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Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Translation

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Abstract
This essay looks at how Ricoeur's hermeneutics functions as both philosophy *of* translation and philosophy *as* translation. It starts with a overview of Ricoeur's theories in the light of the history of the philosophy of translation and shows how he, following in the footsteps of Gadamer, understands the act of translation as an art of negotiating and mediating between Self and Other. It then goes on to explore the hermeneutic model of translation, advanced in Ricoeur's later work, in terms of three main paradigms: linguistic, ontological and ethical. The essay concludes with a discussion of the crucial role played by translation in hospitality, pluralism and pardon.

Keywords
hermeneutics, translation, ethics, memory, hospitality

Translation has been a central feature of Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, though it was not until his later years that he made it an explicit theme of his work. Well before Ricoeur actually thematized the subject, the art of translation was something he actually *performed* in his philosophical practice. Ricoeur was an inveterate mediator, someone who navigated and negotiated transits between rival positions. He was, it could be argued, unequaled as a diplomat of philosophical exchange, forever finding a point of commerce—if not always resolution—between ostensibly irreconcilable viewpoints. Consider his endless brokering and commuting between Continental and Anglo-Saxon thought at the most general level. Then, within the Continental tradition more specifically, between existentialism and structuralism; between hermeneutics and Critical Theory; between phenomenology and the human sciences; between Freudian psychoanalysis and Hegelian dialectics; between literary theory and the philosophy of religion; between historical understanding (*Verstehen*) and scientific explanation (*Erklären*); between psychology and neuro-science; between ethics and politics, and so on. And consider, finally, his many acts of mediating translation *within* hermeneutics itself between romantic hermeneutics (from

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Schleiermacher and Dilthey) and critical or radical hermeneutics (developed by Habermas and Derrida, respectively)

What is remarkable in all these critical intercessions is that Ricoeur never ceased to respect both adversarial partners in the exchange. He deftly transmuted conflict into conversation without ever sacrificing depth of conviction or acuity of evaluation. In his philosophical role as translator, Ricoeur was, I believe, unrivaled in his time. Indeed, one could say that Ricoeur's thought represented both philosophy *as* translation and a philosophy *of* translation. In what follows below I will concentrate mainly on the latter.

1. Ricoeur's Philosophy of Translation

In *On Translation*, one of Ricoeur's last works, published in French in 2004 and in English in 2006, Ricoeur treats directly of the processes and problems of translation. He outlines two paradigms. First, the *linguistic paradigm*, which refers to how words relate to meanings within language or between languages. And, second, the *ontological paradigm*, which refers to how translation occurs between one human self and another. Let me say something about each.[1]

a) *The Linguistic Paradigm.* Language is one, yet languages are many. In this very distinction lies the primordial need for translation. What all languages share in common is a capacity to mediate between a human speaker and a world of meanings (actual and possible) spoken about. But if this function constitutes the unifying property of language, the fact that there exists a plurality of languages, both living and dead, means that we are faced with a double duty of translation, internal and external. In short, one of Ricoeur's great originalities is the way in which he demonstrates how translation is both *intra*-lingual and *inter*-lingual.

Ricoeur's understanding of the historical development of the philosophy of translation helps clarify the issue. Some of the earliest reflections on the problems and enigmas of translation go back, at least in Western history, to the major encounters between cultures. In classical times, we find the translation between Greek and Latin languages to be a crucial landmark, while the famous feats of biblical translation from Hebrew and Aramaic to Greek and Latin—ranging from the Septuagint to the decisive translations of St. Jerome (author of the Vulgate), or later again, of Luther in German, or the King James authors

[1] Paul Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction* (Paris: Bayard, 2004); translated by Eileen Brennan as *On Translation* (London: Routledge, 2006).

in English—mark yet another set of milestones in the history of inter-linguistic translation.

One of the earliest words for a translator in Greek was *hermeneus* and in Latin *interpres*. Both terms, notes Ricoeur, carry the sense of an intermediary laboring between two distinct languages or speakers. The term *translator* arises from the Latin verb, *transfero, transfere, translatum*, which evolves into the term *translatare, translater* in the Romance languages of the Middle Ages (hence the later English *translate*). In the fifteenth century, the Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni became the first modern thinker to devote an entire scientific treatise to the art of translation, entitled *De Interpretatione Recta* (1420). Here Ricoeur locates the original appearance of the term *traducere*, referring to a unitary concept of translation and giving rise in the sixteenth century to the French term *traducteur*, employed by the humanist Etienne Dolet.[2] The twentieth century saw a number of influential theorists of translation, from Croce and Rosenzweig to Benjamin (*The Task of the Translator*) and Steiner (*After Babel*). Ricoeur's own recent study on translation follows in the footsteps of these intellectual predecessors. What Ricoeur adds is a singularly hermeneutic twist, as I endeavor to show below.

As mentioned, Ricoeur underscores the way in which some of the great translations of biblical and classical texts played formative roles in the development of both national and cultural identities. He is fully conscious of the dramatic influence exerted by Luther's German translation of the Bible, or the Moravian Brethern's Czech translation, or the Genevan French translation, not to mention the crucial role played by renditions of classical texts in the birth of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, or Romanticism. In all these instances of inter-linguistic translation, the transmigration of one linguistic thesaurus into another was linked with modern ideas of human emancipation and change. And the momentous encounter with the Other outside the nation, or indeed the European world generally—with the discovery of other continents and civilizations from the fifteenth century onwards—is a crucial reminder for Ricoeur of the modern necessity of translation. Thus understood,

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[2] I am indebted to Dominico Jervolino for this reference to Dolet and to several other sources on the history of translation cited below. See Jervolino's illuminating paper, "The Hermeneutics of the Self and the Paradigm of Translation," presented at the Rome International Conference on Translation (April 2004) and his Introduction to *La traduzione: Una sfida etica* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2001), 7–35. See also his pioneering essay, "Herméneutique et traduction. L'autre, l'étranger, l'hôte," *Archives de Philosophie* 63 (2000): 79–93.

translation has always been, in Antoine Berman's resonant (and virtually untranslatable!) phrase, oft cited by Ricoeur—*une épreuve de l' étranger*.[3]

b) *The Ontological Paradigm.* Translation is understood by Ricoeur in both a specific and a general sense. In the specific sense—the one in common contemporary usage, outlined above—it signals the work of translating the meanings of one particular language into another. In the more generic sense, it indicates the ontological act of speaking as a way of not only translating oneself to oneself (inner to outer, private to public, unconscious to conscious) but also, and more explicitly, of translating oneself to others. As Dominico Jervolino puts it: "To speak is already to translate (even when one is speaking one's own native language or when one is speaking to oneself); further, one has to take into account the plurality of languages, which demand a more exacting encounter with the different Other. One is tempted to say that there is a plurality of languages because we are originally plural. The encounter with the Other cannot be avoided. If one accepts the necessary nature of the encounter, linguistic pluralism appears no longer as a malediction, as the received interpretation of the myth of Babel would have it, but as a condition which requires us to surrender the all-encompassing dream of a perfect language (and of a global translation, so to speak, without residues). The partiality and the finitude of individual languages is then viewed not as an insurmountable obstacle but as the very precondition of communication among individuals."[4]

This ontological model of translation is, I believe, one of Ricoeur's most consequential insights. It demonstrates how and why translation *matters*. And it lies at the basis of his ethical and political theory, as we shall see in the next section. Ricoeur compares the work of the translator to that of a middleman between "two masters," between an author and a reader, a self and another. He underscores the word "work," stressing the importance of both (i) a *labor of memory*, and (ii) a *labor of mourning*. As such, Ricoeur borrows liberally from Freud's famous notion of 'working through' (*Durcharbeitung*).

This emphasis on the work-like character of translation refers to the common experience of tension and suffering that the translator undergoes as he/she checks the basic impulse to reduce the otherness of the other, thereby subsuming alien meaning into one's own scheme of things. The work of translation might thus be said to carry a double duty: to expropriate oneself from

[3] Antoine Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

[4] "The Hermeneutics of the Self," 6; see also Paul Zumthor, *Babel ou l'inachèvement* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

oneself as one appropriates the other to oneself. In other words, we are called to make our language put on the stranger's clothes at the same time as we invite the stranger to step into the fabric of our own speech. The result of a good translation is when one language rediscovers itself in and as another (*soi-même come un autre*).

Ricoeur argues that good translations involve a crucial openness to the other. Indeed he recommends that we be prepared to forfeit our native language's claim to self-sufficiency—which can sometimes go to extremes of nationalism and chauvinism—in order to 'host' (qua *hospes*) the 'foreign' (*hostis*). As the linquist Emile Benveniste points out in *Le Vocabulaire des Institutions Indo-Européenes*, the two terms *hospes* and *hostis* are etymologically akin.[5] Following Benveniste, Ricoeur writes: "Despite the conflictual character which renders the task of the translator dramatic, he or she will find satisfaction in what I would like to call *linguistic hospitality*. Its predicament is that of a correspondence without complete adhesion. This is a fragile condition, which admits of no verification other than a new translation... a sort of duplication of the work of the translator which is possible in virtue of a minimum of bilingualism: to translate afresh after the translator." And he adds (again in *On Translation*): "Just as in a narration it is always possible to tell the story in a different way, likewise in translation it is always possible to translate otherwise, without ever hoping to bridge the gap between equivalence and perfect adhesion. Linguistic hospitality, therefore, is the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one's own home, one's own dwelling."[6]

Linguistic hospitality calls us to forgo the lure of omnipotence: the illusion of a total translation that would provide a perfect replica of the original. Instead it asks us to respect the fact that the semantic and syntactic fields of two languages are not the same, nor exactly reducible the one to the other. Connotations, contexts, and cultural characteristics will always exceed any slide rule of neat equation between tongues. Short of some kind of abstract symbolic logic—or fantasy Esperanto logos—there is no single unitary language. Translation, as George Steiner has powerfully reminded us, is always *after babel*.[7] It is forever compelled to acknowledge the finite limits of speech,

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[5] Emile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-europèennes* (Paris: Minuit, 1969).

[6] *Sur la traduction*, 19–20.

[7] George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). For an excellent analysis of the ontological aspects of translation see John Sallis, *On Translation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

the multiplicity of different tongues. To function authentically, therefore, the translator must renounce the dream of a return to some adamantine logos of pure correspondences. The attempt to retrieve a pre-lapsarian paradise of timeless signs is futile. And sometimes dangerous. Even the Enlightenment ideal of a perfect universal language was obliged to recognize the genuine resistances of cultural differences predicated upon linguistic diversities. Indeed, most attempts to instantiate an absolute universal language proved, in point of fact, to be thinly disguised imperial ploys to impose one particular language (e.g., French, English, Spanish) over other politically subordinate ones. Here Ricoeur's deep ethical commitment to social justice and equity come to the fore, a point to which we shall return in the next section.

As soon as there is language there is interpretation, that is, translation. *In principio fuit interpres.* Words exist in time and space, and thus have a history of meanings that alter and evolve. All translation involves some aspect of dialogue between self and stranger. Dialogue means just that, *dia-legein*, welcoming the difference. It is for this reason that in his essay "The Paradigm of Translation," Ricoeur proposes translation as a model of hermeneutics. Both in its normal role as a transfer of meaning from one language to another and in its more specific role as a transfer of understanding between different members of the same linguistic community, translation entails an exposure to strangeness. We are dealing with both an alterity residing *outside* the home language and an alterity residing *within* it. "The gap between a hypothetical perfect language and the concreteness of a living language is felt again and again in the linguistic exchange: it is always possible to say the same thing in a different way. Now, to say something in a different way, to say it in other terms, is exactly what a translator does from one language to the other. The inputs at the two ends, the two halves of the problem, so to speak, clarify each other and present again the enigma and the richness of the relationship with the Other."[8]

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It might be noted that Ricoeur's theory of translation here follows a similar emphasis to his theory of the *text* as model of interpretation in the seventies and eighties. In both cases, Ricoeur underscores the 'distancing' of sense. In

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8) "The Hermeneutics of Self," 8; see also Jervolino, "Translation as Paradigm for Hermeneutics and Its Implications for an Ethics of Hospitality," in *Ars Interpretandi*, vol. 5 (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2000), 57–69.

the case of the written text, this refers to how meaning gains autonomy from 1) the intention of the original *author* (e.g., Homer); 2) the original *world* of circumstances in which the author wrote or which she/he wrote about (Homeric Greece); and 3) the original *readers* of the text when it was first produced (the Greek community who read Homer's *Odyssey*).

A similar aspect of 'distantiation' occurs in translation where the estrangement of meaning precedes and even provokes the subsequent act of reading as a renewed reappropriation of the original meaning. Or as Ricoeur liked to put it, the best path to selfhood is through otherness. Thus while Schleiermacher and the romantic hermeneuts tended to favor a somewhat Platonic model of dialogue as a return (*anamnesis/aneignung*) to original meanings, Ricoeur might be said to favor a more Aristotelian model that stresses a) a plurality of meanings and b) a methodical appreciation of the complex 'poetics' and 'rhetorics' involved in the interpretation of linguistic meaning. (Hence, as already noted, the importance of Ricoeur's call, *pace* Gadamer and Heidegger, for a rigorous critical relationship with the human sciences—including linguistics—and a surpassing of the old dichotomy between 'understanding' and 'explanation'. Though it has to be said that the gap between Ricoeur and Gadamer became quite narrow in the end.)

For Ricoeur the matter is clear: there is no self-understanding possible without the labor of mediation through signs, symbols, narratives, and texts. The idealist romantic subject, sovereign master of itself and all it surveys, is replaced by an engaged self that only finds itself after it has traversed the field of foreignness and returned to itself again, altered and enlarged, or as James Joyce would say, 'othered'. The *moi* gives way to the *soi*, or more precisely to *soi-même comme un autre*. The arc of translation epitomizes this journey from self through the other, reminding us of the irreducible finitude and contingency of all language. And here, of course, we find echoes of Ricoeur's early writings on finitude and fallibility from *Freedom and Nature* to *Fallible Man*.

For Ricoeur, the task of *outer* translation finds correspondences in the work of *inner* translation. Indeed the very problem of human identity, as he shows in *Oneself as Another*, involves a discovery of an other within the very depths of the self. This 'other within' is itself plural, signifying by turns the unconscious, the body, the call of conscience, the traces of our relations with other human beings, or the sign of transcendence inscribed in the deepest interiority of the human heart. This means that the question of human identity or, more exactly, the answer to the question "*who* are you?" always entails a translation between the self and others both within the self and outside the self. Every subject, as Ricoeur puts it, is a tapestry of stories heard and told. This makes

of each one of us a narrative identity, operating as both authors and readers of our own lives. Which is another way of saying, *translators* of our own lives.

Life stories and life histories are always parts of larger stories and histories in which we find ourselves entwined (*empêtré*). This is where the paradigm of translation as transference to and fro, forward and back, reveals its everyday power. "To think, to speak is always to translate, even when one speaks to oneself, when one discovers the traces of the Other in oneself. After all, language, understood as a peculiarly human attribute, is always coupled to a specific and particular language and to the variety and plurality of languages."[9] Indeed, Ricoeur goes so far as to suggest that the future ethos of European politics, and eventually of world politics, should be one based upon an exchange of memories and narratives between different nations, for it is only when we translate our own wounds into the language of strangers and retranslate the wounds of strangers into our own language that healing and reconciliation can take place.[10]

2. The Ethics of Translation: Applied Hermeneutics

This brings us to Ricoeur's ultimate claim that an ethics of translation involves a process of inter-linguistic hospitality. The world is made up of a plurality of human beings, cultures, tongues. Humanity exists in the plural mode. Which means that any legitimate form of universality must always—if the hermeneutic model of translation is observed—find its equivalent plurality. The creative tension between the universal and the plural ensures that the task of translation is an endless one, a work of tireless memory and mourning, of appropriation and disappropriation, of taking up and letting go, of expressing oneself and welcoming others. The final word of Ricoeur's last major published book, *Memory, History and Forgetting* (2000, in French; 2005, in English), is 'incompletion' (*inachèvement*).[11] And this is telling. For it acknowledges that translation, understood as an endlessly unfinished business, is a signal not of failure but of hope. 'Fallible Man' finds a new vocation as 'Capable Man'.

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[9] "The Hermeneutics of Self," 9; and "La question de l'unité de l'oeuvre de Ricoeur: La paradigme de la traduction," *Archives de Philosophie* 4 (2004): 659–68.

[10] Ricoeur, "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," in *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, ed. Richard Kearney (London: Sage, 1996), especially the section entitled "The Model of Translation," pp. 4–5.

[11] Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 657; translated by David Pellauer as *Memory, History and Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Let me conclude, then, with some remarks on Ricoeur's appreciation of the *ethical* implications of translation as a hermeneutic model of existence. In an important essay entitled "Reflections on a new Ethos for Europe" (1992, in French; 1996, in English), Ricoeur outlines five ethical functions of translation.[12]

(a) A hermeneutics of translation provides, first, a basis for an *ethic of hospitality*. This, says Ricoeur, involves "taking responsibility in imagination and in sympathy for the story of the other, through the life narratives which concern the other."[13] In the cross-over of testimonies and memories between people of different cultural traditions we may witness a salutary transference permitting us to welcome the story of the other, the stranger, the victim, the forgotten one.

(b) Second, a hermeneutic of translation solicits an *ethic of narrative flexibility*. Cultures constantly face the challenge of resisting the reification of a founding historical or mythical event into a fixed dogma; they can do this by showing how each event may be told in different ways by different generations and by different narrators. Not that everything thereby becomes relative and arbitrary. On the contrary, acts of foundational suffering or struggle, for example, call out for compassion and justice; and the best way of achieving this is often to invite empathy with strangers and adversaries by allowing for a plurality of narrative perspectives. The resulting overlap may thus lead to what Gadamer calls a 'fusion of horizons' where diverse horizons of consciousness and conscience may at last find common ground.[14] A reciprocal transfer between opposite minds. "The identity of a group, culture, people or nation, is not that of an immutable substance," writes Ricoeur, "nor that of a fixed structure, but that, rather, of a recounted story." A hermeneutic exchange of stories effectively resists arrogant conceptions of cultural identity that prevent us from perceiving the radical implications of the principle of narrative translatability—namely, "the possibilities of revising every story which has been handed down and of carving out a place for several stories directed towards the same past."[15] This mode of attentiveness to stories other than our own—fostered by intercultural translatability—might be said to consort well with

12) "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," 5–14.
13) Ibid., 7. Another plea for a certain kind of understanding, wisdom, and phronetic 'reason' as alternatives to panic and fear before terror is offered by Corey Robin, "Reason to Panic," in "Fear Itself," special issue, *The Hedgehog Review* 5, no. 3 (Fall, 2003): 62–80.
14) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 273f.
15) "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," 7.

the virtue of detachment vis-à-vis one's own obsessive attachment to what is 'mine' and 'ours'.

(c) This leads us to a third ethical principle of translation—that of *narrative plurality*. Pluralism here does not mean lack of respect for the singularity and uniqueness of a particular event (historical, cultural, religious). It might even be said to increase our sense of awareness of such singularity, especially if it is foreign to us in time, space, or cultural provenance. "*Recounting differently* is not inimical to a certain historical reverence to the extent that the inexhaustible richness of the event is honored by the diversity of stories which are made of it, and by the competition to which that diversity gives rise."[16] Multiple perspectives need not betray the concrete specificity of an historical event. On the contrary, they may eloquently testify to its inexhaustible richness and suggestiveness. And this faithful testimony may in fact be deepened as we extend the circle of reference to include further or alternative perspectives. Ricoeur adds this critical point: "The ability to recount the founding events of our history in different ways is reinforced by the exchange of cultural memories. This ability to exchange has as a touchstone the will to share symbolically and respectfully in the commemoration of the founding events of other cultures, as well as those of their ethnic minorities and their minority religious denominations."[17] This point applies as much to events of pain and trauma as to events of pride and celebration.

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16) Ibid., 8. This principle of radical hermeneutic plurality calls for an equally radical pluralist politics. I would suggest a political theorist like Chantale Mouffe offers some interesting possibilities here when she talks about moving beyond an 'antagonistic' politics of us-versus-them to a more democratic 'agonistic' politics that fosters a robust and creative conflict of interpretations. She argues that when the political channels are not available through which conflicts can take an 'agonistic' form, they degenerate into the 'antagonistic' model of absolutist polarization between good and evil, the opponent being perceived as an 'enemy' or 'demon' to be destroyed. The mistakenness of apocalyptic politics is evident here. But there is a more subtle error committed by certain strands of liberal rationalism and individualism when they ignore the crucial motivational role played by communal affects, passions, and identifications in our contemporary world. Mouffe concludes that the goal of genuine democracy is not to move from a bipolar to a unipolar system of politics but to foster the emergence of a multipolar world with a balance among several regional poles allowing for a plurality of powers. By converting *antagonism* into *agonism*, we are allowing dissent to express itself within a common symbolic space, rather than resorting to violence. Adversaries thus become legitimate opponents, rather than illegitimate enemies. This, she suggests, is the only way to avoid the hegemony of one single hyperpower or the collapse into violent chaos. See her book, *On the Political*, (London: Routledge, 2005).

17) "Reflections on a New Ethos," 9.

(d) A fourth ethical function of translation is the *transfiguring of the past*. This involves a creative retrieval of the betrayed promises of history. It permits us, for example, to respond to our 'debt to the dead' and endeavor to give them a voice. The goal of tolerant testimonies is, therefore, to try to give a future to the past by remembering it in a more attentive way, both ethically and poetically. A crucial aspect of reinterpreting traditions is the task of discerning past promises that have *not yet* been honored. For "the past is not only what is bygone—that which has taken place and can no longer be changed—it also lives in the memory thanks to arrows of futurity which have not been fired or whose trajectory has been interrupted."[18] In other words, translations from the past can actually give an unfulfilled future to the past. For, as Ricoeur reminds us, the emancipation of the "unfulfilled future of the past is the major benefit that we can expect from the crossing of memories and the exchange of narratives."[19] It is especially the founding events of a particular, national, political, or religious community—traumatic or emancipatory—that require being reread in this critical manner. For, in so doing, we may unlock the potencies and expectancies that the subsequent unfolding of history has forgotten or betrayed. Fundamentalism, of whatever ideology, is another term for such betrayal. This is why hermeneutic tolerance involves a special acoustic, a particular practice of auditory imagination attuned to seminal moments of suffering or hope—as well as to the various complex testimonial and textual responses to those events—that are often occluded by Official History. "The past is a cemetery of promises that have not been kept," notes Ricoeur. And attentive modes of remembrance may provide ways of "bringing them back to life like the dry bones in the valley described in the prophecy of Ezekiel."[20]

(e) A fifth and final moment in the hermeneutics of translation is *pardon*. If empathy and hospitality towards others are crucial steps in an ethic of non-violence, there is something *more*—something that entails moving beyond narrative imagination to forgiveness. In short, the mutual translation of memories of suffering demands more than sympathy and duty (though these are

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[18] Ibid., 8. See also Ricoeur "Memory and Forgetting" and "Imagination, Testimony and Trust," in *Questioning Ethics*, ed. Mark Dooley and Richard Kearney (London: Routledge, 2004), 5–11 and 12–17. See also on this subject of critical and empathic remembrance, R. Kearney, "Narrative and the Ethics of Remembrance," in *Questioning Ethics*, 18–30.

[19] "Reflections on a New Ethos," 8. See also Francis Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 26–27; *Buddhists Talk about Jesus, Christians Talk about the Buddha*, ed. Rita Gross and Terry Muck (New York: Continuum, 2002); Swami Tyagananda, "Harmony of Religions," (lecture, Harvard University, April 8, 2000) (www.vedanta.org).

[20] "Reflections on a New Ethos," 9.

essential for any kind of justice). And this something 'extra' involves pardon insofar as pardon means 'shattering the debt'. Here the order of justice and reciprocity can be supplemented, but not replaced, by that of the order of 'charity and gift'. Such forgiveness demands huge patience, an enduring practice of 'working-through', mourning and letting go. But it is not a forgetful forgiveness. Amnesty can never be based on amnesia. It remembers our debt to the dead while at the same time introducing something other, something difficult almost to the point of impossibility, but something all the more important for that. One thinks of Brandt kneeling at Warsaw, Havel's apology to the Sudeten Germans, Hume's dialogue with Gerry Adams and the IRA, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, Hillesum's refusal to hate her hateful persecutioners. Or of certain survivors of 9/11 who, having witnessed what the terrorists did, or lost loved ones, still refused to cry vengeance.

Such exceptional moments signal a point in the hermeneutics of translation where an *ethics of justice* is touched by a *poetics of pardon*. The one does not and cannot replace the other. Justice *and* pardon are crucially important in our response to suffering. They are both called for. For, as Ricoeur reminds us, if at moments, charity does indeed exceed justice, "we must guard against substituting it for justice." Charity remains a surplus; and it is this very "surplus of compassion and tenderness [that] is capable of giving the exchange of memories its profound motivation, its daring and its momentum."[21] The surplus, evidenced in pardon, is endless in its demands for translation and inexhaustible in its resources. It is what makes the impossibility of forgiving possible.

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[21] Ibid., 11. For a more elaborate analysis of this point see Ricoeur, "Love and Justice," in *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, 23–40. See also here Ricoeur's concluding section on "Difficult Pardon" in *Memory, History and Forgetting* and Derrida's more deconstructive notion of 'impossible pardon' in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001). Notions of unconditional love, pardon, and compassion are by no means the exclusive preserve of the great monotheistic or religious Wisdom traditions. They are also centrally present in the philosophical tradition of ancient Greece, as we have noted elsewhere: see the conclusion to "On Terror" in my *Strangers, Gods and Monsters* (London: Routledge, 2003), 137: "Theseus sets out to slay the Minotaur. But Socrates declines that option. He argues instead that the Monster is best resisted by the guiding principle: 'do not harm, no matter what the circumstances'. Socrates prefers to stay on in the city than to become a murderer of its laws by escaping. Resolving to address the hidden cause of the Monstrous, rather than simply slay the beast, Socrates confirms his basic philosophy that it is better to suffer than to do wrong. He says no to the lure of sacrificial vengeance. He refuses to scapegoat." On the challenge of responding creatively, spiritually and therapeutically to our hidden monsters of fear, terror, and darkness, see Thomas Moore, *Dark Nights of the Soul*, (New York: Gotham Books, 2004).

Though no less difficult for that. That is why, as Julia Kristeva observes, "to forgive is as infinite as it is repetitive."[22]

In the difficult act of pardon, the empathy of translation between self and other must always remain attentive to the demands of justice. Pardon cannot forget protest any more than love can forget action.

[22] Julia Kristeva, "Forgiveness," *PMLA* 117, no. 2 (March 2002): 282, cited by Kelly Oliver in "Forgiveness and Subjectivity," *Philosophy Today* 47, no. 3 (2003): 280. Oliver offers a very useful critical overview of some of the most significant discussions of forgiveness in contemporary psychoanalysis and deconstruction, with particularly instructive attention to the work of Derrida, Arendt, and Kristeva. She concludes her analysis with a plea for an ethics of the unconscious, capable of combining responsibility with forgiveness: "Subjectivity requires revolt and transgression in order to individuate but it also presupposes forgiveness in order to belong to the community.... the revolt of those excluded from the dominant order... is seen as uppitiness, perversion or terrorism. Their revolt is not forgiven.... This withholding or foreclosure is an essential part of domination and oppression, which operate through the colonization of psychic space precisely by denying the possibility of sublimation, revolt and forgiveness." She proposes this response: "The notion of the unconscious gives us an ethics of responsibility without sovereignty. We are responsible for what we cannot and do not control, our unconscious fears and desires and their affective representations. In addition, we are responsible for the effects of those fears, desires and affects on others. This impossible responsibility entails the imperative to question ourselves and constantly engage in self-critical hermeneutics, which also gives meaning to our lives. Responsible ethics and politics requires that we account for the unconscious. Without doing so we risk self-righteously adhering to deadly principles in the name of freedom and justice." (289).

Paul Ricoeur was born on February 27, 1913 in Valence, France. His mother died shortly thereafter and his father was killed in the Battle of the Marne in 1915, so Ricoeur and his sister were reared by their paternal grandparents and an unmarried aunt in Rennes. They were devout members of the French Reformed Protestant tradition.Â But Ricoeur never accepted any version of a substance dualism in the person as the Cartesian cogito and the Kantian transcendental subject can be read to require. He did, however, accept Kantâ€™s doctrine regarding the antinomies of reason and the necessary distinction between theoretical and practical reason.