

The Narrative Identity of the Philosopher Paul Ricoeur

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Abstract

In this essay, I will attempt to understand the narrative identity concept of the French Philosopher, *Paul Ricœur* (1913-2005). As we will see, *Ricœur* understands the personal identity as a heterogeneous construct, inscribed in a dialectical temporality between *sameness* and *selfhood*.³⁵ This means that if a person wants to tell or write his personal story, he enters a transformative language and time process where lived experiences become a “fictionalized” unity of words and in this sense personal identity becomes narrative. According to *Ricœur*, this passage from personal identity to *narrative identity* undergoes, at the level of the writing process, different stages (prefiguration, configuration, and re-figuration) which constitute the *mimetic arc* and the *hermeneutic circle*. In attempting to write about oneself, each writer is forced to go through a narrative identity, creating a vision of the world as a whole, which can be seen as a model of reality. This model is constituted by a dialectical dynamic between a) a literary model and b) a cultural model. The literary model belongs to the prefiguration of the “History of the ‘I’ ” (or “*History of the self*”). His choice and the choice of the genre (autobiography, travelogue, autobiographical novel, journal, etc.) are cultural expressions that imply a cultural awareness, orienting the choice of the literary model.

Before we attempt to understand Paul Ricoeur’s narrative identity concept, it may be helpful to give some views of the general identity concept. Then we will trace the identity concept historically as a “History of the ‘I’ ” that briefly undergoes three variations during its evolution in form as *I-unified*, *I-cleaved*, and *I-multiple*.

1. The Identity Concept – Some Reflections

The concept of identity is used today in almost all scientific disciplines, in the humanities as well as in the natural sciences. It is an inter- and intra-disciplinary concept that generally means the unification of differences. In this sense, for example, identity can constitute a person, a culture, a community, etc. Concepts such as “*identity*,” “*individual*,” “*self*,” or “*subjectivity*” have not always existed discursively. They are related to the appearance of the modern subject around the 18th century and emerged together with the realistic literature. The word “*autobiography*,” for example, came from England in 1805 with the work of the poet *William Wordsworth* who wrote “*The prelude or Growth of a poet’s mind. An autobiographical poem.*”³⁶ In France, rather synonymous with the term “*memories*,” this concept was more related to historical interest. The English, on the other hand, believed that this word came from Germany because of the German’s hermeneutic tradition. The origin of the term is no less controversial than its meaning.³⁷

³⁵ Ricœur, Paul, *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris, Seuil (Points), 1990, p.140.

³⁶ (Lecarme, J. et Lecarme-Tabone, E., *L’Autobiographie*. Paris, Armand Colin, 1997, p.7.

³⁷ (Idem).

The evolution of idealist literature towards realistic literature seems to be caused by a change of structures in society. The development of technology, commerce, and industry had contributed to the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a new dominant social class. Industrialization shifted boundaries between private and public life. Gradually, it created new interests and multiple variants of human behavior. This new anthropological interest finally found expression in realistic literary forms such as the novel and autobiography. Their almost simultaneous appearances and their reciprocal resemblances suggest that these two genres have progressed symbiotically.³⁸

The valorization of everyday life and experience, hitherto ignored by rhetoric and the classics, will acquire a literary status. Other studies have criticized the new anthropological interest as the only reason for the emergence of self-writing. They especially criticized that this discourse concealed a major historical episode, marked by the autobiography, which Foucault later formulated as a new interest for the author as “*enunciator of literary speech*.”³⁹ The introduction of realism, the development of a new science of a unified man, the study of anthropology, and the emergence of the bourgeoisie are all factors that have influenced the reader and the reading. This shift of interest towards the autobiography marked the transition from religious confession to the modern autobiography as two different genres.⁴⁰

The religious confession, such as St. Augustine’s, is interpreted as a topology of guilt, conversion, and reading of the heart. On the contrary, the autobiographical effort was seen above all as the desire to become oneself. What in the religious confession was a description of the experience of a self, connected to the Divine, became in the autobiographical writing the description of the experience of a self, becoming oneself. Therefore, the figuration of the “*self*” of these two genres is different. The modern autobiography had transformed the “*court of reading*” of the religious confession into a “*self*,” divided into three: author, narrator, and protagonist, like Philippe Lejeune⁴¹ has defined it. For example, in *J. J. Rousseau's Les Confessions*, we can still find the “*tribunal of reading*” of the religious confession but without function because only Rousseau can read in his “*writing of the heart*.” In his way of describing himself in details, and in the depths of his soul to the last hidden and secret variants, Rousseau has opened a new era in the expression of subjectivity. Susanne Craemer-Schroeder (1993) understands his writing as a passage from religious confession to the modern autobiography.

These two examples underscore the interdependent relationship between the perception of the “*Self*” and the perception of the “*Zeitgeist*.” The evolution of the world in relation to new technological, industrial, and other discoveries, changes the interpretation of the *Self*.” Every change in the perception of reality seems to dialectically transform the perception of the self and the way the subject thinks and writes himself, which also leads to epistemological changes.

³⁸ Müller, Klaus-Detlef, *Autobiographie und Roman*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1976.

³⁹ (Foucault, («*Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur*»), TIII, dans *Dits et Écrits*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1994

⁴⁰ Craemer-Schroeder, Susanne, *Deklination des Autobiographischen*, Heft 124, Berlin, E.Schmidt Verlag, 1993, p. 10).

⁴¹ Lejeune, Philippe, *Le pacte autobiographique*. Paris, Seuil, 1975

2. The History of the "Self"

18th-century science developed positivism as a theory of knowledge. This positivist theory divided the world into nature and spirit and gave ontology a secure and stable place. It was a world that made no distinction between self-thought and the identity of being, on one hand, and between writing and lived experience, on the other hand. This epoch, which lasted no more than one century, from *Rousseau* to *Flaubert*⁴², was marked by the *cogito* of *Descartes*. The latter regarded the individual as a substance, singular, and unique. In this vision, the realistic writing postulated a concordance (adequation) between text, self, and writer:

*(Le «donc» du «je pense donc je suis» - cet ergo - [...], qui assimile le sujet de l'énoncé («je suis») au sujet de l'énonciation («je suis celui qui pense»). Mais jusqu'à quel point le je qui pense est-il le même que le je du «je suis» ? Selon cette formule, l'être est ramené en fait à la pensée, à la conscience de soi, et par un glissement insidieux Descartes fait de cette coïncidence le critère de la connaissance, des idées claires, et de la vérité.*⁴³

"The "so" of the "I think so I am" - this ergo - [...], who assimilates the subject of the statement ("I am") with the saying ("I am the one who thinks"). But to what extent is "I," who "thinks" the same as "I" of the "I am"? According to this formula, the being is brought back to the thought, to self-consciousness, and by an insidious slip, Descartes makes out of this coincidence the criterion of knowledge, clear ideas, and truth."

In the positivist world view, man creates the illusion of self-unity and forges the conviction that he can write his inner reality in black and white. *J. J. Rousseau*, for example, has written in the *Confessions*, "I want to show my fellow man a man in all his truth of nature; and this man will be me."⁴⁴ Since then, other scientific discoveries have emerged and upset this worldview.

At the level of the history of the self, it is *Freud's* psychoanalysis which questions in a striking way the illusion of the *unity of the self*,⁴⁵ and the possibility of knowing oneself entirely. The last text of *Freud*, *Die Ichspaltung (the cleavage of the self)*, is articulated around the notions of "self," "the other" and "otherness." The integration of the other in the subject passes by an unconscious act and finally shows a subject radically cleaved between the conscience and the unconsciousness, between the "self" and the "oneself" or, as *Ricœur* formulated it, between *ipseity* and *sameness*.⁴⁶

The individual who talks or writes a story about himself establishes a relationship between "self" and "self," which can only be possible to the extent that "the self" is different

⁴² Chevalier, Anne «*La crise du moi et l'écriture autobiographique*», Le sujet de l'écriture, Elsevier 9, Caen, University Press, 1994,

⁴³ Goulet, Alain, "L'autre autobiographique", de *Rousseau à la Nouvelle Autobiographie*, 1994, p. 27-28.

⁴⁴ J. J. Rousseau, «*Les Confession*» dans *Lejeune, L'autobiographie en France*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1971.

⁴⁵ Goulet, 1994, op.cit., p. 27-28.

⁴⁶ Ricœur, Paul (1990), op.cit. p.140.

from "oneself." In this sense, "*the individual becomes object and subject of himself as he is object and subject of change and restitution.*"⁴⁷

This is why the individual cannot claim to form a unified identity and must face the problem of its duplication. This problem of duplication is a subject of debate in multiple theories and interpretations concerning the construction of the self. The psychologist and philosopher, *Jacques Lacan* has written reinterpretations of some of *Freud's* time related views and influences. One of these books is called *The Stage of the Mirror as Formation of the Function of the Self*.⁴⁸ In this book, *Lacan* uses the mirror as a metaphor and instrument to illustrate a very important moment in the process of self-construction. It is the crucial moment where the little being recognizes the reflection of its body in the mirror. It sees a unified image in the mirror at a moment when its life itself is still fragmented and totally dependent on its mother. This recognition in the mirror as *imago*, *form*, or *Gestalt* is interpreted by *Lacan* as a projection in time through space, in which the little being lives a duplication. In the mirror, this motionless, fixed and asymmetrical form, *imago* or *Gestalt* is not him, but it looks enough alike for him to recognize himself. According to *Lacan*, the relation of the subject to himself in this first stage of identification situates "*the instance of the ego before its social determination in a line of fiction, forever irreducible to the individual.*"⁴⁹

This transformation, engendered by the *imago*, must be understood, according to *Lacan*, as a subject's solution or a response to the conciseness (*pregnance*) linked to his species, to his motoric helplessness and to his dependence on food. This preponderance of his species is expressed by a profound experience of "lack" and a loss of unity (with the mother). By these two aspects of its appearance, the lack and the constituent cleavage, the form (*Gestalt*) symbolizes the mental permanence of the "self," while at the same time it prefigures its alienating destination: "*I am) is another*"⁵⁰ which contradicts the *Cartesian cogito* and shows an "I" constitutively cleaved.

The "cleaved subject" or the "duplication of the self," etc. are expressions that have accompanied and contributed to the identity crisis of the subject which Charles Taylor addresses in his book *Source of the Self*.⁵¹ It is above all the discoveries made at the level of the functioning of the human mind that will engender this loss of the "illusion of the unified self." The modern individual is no longer able to construct an abstract reference that could order and control all the different roles and functions in which his identity is multiplied. In "*Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*" (1976) in which *Barthes* stated, "*All this must be considered as said by a novel character,*"⁵² is an example of this new phase in the "*history of the self.*"⁵³

The phenomenon observable in this new turning point in the writing of the self seems to be an interrogation of the relationship between the representation of the self and the real self. The

⁴⁷ Calle-Gruber, M. et Rothe, A, *Autobiographie et Biographie*, Colloque de Heidelberg, Paris, Nizet, 1989.

⁴⁸ Lacan, Jacques, *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966, p. 95.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁵⁰ Ricœur, Paul, 1990, op. cit. p. 140.

⁵¹ Taylor, Charles, *Source of the self* (lecture of Septembre 6, UQAM : *Cahiers de recherche*), 1991.

⁵² Barthes, Roland, *Roland Barthes*, Paris, Seuil, 1976.

⁵³ Lecarme, 1997, op. cit. p.7.

question of duplication in the writing of the self is now targeted. It becomes an issue in which the writer tries to give the two self(s) (public and intimate) a visible place: the unconscious left behind the scenes speaks on the scene of the "real" as "Gestalt" literary so that the distinction between the real and the imaginary is erased. It is no longer a matter of telling oneself or reconstructing a journey in one's life around a very precise and coherent personality, but an effort "to test an uncertain and problematic identity that escapes any decision."⁵⁴

*Et là, il me faut avouer une brisure supplémentaire, radicale et fulgurante. Je me sens traversé sans cesse, dans mon existence réelle, par d'autres existences, tout aussi réelles sans doute : des femmes que j'ai connues, mes parents, des personnages historiques [...], les héros de roman, ou de théâtre, qui m'ont nourri de leur substance [...] dont les instants éclatés, denses, présents, incontestables, soudain se mêlent aux miens.*⁵⁵

And here, I must admit an additional fissure, radical and dazzling. In my real existence, I feel myself continually being traversed by other existences, just as real, no doubt: women I have known, my parents, historical figures [...], the heroes of the novel, or of theater, which have nourished me with their [...] substance, broken, dense, incontestable, suddenly presence mingled with mine.

This "floating" opening defines so-called "postmodern" autobiography or autofiction, with writers like Alain Robbe-Grillet (*The Mirror Comes Back*), Nathalie Sarraute (*Childhood*), Georges Perec (*A Childhood Memory*), Serge Doubrovsky (*Son*), Philippe Sollers (*Portrait of the Player*), Marguerite Duras (*The Lover*).

What happened? Reality, hitherto understood as a single truth, has become a notion that is part of human construction and has lost its normative, even fixative, character. The discovery of non-objectivity shifted all the values of scientific reality related to positivist thought. The differences that once structured the world now merge into relative thinking about time and space. For *Charles Taylor*, the subject must face not only the questioning of the unity of the self and the discovery of its multiplicity but also an ontological crisis. The world itself has become uncertain and dazzling. Identity, having literally lost its substantial thought, no longer seems able to distinguish between reality and virtuality.⁵⁶

3. The Identity Concept

3.1. "The Problem of Personal Identity" - Paul Ricœur

In 1990, *Ricœur* published the book *Soi-même Comme un Autre - Self as Another*, a main research on identity. In this book, he places the problem of personal identity in the temporal dimension of human existence. This temporal dimension emerged along with the notion of *narrative identity* as center of the research and focused on the dialectic between what *Ricoeur*

⁵⁴ Goulet 1994, *op.cit.*, p. 31

⁵⁵ Robbe-Grillet, Alain, *Angélique*, Paris, Minuit, 1987, p. 69.

⁵⁶ Robin, Régine, *Le Golem de l'écriture*, Montréal, XYZ, 1997.

calls identity as *mêmeté* in French, English: *sameness*, Latin: *idem*, German: *Gleichheit* and identity as *ipséité* in French, English: *selfhood*, Latin: *ipse*, German: *Selbstheit*.⁵⁷

Within this dialectic, he distinguishes *identity-sameness*, which consists in the permanence of time as a substratum (in Kant's scheme of the category of substance), and another permanence in time in the level of *identity-ipseity* which is irreducible and appears as an answer to the question "who am I?" It manifests itself as a polarity between the instance of the character and the experience of the spoken word. In the spoken word of the commitment (to keep a promise), selfhood appears with all its clarity, but in the character "sameness" completely covers *ipseity*. According to Ricoeur, It is this coincidence between selfhood and sameness (evenness) at the level of character which suggests an intervention of narrative identity in the conceptual constitution of personal identity; the subject has to stop all activity to signify. That means the subject enters a temporal difference and a symbolic language order to signify, and for this reason, according to Ricoeur, the subject enters a narrative process.

3.2. "Narrative Identity" - Paul Ricoeur

The narrative identity is part of a circular movement between pre-figuration, configuration, and re-figuration. It is a three-dimensional movement of the "I" that integrates intersubjectivity as plurality. The written and linguistic expression seems to be a mediation or a bridge between two worlds: the world of action and experience, and the world of representation. For Jacques Lacan, for example, this bridge constitutes the imaginary line in which the "I" is projected in a dimension of doubling itself, by which the subject advances in a mirage, the maturation of his power. In *Ricoeur*, this bridge corresponds to the moment of "intrigue." It constitutes the narrative identity, which is a circular movement between the "I" and the "Other." This movement opens up a dimension in which the "I" is confronted with the other and must integrate with the variability of intersubjectivity, thus with its own plurality.

Since 1611, the Dictionary of the French language⁵⁸ recognizes the notion of identity that comes from the Latin word "*identitas*" and the notion of the "*same*." The "*same*" implies a relationship: *to whom, to what?* The individual cannot be "ditto" or "the same" with himself unless the "same" is the "other," which indicates a dilemma. To this dilemma, Paul Ricoeur proposes to answer through the concept of narrative identity:

le problème de l'identité personnelle est en effet voué à une antinomie sans solution : ou bien l'on pose un sujet identique à lui-même dans la diversité de ses états, ou bien l'on tient, à la suite de Hume et de Nietzsche, que ce sujet identique n'est qu'une illusion substantialiste, [...] Le dilemme disparaît si, à l'identité comprise au sens d'un même (idem), on substitue l'identité comprise au sens d'un soi-même (ipse) ; la différence entre idem et ipse n'est autre que la différence entre une identité substantielle ou formelle et l'identité narrative."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ricoeur, 1990, ob.cit, p.140

⁵⁸ Petit Robert I, Paris, *Paul Robert*, 1989, p. 957

⁵⁹ Ricoeur, Paul, *Temps et récit III Paris, Seuil, p. 355.*

the problem of personal identity is indeed doomed to an antinomy without solution: either one poses a subject identical to itself in the diversity of its states, or one holds, to the continuation of Hume and Nietzsche, that this identical subject is only an illusion of substantiality, [...] The dilemma disappears if, identity is understood in the sense of the same (idem), to which one substitutes identity, understood as oneself (ipse); the difference between idem and ipse is none other than the difference between a "substantial or formal identity" and "narrative identity."

In the three volumes of *Temps et Récit*, Paul Ricœur tries to establish a link between the human experience and the narrative experience. The author gives the same power to narrative identity and metaphor. Both are engaged in imaginary and linguistic work to understand individual and social human experience. Imagination means more than just a feeling or an emotion. The central dialectic of imagination is inherent, innovative, and semantically structured. Ricœur supposes that the narrative function is the possibility of reconfiguring our temporal experience, which is silent, confused, and shapeless.

The process of narration unifies the diversity of human action in the intelligible order of a set: "intrigue." In this sense, Ricœur's narrative function joins his conception of the role of metaphor, which is the product of linguistic innovation between identity and difference.⁶⁰ Narrative and metaphor have the potential to clarify the temporary process of identity formation. They also have the creative duty of transforming human experience into a specific narrative language and form, corresponding to an active and temporalized human world.

3.3. "La Mise en Intrigue"

For Paul Ricœur, personal identity can only be told or written through narrative identity. The individual can only express himself through the symbolism of language. In the same way, scientific language describes reality through a certain linguistic model that represents it. Using the "intrigue," narrative identity can take shape. *The Intrigue* is based on two theories: the theory of time with the "*distensio animi*"⁶¹ in Augustine's Confessions and the theory of the "*tragic mythos*"⁶² in *Poetics of Aristotle*. For Ricœur, both theories represent "two independent entries in the circle of the problem: one is "*the paradoxes of time*" and the other is "*the intelligible organization of the story*."⁶³ Ricœur's major interest in these two theories is to unify the relationship between the concordance of time, the discordance of human action and the narrative configuration. The narrative function, the "intrigue," then places the diversity of human experience in an encompassing linguistic set.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 274

⁶¹ Ricœur, *Temps et récit I, op.cit.*, p. 18

⁶² Idem

⁶³ Idem

*l'intrigue d'un récit prend ensemble et intègre dans une histoire entière et complète les événements multiples et dispersés et ainsi schématise la signification intelligible qui s'attache au récit pris comme un tout.*⁶⁴

the intrigue of a narrative takes together and integrates into a complete story the multiple and dispersed events and thus schematizes the intelligible meaning that attaches to the narrative taken as a whole.

Thus, “la mise en intrigue” is the poetic act that unites identity and difference in a unifying temporal structure. It is important to emphasize that Ricœur insists on the understanding of the two Aristotelian terms *muthos* and *mimesis* (differently interpreted by Plato). According to Ricœur, “muthos” (or *la mise en intrigue*) as understood by Aristotle, is “the arrangement of facts in a system”⁶⁵ and *mimesis* is the “active process of imitating or representing.”⁶⁶ As a result, *mimesis* expresses poetic activity itself. It is a creative act that does not imitate reality, but reinvents it from a certain cultural base: “imitation, for Aristotle, is an activity that teaches.”⁶⁷

Ricœur joins Ernst Cassirer⁶⁸ in his explanation of the self-transforming power of art in which Cassirer depicts Plato's rejection of art for the same reason: the self-transforming power of art. He writes, “Poetry indeed is a doing, and a 'doing' on a 'doing' (...). Only, it is not an effective, ethical, but precisely invented poetic act.”⁶⁹

"this poetic doing" gives us pleasure because it invents something similar. The sequence connects discordance within a set in a concordant logical sequence that transforms lived experience into logical human time. The ideas of beginning, middle, and end do not come from real life but are effects of the poetic order. Composition and construction take time. This conception of time is the time of the writing work and not the time of the empirical events.

*Les temps vides sont exclus du compte. On ne demande pas ce que le héros a fait entre deux événements qui dans la vie seraient séparés : dans Roi Oedipei, Else, le messager revient au moment précis où l'intrigue requiert sa présence : ni plus tôt, ni plus tard.*⁷⁰

Empty times are excluded from the account. One does not ask what the hero did between two events that in real life would be separated: in King Oedipus, Else, the messenger returns to the precise moment, when the plot requires his presence: neither sooner nor later.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁶⁶ *Idem*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 72

⁶⁸ Cassirer, Ernst, “*Ecrits sur L'art*”, 1995

⁶⁹ Ricœur, *Temps et récit I*, *op.cit.*, p.82-83

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 81-82

The intrigue thus integrates with the configuring act a paradox. Unpredictable and contingent events, hazards, and so on, are integrated into a heterogeneous synthesis that Ricœur calls "*discordant concordance*."⁷¹ This is characteristic of any narrative composition.

*Le récit construit l'identité du personnage, qu'on peut appeler son identité narrative, en construisant celle de l'histoire racontée. C'est l'identité de l'histoire qui fait l'identité du personnage.*⁷²

"The narrative" constructs the identity of the character, which can be called narrative identity, by constructing an identity of the story. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character.

3.4. The Mimetic Circle

The mimetic circle, which oscillates between narrativity and temporality, represents the central thesis of Ricœur's hermeneutical phenomenology. It is a three-stage process⁷³ that goes from the practical field of human experience to the language field and returns again to the world of experience. The circular nature of this thesis is typical for any hermeneutic assertion. The individual takes a temporal distance from the world of action and experience by an imaginative configuration. To be able to do this, the individual and his identity formation must be based on pre-narrative elements.⁷⁴ The little human is not born into nothingness. He is born into a sensible structure of a symbolic and temporal linguistic order of the world of action. This world is still opaque to it, discordant and silent. To be able to speak, the little being must appropriate the symbolic language system, in which the medialization of the human experience is given. This symbolic mediation of action, according to Ricoeur, is thought as a process and starts with the prefiguration (mimesis I) to the configuration (mimesis II) and ends with the re-figuration (mimesis III).

*On se rappelle que la pré-compréhension du monde de l'action, sous le régime de mimésis I, est caractérisée par la maîtrise du réseau d'inter-significations constitutif de la sémantique de l'action, par la familiarité avec les médiations symboliques et avec les ressources pré-narratives de l'agir humain. L'être au monde selon la narrativité, c'est un être au monde déjà marqué par la pratique langagière apparente à cette pré-compréhension.*⁷⁵

We remember that the pre-understanding of the world of action, under the regime of mimesis I, is characterized by the mastery of the network of inter-significations, constituting the semantics of action, by familiarity with symbolic mediations and with the pre-narrative resources of human action. The being in the world, according to the

⁷¹ Ricœur, 1990, op. cit. p. 128

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 175

⁷³ Ricœur, *Temps et Récit I*, op.cit., p. 107

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108-113

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

narrativity, is a being in the world already marked by the language practice apparent to this pre-understanding.

Thus, the prefiguration constitutes the basis for the configuration of the human experience. However, this act of configuration can take place only through a reading that connects language to the current world of the reader's experience. It is only by this re-figuration that the text is brought back to life. The act of reading makes the text a unity by producing a possibility of experience. "La mise en intrigue" of the re-figuration is not a simple repetition of the experience but an autonomous production and an implementation that gives the work of fiction (fictionalization) its meaning. Reading is, therefore, a synthesizing activity that produces an analog connection between the text and the reader; Ricœur understands the text as analogous to the world of the reader, which is to say, reconverted to the life of the world of action and experience. Thus *"the world of the text must become fictional to be able to refigure the real."*⁷⁶

Between the prefiguration and the re-figuration is the poetic act itself: the configuration.⁷⁷ The intrigue of the configuration connects events, which are diverse and heterogeneous in a temporal succession, to the central thought of an intelligible unity; it creates a narrative unity between identity and diversity, which Ricœur calls "concordance-discordance."⁷⁸ The temporal dimension is the key to the mimetic circle. The act of "la mise en intrigue" of the configuration combines two temporal dimensions, one chronological, and the other non-chronological. The first constitutes the episodic dimension of the story, giving the story events. The second is the configuration itself, in which the "intrigue" transforms the events into a story. The act of configuration then episodically transforms events into a temporal unity. The temporal unity forms the story by producing a human time, which seems to bring a solution to the inherent distance between the diversity of the events of the lived experience and the singularity of a centralizing thought.

*la mise en intrigue (de la configuration) apporte au paradoxe (temporaire) une solution qui est l'acte poétique lui-même.*⁷⁹

the intrigue (of the configuration) brings to the (temporary) paradox a solution which is the poetic act itself.

It allows the reader to live in a world of configuration that has transformed the temporal paradox into a living dialectic.⁸⁰ This means that the author, as well as the reader with the help of the "intrigue," both become creators of the text: the author configures the life experiments into a text and the reader animates the text and creates his text-version out of the given text. In this sense, Ricoeur stresses Nelson Goodman's book, *"Reality Remade,"* and its maxim: *thinking oeuvres in terms of worlds and worlds in terms of oeuvres.*"

⁷⁶ Ricœur, *Temps et Récit III*, *op.cit.*, p. 157

⁷⁷ Ricœur, *Temps et Récit I*, *op.cit.*, p. 129

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130

*Penser les œuvres en termes de mondes et les mondes en termes d'œuvres.*⁸¹

Conclusion

In the first chapter, I have shown that the “concept of identity” is not a fixed concept, but a constantly moving process influenced particularly by societal discoveries in science and technology. When the society changes, so do the structure of identity and thus how the individual sees and thinks of himself in the world. In the reflections preceding the first chapter, I gave an example of this interdependence through the “history of the self,” putting in place three perceptions of the self (s): the united, the cleaved and the multiple one.

The perceived “united self” emerges parallel to a reality, seen as an objective world, under the influence of science and technology convinced of their impartiality.

The “cleaved self” reflects an existential doubt whose world has experienced upheavals due to the development of technic, especially at the level of the neuronal brain and the relativity of time and has led to a loss of meaning.

Specialization and sectorization in all public domains contributed to a fragmentation of the self into multiple functions. The penetration of the universe and the development of artificial intelligence have introduced an ontological doubt. The man who can no longer distinguish between reality and virtuality is not only experiencing an identity crisis but also an ontological one. Expressions like “nontology,” “intersubjectivity,” and “intertextuality” have entered the postmodern speech.

Another example, showing this interdependence between the self and the world appears in epistemological changes. For example, constructivism developed in opposition to positivism. The influence in the realist literature of these two epistemologies is expressed as: either the autobiography is understood as a copy of the “true” life of a writer, or it becomes a fictional construction.

We also have seen in the third chapter that the concept of personal identity becomes a problem when an individual tries to communicate his life experiences, because writing an experience is very different from living it. In the moment where the individual thinks or writes about himself, he has to stop all activities to contemplate himself. That means he takes a temporal distance to himself. He looks from himself at himself, but this is only possible when the individual takes himself as “another.” (Therefore, Ricoeur’s book title: “Oneself as another”). In this act of contemplation, the individual has doubled (or cleaved) himself and integrated the other as himself.

Also, we have seen that communication happened through language. Any language set has its own order, rules, laws, and linear application structures. When lived experiences enter the symbolic order of language, they undergo a transformation. That means the lived experiences become language, written in black and white following the rules of the language in which the

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 153

narrator is transformed into a paper-creature. Language is an instrument of representation, in which each individual integrates his system of references: his beliefs and perception of society and culture and “inter alia,” his autobiographical self. The act of narration unifies, with help of Ricoeur’s “mise en intrigue,” the diversity of human action into a story. Real-time is changed into story time.

The narrative unit is created by a circular movement between prefiguration, configuration, and re-figuration. It is a three-dimensional movement of the narrative “self.” Hereby, the reader (re-figuration act) plays an important role. He transforms a text into a meaningful unit by producing his story from his level of understanding and experiences. The act of reading is not a mere repetition of experiences, but an autonomous production and an implementation that gives the reader’s work of “transformation” its meaning. Reading is, therefore, a synthesizing activity that produces an analog link between the reader and the text.

The language acts as a metaphor between the world and man. Man approaches and at the same time, moves away from the world with each nomination because man remains imprisoned in the symbolic system of language. The language as representation is a fictional space and generates a process called "fictionalization" by Manfred Jurgensen,⁸² "symbolization" by Ernst Cassirer,⁸³ and "narrative identity" by Paul Ricoeur.⁸⁴

The language space is a fictional space that allows, as the history of the "I" has shown, identification. If the fictional space allows identification, fiction is no longer the opposite of reality but part of it. In other words, writing the real is a fiction like any other, except that fictionalizing reality is different from "fictionalizing" fiction; therefore, different sets of vocabulary are to apply. However, in the fictional space, the unreal is often positioned as being in opposition to the real and even seen as pathology. For example, in psychiatric understanding, the unreal means a loss or reduction of the sense of reality.⁸⁵ What differentiates the real from the unreal is the setting of a norm: "*The sense too developed for the unreal is as neurotic as the sense too developed for the real.*"⁸⁶

Philippe Hamon⁸⁷ notes that the question of the representation of reality has long been a fixed, almost obsessive idea of our Western culture. Already classical and neoclassical rhetoric could not elaborate a precise and coherent theory of this concept. Roland Barthes⁸⁸ has demonstrated that the "useless detail" is one of the main processes by which the realist discourse hides its own nature and gives the text "the effect of reality."

il s'agit, si l'on veut, d'une hésitation entre la Poétique d'Aristote (toute littérature est

⁸² Jurgensen, Manfred (1979), *Das fiktionale Ich*, Bern, Francke AG Verlag.

⁸³ Cassirer, Ernst (1972), *La Philosophie des formes symboliques*, Paris, Minuit.

⁸⁴ Ricoeur, Paul (1990), *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris, Seuil.

⁸⁵ Goldstein, Dr. K. citation by Waldenfels in Oelmüller, (1981), *Kolloquium Kunst und Philosophie*, Bochum, UTB Schöninghausen.

⁸⁶ Bachelard cité par Waldenfels, *Ibid.*, p.100-101.

⁸⁷ Watt, Ian (1982), «*Réalisme et forme romanesque*», Barthes, Bersani, Hamon, Riffaterre, Watt: *Littérature et réalité*, Paris, Seuil.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

imitation), et le Laocoon de Lessing (la langue ne peut copier le réel), entre une prescription (la littérature doit copier le réel) et une interdiction (la littérature ne doit pas copier le réel), ou d'une hésitation entre la mimesis comme fait de culture (donc variable) ou comme fait de nature (un certain type de discours, un invariant stylistique), hésitation dont Michel Foucault s'est fait l'archéologue en écrivant son «histoire de la ressemblance», Jacques Derrida en s'attachant à démonter la logique même de ce concept.⁸⁹

it is, if you will, a hesitation between Aristotle's Poetics (all literature is imitation), and Lessing's Laocoon (language cannot copy the real), between a prescription (literature must copy the real) and a ban (literature should not copy the real), or a hesitation between the mimesis as a fact of culture (so variable) or as fact of nature (a certain type of speech, a stylistic invariant) Michel Foucault hesitated to become an archaeologist by writing his "history of resemblance," Jacques Derrida, by attempting to dismantle the very logic of this concept. For Michael Riffaterre, the reality produced in the text comes from "the referential illusion."

For Michael Riffaterre, for example, the reality produced in the text comes from "the referential illusion:"

la croyance naïve en un contact ou une relation directe entre mots et référents est une illusion, et cela pour deux raisons: l'une générale, valable pour tous les faits de langue; l'autre, propre à la littérature. [...] Les mots, en tant que formes physiques, n'ont aucune relation naturelle avec les référents : ce sont les conventions d'un groupe, arbitrairement liées à des ensembles de concepts sur les référents, à une mythologie du réel. Cette mythologie, le signifié, s'interpose entre les mots et les référents.⁹⁰

the naive belief in a contact or a direct relation between words and referents is an illusion for two reasons: the general one, valid for all the facts of language; the other, peculiar to literature. [...] Words, as physical forms, have no natural relation with referents: they are the conventions of a group, arbitrarily linked to sets of concepts on referents to a mythology of reality. In this mythology, the signified interposes itself between words and referents.

Each era and each culture conveys a collective imaginary of the real to which the writer participates. The system of representation, which is held in a fictional space, holds collective language agreements (conventions, typologies, norms, etc.) and thus becomes generalizing; subject, of course, to the participation of the same period and the same cultural code (the Western world is different from the Eastern world, Asian, African, etc.). Literature and art, in general, create new forms to see, hear, and meet reality differently. For Waldenfels, art renews reality through fictional production. Art is not a world different from reality, but it recomposes it differently. "Art uses the real only to abolish it, and substitute a new reality for it."⁹¹

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92-93

⁹¹ Waldenfels, B. 1981, «Fiction et Réalité» op. cit. p. 100-101;

This general look at artistic creation and realism defeats the assumption that autobiographical writing copies reality. It is rather to see a construction. Our reflection starts from the point of view, which posits that the identity and the view of the world are linked dialectically and form a vision of reality. This vision of reality or of the world takes place in a whole that includes the individual's view of himself, his society, and his history. A writer who wants to represent his personal history and his identity is confronted with the issue of representation, which, linked to the symbolic language system, transforms the heterogeneity of events into a temporal form.

Like Paul Ricoeur, Ernst Cassirer⁹² or many others, we think that this transformation is a symbolic act in which the image of perception, the beauty of an orchid, for example, becomes an aesthetic experience, in which all the perceived elements take on a new configuration. The artistic imagination opens a new horizon, another symbolization of the world by a different way of seeing the forms of reality. In this sense, the aesthetic experience is an active experience that builds its own forms and contours to be able to become aware of them, to see them, or to feel them in a different way. It is a dynamic dimension that gives the static or living materials another color, another meaning.

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⁹² Cassirer, Ernst (1995), *Écrits sur l'art*, Paris, Cerf.

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Biographical Sketch

Dr. Waltraud Gudrian is originally from Germany. She achieved her undergraduate degree in Economic Sciences and completed a master's degree in Sociology at the Free (Freie) University of Berlin. She left Germany for Paris, France where she worked as a counselor in special education; then, she immigrated to Canada where she finished a Ph.D. in German literature in the

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Three-Parameter Bayesian Estimation Problem

Michael Lloyd, Professor of Mathematics

Abstract

A Bayesian estimate of three parameters will be derived using PERT, triangular distributions, and R. An analyst at a large corporation introduced me to this problem.

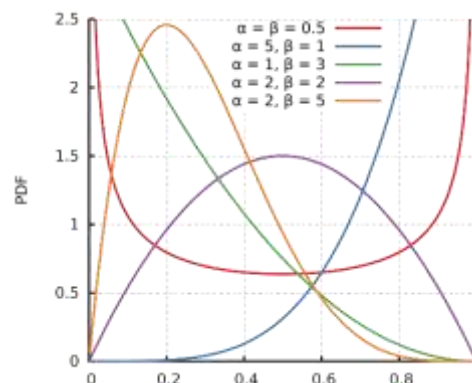
Distributions

Two-Parameter Beta Distribution $Beta(\alpha, \beta)$ has the following probability density function:

$$\text{pdf } f(x) = \frac{x^{\alpha-1}(1-x)^{\beta-1}}{B(\alpha, \beta)}, \text{ where } 0 < x < 1, B(\alpha, \beta) = \frac{\Gamma(\alpha)\Gamma(\beta)}{\Gamma(\alpha+\beta)}, \alpha > 0, \beta > 0$$

The accompanying graph shows Beta probability density functions for various values of its parameters.

The Four-Parameter Beta Distribution $Beta(\alpha, \beta, a, c)$ is a linear transformation of $Beta(\alpha, \beta)$ that maps the support from $[0,1]$ to $[a, c]$. An application of the change-of-variable technique gives the following probability density function for the Four-Parameter Beta Distribution:



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beta_distribution

$$\text{pdf } f(x) = \frac{(x-a)^{\alpha-1}(c-x)^{\beta-1}}{B(\alpha, \beta)(c-a)^{\alpha+\beta-1}}, \text{ where } a < x < c, \alpha > 0, \beta > 0, a < c$$

The $PERT(a, b, c)$ distribution is a special case of the Four-Parameter Beta Distribution where $a < b < c$, b is the mode and the mean is $\mu = \frac{a+4b+c}{6}$. That is,

$$PERT(a, b, c) = Beta\left(\frac{4b + c - 5a}{c - a}, \frac{5c - a - 4b}{c - a}, a, c\right)$$