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## THE LANGUAGE OF TESTIMONY

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### ABSTRACT

Ricoeur explored the moral and ethical stance on the commissive and promissive linguistic philosophy. The fulcrum of his argumentation is on attestation as the mode of being of ipseity wherein the self exists as an attestation of the veracity of being. It exposes the kinship between testimony and attestation, the semantics of testimony as well as doing and attestation.

For Aristotle “to be authentic” and “to be inauthentic” were among the original meanings of being. “To be true” and “to be false” are modes of being. It becomes attestation and suspicion (OAA, 299). This leads us back again to the debate between episteme and doxa.

In Ricoeur’s vocabulary, there exists a knowledge of things in between the exigent and immutable (episteme) and arbitrary (doxa). Practical reason rests in this median zone of a sobered reason that is unconcealed to argumentation and criticism. What epistemological status does Ricoeur engage to this sobered reason?

He claims that the speaker of a language and the agent of action both professes and affirms commitment to the real that lead them beyond themselves. This is what Ricoeur calls the “ontological vehemence” of the speaker or the agent. The speaker and the agent make an asseveration not only about reality and about the world of action but also a mode of existence of the self. This mode of existence of the self Ricoeur calls “attestation (OAA, 22).”

**KEYWORDS:** Language, Testimony, Attestation, Commissive, Promissive

### INTRODUCTION

I’d been following Ricoeur’s general thesis: “Identity in the sense of ipse implies no assertion concerning some unchanging core of the personality. And this will be true, even when selfhood adds its own peculiar modalities of identity, as will be seen in the analysis of promising.”

Ricoeur mentioned a lot about reflections, maxims, praxis etc. But he is silent concerning practical liturgical praxis. So, I decided to adopt Ricoeur’s viewpoint up to the tenth study of his book “Oneself as Another” and adjunct my very own formulated simple thesis that is exigent to improve my relationship with God.

*My thesis is:* In such a disoriented existence is a life in search of a story, in need of reception, in need of justice and in need of healing. In telling the story of the suffering

God, we find it possible if not imperative to tell our own stories of pain and reconciliation. Through practical liturgical praxis, it is possible for us to name God and to truly bestow the language of testimony. We are transformed by an encounter with human others and their story telling.

What is **practical liturgical praxis** I am alluding to? This requires surrendering our speech, words, thoughts, actions and deeds to God, practical, concrete and narrative with the Liturgy and the Sacraments as the very core. It is a kind of onto-theology or practical theology, praxeology, pastoral theology and liberation theology. Living a truthful life requires more than simply correlating words and reality, matching our words against what we consider to be the facts. It requires, in addition, a judgment concerning the fittingness, appropriateness or fidelity

of our actual discourse to the situation at hand. In short, telling the truth is coextensive with moral discernment and both demand a life of integrity and ethical wholeness. We shall come back to this discussion later.

## A. MODES OF BEING

### The Ontology of the Human Person

In his book "Essays on Actions and Events" Davidson<sup>1</sup> advances the thesis that events envelope actions since actions have been categorized as a subset of events are primitive entities. Events are authentic realities because of the statements alluding to them. Hence, actions are similar to substances, with this variance, the logical form of action sentences is somewhere between "substance" (fixed entity) and "event" (transitory entity) (OAA, 83).

At the ontological aspect this recognizes actions as events and leads to an ontology of actions as events, that is, of actions as "something," as being on the plane of substance. This has resulted as for the unexpressed agent of action in analytic philosophy. In reality, persons in Strawson's context are more on the plane of substance; insofar as it is to them that action-event occur.

In theological exposition of the sentence "Pierre struck a blow," what is concerned is the verb "to strike" is uttered of both Pierre and the blow. The blow is in the perspective of a specific event. Pierre is in the perspective of substance, not so much as a person different from material things but as bearer of the event. (OAA, 83).

Such fading away or distinctness of the person, the self, in the mass of events is not suitable. The logical form of action sentences exhibits that actions are events. These actions are amenable to varied representations, they must be motives. They are individuated. Some form of qualitative identity exists between two actions. All the proofs allude to actions containing essential reality. This means that an ontology of events as a primitive entity has logical efficacy. Does this include those actions that we recognized above as promissives and commissives? Here the load moves from action as events to action as agent driven. The ontological query must move to the agent.

Ricoeur structured a context of the self. Action can indeed be regarded in two planes: as past and therefore, noticeable action, which engenders actions to become like entities, likened to events, and as future, not yet existing, speculated actions which are not like entities.

Who or what is this self mediated of human action? The self, for Ricoeur, is not synonymous with the "I." The self that is mediated by action becomes most evident in the reflexive indefinite form

of the predicate (e.g., to manage oneself). It is imprecise before it becomes the self in the personal pronouns (myself). It is not an equilibrium of the solipsistic self or the ego.

Ricoeur construed *the self as a mediated self*. Its argument is an unceasing course wherein the self meets explication of the self in the human and social sciences and all the disciplines and narratives that examines and depicts the diversity of the human self. This dialectic of explication and construing is perfected by a dialectic, on one plane, of the self as *idem* (human identity as being the same) and the self as *ipse* (human identity as not-yet, as *ipseity* or the "pondered word"), and, on another plane, of the self and the other. The dialectic of sameness and *ipseity* enables Ricoeur to represent the same division of the self-happening in action.

The identity of the self is composed between "*sameness*" (*idem*) and "*ipseity*" (*ipse*). Ricoeur envisages this dialectic through narratives. He construed this dialectic as an imitation of action and the Aristotelian context of generative reality. This is *the main thesis of Ricoeur: Narratives configures temporality not only of actions but also of the characters, the agents inscribed in the text. In the unfolding of the characters, narratives reckon for existence as temporal. Self-Identity is a temporal course. The temporal course attributed in narratives exhibits this self-identity as a dialectic course. In the narrative, there is an interaction of a self that sustains an identity of permanency (a self remains the same, hence "sameness"), with a self that, on another plane, projects itself into the future and commits itself to conversion and transformation (a self that is not yet but becomes an "ipseity").*

The human self comprised this dialectic of sameness and *ipseity*. The self unfolds in a course, on one side, of actions that have "sedimented" themselves in human character. Here the self exhibits a logical coherence and a permanency. The self is evident to have a substantive identity, which bears what can be recognized again and again as being the same.

On another plane, the human person is not solely an impenetrable self. He undergoes initiatives and recreates something to occur which encloses itself as strangeness. He projects into the future through promises and commitments. This phase is what Ricoeur calls *ipseity*.

The self is determined to remain committed, faithful and truthful to a proffered word. The firmness of the self is a forestalled action. In such projected actions, the identity is not substantive but a course of becoming. In narratives, this identity is constituted by the plot. In *peripeteia* i.e., change of

fortune, the self as *idem* meets expedient occasions or turning point. The character's position to reply with new innovations committing him to new potentialities, the self is exhibited as being more than unflinching steadfastness. It becomes other without defeating personal identity, that is, it becomes itself without in some way remaining the same. The self is a dialectic "of sameness" and "*ipseity*." Such dialectic pits "sameness" for it can be recognized again and again; visibly as something substantive, as an entity with "*ipseity*" which is projective and grounded on the "pondered work."

The narrative action expands the personal identity of the agent beyond the inner dialectic of the self. Narrative action presents that the human identity or the self does not composed even more efficaciously the eclipse of the other in the narrative. Action is, interaction, and simultaneously undertakes action. Action and passion, which is actions undertaken or suffered, are not disengageable, for every action is at the same time an efficacy "over." Human agency influences the other, so that the efficacy to act is "grafted upon the initial dissymmetry between that which one does and that which is done to the other. Ricoeur comments, "Every action has its agents and its patients."

An adjunct of the dimension of the other with its passive constitution for both self and the other must be observed in the twofold ontology of the self-delineated above. Ricoeur's scheme of this passivity is a threefold experience discussed previously: the experience of one's body which mediates between the self and the world; the experience of the intersubjective other for whom I experience an ethical accountability; and the experience of conscience as an engagement of our evocation of our debt to the dead.

To what sort of ontology does this conception of the self takes us and what repercussions do these certain upon the potentiality of a scientific approximation to action? Here, I will discuss the ontological concern. I have discussed previously its epistemological potentialities.

Based on the above contention, ontology was indispensable to permit practical philosophy to incorporate together into an analogous integration the diverse discourses on human action. What sort of ontology under girds the parts of discourse that Ricoeur has incorporated concerning human identity? If the ontology of the self is configured out of these diverse discourses on action, traditional metaphysics is out of the question, which is too firmly grounded in being as substance or presence. It demands a context of being that is, in fragment, non-substantialist. Solely the self as sameness is evidently substantial. Where does Ricoeur discover such an ontology?

Amazingly, in an intensified Aristotelian practical philosophy discussed previously, Ricoeur, in Aristotelian metaphysics, has discovered unresolved aporias that perhaps be exploited for a non-substantialist action of Being. He clarifies this in Aristotle's manner of action and potency as modes of Being. In Aristotle, these notions are left vague, for action is elucidated through potency. Here, Ricoeur argues on the evident temporality of action and passion. This was exactly the great accomplishment of Heidegger's "Being and Time." This book as Heidegger's rereading of Aristotle achieved in tying temporality to ontology.

Heidegger's *selbst* has become an existential, *Dasein*, a temporal unconcealedness to the world. In the self's projection into the future through initiative the self becomes a particular place for harmonious action with the transitions of the world. This is the rationality behind this ontology discovering its grounds not in substantial being but in being as act and potency.

Hence the task of Ricoeur is to discover how is the self of attestation grounded? He incorporated this to a self in an expedient ontology of action and passion. If the self in dialectical existence is not to be shattered into an irremediable devoidness, it must be grounded ontologically.

Traditional metaphysics fall short of rooting the self for it is too solidly grounded in being as substance or presence. The self in its dialectical configuration of sameness and *ipseity* is only a fragment, at the phase of sameness, a something. Solely as sameness is the self grounded in substantialist being. As *ipseity* the self is not a something but a projection. Hence Ricoeur opt to a non-substantialist context of being. This is not a transposition in Ricoeur's cogitation.

In his earliest endeavors he has sustained that Being must not be permitted to be use up completely by substance and form. Here, he represented being as act, the "living avowal, the efficacy of existing and of making exist."

Ricoeur justified such ontology. He structures this ontology in a way that that is familiar with Ricoeur will identify directly his trademark. In line with his construal of a hermeneutics of historical awareness, he proposes for a dialectic in history of the space of experience and the horizon of anticipation. This dialectic unconceals new potentialities of present initiation.

In rereading the great ontological tradition, potentials of meaning are unexplored and concealed. This can be freed to realize themselves in new situations. Tradition is capable of being creatively revived. Particularly, Ricoeur explored "Aristotle's Metaphysics" albeit the self was left unmentioned in Aristotle's principle of the soul. He

explores Aristotle's construal of *ousia* and the categories for an ontology that is not exclusively substantialist. He discovers it in Aristotle's manner of action and potency as a mode of being.

He observes, however as a vagueness in Aristotle's circular meaning of action by potency. Such are best answered by reading Heidegger's "Being and Time" as a realization of Aristotle's practical philosophy, more specifically of Aristotle's notions of *dynamis/energeia*. For Aristotle, act/potency is represented in terms of *dynamis/energeia* i.e., being at once actual and its possibility.

With his context of Dasein, Heidegger achieved where Aristotle fall short in tying temporality to an ontology. In Heidegger's vastly enriching realization of Aristotle's practical philosophy the self is correlative to Being-in-the-world. In Heidegger, the self can solely be such an unconcealedness if one identifies in initiative a particular harmonious engagement with the transitions of the world and all the physical realms of action

Heidegger is in contrariety to this *selbst* to that which is usable i.e., *Vorhanden*. The self is not a thing. The contradiction of *selbst/vorhanden* is proximate to Ricoeur's dialectic of *ipseity/sameness*. This dialectic to which attestation proffers certainly is ontologically grounded in two distinctive modes of being. Sameness is anchored to an ontology of being as substance. *Ipseity* or selfhood is bridged to the ontology of being as act/potency.

Ricoeur was not influenced by Heidegger all the way. He precludes to the interpretation of Heidegger of Aristotle's being as *dunamis/energeia* as facticity<sup>2</sup> entailing the givenness of reality. For Ricoeur this is not a repletely articulation of Being as *energeia*. He translates Being, as he had done in his earliest endeavors by Spinoza's *Conatus*, which he construes as the desire and endeavor to be, or "the endeavor through which each thing applies itself to persevere in Existence" (OAA, 316).

Spinoza's *Conatus* articulates being as act and potency more lucidly than facticity, because for Spinoza this endeavor to persist in existence is the very essence of a thing. The self is this energy and vitality. This desire and deficiency implied by the very term *conatus*. For Ricoeur, it is attestation that proffers witness to the fruitfulness and fecundity of this ontology of act/potency

Being as act/potency permits Ricoeur to ground the third other and most radical dialectic of the self: the self in enjoying to the other. The other is constitutive for the self. The self cannot be cogitated without the other. In other words, selfhood cannot be thought without alterity, the other in the experience of my body, in the experience of

intersubjective engagement, and in the experience of the indebtedness of existence (conscience).

Beyond becoming, being or self must configure otherness, the dissimilar. Being encloses passivity: all the experience in which the self is interdicted by authority to occupy the location of ground. This is the rational behind why the self is capable of attesting to itself only in a fragmented way because the experiences are disparate i.e., it must identify variance and otherness.

The self must converge at the junction of this other whether as one's own flesh, or as the intersubjective other, or as the "call" of one's own conscience. The self is no longer capable of existing as an imperial self-encompassing supremacy and efficacy. Passivity, like action, is polysemic, for Ricoeur. In this sense Ricoeur's tentative ontology of act/potency explores and discovers to serve as the foundation for attestation and for the self.

## B. THE FRAMEWORK OF ACTION

Ricoeur Explored the permutation of the framework of action into three different units of praxis: *First, practice; second, life plans; lastly, the narrative unity of life*. An enlarged principle of action ought to configure such realms of praxis that are classified sequentially.

The first unit of praxis is known as "practices" wherein the network of supplementary actions is exercised by constitutional rules that are effective in professions, arts and games. These engagements are known as "nesting engagements" for they are not linear; instead they entail the intricacy of the framework of supplementary actions such as the profession of a medical doctor, a lawyer or the basketball game.

These actions yield significance by the context of configured rules assevering the given action or shift comprises meaning and consequences solely in the notion of the profession or game. Such rules exercised the meaning of the specific gestures, declaring, for example, that transposing or a homerun hit in baseball comprises a movement or that a promise is in congruence and accepting such accountability to ponder one's word. Such a broadening of action principle locates action into a social milieu.

These practices are meaningful and conceivable solely in a pragmatic social context that is in engagement with others even when they are solitary practices. Simultaneously, the situating of action into these widened intricacies such as professions and games manifests that acting and enjoying can also become an acting. You are undertaking action. It appears that action is proximately allied with passion or suffering.

The second unit of praxis is known as Life plans. It is an elevated form of action. This terminology is employed by Ricoeur when he alludes to the great extent of practical components. It offers action as proximately allied with passion or suffering. Ricoeur's centrality on the life plans is a shift between answered ideals wherein we explore to actualize thou as our life present.

Ricoeur cited Alisdair MacIntyre's perspective on the third unit of practice known as "the narrative unity." Ricoeur contains a degree of difficulty because of the dissimilarities as well as similarity between a literary because of the dissimilarities as well as similarities between a literary component and real life. It offers the narrative to be an "non constant mingling of fabulation and realized experience." (OAA, 162).

The task of collating together onto a unified real genesis that encompasses our initiative with a speculation of a finality of the process of our action. Such narrative integration of life is the most extensive notion for a principle of action.

In such a context, for Ricoeur, action is transformed to be usable for exposition and explicatory procedures, not solely in the form of action sentences but also in terms of practices with their roles for construing, as well as in terms of the more illusive life plans, but specifically the intelligibility of narrative compositions.

The above extension of the domain of action, Ricoeur persisted that action is similar to a lingual text i.e., several languages. This engenders action critically investigated on a way that a literary text or narrative is examined and explored. Action is likened to "readability characters," that is, action is transformed to an event that leaves traces or imprints such as in documents, monuments, process of events, history, institutions, great endeavors of culture, components of rules of behavior, tradition etc.

The above contention is only one side of the sphere of meaningful human action. It does not reckon the projective character of human life which Ricoeur perceives first, for a narrative integration of a "good life." So as at the projective impact, action as configuring human life has an ethical coloration and should be examined by ethics, politics, and the resources of practical wisdom.

Insofar as narratives and literary tradition is effective as "immense laboratory for thought experiments" and "imaginative variations" of human life. Explications of action sequences at this aspect are patterned in accord to lingual texts. Similar to grammar in language, actions are rule exercised. The incentive of social action is through symbols and values that articulates public features of desirability, and is codified in the cultural network of symbolic

mediations that generate models of interactive meanings.

These systematized rules grant a readability disposition upon these action intervals that consent them to transform to communicable and accessible commitment to writing. In this context, action is transformed to a shift into a cultural context. Actions penetrate into the public sphere and become accessible to description (e.g., ethnology) and to practical reason, construed in an adaptation of Aristotelian meaning as pondered desire. Practical reason replete the task here as an arbiter between an asserting polarities of desirability. In this context of logical consistency is exercised by practical rationality.

This leads us to ask: Is there a potentiality engaging this practical rationality unifying empirical logical consistency? As a response, Ricoeur recognizes the patterns of practical logical consistency after the scientific pattern as the Kantian error. "Few visions today are as salubrious as liberative or the thought of a practical rationality but not as a science of practice." Practical logical coherence is effective in the organization of altering things where universal norms must consider human desire and freedom. It is located between logic and alogic and is treated with the plausible and probable.

Solely a scientific pattern that reckons the probable and the plausible can be regarded as respectful of the domain of practical logical coherence. There is also the learning of disengaging action from specific persons, recognizable through personal pronouns, to abstractions such as the state as a hypostatized entity. Action is left personal and any scientific approximation to action will have to defend singularity.

### ***Hermeneutics of Self***

Levinas explores the second focus of our ellipse: the indispensable task that attestation performs in the definitive statement of a hermeneutics of the self, a program that Ricoeur defines in Oneself as Another.

There is an engagement to the semantic proximity of the German terms *Überzeugung* (conviction) and *Bezeugung* (attestation). It rests on the radical task of this context of "attestation." This task is immediately assimilated to the position that the hermeneutics of the self presupposes in the face of the philosophies of the subject.

Conscious of the unaccountable oscillations that these philosophies proffer, torn between the Cartesian *cogito* with its radical assertion (the exalted subject) and the Nietzschean anti-*cogito* (the degraded subject), it is located at an equidistance from the apology of the *cogito* and from its defeat (OAA 4/15).

This equidistance is not a precise midpoint between two opposites of mean. The hermeneutics of the self is discovered to be at an equidistance for it has been left behind these two contradictory perspectives and wells an epistemic and ontological location assigned beyond this option (OAA 16/27).

Attestation portrays a conclusive task both in the epistemic designation and in the ontological description of this setting. Concerning the epistemic plane, it is generative to highlight brief observations engaging to the style and the method adopted. The radical description of the endeavor is a rivalry between analytic philosophy and hermeneutics, which represents a diverse face in each of the ten studies. Evidently, the incipience to rivalry is affirmatively transformed into commendable articulation or appreciation.

In this transformation, the procurements from phenomenology portray special task, which is hard to examine. Whereas the meeting between hermeneutics and analytical philosophy lucidly situates the foreground of the scene, the reader slowly realizes that a certain phenomenology endeavoring behind the author from its incipience, eventually explodes in an untimely and amazing manner. This realm is insignificant. We should be concerned of attestation deduced from phenomenology and the region of contextual exposition, viz., the semantic domain of acting.

The second plane of the exposition is envisioned as a fragmentary chain of studies, containing its own autonomy and the essence composing the unconcealed exploration of the purely analogical incorporation of the domain of human acting (OAA 20/32).

Such variability can solely oppose the breath of a fundamental ground which typify the philosophies of the *cogito*, albeit this does not discover its articulation in the generation of a process of knowledge apprehended in the way of speculative idealism. It is the entire casting off of the assertion to ground the sort of certitude, which typifies it, which fixes the boundaries of the epistemic derivability of the hermeneutics of the self. It is a concern of stating the meaning of a new sort of certitude.

In this context, attestation draws near in and, before even becoming a concoction of special inquiry, defines in Ricoeur's vision the *alethic or veritative* mode, which typify his entire exploration. From this account, attestation describes exactly the kind of certitude that hermeneutics holds between epistemic exaltation of the cogito commencing with Descartes and its degrading genesis with Nietzsche.

In the first phenomenological plane, first, attestation entails an instance of belief, which is less demanding than the certitude belonging to the fundamental ground (OAA 21/33). Such belief

entails evading the classical contradiction of doxal episteme. Belief is here construed as credence and not opinion. The engagement that exists between attestation and testimony albeit not identical (OAA 22/34) can now be construed.

Infirmity concerns assertion to the established ground, fragmentation and historical contingency of questioning, "vulnerability of a discourse conscious of its own deficiency of ground (OAA 22/34). These are varied realms which offer that attestation typify the "wounded *cogito*" is not *cogito* smashed by the weight of a relentless suspicion. The credence, which typifies attestation, is also the confidence, which contends with suspicion, hence engendering an "attestation of the self" out of attestation.

In unguaranteed credence and confidence, any suspicion, the hermeneutics of the self can argue to assert itself at an equi-distance from the *cogito* exalted by Descartes and from the *cogito* that Nietzsche declared forfeit (OAA 23/35).

Ricoeur's reader can strengthened the guarantee, the confidence of the author which is articulated in his lines and which stirs up the reader to count on him, whereas conjoining that if this occurs it is because of attestation. This presence of attestation is located in the efficacy of uttering, of doing, of identifying oneself as a character in a narrative, and of presupposing ethical accountability.

### C. Onto-Theology

In "Oneself as Another," Ricoeur furnished us a reconstruction or refiguration of the ontological foundation of human selfhood and action which gives us a comprehension of theology as practical. There are recent approximations to theology that is expedient to the practical. For instance, the offshoot of theology called "practical" or "pastoral" theology, Liberation theology and *Metz's political theology*. Johannes Metz of Latin America is best known for introducing the concept of "political theology." I.e., a theology, which relates theory and practice, measuring all reality in the light of the promised kingdom of God.

In Metz's propositions, he suggests three functions of a practical theology, which correspond proximately to Ricoeur's traits of a practical philosophy. Metz explores the justification of the primacy of praxis, the assertion of the human subject as primarily non private, non transcendental bearer of accountability for action, and the insertion to the fore of a temporal dimension by calling forth a narrative theology of the perilous remembrance of the suffering of the historically subdued.

What I am proposing is that Ricoeur's practical philosophy could share a generative consequence to a more profound practical theology.

A practical theology along these lines will be hermeneutics, self or identity-oriented, and narrative.

### 1. Theological Hermeneutics as Practical Theology

The reception of metaphysics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century corresponds to the acknowledgment given to the goal of onto-theology. Such theology yielded scientific advancement through a confidence upon the analogy of meaning. Kierkegaard and Heidegger in the 20<sup>th</sup> century persisted that theology ought to desist from its desire for conceptual serenity and revert to ensue the “factual” experience of life.

Heidegger visualizes theology in terms of factual life operating at the sphere of performance. It unconceals the framework for the most generative theology. Such performative construction is explorative in the bible i.e., on prophetic oracles and texts. The goal of the narrative is to configure action, which is relative to intertextual dialogue with the non-narrative approximations to the naming of God.

The term “practical” as employed to theology suggests that the primal analogue is action rather than substantive identity or being. Here, there is no duality between practical theology and liberation theology once action is principally designated. In liberation theology, praxis entails primal entanglement or commitment to liberative practices, to doing than cogitating. Such notion of praxis is conceived as the ground of the principle, so that praxis sublate to principles.

Recently, practical theology shifts from an undifferentiated praxis to transformed praxis mediated by principle. Hence, praxis is conceived as being in compulsion with principles. Ricoeur conceives action as a representative that this polarity of contamination gains no vindication. Action is established in a proper ontology demanding no other foundation.

Such viewpoint is evidently intuitive for those clinging to the primacy of praxis, but by declining to establish action in an ontology (may be construed as an ontology of substantive being) they disapproved human action to operate vacuously. A practical theology employing Ricoeur’s practical philosophy would be a new sort of onto-theology, not grounded on the being of substance but on the being of activity and passivity. It entails taking hermeneutics.

The first aspect of such a practical theology is an expansion of the preconceptual configuration of human action into linguistic and symbolic cultural figurations. Such action is meaningful. It construed the substructure of human and Christian living as action. Engaging this to what Ricoeur calls prefiguration of action is relevant for the actualization of the Christian project. Its primal thrust will be performing (not solely ethics).

### 2. Practical Theology and Identity

Ricoeur typify this practical philosophy as a hermeneutics of the self (OAA 15) and exhibits it as operative between the exalted subject of the Cartesian tradition and the shattered subject of Nietzsche and Deconstructionism. Metz’s practical or political theology explores to liberate Christian faith from the individual to a social and historical subject. Ricoeur could influence Metz construal of the human subject through his construal of human selfhood.

Ricoeur grappled the dialectic course of ipseity and sameness wherein the self is recognized in the frailty of the pondered word. Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the self is itself mediated by action. It generates an anchor between the self and personal identity and action.

In Latin America this viewpoint is relevant to resolve its aporetic engagement to classical Christology. Ricoeur’s refined approximation to the human self deepen our construal of the self-formed by fidelity, the pondered word, of God. The self that arises in the hearing of God’s word is the self of faith, and of hope proffered and configured in the promise of God’s fidelity.

The freed self of hope lives in the generosity and graciousness of God. The Christian is a course of self-composition. The self who arises in the worship of God in the Liturgy of the church is a “called subject,” a self-constituted by a prophetic calling. This self is not an isolated self but a self-committing to a convocation within a community or a self in the obedience of faith.

### 3. Practical Theology as Narrative Theology

Through the activity of emplotment, narrative generates human action. For Heidegger, if practical theology is faithful to factual experience, it must be capable of incorporating “constitutional framework as deviating as circumstances meet while unsought agent of actions and those who passively undergo them, accidental compulsions, interactions locating the place of thespians in engaging from compulsion to corroboration, means that we are well attuned to goals and lastly, the consequences that were not willed.

In *Time and Narrative*, narratives are location where the human experience of time is inscribed and accessible. Time is expressed through a narrative path. A practical theology as a narrative theology concerns the temporal constitution of the story of Israel and the Church. In Balthasar’s Theo-dramatics, he deals with the aporia of the goodness and justice of God in liberating men by accenting on the narrative of the cross and the self-giving of the Son (*Proximity and Substitution*).



For Metz, Praxis demands the narrative for the bourgeois subject has lost the memory of the past. The narrative is to revert on to history and to remember another history than that of the absolute and predominating subject. Metz conceives the narratives solely as repleting the practical. Ricoeur construed the narrative more than to simply replete the practical. Its vortex of discussion is the institution of action, a mimesis praxis. This approximation visualizes narratology as an explicatory mediation in the praxis of liberation.

### **The Commissive and Promissive Linguistic Philosophy**

In commissive – promissive linguistic philosophy, it is the “you can reckon on me” of the engagement to do which bounds selfhood with the mutuality for the other established in solicitude. For Ricoeur, not keeping one’s engagement is deceiving both the other’s anticipation and the institution that mediates the reciprocated confidence of uttering subjects.”

Kant, however, falls short to visualize the potentiality of compulsion between reverence for the law and reverence for persons. To elucidate the sort of compulsion and struggle, which is potential, Ricoeur sketches the “end of life” and the “genesis of life.”

In the former case, he sketches the accountability to say the truth to dying persons. Such accountability is affected by a disposition of compassion for certain patients who are infirmed to attests to the truth or those for whom the truth would be a death sentence.

In the latter, Ricoeur commented on the question of *abortion*. Ricoeur’s perspective slighted a bit with Scheler’s and in congruence with Pope John Paul II. On the ground of biological criterion, the embryo is a biological individual from the genesis of conception. Ricoeur focuses then on the query “whether practical wisdom, without totally obliterating this biologic criterion from sight, must not take into account the phenomenon of thresholds and stages that put into question the simple alternative between “person” and “thing (OAA, 270-273).”

Such issue shows an appended length of intricacy by reason of the ontological considerations. The embryo and the human fetus, are they neither things nor persons? Kantian perspective on persons entails ontological implications: rational nature exists as an end in itself. Variably, things as manipulability entails distinct mode of existence.

The variability between modes of beings is disengageable from practice i.e., in treating persons and things. Hence the embryo and the human fetus pose dual character of this ethico-ontological

consideration. It is not only the human embryo in the maternal uterus but the dissociated embryo, conceived in a test tube, placed in a freezer is the most conflictual principle due to the human being and the instrumentalization of this being at the embryonic or fetal stages.

The ethical stance: the embryo’s right to life is a right to a “chance to live.” Hence, it is to solicitude, concerned with the otherness of persons including potential persons that respects allude.

The argument on the status of pre-natal life<sup>44</sup> leads us to ask exhaustibly: what constitutes human person? The start of human life contains various theories and approaches. First, on conception of fertilization. Second, the time of uterine implantation with the ovum is truly individualized so that twinning is no longer possible. Fourth, the appearance of brain waves in the fetus. Lastly, other views such as time of fetal viability, of birth and socialization.

On such ground of biological criteria, Ricoeur believes that the dialectic between sameness and selfhood shuns us away from any simplistic substantialist ontology operative here. In contrariety, personhood is composed only by well-educated and autonomous adults.

Ricoeur declines such view as well as to protect lesser beings i.e., animals or nature with no rights to be respected. Ricoeur believes an “all-or-nothing” perspective, which repudiates phases of development. He avers for a progression of qualitatively diverse rights bound to a progression of biological incipience. Ricoeur suggests “critical solicitude,” where our moral discretions are the consequence of the good counsel of wise and competent human beings.

Ricoeur proceeds to argue on the tensions in the very nucleus of the assertion of morality calling to revert to the most basic insights of ethics. Specifically, there is uninterrupted potentiality and reality of tensions between the universalist vision of the maxims deduced from moral theories and the identification of affirmative value possessed by “the historical and communitarian concepts of the actualization of these same maxims.” The tragedy of action then is irreplaceable unless there is a location for both the universalist principles and the contextualist principles mediated by “the practical wisdom of moral discretion in situation.”

Ricoeur appended on the significance of extending revision to Kantian formalism exhibiting universalist assertions and its tensions with contextualism. Ricoeur informs us of the following revisions in three phases: First, concerning the precedent Kant proffers to the theory of autonomy due to the plurality of individuals and the theory of justice as applied to institutions.

Such autonomy, for Ricoeur, should be located at the final phase and not at the threshold. Second, concerning the boundary Kant employed on the criterion of universalization. Such criterion is very impoverished due to its restriction to non-opposition and repudiates the vision of the coherence of a moral course.

Here, coherence entails that formation is not devoid in the context of the entire chain of moral accountabilities or maxims extrapolated from the single theory demanding respect for others. Such moral accountability is reciprocally coherent and contains no polarities among themselves. These maxims are such that inferior maxims are coherent with superior maxims.

Finally, Kant's formalism rests on the retrospective route of justification whereas the real polarities emerges on the prospective path of deducing conclusive discretions from maxims and maxims from theories, i.e., in the application of universal theories to definite cases. In brief, Ricoeur's intention is to exhibit both the evidences and credentials of the requirement for universalization and the contextual nature of the application of moral maxims.

It is the task of political practice to concern themselves with this compulsions and perplexities. Ricoeur further explores here the significance of the history of these political options. Then, the transposition from the political to sphere of interpersonal engagements, anew duality or compulsions emerges: the otherness (alterite) of individuals is in contradiction to the unitary sphere of the notion of humanity.

There is disengagement between respect for the law and respect for persons. There is again a compulsion between universalism and contextualism. In a purely procedural justice, an ethics of explication can resolve the compulsions. This leads us to ask whether the condition is the same with the theory of respect for persons.

Concerning the debate over the rights of the fetus, Ricoeur accedes to the contextualist delineation but repudiates strenuously to an apology of variance for the sake of variance which, generates are variability's indifferent, to the length that it engenders the argumentation useless. What Ricoeur declines is an ethics of elucidation (describing the requirement for universalization) and not then regard on conditions in constructing the best elucidation, but its attempt at purification. Kant intends to purify all moral elucidations from any sort of propensities, desire, pleasure, happiness etc. Habermas guards his purification to anything conventional to liberate moral elucidations from concerning doing with tradition and authority.

Ricoeur prefers a redefinitive statement of the ethics of elucidation, which anchors and unifies the objection of contextualism with the requirements of universalization. He explores the compulsions explication and convention and replaces a dialectic between explication and conviction.

The expressions that we continually intensifies between deontology and teleology locates its most elevated and most fragile articulation in the cogitative equilibrium between the ethics of explication and regarded convictions. Ricoeur here noticed the sphere of practical wisdom as the dialogic art, in which the ethics of explication is put to the test in the compulsion of convictions.

What is interesting about Ricoeur's moral perspective is that he does not coincide to the classical polarities between a teleological ethics and a nomological morality to employ his conventions as an antinomy. He holds that they are poles in a dialectical engagement; each compensates and complements each other to fill its sense of a moral universe.

A teleological vision of the intention of ethics needs universal moral maxims as an indispensable means, on the other side, the application of these maxims to difficult specific cases appeals for a plea to the fundamental telos of morality.

The dialectic between ethics as the teleological intention of "a good life lived with others in just institutions" and a morality of universal maxims discovers its mediation in "practical wisdom." This wisdom is definitely the application of moral maxims and precepts to specific situations where a compulsion of convictions is tempered by an ethics of elucidation.

In his moral principle, Ricoeur substitutes the "polarity of interpretations" of his hermeneutics with a compulsion of convictions. It is the role of reflective philosophy to adjudicate among the struggling assertions each of which claims that it is absolute.

Concerning the decisive shift in the direction of ethics and morality, it focuses on our cogitations on the promise as a model of what counts as self-constancy. It is difficult, however, to differentiate between the promises as a performative of a certain type, capable of being represented in terms of a theory of speech acts, and the moral obligation to keep one's promises.

I think it is erroneous to say that the indispensability of the promise, insofar as it "binds" the one who pronounces it, as such implies the accountability to keep the promise. An unkept promise remains a promise. The potentiality of deceiving one's word implies a supplementary act that is articulated in the accountability to keep one's word. There is an exigence, therefore, intervening

here at the injunction that incorporate self-respect, respect for the other who depends on me and finally respect for the very institution of language, which rely entirely on the presupposition that everyone “means what he or she says.” In the final exposition, it is the act of actually keeping one’s word that encompasses the actual movement between the “metaphysical” and the “moral” angles of self-permanency.

We must regard the engagement between the personal forms of imputation and moral imputation. In this context, metaphysics has been anchored to morality surmounting over their disconnectedness. The direction of moral neutrality with our representation of conscience, as the form of the self’s colloquy with itself.

The critical study of conscience, which is a Socratic as well as biblical heritage, has as its initial threshold the identification of the demarcation between those things that counts on us and those that do not. We are responsible or liable only for the former. In such relatively neutral setting that the “good” and the “bad” conscience stand out, which it becomes difficult to differentiate from the voice of conscience i.e., *Heidegger’s Gewissen* in “Being and Time.” The Moral Conscience cannot rely very long “beyond good and evil.”

The location of convergence between critical exposition and charging or discharging takes place. Here, moral discretion is discarded from the sphere of its assertion to universality, but rather moral discrete in some definite condition. It is at the phase of practical wisdom, where we desire for a “good life” invests itself in the tragic of profundity of action, beyond the precepts and maxims of morality, conscience is merged with moral imputation.

In this phase, justice is transformed into equity. Deduced on the abstract moral angle, obedience to the role of justice requires, on the one plane, that similar conditions be treated similarly, and on the other plane, that everyone receives his or her due from what can only be unevenly divided.

It is in the sphere of definite circumstances, and what we can designate as “circumstances of conscience,” that equity pronounces what here and now is just. In “*Nichomachean Ethics*” v. 14, Aristotle states that “the reason is that the law is something general and there are cases for which it is not possible to make a general assertion of what rightly applies to them. Such is the nature of the equitable. It is a corrective to the law, there where the law is deficient on its ability to pass judgment because of its generality.

Inward conviction and real equity toward others hence composes the privileged “location” of the actual confluence between the descriptive

dimension of conscience and the prescriptive dimension of moral imputation.

In the final phase of an inquiry that commenced from the angle of the most elevated anticipation applied to the multiple senses of being. It crossed multiple phases of a hermeneutic phenomenology applied to the construction of selfhood. We have identified here three mediating terms between metaphysics and actions: the esteem addressed to the capable human being, the kept promise, and the most inward conviction and is inextricably linked from its altruistic mode, equity.

Ricoeur uses the word “attestation” to describe the level of certitude appropriate to his hermeneutics. It is opposed to the kind of certainty claims of episteme, of science, “taken in the sense of ultimate and self-founding knowledge.” Testimony is required in contested areas where evidence of eyewitnesses or experts is needed to settle a probable state of affairs. At an epistemological level, testimony operates at the level of belief or attestation.

The context in which testimony emerges as an issue in our time comes from philosophies of consciousness. These philosophies presume that, in order to overcome the uncertainty of the knowledge that we have about reality and the skepticism that surrounds us, it is necessary to throw our energies in the search for a solid foundation for human knowledge and human living. Wherever possible the human ego relies on description and empirical validation of hypotheses to attain this certainty. The success of this approach is evidenced in the empirical sciences. It presumes that this type of self-conscious engagement of the world will set us free from illusions, from knowledge based on authority, and from mere opinion. When applied to human living, where empirical approaches must interact with human understanding, the search for a foundation for self-appropriation has focused on human consciousness. Within the Cartesian tradition, the aim has been is to let self-consciousness become the foundation of our relationships with others, the world, and self. The human self becomes then the origin, the beginning. The end goal of human becoming is the coincidence of conscious with the unconscious and from this foundation, it is felt, one can tackle human existence. At this point, I am the source of meaning.

The philosopher of testimony, according to Ricoeur, break this coincidence of the self with the self apart (that is, the self with the conscious self) by pointing to two dimensions of the self, which the philosophers of consciousness (e.g., Husserl) have great difficulty in incorporating. On the one hand these philosophers point out a vertical dimension for the self. Ricoeur uses Levinas’ word “height” to express this. It refers to the self’s relation to

something/someone which transcends the self. This is the experience of otherness within the very experience of the self. These thinkers point to a radical non-coincidence of the self with the self, which is not superseded when my unconscious becomes self-consciousness. The non-coincidence is more radical (Nabert's fault, failure, and in the

deepest sense, unjustifiable evil; Levinas' "the face of the other") and exterior. I cannot encompass the self and ultimately control it. The following diagram highlights the conceptions of "height" and "exteriority" in the three thinkers studied by Ricoeur.

Height		
Heidegger: Gewissen	Nabert: Orinary Affirmation	Levinas: Infinite
Exteriority		
Heidegger: Uncanny	Nabert: Mediation of another consciousness testifying Absolutely to the absolute	Levinas: The other as responsibility for self in extreme passivity of being a hostage to the other

Of the three, according to Ricoeur, only Levinas was able to bring height and exteriority together in a philosophy of testimony. The philosophy, again according to Ricoeur, is an epistemological attempt to link infinity and the other in the constitution of the human self. The other who makes me responsibility, whose face is the injunction, "Thou shall not kill," that is, the conjoining of infinity and the other, cannot lead to a speculative philosophy but only to a practical philosophy. For Levinas a practical philosophy or philosophy of testimony is radically ethical.

**CONCLUSION**

Ricoeur cautioning us against any attempt to set up an epistemological or ontological grounding in the aspects of Descartes or Husserl. Ricoeur suggests an attestation as an aspect of belief and confidence rooted in testimony. The self is not the consequence of some linguistic fallacies or an illusional realm of language as a corrective for French structuralism.

This study concludes on Ricoeur cautioning us also of the danger for false testimony that is a false height to lay its claim. Hence, the need for a Criteriology of the Divine. The image of God is not an essential substantive feature of the human self. It can be lost. This forces us to reexamine the human as image of God and refuse it as an ontological trait and accept it only as an ethical mandate. We must act to restore the divine image to the limits of our power in every situation where it is threatened. Testimony in our time must pass through the testimonies of radical negation.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup>See D. Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980, 3-19

<sup>2</sup>Faktizitat is the earliest term Heidegger employs for an ontology. It articulates the given ness

of reality. In "Being and Time," he employs the term *Befindlichkeit*, the situated ness of being.

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