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The Demand of the Other in Paul Ricœur's Philosophical Hermeneutics

Paul Ricœur (1913–2005) was one of the most acclaimed thinkers of the twentieth century. He figured as a Christian philosopher, prisoner of war, an exceptionally prolific author. His intellectual and academic path comprised multitudinous research areas, namely existentialism, anthropology, phenomenology, philosophical biblical and hermeneutics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of action, language, law, the political, narrative and critical theories.[1] Ricœur is widely recognized as one of the most significant contemporary voices in philosophy of morality and ethics. The following study attempts to tackle the problematic of the demand of the Other in Ricouer's philosophical hermeneutics in the framework of his ethical theory.

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[1] Cf. D. M. Kaplan, *Reading Ricœur*, Albany 2003, p. 1.

In general, Ricœur's idea of ethics ensues from his concept of the narrative coherence of life and the notion of narrative identity. He explicates the call of the Other and the ethics of the relation between the self and the Other mostly in his seminal *Oneself as Another.* For Ricœur, it is the demand of the Other which determines the formation of 'the self,' and the self is molded in a life-long process of experience and interpretation. The ethical question, which becomes central for Ricœur, is an achievement of selfhood. Essentially, selfhood is constituted by our genuine response to the Other. The formation of our self, its worth, depends upon our ability to see ourselves as human beings being called to respond to the Other.[2] Ricœur introduces a rigorous distinction in this respect: for him, the narrative coherence of one's life bespeaks the worthiness of oneself as a subject, and the loss of the coherence would mean a loss of oneself as a commendable self.[3] The major facets of the demand of the Other that Ricœur underscores in his philosophical hermeneutics are the self and call of the suffering Other, the self and the Other in the relationship of friendship, the self as a capable human being, the 'good life' viewed through the prism of the relationship between the self and the Other.

For further analysis of the demand of the Other, it is worthwhile to recur to Ricœur's explication of the difference between ethics and morality. Ricœur explains clearly the distinction between the two notions, stressing their different etymology. The first is of Greek, the second of Latin origin; ethics means that "which is considered to be good" and morality – that "which imposes itself as obligatory."[4] Elaborating on the two terms, he uses ethics for "the aim of an accomplished life and the term *morality* for the articulation of this aim in norms characterized at once by the claim to universality and by an effect of constraint."[5] Ricœur views ethics as "the project of an accomplished life," in its original version

[2] Cf. P. Ricouer, *The Narrative Path: The Later Works of Paul Ricœur*, eds. D. Rasmussen, P. Kemp, Cambridge, MA 1989, p. 96–99.

[3] Cf. P. Ricouer, *The Narrative Path*…, op. cit., p. 99–103.

[4] P. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, transl. K. Blamey, Chicago 1992, p. 170.

[5] P. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, op. cit., p. 170.

"la vise d' une vie accompli."[6] Ethics is preoccupied with the question: "How should I live?," whereas morality belongs to the realm of deontology and is concerned with the query: "What must I do?". Most importantly Ricœur prioritizes ethics over morals, praxis over principle. His preference follows more Aristotle's concept of the good life, rather than the Kantian imperative which comes from the outside.

'Self-Esteem' as an Ethical Aim in Ricœur's Hermeneutics

Following from his reflections upon the narrative coherence of one's life, Ricœur's is the view that our lives have an ethical aim. It is of crucial import to see the intersubjective character of a moral evaluation of our lives which Ricœur proposes. The ethical aim of our lives according to him is self-esteem, and 'self-esteem' means an ability to attest to oneself as a worthy subject, capable of a good life. Our capability is not only a viable possibility, but rather also a true ethical aim of our lives.[7] Ricœur's proposition is wholly reliant on his concept of the narrative coherence of life. It is the narrative of one's life which provides a structure for the selfhood to be realized; the subject whose aim is to live a good life in the world of others.[8] It is mostly 'activity' which is constitutive of selfhood.

The foregrounding of the 'activity' constituent is tantamount to the ethical perspective of the demand of the Other. This demand implies our responsibility for the Other, mutual vulnerability to each other, our being indebted to the Other, and our being dependent on each other. While discussing the ethics of our lives, Ricœur introduces a concept of imputation which expresses the core of his ethical reflection. In his article *Narrative Identity* Ricœur explains this notion as follows:

> Let us call ascription the assignation of an agent to an action. In this way we attest that the action is the possession of the one who did it, that is his or hers, that

[6] P. Ricœur, *Soi-meme comme un autre*, Paris 1990, p. 200.
[7] Cf. J. Wall, *Moral Creativity: Paul Ricœur and the Poetics of Possibility*, Oxford 2005, p. 79–80.
[8] Cf. P. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, op. cit., p. 171–173.

> it belongs to one own self. Onto this act still neutral from a moral point of view, is grafted the act of imputation which takes on an explicitly moral signification, in the sense that it implies accusation, excuse or acquittal, blame or praise, or, in brief an estimation according to 'the good' or 'the just.'[9]

The responsibility for my actions involves an imputation of my deeds. My actions can be imputed to me, and as a result my character can be valued according to the ethical value of my actions.[10] Self-esteem, which, according to Ricœur, is the ethical aim of our lives, takes on a normative value. We are obliged to fulfil duties we possess towards the Other. And from the fulfilment of the moral obligations, our bestowing of respect towards the Other and acting in a just way, arises a genuine formation of 'the self.' As a result, our self-esteem is upheld and serves as a vehicle of an ethical interpretation of our conduct.

The Fundamental Character of Friendship in the Relation Between the Self and the Other

In *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur, proposes the ambience of friendship as that in which the relation between the self and the Other comes to its full realization. He holds that it is the terrain of friendship which demonstrates man's need to search for that which the self lacks. An impossibility of attaining that which we lack on our own necessitates the phenomenon of friendship. The mutual giving and sharing is for Ricœur the exact response of the self to the Other and the Other's response to the self. This, at least hypothetical, reciprocity becomes for Ricouer the fundament for our just 'being' with others: "the 'good life' with and for others, in just institutions."[11] The reciprocal exchange in friendship is for Ricouer one of the most fundamental ways of fulfilling the need for being with the Other.

[9] P. Ricœur, *Narrative Identity,* transl. M. S. Muldoon, "Philosophy Today" 35 (1991: Spring) issue 1, p. 75.

[10] Cf. J. Wall, *Moral Creativity*, op. cit., p. 87–90.

[11] P. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, op. cit., p. 172.

The Self and the Suffering Other as the Pinnacle of Ricœur's Ethics

Although, Ricœur devotes a substantial space in *Oneself as Another* to the explication of the relation of the self to the Other in terms of friendship, he accentuates that the ethical relation originates in the call of the Other who suffers. Contrary to at least the hypothetical equality of giving and receiving, the call of the suffering Other is interwoven with the exertion of benevolence. Benevolence, in Ricœur's understanding of the notion, arises from the fact that we are mortal human beings and thus vulnerable to suffering. Interestingly, Ricouer insists on the paradoxical power which stems from the feeling of weakness and mutual vulnerability. We are capable of giving in that very condition of ours which presupposes our human fragility, and which ultimately makes us aware of the fact that we are mortal.[12] Ricœur bespeaks the truth about the spontaneous action which originates from the feeling of benevolence. Benevolence involves more the recognition of weakness than power. We can display benevolence because we experience our dependence on others, our indebtedness to others; we can display benevolence since we are dependent on each other, prone to be harmed, to be treated unjustly. Ricœur writes: "From the suffering Other there comes a giving that is no longer drawn from the power of acting and existing, but precisely from weakness itself."[13] In this respect, Ricœur's rendition of the demand of the Other, the relation between the self and the Other differs, for instance, from Levinas's elucidation of the relation of 'I' and 'Thou,' which the following excerpt from Levinas illustrates:

> The Face resists possession, resists my powers. In its epiphany, inexpression, the sensible, still graspable, turns into resistance to the grasp. This mutation can occur only by the opening of a new dimension. For the resistance to the grasp is not produced as an unsurmountable resistance, like the hardness of the rock against which

[12] Cf. P. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, op. cit., p. 192.
[13] P. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, op. cit., p. 188–189.

> the effort of the hand comes to naught, like the remoteness of a star in the immensity of space. The expression the face introduces into the world does not defy the feebleness of my powers, but my ability for power.[14]

Levinas highlights the elements of power and resistance in the relation between the self and the Other. He expresses the enfeebled power confronting the Face of the Other, whereas for Ricouer the call of the Other is submerged in the aspect of mutability, which constitutes the common ground for 'being,' for sharing, and for sustaining life. An encounter with the Other for Levinas presupposes some potential dominance of one over the Other, whereas in the Ricœurian understanding an encounter with the Other is imbued with the recognition of mutual vulnerability.

A Capable Human Being and the Notion of Imputation

Ricœur's explication of the demand of the Other rests on the premise of a human as a capable human being. The notion of a capable man is for Ricœur one of the central criteria in determining the true nature and psychological constitution of a human being. Ricœur attempts to show that we can conceive of the self not an illusion, or even as a fragmented illusion, as it is cherished by the postmodern thinkers. Rather, for Ricœur, the self is the center of a capable human being, that is a being capable of acting, suffering, and speaking.[15] If to be human means to act, to engage in the activities which are chosen freely, then responsibility for these activities bespeaks the very core of us as capable human beings. In this context, Ricœur introduces the concept of imputation; the freely chosen activities are imputable to the self. Admittedly, Ricœur's conceptualization of capability is a markedly ample one. It encompasses our bondage to the material world. Human capability is delimited, however, by vulnerability, by an exposition to various forms of alterity. One

[14] E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority*, Dordrecht–Boston–London 1991, p. 197–198.

[15] Cf. J. Carter, *Ricœur on Moral Religion: A Hermeneutics of Ethical Life*, Oxford 2014, p. 9.

of the fundamental capabilities is our relation to the Other, upon whom we are reliant and without whom we wouldn't be able live and also we wouldn't be able to understand ourselves. Our relation to the Other embraces moral responsibility in the face of the Other. This moral accountability constitutes the fundaments of our recognition of ourselves as humans. Most significantly, it is the overarching capability of responding to the Other which expresses our condition as humans.[16]

The response to the Other which ensues form the demand of the Other possesses an irreducible quality. It is the primordial character of the demand of the Other, which so much permeates our lives, that it is a voluntary act of our choosing to perform an activity of benevolence, care, love, or on the contrary: hostility, indifference, violence with all the minute shades of meanings and underpinnings.

Ricœur's Concept of a 'Good life' as the Uttermost Ethical Horizon

Ricœur's study of the relation of the self to the Other in *Oneself as Another* tackles meaningfully, as it was already mentioned, the related concept of a 'good life.' In a thorough study of the place of the notion of the 'good life' in Ricœur's hermeneutics, Eftichis Pirovolakis underlines some important issues. Of major import in Ricœur's hermeneutics, according to Pirovolakis, is the movement between the 'good life' and the vital decisions in life, the movement which goes backwards and forwards; an ideal of the 'good life' triggers off ethical life decisions and one's decisions throughout life proceed toward the ultimately 'good life.' Ricouer sees 'good life' as the space providing a horizon of an unflagging interpretation in three aspects: good life, self and action, self and the Other as interconnected.[17] For Ricœur the good life which has the quality of an

[16] Cf. *Paul Ricœur: Honoring and Continuing the Work*, ed. F. Erfani, New York–Toronto–Plymouth 2011, p. 52–53.

[17] Cf. E. Pirovolakis, *Reading Derrida and Ricœur: Improbable Encounters Between Deconstruction and Hermeneutics*, New York 2010, p. 37.

ideal, its content heading for an infinite and ever altering aim, calls for the constant flow of interpretation and reinterpretation. Crucially, the interpretative process which embraces the interpretation of the meaning of particular actions leads to self-interpretation and in terms of ethics the self-interpretation becomes self-esteem.[18] This is constitutive of the self's ethical relation to the Other. The interpretative process unlocks a capacious space for the evaluation and reevaluation of one's deeds in the light of the ethical demand of the Other. Ricœur unravels the dynamic character of a 'good life' in which the call of the Other remains its central issue. The 'good life' comprises ideals, and dreams of achievements, which in a life meet various degrees of fulfillment. For the French thinker, the notion of the 'good life' caters for the perspective from which all our actions can be viewed and to which all our actions can be directed; though being aims in themselves, particular actions ceaselessly subscribe to the overall project of a 'good life.' Ricœur takes cognizance of the aspect of finality of our deeds inscribed in the total finality of existence.[19]

The significant plane of the 'good life' in Ricœur's elucidation of the relation between the self and the Other is thoroughly discussed in *Ricœur as Another: the Ethics of Subjectivity*. In this book, David Pellauer stresses Ricœur's insistence on the bondage between intentionality and action; his view of "the self's ability to intend to act and to intend oneself in inscribing its actions to itself."[20] The interconnection between intentionality and action is constitutive of the moral structure of man with all the fragility of such constitution. The self is the moral subject to whom the moral deeds can be imputed. For Ricœur a 'good life' is something the self strives for and something to be gained. It propels the process of self-evaluation, in which the self looks back at its actions and reflects on them, as well as the actions reflect on the self, thus shaping the person and shaping the narrative identity of the subject. For Ricœur, the process of self-evaluation is not something isolated or abstract; the self-evaluation is intertwined

[18] Cf. E. Pirovolakis, *Reading Derrida*…, op. cit., p. 99.
[19] Cf. P. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, op. cit., p. 179.
[20] *Ricœur as Another: the Ethics of Subjectivity*, eds. R. A. Cohen, J. L. Marsh, Albany 2002, p. 191.

with the self-evaluation of the Other. The self-esteem is a fundamentally dialectic process; the evaluation is of the self and the evaluation which comes from the Other to the human in question.[21]

As for moral norms, Ricouer finds the ultimate meaning in the self's subjection to moral norms in which respecting norms arises from respecting others. The self-respect gained as result of the obedience to moral norms, as a matter of fact, turns out to be the respect for oneself as another. This involves empathy and kindness. Ricœur uses here the term 'solicitude.' An accountability for one's deeds in to be viewed in the context of a fragment of life, in a present situation, and also in terms of one's responsibility throughout life, in life in its entirety. The demand of the Other, the demand of the right treatment, the call for the just conduct are constitutive of one's moral identity.[22] Ricœur's concept of narrative identity, that is, the identity of *idem* and *ipse,* encompasses the response in the face of the Other in all its immediacy as well as a response which covers a span of time and ultimately the whole life. Ricœur insists that the transition from the Same to the Other implies also the reverse route – the transition of the Other towards the Same. An acceptance of responsibility is of seminal import; it is all at once an attestation of selfhood.

'Attestation,' Time and the Narrative Coherence of Life

The act of accepting responsibility and the act of performing responsibility become acts in which our selfhood attests to itself. One's responsibility for deeds and events lies within the circumscriptions of one's capability and faculty of displaying control. For Ricœur, the demand of the Other is deeply rooted in personal identity. The dialectic character of identity, Ricœur's proposal of the narrative identity, is an illuminating answer to the *aporia* enveloping personal identity. This problem can be formulated in the question: How do we remain the same in the passage of time? Ricœur's answer unravels the most primordial interrelation of

[21] Cf. P. Ricouer, *The Just*, transl. by D. Pellauer, Chicago 2003, p. 4.
[22] Cf. P. Ricouer, *The Just*, op. cit., p. 11–12.

selfhood and otherness, and demonstrates meaningfully how otherness becomes part of selfhood. Selfhood and otherness, as two facets of identity in narrative identity, participate in the molding of ethical identity.

Admittedly, there arises the question if there is any effective possibility of uniting the *prima facie* exclusive sides of personal identity? In the chapter entitled *'Idem' and 'Ipse'. From Narrative Identity to the Ethical Self* of his *Reading Derrida and Ricœur: Improbable Encounters Between Deconstruction and Hermeneutics*, Eftichis Pirovolakis asks the question: "Is there any way of bridging the gulf between the plurality of narrative identity and the singularity of ethical selfhood?"[23] He provides a clear answer: it is the refiguration of the narrative unfold by the human/reader/character which gives an opportunity to mash narrativity and responsibility in ethical terms. He stresses the importance of the refigurative and interpretative processes which become the core of the hermeneutic process according to one of Ricœur's definitions of hermeneutics: "To 'make one's own' what was previously 'foreign' remains the ultimate aim of all hermeneutics. Interpretation in its last stage wants to equalize, to render contemporaneous, to assimilate in the sense of making similar."[24] In this context, Ricœur answers the question regarding the common usage of the word of 'self' instead of 'ego,' and thus he draws attention to the fact that "…all grammatical persons are subject to ascription"[25] and that the import of moral message is conveyed in two ways, by means of two grammatical persons 'I' and 'You.' In particular, it is the first person expressing responsibility for one's actions: "I did it" and the second grammatical person, which takes the form of commandment "You shall not kill."[26] Ricœur's explanation in this respect corresponds with his proposition of the narrative coherence of life which rests on the premise of the dialectics of *idem* and *ipse* narrative identity, as well as the dynamics of

[23] E. Pirovolakis, *Reading Derrida and Ricœur: Improbable Encounters Between Deconstruction and Hermeneutics*, New York 2010, p. 94.

[24] P. Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth 1976.

[25] P. Ricœur, *Narrative Identity*, op. cit., p. 75.

[26] P. Ricœur, *Narrative Identity*, op. cit., p. 75.

configurative, refigurative processes pertaining to the self's search for the meaning and unity of life.

Identity is identifiable while the narrative of a life unfolds and all the dispersed 'stories' comprise the 'self' as a character in the narrative. If according to Ricœur, my identity as my 'self' is to be discovered in the process similar to a discovery of a character in a narrative, and thus it is a hermeneutic process of interpretation, so does my response to the demand of the other undergo a dynamic process of answering, of displaying responsibility not only here and now, but also horizontally, throughout the whole of my life. This is a response, including an impact of the narratives preceding mine, the narratives of my antecedents, and also the influence of the narratives of my contemporaries. The self is called to show responsibility in the face of the Other, but also in this reciprocal process of call and response. It is the 'self' that summons the Other to respond, to be responsible. This reciprocal process entails the transcendence of one's 'self'; the self is capable to see oneself as the Other. And this is interwoven with an exertion of a powerful result – the empathy and concern for the Other. The benevolent gesture of hospitality opens a viable possibility of seeing the wellbeing of Other as one's own good, as the response is saturated with attentiveness and kindness towards the Other for whom I am responsible. Ricœur's ethics tackles the idea of time in relation to the demand of the Other – not only in the context of the time of one's life, but also in the context of the ethical demand of the Other and time understood in terms of the changes in the ethical evaluation which the passage of historical time may impose. What can be viewed as an ethical quandary at present and the realization that it must be resolved may be contrasted with a total obliviousness to the same issue in ethical terms maintained at a different point in history.[27]

The demand of the Other becomes not only the demand of an instantaneous action or a gesture but it is part of prudence. This far-sightedness of the relation between 'I' and the Other takes cognizance of the self's inner capabilities of foreseeing the results of one's actions in the sort and

[27] Cf. P. Ricouer, *The Just*, op. cit., p. 148.

the long run, however, the results cannot be envisaged fully. In this respect, Ricœur's rendition of the call of the Other reminds of Gadamer's elucidation of a true hermeneutic conversation: "The unpredictability of a true conversation lies in allowing oneself 'to be conducted by the subject matter.'"[28] The relation between the self and the Other is not an unrequited, unilateral bond, but it is a relation which necessitates reciprocity, carefulness and discretion. The demand of the Other transgresses the barrier of a difference in 'Weltanschauung;' as a matter of fact, the demand of the Other and the genuine response to the Other cross the potential ideological, religious, personal obstacles, as both the demand of the Other and response are always in search for an effective understanding, an understanding which is in Ricœur's and Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics the most fundamental mode of being-in-the-world.[29]

Ricœur views the answer to the Other as anticipated by the demand of the Other. The Other summons me to respond, and my response happens as a reciprocal event/occurrence or process. The mutual vulnerability of the self and the Other, the sense of indebtedness and responsibility entangle reciprocity. In this respect, Ricœur represents a different view from Emmanuel Levinas's proposal of the relation between the self and the Other. Levinas writes:

> I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it. Reciprocity is his affair. It is precisely insofar as the relation between the Other and me is not reciprocal that I am subjection to the Other; and I am 'subject' essentially in this sense. It is I who support all. The I always has one responsibility more than the others.[30]

Contrary to Levinas's proposal, Ricœur's conceptualization of the demand of the Other includes a presupposition of **the response** to and of

[28] H.-G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, transl. & ed. D. E. Linge, Berkely–Los Angeles 1977, p. 66.

[29] Cf. *Gadamer and Ricœur: Critical Horizons for Contemporary Hermeneutics*, eds. F. J. Mootz III, G. H. Taylor, London–New York 2011, p. 1–2.

[30] E. Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity, Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, transl. Richard A. Cohen, Pittsburgh, PA 1985, p. 99.

the Other. An extensive explication of the differences between Ricœur's and Levinas's approaches to alterity and the demand of the Other, as well as remarks on Ricœur's critique of Levinas, can be found in *Ricœur as Another: the Ethics of Subjectivity*. The central argument of Richard Cohen, a Levinas scholar, presented in the book, is his claim of Ricœur's misunderstanding of Levinas's illumination of the alterity and the passivity of the 'self' responding to alterity.[31] We, however, do not endorse the claim of misunderstanding, but rather see Ricœur's and Levinas's approaches as inasmuch differing as complimentary. The underlying difference in understanding alterity, the relation between 'I' and 'Thou' for Ricœur and Levinas rests on the their attitude to mutuality. For Ricœur the demand of the Other presupposes not only an inevitability, but crucially, the mutuality of response. Essentially, for Levinas it is a sense of distance, or an absence of the Other's countenance expressed in the encounter between 'I' and 'Thou.' For the Jewish philosopher, the Other presents himself/herself through face, which is the metaphor for the non-alergic relation. Levinas's model of the 'I' and 'Thou' relation relies on language, which presupposes the room for diversity; the desire of the Other is a desire to act with him/her, and it cannot be satiated, as it does not seek to fill a void or a negation. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas presents the Other-oriented way of thought, which fundamentally implies readiness to listen; there is no escape from finding oneself in the world of the alien, the confrontation happens through and in the dynamics of language.[32] For Levinas one's responsibility for the Other does not involve reciprocity. Ricœur insists on the mutability of vulnerability, the mutuality of response and of responsibility.

The Just, Practical Wisdom and the Linguistic Aspect

Ricœur views an ethical life as the proper fundamental premise for the problem of justice and all the related questions especially the universality

[31] Cf. *Ricœur as Another: The Ethics of Subjectivity*, op. cit., p. 127–133.
[32] Cf. E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* Pittsburgh 1969, p. 50–53.

of norms. In this respect Ricœur recurs to the notion of practical wisdom which is deployed as the overarching frame for the questions under the umbrella term of justice and the applicability of ethical norms[33] Significantly, the exploration of ethical identity in Ricœur's hermeneutics concerns a whole set of binary opposed pairs: self and the Other, universal norm versus particular tradition, 'is' and 'ought.' In an explanation of the ethical identity, Ricœur maintains the primary character of ethics over morality. For him it is crucial that the ethical aim needs to be tested by morality, as well as in cases of norms producing conflicts there is the requirement of a resort to the teleological aim.[34]

The demand of the Other and the genuine response to the demand of the Other in Ricœur's hermeneutics rests on the fundamental question he asks himself, the question which is disregarded by the postmodern thinkers; it is the query of 'who I am?'. The answer to the question is not only problematic in terms of philosophy, with an entire history of philosophy as backdrop, the answer is basically reliant on the delimitations of language as Adriana Cavarero notices following Hannah Arendt: "Philosophical discourse… is unable to determine in words the individual uniqueness of a human being. As far as philosophy is concerned, Arendt remarks 'who' someone is, in all of his or her singularity, 'retains a curious intangibility that confounds all efforts towards unequivocal verbal expression,' Put it another way, 'the moment we want to say who someone is, our very vocabulary leads us astray and into saying what he is.'"[35] In respect of language Arendt's proposition is concordant with the constructedness of human subjectivity endorsed by the postmodern philosophies; the human subject constructed and determined by social, sexual, psychic, or linguistic mechanisms. Any kind of discourse, be it the philosophical one is delimited by language constraints. Showing his acknowledgement of language insufficiencies, Ricœur does not, however, anchor an answer to the query of 'who am I?' in language only, or does not see it

[33] Cf. E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* op. cit., p. 194–197.
[34] Cf. P. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, op. cit., p. 169–173.
[35] A. Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, London–New York 2000, p. 7.

as narrowed to the matter of language. His answer to this question is to be found in his hermeneutics of the self which stretches beyond the circumscriptions of language. Hermeneutics is not only a mode of knowing but a way of being and in that it reaches in the profoundest way the ontology of being, in its pre-linguistic phase.

The Demand of the Other, Hermeneutics of the Self, and Life as the Story in the Search of Meaning

Ricœur's explication of the demand of the Other is intertwined with the two other major concerns of his hermeneutics: the search for an answer to the question of 'who am I?' and the quest for the meaning of life. The question of 'who am I?' is not an isolated query, and it is also not one among other significant ones, but more, it is a question, which when answered grants the self with the fulfillment of an innermost desire; to know who one is means to understand, to undergo a process of interpretation which releases an answer. For Ricœur, the process of interpretation, which generates an answer in always interlinked with the self's response to the demand of the Other. For the French philosopher, there seems to be no other way for the self to unveil and comprehend the truth about 'who I am' than to get engaged in the process of mutual responsivity and responsibility for the Other. The demand of the Other and my response have a mediating quality. It is through the demand of the Other that the story of my life becomes a story in the search of meaning, as the totality of my entanglement in the narratives of others causes that I genuinely discover my identity. The narrative of my life becomes a part of the narrative of the Other, and his/hers becomes a part of mine. The demand of the Other is substantially, significantly, even surprisingly, or unwillingly constitutive of the story of my life and concomitantly it is constitutive of my **self**, of my identity.

The Final Remarks

To conclude, it must be stressed that Paul Ricœur's proposition of ethics, and his rendition of the demand of the Other, discussed here

mainly on the basis of his ground-breaking *Oneself as Another,* is inextricably interwoven with the major preoccupation of his hermeneutics of the self, which is the quest for the meaning of life, and the search of an answer to the question of 'who I am?' Ricœur's construal of the relation between the self and the Other, which refers mostly to the self and the suffering Other, the articulation of the workings of friendship, the capable human and the explanation of the notion of 'good life' as the teleological horizon of a life comprise the fundaments of his prioritizing of ethics over morality. For Ricœur the demand of the Other is set on the premise of understanding viewed as a rudimentary mode of being-in-the world. The plane of the ethics of the Other is saturated with the discourse of our proneness to being affected by the Other, the mutual vulnerability, indebtedness to the Other and reliance on the Other, with all the lingual limitations of expression. The genuine response to the demand of the Other equals a worthy, fulfilled life, reflected, for Ricœur, in the narrative coherence of a life. The narrative coherence of life, for Ricœur, is the only viable possibility of finding an answer to the question of 'who am I?'. The subject uncovers his/her identity in a life-long process. It is not a univocal, unadulterated story of one's life, a superficial, linear account of the life events, which provides an answer to the fundamental query of 'who am I?', but rather, as Ricœur argues, it is all the various stories which ask for recognition and interpretation which comprise an answer to the question underlying human existence. The narrative coherence of a life bestows the human subject with a genuine possibility of unveiling a response to the otherwise unanswerable question of human subjectivity.

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Abstract

The Demand of the Other in Paul Ricœur's Philosophical Hermeneutics

The article proposes to view Paul Ricœur's ethics and the demand of the Other from the perspectives that are mostly explicated in his seminal *Oneself as Another*, namely: the self and the suffering Other, friendship, the capable human being, and the notion of 'the good life' seen as the teleological horizon of a human life. My attempt is to demonstrate that for Ricœur the demand of the Other is set on the premise of understanding viewed as the fundamental mode of being-in-the world, and that his ethics of the Other comprises mainly such phenomena as mutual vulnerability, the self's indebtedness to the Other and reliance on the Other, as well as an expression of the feelings of benevolence and solicitude. Significantly, for Ricouer the genuine response to the demand of the Other equals a worthy, fulfilled life manifested in the narrative coherence of a life. This article also touches upon the debate between Ricœur and Lévinas regarding the 'I' and 'Thou'

relation and the underlying difference in their approach to alterity; Ricœur's presupposition of the response of the Other and Levinas's model which does not entangle reciprocity.

Keywords

Ricœur, the demand of Other, ethics, vulnerability

Abstrakt

Nakaz Drugiego w hermeneutyce filozoficznej Paula Ricœura

W artykule proponuję spojrzenie na etykę Paula Ricœura i nakaz Drugiego pod kątem treści poruszanych w jego dziele *O sobie samym jako innym*, takich jak: „ja" i Drugi, który cierpi, przyjaźń, „dobre życie" rozumiane jako teleologiczny horyzont ludzkiej egzystencji. Moim celem jest ukazanie, że Ricœur sytuuje nakaz Drugiego w „rozumieniu", które jest pojmowane jako fundamentalny sposób bycia-w-świecie. Etyka Ricœura obejmuje przede wszystkim zagadnienie podatności na zranienie, wzajemną odpowiedzialność, dobroć i troskliwość. Ricœur twierdzi, że prawdziwa odpowiedź na nakaz Drugiego równa się wartościowemu, spełnionemu życiu i wyraża się w jego narracyjnej spójności. Artykuł podejmuje również temat debaty pomiędzy Ricœurem i Levinasem wokół relacji „ja" i „ty", i różnic w podejściu do niej: model Ricœura zakłada odpowiedź Drugiego, podczas gdy Levinas mówi o relacji, która nie musi być oparta na wzajemności.

Słowa kluczowe

Ricœur, nakaz Drugiego, etyka, podatność na zranienie