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Empathy in the Context of the Hermeneutics of Suspicion

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Abstract

We defend in this essay Paul Ricœur's hermeneutics of suspicion against Toril Moi's debunking of it as a misguided interpretation of the practice of critical inquiry, and we relate the practice of a rigorous and critical empathy to the hermeneutics of suspicion. For Ricœur, empathy would not be a mere psychological mechanism by which one subject transiently identifies with another, but the ontological presence of the self with the Other as a way of being —listening as a human action that is a fundamental way of being with the Other in which "hermeneutics can stand on the authority of the resources of past ontologies." In a rational reconstruction of what a Ricœur-friendly approach to empathy would entail, a logical space can be made for empathy to avoid the epistemological paradoxes of Husserl and the ethical enthusiasms of Levinas. How this reconstruction of empathy would apply to empathic understanding, empathic responsiveness, empathic interpretation, and empathic receptivity is elaborated from a Ricœurian perspective.

Keywords: Empathy; Hermeneutics of Suspicion; Understanding; Receptivity; Responsiveness

Résumé

Dans cet essai, nous prenons la défense de l'herméneutique du soupçon de Paul Ricœur contre la réfutation de Toril Moi qui y voit une interprétation erronée de la pratique de l'enquête critique, et nous mettons en relation la pratique d'une empathie rigoureuse et critique avec l'herméneutique du soupçon. Pour Ricœur, l'empathie ne saurait se réduire à un simple mécanisme psychologique par lequel un sujet s'identifie momentanément à un autre. Elle est une présence ontologique du moi à l'Autre – façon de se mettre à son écoute et une action humaine qui correspond à une manière fondamentale d'être avec l'Autre dans laquelle « l'herméneutique peut s'appuyer sur l'autorité des ressources des ontologies passées ». En procédant à une reconstruction rationnelle des implications d'une approche de l'empathie favorable à Ricœur, il est possible de ménager un espace logique pour l'empathie, afin que cette dernière évite les paradoxes épistémologiques de Husserl et les enthousiasmes éthiques de Levinas. Cet article tente de penser dans une perspective ricœurienne la manière dont cette reconstruction de l'empathie est susceptible de s'appliquer à la compréhension empathique, à la réactivité empathique, à l'interprétation empathique et à la réceptivité empathique.

Mots-clés : empathie ; herméneutique du soupçon ; compréhension ; réceptivité ; réactivité

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I. Introduction: Paul Ricœur, Philosopher of Empathy

This essay has two purposes. The first is to defend Paul Ricœur's hermeneutics of suspicion against Toril Moi's[1] debunking of it as a misguided interpretation of the practice of critical inquiry. The second, is to situate and elaborate the practice of a rigorous and critical empathy in relation to the hermeneutics of suspicion.

Paul Ricœur is generally not regarded as a philosopher of empathy, and the subtitle of this section is intended as a provocation to "consider the possibility." Ricœur is definitely not one in the way that Edith Stein, Max Scheler, or Edmund Husserl, are, whose works all contain dozens if not hundreds of references to "empathy [*Einfühlung*]" as well as explicit critical discussions of it, both positive and negative. Nevertheless, an argument can be made that Ricœur's approach, method(s), and rhetorical stance, are pervaded by empathy. The way he constantly navigates a path between the Continental and Anglo-American philosophical traditions creates a context for thinking of acceptance and tolerance characteristic of empathic engagement. The way he refuses to force a choice between hermeneutic phenomenology and ordinary language philosophy generates possibilities for expanding knowledge and practice in the context of the humanities, linguistics, and the social sciences. When, in a conflict of interpretations, dialectical disagreements inevitably emerge, Ricœur's commitment is that the debate be a productive one, without backing down from an enlivening confrontation, enriching the multiplicity of perspectives on fundamental issues that can be brought to bear.

Characteristic of most great teachers, Ricœur's implicit empathic attitude being acknowledged, the question still occurs what would an explicit treatment of empathy look like if Ricœur would have (condition contrary to fact) proposed one. Such a treatment must take the form of a rational reconstruction, based on existing texts and remain faithful to their meaning, even while elaborating the implications for empathy.

This reconstruction will be wide-ranging, speculative, inferential, and empathic. The treatment will traverse four aspects of empathy to which Ricœur's work directly contributes or marshals strong implications, including empathic understanding, empathic responsiveness, empathic interpretation, and empathic receptivity. These four aspects of empathy will be defined as the components of rigorous and critical empathy when the argument explicitly engages with empathy and suspicion in the section "From suspicion to empathy—and back." From the perspective of empathy, the method of this engagement with Ricœur's work will be to call out an "empathy lesson," "best practice," or strategic insight about empathy based on what he writes. The

[1] Toril Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

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starting point is arbitrary as all four aspects of empathy are intertwined and circle around to join the others.

II. The Dogmatic Stereotype of the Hermeneutics of Suspicion

On a personal note, the author was privileged to hear Professor Moi present in person the materials from her book, *Revolution of the Ordinary*, when she was in Chicago prior to the pandemic. She and her research are engaging, penetrating, powerful, and examples of authentic mind-expanding inquiry. I have thoroughly engaged Moi's text, and, especially like the debunking of structuralist and post-modern over-intellectualization that Moi undertakes from the nuanced position of ordinary language philosophy. This debate focuses on the essay with which I most strongly disagree: "Nothing is Hidden: Beyond the Hermeneutics of Suspicion." Isn't it always that way? So the reader is requested to keep in mind please the high esteem in which I hold Moi's work project and the amount I have learned from it. Yet this is *not* a softball commentary.

Toril Moi properly debunks dogmatic readings of texts (literary and historical) as concealing Freudian sexuality, Nietzschean slave morality, or Marxian exploitation, but she goes too far in attributing such stereotypes to Ricœur. Moi overlooks that Ricœur balances suspicion with listening, skepticism with sincerity, and betrayal with fidelity.

The occasion for this engagement with Toril Moi's[2] critique of Ricœur's hermeneutics of suspicion is a breakdown in charity in the sense of a "charitable reading" ("charitable" in Donald Davidson sense,[3] asking the reader to consider the strongest version of an argument rather than using a weakened version). In so far as charity and empathy share a commitment to opening a space of acceptance and tolerance, the breakdown is also one of empathy. This author begins by taking strong exception to Moi's interpretation of Paul Ricœur's "hermeneutics of suspicion." Moi's representation of the hermeneutics of suspicion applies only to its most clumsy, stereotyped applications, not to Ricœur's fundamental insight and position. Yes, there are Freudians, Nietzscheans, and Marxists, who beneath every bourgeois surface ideology predictably and invariably "discover" sexual and aggressive drives, resentment and slave morality, and the fetishism of alienated work relations. In the clumsy hands of these entry level interpreters, suspicions become paranoia. This is not suspicion; it is dogmatism.

While Ricœur may be many things, dogmatic he is not. Ricœur's definition balances "this double motivation: willingness to suspect; willingness to listen."[4] Ricœur is an inclusive, generous, horns-of-the-dilemma finessing individual committed to a comprehensive reading: "In our time we have not finished doing away with *idols* and we have barely begun to listen to *symbols*."[5] Such idols of interpretations need to be debunked, even if they might earn a high mark in undergraduate term papers (though that risks giving undergrads a bad name). And my reservations include

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[2] Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary*.

[3] Donald Davidson, "Radical Interpretation," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2001, first edition 1973), 136-7.

[4] Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy. An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 27.

[5] Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 27, Ricœur's italics.

validation and encouragement for Moi's debunking enterprises, even though she would not acknowledge Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* as belonging on the list of ground breaking works of such a hermeneutics of suspicion.

Moi emphasizes those passages in Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophers that counsel getting in touch with the evident and obvious in literature, plainly present in front of the reader. Many passages are available in which Wittgenstein writes to the effect that the confused philosopher is looking for something hidden, but it is right in front of her eyes. "Look and see," "Don't think, but look!" writes Wittgenstein.[6] On other occasions the matter is nuanced such that the answer, solution, or dissolution of the problem is "hidden in plain view" (as the saying goes). Moi begins with Wittgenstein, and so do we:

> The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something —because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of their inquiry do not strike people at all. Unless *that* fact has at some time struck them. —And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking, and most powerful.[7]

In most non-trivial inquires, a process of focusing one's attention on salient features of the problem occurs. If the inquiry has a foundation, does that mean it also has a superstructure? Or is it foundation "all the way down," or perhaps "all the way up"? Still, "*that* fact" (as Wittgenstein writes), some aspect of the foundation, has been over-looked in the inquiry with which Wittgenstein is engaging. Wittgenstein's guidance is to look and look again to reduce the risk that something has been over-looked.

Yet this matter of looking, observing, noting the obvious, may not be as simple as one might hope. Let us take a step back. In Chemistry 101, looking is a non-trivial exercise. The teacher tells the students to weigh the compound three times. looking at the dial of the scale, noting the read-out each time, then take the average to triangulate what one was seeing on the dial as the weight. One imagines that *looking* —whether as reading or as elementary scientific observation— is a simple task. Yet accuracy is not guaranteed. Practice is needed regardless of the form of receptivity, whether visually observing the calibrations on a scientific instrument or looking at the canals of Mars through a telescope with one's eyes. Of course, there are no canals on Mars, but a map was drawn of them none the less by Percival Lowell— and published to great acclaim.[8] Years later the mystery was solved. Lowell was seeing the blood vessels and structures of his own eye reflected as shadows —projection![9] Seeing the configuration of letters on a page or an image through a telescope as one thing rather than as another may not require anything to be hidden, but such an operation allows for a diversity of implicit descriptions, redescriptions, and

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[6] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte (London: Wiley Blackwell, 1953), §66, §93, §578.

[7] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §129.

[8] Percival Lowell, *Mars and Its Canals* (New York: Macmillan, 1906).

[9] Leon Jaroff, "What Lowell Really Saw When He Watched Venus," *The New York Times* (2002), https://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/10/science/what-lowell-really-saw-when-he-watched-venus.html?searchResultPosition=1.

interpretations. An unexpressed description or interpretation is not exactly hidden, but then again neither is it displayed. The suspicion turns out to be of the implicit, the unexpressed, the unattended, the invisible, that which is paradoxically hidden in plain view —okay, the out of sight and concealed.

Perhaps Wittgenstein was more a logician than a chemist (or a literary critic?), and here the logicians are checking to make sure that every open parenthesis has a corresponding closed parenthesis. The key is a matter of shifting of attention from background to foreground rather than from surface to depth. However, one must wonder whether in shifting attention versus diving beneath the surface the point is rather the same, just translated from the x-axis to the y-axis.

Bringing ordinary language philosophy to the reading of literature is on the critical path of Moi's initiative. Wittgenstein was famously fond of Tolstoy, though we do not know if he focused on the following quote, which, however, nicely expresses Pierre Buzukhov's struggle to experience and see what is hidden in plain view: expressed at literary length in the following passage:

> In the past he had never been able to find that great inscrutable infinite something. He had only felt that it must exist somewhere and had looked for it. In everything near and comprehensible he had seen only what was limited, petty, commonplace, and senseless. He had equipped himself with a mental telescope and looked into remote space, where that petty worldliness, hiding itself in misty distance, had seemed to him great and infinite merely because it was not clearly seen. And such had European life, politics, Freemasonry, philosophy, and philanthropy, seemed to him. But even then, at moments of weakness as he had accounted them, his mind had penetrated to those distances and he had there seen the same pettiness, worldliness, and senselessness. Now, however, he had learnt to see the great, eternal, and infinite in everything, and therefore—to see it and enjoy its contemplation—he naturally threw away the telescope through which he had till now gazed over men's heads, and gladly regarded the ever-changing, eternally great, unfathomable and infinite life around him. And the closer he looked. the more tranquil and happy he became. That dreadful question, What for? which had formerly destroyed all his mental edifices, no longer existed for him.[10]

Lacking Wittgenstein's engineering and philosophical training, Pierre has to work his way through Freemasonry, philosophy, philanthropy, wandering dazed through the aftermath of a battle, and politics before he is able to throw away the telescope and see what is hidden in front of his nose. The page number 1189 is itself a data point of significance, though not a fact within the narrative; and it points one, as reader, to the distance in narrative time that Pierre had to traverse before he was able to return home, literally seeing what was in front of him. "The great, eternal, and infinite" are available in the ordinary, everyday things around Pierre. And in true Wittgensteinian fashion, the problem is dissolved. To Wittgenstein's great credit, he does not say

[10] Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace* [1869], trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude, ed. Amy Mandelker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1189.

it is simple to see what is hidden in plain view —often it is hard to grasp— but Wittgenstein does urge being open to the possibility.

There is no avoiding the confrontation when Moi plays what can best be described as "dismissive and devaluing" with Ricœur's contribution.[11] Moi inaccurately attributes to Ricœur the intentional fallacy, i.e., the position of separating the author's intention from the meaning of the text, and doing so because he is supposedly a fellow traveler with Derrida, the *Tel Quel* group, and, inconsistently, a New Critic.[12] Derrida was Ricœur's student and assistant, going on to accomplishments that in some ways eclipsed his mentor and are not summarizable here. There is no doubt that Ricœur started out as a phenomenologist and little doubt that he ever changed his mind on the value of phenomenology, especially in its hermeneutic implementation. Ricœur translated Husserl's *Ideas* in the margins of the book itself while he (Ricœur) was in a German prisoner of war camp (in the margins because paper was hard to get). This attribution rebounds on the head of the author (Moi) if she thinks it is a bad idea to separate the author's intention from the resulting text (or, in other contexts, speech acts) as Ricœur does. This requires elaboration.

III. Texts Do Not Grow on Trees

The intentional fallacy is often not well understood and does not always prohibit discussing an author's intention in the context of literary criticism. However, the intentional fallacy does indeed consist in maintaining that the intention is the canonical, ultimately authoritative defining meaning of the text.

A bold statement of the obvious: Authors have intentions. Texts are not natural objects; they do not grow on trees; they have authors.[13] Less obvious, though perhaps not "hidden" in that dangerous way that concerns Moi: The meanings of what authors write often escapes the authors' initial intentional horizons. They also escape the historical context, the affect aroused in the reader (audience), taking on a life of their own in the culture and community. Friedrich Schleiermacher was fond of quoting Kant[14] as saying that we can understand an author better than the author understands himself. It is important to note that Kant made this statement about Plato's theory of ideas at the point at which he (Kant) was about to redescribe Plato as providing an early version of Kant's own critical project. Even given a critic's retrospective redescribing of a would-be competitor, the most accurate representation of any author's intention is still the work itself, the literary product. I hasten to add that the issue of what is intentionality is not solved by the representation of the author's intention as the literary product; but it does point to why one needs

[11] Especially starting at the bottom on Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary,* 199 and following.

[12] William K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy [1946]," in *the Verbal Icon* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1952), 3-18.

[13] "Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics," in *A Ricœur Reader. Reflections and Imagination*, Mario Valdés (ed.) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 325 (Lecture given in English at the Center for Philosophical Exchange; no translator specified).

[14] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* [1787], trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), B370.

hermeneutics as an approach to interpretation, since understanding without context risks distortions, disguises, and loss of meaning.

Moi and Ricœur are more intimate fellow travelers than Moi may imagine at least in so far as Ricœur aligns with Elizabeth Anscombe's account —do I dare say "theory" given Moi's anti-theoretic assertions (see below)— of actions (and intentions) under a description.[15] A different description seems to yield a different action, but there is still only one underlying action.) Thus, Ricœur's development as a phenomenologist is multi-dimensional in a way that includes his existential encounter with ordinary language philosophy.[16] Like Anscombe's position (and Moi's), Ricœur's position is highly nuanced:

> Tests of sincerity, as I shall state […] in the study devoted to narrative identity, are not verifications but trials that finally end in an act of trust, in a final testimony, regardless of the intermediary episodes of suspicion.[17]

How Ricœur's uses of "testimony," "attestation," and "trust" link up with *acknowledgement* and *recognition* requires an entire book (and Ricœur has written one[18]; and, I suggest, these uses leave much room for overlap in the thinking and reading of literature between Ricœur and Moi.

If one looks at Ricœur's[19] interpretations of literature —Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, and Thomas Mann in his engagement with narrative fiction— counterexamples to Moi's position (and its perhaps unwittingly caricatured reading of Ricœur) exist in abundance. The readings of how time gets narrativized and vice versa are subtle, nuanced, nonobvious, and oscillating between trust and suspicion. One can imagine Moi saying, "Lou —you just don't get the point," and maybe I don't. Moi continues: "The complete title is 'Nothing is hidden: Beyond the hermeneutics of suspicion.' Yes, by all means, be suspicious, but only at the right time and place —don't get stuck there. Continuously re-iterated suspicion is just as bad as reiterated skepticism" (or imagined words to that effect from Moi). Good point. Agreed. If that is the idea, we are in agreement. But Moi does not say one has to work from the surface to the depth and back again to appreciate that nothing is hidden, on the contrary, she does not allow for the depth as such or that the surface discloses, makes accessible, the depth. It sounds like —it comes across as an emphatic "the depth is an illusion. Don't go there!"

Here's the thing about Wittgenstein as one of the innovators in ordinary language philosophy. Wittgenstein is like a double-edged scythe, which cuts the wheat moving both to-and-fro. Moi's interpretation skillfully wields the blade of Wittgenstein. Yes, they both cut through the

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[15] On the uses of action under a description —that is, interpretation—, see Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe's penetrating contribution (*Intentions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959)).

[16] Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 68-80.

[17] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 72.

[18] Paul Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[19] Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

thicket of semantic entanglements to get at meaning as use. But remember well, he who lives by the scythe perishes by it, too.

Wittgenstein does indeed write "nothing is hidden"[20] —and he means it when he writes it. But he also explicitly writes the contrary:

> In the use of words, one might distinguish 'surface grammar' from 'depth grammar'. What immediately impresses itself upon us about the use of a word is the way it is used in the construction of the sentence, the part of its use —one might say— that can be taken in by the ear. And now compare the depth grammar, say of the word 'to mean', with what its surface grammar would lead us to *suspect*. No wonder we find it difficult to know our way about.[21]

Here Wittgenstein practically endorses being suspicious —as he writes, "*suspect*" (Wittgenstein's italics). Is this perhaps an inconsistency on the part of Wittgenstein? Not in this case! In the one context, Wittgenstein is talking about mental processes and expression; in the other context, about aspects of language. But, in the latter, depth *lives*. Thus, Moi's interpretation is at risk.

IV. Something is Hidden—in Plain View

Something is hidden. Thus, the debate is joined. Granted, there are several passages in which Wittgenstein writes to the effect that, note well, learned philosophers such as Russell, Frege, not to mention Locke and Kant, are overthinking things as regards such basic distinctions as meaning, mind, mental processes.[22] The depth is illusionary when it comes to trying to figure out what is occurring in conscious processes in people's minds. Meaning is not a mental process, or at least not fundamentally so. If you want to learn the meaning of a term, get out of your head, and consider the term's use in ordinary language.

Yet, when it comes to language, Wittgenstein resolutely endorses the distinction between misleading surface grammar and depth grammar. One recalls this distinction was given widespread currency in Bertrand Russell's debunking of imaginary objects such as the mental inexistence of unicorns.[23] Wittgenstein consistently sticks to it (the distinction between surface and depth grammar) through his early and later works.

If one wants to live by the sword that "nothing is hidden," as noted, one dies by that sword. One has to argue that neither Sherlock Holmes nor Freud are "digging beneath the surface." If Sherlock is not exercising suspicion, then I would not know it. Both these thinkers definitely spend a lot of time disclosing what is hidden, disguised, and/or unknown.

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[20] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §435.

[21] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §664; 168e; italics by author.

[22] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §89, §11, §387.

[23] See Bertrand Russell, "Descriptions [1919]," in Robert Ackerman (ed.), *Classics of Analytic Philosophy* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), 15-24.

Freud's use of archeological metaphors is pervasive, and in these passages, Freud even writes of using a shovel to dig beneath the surface. The hermeneutic circle starts to spin. Freud's use[24] is closely akin to Wittgenstein's comparison of language to an ancient city:

> Our language can be seen as an anxiety city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods, and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and unform houses.[25]

This is Wittgenstein, the structuralist —language is a synchronous structure where the past lives alongside the present as the modern upgrade of indoor plumbing in the 16th century Italian Palazzo lives in our own day. Nothing is hidden here —point awarded to Moi. This supports Moi's grinding devaluing of depth until one realizes —nothing is hidden *except* the historical development of the language, including language's development into the future as new suburbs of scientific and pop cultural language surround the ancient city center. Maybe we should just agree to dance in the chaos —dance in the chaos of multiple simultaneously changing variables in complex systems.

Further unanticipated consequences occur of taking such an extreme position as "nothing is hidden": Would Moi align with Gadamer's approach that there is no neutral or innocent engagement with literature or art—that the encounter is informed by one's pre-judgments in the rich (not negative) sense of the word "prejudice"? Gadamer relies on Heidegger's[26] elaboration of the derivative form of interpretation from understanding as a for-having (*Vorhaben*), for-seeing (*Vorsehen*), and for-grasping (*Vorgreifen*), which in plain English (or German) mean a plan (or intention), a design, and an anticipation. Such pre-judgments are not obvious, so evidently, they are thereby latent, hidden, and in need of surfacing, disclosing, or unmasking.

If the revolution of the ordinary aims at recovering and bringing a "beginner's mind" to the reading of literary texts, then the training consists precisely in traversing episodes of the above-cited exercise of suspicion to discover what is already present in plain view in the fore-structure of interpretation. By all means, bring a "beginner's mind" to the text; but the challenge is that one approaches such a *tabula rasa* asymptotically only by identifying and setting aside the multitude of pre-judgments, in which one already inevitably lives. The plain view is not always as plain as one might wish or imagined. The beginner's mind become available after much effort, experience, and an encounter with a suspicion as synonymous with a "second naivete" in Áron Buzási's astute reading of Ricœur.[27]

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[24] Sigmund Freud, "The Aetiology of Hysteria," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 3, trans. dir. James Strachey (New York/London: W.W. Norton, 1896), 192; "Civilization and its Discontents," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21, trans. dir. James Strachey (New York/London: W.W. Norton, 1930), 69.

[25] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §18.

[26] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* [1927], trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 191, (H150) §32.

[27] See Áron Buzási, "Paul Ricœur and the Idea of Second Naivety," *Études ricœuriennes/Ricœur Studies*, vol. 13/2 (2022), 39-58, which limitations of space preclude further discussion here.

Still, Moi elaborates an approach to literary criticism that is penetraing and powerful in its ability to debunk the notoriously endless excesses of structuralism, deconstructionism, and post modern everything. She is able effectively to use Ricœur as a straw man, which is sure *not* to be appreciated by Ricœur scholars, and yet Ricœur is not a bad choice, even when he is distorted. Unlike Derrida where one is especially challenged to hit a moving, zig zagging target, Ricœur is coherent and consistent —and intelligible— and when he takes a position in his developmental trajectory, though challenging in the amount of material he proposes to integrate, he sticks to the position. Thus, Ricœur is worth critizing, even if the criticizing misses the mark.

V. The Real Target is Literary Criticism Itself

Ricœur aside (who really requires no defense), the real target of Moi's debunking is literary criticism itself. "Understood as the work of reading, literary criticism has no method."[28] "A theory is not a method."[29] Ouch! Even though Bakhtin does get a favorable review (and a "pass"), Moi aims to do for literary criticism what Wittgenstein (and, to a lesser extent, Cavell) did for academic, ivory tower philosophy. Blow it up.

Since the proof of practice occurs in the application, let us take a look at what Moi actually does when she engages with literary fiction and literary history in her monumental contribution on Ibsen.[30] As one might expect, she discusses Ibsen's personal life, growing up in poverty, lack of university education, his intentions and the historical context, in which his theatrical innovations find an audience and the receptivity of the audience to his innovations. The hermeneutic circle is complete. How could someone, Henrik Ibsen, who ought to have been a Lutheran bachelor farmer, end up a good family man with such deep insight into the social and psychological struggles of the women of his day (and in many ways, not only of his day)?

Rich in empathic detail, Moi's contribution[31] is at risk of doing all the things for which she denounces the hermeneutics of suspicion. Her work engages the deep structure and the historical method in its alignment and misalignment with modernist theory. Today (or at least prior to Moi's Ibsen study) no one hears about the prevailing idealism (and anti-idealism) of Ibsen's day, because it (the idealism) has been so completely overturned, debunked, and buried (if one may use that word). One can't understand Wittgenstein without understanding that he was having a conversation with Frege and Russell; and one can't understand Ibsen's innovations in play writing without appreciating the idealism which he was contesting. The idealism prevailing in Ibsen's day is truly hidden from view (and from us), because, in part thanks to Ibsen, it was so thoroughly and resoundingly defeated. Moi's literary work exposes the literary backstory, the historical context — shows forth that which was hidden, but not really in plain view, beneath the historical detritus of debunked idealism. Ibsen is not a realist; he is a modernist.

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[28] Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary*, 178.

[29] Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary*, 192.

[30] Toril Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism. Art, Theater, Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[31] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism.*

At the risk (long since incurred) of over-simplification, Moi's insight is that when Nora slams the door in *A Doll's House* (1879), the echo announces the arrival of modernity, feminism, anti-idealism, and *avant-garde* theatre, all at once. In this, the deepest sense, Moi is completely consistent and on target. Moi's many worthy goals include social justice and the empowerment of women in areas where power has noticeably been lacking. Even though Moi's critical work on Ibsen was published prior to her being knocked off the horse, Saint-Paul-like, on the road to historicism by the lightning bolts of Wittgenstein, Austin, Conant, Cavell, and ordinary language philosophy, Moi shows one how to use literature —remember, meaning *is* use in the revolution of the ordinary— for one's own specific purposes.

Moi's essay on "Reading as the Practice of Acknowledgement" wisely declines to define literature or equate it with fiction. Moi has already answered the question, What is the meaning of literature? in engaging with Wittgenstein's approach to meaning, namely, "meaning is use." Literature —not the mere word, the particular practices of writing and reading literature— is useful for and gives meaning to as many forms of life as there are readers and authors. Literature may even be an end in itself, not requiring any use for pleasure, entertainment, moral improvement, moral degradation, training, political action, tips and techniques, strategic misinformation, and so on.

The issue is that Moi does not connect the dots between reading and reading as a form of acknowledgement. Reading is a practice. Reading is a practice of decoding, about which, incidentally Wittgenstein had quite a lot to say.[32] In a broader sense, reading is a practice of calling forth that which is not present in the moment, but lives in the future, in the past, in present imagination, or in a mixture of all three. The practice of reading gives the reader access to a world, which is an amalgamation of phenomena the reader has experienced and those s/he has not experienced or may never experience. That is the power of language, in particular, the conditional contrary to fact tense and fictional narratives or historical reconstructions based on such a tense.

Moi emphasizes that reading calls forth acknowledgement. Reading makes something present. Whenever one is in the presence of something that is an expression of human thought, emotion, or being, then one acknowledges the human source and situation that is expressed in the narrative, whether artistic, historical, or ordinary. That's always a possibility, and it may always be required to get started in engaging with the humanity expressed in the text or artistic product. Still, the connecting of dots is long and a lot more work may usefully be done to connect the practice of reading with recognition.

One may think one has a boring life like a boring character in Beckett, Flaubert, or Fontaine; but this boring life encapsulates an entire and amazing universe of individual, familial, and community dynamics, conflicts, and struggles that, one (i.e., you), the individual have to navigate and survive.

In the final sections of Moi's work,[33] one does not know if she thinks of owning the drama of the ordinary as opposed to restoring it to the shallows of meaning by debunking its depth. Key term: depth. But either way, the everyday is not ordinary —it has a depth that is unimaginable

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[32] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §156-171.

[33] Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary*.

upon first encounter, but opens up to a vast field of human experience, rich in its emotions and potential actions. Thus, the revolution of the ordinary is either not ordinary or not revolutionary.

This is the reversal of the revolution of the ordinary. In what sense? As Moi quotes Simone de Beauvoir, one of the reasons we turn to literature is for adventure and obtaining a taste of another life. Here "taste" captures an aspect of "empathy". Yes, this can be high drama or comedy as when Ibsen's Peer Gynt confronts the Great Bogue in the swamp and has to go around; but it can also be discovering the adventure in the everyday. Moi takes an important step towards connecting the dots between reading and acknowledgement when she quotes de Beauvoir, attributing to literature and reading the possibility of giving us a "taste of another life."[34] That is the empathic moment.

VI. From Suspicion to Empathy —and Back

Now that this essay has defended Paul Ricœur's hermeneutics of suspicion against Toril Moi's[35] debunking of it as a misguided interpretation of the practice of critical inquiry, this essay turns to relating the practice of a rigorous and critical empathy explicitly to Ricœur's hermeneutics of suspicion. Without using the word "empathy," Ricœur has much to contribute to the philosophy of empathy.

Defining one's terms upfront is a best practice. Though it is hard to say just a little about the distinction "empathy," I shall try. The four aspects of a rigorous and critical empathy have been separately defined[36] and will be reconstructed in Paul Ricœur as a philosopher of empathy include:

1. *empathic receptivity*: being open to the animate expressions of life of the other person, resulting in a vicarious experience of the other individual's experience (feeling, affect, sensation, emotion); this is often also called "affective" or "bottom up" empathy;
2. *empathic understanding*: appropriation and appreciation of who the Other is as a possibility; recognition and acknowledgement of the Other as a possible way of being in the world, using Heidegger's sense of "understanding" as understanding of possibility[37]; for example, Hanno's father, Thomas, understands his son (Hanno) as the possibility of success in business whereas Hanno wants to be an artist, which is a failure of empathic understanding;
3. *empathic interpretation*: this is the aspect of the folk definition of empathy – adopt the Other's point of view; take a walk in the Other's shoes, but do not forget to take off one's own before doing so, lest one succumb to projection;
4. *empathic responsiveness*: this is an optimal responsiveness to the Other, based on *listening* to the Other and responding such that the listener communicates back a form of words

[34] Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary*, 230.

[35] Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary*.

[36] Lou Agosta, "Introduction. Rewriting the Definition of Empathy," in *A Rumor of Empathy. Rewriting Empathy in the Context of Philosophy* (New York: Springer, 2014), 4-6.

[37] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 188 (H148) §32.

or gesture that shows the listener has "gotten" what the speaker has experienced; this aspect of empathy corresponds to the speech act of storytelling or providing a narrative or concise micro-narrative in response.

The reader may say that this four-part definition of a rigorous and critical empathy, admirable in its conciseness, nevertheless raises as many questions as it answers, and an entire book would be needed to address them. Fortunately, one is available.[38] After situating Ricœur's contribution to relating to the Other, these aspects of empathy will be made explicit in Ricœur's contribution to the philosophy of empathy.

Paul Ricœur's *Oneself as Another* —not merely the title of the work, but the manner of relating oneself to the Other— provides a leading thread to empathic understanding. This finds a middle way to the self from the Other between the sincerity of sameness and the suspicion of identity. In the Tenth Study: What Ontology in View, Ricœur works through Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation and its transfer and construction of the sense "Other" by means of appresentation, analogical apprehension, and pairing.[39] The accusation against Husserl of solipsism is an epistemological problem that cannot be completely solved epistemologically. In Ricœur's reading, Husserl's movement from the self to the Other is met by a return movement from the Other to the self. This return movement from the Other to the self occurs in Levinas.[40] The Other makes an unconditional and unqualified —and in that sense, infinite— demand on the self to take responsibility for relating with integrity. The Other exclaims, "Don't kill me!" which is Levinas' radicalization of the basic ethical demand to engage the Other with dignity and respect. Yet Ricœur refuses to choose between Husserl's epistemology and Levinas ethics.

This opens a logical space for the reconstruction of an account of empathy specific to Ricœur. How so? First, Husserl displaces empathy [*Einfühlung*] "upstairs" —using the Kantian term— above his transcendental aesthetics: "The theory of experiencing someone else, the theory of so-called "empathy," belongs in the first story above our 'transcendental aesthetics'"[41] (Husserl 1929/31: 147 [173]). Empathy gets "kicked upstairs," and, in that sense, devalued by Husserl by being removed from the foundation of intersubjectivity, at least in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation. (However, in other texts, Husserl migrates empathy [*Einfühlung*] from the periphery to the center of Husserlian subjectivity.)[42] Second, for Levinas, empathy, as a psychological mechanism by which one transiently identifies with the Other, falls on the side of totality, not infinity. Any would-be empathic relation is not bad as such, just incomplete, not fundamental. The Other is an absolute presence and this presence is an ethical one. The Other is presented by the human face, and ethics gives us the lens to receive it:

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[38] Lou Agosta, *Empathy in the Context of Philosophy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[39] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 334.

[40] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* [1961], trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

[41] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* [1929-1931], trans. Dorion Cairns (Hague: Nijhoff, 1970), 147 [173].

[42] "Husserl's Rewriting of Empathy in Husserl," in *A Rumor of Empathy. Rewriting Empathy in the Context of Philosophy* (New York: Springer, 2014), 97-118.

> The dimension of the divine opens forth from the human face […] The proximity of the Other, the proximity of the neighbor, is in being an ineluctable moment of the revelation of an absolute presence […] Ethics is the spiritual optics.[43]

In a masterpiece of studied ambiguity, Ricœur then refuses to choose between Husserl and Levinas:

> From this confrontation between Husserl and Levinas results the suggestion that there is no contradiction in holding the movement from the Same toward the Other and that from the Other toward the Same to be dialectically complementary.[44]

This is the point at which a logical space can be made for empathy to avoid the epistemological paradoxes of Husserl and the ethical enthusiasms of Levinas. Yet the title already said it —one gets one's self— the humanness of one's self —from another— the Other.

Ricœur then turns to Heidegger, who minimizes the ethical aspect of conscience (*Gewissen*) in the context of Heidegger's understanding of *Dasein*'s relation with itself —the call of the authentic self in resoluteness to the one distracted and lost in the automaticity and inauthenticity of everyday business. This address —to oneself as another— reminds Dasein of the possibility of resoluteness in the face of death and choosing authentically. Heidegger then assigns a "special hermeneutic of empathy [*Einfühlung*]"[45] to a follow up ontological analysis of being-with [*Mitsein*] as undercutting empathy as a psychological mechanism as taxonomized by Max Scheler,[46] and then Heidegger moves on. Ricœur next calls out Gadamer's equation of *phronēsis* with *Gewissen*.[47] The latter reminds Dasein of the diversity of possibilities of flourishing including authentic relations with the Other, the *thou*. Both minimize the ethical implications of the distinctions in relation to fundamental ontology.

For Ricœur, empathy would not be a mere psychological mechanism by which one subject transiently identifies with another. It would be the ontological presence of the self with the Other in a way of being —listening as a human action that is fundamental to Dasein's way of being in which "hermeneutics can stand on the authority of the resources of past ontologies."[48] Empathy would be defined ontologically as being present with the Other, being with the Other, in a space of acceptance and tolerance.

Is this empathic *being with* the Other an ethical relation or an epistemological relation? The relation definitely has implications for knowledge and ethics; yet it is first and foremost a way of being with the Other, an ontological relation without the determinations of knowledge and ethics

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[43] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 78.

[44] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 340.

[45] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H125 (pagination of the German Niemeyer edition).

[46] Max Scheler, *Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühle* [1913], in Maria Scheler and Manfred Frings (eds), Scheler's *Späte Schriften*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 9 (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1967).

[47] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 352.

[48] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 20.

added. Without the Other, the self is empty, a transcendental point, an ego accompanying one's representation, on the horizon of dialectical illusion. For Ricœur and a Ricœur-sourced account of empathy, a strong candidate to fill the logical space is with a narrative of the self and Other.

The story-teller gets his or her being human from the listener (or reader), calling the individual not just to the role of an entertainer putting on a good show (although that too occurs), but to the possibility of a human being giving the listener an emotional experience —laughter, high spirits, sadness, fear, pity— in relation to another human being as represented in the narrated drama. The Good Samaritan —in the parable of the same name— gets his humanness (being human) from the traveler who has been waylaid by robbers and whose suffering —disclosed empathically— inspires intervention. If the reader (listener) can delay for a moment hearing this story as about ethics, the empathic dimension opens up. The Priest and the Levite experienced empathic distress and cross over. The Samaritan's empathy is such that he recognizes the suffering humanity in the survivor and decides to get involved. His empathy tells him what the Other is experiencing —pain and suffering— and the Samaritan's way of being as a neighbor —tell him what to do about it. Yes, of course, the result is ethically valid and applaudable, but one is also creating an empathic community where possibilities of neighborliness flourish across many dimensions. In other examples based on this paradigm, the parent gets his or her own being human from the infant, and, in turn, returns it to the infant as what is properly taken to be parent-child empathy. The therapist gets the possibility of her empathy from being with the client and returns it to him as part of the treatment where empathy is on the critical path to a restored sense of integrity, wholeness, and well-being. The friend gets her being human from the person whom she befriends only to give it back to him as an empathic relationship in which the being human (humanness) is disclosed, enhanced, and sustained in its very existence by being shared. In every one of these examples the individual is humanized by the Other and this humanizing being with the Other is the basis for the empathic relationship, in which the one empathizes with the Other.

It is a fair question whether one can be with the Other without being with the individual ethically. Taking a clue from Ricœur, this too is a choice that should not be forced —that one does not have to make. The practice of a rigorous and critical empathy is challenging in that the empathic individual, in every case cited above, gets his or her own being human (humanness) from the one with whom the empathy is occurring.

When Ricœur says "With this aporia of the other, philosophical discourse comes to an end" (and so does the book!).[49] Ricœur is explicitly referring to Levinas and the aporia of whether the Other is a person, the moral law, God, or remains unknown. However, Ricœur might just as well have been referring to the possibility of empathic relatedness. Recognition of the Other is on the critical path to a complete performance of empathy as the practice of a rigorous and critical engagement with the Other. Ricœur's[50] uses of "testimony," "attestation," and "trust" link up with acknowledgement and recognition and require an entire book. As noted above, Ricœur has written one (*The Course of Recognition*). A single quotation[51] opens up the issues of self-deception and narrative identity. Ricœur's position on attestation—bearing witness, declaring formally and "on

[49] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 355.

[50] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 72.

[51] Cited above Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 72.

the record" that someone and something exists —shows the way forward from the particular problematic of empathic relatedness.

At this point, the rational reconstruction of what Ricœur might have said about empathy turns from empathic being with the Other to empathic responsiveness to the Other. The provider of empathy responds to the experience of the person receiving the empathy with recognition, acknowledgement, and/or other forms of language and gesture that enables the recipient to "get" that the Others' experiences of struggle, suffering, or accomplishment have been acknowledged and grasped in their humanity. One can have the most accurate empathy in the world and really appreciate what the Other is experiencing vicariously; but unless one is able to communicate to the Other that one has grasped that with which she is engaged, one's empathy is like a tree in the forest that falls without anyone being there —it moves air molecules, but it does not make a sound. No one is listening. It does not make a difference. Empathic responsiveness is a basic part of relating empathically. Without empathic responsiveness one has a good, solid empathic intention, but the empathy is incomplete until addressing the Other explicitly includes the individual in the relationship.

At this point, it may seem that one has to read Ricœur against himself. Ricœur gives some sixteen definitions of "recognition,"[52] but, at least in my understanding, not one of them maps to recognition as simple acknowledgement or recognition of the Other in and through empathic responsiveness to the Other. The definitions seem to overshoot with recognition as gratitude, mutuality, and reciprocity, or the definitions fall short with recognition as domination, surrender, or master-slave struggle. While empathic responsiveness may indeed include gratitude, the latter is neither necessary nor sufficient; and though the Hegel's master-slave dialectic may be the mother of all struggles for recognition, the surrender of the one to the Other in the face of death is not an adequate fit for the acceptance and tolerance characteristic of empathic relatedness.

But what if empathic responsiveness gets expressed as telling a story —a narrative? Might that be a way forward for a reconstruction of a Ricœur-friendly account of empathic responsiveness? The would-be empathizer listens to the account of the Other. The account itself is a narrative. Whether delivered in-person or in-fiction in a story, the narrative is a way of being with the Other in the telling, in the Other's struggle or accomplishment, which, in turn, find a form of words—the listener's narrative based on the Other's narrative —to give back to the Other the experience the listener has formulated based on what the listener has heard. This becomes a contribution —input— to the formation, transformation, or consolidation of the Other's identity, a narrative identity in this case. The speaker and listener iteratively form a hermeneutic circle. Indeed nothing says that the speaker, talking into the gracious and generous listening of the would-be empathizer, cannot formulate his or her own story, in a kind of "Ah ha!" moment ("*Augenblick*") of realization. In such a special, limiting case, the listening would turn out to have been a creative listening that shifted the speaker out of unempathic stuckness through the listener's listening alone as such. Though relatively rare, such occurrences are not unheard of. Human experience in its

[52] Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, 6-8.

breath and depth already has a pre-narrative quality and structure that makes it ready for narrating; and, as Ricœur asserts, the examined life is a narrated one.[53]

Since most good listeners do not necessarily deploy literary skill in their formulations of empathic responses and since one's response to the Other in one's physical presence must be relatively concise to be effective, the story told is often a micro-narrative, rather like the punchline of a fable or folktale. Many such micro-narratives have the simple form of recognition or acknowledgement (defined here as validating the experience of the Other in having survived or reached a goal) where what is recognized is the accomplishment, struggle, suffering, or humanity of the Other.

The empathic process is entrained, called forth, occasioned, by the narrative. The empathic presence of the gracious and generous listening brings forth the community and expands the empathy in it. The empathic listener (which may include the speaker talking to the present listener) tells the story of the Other's struggle or accomplishment and that brings forth the reciprocity and mutuality of which Ricœur writes.[54] It establishes a community in imparting the same qualitative experiences vicariously in and to the listener, based on the corresponding events in the speaker's story. There is no guarantee that the empathy as pattern-matching of an emotion between individuals works just the same, but in such a case the empathic context may be sufficient. There is no guarantee or even requirement that the possibility one understands from the story is the same as the possibility the other person appreciates. Yet the plurality and variety of possibilities are an opening for empathy to do what it does best, build relatedness where previously there was lack of relatedness, asymmetry, disconnection and isolation. The storytelling ends up creating a community.

Having engaged empathic understanding and empathic responsiveness, what about empathic interpretation and empathic receptivity? Let us not overlook the obvious, that which is hidden in plain view —as Moi might say. Interpretation is a derivative form of understanding. This points to the folk definition of empathic interpretation— taking a walk in the other's person's shoes. Change one's perspective. Consider an alternative point of view (also a best practice in critical thinking). What is often missed in citing the folk definition of empathy is that one must take off one's own shoes before trying on the Other's or incur the risk of projecting one's own issues onto the Other. In considering how a text addressed to someone —we might say "addressed to an Other"— is appropriated, Ricœur writes:

> The term "point of view" was used to describe the various possible solutions contributed by novelist of the past to this difficult problem [of appropriation]: a total view of the characters through whose eyes the author sees everything that is shown, the annihilation of the author in a story which tells itself all alone and so on.[55]

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[53] "Life. A Story in Search of a Narrator [1987]," trans. J.N. Craay and A.J. Scholten, in Mario Valdés (ed.), *A Ricœur Reader. Reflections and Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 434-5.

[54] Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, 153-61.

[55] *Appropriation* [1972], trans. John Thompson, in Mario Valdés (ed.), *A Ricœur Reader. Reflections and Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 86-98.

Echoing Barthes' celebrated article on the death[56] —Ricœur's "annihilation"— of the author, Ricœur goes on to take the position that the author may indeed "die," but she/he does not do so until after having given birth to the work. As noted above, texts are not natural objects; they do not grow on trees; they are made by human beings[57] writing sentences. Yet once written down, the author's intention and interpretation are one opinion and one interpretation among a diversity of others. The author has a valid moral claim of a copyright, but her or his opinion as to the text's meaning are one among many.

However, that is not the point for purposes of a rational reconstruction of what Ricœur might have said about empathy in the context of a hermeneutics of suspicion. The omniscient narrator of the realist novel provides a degree of empathic access to the characters in a novel that would require years of committed listening to the Other to develop, and even then without being certain one knew the Other. The omniscient narrator goes beyond intuition, subliminal educated guess, perception of fine-grained details in a "delicacy of impressions," and becomes a "miracle of empathy." In contrast, in the real world, the human practice of empathy is fallible and finite. What makes empathy "rigorous and critical" is precisely that it can be wrong, misfire, or breakdown. In empathy, one is sometimes mistaken about the emotions, affects, feelings, and experiences that one attributes to other people. That is the moment for hermeneutic suspicion. Someone tells me something —I have to decide whether or not to believe it— to credit it, discredit it, or question it further. Usually, one goes along with the story, at least provisionally; but checks for inconsistencies, loose ends, and motivated conflicts of interests. One has further conversation with the Other, creating an empathic space of acceptance and tolerance, in which the source of suffering or the secret with which the Other is struggling is invited to come forth into a safe space of acceptance and tolerance.

Knowing Ricœur's commitment to the reading of Kant, a reconstruction of "empathic receptivity" takes its start from the Kantian meaning of "receptivity."[58] Receptivity is the form of intuition in the Transcendental Aesthetic of Kant's First Critique—receptivity to that which is further processed into one's experience of the world of nature by the synthetic functions of the categories of the understanding. Now, in engaging receptivity to the Other, the distinction is shifted from nature to community (intersubjectivity). Here "receptivity" is displaced in the direction of one person's openness to the experience of the other person. From the Kantian perspective, the matter is complex, and this reading of Kant acknowledges that in the context of Kant's 2nd Critique, the person shows up in the experience of the Other as respect—the effect (and affect) of the moral law upon the individual; and in the context of the 3rd Critique, the person shows up as sociality and the common communicability of affect in a *sensus communus*. For purposes of a reconstruction, it is useful to assert that the form of receptivity in empathic receptivity is listening

[56] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press/HarperCollins, 1968), 142-8.

[57] Ricœur, "Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics," 325.

[58] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* [1787], trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

to the Other. A conversation about empathic receptivity without a place for listening to the Other will be inadequate and incomplete.[59]

The strategy is to shift the distinctions applied by Ricœur in engaging with an aesthetics of receptivity as relating to a literary or historical work in the direction of relating to the Other. This is workable because the practices of reading and of empathizing are not just parallel, they also make use of similar underlying functions of receptivity, shifting different points of view, understanding of possibilities, and explicating responding to the Other narratively. To connect the dots between this reconstruction and what Ricœur actually writes, it is useful to turn to his engagement with the aesthetics of receptivity. Ricœur turns from rhetoric to aesthetics:

> A new element enriching poetics arises here out of an "aesthetic" rather than a "rhetoric," if we restore to the term "aesthetic" the full range of meaning of the Greek word *aisthésis*, and if we grant to it the task of exploring the multiple ways in which the work, in acting on a reader *affects* that reader. This being-affected has the noteworthy quality of combining in an experience of a particular type passivity and activity, which allows us to consider as the 'reception' of a text the very 'action' of reading it.[60]

The way the work *affects* the reader is arguably a function of the reader's empathic receptivity to that text. While many analogies exist between reading a text and empathizing with an Other, this is not a mere analogical argument. The practices of empathy and reading are applying the same underlying empathic shift of perspective, understanding of possibilities, skills, techniques, and methods. Reading a text and "reading" an Other combine and reverse directions with empathizing with an Other and empathizing with a text and the characters in it. Reading literature is an empathic practice—not merely analogous to one, though it may be that too.

Reading is an empathic practice in that it engages with an Other —*the* Other— and does so at several levels. There are several levels of otherness —the Other of the character in the text is the most readily available— there is the implied Other addressed by the implied author, the Other of the narrator, who collapses into the implied author but often is distinct, and the actual author, who writes the words. Fiction as well as historical writing are thick with otherness, which, in turn, seemingly inevitably calls forth and calls for the practice of empathy. Paul Ricœur's approach was already so steeped in empathy that he did not need to be explicit about the word "empathy" itself, but perhaps lacking the extent of his empathy, we do.

The experience captured in being empathically receptive to the Other is never a translation of the Other's original experience; but it does not thereby follow that it is impossible, bad, or inadequate. The experience captured in empathic receptivity and brought to words is a vicarious experience, which, by definition, is not the original. Those who wish to devalue a translation point out —Paul Ricœur nicely parodies the objection— "a translation can only be bad because it can

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[59] For a detailed engagement of Kant with empathy see Lou Agosta, "A Rumor of Empathy in Kant," in *A Rumor of Empathy. Rewriting Empathy in the Context of Philosophy* (New York: Springer, 2014), 31-52.

[60] Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 2, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 399, italics are Ricœur's.

never be the original."[61] Bottom up, affective empathy —empathic receptivity to the emotions of the Other— struggles with a similar fate in emotional-affective matching. One's empathy can only be bad —inadequate— because it is a vicarious experience of the Other—never the original one.

With a literary reading, appropriating, and rendering that actually delivers something of the original experience of the original reader of the work vicariously, the translation both overshoots and undershoots the original, leaving out words that lack correlatives in the target language or adding verbiage to unpack words in the original language that lack concise correspondents in the target. Translating between different natural languages occurs under the illusion —or phantasy— of perfect correspondence. With a translation crib or pony, one gets a line-by-line rendering of words—nothing is lost in the translation, nothing except the original, whether poem, narrative, or vicarious experience of the Other's experience. Ricœur proposes substituting faithfulness versus betrayal[62] for the false dichotomy of translatability versus untranslatability in both the cases of translating texts and translating between familiar and the foreign (i.e., between oneself and the Other). This is not a reconstruction of what Ricœur might have written. This is what he did write. Instead of a choice between untranslatable and translatable, between never really being able to know the Other (who remains "foreign") and knowing the Other perfectly, killing two problems with one stone (so to say), one engages the task of translating step-by-step that which was foreign into the familiar.

Following up on Ricœur's opening wedge, the translation is never the original, though it does not thereby follow that it is bad or even inadequate, just not identical. One may say the same of an empathic experience of the Other's experience. An example will be useful. For example, in Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*,[63] Hanno has a vicarious experience of his father's (Thomas Buddenbrooks') suffering. Hanno's vicarious experience is a copy of Thomas', but lacks the liveliness and force of that which Thomas experiences in the moment. It is both too much and too little. It is too much in that Hanno has experiences of being bullied at school, which his father, Thomas, escaped. It is too little in that the source of Thomas's suffering is jealousy. In this scene, Hanno is a middle school student, and his father is suffering from jealousy as his wife, Gerda, is spending too much time with a potential romantic competitor playing passionate duets on the violin. Hanno lacks sexual enlightenment, yet in matters of the empathic communication of emotion, Hanno "gets it" that his father is really suffering. He does not understand the adult motive(s), yet "suffering is suffering." Hanno gets a sample of his father's experience —a trace affect, a vicarious experience. For that to become full-blown, complete empathy further processing of the vicarious experience as understanding, interpretation, and responsiveness are required, which occur in follow up scenes.[64] Thus, Hanno's empathic receptivity.

This account of Ricœur's contribution to empathy in the context of suspicion remains programmatic and more remains to be said about it. Once again, I emphasize —and empathize— aesthetic acts of receptivity are not merely analogous to acts of the practice of empathy, they are empathic gestures from start to finish, since they bring forth empathy and make it present in the

[61] Paul Ricœur, *Sur la traduction* [1999] (Paris: Bayard, 2004), 11.

[62] Ricœur, *Sur la traduction*, 26.

[63] Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks* [1901], trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Random House, 1961).

[64] Mann, *Buddenbrooks*, 516.

encounter with an Other, whether as a literary text or an encounter with an individual in-person. They belong in an aesthetics of receptivity, and a reconstruction of what Ricœur would contribute to an account of empathic receptivity. This completes the rational reconstruction of a Ricœurian approach to empathy, traversing the four aspects of empathic understanding, empathic responsiveness, empathic interpretation, and, finally, empathic receptivity. Empathy is no rumor in the work of Paul Ricœur –empathy *lives* there.

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