necessary for existence to arrive at "expression, at meaning, and at reflection," namely at the works of culture, so that existence can become a self "human and adult." (CI, 26/22) But this self is forced by a teleological desire toward the sacred: "by understanding himself in and through the signs of the sacred, man performs the most radical abandonment of himself." (Ibid.) Again the score of the sacred given by the phenomenology of religion pushed the self to discover its uneasiness, its displacement. The hermeneutical finitude finds its limit in face of the Alpha (archaic) and the Omega (telos, sacred). The finitude, essential to the human freedom, finally approves "the dependence of the self upon existence." (CI, 26/23) The self, together with the truncated (brisée) ontology, in his confrontation with the rival interpretations, is always in a place of displacement. Being interpreted, the self is that very hermeneutic arc.

The phenomenological foundation constitutes one essential pole for Ricoeur to absorb the contribution of structuralist semiotics and semantics. Hermeneutics provides a dialectical synthesis of the consciousness and the structure toward a better understanding. Counter Barthes's proposition "it is language which speaks, not the author," Ricoeur replies that "Language does not speak, people do"²⁰ without reducing the semantic analysis to mere psychological intention of author. The scope goes beyond the sphere of discourse by including the investigation of writing and arrives at a dynamic concept of the text. Just in parallel with the triangle writer-work-reader, Ricoeur proposes a triangular structure of discourse-writing-text through which a dialectics of event and meaning takes place. The distanciation²¹ happens also on the writing of the author: "The text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text means now

²⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p.13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.25.

matters more than the author meant when he writes it.”²² The text presupposes the existence of the reader (just as the message is for the hearer) who engages an after-life or a temporality of refiguration, as the *Mimesis III* will develop the effect of space of reverberation for narrative imagination. But the distanciation does not release the self in the eccentric journey from an attachment to the world. There are still other references than auto-reference of the writing. In this sense, the text is more eccentric than the writing but is more centripetal toward the understanding of the self. The text invites the reader to join the dialogue (TA, 112/84), to enter a new world be it real or fictive. To understand oneself is by way of the mediation of the text. The ontology of the text is complementary to the hermeneutics of the self (applied to the author and the reader).

Besides the ontological reason, there is a temporal necessity for the self to well distinguish the previous and the latter. We will offer another observation in this topic.

III. Spacing of the Self in time

It is worthy thinking if one takes the debate of Ricoeur-Foucault in the third volume of *Time and Narrative*. Obviously Ricoeur disagrees with Foucault on the idea of rupture in the formation of history. He continues the idea of effective history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) given by Gadamer.

Despite this appearance, time is eventually structured in a threefold mimesis, i.e. prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration. The problem of the self in relation to time seems to unveil the reciprocity of inner structuration of self and time. Unlike Husserl who catches the temporal constitution of time in consciousness, Ricoeur situates time in the frame of outer objective time (Aristotle) and inner subjective time (Augustine) to justify a third layer: a narrative time. A hermeneutical circle of temporality appears in the dialectics of the mimesis mediations. Guided by the dialectics of *idem* and *ipse*, Ricoeur explains in *Oneself as Another* the extension of narrative identity. The author not only writes the text along with the temporal axis by organizing the discursive instances, but also the reader receives the message in compiling another temporal order. The narrative

²² *Ibid.*, p.30.

identity is required on the level of the person who is active in writing or reading. If the author can occupy the place of the first person in a sentence, the narrator speaks then in a tense of third person. But what about the second person “you” in the dialogue? The real condition of possibility of the world of communication is the process of recontextualizing through the path of decontextualizing. The text itself does not escape the triple mimesis in so far as it opens the narrative mediation. For this purpose, some requirements are revealed to insert the text in the world of praxis.

A first clue, which leads Ricoeur to affirm his distinction between two types of identity—sameness and selfhood—is the permanence in time (SA, 140/OA, 116). His contribution to the debate in the history of philosophy is neither to continue the refutations against the personal identity since Locke, Hume, and Kant, nor to defend a metaphysical substance, but to lend a conceptual distinction to restore the essential problem of *who* in this debate. Having discarded the identity as sameness presupposed in the traditional discourses on the personal identity, he wonders if “the selfhood of the self implies a form of permanence in time which is not reducible to the determination of a substratum, not even in the relational sense which Kant assigns to the category of substance” (SA, 143/OA, 118). After the description of two poles of personal identity (character and keeping one’s word), Ricoeur engages himself in replying to the attacks of Derek Parfit on the beliefs of personal identity. The main issue is the impersonal description of event to which Ricoeur replies with the insistence on the mineness (*mienneté*²³; SA, 158/OA, 132). Against the indecidability theses of Parfit, Ricoeur continues his critics on Parfit’s standing point of sameness. Ricoeur’s suspicion rests on the case of memory as psychic event: can one “define mnemonic continuity without any reference to mine, yours, his or hers”? can one get rid of “the trait of belonging to me—in short, of ‘one’s own’ (proper; SA, 159/OA, 133)? He only takes Parfit’s puzzling cases as imaginary cases. But after all the imaginative variations, he requests a core content belonging to someone. In the case of brain teletransportation, Ricoeur claims that the imaginary experiences, “seems irrefutable, namely the temporality, not of the voyage, but of the teletransported voyager” (SA, 163 / OA, 136). Here it is not the content of an event, but the *who* of event, is at issue. Ricoeur’s answer to Parfit’s “Identity is not what

²³ Cf. Heidegger’s *Jemeinigkeit*, see also SA, 212/OA, 180.

matters” is “to whom the things matter.” (SA, 165 / OA, 137) Notwithstanding the confusion of sameness with selfhood, this confusion as crisis is still “constitutive of selfhood.” (ibid.) The personal identity discussed here is far from being a substance or a belief crashed under the concept of event, it concerns the relationship of mineness, in brief, an ontological relationship articulated in narrative network. This articulation conveys an inner connection of temporality and selfhood. In this sense, the self reveals itself in a temporal relation. Now the question is whether at a second level this relation to mineness persists in time. It should be considered in the traits of narrativity.

A second clue, meant to resolve the problem of narrativity, is to give the temporality a principle to organize event and person in a narrative operation. Along with the dialectics provided in the triple mimesis, the narrative identity repeats the dialectics of sameness and selfhood at a higher level. How is the temporal principle capable of resolving the problem of personal identity? In Ricoeur’s words, it is rather a transformation of personal identity into the narrative identity. He likewise modifies the concept of event by enlarging the concept of emplotment (*mise en intrigue*). Thus an event does not only take place in the timeline, but also in the organization of timelines. The multiplicities immanent in the temporality call forth again “the space of imaginative variations,” of that which are expressed as diversity, variability, discontinuity, instability (SA, 168/OA, 140). Under the emplotment, there is a dynamic competition between “a demand for concordance and the admission of discordance,” for which the configuration gives a schema for the composition. Even a contingency can be transformed into a necessity for the sake of narrative reason.

The decisive step, as Ricoeur argues, is the passage “from the action to the character.” Action and character are two factors of the emplotment that arranges the events. In this sense, again, an impersonal event makes no sense in the eyes of storytelling. Ricoeur insists that, different from a paradigmatic viewpoint, the responses to the questions “who?” “what?” “why?” constitute “a chain that is none other than the story chain” (SA, 174/OA, 146) from a syntagmatic viewpoint. As event and character are organized in an emplotment, the selfhood is ultimately inserted in a narrative action: “Telling a story is saying who did what and how, by spreading out in time the connection between these various viewpoints.” (ibid.) By doing so, the character is also recognized in the chain of time; there is “a dialectic internal to the character” (SA, 175/OA, 147) in

which the concordant-discordant synthesis again explicates the complexity of the character. The “dialectic of discordant concordance belonging to character” coincides with the dialectic of the sameness and the ipseity of self-constancy under the condition of permanence in time (*maintien de soi*; SA, 176/OA, 148). The reinscription of one circle into another circle seems to be a repetition of the general hermeneutic circle. In the center of these circles lies the invariant core of identity. The literary fiction functions as a laboratory for thought experiments, similar to the imaginative variations. Narration offers in fact a test with a strong tension between the identifiable character and the loss of identity (SA, 176-177/OA, 148-149). For Ricoeur, even the loss of identity can count as a modality of identity, for it can be “interpreted as exposing selfhood by taking away the support of sameness.” (SA, 178/OA, 149) By dropping off the sameness, the character in a story unveils an invariant, i.e. the existential mediation between the self and the world. The fiction lies under “the constraint of the corporal and terrestrial condition” (*Ibid.*). This means that even the radical case as the loss of identity of a character in a story is bound to this world, to this mundane temporality.

Inversely the character is also arranged in the actions of story (fiction or history). Ricoeur follows again the Aristotelian definition of mimesis of action (*mimêsis praxêôs*, *Poetics*, 1450a) by inserting three types of dialectics in regard to action (inaction), life, and happiness (or misery) (SA, 181/OA, 152). The discourse shifts to the dialectic of praxis and narrative. The key role of character invokes the relations with others in one’s own actions or passions (passive actions) or even non-actions. The characters can be agents and patients (SA, 186/OA, 157) at the same time. The actions or practices refer to “life plans” rearranged in the time chain of a story or a history. Different and fragmentary practices are integrated in a “narrative unity of life.” (an expression of McIntyre, cf. SA, 187-188/OA, 157-158) In so doing, Ricoeur tries to conduct the narrative identity to a “good life” on the ethical level. The narrative function stated here confirms again the fiction as laboratory for thought experiments. After numerous imaginative variations, the mimesis of action arrives at a “more dialectical comprehension of appropriation.” (SA, 191/OA, 161-162) As a self is in face with others, with its own finitude, it lives in an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience (*expérience vive*, SA, 191/OA, 162). As my story is mingled with that of others, there is an unknown fragment of my life deposited in the memory of someone else or some other people. An open field, either

before my birth or after my death, is integrated in this huge narrative in which I am just a coauthor and never a dominant author. The unity rendered by the narration extends the “actual experience” to the past and to the future. As the configuration mediates the prefiguration and the refiguration in *Time and Narrative*, the past is linked to the future in order to constitute a virtual unity of experience. The death, experienced virtually in the fiction, is assimilated to “mourning for oneself,” to the Being-toward-death. The mediation culminates in teaching “how to articulate narratively retrospection and prospection.” (SA, 193/OA, 163)

It is remarkable that in the eyes of Ricoeur the mediating function offered by narration is to save life from its radical fragmentation and to restore its connection (with the world and within life itself). The narrative mediation, which accomplishes the multiple types of dialectic, weaves the different clues to form the unity of the self. Even Ricoeur discards the propensity toward the sameness in order to conserve the selfhood, he admits however the unity of life for the self by confronting the oppositions and the raptures in the formation of the self. Diversity, variability, discontinuity, instability, loss of identity, desolation, mourning, all lead to a form of disappropriation, which is ready for further appropriation. Ricoeur dares go to the opposite side of the course of self-recognition to say “oneself as another” (SA, 226, 378/OA, 194, 327) in face with the radical alterity required by Levinas. The dissymmetry between “the other as oneself” and “oneself as an other” leaves a space for Ricoeur to render possible the reappropriation (SA, 360/OA, 311). But the process of appropriation, disappropriation, and reappropriation does not end in restoring a simple mineness for me, it reveals an irreplaceable Self. The accusative mode of the self (SA, 221/OA, 189)—“it’s me here!” or “here I am!” (me voice!²⁴; SA, 389/OA, 338)—, solicited by the injunction from the other, is conducted by Ricoeur to discover the self in the mode of testimony. Despite the exteriority (which is most similar to an eccentric self) and the substitution as hostage of the other, Ricoeur asks “But who testifies, if not the Self, distinguished henceforth from the I by virtue of the idea of the assignment of responsibility?” (SA, 392/OA, 340) Contrary to the intention of Levinas, Ricoeur asserts for his own part that testimony is

²⁴ Emanuel Levinas cites the expression in Isaiah, 6:8 of Bible, in *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence* (Le Haye: Nijhoff, 1974), p.180.

“the mode of truth of this auto-exhibition of the Self, the inverse of the certainty of the ego.” (ibid.) Turned into an accusative mode, the reappropriation of the self has its place. In this way, the alterity abides the ethical injunction to save the self from the risk of “another self” (hétéros autos, autre soi; SA, 217/OA, 185) in Aristotelian discussion on the friendship. There is a double consequence: the necessity of ethical orientation and the confirmation of the self. I will leave the ethical issue to the next section and spend some more time on the place of the self in this context.

Dialectic of idem and ipse means an amplification of the identity within itself. There is a qualitative intensification of the self, a repetition in difference in Deleuze’s term. For Ricoeur the self is deeply temporal despite his attention on the spatiality of the flesh (SA, 376/OA, 325). Though he appraises the great discovery of Husserl’s distinction between flesh and body (Leib/Körper), he recognizes in him the authentic spatiality in the worldiness. The flesh belongs to the life-world instead of being described by an objective and geographical coordination. Also in Heidegger, Ricoeur finds that the temporality “prevented an authentic phenomenology of spatiality—and along with it, an ontology of the flesh.” (SA, 379/OA, 328) The hermeneutically mediated spatiality of the flesh resides on the subjectivity of “I can” to which Ricoeur attributes a phenomenology of the “Capable Human Being.”²⁵ The “I can” from Maine de Biran to Husserl is ontologically rooted in Aristotelian concept of the pair potentiality-actuality (dunamis-énergéia) or praxis and in Spinozist conatus (SA, 352, 365/OA, 303, 315). Concerning the practical embodiment, the capacity sends back to someone invariant in all these actions. The imputability and the act of keeping promise are likely put in the same kernel of the selfhood. Time and again the self stays at the center of all these variations of the active and passive capacities. The self is every time repeated in a different way to restore. In contrast to the eccentric journey, the self is intensified in its risk of alienation.

Similar to the formula in psychoanalysis stating that “the self must be lost in order to find the ‘I’,” the risk of fragmentation turns out to be a chance to confirm the status of the self. As the hermeneutic arc holds explanation and understanding to form a dynamics of interpretation, it is also for the self to survive from the diverse challenges. Or it’s better to

²⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Parcours de la reconnaissance* (Paris: Stock, 2004), p.137; David Pellauer (tr.), *The Course of Recognition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), p.89.

say that the closer the threat of fragmentation looms, the more the demand for identity strengthens. The more alienated the self finds itself to be, the more apparently the core will unveil.

IV. Being-toward and orientation

Following the above discussion, we find that not only the temporality profoundly curves the traits of the self, the locality or spatiality distends the self in a way to restore it. It seems that this self is first of all a being thrown in a labyrinth of meaning, in search for its redemption in the interpretative actions. The intention of the author can be also qualified as the element for the construction of meaning. What the author intends to mean matters as well as what the reader understands in placing himself or herself in the world of the text. Whenever the reader is lost in the world of the text, there is a possibility to innovate a different world based on a better understanding. In this sense, the author is also significantly and better understood, even though the authority often shifts from its original place. Along with the Being-in-the-world proposed, a hermeneutical version under the influence of dialectics will begin with a Being-lost-in-the-world. There is the world, a world that makes sense for those who try to locate their own bodies. Ricoeur inherits the attitude shared by both Husserl and Heidegger and insists on a distinction between the authenticity and the natural attitude. So far as Husserl opposes the authentic spatiality of the flesh to the natural location of objective bodies, Heidegger searches an authentic temporality to discard the objectively measurable timescale and chronology. By reappropriating Aristotelian poetics of emplotment (*muthos*) and time, Ricoeur indicates an achronic motive of the poetic logics and sees in it “the resistance of narrative temporality to simple chronology.”²⁶ The self is withstanding along with the resistance. Through the resistance, a core can not be destroyed and is assigned as the self.

Seen in the dialectical model, the discovery of the self takes place in the high tension of opposite poles held by the arc. More precisely one can be attentive to the space left

²⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit, II* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), p.75; Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (tr.), *Time and Narrative, II* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), p.47.

open between the restoration of the self and the search for the self.

The self is tightly linked to an ethical requirement: good life. The reorganization of storytelling and the responsibility are complementary to each other. The inner voice initiates a quasi dialogue of question and answer: "Who am I?" and "Here I am!" (SA, 197/OA, 167) In the question, there is presupposed an end for this question and to stop the question. Suddenly the answer jumps the dubious stages to confirm a standing point, a here for me ("it is me here" is equal to "me voici"). The reflexive form of the I, i.e. the self, responds to the injunction of others, of the Other, of other people (autrui in the sense of Levinas). By the response the self recognizes his or her own responsibility. It is as if the ethical demand is not imposed directly but only gets its effect through a detour, through a reverse movement.

The expression "ethical aim" (*visée éthique*) implies immanent ends which are central to Aristotle. The emphasis of Ricoeur on Aristotelian ethics is similarly a reappropriation of the teleological view. A good life is not a description but rather an aim. Ethical behalf belongs to a permanent search for the excellence. Ricoeur not only follows the path of Gadamer in elevating the importance of practical wisdom (*phronêsis*), he also reveals the work of human life as a praxis having an end in itself. By adding the narrative aspect, he invokes a term "life plan". Ricoeur claims, "In the relation between practices and life plan the secret of the nesting of finalities, one side the other, is to be found." (SA, 178/OA, 209) It is because "all action tends toward an ultimate end". More exactly speaking, the life is profoundly "being-toward..." If we take this view to look at the chapter "What Ontology in View?" (*Vers quelle ontologie?*) there is a certain suspension hidden under the question mark.

This status of suspension leads to another dimension for justifying the "better" understanding. There is in fact no objective and exterior standard for claiming certain interpretations better than some others. The implicit teleology functions as the necessity of refuting the neutrality. A very neutral interpretation, without any bias, could be the worst interpretation, in so far as the interpreter is lost in the *ad infinitum* vicious circle. More metaphorically, the self is separated from the circle and rejected out from the dialogue. In short, this is the absolute isolation.

The recognition of the self does not escape this potential suspension. Recognition is alike the narrative time (*le temps raconté*) conditioned by the refiguration (*Mimesis III*).

The self thus recognized seems to be an after-effect of temporalization in so far as the self is exposed to time and structured in time. The ethical injunction puts the self in a structure of question-answer. From question to answer, the time span may encounter some suspension. Despite this suspension, the dialogue of the one and the other is inscribed in the narrative time. The narrativity of mimesis modifies the self to come (in a repeated present) so that the self can fulfill the condition of self-maintaining, self-constancy. This means that, however the story is told, the self remains where it should be located. Without waiting for the actual answer, the responding self is already included in the structure of question. The self is a being toward an end. But this very being has urged the self as an end. Paradoxically the self-alienation arrives at the self-foundation. To use a French mode of expression "future anterior (future antérieur)"—"the self will have been recognized (le soi aura été reconnu)," the recognition that is predestined to happen in later time is required at the first moment. Not only the past will be retrieved in the future, but also the future is inscribed in the past. The place of the self is thus located in a suspension between the orientation and the recognition. If the self in time is dynamic, in a process of becoming, it is not just an integration of fragmentary durations or instantaneous segments. The self is a constant reprise. A recognized self is anterior to the cognitive I. The authentic place for the self is the tissue made in and of the world. As a self is ontologically world-related, there will be no world without the recognition of the self. The reprise of the self assigns an orientation for every Being-in-the-world. The dialectical and dynamic process creates a space for the reprise. The self is that enigmatic moment of recognition in spite of all fragmentations. With all conditions of "life plan," "narrative unity of life," and "good life," we wonder if that enigmatic moment is life itself—life reaching the self, the self becoming life—.

A reprise through the time in a dialogical structure has a different mode of responsibility. To answer to what the author said or is assumed to have said, is to assume the responsibility of correcting the path in search for the meaning. If the author has the power of initiating forward a series of locutions, the authorship can not abolish the responsibility in pair with the authority. If the death of the author relinquishes in a certain sense this authority and releases a sphere of impersonal speaking, the location of the self requires backward a dialectical reconstruction in and for the community. Along with this ethical correction, there emerge the inter-temporality, the inter-spatiality, the

inter-personality, and the inter-world. The recognition of the subjectivity of the author takes place in a way to bind it to a communal mutual recognition, not only in a present tense but also in a future tense. To put it radically, even in every past moment there is an irruption for future instance. The anticipation of the author finds its realization in the memory of the reader. There is no isolated life of the author but only some indefinite reverberation left for the community to come.

Conclusion

We have tried to approach the topology of the self in three aspects, eccentric journey, narrative spacing, and oriented suspension. The place of the self lies in a constant requirement of recognition. This recognition precedes the cognition, in a dialectical and dialogical sense. To assert the self in a double aspect (ipse and other), is to affirm an immanent implacement of suspension for the self to live. Ricoeur's hermeneutics identifies this inner distancing in numerous ways, through symbol, myth, metaphor, story, and text. The hermeneutic arc couples with the distancing: to reveal the self, one must have a distance for and of the self. Relative to the text, the self is discursive, i.e. the self is structured as discourse. To write the self, there must be a space for writing. The self written is not an objective self for a cognition, but an accusative mode for a recognition. The autobiography²⁷ is thus a writing to extend the span of the self as life. There will be no one specific place for the self. The self lies nowhere. Whenever the self is suspended, it reappears to respond to the injunction from other people.

On the other hand, the self constitutes the core of the hermeneutical circle. The circle varies according to the situations, applying the power of dialectics. But the core remains untouched. The circle actualizes the complementarity of explanation and understanding. Once a dynamics of interpretation is lanced, the self inserts a spacing to hold the variations. Due to this operation, the nowhere of the self corresponds to the imaginative constitution. The self is involved in the process, in the course, as a creative

²⁷ Cf. Georges Gusdorf, *Auto-bio-graphie* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1991).

nothing, a being otherwise than being.

Seen in this perspective by introducing the distanciation inscribed in the hermeneutical circle, the authorship has to do with a certain concept of the self. The status of the self lying nowhere may help to regard the author also as an empty case in which diverse operations play with multiple selves. In fact, the ontology of the authorship is rather transformed.

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自我的場所論：呂格爾思想中的文本與作者

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內容摘要：考量作者的問題時，也有必要考慮到作者與主體性之間的概念關連，根據這樣的關聯，自我才有其場所。如何在世界中給自己定位呢？當然，事實上在世上有其地位，但究竟如何給予定位則激起諸多的深刻思慮。對呂格爾來說，自我的事實性是在對自我的反覆追問中所勾勒出來的。自我（主體性的根源）是恆常地被構成出來的。在存有論的根柢上，自我的同一性在面對著詮釋的諸種衝突時，延續著詮釋學的迂迴，維持著敘事的模擬痕跡，也被引導到倫理與道德之間的中介，最後則是發現到一種經過摺疊、打開摺疊的認可過程。本文試著刻劃自我問題的複雜性，並以此問題當作理解呂格爾詮釋學的動機，從而聯繫到作者問題的再思考。根據自我，我們才把握到詮釋之中的自我理解，這種自我理解打開而且擴大了詮釋學循環，也對自己展示出存在的一種主要關切。這樣的詮釋學舉動重新將作者的功能置於存有論的平面上。

關鍵詞：作者、定向、他者、場所、挪出空間、自我