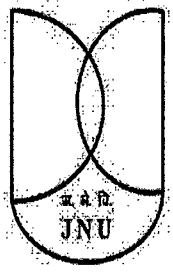
PAUL RICOEUR ON SELF, NARRATIVE IDENTITY AND AGENCY

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SOLOMON ZINGKHAI



CENTRE FOR PHILOSOPHY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI – 110067
INDIA

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JAWHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI – 110067

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "**Paul Ricoeur on Self, Narrative Identity and Agency**," submitted by **Solomon Zingkhai** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted either in part or in full in this or other university.

We recommend this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

(Dr. Manidipa Sen)
Supervisor

SUPERVISOR
Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

(Prof. Satya P. Gautam)
Chairperson

for,
Chairperson
Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067, INDIA

DECLARATION

I, Solomon Zingkhai, declare that the dissertation entitled "**Paul Ricoeur on Self, Narrative Identity and Agency**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted so far in part or full, for the award of any other degree in this or any other university.

Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

(Solomon Zingkhai)

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Introduction

Self and its Dilemmas

The nature of self is such that its presence permeates every facet of our being and its proximity is such that it becomes impossible to talk of any of our engagements, be it with our own selves, with that of other selves as well as with the world outside, without reference to it. The ambiguity of the self is such that owing to its intricate nature it evades our understanding the moment we try to capture its essence. The self has been variously understood, often radically differing in their appearance, as a soul, a bodily substance, consciousness, a pure subject or ego-pole or as a social construct reducible to a mere theoretical fiction. The explanation behind this can be primarily attributed to the multifaceted nature of self that needs to be seen and interpreted correctly in the context of what we really are trying to arrive at if at all an attempt is to be made.

For Descartes the mind as the subject of the consciousness is different from the body whose essence lies in occupying space. He thought that the immaterial substance, the thinking and unextended substance was distinct from the extended and unthinking body for the very reason that while the existence of body can be subjected to doubt the existence of the thinking and therefore a thinker could not be. Thus he writes that,

> I saw that while I pretend that I had no body and that there was no world and no place for me to be in, I could not for all that pretend that I did not exist. I saw on the contrary that from the mere fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed quite evidently and certainly that I existed.[1]

For him the question of the self came down to discovering that something which he would know with absolute certainty which even the hypothetical great deceiver would not be able to put in doubt. Descartes eventually concludes that the certainty that, in so far as he is doubting or thinking he exists, is the first in the order of discovering such knowledge. The clearness and distinctness with which this proposition establishes the

[1] Descartes, 1995: 6: 32 –33.

certainty of his existence makes him to conclude that "I knew I was a substance whose essence or nature is simply to think."[2]

However, the self as a thinking substance is confronted with numerous loopholes and thus faces various criticisms. Gassendi, for instance, in his correspondence with Descartes points out that despite the fact that one knows that one is thinking or doubting yet this knowing is not enough to yield substantive knowledge of what one is.[3] The reason here is that despite the fact that our knowledge of *what* we are and our knowledge of what is called our *particular* self-knowledge, i.e., our thoughts, sensations, perceptual experiences etc cannot be held separately, yet at the same time should not be mistaken for the knowledge of the true nature of the self as they form different levels of knowledge.[4] This leads us to the elusiveness thesis where, for instance, Hume holds that despite the fact that "actions and sensation" of the mind are wholly transparent yet when it comes to determining the nature of the self we must have recourse to the "most profound metaphysics."[5] He claims that when we enter into our own self what we can observe is nothing other than a bundle of perceptions and not the self having the perceptions. This was followed by Kant's argument that one has knowledge of oneself only as it appears to us but the nature of self in itself is *unknowable*.[6] Thus, what the elusive thesis shows is that to the extent that self-knowledge is said to depend upon the possibility of introspective perception of oneself as a persisting thing it is unavailable to us.

The force of this argument is carried further to its logical conclusion by contemporary philosophers like Derek Parfit. Parfit in allowing only an impersonal description of facts in relations either to the psychological or the bodily criteria of identity at the end holds that personal identity is not what matters.[7] According to his view of reductionism, personal identity through time consists only in describing certain particular facts which can be understood without presupposing an identity. Moreover what we call experiences in life can be described in an impersonal manner without

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[2] Descartes, 1995: 6: 32–33.
[3] See Cassam, 1994: 2.
[4] Ibid., 1.
[5] Hume, 1978: 189.
[6] Kant, 1992: B158.
[7] In Wood. 1991: 193.

supposing the purportedly existence of the persons whose experiences they are. Thus at the end "personal identity constitutes a supplementary fact, which consist simply in physical and/or psychological continuity."[8] He then holds that if the connecting physical or psychical is the only important thing about identity, then personal identity is not what matters.

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of the present study is to analyze the increasingly popular notion of the self conceived as a construct as opposed to a self that is pre-given and for this purpose we will make an attempt to examine, in detail, the self, as it appears in the narrative identity theory, particularly that of Paul Ricoeur. The merit of this narrative identity theory of self lies in that it offers a novel way of construing the self as an open-ended construct, structured and articulated by the symbolic mediations of narratives within a storied life in reply to the question "Who am I," which is, on the whole, different from the classical understanding of self as a principle of unchangeable substance given once and for all. Subsequently, the focus will be on understanding Ricoeur's works such as *Oneself as Another* (1992), *Time and Narrative* 3 Vols. (1984, 1985, 1988), *The Course of Recognition* (2005), *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (2005), that deals with the issue of narrative identity. In addition we would also take up writings of the non-narrativist like Galen Stawson, Dan Zahavi and narrativist like Alistair MacIntyre, Daniel C. Dennett in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the issue in hand.

Narrative structuring reveals a remarkable and fascinating facet of the self's constructive and interpretative nature through the storied concept, where our identity is configured and made meaningful in the unfolding of a narrative by emplotted drama that brings to unity previously disparate events in identifying them as contributing parts of a new whole, a reintegrated and renewed self. The justification for this narrative account of the self lies in the fact that it does not simply elucidates the nature of an already

[8] Parfit, 1984: 210

existing self, but in confronting and reflecting upon the life that we are leading, it intelligibly structures our actions in a narrative sequence that elucidates, constructs and reconfigures the self. As a result it is responsible for providing a detailed, more accurate and comprehensive picture of the multilayered nature of the self. However, its opponents, non-narrativist like, Stawson and Zahavi objects to this view in holding that it does more harm than good for "the narrative tendency to look for story or narrative coherence in one's life is in general, a gross hindrance to self understanding."[9]

The main focus of this study will be to show how the narrative structure in Riceour's writing concerned with the larger question of human meaning engages with the question of understanding the self, the world and the relationship that holds between them. How self identity of the subject is constructed by the narrative as "it is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character."[10] And how this narrative identity in turn is responsible for mediating between the two poles of personal identity, *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity, i.e., between constancy and change or the pole of sameness (*idem*) and the pole of selfhood (*ipse*) and involves trustworthiness and faithfulness to oneself, despite all the deviation and transformations which mark the path of life. It will also deal with the issue of how the self, by taking initiative, intervenes in the course of the world, bringing about significant changes in the world and thereby establishes a relationship between action as something that happens and the self as agents who make things happen.

We will also seek to understand how emplotment, under the aegis of what Ricoeur calls narrative intelligence or understanding makes it possible to bring discordant events and heterogeneous episodes of human actions and binds them together into the unity of one temporal whole, giving it the form of "human" time. The study will also touch upon the matter of how the hermeneutics of the self leads to the recognition of the relation of the self with the other, a relation that is intrinsic to the very constitution of self in his narrative construction. And how the narrative construct in situating self-identity in close proximity to recognition, firmly asserts the existential bond between the self and the other

[9] Strawson, 2004: 447.
[10] Ricoeur, 1992: 147.

that culminates in a philosophy of action which has for its ends "the "good life" with and for others, in just institutions."[11]

Questions Addressed

Ricoeur's philosophy, better known as the anthropology of the "capable human being," involves an acknowledgement of the opposing and conflicting forces of capabilities as well as vulnerabilities as an inescapable dimension of the self as it strives to discover and maintain his or her identity in a world which is already interpreted before the individual's entry to it: 'In being born I enter into the world of language that precedes me and envelops me'[12] Therefore, though the main focus is always on the possibility of understanding the self as an agent responsible for its actions, Ricoeur consistently rejects any claim that the self is immediately transparent to itself or fully master of itself. The self in narrative identity is always a construct at all the stages of life and is inter-linked with and perhaps inter-dependent on reflection, recognition and expectation of the other and defined in terms of our life with and among others in that world. Thus, there is an inevitable tension between the experience, the desire and uniqueness of the individual and the corresponding existence of the other ensues. This correspondence between the experience of the self and the other entails similarities and commonalities in the experience of being human and is on the other hand, counter-balanced with the reality of differences and divergences of the individual selves. Thus, Ricoeur instead of attempting the impossibility of integrating the differences, brings in the notion of mutual recognition to bridge the gap between diverse positions and interpretations. Consequently, in the course of constructing a narrative self there are many problems that Ricoeur encounters and this work, as part of an attempt to understand how the concept of self is played out in his scheme of narrative identity will try to examine and address such questions.

To begin with, one of the most perennial but pertinent question would be how to justifiably put forth a plausible theory of the self out of the numerous competing theories

[11] Ricoeur, 1992: 262.
[12] Ricoeur, 1986: 27.

which captures well the essence of the "self" which is a multifaceted and widely contested concept? Corresponding to this will be the problem of how best to convince the non-narrativist that the narrative construction of self identity does not simply amount to a figment of our Imagination but the self in turn, as Macintyre puts it "resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end."[13] Moreover, question can be raised that, if the self in narrative is a construction then does it make it unreal and are we justified in reducing our selfhood to that which can be narrated? Most importantly, another question in conjunction to this issue would be how successfully can we, in the first place, distinguish the true from the false narrative?

Again, granted that even if the narrative may capture something important about the self, of who we are, the most pressing question would be, is it capable of capturing the full complexity of the self? This at the same time raises the consecutive question of as there is a selective portrayal of human nature which narrows the experience of relationship, the self, on this account, can and does often withdraw behind illusions of self-sufficiency, self-knowledge and self-acceptance and refuse to encounter the possibilities of life in all its fullness and ambivalence so how honest can we be in construing the self in narrative identity?

Another, persisting and valid objection raised by the opponents and a continuing problem for the narrativist is that since the narrative identity of the self involves involvement and recognition with the others so the question is, does the authority of narration of one's life rest with the individual alone or can the narration of that life by the others be considered as valid too? Finally, particular in Ricoeur's theory of narrative structure, given the fact that the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are not always truthful or comprehensive and are often coloured by our quest for recognition and approval, how are we to account for the ethical dimension of the narrative self since the axiological neutrality of narrative is not equivalent to its ethical neutrality.

[13] MacIntyre, 1981: 205.

Possible Alternatives

A. The Substantial Self

For Descartes the mind as the subject of consciousness and the locus of all thoughts is identical with the self, the soul or the ego. It unlike the bodies which is a thing extended in space that is defined in terms of its shape and size cannot be extended in space. It is utterly nonspatial, having neither shape, size, nor location rather its essence lie in having thought feelings, memories, perceptions.[14] By the end of his *Second Mediations* Descartes concludes that there is one thing that he knows for certain, with clarity and distinctness, despite the persisting doubting, i.e., the existence of his self. This self, that exists as a thinking non-extended thing, is the "first and most certain of all to occur to anyone who philosophizes in an orderly way"[15] for despite the fact that the existence of the world of things, including the body, can be subjected to doubt yet the existence of this thinking being comes out clearer and stronger the more it is subjected to doubt. Thus Descartes writes, "let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think I am something."[16] Thus, initially, the self at this time seems to occupy a foundational position, to have an epistemic privilege owing to its very nature of being clear and distinct and indefeasible for "whatever is revealed to me by the natural light – for example that from the fact that I am doubting it follows that I exists and so on – cannot in anyway be open to doubt."[17]

This first truth over which there is said to be no other preceding truth would have retained its position, if there was no other differing evidence against it. However, problem arise since the fact that the certainty of the soul as pure intelligence is but only an internal necessity of science thus the cogito at the end gives only a strict subjective version of truth.[18] This leads to the question as to whether this certainty of the cogito has any

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[14] Shaffer, 1998: 35.
[15] Descartes, prin. 1: 7
[16] Newman, "Descartes' Epistemology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/descartes-epistemology/>.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ricoeur, 1992: 8. Here Ricoeur is in total agreement with Martial Gueroult in holding that since, Descartes himself admits the Cogito as having certainty only within itself, the self enclosed, and takes

objective value. Therefore, in order to overcome this weakness Descartes bring in the notion of God to strengthen the *cogito*'s position. However, with the introduction of the notion of God the order is reversed, God, who earlier featured merely as a connecting link becomes the first in the order from which everything flows. Thus, the certainty of cogito is reduced to a subordinate position in relation to God. Thus, Ricoeur holds that the cogito despite possessing the value of a foundation is but "a sterile truth from which nothing can be said to follow . . . or it is the idea of perfection"[19] understood in terms of its finiteness where it no longer can be said to occupy the first foundation.

B. A Phenomenological Self

Here, Self-experience understood in the most basic sense is to be conscious of one*self* which is not to be understood in the sense of getting in touch with a pure self that exists apart from the stream of consciousness. Rather, it is a matter of having first-personal access to one's own experiential life and being conscious of an experience in its first-personal mode of givenness.[20] Understanding what it means to be a self is possible only if it is integrated with experience for experiences are not merely understood in terms of certain qualitative features but as necessarily existing for a subject. As a result, an understanding of self lies in the examination of the structure of experience. Here, the self is said to be very much related to the first-person perspective by reason of its possessing experiential reality, in fact it is identified with the very first-personal *givenness* of the experiential phenomena. Thus, Zahavi holds that "the self referred to is not something standing beyond or opposed to the stream of experiences but is rather a feature or function of its givenness."[21] This notion of self is fundamental and minimalist in the sense that nothing that lacks this dimension deserves to be called a self and so Zahavi calls this experiential dimension of self the *minimal self* or the *core self.*[22] However, the Self- experience is not to be understood as an isolated experience of a worldless self

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refuge in the existence of God so it does not give any objective value. Thus, the reign of the evil genius continues.

[19] Ricoeur, 1992: 10.

[20] Zahavi, 2007: 179-201.

[21] Zahavi, 2005: 106.

[22] Ibid.

rather it is held to be a self-experience of a world –immersed self. Zahavi points out that this self, in being different from the Cartesian-style mental residuum, is not a self-enclosed interieority but compatible with the being-in-the-world of consciousness.[23] The self that comes out here as an integral part of our conscious life with an immediate experiential reality is different from the self understood as an ineffable transcendental precondition or the self understood as a mere social construct that evolves through time.

C. A Narrative Self

Narrativist like Ricoeur on the other hand are of the opinion that being aware of of oneself from the first person perspective it is not enough to gain a robust self understanding for the answer to the question "Who am I?" is to tell the story of a life.[24] Human activities are said to be enacted narratives as actions gain intelligibility in terms of a narrative sequence. For this reason, narrative is not merely a way of gaining insight into the nature of an already existing self. On the contrary, the self is the product of a narratively structured life. We live our lives in narratives and understand our own lives in terms of narratives as "Stories are lived before they are told—except in the case of fiction."[25] And it is within the framework of narratives that we ask the question, "Who is responsible?," which in turn is provided by the narrative itself and that at the end is said to constitute his or her narrative identity. This is why, according to MacIntyre, any attempt to elucidate the notions of selfhood or personal identity independently of and in isolation from the notions of narrativity, intelligibility, and accountability is bound to fail.[26]

For Ricoeur, the notion of narrative identity is the answer to the traditional dilemma of choosing between the Cartesian notion of the substantial self and the substantialist illusion positions of Nietzsche.[27] He brings out clearly the concept of narrative identity

[23] Zahvi, 2007: 179-201
[24] Ricer, 1985: 442
[25] MacIntyre, 1985: 212
[26] MacIntyre, 1985: 218
[27] MacIntyre, 1985:218.

by means of the two concepts of identity, i.e., identity as sameness (*idem*) and identity as selfhood (*ipse*). Identity as sameness (*idem*) conceives of identity as that which is unchangeable, resists change and so can be reidentified again and again. On the other hand, unlike the abstract identity of the same, identity of the self (*ipse*) does include changes and mutations within the cohesion of a lifetime and is different from the persistence of some unchanging core and is an answer to the question "who am I"[28] (that is related to the question of self-understanding. Thus, a live of narrative reconfigured by all the truthful or fictive stories makes "life itself a cloth woven of stories told."[29]. At the sametime, the question in making us reflect and evaluate the way of living understood in terms of the values we honor, and the goals we pursue forced us to confront the life one is living which makes this life the fruit of an examined life.

Moreover, any consideration of narrative identity obviously involves a reference to others, since the moment we enter into a stage which we find ourselves part of an action that was not of our making.[30] So, who we are depends on the stories that is told by ourselves as well as by others. This part of narrative self-understanding that involves a socialization and participation in the community is responsible for the special characteristics of narrative identity that allows us to be both the narrator and the main character, but not the sole author. This explains for the move away from the substantial self. Moreover, the fact that the story of any individual life, is not only interwoven with the stories of others (parents, siblings, friends, etc.) but is also embedded in a larger historical and communal meaning-giving structure[31] can be said to keep the self from being considered as a sheer illusion.

5. The Basis of Ricoeur's Narrative Identity

Ricoeur's analysis of the human subject examines and critiques diverse interpretations and descriptions which have been offered throughout the history of philosophy. He

[28] Ricoeur, 1990: 12–13.
[29] Ricoeur, 1985: 443.
[30] MacIntyre, 1985: 213.
[31] MacIntyre, 1985: 221.

questions the concept of the self as a fixed unity of substance which underlies the Cartesian *Cogito* for it fails to capture the unfolding and storied nature of human existence owing to its pre-determined nature. He observed the nature of self here as "the humiliation of the cogito reduced to sheer illusion following the Nietzschean critique."[32] He at the same rejects the contention of the opposing view at the extreme end that the subject is merely a construct, like Dennett,[33] who holds that the self like the center of gravity is an abstract object, a theorist's fiction and an illusion and any attempt to know what the self really is, is a category mistake. Instead, Ricoeur proposes a narrative understanding of subjectivity that takes into account the open-ended and fluid nature of one's life description, and precludes fixed definitions, unchangeable certainties, and necessitates an acceptance of fragility, vulnerability and fallibility. Therefore, at the end, the open-ended nature of identity for Ricoeur is such that 'the Self is aimed at rather than experienced...the person is primarily a project which I represent to myself, which I set before me and entertain'[34]

The relation between life and narration is captured in the fact that an interval between birth and death is spoken of as a life story.[35] However this assimilation of life into a story needs to be submitted to critical doubt and should be based on an examined life. It is with the help of plot, the *intelligibility* behind the configuring act, that life's events are well constructed into a lively activity that gives the story its dynamic identity. The plot in synthesizing diverse and multiple incidents transforms them into one story where these incidents no longer feature as a mere occurrence but contributes to the progress of the narrative. Moreover in its synthesizing of the heterogeneous from the temporal point of time, it draws a configuration out of a simple succession. Thus Ricer, in following Aristotle holds that every well-told story teaches something, it reveals the universal aspects of human condition.[36]

However at the same time Ricoeur holds that because the process of composition does not stop with the text but in the reader narrative is able to reconfigure life, he holds

[32]Ricoeur, 1992: 299.
[33] Dennett, 1992:
[34] Ricoeur, 2006: 69.
[35] In Wood, 1991: 20.
[36] Ibid., 22.

that "the significance of a narrative stems from the *intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader.*"[37] The text signifies the projection of a new universe distinct from that in which we live where the reader is said to belong to both the horizon of expectation and the horizon of experience that are said to confront one another and merge together. So emplotment is said to be common work of the text and the reader as the act of configuration consists in its capacity to be followed and actualized. So Ricoeur writes that "Following a narrative is reactualizing of the configuring act which gives it its from."[38] Thus, it is the act of reading that completes the work and transforms it into a *guide* for reading. The act of reading at the same time can be said to reconcile narration and life for reading is itself already a way of living life *lived in the mode of imaginary.*[39]

It has been observed that life as long as it has not been interpreted is no more than a biological phenomenon.[40] Interpretation, in turn is where fiction plays a mediating role for Aristotle himself has in defining narrative defined it as "the imitation of an action." Therefore, according to Ricoeur the first point of anchorage where narrative find its place in living experience is in the very structure of human acting and suffering.[41] Human actions are in this sense distinct from that of the animal or mere physical movement in that within the semantics of actions that include project, actions, means, circumstances etc. we, through our competence to use in a meaningful way the network of expression and concepts, understand what all these projects signifies. This finds its similarities in the way we understand the plot of the stories in narrative. Again, the other area where narration finds its anchorage in practical understanding lies in the way in which actions, already being articulated in signs, rules and norms is said to possess an initial readability and is said to be symbolically mediated. This makes action a quasi-text, a *context of description* which a narrative can interpret.[42] The final point of anchorage of narrative lies in the *pre-narrative quality of human experience* which enable us to speak of life as a

[37]In Wood, 1991: 26.
[38] Ibid., 27
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 28.
[42] Ibid., 29.

story in its nascent stage.[43] Thus, we see the narrative fiction forms an irreducible dimension of self understanding that finds its completion in life and life too can be understood through the stories we tell about it. Thus, Ricer, following Socrates agrees, with the belief that an examined life is a life recounted.

Our life then is not imposed from outside but a field of constructive activity through which we attempt to discover the narrative identity which constitutes us. It in the light of the narratives proposed by our culture that we apply to the play of sedimentation and innovation to our self understanding. This is the point where we learn to become the narrator and the hero of our own story without actually becoming the author of our life. The very fact that we can become the narrator but not the author of our life marks the distinction between life and fiction. While it is true that an unbridgeable difference does remain between life and fiction but this difference is narrowed down in our attempt to obtain a narrative understanding of ourselves. The self, which in finding himself or herself instructed by the cultural symbols, was never something that was given at the start but is a construct.[44] Therefore, narrative identity in placing itself between the two identities, escapes the dilemma of choosing between the two identities, that of immutable substance and that of sheer change.

Chapter Plan

The introductory chapter would in declaring the intention of the study clearly lay down that it is to the question of selfhood that we are seeking for a possible answer. The truth that the self is without a position of its own, according to Ricoeur, can be seen in the way the philosophies of the subject oscillates, between that of an "exalted subject" in Descartes and its complete reversal as a "humiliated subject" in Nietzsche. Thus, this chapter, in making clear the problems that lies ahead, the scope and the possible solutions, which Ricoeur's narrative identity faces in presenting an the alternative account, of the self as a construct understood through the stories told, would lay down the

[43] Ibid.
[44] In Wood, 1991: 33.

proposition to be considered. In doing so it would give a brief sketch of the chapter plans that would be followed in the rest of the study.

This chapter as the opening account of what the self is all about in the narrative theory will begin by throwing open the debate between the two competing theories of self, i.e., the narrativist and the non-narrativist notion of self. The objective of this chapter, in pitting the narrativist against the non-narrativist, is to provide a ground work of the extent within which narrative is said to operate. Thus, in delineating the scope of narrative will open the way for a deeper analysis in chapters to follow, as to what consists in narrative, how competent is this account in figuring out the self and what are its merits as well as drawbacks. Thus, in order to provide a more comprehensive picture it will throw open this debate in the light of the discussion of the various competing contemporary theories of the self, followed by a more detailed comparative account of the narrative and the non-narrative self. And in the final section, in drawing a broad classification of the narrative theories of self provide a justification as to why how Ricoeur's theory of narrative Identity perhaps could provide the possible solution that we are looking for.

In the second chapter we will examine what this act of narrating consist in beginning with an examination of how emplotment as a synthesis of heterogeneous elements a) draws a story out of the multiple incidents b) brings concordance to discordant sections c) configure a theme out of succession. This will be followed by a discussion of how narrative identity in entailing two senses of being, identity as sameness (*idem*) and as selfhood (*ipse*) understood within the framework of a temporal structure is able to account for a dynamic identity. Focus will also be made on how a failure to account for these distinction results in the failure to come up with a successful account of personal identity. Next, we will see how emplotment in synthesizing what is seemingly contrary in the domain of sameness-identity brings a concordance out of discordance. This will be followed by how a transposition of the notion of emplotment from the action to the characters produces dialectic between sameness and selfhood. Attention will also be on how literary narrative in providing the much needed space for a rich imaginative

variation makes possible for the reconfiguration of life by narrative. In the final section of our chapter, which will serve as a preliminary introduction to the next chapter, we in understanding that actions covered by narrative necessitate an entry into the ethical field will be initiated into what is called the dialectic of the selfhood and otherness. The response to the question "who" takes us to the question of imputation which unlike the notion of self reflexivity in finding itself incomplete calls for the otherness of the other than self or what Ricoeur calls solicitude.

The focus of this third chapter will be on how, with the placing of narrative at the crossroads of the theory of action and moral theory that makes narration serve as a natural transition between description and prescription, the self gets enriched. The shift from the field of semantics of action to that of pragmatics results in the creation of a self that is not only a speaking, acting, narrating self but one equally characterized by the traits of imputability, responsibility and recognition. The focus here will be on how the inadequacy of the notion of ascription to address the relation between the self and its action points towards the need for moving beyond the field of semantics and pragmatics into a higher plane that of imputation, which brings out the self's "power to act" as an agent. Next, in focusing on the power of the self to act discuss on how the self informed with desire and capable of initiative comes out as an agent responsible for the actions he or she brings about. Following which, we in turning to the other end of the spectrum of the acting self, will find in its other, a suffering being, who is the patient or the victim of our actions. It will also be seen how with the introduction of the notion of "equality," that dimension of justice, which adds to the notion of self an "each" that in encompassing the whole of humanity brings a sense of justice. Therefore, with the placing of the narrative identity at the strategic point of our discussion what we get is nothing other than a capable human being. In the final section realizing the importance of narrative conclude with Ricoeur's reply to his critics which in the light of our whole discussion in stress on how narrative bridges the gap between life and fiction, how narrative intelligibility becomes inevitable in configuring a meaningful life and why there is this need for personal identity.

In the conclusion, following an analysis of the strength and the weakness of the narrative identity in the three main chapter, we will reflect upon the extent to which narrative identity have justifiable substantiated its claim of occupying a place position between the account of a substantial and an illusionary self. Thus, the question that would be open is, if the narrative by virtue of its intelligibility can successfully bring together, the act of prefiguration and refiguration through its configurational act, then, can we say that narrative claim to serve as a mediator between the practical and ethical field is justified? And if yes, question arises as to if the narrative in its meditative role can account for a self that is said to be equivocal? Or simply putting it, "Are narrative the primary access to the self?."[45]

[45] Zahavi, 2007: 179–201.

CHAPTER 1

Narrative versus Non-Narrative Accounts of Self

Introduction

It is obvious that the concept of self is one that is elusive and there is no prevalent consensus about what exactly it means to be a self for it connotes different things in different disciplines—most often leading radically different thoughts. It is not surprising nor would it be an exaggeration to claim that contemporary discussions literally abound with competing and conflicting notion of the self. This can be witnessed in terms of the fact that Neisser, comes up with a list of five different types of self, the ecological, interpersonal, extended, private, and conceptual self.[1] However, several years later on, Galen Strawson in a recent discussion on the notion of self in the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* came up with a finding that lists no fewer than twenty-one concepts of self.[2] Hence, given this mounting wealth of either conflicting or complementary notions of self, it is quite a challenging task to come up with an appropriate way of conceiving the self.

This chapter, being the opening chapter on what the notion of the narrative self is all about, the primary focus here is to sketch a general framework of how the self is constructed in the light of a comparative account between narrativist and non-narrativst theories of self. But in doing so, the discussion in this chapter would be structured around views counter to narrative account so that a clear delineating line is drawn, creating more space for further discussions on what is the narrative account of the self, in the chapters that follow, what are its merits and limitation and why be narrative. Thus, this study would involve understanding contemporary competing notions of the self, followed by comparative accounts of the narrativst and the non-narrativist, in the light of which we would explain in greater detail the non-narrativist stance followed by defense of the narrativst view and finally, consider a broad classification of the narrative version involved in constructing the notion of self.

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[1] Neisser, 1988: 35.
[2] Strawson, 1999: 484.

1. Competing Theories of Self

The task of theorizing on the self, as mentioned above, is one that has always been riddled with questions rather than answers for by its very nature the notion of "self" is equivocal and answers can following many methods. Nevertheless, since our main focus is more about the hermeneutics of the self, so, in this opening chapter we will commence with a presentation of how the self figures in the scheme of the two competing theories, the exalted Cartesian *cogito* and the humiliated subject or shattered *cogito* in Nietzsche.[3] We will at the same time examine, an alternative view, the narrative view that in claiming to hold itself at equidistance from both the extremes provide a way of constructing the self that includes change, mutability, within the cohesion of a person's lifetime.

A. The Cartesian *Cogito*

The *cogito,* according to Ricoeur, can be said to have no genuine philosophical significance unless it is understood in terms of its ambition to establish a final, ultimate foundation.[4] This explains for the great oscillation of the "I" of "I think" to be raised to the heights of the first truth and then cast down to the depths of a vast illusion. This ambitious project of the cogito can be recognized from the outset in the form of the hyperbolic character of the doubt with which the investigations in *Meditations* open. Thus, Descartes comes up with a kind of doubt he calls "metaphysical" that has no parallel, for it, in the process of doubting, encompasses within its realm of "opinion" commonsense, the sciences – mathematical, physical and even the philosophical traditions. Further, in order to heighten this doubt, Descartes created the hypothesis of a great deceiver who was an inverted image of a truthful god. Thus, the intention behind creating such a doubt was that if the *cogito* can surpass the test of this extreme conditions of doubt then this would give rise to the assertion that someone is doing the doubting. This would then provide the first

[3] This comparison is done following Ricoeur, who in talking of the narrative self as situated between the alternative of *cogito* or anti*cogito* traces the birthplace of *Cogito* to Descartes himself and again finds in Nietzsche a privileged adversary of Descartes, where the self is seen to occupy the extreme position of either being labeled as an exalted subject or a humiliated subject.

[4] Ricoeur, 1992: 4

foundation of which the whole of philosophy, in fact, the whole of theoretical enterprise can be based.

Descartes, in order to make sure that any semblance of doubt is done away with, with the destruction of all physical bodies, radically stripped the subject of doubt of its anchorage. Thus, at the end what was left of all this free floating is the "I" who doubts, which in its very stubbornness to want to doubt commits itself to discover one thing that is certain and indubitable. Thus, the first certainty that derives from the ontological intention of doubt is the certainty of the doubter's existence implied in the very exercise of doubting which is nothing but a form of thinking. This is the point where the ontological intention of doubt is reversed into the certainty of cognition in the "Second Meditations."

The first certainty that derives from the exercise of doubting is the certainty of the doubter's existence in the form of the thinking that as long as I am being deceived there is no doubt that I exists for this shows that I am not nothing but something. It is at this juncture according to Ricoeur that the question 'who" related to the question "who doubts?" takes on a new twist when it is connected to the question "who thinks?" and more radically to the question, "Who exists?." It is here that Descartes, owing to the utter indetermination of the answer, in order to flesh out the certainties obtained, was required to add the question "what I am?."[5] This leads to the more developed expression of the *cogito* that "I am therefore precisely only a thing that thinks; that is, a mind, or soul, or intellect, or reason"[6] However, with the enumeration of the question "what" the question of the identity of the subject came to be posed but in an entirely different perspective such that it, in escaping the alternatives of permanence and change involves nothing but "a kind of point like ahistorical identity of the "I,""[7] an identity that of the same. Thus, what appears at the end of the *Second Meditations* is that the identity of the certainty of the *cogito* is not something that maintains itself in the position of the first truth which is immediately known by reflecting on doubt. The reason being the cogito in having "certainty only within it,

[5] Ricoeur, 1992: 7.
[6] Newman, "Descartes' Epistemology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.),URL<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/descartes-epistemology/>.
[7] Ricoeur, 1992: 7.

that is, for myself enclosed within itself"[8] towards the end can be said to be nothing other than the one that gives a strictly subjective version of truth.

Now, it becomes logical that the cogito would be regarded as genuinely absolute in all respect if it was able to maintain just one order, where it in occupying the first position in the rung, can be said to be the principle from which the rest of the principles do follow. However, in the face of difficulties confronting it, in the *Third Mediation*, it came to the point where Descartes believed that only the demonstration of God's existence would allow him to resolve the question. Thus, with the introduction of God, the order of discovery is reversed, God, who appear as a mere link in the first order becomes the first in the ring and consequently, the *cogito* is seen as slipping to a subordinate second ontological rank. However, in this respect, Ricoeur observes that, since, with the introduction of God there results the elimination of the great deceiver, Descartes was able to see in this only the benefits of the abolition of doubt. Yet for Ricoeur this poses a big problem for it is at this point, he observes that "left to itself, the "I" of the cogito is Sisyphus condemned, from one instant to the next, to push up the rock of its certainty, fighting the slope of doubt."[9]

B. The Shattered Cogito

> "Everything is subjective," you say; but even this is interpretation. The "subject" is not something given, it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is -- Finally, it is necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretation? Even this is invention, hypothesis. . . . The world. . . . has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. – "perspectivism."[10]

To the obvious question of who is responsible for these events of interpretation, Nietzsche responds: "one may not ask: 'Who then Interprets?' for the interpretation itself as a form of the will to power, exists (not as 'being' but as a process, a becoming) as an effect."[11] Despite the "I," projecting itself as the underlying meaning, Nietzsche does not assert that the concept of subject as substance and substrate come after the subject as

[8] Martial Guerolt, *Descartes' philosophy interpreted according to the Order of Reasons*, vol. 1, *The soul and God* p 52 as quoted in Ricoeur, 1992: 8.
[9] Ricoeur, 1992: 9.
[10] Nietzcshe, 1968: 481.
[11] Nietzcshe, 1968: 556.

interpreter. This would indeed be nothing new, but merely a further extension of the basic position of modern philosophy. For Nietzsche both subject and substance are fictions.

To be sure, Nietzsche does at times speak of a deep self in a way that may lead one to suppose that beneath his critique of the metaphysical categories there lies a presupposition of a unitary being that is something like a fixed self. Nietzsche claims that most of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly guided and forced into certain channels by our instincts, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life.[12] In consequence, this "outer" physiological bodily self is deeper and more internal and rules over the "inner" self of consciously which is more surface and shallow. Thus he writes in Zarathustra, "Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body."[13]

According to Nietzsche, proclaiming the phenomenal character of the internal world results in its alignment with the external world of phenomenality that is characterized by interpretations and not facts. Following this Ricoeur observes that, Nietzsche, in principle, in extending the critique to the so called internal experience in this manner destroys the exceptional character of the cogito. Moreover, assuming the phenomenality of the internal world according to Ricoeur is to be seen as an illusion that conceals the play of forces under the artifice of order. It also results in the positing of an entirely arbitrary unity, the fiction called "thinking" and thereby, leads to the imagination of a "substratum of subject."[14]

For Nietzsche, there is no end, no final state of being either from which we arise, as in the case of the notion of soul, or towards which we are directed and in which we will come to rest and become who we are. There neither is nor will be a self-identical subject for he says there are no subject "atom," and when he speaks of the subject, it is always of a plural subject, a "subject as multiplicity."[15] According to him the sphere of

[12] Nietzsche, 1966: 201.
[13] Nietzsche, 1883: 146. Thus Heidegger in his book *Nietzsche.* Vol. IV (page 133) writes that "For Nietzsche, what underlies is not the 'I" But the 'body.'"
[14] Ricoeur, 1992: 15.
[15] Nietzsche, 1968: 490.

the subject is constantly shifting, growing or decreasing and he calls this de-centered centre, standpoints that incorporate a quantum of force within the flux of becoming.[16]

According to Nietzsche, this quantum of force is equivalent to nothing other than desire, will and effort which in the end, owing to the seduction of language conceives and misconceives that behind all these effects is a "subject" that conditions these causes.[17] There is according to Nietzsche simultaneous development of language and consciousness as a result of which and in the process of reasoning there is always a demand for the duality of opposites, of a being behind doing, being and becoming, substance and accident. However, Nietzsche in his attempt to stretch the horizon of metaphysical language reverses the priorities and rankings that inhabit metaphysical thought. But these reversals do not leave the metaphysical project intact, it results in the fact that the self as ego and substrate is a fiction, a mask and a representation.[18]

C. A Hermeneutical Perspective: The Self as a Narrative Construction

To have a self, or better, to be a self, is something in which one is existentially involved. According to this view, which has become increasingly popular lately, the self is assumed to be a construction rather than being something that is given once and for all, something that has to be appropriated and can be attained with varying degrees of success. This self is quite different from the traditional way of understanding a self as a thing that is fixed and unchangeable in that it is rather something evolving and can be realized through one's projects. Therefore, it cannot be understood independently of one's own self-interpretation. In short, one is not a self in the same way as one is a living organism. One does not have a self in the same way that one has a heart or a nose[19] It is the product of conceiving and organizing one's life in a certain way and just as life goes on, there is no final self-understanding but an ongoing process. The concomitant concept of selfhood, Macintyre writes is "a concept of self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end."[20] When confronted with the question "Who am I?" we tell stories as part of our

[16] Nietzsche, 1968: 715.
[17] Ibid., 481.
[18] Walter A., 1991: 427.
[19] Taylor, 1989: 34.
[20] Macintyre, 2007: 205.

fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control and self-definition and put stress on aspects that we deem to be of special significance, that which defines who we are, that which we present to others for recognition and approval[21] This narrative, however, is not merely a way of gaining insight into the nature of an already existing self. The self is an open-ended construction, arrived at in and through the narration. Thus who we are is dependent on the story we (and others) tell about ourselves which can be more or less coherent. The narrative self is, consequently, under constant revision. However, who one is depends on the values, ideals, and goals one has; it is a question of what has significance and meaning for oneself, and this, of course, is conditioned by the community of which one is part. As Atkins put it "our lives are always entangled with the lives of others, not merely as a matter of external relations but as a matter of internal constitution in virtue of the fact that we are embodied." [22] This explains why we in understanding who we are and how we should live have to address this issue always in the context of an interpersonal, cultural and historical setting. Moreover, the significance of the otherness comes out clearly in Ricouer's dialectics between selfhood and otherness as something that is not merely added to selfhood from outside so as to prevent its solipsistic drift but as belonging to the meaning and to the ontological constitution of selfhood.[23]

2. Comparative Accounts of Narrative and Non- Narrative Self

A. Accounts of the Narrative Self

Having introduced the notion of self as a narrative construction, something that lies in between the fixed autonomous self of the Cartesian ego as well as the substantialist illusion of Nietzsche, a self that includes both the possibility of sedimentation as well as initiative it would be practical, at this initial stage, to present different accounts both for

[21] Here, the difference in view between Ricoeur and Dennett, the two narrativist, lies in that while Dennett gives more stress on the psychological narrative version where, the telling of stories, as part of our self-preservation process involves more of concocting and controlling whereas in Ricouer, the self, in telling a story, as part of the narrative function, is an agent of imputation who is subjected to ethical implications.

[22] Atkins, 2008: 1.

[23] Ricoeur, 1992: 317. The main virtue of the dialectic Ricoeur points out is that it keeps the self from occupying the place of foundation. Moreover, Ricoeur, in his discussion on the ontology of the self comes up with what he calls the triad of passivity where the otherness implies three things, i.e., one's own body, the other (than) self and Conscience in the sense of *Gesissen.*

and against the narrative self, in order to make a good assessment of the issue in hand.

Barbara Hardy in her book "*Towards a Poetics of Fiction: An Approach Through Narrative,*" writes that "we dream in narrative, day dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative."[24] Louis O. Mink counters this in writing that,

> Stories are not lived but told. Life has no beginnings, middles, or ends; there are meetings, but the start of an affair belongs to the story we tell ourselves later, and there are partings, but final partings only in the story. There are hopes, plans, battles and ideas, but only in retrospective stories are hopes unfulfilled, plans miscarried, battles decisive and ideas seminal.[25]

Sartre in his novel *Nausea*, in parallel with what Mink puts forth and argues further in saying that life is very different from narrative and the presentation of human life in the form of a narrative always falsifies it. In fact, our lives are composed of discrete actions which lead nowhere have no order. Rather it is, Sartre holds, an order imposed on human events, retrospectively, which they did not have while they lived, through the act of story-telling. And so he thinks that there is and cannot be any true story.[26] Macintyre, on the other hand, holds a counter point in saying that,

> It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told – except in the case of fiction."[27]

Since, our roles in the human society have already been drafted and is more a question of finding out 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?,' thus, how we response to the others and the other respond to us lies in the question of finding out 'what am I to do?' and not in the question of one's authorship. As a result, man is not essentially but becomes through history 'in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially

[24]Hardy, 1968: 5.
[25] Mink, 1970: 557-8.
[26] Sartre, 1938: 64.
[27] Macintyre, 2007: 212.

a story-telling animal'[28] in telling stories that aspire to truth. Therefore Macintyre further writes that "deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words."[29]

Burner goes further in saying, "A self is probably the most impressive work of art we ever produce, surely the most intricate."[30] From these it is clear that narrative do not merely capture aspects of an already existing self, since there is no such thing as a pre-existing self precisely because it is constituted by the narrative. Dan Dennett also in the same tone but in a different vein writes that,

> We are all virtuoso novelists, who find ourselves engaged in all sorts of behaviour, and we always try to put the best 'faces' on it we can. We try to make all of our material cohere into a single good story. And that story is our autobiography. The chief fictional character at the centre of that autobiography is one's self.[31]

Harlene Anderson, in arguing against the modernist notion of the core self defines the narrative self which is made up of many narratives across time and experiences as "always engaged in conversational becoming, constructed and reconstructed through continuous interactions, through relationships." Here, the identity of the self is seen as a created narrative of continuous process of storytelling. So, the self is "a dialogical-narrative self" as it is "linguistically constructed and existing in dialogue and in relationship."[32]

However, Narrative is different from and not to be confused with that of a consciously worked-up autobiographical narrative as it is a question of organizing my experiences and actions in a way that presupposes an implicit understanding of me as an evolving protagonist. Accordingly, for Schetchman if self-interpretation is to count as narrative, it consists in understanding the different life episodes in terms of their places in an unfolding story. For her a person who, 'creates his identity [only] by forming an

[28] Macintyre, 2007: 216.
[29] Ibid., 216.
[30] Burner, 2002: 14.
[31] Dennett, 1988: 1029.
[32] Anderson, 1997: 220.

autobiographical narrative – a story of his life' must be in possession of a full and 'explicit narrative [of one's life] to develop fully as a person'.[33] Thus she writes,

> the difference between persons and other individuals...lies in how they organize their experience, and hence their lives. At the core of this view is the assertion that individuals constitute themselves as persons by coming to think of themselves as persisting subjects who have had experience in the past and will continue to have experience in the future, taking certain experiences as theirs. Some, but not all, individuals weave stories of their lives, and it is their doing so which makes them persons.[34]

For Charles Taylor too, to grasp our lives in a narrative is not an optional extra but a basic condition of making sense of ourselves for we have an understanding of our lives 'as an unfolding story' as our lives exists 'in a space of questions, which only a coherent narrative can answer'.[35] Taylor builds an ethical dimension into what he terms as an 'inescapable structural requirement of human agency,'

> because we cannot but orient ourselves to things involved in getting through life. It is because we cannot but orient ourselves to the good, and hence determine our place relative to it and hence determine the direction of our lives, [that] we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, as a 'quest' [and] must see our lives in story.[36]

According to Taylor, the self is a kind of being that can only exist within a normative space and he therefore claims that any attempt to define selfhood through some minimal or formal form of self-awareness must fail, since such a self is either non-existent or insignificant.

Alasdair Macintyre also holds a similar view, for him, 'The unity of an individual life', lies in, 'the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life. And to know "What is the good for me?" is to know how best I might live out that unity and bring it to completion. He thus writes,

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[33] Schechtman, 1997: 93, 119.
[34] Schechtman, 1996: 94.
[35] Taylor, 1989: 47, 52.
[36] Ibid., 51–52.

> The unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest ... [and] the only criteria for success or failure in a human life as a whole are the criteria for success or failure in a narrated or to-be-narrated quest. ...A quest for what?. . . a quest for the good ... the good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man.[37]

Ricoeur also shares a similar view in holding that a subject of action cannot give an ethical character to his or her own life taken as a whole if this life were not gathered together in some way in the form of a narrative. In fact he writes,

> How, then, are we to maintain on the ethical level a self which, on the narrative level, seems to be fading away? How can one say at one and the same time "Who am I?" and "Here I am!"? Is it not possible to make the gap separating narrative identity and moral identity work to the benefit of their living dialectic? This is how I see the opposition between them transformed into a fruitful tension.[38]

Finally, the reason why a narrative account becomes important can be stated in the words of David Carr stated as,

> We might say that the narrative explanation is satisfying precisely because it never strays far from ordinary discourse. The content of the story may in the end depart considerably in content from that of the surface-story we began with say, the agent's own account but its proximity in form and style to our day-to-day dealing in human situations lends it an air of familiarity that we may find comforting. ... In other words, the kind of understanding we achieve through telling a story is also the kind that can lead, if need be, to action.[39]

B. Accounts of Non-narrative Self

However, on the other hand, there are the non-narrativists, who hold a view counter to what has been suggested by the narrativsts. To begin with, a clear statement of what would be a version of psychological Narrativity thesis as given by Roquentin in Sartre's novel *Nausea* that,

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[37]Macintyre 2007: 219.
[38] Ricoeur, 1992: 167.
[39] Carr, 2008: 21, 22.

> a man is always a teller of stories, he lives surrounded by his own stories and those of other people, he sees everything that happens to him in terms of these stories and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it.[40]

However despite putting forth this version of psychological narrativity thesis Sartre rejects the ethical narrativity thesis and sees this narrative, story-telling impulse as a defect that is regrettable. He sees this exercise of human Narrativity as essentially a matter of bad faith, of radical (and typically irremediable) inauthenticity rather than something that is essential for authenticity. Foucault, also in the same line of thought criticized narrative self-interpretation as part of a disciplinary culture of confession with its roots in the 'ashes and sackcloth' tradition of the Christian church. He writes that, "hermeneutics of the self implies the sacrifice of the self. And that, I think, the deep contradiction, or, if you want, the great richness, of Christian technologies of the self: no truth about the self without a sacrifice of the self." [41]

Galen Stawson has a strong view against the narrativist attempt to construct the self. It is in this constant endeavour of narrating one's daily experiences to others in a storying way and with great gusto that one drifts away ever further from the truth. And it is in this process of telling and retelling the past that one shifts away from the facts as this involves changes, smoothening and enhancements.[42]Thus, the result is obvious for the more we narrate ourselves, recall and retell our stories, the further we risk moving away from the truth of an accurate self-understanding of our being. He writes,

> "The aspiration to explicit narrative self-articulation is natural for some – for some, perhaps it may be helpful – but in others it is highly unnatural and ruinous. My guess is that it almost always does more harm than good – that the Narrative tendency to look for story or narrative coherence in one's life is, in general, a gross hindrance to self-understanding: to a just, general, practically real sense, implicit or explicit, of one's nature."[43]

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[40] Sartre, 1938: 64.
[41] Foucault, 1993: 198-227.
[42]Strawson points out that this tendency is not just a human psychological foible. But recent research has shown this to be an inevitable consequence of the mechanics of the neurophysiological process of laying down memories that every studied conscious recall of past events brings an alteration.
[43] Strawson, 2005: 82.

Zahavi on the other hand has a more sympathetic view of the narrative approach to the extent that the question "who I am?" is of importance to me, the self and cannot be settled independently of the self's own self-understanding, but differ on the position that this approach can stand alone or is sufficient to provide an answer. There are limits to the kind of understanding of self and others that narratives can provide. It needs to be supplemented by a more primitive and fundamental notion of self, than the one endorsed by the narrativists, a first-person perspective which is not and cannot be captured in terms of narrative structures. In a parallel move, with respect to the question of what it means to be other, the reason why the other is characterized by a certain dimension of inaccessibility and transcendence according to Zahavi is one that is seemingly straightforward but one that is bound to be missed by the narrative approach. The reason why the other is an other he holds is precisely because of the fact that the other "is also a self, with his or her own irreplaceable first-person perspective."[44]

3. The Non-Narrativist Stance

Having dealt with a comparative accounts of narrative and non- narrative self in the above section we will continue to examine in greater detail the argument that the non-narrativist puts forth against the narrativist but in doing so, we will narrow our discussion to the argument provide by two central non-narrativist philosopher. The first would be an understanding of Zahavi's argument that there is a need to operate with a more primitive and fundamental notion of self than the one endorsed by the narrativists and that there are limits to the kind of understanding of self and others that narratives can provide as a crucial dimension of what it means to be other that is bound to be missed by the narrative approach. This would be followed by examining Strawson's groundbreaking arguments against the narrative identity thesis that challenges both the descriptive and normative aspects of the thesis. His defense of what he calls an episodic approach as against the prevailing diachronic approach to self experience and his defense of a non-narrativist form of self-representation, as against the Narrative

[44] Zahavi 2007: 201.

form of self-representation, will show that there is not just one good way for humans to experience their being in time.[45]

A. Zahavi's Critique of Narrativism

In the light of the above discussion it can be pointed out that the narrative approach does face some problems as story about one's own life is not simply a recounting of the brute facts, rather it is, as Bruner puts it, an interpretative feat.[46] Accordingly the question for a non-narrativist like Zahavi is, "Is it really legitimate to reduce our selfhood to that which can be narrated? Is it possible to resist fictionalism as long as the self is taken to be nothing but a narrative construction?"[47] Just as a storyteller constructs and reconstructs events, in order to impose more coherence on life events, than they possessed while simply being lived, in the same manner, it can be said that a narrative necessarily favours a certain perspective on one's experiences and actions to the exclusion of others. Therefore, one is immediately confronted with the question as to the extent to which one can talk about the truth and falsity of self-narratives as there is no straightforward one-to-one correlation between the life as it is led and the life as it is told.

Moreover, we can be mistaken about who we are and so despite a person's sincere propagation of a specific life story its truth is not guaranteed. In fact, in some cases, it may be that the stability of our self-identity is inversely proportional to the fixed stories we tell about ourselves. To the extent that the narrativist storytelling serves a compensatory function and might even be seen as an attempt to make up for the lack of a fragile self-identity Zahavi is in agreement. Nevertheless, given that our self-narratives are fallible the fundamental question that Zahavi raises is, are narratives only constrained by the narratives of others, or can we also appeal to narrative-transcendent facts?

The response to this query differ in many ways, defenders of a narrative approach to selfhood like Dennett have argued that the self is nothing but a fictional centre of narrative gravity, merely the abstract point where various stories intersect.[48] In a parallel

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[45] Stawson believes that there are deeply non-narrative people who are deeply non-narrative and yet live a very good life.
[46] Burner, 2002: 12–13.
[47] Zahavi, 2007: 181.
[48] Dennett, 1991: 418.

move, someone like L.O. Mink would argue that narratives merely reflect our need for a satisfying coherence, and that they distort reality by imposing fictional configurations on a life that in and of itself has no beginning, middle and end.[49]By contrast, others have claimed that the narrative self has reality insofar as it is a real social construction. Carr has argued that despite the differences between fictional narratives and real life and the fact that we are denied the authoritative retrospective point of view of the story-teller or historian, narrative beginning-middle-end structures can be seen as an extension and enrichment of configurations already found in experience and action.[50] So what he finds strange is not the claim that our lives have coherence, but the belief that there is no coherence in our life for lived time already has a quasi-narrative character that is not just amenable to any telling.

Another argument that Zahavi holds against the narrativist is that granted that Self-narratives may capture something important about who we are but is it capable of delivering an exhaustive account of what it means to be a self or is there a need for a more foundational notion of self than that provided by the narrative? This contention is based on the premise that the self as a univocal concept is an unacceptable oversimplication, for there is, he believes, not only one type or level or aspect of self to reckon with.[51] Rather for him there is a need to operate within a different dimension or level of selfhood than the one addressed by the narrativist account.

In response to the above question, he reverts back to the phenomenological notion of self that holds the self as not something standing opposed to the stream of consciousness, but is, rather, immersed in conscious life. In essence what it means to be a self calls for an examination of the structure of experience, and vice versa. This self or more precisely, the minimal or core self, is closely linked to the first-person perspective and is said to possess experiential reality. In fact Zahavi holds that, "This first-personal givenness of experiential phenomena is not something quite incidental to their being, a mere varnish that the experiences could lack without ceasing to be experiences. On the contrary, this first-personal givenness makes the experiences subjective."[52]

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[49] Mink, 1970: 558.
[50] Carr, 1986: 59.
[51] Zahavi, 2007: 181.
[52] Ibid., 183.

For Zahavi, the experiential core self is an integral part of the structure of phenomenal consciousness and must be regarded as a pre-linguistic presupposition for any narrative practices. It simply is a difference between the question of having first-personal access to one's own consciousness where one could consider her own aims, ideals and aspirations as her own and a question of the manifestation of experiential life where one tells a story about them. Essentially, only when one has access to one's own experiential life then can he or she be said to have a first-person perspective whereas the latter amounts to presupposing a mastery of the first-person pronoun and being able to articulate it linguistically.

The problem, according to Zahavi, with some of the narrativists is that despite seeming to recognize this distinction they fail to recognize its full significance and so conclude that even this primitive and foundational structure merits the name of self. Thus, Carr for instance despite recognizing the fact that in the construction of a coherent life-story, experiences and actions must already be given as mine later dismisses such unity as necessary but not sufficient condition for selfhood.[53] Likewise, Kerby also in *Narrative and the Self*, unwittingly points out that the attempt to explain the phenomenon of selfhood by appealing to the primitive structures of (time-)consciousness is like the attempt to describe a house only in terms of its framework or underlying structure.[54] To this Zahavi agrees that there is more to human existence than the possession of a first-person perspective. However his reply is who would, on the other hand want to live in a house that lacked a stable foundation?

Bruner also despite admitting that certain features of selfhood are innate and that a primitive, pre-conceptual self exist, however maintains that "dysnarrativia" (which we for instance encounter in Korsakoff's syndrome or Alzheimer's disease) is deadly for selfhood and amount to nothing in the absence of narrative capacities.[55] Yet this can be countered by Damasio, who rather explicitly argues that neuropathology provides empirical evidence in support of the distinction between core self and autobiographical self. In the above case core consciousness can remain intact even when extended

[53] Carr, 1986: 97.
[54] Kerby, 1991: 32.
[55] Burner, 2002: 86, 119.

consciousness is severely impaired or completely absent, whereas a loss of core consciousness will cause extended consciousness to collapse as well.[56]

Another option that Zahavi provides is that one might retain the term "self" in dealing with the experiential self when dealing with a primitive form of self-givenness or self-referentiality. On the other hand, it may be helpful to speak of the narrative construction as a person[57] and not as a self. The reason being what is captured by a narrative account is the nature of my personal character that is already personalized in the process of developing into a full-blown person, something that evolves through time, is shaped by the values, by my moral and intellectual convictions and decisions I endorse. Although, a narrow focus on the experiential core self might be said to involve a certain amount of abstraction, there is no reason to question its reality, it is not a mere abstraction. Not only does it play a foundational role, but, it has also found resonance in empirical science.[58]

Another important point of debate is that of the relation between narratives and otherness. For instance, both Hutto and Bruner have argued that our ability to understand others is greatly enhanced by our shared narratives and understanding of how a manifold of character types will react in various narrative scenarios.[59] However Zahavi thinks that despite there being a truth to these claims there is also a limit to the extent narratives can get us on the basis of two important reasons.

Firstly, children despite engaging in increasingly sophisticated forms of social interaction from birth onwards acquire narrative skills, relatively, only at a later stage. Thus, from a developmental point of view narratives cannot form the basis and foundation of intersubjectivity. A possible retort might be that the exchanges can still be structured as meaningful sequences with a beginning and an end. Even if these forms do not comprise full-fledged narratives they still contain what might be called micro-narratives. Moreover, as an escape from the accusation of fictionalism, Carr for instance,

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[56] Damasio, 1999: 115-119.

[57] It might also be worthwhile to consider the etymology of the concept of person. The Latin persona refers to masks worn by actors and is related to the expression dramatis personae, which designates the characters in a play or a story.

[58] According to Josef Parnas in his article, "The Self and its Scizophrenia: Some Open issues." (2012) if one is to trace the psychopathological core of schizophrenia there is an prereflective sense of self that is more basic than the level of self as a narrative construction that accounts for the subjective experience of agency, coherence, unity, temporal identity and demarcation.

[59] Burner, 2002: 16.

has argued that the narrative beginning-middle-end structures should be seen as extensions and enrichment of temporal configurations already found in experience and action.[60] However, according to Zahavi, the problem with this type of response shows a sign of bankruptcy. It in severing the link between language can be said to stretch narrative beyond its breaking point such that narrative in become all-inclusive would in the end become so vacuous that everything and anything meaningful would involve narratives.[61] Another problem might be that since none of the infants under study demonstrate a proper understanding of the self-other distinction so, it might be that an awareness of the other, enters the stage only through language-use and narratives. However, this is not true, for Zahavi holds that even in young infants there is the presence of a basic self-other differentiation.[62]

Secondly, what seems to be problematic is the claim most phenomenologists would make that it is possible to experience the feelings, desires, and beliefs of others in their expressive behavior. However, this does not imply that I can experience the other in the same way as she herself does, nor that the other's consciousness is accessible to me in the same way as my own is. Simply because the second and for even the third person access to psychological states differ from the first-person access which is on the other hand constitutional and not an imperfection or a shortcoming. Thus, the givenness of the other is of a rather peculiar kind and the transcendence of the other must be thus respected which the narrative approach fails to maintain.[63]

Sartre emphasized the transcendent, ineffable and elusive character of the other, and rejected any attempt to bridge or downplay the difference between self and other. Rather what is truly peculiar and exceptional about the other according to Sartre is not that I am experiencing a *cogitatum cogitans*, but that I am encountering somebody who transcends my grasp, and who in turn is able to perceive and objectify me.[64] A similar approach was adopted by Lévinas who also took the problem of intersubjectivity

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[60] Carr, 1991: 162.
[61] Zahavi, 2007: 187.
[62] In connection with this issue Zahavi refers to the work of developmental psychologist like Daniel Stern who in his book *The Interpersonal World of Infant* argues that from around two months the child develops a generalized representation of its interactions with its primary caregiver and around seven months, the child begins to be aware that his or her thoughts and experiences are distinct from those of other people and only around fifteen months the child develops the capacity for symbolic representation and language.
[63] Zahavi, 2007: 189.
[64] Sartre, 1956: 310.

to be primarily a problem of the encounter with radical otherness. We are yet to properly understand other as long as we conceive the other as something that can be absorbed into a totality for "If one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other."[65]

Although this account of intersubjectivity misses out important aspects of inter-subjectivity yet ignoring this call to attention means losing out the crucial aspects of experiencing the other. For instance Schapp goes to the extreme in claiming that what is essential about others are their stories and the encounter with the other in flesh and blood doesn't add any significant dimension beyond the narrative. He argues that the face also tells stories, and that meeting somebody face-to-face is merely to encounter new stories or have the old stories confirmed.[66] But this failure to realize precisely the fact that the other is charactresized by an otherness, which is beyond whatever narratives bring to bear on him or her, might be criticized for a "domestication of otherness."

B. Strawson's Critique of Narrative Self

According to the narrativist version of self there are two possible ways of conceiving one's life, i.e., in terms of the psychological narrativity thesis which is often coupled with a normative thesis, called the ethical narrativity thesis. The psychological narrativity thesis is a straightforwardly empirical and descriptive thesis based on the widespread agreement that ordinarily human beings as part of our nature actually experience our lives as a narrative or story of some sorts. Whereas, in addition, ethical narrativity thesis holds that "a richly Narrative outlook is essential to a well-lived life, to true or full personhood."[67] and hence experiencing one's life as a narrative is a good thing.

Both views according to Strawson are false as there is not only one particular good way for human beings to experience their being in time, as there are deeply non-Narrative people who have lived good ways of life that are deeply non-narrative. Consequently, such views, "hinder human self-understanding, close down important avenues of thought, impoverish our grasp of ethical possibilities, needlessly and wrongly distress those who do not fit their model, and are potentially destructive in

[65] Levinas, 1979: 83.
[66] Schapp as discussed in Zahavi, 2007: 179–201.
[67] Stawson, 2005: 82.

psychotherapeutic contexts."[68] He believes that many who have this ethical leanings are wrapped up in forms of religious beliefs that are really all about the self.[69]

Another factor in relation to this narrative and non-narrative distinction is the correlative issue of episodic and diachronic distinction of temporal beings, which, though is not the same with the former, holds a close link with it.[70] In case if one happens to be Diachronic [D] one naturally figures oneself as something that has relatively long-term continuity persisting over a long stretch of time, covering the (further) past as well as the (further) future, perhaps the stretch of life. In contrast, if one is Episodic, [E] although one is perfectly well aware that one has long-term continuity considered as a whole human being there is no sense or little sense of oneself as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future. In this sense, though diachronics and episodics are not totally oppose to one another yet they are likely to misunderstand one another as their life form, in terms of their ethical and emotional nature, differ significantly to such an extent that they radically opposed one another. Diachronics, for instance, may feel that there is something chilling, empty and deficient about the episodic life, although it is no less full than the former. Likewise, episodics, on the other hand, might also find the diachronic life somehow clogged or excessively self-controlled.[71]

Despite the perception that many people, especially the episodics, have absolutely no sense of life being lived as a narrative with or without form and are said to have no special interest in the past or the future. However, according to Strawson, on a closer examination an episodic life, it becomes evident that far from being less vital, less engaged and less humane, it is a normal, good and non-pathological form of life for humans to flourish. Moreover, as far as self-experience is concerned episodics are by definition more located in the present and can be said to have a respectable amount of

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[68] Ibid., 64

[69] Ibid., 71. According to Strawson religious belief is one of the fundamental vehicles of human narcissism so he holds that clearly the sense of self importance is more likely to be felt and visible in the one who has come to religion than in someone who has been born into it.

[70]With regard to this distinction Strawson is of the view that many people are naturally Diachronic, and that many who are Diachronic are also Narrative in their outlook on life whereas on the contrary Episodics are likely to have no particular tendency to see their life in Narrative terms.

[71]Strawson, 2005: 66.

remembrance about the past and its experience 'from the inside', as philosophers say.[72] And even if it is true that narrativity is necessary for a good life for those who believe so, it, at the same time, is not true and not applicable to others for it is also true that the best lives almost never involve this kind of self-telling. So on the basis of this argument Strawson dismissed both the Narrativity thesis as "another deep divider of the human race"[73] He is in agreement with Goronwy Rees that it is always surprising that people should take it so much for granted that they each possess what is usually called 'a character' because at no time in one's life have we had that enviable sensation of constituting a continuous personality.[74]

Strawson goes further in holding that even if one was to have a perfectly good grasp of oneself as having a certain personality one can be completely disinterested in the question of "What have I made of my life?" without being irresponsible. It's just that we are living our life and care about it as it is now, without being too concerned about the past. Apart from being diachronic the narrative outlook in its construction of the events of life clearly involve other three factors. Firstly, when it comes to an apprehension of one's life, or relatively large-scale parts of one's life, one must have some sort of relatively large-scale coherence-seeking, unity seeking, pattern-seeking, or most generally [F] form-finding tendency. This form–finding tendency is a factor that essentially goes beyond being diachronic and is an essential but minimally sufficient factor of being narrative. Again, if one is genuinely narrative one must, in apprehending one's life, also have some sort of distinctive [S] story-telling tendency which in a way does not imply any tendency to fabricate, consciously or otherwise, although it does not rule it out either. A third and more troubling suggestion is that if one is Narrative then when it comes to an apprehension of one's own life one will also have a tendency to engage unconsciously in invention, fiction of some sort, i.e., falsification, confabulation, revisionism which is known as [R] revision.[75]

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[72] Ibid.

[73]Strawson, 2005: 72.

[74]Ress, 1960: 9–10. Ress writes that "if indeed I had known at that time of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* [*The Man without Qualities*, a novel by Robert Musil], the man without qualities, I would have greeted him as my blood brother and rejoiced because I was not alone in the world; as it was, I was content with a private fantasy of my own in which I figured as Mr. Nobody."

[75]Strawson, 2005: 75-80 Thus, with reference to the presence of a combination of the four factors [+D +F +S +R] we can provide a rough sketch of who endorses what. Dennett along with Burner is seen as endorsing a full blown. This is an abbreviated formulation which Stawson has come up

Some think that all normal human beings have all four of these properties or narrativity necessarily involves all four. But Stawson argues that a normal person have none of these and that the limiting case of narrativity involves nothing more than characteristics of form-finding and story-telling. Moreover, granted that certain sorts of self-understanding are necessary for a good human life, they need be nothing more than form-finding, without the need for narrativity. Certainly, narrativity, according to Stawson, is not necessarily a part of the 'examined life' and one is never sure if the examined life thought to be essential by Socrates to human existence is always a good thing.[76] A good human life involving form-finding tendencies may be osmotic, systematic and not staged in consciousness so the business of living well is, for many, a completely non-Narrative Project. People can develop and deepen in valuable ways without any sort of Narrative reflection, just as musicians can improve by practice sessions without recalling those sessions. Thus, he writes that, "Diachronicity is not a necessary condition of a properly moral existence, nor a proper sense of responsibility.[77]

Therefore, according to Stawson to consider life as a construct of narrative is to miss the point which V. S. Pritchett, the great short story writer, has poignantly bought out in saying "We live beyond any tale that we happen to enact."[78] Narrative, understood in a strictly secular sense misses the point and risks a strange commodification of life, time and soul. The reason for this view is because the introduction of Narrativity in the sphere of ethics "is more of an affliction or a bad habit than a prerequisite of a good life."[79]

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with in order to represent the four factors that constitute a narrative account of life. Thus, D stands for Diachronic, F for Form-finding tendency, S for Story-telling and R for Revision plus "+" for the presence of those factors and "-" for the absence of these factors. According to this division Dennett seems to place considerable emphasis on revision. Schechtman's account of Narrativity is [+D +F +S±R]. It assumes that we are all Diachronic, requires that we be form-finding and story-telling and explicitly so: constituting an identity requires that an individual conceive of his life as having the form and the logic of a story – more specifically, the story of a person's life – where "story" is understood as a conventional, linear narrative. On the other hand, Sartre version would endorse [+F +S +R] as he is not particularly concerned with [D].

[76]Strawson, 2005: 82.

[77] Strawson, 2005: 85.

[78] Pritchett, 1979: 47.

[79] Ibid., 85.

4. WHY NARRATIVE

A central starting point for the narrativist is the assumption that we need to distinguish between merely being conscious or sentient, and being a self, precisely because being a self is an achievement rather than a given, constructed through narrative self-interpretation. Who I am is not something given, but something that is evolving and realized through my projects. The self in a narrative construction is said to arise out of discursive practices of the stories that one and others weave about oneself, of organizing my experiences and actions in the context of a unifying story. Thus, within a life story that traces the origin and development of where one comes from and where one is heading, one attains insights into who one is by situating one's character traits, the values one endorses, the goals that one pursues, etc. In doing so, narratives do not merely capture aspects of an already existing self but constitute a privileged way to obtain knowledge about the self , since there is no such thing as a pre-existing self for narrative itself constitute the self.[80] A person in the process of telling the story about his or her life is then found to be refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories, making "life itself a cloth woven of stories told."[81] The narrative account clearly brings out both the temporal and social dimension of selfhood as events and experiences that occur at different times are united togehter by being incorporated into a single self-narrative. It is a social process, for one is dependent on the values, ideals and goals one has, the significance and meaning of which in turn is conditioned by the community of which one is a part.

Like most interesting accounts, the narrative approach certainly does face some problems. To tell a story about one's own life is not simply a recounting of the brute facts, rather it is, as Bruner puts it, an interpretative feat.[82] Stories are not simply records of what happened, but continuing interpretations and reinterpretations of our lives that favours a certain perspective of one's experiences and actions to the exclusion of others. But insofar as there is no straightforward one-to-one correlation between life as it is led and life as it is told, one is immediately confronted with the question concerning the extent to which one can talk about the truth and falsity of self-

[80] Bruner, 2002: 14. He holds that a self is probably the most impressive and most intricate work of art we ever produce.
[81] Ricoeur, 1988: 246.
[82] Burner, 2002: 12-13.

narratives. In fact, in some cases the stability of our self-identity might be inversely proportional to the fixed stories we tell about ourselves.[83]

While it is true that Selfhood is essentially, an activity of self-constitution which entails an agent articulating "who are you?" and making sense of oneself by giving a narrative account of who one is, in reply, it, at the same time, is not merely the work of poets, dramatist and novelists reflecting upon events which had no narrative order before one was imposed nor is it a disguise or decoration. Rather, it is an intelligible rendering of actions which itself has a basically historical character.[84] The question, who am I is not asked by mere psychological entities or brains but by an acting and suffering human being. It constitutes a crucial part of the self as an agent whose life is intrinsically relational and intersubjective by virtue of the fact that we are embodied. For this reason, questions about who I am and how I should live need to be addressed in the context of an interpersonal, cultural and historical setting and in reply to these questions our lives takes a practical identity with a narrative form.[85]

Moreover, since we as agents are but only the co-author of our narrative so we find ourselves as part of an action which we did not make and design thus we are always under certain constraints. We do not live the story as we please which happens only in fantasy.[86] Rather, for Ricoeur, in recalling Socrates' phrase in the *Apology* he describes the self of self-knowledge as the fruit of an examined life which is totally different from "the egoistical and narcissistic ego whose hypocrisy and naivete the hermeneutics of suspicion have denounced," and "clarified by the cathartic effects of narratives, be they historical or fictional, conveyed by our culture."[87] The benefit of having such a narrative identity whose self-constancy is informed by the works of culture, according to Ricoeur is that it can be equally applicable to the individual as well as to the community.

As Bruner points out, our self-making stories are not made up from scratch; they pattern themselves on conventional genres so when talking about myself,

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[83]Ricoeur holds that narrative identity is not a stable and seamless identity as it is always possible to compose or weave together different, even opposed plots about our lives. Narrative identity thus becomes the name of a problem at least as much as it is that of a solution.

[84] Macintyre, 2007: 211.

[85]Atkins, 2008: p. 1. The strength of the narrative model, according to Atkins, pertain to its capacity of deploying strategies to integrate and unify different characters, actors, motives, places, events, perspectives, and even different orders of time.

[86] Macintyre, 2007: 213

[87] Ricoeur, 1988: 247.

my selfhood becomes part of the public domain, and its shape and nature is guided by cultural models of what selfhood should and shouldn't be. Furthermore, others are called upon to hear and to accept the narrative accounts we give of our actions and experiences. To come to know oneself as a person with a particular life history and particular character traits is, consequently, both more complicated than knowing one's immediate beliefs and desires and less private than it might initially seem. When I interpret myself in terms of a life story, I might be both the narrator and the main character, but I am not the sole author for history is an enacted dramatic narrative in which the characters are also the authors.[88] Despite the fact that the way the story unfolds, is in part determined by our own choices and decisions, the beginning of our own story has always already been made for me(the self) by other. In fact, the story of any individual life is not only interwoven with the stories of others (parents, siblings, friends etc.), it is also embedded in a larger historical and communal meaning-giving structure.

But this does not mean that individuals necessarily experience their lives as coherent narratives. It rather than denying the potentially distorting effects of memory and socialization accepts the threats that reality of embodiment and the social context poses to a coherent live and sees the need for a coherent reflective self-understanding which only a narrative understanding can provide. Thus, the argument here is that to the extent that a life is coherent, it is so because it deploys narrative strategies and for this reason narrative coherence is seen as crucial to agency, moral identity and ultimately to a good life.[89]

Again talking about the fluid nature of the self, though in the narrative metaphor one becomes a story teller, yet understood in the context of the specificity and "realness' of personal histories, the idea of the self as an unrestricted flow poses a risk and so one has to be mindful. No doubt, the idea of fluidity of self brings to focus the capacities that we have but that fluidity cannot be an unrestricted free-floating self. The fact that there has to be a restraint on the fluidity can be found in the very fact that we do not and cannot have limitless stories as we do not, in our experience of our selves, have limitless possibilities.[90] Moreover, as a result of this fluidity there arises irreconcilable conflict regarding not only our relations with others but also within our own selves especially in

[88] Macintyre, 2007: 215.
[89] Atkins, 2008: 7.
[90] Flaskas, 1999: 24.

case of life transforming decisions that involve choosing between conflicting norms which cannot be resolved by an appeal to a universal value. Thus, Atkins hold that given a situation like this, which demands for a single minded approach in a situation of conflicts that precisely seems to deny this an autonomous agent can be found to employs narrative competencies which is presupposed in our understanding of our ourselves as embodied, socialized agents. [91]

The other aspect of narrative selfhood is the sense of correlativeness. Macintyre holds that one is not only accountable for giving but also for asking others an account as one is part of their story just as they are part of ours. Thus, without this accountability of the self, even those but the simplest and barest of narratives would not occur and they would lack that continuity required to make both itself and the action that constitute them intelligible. Therefore, it follows that any attempts to elucidate the notion of personal identity in the absence of the notions of narrative, intelligibility and accountability are bound to fail for "narrative, intelligibility and accountability presuppose the applicability of the concept of personal identity, just as it presupposes their applicability."[92]

According to Atkins, the very fact that the agency of the narrative identities are formed through our earliest relations with others and in the context of actions that are socially signified and endowed with value, so, narrative agents are subjects of imputations. Thus, she holds that actions can be in the first place evaluated from the perspective of the agent as a member of a common humanity. Secondly it can be evaluated from the perspective of the agent as a unique, irreplaceable end.[93]

The above discussion leads us to an important feature of the narrative model that can be seen in terms of its ethical implications. For Ricoeur, narrative identity presupposes an ethical aim with its desire to live well, with, and for others in just institutions. He goes further in holding that this ethical concern with its conception of a good unified life can be met by a sophisticated narrative view. Kearney, in agreement with Ricoeur holds narratives as the basic agency of ethical empathy that help us cross boundaries. Narrative being inter-subjective help us to see the other, primarily, as human beings rather than in terms of members of this or that class, sect, faction or clique or

[91] Atkins, 2008: 5.
[92] Macintyre, 2007: 218.
[93] Atkins, 2008: 5.

in other words, help us "to feel what wretches feel." Thus, on the whole, narratives "enable each one of us to relate to the other as another self and to oneself as another."[94]

Accordingly, there is also the fear that the unity and the social context narrative model places on, could arbitrarily determine that only certain types of self-narrative can count as socially and morally valuable resulting in a strong tendency towards conventionality. However, according to Kearney, the narrative self being intersubjective is aware that it in itself is not enough as it acquires its identity in large part by receiving other's narratives and re-narrating itself in turn to others.[95] The self in the narrative is understood both as a creative agent and a receptive actor, acting and a suffering being. This, he holds is where narrative, "revives the age-old virtue of self-knowledge, not as some self-regarding ego but as an examined life freed from narcissism and solipsism through a recognition of our dialogical interdependence vis-a-vis the others."[96]

But narrative responsibility apart from this aspect of constancy also requires flexibility. The fact that narrative is always subjected to the process of something made and remade explains for its fundamental fluidity and openness. Unlike the Grand Narratives which legitimate ideologies of domination and conquest employs, the kind of openness on which these kinds of narratives are structured ensures that they do not degenerate into self- righteousness, fundamentalism or racism.[97] In contrast, the capacity of the narrative imagination to constantly transcend the status quo of any given society towards possible alternatives sustains the sense of ethical empathy and attentiveness to the others which constitutes its strong point.

While it is true that no narrative is presuppositionless and every story is told from a certain point of view with certain interests and anticipates certain ends yet it is equally true that a hermeneutic of affirmation always needs to be accompanied by a hermeneutic of suspicion. In other words, Narrative identity must subjects its own self-constancy to self-questioning and never forget its origins in narrativity for such forgetfulness breeds uncritical naivety. This, writes Kearney "preserves the *specificity* of historical suffering from sanitizing homogenisation, thereby restoring what

[94] Kearney, 1996: 33.
[95] Ibid., 36.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., 42.

Ricoeur calls our 'debt to the dead'."[98] He also holds that if one is to safeguard history from what Frederic Jameson has called the "postmodern cult of the depthless present" a narrative should adopt the twin process of narrating imaginatively and explaining scientifically.[99] This would in the end make narrative memory not just a witness of testifying to past horrors but make it an affair of representing ideals and virtues which both Aristotle and Kant has maintained.

5. KINDS OF NARRATIVE SELF

Understanding well the defense of the narrativist as against the non-narrativist on the necessity for a narrative theory we now turn our attention to the various kinds of narrative self and in doing so we choose to compare two well-known but distinct notion of narrative self, i.e., Dennett and Ricoeur. From Dennett's irrealist point view, the self is comparable to the centre of narrative gravity or a fictional character that stems from and is reflective of his commitment to naturalism, his "heterophenomenological method,"[100] and his views of consciousness. However in Ricoeur works, unlike Dennett's naturalist stance, which privileges scientific explanation, the self emerges as a real, a capable agent as it is based on the phenomenological privileging of lived experience and hermeneutic standards of interpretation and identity.

A. **Dennett's Narrative Self: An Irrealist Account**

According to Dennett, since Descartes in the 17th Century we have had a vision of the self as a sort of immaterial ghost that owns and controls the body just as the way one owns and control one's car. But with the rejection of dualism and the rise of materialism we have had the view of the self as a node or module in the brain. Thus, the very idea of a self must be "nothing but a compelling fiction, a creed outworn, as some theorists insist, a myth we keep telling ourselves in spite of the advances of science that discredit

[98] Kearney, 1996: 42.
[99] Jameson, 1984: 53-91.
[100] Heterophenomenology or "phenomenology *of another* not oneself" is a term coined by Daniel Dennett to describe an explicitly third-person, scientific approach to the study of consciousness and other mental phenomena.

it?"[101] So it is a category mistake to start looking around for the self in the brain because unlike centers of gravity, whose sole property is their spatio-temporal position, selves have a spatio-temporal position that is only grossly defined. Dennett compares the search for the self, to the search for a train in the subways of London which in the end turns out to be nothing but just a way of crossing the street underground.[102]

The original distinction between self and other, he holds, lies in the deepest biological principle that begins in "self-preservation," in the emergence of entities who resisted destruction and decay and passed on this capacity to their descendants. This fundamental biological principle of distinguishing between everything on the "inside" of a closed boundary and everything in the "external world" is one of the marks of a primordial form of selfishness of this life. Thus, this human selfishness "Me against the world," is at the heart of all biological processes and has some remarkable echoes in the highest vaults of our psychology.

The sort of self-hood human beings have, Dennett holds, is unlike the implied self of the lobster or the ant-colony which doesn't have to resort to self-representation as its innate design takes care of that problem. We, on the other hand, are constantly engaged in "representing" ourselves be it in language and gesture, external and internal either to others or to ourselves. The most obvious difference in our environment that would explain this difference in our behavior is the behavior itself. Thus he writes,

> Our human environment contains not just food and shelter, enemies to fight or flee and conspecifics with whom to mate, but words, words, words. These words are potent elements of our environment that we readily incorporate, ingesting and extruding them, weaving them like spiderwebs into self-protective strings of *narrative. Our* fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control, and self-definition is not building dams or spinning webs, but telling stories--and more

[101] Dennett, 1989: 163-73.

[102] In *The origin of selves* Dennett draw a comparison of the futility of searching for the self with that of the searching for trains in the subways of London. He holds that we in our search "enter the brain through the eye, march up the optic nerve, round and round in the cortex, looking behind every neuron, and then, before we know it, we emerge into daylight on the spike of a motor nerve impulse, scratching our head and wondering where the self is."

particularly concociting and controlling the story we tell others--and ourselves--about who we are.[103]

But, in this sense, according to Dennett, "we" are more similar to the spiders than to the "professional" human storytellers for here we don't have to consciously and deliberately figure out what narratives to tell and how to tell them unlike. Rather what comes out at the end of our tale spinning is our human consciousness and our narrative selfhood, which being created is a "product" and not the "source."[104] He, thus, holds that in our telling of our story, the streams of narrative, issue forth "as if" from a single source and the effect it has on any audience or reader is to encourage them to put forward a unified agent who in telling the story conjectures a center of narrative gravity. Therefore, this centre of gravity despite being just another abstraction and not a thing in the brain is but "remarkably robust and almost becomes a tangible *attractor of properties*, the "owner of record" of whatever items and features are lying about unclaimed."[105]

Moreover, according to Dennett, just as out of the many candidates vying for the post of president, through a narrative dialectical process, a person fitting the bill is elected to represent the country, in very much a parallel way a human being does not start out as single or as multiple, he or she starts out without any "Head of Mind" at all.[106] A human being first creates unconsciously one or more ideal fictive-selves then slowly gets acquainted with the various possibilities of selfhood that "make sense" and then elects the best supported of these as the "Head of Mind." A significant difference in the human case, however, is that there is likely to be considerably more *outside influence*, for instance, parents, friends and even enemies may contribute to the image of what it means to be me.

Now, how can we make the claim that a self is rather like a fictional character? Aren't all *fictional* selves dependent for their very creation on the existence of *real* selves? A real self for instance is like, Melville, the author and creator of Ishmael, the fictional character. Doesn't this show that it takes a real self to create a fictional self? This is not the case. In fact, the self is just like the novel-writing machine

[103] Dennett, 1989: 167–73.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid

that creates, Gilbert, the fictional self, whose life bears an interesting resemblance to the career of this mere robot but which at the end cannot be said to really know nothing about the world.[107] The same is just as true of our brain for it doesn't know what it's doing either. Thus, according to Dennett it is a category mistake to start looking around for the self in the brain. The reason to begin with is that selves, unlike centers of gravity, whose sole property is their spatio-temporal position, have a spatio-temporal position that is only grossly defined.[108]

There is, of course, a big difference between fictional characters and our own selves. One of the reasons being a fictional character is usually encountered as a *fait accompli*, where anything indeterminate that strikes the reader's curiosity cannot be made determinate. However, our selves are constantly being made more determinate as we go along in response to the way the world impinges upon us, though it is true that we too cannot undo those parts of our pasts that are determinate. In addition, unlike a fictional character which can have contradictory properties because it's "just" a fictional character, we in trying to interpret someone, even a fictional character, find such contradictions intolerable and typically "bifurcate" the character to resolve the conflict.

The reason why we are all inveterate and inventive autobiographical novelists, confabulating, telling and retelling ourselves the story of our own lives, without paying attention to the question of truth, is because "there is no conscious self that is unproblematically in command of the mind's resources. Rather, we are somewhat disunified."[109] This, Dennett holds, makes our intuition for self-preservation to act "in opportunistic but amazingly resourceful ways to produce a modicum of behavioral unity, *which is then enhanced by an illusion of greater unity.*"[110] Just as the physicist comes up with the theoretical abstraction of a center of gravity as an *interpretation*, of the object and its behavior, likewise, the hermeneuticist on seeing humans finds it theoretically perspicuous to organize the interpretation around a central abstraction. So,

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[107] Both these examples of fictional characters, Melville as well as Gilbert can be found discussed in greater detail in Dennett's article "The self as a Centre of Narrative Gravity."

[108] Considering the centre of gravity of physical object, despite being an abstractum, it has a nicely defined well delineated and well behaved role within physics. So if one starts tipping an object, we can more or less predict accurately whether it would start to fall over or fall back in place as the key term of it are all interdefinable. However, as has been shown by Dennett, in case of Humans specially when one's behavioral control system becomes seriously impaired the best hermeneutical story we can tell about the individual is to say that there is more than one character "inhabiting" that body.

[109] Dennett, 1992.

[110] Ibid.

we, in addition to a center of gravity, have to posit for *ourselves* a chief fictional character, a *self* as well. Therefore he holds, "A self is also an abstract object, a theorist's fiction. The theory is not particle physics but what we might call a branch of people-physics; it is more soberly known as a phenomenology or hermeneutics, or soul-science (*Geisteswissenschaft*)."[111]

A. Ricoeur's Narrative Self: A Realist Account

Ricoeur argues that self-understanding is a hermeneutic encounter with the narrative of self-identity. However, unlike Dennett he does not see the self as a fiction that is not real. Instead, he holds that self-conscious presence is one of the "limiting boundaries" for narrative. This self-affirmation is lived, not reasoned and is an existential consciousness internal to a person who in turn is an author of acts.[112] Ricoeur holds that narrative gives us more than a "sense of truth." Which is helpful in understanding the significance of the shift from a foundationalist subject to the ethical or responsible subject, a move which at the same time provides a way out of the relativistic impasse of narrative theory. Ricoeur affirms that "There is no world without the self who finds itself in it and acts in it; there is no self without a world that is practicable in some fashion." so the self is present, i.e., is real, in its acts.[113] Thus despite the narrative self being implicated in fiction, in an infinite revision of its own narrative possibilities, yet it retains an *alethic* or veritative dimension as the self who attests to its presence, not directly, as immediate awareness in the sense of the Cartesian cogito, but indirectly in and through action.

Riceour's notion of the self existing as real, both at the level of common sense as well as in philosophical reflection, is constituted by a three-part movement: description, narrative, and prescription.[114] Description to begin with is a "looking back"

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[111]Dennett, 1992.

[112]In reply to the question, "To whom then is action imputable?" Ricoeur replies that it is to the self, as capable of passing through the entire course of the ethico-moral determinations of action, a course at the end of which self-esteem becomes conviction.

[113] Ricoeur, 1992: 311.

[114]James B. Sauer and Randall R. Lyle in their article "The Hermeneutical Mistake of Social Construction," while discussing Ricoeur's version of narrative holds that we can describe these three moments of self-identification as the acting self, the narrative self, and the responsible self and the being of self can be said to revealed only in the conjunction of all three moments.

to what has occurred and constitutes the "what of act." It is the behavior manifested in acting that places a limit on what can be incorporated into a narrative. Most importantly, this "what of an action" leads to the query "who is acting?" Prescription, on the other hand is the determination of action by the use of predicates such as "good" and "obligation" that embeds action within a meaningful normative framework. Whereas, narrative is a transitional and relational function between description and prescription that places a "who" in the action.[115] A narrative, thus, ""binds" the retrospective horizon of description and the prospective horizon of prescription to a particular concrete present."[116] Thus, for Ricoeur, the very structure of the act of narrating is said to place action within the continuity and completeness of a whole life and anticipate ethical considerations.

In following Heidegger, Ricoeur argues that the identity of the self as a subject of practical philosophy that finds its completion in the ethical arises from the situatedness of human existence.[117] However, since the connection between existence and identity is not immediate or direct but is a philosophy of detours, meditated by a theory of human action, the detour by means of the questions "What?" and "why?." Thus, for him the self is not the foundational subject, the transcendental ego, but the project of life as practical philosophy being grounded on an ontology of action and passion begins not with a foundational self, but with a hermeneutical philosophy of action. The question of "What?" and "why?" mentioned above leads back to the question, "who is the agent of action?."[118] . The self being the outcome of this practical philosophy mediated by the analysis of human action becomes a philosophical project where Ethics and practical philosophy lies at the core of this project, the hermeneutics of the self.[119]

Ricoeur, despite being a non foundationalist, retains from the philosophies of subjectivity, the epistemological status of the self as he does not want to relieve the human subject who as an agent of action makes a commitment of the task of ascertaining truth.[120] He calls this epistemological affirmation about reality and about

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[115] Ricoeur, 1992: 152.
[116] Sauer and Randall, 1997: 206.
[117] Ricoeur, 1992: 309–14.
[118] Ricoeur, 1992: 17.
[119] Ibid., 18.
[120] Ricoeur holds that the detour by way of analytic philosophy is simply one of the richest in promise and in results. (Ibid., 17).

the world of action, a mode of existence as selfhood or "attestation."[121] Attestation as the commitment of the self to the world does not necessarily mean verifiable truth or truth as adequation. It is the unverifiable confidence of the self in what it says and is able to do. This act of attestation affirms the presence of an essential self as central to both the project of life and as an epistemological stance, the self to whom decisions and actions can be ascribed that in turn reveal a character.[122]

With reference to the question of narrative swinging between fiction and history Ricoeur holds that the merit of literature lies in its serving a vast laboratory within which we experiment with estimations, evaluations, and judgments of approval and condemnation which in turn allows narratives to serve as a propaedeutic to ethics.[123] Thus, narrative offers to ethics the play or space for moral imagination. Moreover, the quest for a unity in narrative is not much about an assembling of the parts of a story but more about establishing a connection that the narrative provides between estimations applied to actions. It is within this line of the narrative that self-constancy emerges as the link between narrative as infinitely revisable and ethics as the pursuit of a good life with and for others.[124] The major advantage of entering into the ethical issues through a detour of the notion of a "good life" according to Ricoeur is that "it does not refer directly to self-hood in the figure of self-esteem."[125] Thus, Sauer and Randall observes that, "the good is not just a matter of personal satisfaction or a narrative aesthetic but a matter of what is truly worthwhile or valuable, the determination of which is both self-determined and self-determining."[126]

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[121] Ricoeur, 1992: 299 The relation of attestation to self-knowledge is similar to the relation of verification to description and in this sense, attestation or "the truth-value of narrative" is the witness or testimony to the presence of oneself in one's own actions.

[122] Character is not only a who as who acts but also the "what of the who "-the self-determining and self-determined basis of the act. It is the attestation of the selfs' presence in its own acts that may be true or false.

[123] Ricoeur, 1992: 115. Here, moral imagination is not to be confused with fantasy or fiction but understood as one that envisions future possibilities.

[124] Ricoeur, 1992: 180.

[125] Ibid., 172.

[126] Ricoeur holds that narrative mediation explains for the remarkable characteristics of self-knowledge in terms of self-interpreataion. Thus he writes, "What narrative interpretation brings in its own right is precisely the figural nature of the character by which the self, narratively interpreted, turns out to be a *figured* self—which imagines itself *(se figure)* in this or that way." ("Narrative Identity" in wood, 1991: 199)

Hermeneutic of self takes a significant departure from the convenient fictions of constructionism because the narrative identity thematizes more than the created coherence of an individual's life. It thematizes personal identity in its dimensions of care (how the personal other counts on me) and its dimension of justice (how others who I do not know are affected by my actions).[127] Simultaneously, however, in the decisions taken by characters that configure their roles and identities, life is opened to examination. Narrative creates a playground within which we can test out our feelings of what is praiseworthy and blameworthy, of worthwhileness and pointlessness, of change and permanence.

In following the characters in the execution of their roles and the outcome of their actions, we discover a storehouse of possibilities for testing out our own feelings and reactions. A sense of responsibility spontaneously surfaces as our feelings respond to the course of actions narrated in the comic and tragic dramas of human action.[128] Ricoeur has always maintained in his textual hermeneutics that reading is essential to the structure of the text. Reading not only integrates the text within our lives, it also brings the text to a close by our own initiatives. Genuine interpretation is at the same time an existential stance. For a hermeneutics of the self, the ethical perspective (the moment of attestation, our own decision toward the good) closes the book of fiction as a playground, a laboratory of possibilities, and initiates our own ethical selves in the moment of decision. The narrative approach, in short, considers ethics in terms of human desire rather than exclusively in terms of rules.[129] It favours teleology over deontology and seeks to extend our understanding of ethical philosophy beyond formalist categories. The existential insight is that the person I am becoming is constituted by my decisions and action. This becoming is not merely a retelling of the stories that reveal multiple selves or no self at all, but the concrete self of personal being who can be said to be being-true or being-false.

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[127] Ricoeur, 1992: 310.
[128] Ibid., 152.
[129] Ricoeur, 1992: 164.

Conclusion

Therefore, following Rosenbaum and Dyckman one can say that "the self is not an accrual of experience but an ongoing, ever changing manifestation of potentiality."[130] The idea of self is seen as relational rather than being autonomous, always fluid rather than being fixed and existing in a narrative form, it is a reconstruction of self as relationship and a move away from the notion of self as an concrete entity. Thus, the self that merges within is something different from the earlier discourse of self as a 'thing' an essential and interior self, capable of being thought as a separate form, something which at the end we can be said to have too much or too little. Again, the self here is not to be understood as a property "owned" by the individual which comes with the understanding of self as a concrete unity. Rather than existing as an internal property of the individual the self becomes a narrative self, 'storied,' constructed in language and created and re-created in relationship with others.

In the light of the ongoing discussion we will proceed to see how the hermeneutics of the self, in Ricoeur, occupies an epistemological place and structure itself in placing itself as an alternative to the *cogito* and the anti-*cogito* standpoint. We see how through the detour of reflection by way of analysis, the dialectic of selfhood and sameness, and the dialectic of selfhood and otherness Ricoeur constructs a narrative identity that is far from the postmodern "irrepresentability"[131] of abandonment of narrative claims. He bring this perspective to the problematic of the self, in asking the question "who?" to the answer—the self. Thus, in the end, a responsible self emerges as it can be seen, to be indirectly posited, in reply to the following questions, Who is speaking? Who is acting? Who is recounting about himself or herself? Who is the moral subject of imputation?

[130] Rosenbaum and Dyckman, 1995: 28.

[131] This is in reference to the kind of "irreference" with which narrative have become synonymous with, of the abandonment of narrative claim of recounting past experiences "as it actually was" and "as if" we were actually there to experience it.

CHAPTER 2

Ricoeur on Narrative Self Identity

Introduction

An examination of the position of the "I" of the "philosophies of the subject" reveals that the self is without any assured place in philosophical discourse as it seems to be caught up in an alternating sequence of over evaluation or under evaluation. According to Ricoeur, the truth that the self is without a place position of its own can be seen in the way the philosophies of the subject oscillates between that of an "exalted subject" in Descartes and its complete reversal as a "humiliated subject" in Nietzsche. Thus, the hermeneutics of the self, in order to provide the self with an epistemological status, comes up with the notion of "narrative identity" that in avoiding both the alternative of *cogito* and the anti-*cogito* places itself between the two. Accordingly, here, personal identity in unfolding the notion of identity as inclusive of both identity as sameness, i.e., *idem* and identity as self-constancy, i.e., *ipse* creates the durable properties of a character "by constructing the kind of dynamic identity found in the plot which creates the character's identity."[1] Thus, the narrative self, in being a construct that is never given at the start which includes change, mutability, within the cohesion of a lifetime, avoids the accusation of being labeled as a narcissistic ego. Moreover, the self at the same time being a product of the play of sedimentation and innovation, a self that is instructed by cultural symbols, escapes the fate of being labeled as a sheer change. Thus, Ricoeur writes that "what we lose on the side of narcissism, we win back on the side of Narrative."[2]

According to Ricoeur, life has always been known to do something with narrative for we in characterizing the interval between birth and death speak of a life story. However, the way in which narrative contributes to making life is not merely to be understood in terms of an oversimplified relation that holds between history and life. Following this we shall, in this chapter, examine as to what this act of narrating

[1] Wood, 1991: 195.
[2] Ibid., 33.

consist in beginning with an examination of how the operation of emplotment as a synthesis of heterogeneous elements a) mediates between the multiple incidents and unified story, b) brings out the primacy of concordance over discordance and finally c) configure a unifying theme out of the series of events, a story out of succession. This will be followed by a discussion of how identity understood in terms of narrative entails two senses of being, identity as sameness (*idem*) and as selfhood (*ipse*) that, understood within the framework of a temporal structure, the primary trait of the self, leads to a productive dialectic and help escape the dilemma of opting for a substantial self, identical with itself or a self that is a mere illusion. In addition, we will also see how as a result of the failure to account for these distinction and the overlap between the two sense of identity, results in the failure to give a successful account of personal identity. We will then proceed to see how emplotment, in the domain of sameness-identity, in allowing us to integrate permanence in time with what is seemingly contrary, i.e., diversity, variability, discontinuity and instability, brings out a concordance out of discordance. This will be followed by how with the transposing of the notion of emplotment from action to the characters in the narrative, a dialectic that is a dialectic of sameness and selfhood is produced. This will be followed by a focus on how literary narrative, in providing the much needed space for a rich imaginative variation makes possible the reconfiguration of life by narrative. And in the final section of this chapter, we shall, in understanding how the practical field covered by narrative, not merely go beyond the field of the semantics and pragmatics of action but also calls for action that can be thematically developed only within the framework of ethical implications. Thus, we shall see how the discussion in stepping into the dialectic of selfhood and otherness unfolds the notion of self-esteem or self-reflexivity, understood in terms of accountability and how self-reflexivity in being incomplete in itself necessitates the notion of solicitude or the notion of otherness of the other than self which in turn would as we shall see later in chapter three invoke the Notion of "for each" that leads to the notion of just institutions.

1. Emplotment as Mediation

According to Ricoeur, the narrative theory that shall be the focus of our discussion here, in its developed form, dates back to the Russian and Czech formalist of the

twenties and thirties and from the French structuralist of the sixties and seventies. However, it can at the same time be traced back to Aristotle in the poetics.[3] Thus, what Aristotle call plot is not a static structure but an integrating process that gives a dynamic identity to the story recounted and finds its completion in the living receiver of the narrated story. So, here, the treatment of the operation of emplotment as synthesis of heterogeneous elements, will reveal its power a) of transforming the many incidents "into one" story, b) of discordant concordance , i.e., in synthesizing heterogeneous factors into a single story that makes the plot a totality and c) of drawing a configuration out of mere succession in terms of temporality. Moreover, it will also bring into focus how the narrative intelligibility that emplotment employs, in simulating an understanding, brings to light *deep structures* and "*teaches* something," as Aristotle would put it that reveals the universal aspect of human condition.[4]

A. Threefold Mimesis; Prefiguring, Configuring and Refiguring

Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity reinterprets the notion of memesis found in Aristotle's *Poetics* and comes up with a kind of practical identity whose explication takes the form of emploted narratives. Aristotle identifies the mimetic activity or the imitation of an action as nothing more than the emplotment, in which the events are structured into a whole. Ricoeur on the other hand does not equate *muthos*[5] with mimesis as Aristotle does though he holds that the making of a story is both an organization of events into a story with a plot (*muthos*) and an "imitation of an action" (mimesis).[6]

Ricoeur accepts Aristotle's central idea, but notes that there are three levels in the imitation of action, $mimesis_1$, $mimesis_2$ and $mimesis_3$ respectively, out of which

[3] In wood, 1991: 20.
[4] Ibid., 22.
[5] *Muthos* is a Greek term that stands for both fable, in the sense of an imaginary story and plot, in the sense of a well constructed story in the Aristotelian scheme of things but for Ricoeur he is more concerned with the second aspect of *muthos,* that of creative imitation as the central concept of emplotment.
[6] According to Aristotle, various arts are forms of imitation (mimesis), tragic poetry being the imitation of action. A tragedy - or the art of composing tragedies - consists of six different elements, the most important of which is the plot: the organization of events into a coherent story, into an organized whole with a beginning, middle and an end. The central concept is muthos or emplotment.

mimesis$_2$ that configures discrete events into a story qualifies the name of emplotment. Thus, mimesis contains more than the emplotment, it also consists of a reference to the world of action (mimesis$_1$), and to the event of reading (mimesis$_3$). In one sense, the structure is completed only when the reader reads the text which always takes place in the context of the pre-understandings of the reader, and thus mimesis$_3$ contains a reference to the world of the reader as well.

Mimesis$_1$ refers to the actual world of action, to the "imitated" events that the story is about. According to Ricoeur, this world of action in comparison to mere physical occurrences is structurally pre-narrative that implies a network of action-concepts (agent, goals, means, circumstance, motives, expectations, responsibility, interaction, help, hostility, co-operation, conflict that answers to the questions 'what', 'why', 'who', 'how', 'with whom' and 'against whom') and calls for a practical understanding of them.[7] Despite the fact that this world of action in itself does not contain beginnings and endings in the strong sense that narratives create nevertheless it is already prenarratively organized. Here, action as a project is always oriented towards the future, and as a motivation, it inherently carries the past. Thus, on the whole, mimesis$_1$ refers to the pre-narrative structural, symbolic and temporal features of the ordinary world of action.

The phase of mimesis$_2$ is the explicit configuration of various events in emplotted stories. "In short, emplotment is the operation that draws a configuration out of a simple succession that transforms the events or incidents into a story."[8] The plot, by means of a unifying theme or thought, and by imposing a "sense of an ending" to the story juxtaposes various heterogeneous elements (agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results) as well as temporally distant elements. This phase of mimesis$_2$ is said to have some liberties in relation to the pre-figured, pre-narrative elements, although the organized events took place in the world of action for the organization itself, the plot, is created by the author. Mimesis$_2$ or configuration comes out as the most important of the three memesis as it in mediating

[7] Ricoeur, 1984: 54.
[8] Ibid., 65.

between the other two mimesis comprises *muthos* or emplotment which "opens the space for fiction" and "produces the "literariness" of the work of literature."[9]

The phase of mimesis$_3$ marks "the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader."[10] This act of reading becomes critical in the entire analysis for Ricoeur holds that the process of configuration is not completed in the text but in the reader which accounts for the possibility of the reconfiguration of life by narrative. Emplotted narratives, which follow this logic of threefold mimesis, have a potential to bring about concordance to the temporal discordance by organizing the seemingly separate events into a coherent and organized whole. This kind of rendering of unity to one's life, with all of its fortunes and misfortunes, is something that only narratives can accomplish. This is why Ricoeur not only applies his notion of narrative to historiography and fiction, but also to identity-narratives that mediate between two kinds of human temporality: temporal persistence with the help of one's character and temporal persistence despite one's character.

The novelty of Ricoeur's model of emplotment is that in disengaging from the paradigm of tragedy as found in the Aristotelian model he abstracts the configuring activity of emplotment from its earlier imposed limiting constraints and comes up with an additional feature, that which involves an analysis of its temporal structures.[11]

We have turned full circle with the kind of understanding we have brought of our world with the introduction of a narrative understanding of the world. But this hermeneutic circle is a 'healthy' as it takes into account not just the world of the text but most importantly the world of the reader. It is with the completion of the circle that our understanding of the world is enhanced. This increased understanding is dependent on time. Ricoeur's formula is that the understanding of narrative follows "the destiny of a prefigured time that has become a refigured time through the mediation of a configured time."[12] Prefigured time denotes the time which occurs

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[9] Ricoeur, 1984: 45. The fact is that mimesis$_1$ being our understanding of the world that we already have which we bring to the narrative to understand or configure out whereas mimesis$_3$ is the understanding of the world after we read that which is configured in the narrative.

[10] Ibid., 71.

[11] Ricoeur, 1984: 66. Ricoeur holds that, "Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.

[12] Ricoeur, 1984: 54.

before our engagement with the narrative, i.e. the understanding that is prior to narrative. Refigured time is our understanding of the real world which is a result that follows from our engagement with the narrative. It is the new understanding of the real world that arises as a result of having read the narrative that encompassed it. The configured time on the other hand belongs to emplotment itself, it is the structure of narrative that orders the disparate events and the series of incidents into a plot. Hence, Karl Simms in his book *Paul Ricoeur* writes that "plot is what enables us to understand narrative as narrative, and as mimetic of the real world; it enables us to see the actions depicted in a narrative as human actions."[13]

In addition, narrative time has the same threefold composition of the phenomenological time as that of the cosmological time, the only difference here is that this phenomenological time that is a mirror image of the latter relates to the time experienced by humans. Just as it happens with our real life that the present is an anticipation of the future mediated by the memory of the past similarly in narrative, prefiguring is configured into refiguring by the act of narrative mediation. There is the existence of a healthy circle as a result of the existence of this mirroring relationship between narrative and real life. Consequently, we get a better understanding of narrative in our understanding of life and conversely but in the same manner our understanding of life is enhanced as a result of the increased understanding of narrative. Ricoeur's further turn of the circle, the hermeneutic circle become more clear with the configuration of memesis understood within the explanation of time which according to Ricoeur is one of the essential components of narrative understanding. Thus, Simms observes that in Ricer,

> "the hermeneutic circle, or circle of understanding – is constituted by the explanation of time within life and within memesis, thus explaining *why* it is the case that Mimesis + time= narrative, and why it is the case that narrative as such, and not Aristotle's divisions of poetic composition into tragedy, comedy and epic, it is important to human life and its understanding."[14]

The merit of placing emplotment in the intermediary position between an earlier and a later stage of memesis in general lie in understanding better its mediating

[13] Simms, 2003: 86.
[14] Ibid., 87.

function of bringing together what precedes fiction and what follows it. The dynamic character of this mediating function lies in the fact that a plot in configuring allows an integration of "the preunderstanding" and "the postunderstanding" of the order of action and its temporal features, a mediation within its own textual field that is of a larger amplitude beyond its own field.

B. Emplotment as Configuring a Narrative Theme

The configurational operation of emplotment in its mediation between the individual events and a story taken as a whole transforms the diverse incidents (Aristotle's *pragmata*) *into one* meaningful story. [15] As a result of this, the event in its contribution to the development of the plot gets defined and becomes more than just a singular occurrence. Simultaneously, a story, in organizing the series of events into an intelligible whole, becomes more than just an enumeration of events in serial order, possessing a thought or theme of its own. Furthermore, the mediating function of its concordant discordance can be seen in that emplotment in drawing a configuration out of a simple succession brings together heterogeneous factors within the complex structure of plot. This feature of plot that allows an even greater extension of making "appear within a syntagmatic order all the components capable of figuring in the paradigmatic tableau established by the semantics of action"[16] in a narrative makes possible the transition from prenarrative to narrative.

The mediating operation of emplotment operates in another way, that of its temporal characteristics where it can be seen to bring about a temporal totality between what passes and what endures, in drawing a configuration out of mere succession. Though this dynamic feature of the narrative configuration does not find mention in Aristotle they are directly implied in the constitutive of a narrative and bring out clearly the full implication of the concept of concordant discordance. This

[15] Ricoeur, 1984: 65. This act of "grasping together" proper to the configurational act has a similar function in what Kant has to say about the operation of judging as much as it extracts a configuration from a succession. It will be recalled that for Kant the transcendental meaning of judging consists not so much in joining a subject and a predicate as in placing an intuitive manifold under the rule of a concept. The kinship is greater still with the reflective judgment which Kant opposes to the determining one, in the sense that it reflects upon the work of thinking at work in the aesthetic judgment of taste and in the teleological judgment applied to organic wholes.

[16] Ricoeur 1984: 66.

Ricoeur holds "reflects the Augustinian paradox of time as well as resolves it, not in a speculative but in a poetic mode."[17] The paradox here in that emplotment in combining various proportions the two temporal dimension, the chronological referring to the episodic dimension of narrative and the configurational dimension referring to the "grasping together" the events into one "thought" has to converts the paradox of distention and intention into a living dialectic.[18]

To follow a story is according to Ricoeur "to move forward in the midst of contingencies and peripeteia under the guidance of an expectation that finds its fulfillment in the "conclusion" of the story"[19] or the point from where the story can be seen as a whole and that which is not logically implied by some previous premises. Thus, as far as the story is made up of the series of events that draws narrative time, in terms of the linear representation of time in answer to the question "and then what?," it constitutes the episodic dimension of narrative. Here, the phases of action in following one another in accord with the series of irreversible order of time common to physical and human events can be said to share an external relation. However, in a configurational act, as soon as the plot, in a reflective act is said to grasps together the story's manifold successive events and transforms the entire plot into one followable "thought," then there is the corresponding transformation of the successive events into one temporal whole. This act of emplotment, wherein it reveals itself to the listener or to the reader in terms of the story's capacity to be followed through the act of mediation between the two poles of an event and the story and thereby exacts a figure or a "theme" from a succession, is said to constitute the poetic solution to the paradox.[20]

Following a story is not all about enclosing "its surprises or discoveries within our recognition of the meaning attached to the story" but essentially in apprehending the episodes which themselves lead to the end. It involves an understanding how and why the successive episodes led to this conclusion, which, far from being foreseeable, must finally be acceptable as congruent with the episodes brought together by the

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[17] Ricoeur 1984: 66.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ricoeur, 1984: 67. However, we would be completely mistaken if we took such a point as atemporal. Employing Northrop Frye's expression Ricoeur holds that the time of the "fable and theme" is the narrative time that mediates between the episodic aspect and the configurational aspect.

story. For this reason, Ricoeur hold that it is in the act of retelling rather in that of telling that this structural function of closure or the "sense of an ending" (to use the title of Frank Kermode's well-known book) can be discerned.[21]

This configurational act of emplotment that gives to the story its characteristic of "followability" in providing a theme, constitutes the poetic solution to the paradox. It in converting the paradox of distention and intention into a living dialectic, according to Ricoeur, can be said to disquiet Augustine to the point of reducing him to silence.[22] Finally, it is worthy to note that recollection of a story, governed as a whole by its way of ending makes possible for the so-called "natural" order of time to be inverted and provides an alternative to the representation of time as flowing from the past towards the future. Thus, we, in the act of recalling the initial conditions of a course of action while trying to understand its terminal consequences can be said to be "reading the ending in the beginning and the beginning in the ending" and, so, learning to read time itself backwards.[23]

Understanding properly the characteristic of the configurational act in joining $mimesis_3$ to $mimesis_2$ requires the inclusion of the activity of schematization and the character of traditionality which in turn require the support of reading if they are to be reactivated. These two features each of which has a specific relation to time assure the continuity of the process of configuration. Just as in Kant the schematism designates the creative centre of the categories and in the categories the principle of the order of the understanding. In the same way speaking of a schematism of the narrative function, emplotment too, engenders a mixed intelligibility between what has been called the point, theme, or thought of a story, and the intuitive presentation of circumstances, characters, episodes, and changes of fortune that make up the denouement. This schematism being constituted within a history that in turn is informed by the norms of a tradition is a result of the interplay of innovation and

[21] Ricoeur, 1992: 67.
[22] Ibid., 68.
[23] Ibid, 67.

sedimentation which enriches the relationship between plot and time with a new feature.[24]

The sedimentation is produced from the labour of the productive imagination on multiple levels, and this requires of us a broad discernment in our use of the term paradigmatic not just in terms of the sedimentation of the form of discordant concordance and by that of the tragic genre (and the other models of the same level), but also by the types engendered at the level of individual work.[25] It furnishes us with rules for a subsequent experimentation within the narrative field, rules which may gradually undergo change as a result of pressure exerted by the new inventions, or may even resist change, in virtue of the very process of sedimentation. Thus Ricoeur holds that "To sedimentation must be referred the paradigms that constitute the typology of emplotment."[26]

As for innovation, the other pole of tradition, there is always a place for it inasmuch as what is produced in the *poiesis* of the poem at the end is always a singular work, this work, new before becoming typical. Nevertheless, its status is correlative to that of sedimentation in the sense that it remains a form of behavior governed by rules as the work of imagination itself is not borne from nothing but is bound in one way or the other to the paradigm of tradition.[27] However the range of solutions it offers is vast and "it is deployed between the two poles of servile application and calculated deviation, passing through every degree of "rule governed deformation.""[28] It is this variety of applications that confers a history on the productive imagination and that, in counterpoint to sedimentation, makes a narrative tradition possible.

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[24] In speaking of tradition Ricoeur does not mean the inert transmission of some already dead deposit of material but rather the living transmission of an innovation always capable of being reactivated by a return to the most creative moments of poetic activity.

[25] Ricouer, 1984: 69.

[26] Ibid., 68.

[27]The paradigm constitute but only the grammar that governs the composition of new works similar to the way the grammar of a language governs the production of well formed sentences, whose number and content are unforeseeable and whose work of art is an original production, a poem, a play or a novel. What is more, this deviation may come into play on every level, in relation to the types, the genres, even to the formal principles of concordant discordance. The first type of deviation, it would seem, is constitutive of every individual work where each work stands apart from the other work. Here, rule governed deformation constitutes the axis around which the various changes of paradigms through application are arranged.

[28] Ricoeur, 1984: 69.

2. Narrative Identity and Time

As we shall see here, many of the difficulties which obscure the question of personal identity results from failing to distinguish between the two senses of the term identity that human beings acquire through the mediation of the narrative function. This problem of personal identity, according to Ricoeur, constitutes a privileged place of confrontation between the two major notions of identity best captured in Latin as *ipse* or *idem*. Identity in the sense of *idem* or sameness unfolds an entire hierarchy of significations in which permanence constitutes the highest order and is in opposition to the sense of changing or variable. On the other hand, identity in the sense of *ipse* or selfhood implies no assertion concerning some unchanging core of the personality, even when this selfhood adds its own peculiar modalities of identity. On the whole, this *ipse*-identity involves a dialectic complementary to that of selfhood and sameness.

However, in our approach it is important to remember that the self, the agent on whom action depends, has a history of its own and so personal identity can be articulated only in terms of temporal dimension of human existence. Moreover, according to Ricoeur, between the act of narrating a story and the temporal character of human experience there exists a necessary form of transcultural correlation. He holds that, "*time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.*"[29] Thus we shall see that it is only within the question of permanence in time that the confrontation between the *idem* and the *ipse* become a genuine problem and a productive dialectic. Therefore, here we will go for a narrative such that a concrete dialectic and not simply a nominal distinction between sameness and selfhood is achieved which, on the other hand, would reflect the changes that affects the subject who is capable of designating himself or herself in signifying the world.[30]

Following this distinction, we will in the second segment of this section show how the solution offered by other theorists on the question of personal identity fails as

[29] Ricoeur, 1984: 52.
[30] Ricoeur, 1992: 114.

they fall short of taking into account the major distinction between the two set of identities which the narrative dimension brings out.

A. Of Selfhood and Sameness in Time

i) Identity as sameness

The problem with personal identity as well as its solution lies in the confrontation between the two major concepts of identity, identity as *sameness* and identity as *selfhood*, a distinction which becomes clearly visible understood within the implication of temporal dimensions. Indeed, it is within the question of *permanence in time* that the confrontation between the two concepts of identity becomes a genuine problem and no theory of personal identity can be said to offer a successful solution unless the major distinction between these two narrative dimensions is recognized.

Initially, the question of permanence in time appears to be concerned exclusively with the question of *idem*-identity, which in a certain sense it champions.[31] The notion of sameness indicating the prominence that permanence in time holds is a concept of relation and a relation of relations. Essentially, *idem*-identity understood in terms of *numerical* identity, where two occurrences of a thing is designated by an invariable noun that denotes oneness and stands for what is contrary to plurality, shows that the two do not form separate things but "one and the same" thing. Here, the notion of identification standing for uniqueness implies a sense of reidentification since cognition implies recognition of the same, i.e., the same thing twice, *n* times. Next, idem-identity also entails the notion of *Qualitative* identity or extreme resemblance where things are so similar, for instance, cases of x and y wearing the same outfit, that they are interchangeable with no noticeable difference and correspondingly the operation of substitution without semantic loss follows.

[31] Ricoeur hold that the paradoxes related to the question of personal identity under analytic theories is mainly so because their approach is done under *idem* identity. Analytic philosophy of action has often been reproached for the poverty of the examples cited but according to Ricoeur despite this asceticism of the analysis and of bracketing of ethical and political considerations, we still are indebted to the contribution analytic philosophies has given in terms of the grammatical, syntactic, and logical constitution of action sentences which sufficiently make apparent the enigma of sameness.

These two components of identity though, like the Kantian categories of quantity, and quality are irreducible to one, are at the same time not exclusive to one another. It is precisely when the temporal dimension of time is taken into account that the series of occurrences of the same thing and the reidentification of the same provokes hesitation, doubt or contestation that the notion of qualitative identity is in turn invoked basically to reinforce the presumption of numerical identity. Cases where the criterion of similarity serves as an indirect criterion for numerical identity, in the process of trying to reidentifying the same as the object of doubt can be in those instances where we try to reestablish the identity of the probable suspect in a crime scene. Here, we in bringing in the material marks, i.e., photos, imprints, the memories of the witness or witnesses, held to be irrecusable traces of his presence in the very place at issue tries to establish that the man standing here and the author of the crime are one and the same person. However, depending on this criterion alone proves to be a tricky business and the risk involved is that it in the end proves to be insufficient.

Therefore with the weakness of this criterion of similitude with regard to the passage of a great distance in time, we appeal to another criterion, a substitutive criterion, one which operates in the development of a being between the first and the last stage of its evolution, namely the *Uninterrupted continuity.* A criterion that is predominant whenever growth or aging operate as factors of dissemblance and, by implication, of numerical diversity. Here, we say, for instance of an oak tree, that it is the same from the acorn to the fully developed tree or in seeing photos of ourselves at successive ages of our life. A successful demonstration of this continuity function rests upon the ordered series of small changes which if taken apart, one by one, threatens resemblance without destroying it. In addition we can clearly see the importance of time in its functioning as a factor of dissemblance, of divergence and of difference.

However, the demonstration of the continuity of this identity can be seen as functioning in supplementary to that of similarity which in turn is in the service of numerical identity. Moreover, the threat that discontinuity in time holds for this identity cannot be entirely dissipated unless we can posit at the base of similitude and of the uninterrupted continuity, a principle of *permanence in time.* This takes us to the fourth identity that of sameness which is the contrary of diversity. An interesting case, through which Ricoeur brings this issue home, is through the example of the

permanence of the genetic code of a biological individual in case of which, what remains of the person is the organization of a combinatory system. In this criterion of identity what alone remains is the idea of an invariable structure as opposed to that of event. The possibility of conceiving change as happening to something which is unchanging did not figure in the ancient formulation of substance but it can be seen in the relational character of identity which Kant reestablishes in classifying substance among the categories of relation.[32] Thus, Ricoeur holds that "the entire problematic of personal identity revolves round the search for a relational invariant, giving it the strong signification of permanence in time."[33]

ii) Identity as Selfhood

Following an understanding of the identity of sameness and its incompleteness the question that confront us is in Ricoeur's own word is,

> Does the selfhood of the self imply a form of permanence in time which is not reducible to the determination of a substratum, not even in the relational sense which Kant assigns to the category of substance? . . . Is there a form of permanence in time which can be connected to the question "who?" in as much as it is irreducible to any question of "what?"? Is there a form of permanence in time that is a reply to the question "who am I?"?"[34]

The difficulty of giving a reply to these questions is shown by Ricoeur in dealing with two very distinct models of permanence in time which is at once descriptive and emblematic, i.e., *Character* and *keeping one's word* where one can easily recognize a permanence which we say belong to us. The divergence and the irreducibility of this two models of permanence in time with respect to person is witnessed in that permanence of character expresses the almost mutual overlapping of the problematic of *idem* and of *ipse*, while faithfulness to oneself in keeping one's word marks the extreme gap between the permanence of the self and that of the same

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[32] In Kant, the shift of the idea of substance from the ontological to the transcendental domain is marked by the simple correspondence between the category, its schema and the principle (first judgment).

[33] Ricoeur, 1992: 118.

[34] Ibid.

and so attests fully to the irreducibility of the two problematic to one another.[35] However, this calls for an intervention of narrative identity in the conceptual constitution of personal identity.

Character is the set of distinctive marks, of lasting dispositions, by which a person is recognized and reidentified as being the same. Thus, it constitutes the limit point where the problematic of *ipse* becomes indiscernible from that of *idem*, and where one is not inclined to distinguish them from one another. It is the temporal dimension of this disposition that will later set character back upon the path of narrativization of personal identity and so we proceed to examine its role in constituting character.

The first notion related to disposition is habit, with its two fold valence having their respective temporal significance, i.e., habit as it is being formed and habit that is already acquired which in turn gives character its history.[36] According to Ricoeur, habit as part of character gives to the latter a history in which "sedimentation tends to cover over the innovation that precedes it even to the point of abolishing the latter."[37] This in turn confers on character the sort of permanence in time that is marked by the overlapping of *ipse* by *idem*. Each habit formed in this way is acquired and becomes a lasting disposition, a distinctive character trait by which a person is recognized and reidentified as the same. However this overlapping does not abolish the difference separating the two problematic for my Character as second nature is me, the *ipse* but only in this case the *ipse* announces itself as *idem*.

Secondly, related to the notion of disposition is the set of *acquired identifications* by which the others enter into the composition of the same and by which the identity of a person or community is constituted. Here, the identity of the person in holding ceratin values and norms as one's own, is constituted as belonging to that particular community which in turn is responsible for the recognition of the individual by the other. We see in the entry of this otherness assumed as one's own, an accordance of the two poles of identity that make character turn towards fidelity by incorporating an element of loyalty into it, which contributes toward the construction

[35] Ricoeur, 1992: 118.
[36] Ibid., 121.
[37] Ibid.

of the self. This, according to Ricoeur, shows that one cannot think of the *idem* without considering the *ipse*, even when one entirely covers over the other.

Hence, by means of this stability, borrowed from acquired habits and identifications, i.e., from dispositions, character assures at once numerical identity, qualitative identity, uninterrupted continuity across change, and finally permanence in time which defines sameness. Unlike in the theory of action where the distinction between 'what someone does' and 'who does something' leads to the problem of ascription, here, the identity of character expresses a certain adherence to the "what?", a question that is no longer external to the "who". Rather, it is in the overlapping of the "who" by the "what," that one witness the question of "who am I?" slipping back to the question "what am I?"[38]

However, the fact that there is an overlapping of *ipse* by *idem* does not mean that attempts to distinguish them is futile. Rather, according to Ricoeur this overlapping witnessed in the process of habit acquisition, where there is the dialectic of innovation and sedimentation, and in the process of identification, where there is the equally rich dialectic of otherness and internalization, rather serves to remind us that character has a history which is contracted and can contain a narrative dimension.[39] Narration can redeploy what sedimentation has contracted by means of the employment of dispositional language which paves the way for narrative unfolding. The very fact that character must be set back within the movement of narration is attested to by various debates on identity, especially in those cases concerning the identity of a historical community. It becomes the task of narrative identity to balance, the immutable traits of character with those traits that tend to separate the identity of the self from the sameness of character.

Another model of permanence in time which is a polar opposite to that of character is keeping one's word. Keeping a promise expresses "a *self-constancy* which cannot be inscribed, as character was, within the dimension of something in general but solely within the dimension of "who?.""[40] The act of promise does appear as a challenge to time, a denial of change as there is a commitment to hold firm even if my desire and opinion or inclination were to change. The proper ethical justification

[38] Ibid.,122.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.,123.

of a promise, irrespective of how meaningful the promise is, is based on the obligation to safeguard the institution of language and in response to the trust that the other places in the person's faithfulness. This ethical justification, according to Ricoeur, develops its own temporal implications, namely a modality of permanence in time capable of standing as the polar opposite to the permanence of character. Here, the identity of selfhood and sameness cease to coincide and as a result the equivocalness of the notion of permanence in time is dissipated.

As a result of the opposition in terms of temporality, created between the perseverance of character and the constancy of the self in promising, *an interval of sense* opens which remains to be filled. It is this "milieu" that the mediating role of narrative identity occupy and in doing so, it is found to oscillates between the two limiting frontiers, one, where permanence in time expresses the confusion of *idem* and *ipse* and on the other end, where the *ipse* poses the question of its identity without the aid and support of the *idem*.

B. Models of Identity without Narrative Mediation

It is true that without the help of narrative mediation between the two models of identity and without the guideline of the distinction, the question of personal identity loses itself in complicated difficulties and paralyzing paradoxes. Here we shall, in following Ricoeur, examine briefly how the accounts of personal identity given by Locke and Hume fail as they fail to recognize the distinction between the two sense of identity discussed above.

In Locke, there is a close connection between personal identity and memory.[41] Locke introduces a concept of identity that results from comparing a thing with itself at different times depending on which we form the ideas of identity and diversity. But this way of introducing a singular idea of the identity of a thing with itself seems to evade the alternative of sameness and selfhood. These illustrations seem to join together the characters of sameness by virtue of comparison and those of selfhood by

[41] John Locke at the beginning of the famous chapter 27 of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* while talking of the singular identity of a thing with itself, holds that, in asking if anything be the same or not, one always refers to something that existed at such at time in such a place and which it was certain at that instant and therefore was the same with itself.

virtues of what was instantaneous coincidence, maintained through time, of a thing with itself. But what follows in the analysis decomposes the two valences of identity. Locke cites examples of those of a ship which has been rebuilt in all of its parts, the oak tree which has grown from an acorn to a tree, in all of which according to him sameness prevails and have in common the permanence of organization but with no substantiality.

However, when it comes to personal identity, Locke while retaining "sameness with itself" he simply extends the privilege of this instantaneous *reflection* to durations. Thus, he in considering memory as the retrospective expansion of reflection thought that he could introduce a caesura where "sameness with itself" can be extended through time. However, according to Ricoeur, this mutation of reflection into memory marked a conceptual reversal in which selfhood was silently substituted for sameness. [42]

Thus, though tradition has credited Locke with inventing a criterion of identity, namely mental identity as opposed to the criterion of corporeal identity yet Lockes version of identity that hinges on the testimony of memory alone would always be subjected to the criticism of not only the psychological aporias that is concerned with the limits, the intermittence and the failings of memory but more so with the ontological aporias of question like, is it not plausible to assign the continuity of memory to the continuous existence of soul substance rather than saying that the person exist in as much as he remembers?

Coming to the second philosopher, Ricoeur writes that, "With Hume opened the era of doubt and suspicion."[43] In Hume there is a strong concept of the relation of identity that of the single model of identity or *sameness* like Locke which he posits at the beginning of the analysis in his *Treatise of Human Nature* in writing that "we have a distinct idea of an object that remains invariable and uninterrupted through a supposed variation of time; and this idea we call that of identity or sameness."[44] However, Hume, unlike Locke, introduces degrees in assigning identity and thus escapes answers that are black or white and does not overturn his criteria of assigning identity in the mover from things and animate to self. But being a good empiricist he

[42] Ricoeur, 1992: 126.
[43] Ricoeur, 1992: 127.
[44] Hume, 1969: 301.

requires that for every idea there is a corresponding impression and so, when he found no invariable expression relative to the idea of a self but only a diversity of experiences when he "enters most intimately into" himself, he concluded that the self is an illusion. This opens the debate of what gives us this strong inclination to superimpose identity on these successive perceptions?

In his explanation of the illusion of identity, two new concepts enter on stage here, imagination and belief. Whereas imagination helps in moving easily from one experience to another and transforming diversity into identity, when the differences are slight and gradual, belief is said to serves as a relay, filling in the deficiencies of the impression. However, saying that belief engenders fictions would result in beliefs themselves become unbelievable. Though Hume does not take this step yet suggests that the unity of personality can be assimilated to that of a republic whose members unceasingly change but whose ties of association remains.

However, when Hume writes that "I can never catch myself but always stumble on some particular perception or other,"[45] the question is that is he not presupposing the self he was not seeking, a self which is but sameness? Moreover, Ricoeur is in agreement with Chisholm in observing that when there is someone who penetrates within, seeks and claims to be unable to find anything but a datum stripped of selfhood then there is at least someone who is stumbling, observing a perception.[46] It is in the addressing of this question, "who is it that is seeking, stumbling, and not finding?" that the very self who seems to be slipping away returns.

3. Discourse and Action

A major contribution of narrative theory to the constitution of the self according to Ricoeur lies in ascertaining and carrying the dialectic of sameness and selfhood to a higher level which in turn forms the genuine nature of narrative identity. Thus, in this section we shall first see how emplotment in its role of discordant concordance, in executing the task of understanding and allowing for the interconnection of what is seemingly contrary events constituted by i.e., diversity, variability, discontinuity and

[45] Hume, 1969: 300.
[46] Chisholm, 1976: 31–41.

instability to be integrated with permanence in time, carries the dialectic of sameness and selfhood to a higher level.

Following this we will proceed to examine how the notion of emplotment, transposed from the action to that of the character in the narrative, produces a dialectic of the character that is clearly a dialectic of sameness and selfhood. However, it has to be noted that all the configurations which we will discuss below is made possible as a result of the diverse field of experience provided by the literary fiction, having its semblance to life. Therefore, we will at the end examine the role of mediation that narrative theory performs in helping traverse the gap between fiction and life, which helps enrich our understanding of the narrated self.

A. Discordant Concordance

Identity understood on the level of emplotment, is described by Ricoeur as resulting from the competition between a demand for concordance and the admission of discordances which at the same time seems to threaten this identity.[47] This art of composition, the notion of discordant concordance that goes beyond Aristotle's Greek tragedy and epic poetry in mediating between concordance and discordance is the characteristics of all narrative composition or "configuration" and is defined by Ricoeur as the notion of the "synthesis of the heterogenous."[48] Here, in this narrative configuration, it is the plot that performs the diverse mediation between the manifold of events and the temporal unity of the story recounted, the disparate components of the action i.e., intentions, causes and chance occurrences and the sequencing of story and finally between pure succession and the unity of the temporal form. These multiple dialectics make explicit the opposition between the episodic dispersal of the narrative and the power of unification unfurled by the configuring act constituting *poiesis* itself.

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[47] By concordance, Ricoeur understands the principle of order that presides over what Aristotle calls "the arrangement of facts," and by discordance the reversals of fortune where there is a shift from an an initial situation of ordered transformation to a terminal situation. The the term "configuration" is employed on the other hand to the art of composition, which mediates between concordance and discordance.

[48] Ricoeur, 1992: 141.

The distinctiveness in the sort of connectedness brought about by narrative configuration apart from every other model of connectedness, lies in the fact that in a narrative model the status of *events,*[49] is defined by its relation to the very operation of configuration. Its role in the unstable structure of discordant concordance characteristic of the plot is such that it is a source of discordance in as much as it springs up and a source of concordance inasmuch as it allows the story to advance. Moreover, conferring a narrative status upon the events averts the drift of the notion of event making it possible to take the agent into account in the description of the action.

The paradox of emplotment is that by virtue of its configuring act it inverts the effect of contingency by incorporating the events which could have happened differently or which might have not happened at all into something that is of necessity. The meaning effect of this narrative necessity produced at the very core of the event coming from the configuration act itself explains for the transformation of physical contingency into narrative contingency. This inversion effect becomes possible when the event as part of the story according to Ricoeur, "is transfigured by the so-to-speak retrograde necessity which proceeds from the temporal totality carried to its term."[50] It is this feature of narrative operation that explains for the development of an entirely original concept of dynamic identity responsible for reconciling the same categories which Locke took as contraries, namely that of identity and diversity.

B. From Action to Character

The relation between plot and character sheds new light on the relation between action and its agent only at the expense of an extension of the field of practice beyond the action segments that logical grammar confines most readily to action sentences, and even beyond the action chains, whose sole interest consists in the mode of logical connection stemming from a theory of praxis. It is noteworthy

[49] According to Ricoeur by entering into the movement of a narrative which relates a character to a plot, the event loses its impersonal neutrality but doing so should not be understood as contesting the theories that events as occurrences have the right to an ontological status, at least equal to that of substance nor is it contesting the view that they can be object of an impersonal description.

[50] Ricoeur, 1992: 142.

that Aristotle understands by action a connection of incidents, of facts of a sort, susceptible to conforming to narrative configuration. Character gives us qualities, but it is our action – what we do – that we are happy or unhappy about. Thus, any revision in the relation between action and agent requires along with it a revision in the very concept of action, if it is to be carried to the level of narrative configuration on the scale of an entire life. By revision we are to understand much more than a lengthening of the connections between action segments as they are shaped by the grammar of action sentences. A hierarchy of units of praxis must be made to appear, each unit on its own level would contain a specific principle of organization, integrating a variety of logical connections.

According to Ricoeur, a shift in the focus from the action to the character marks a decisive step in the direction of a narrative conception of personal identity. A character is a narrative category by virtue of being the one who performs the action in the narrative and so its role in the narrative involves the same narrative understanding as the plot itself. Here, the identity of character becomes comprehensible only when the operation of emplotment applied earlier to the action recounted is passed to the character and as a result of which character itself becomes identical to the plot. Thus, Ricoeur notes that "Characters, we will say, are themselves plots."[51] Now the question is of determining, what is the contribution of the narrative character to the discussion of personal identity?

Aristotle, in his *Poetics* simply postulated the correlation between the story told and the character. In his scheme of things character plays a subordinate role which becomes apparently clear when he, in holding tragedy as essentially an imitation of actions and not of persons, shows that it is impossible without action but is possible without character. Contemporary narrative theory has attempted to give to this correlation the status of a semiotic constraint,[52] already implicit in Aristotle's conceptual analysis of *muthos* into its "parts." However, on a deeper analysis we see the mutual reinforcement of a semiotics of the actant and a semiotics of narrative course in a way that the narrative appears as the path of the character and vice-versa.

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[51] Ricoeur, 1992: 143.

[52] Because of the complex relationships between words and what they refer to (as symbols),there is a kind of constraint originating from within the linguistic symbol system itself. These constraints govern not only human language but also, by their very nature, any system of symbolic communication, terrestrial or otherwise.

A narrative in true response to the *aporias* of ascription can be seen to join together the two processes of emplotment, that of action and that of the character. So, while it is true that from a paradigmatic viewpoint, in the conceptual network of action the question "who?" "What?" "Why?" denote separate terms but from a syntagmatic viewpoint, by spreading out in time the connection between these viewpoints the responses to these question form a story chain in telling who did what and how.[53] Moreover, despite the fact that mental predicates can be described separately without their attribution to a person, narrative can be seen as reestablishing this attribution.

Likewise it is the articulation between plot and character that makes possible for the joint inquiry, where an inquiry on the level of the search for motives continues infinitely and the other which is finite on the level of attribution to someone, in the process of identification. Turning to the question of resolving the antinomy of ascribing between the thesis, which posits the idea of beginning of a casual series, and the antithesis, which posits the idea of sequence without beginning or interruption, narrative by granting initiative to the character, i.e., the power to begin a series of events, without constituting an absolute beginning of time and on the other hand, by assigning to the narrative as such the power of determining the beginning, the middle and the end of an action, resolves it[54] This way in which the narrative, in granting initiative to the character coincide with the beginning of the action satisfies the thesis without violating the antithesis, according to Ricoeur is a productive and not a speculative response that constitutes the *poetic reply* to the *aporias* of ascription.

Again, by virtue of this correlation between action and character developed by a narrative there results a dialectic of concordance and discordance internal to the character corollary to that of the dialectic developed by the emplotment of action. The

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[53] An illustration of the relationship between paradigmatic and syntagmatic axis can be seen in Roland Barthes' *Elements of semiology* demonstrated in terms of the "garment system." Here, he compares the paradigmatic elements of those items that cannot be worn at the same time but can be substituted (one cannot wear several shirts at the same time but can replace one by the other). On the other hand, syntagmatic elements refers to the juxtaposition of different element of different elements at the same time in a complete ensemble from hat to shoes. Thus, in the same manner meaning accumulates along the syntagmatic axis, through the combinations of paradigmatic (signs) but this meaning is dependent on which signs are chosen and then placed in the syntagmatic constructions.

[54] Ricoeur, 1992: 147. By making the initiative belonging to the character coincide in this way with the beginning of the action, Ricoeur holds that the narrative satisfies the thesis without violating the antithesis and so the response provided by the narrative in such a way makes the response not a speculative response but rather a productive response on another order of language.

dialectic can be seen in the fact that there is concordance as far as the character draws his or her singularity from the unity of life considered a temporal totality which itself is singular and there is discordance when this temporal totality is threatened by the disruptive effect of the unforeseeable events that punctuate it. This concordant-discordant synthesis accounts for transmuting chance into fate, as what was once a contingent event becomes a necessity in the narrative scheme of life, which in turn, is nothing other than the identity of the character. The fact that the person, understood as a character, is not an entity distinct from his or her "experiences" and shares the condition of dynamic identity peculiar to the story recounted proves that the identity of the character emploted can be understood only in terms of this dialectic. Therefore, Ricoeur holds that narrative in constructing the identity of the story told constructs the identity of the character or his or her narrative identity.[55]

This dialectic of discordant concordance belonging to the character then, according to Ricoeur, becomes inscribed within the dialectic of sameness and of selfhood as soon as the search for permanence in time attached to the notion of identity confronts the discordant concordance of the character. It is in this confrontation that the equivocalness of sameness of character on one hand and self-constancy or the *ipseity* on the other is brought out. Narrative in performing the role of mediation between the intervals of these two poles of permanence inscribes the dialectic of the characters. The strength of narrative lies in the fact that it not merely tolerates but by submitting this identity to *imaginative variations* for its attestation seeks and engenders these variations.[56]

Even in ordinary life experiences, it can be observed that sameness and selfhood tends to overlap and merge with one another. Counting on someone, for instance, involves both relying on the stability of a character and expecting that the other will keep his or her word, regardless of the changes that may affect the lasting disposition by which that person is recognized. However, the benefit of conducting such thought experiments of varying the relation between these two modalities of identity encompassed by narrative identity, is immense in literary fiction as it provides ample space for bringing to the front, clearly, the difference between the two meanings of permanence in time.

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[55] Ricoeur, 1992: 148.
[56] Ibid.

Take for instance, in the case of Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* where unlike the Aristotelian model where the character in the story has a definite character that is identifiable and reidentifiable, there is a decomposition of the narrative form paralleling the loss of identity as the character breaks out of the confines of the narrative and consequently draws the literary work into the sphere of essay.[57] The point here is that with the disappearance of the identity of the character and as the narrative approaches the point of annihilitation of the character, the novel also loses its own properly narrative qualities and there is a corresponding crisis of the closure of the narrative. We therefore find a sort of rebound effect of the character on the plot that affects both the tradition of the plot carried to its ending, which stands as a closure and the tradition of an identifiable hero. The erosion of paradigms strikes both the figuration of the character and the configuration of the plot.

However for Ricoeur, understood within the framework of the dialectic of the *idem* and *ipse,* these unsettling cases of narrativity which is seen as the decomposition of the narrative paralleling the loss of identity of the character can be reinterpreted as exposing the selfhood by taking away the support of sameness. The loss of the totally identifiable hero is to be seen as constituting the opposite of that identity which is formed by the superimposition of selfhood upon sameness. Thus, "What is now lost, under the title of "property," is what allowed us to equate the character in the story with lasting dispositions or character."[58] But this leaves us with the most crucial question, what is selfhood once it has lost the support of sameness?

In answer to this the distinction between imaginative variations of literary fictions and those of technological dream has to be made clear.[59] Literary fictions

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[57] In this case of Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* the loss of identity in the fiction is such that the character, the anchor of the proper noun, becomes ridiculously superfluous that it becomes ultimately nonidenfiable in a world or merely qualities without men and thus becomes the unnamable. According to Ricoeur it is at point such as this that we encounter limiting cases in which literary fiction lends itself to a confrontation with the puzzling cases of analytic philosophy and it is here that the conflict between a narrativist version and a non-narrativist version of personal identity will culminate in this confrontation.

[58] Ricoeur, 1992: 149-50.

[59] Ricoeur considers the distinction between literary and technological fiction as forming the basis of the distinction between narrative identity and the reductionist theory, like that of the identity theory of Parfit which holds that identity does not matter. The reason being unlike the literary fiction which plays out its imagination without violating the existential condition of life on which all rules, laws and facts are grounded technological fiction in the very instance take these invariant

differ fundamentally from technological fiction in that variations in literary fiction concern selfhood in its dialectical relation to sameness.[60] By virtue of the mediating function of the body as one's own in the structure of being in the world, the action "imitated" remain imaginative variations on an invariant, our corporeal condition experienced as the existential mediation between the self and the world. However, in case of the technological dream there is an inversion of meaning by which the existential invariant becomes a variable as is illustrated by those cases where the brain, considered to be the substitutable equivalent of the person, is manipulated which amounts to an impersonal treatment of identity on the conceptual level. Thus the imaginative variations of science fictions unlike literary fictions are variations with regard to sameness.

But the real difficulty does not lie within either fields of imaginative variations but between them for the most important question is, is it possible to conceive of variations where corporeal and terrestrial conditions, without which the agent could no longer be said to act or suffer, becomes a contingent variable? For what is violated by the imaginary manipulations of technological dreams is not just the rule but the existential condition of the possibility of rules around which revolves the question of persons as acting and suffering? Perhaps the solution would require a treatment at the ethical level[61] that involves the capacity for imputation which we shall come to in the next section, when we confront narrative identity as oscillating between sameness and selfhood and ethical identity.

C. Dialectics between Fiction and Life

There seems to be an unbridgeable gap separating fiction and life as stories are said to be recounted and life is lived. But the thesis on which Ricoeur based his theory

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corporeal condition as a mere variable which in the end leads to the impersonal account of identity.

[60] Ricoeur, 1992: 150.

[61] It is with the entry of this relation and in this capacity to imputation that cerebral manipulations can be said to undermine personal identity and so to violate a right of the person to his physical integrity for what is manipulated here is not merely the rules but the existential condition of the possibility of rules that involves percepts addressed to persons as acting and suffering being. Thus what is inviolable even on the plane of corporeality is the difference between the same and the self.

is that narrative stems from the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader. Thus, the process of composition is not completed in the text but in the reader which on the other hand opens the way for the reconfiguration of life by narrative. Moreover, reading itself already being understood as a way of living in the fictive universe of the world and so in this section we will in understanding how stories are not just recounted but also lived in the mode of the imaginary see the importance of narrative imagination that provides a rich testing ground for what is called an examined life.

In a deliberately ethical perspective the idea of gathering together one's life in the form of "the narrative unity of a life" which Macintyre, another narrativist thinker, places above the notions of practices and of life plans is destined to serve as a basis for the aim of a "good' life. It is rather in literary fiction that the relationship between action and its agent is easiest to perceive as it serves as an immense work field for carrying out thought experiments in which the relationship between action and agent is tested in terms of numerous imaginative variations. However, the entry of mimetic function of narrative into the sphere of fiction also gives rise to the question of how literature can by means of reading be said to help reconnect with life, as the very act of reading in the first place makes the return from fiction back to life difficult. Precisely, the question that confront us is if the gap between fiction and life is as great as it seems, how can thought experiments occasioned by fiction, with all its ethical implication contribute to self-examination in real life?[62]

How is one to define the relation between the author, narrator and character in terms of a life story whose role and voices are quiet distinct on the plane of fiction and in life when the self interpret itself. Can we say that we in the auto biographical narrative as in fiction are all three at once? To this Ricoeur replies that the self perhaps is the narrator and character of the life but unlike those characters in the fiction the self is not the author but at most, following Aristotle can be said to be the

[62] Unlike MacIntyre's approach where the difficulties tied to the idea of a refiguration of life by fiction do not arise, for Ricoeur, there is the difficulty with the notion how do the thought experiments occasioned by fiction, with all the ethical implications contribute to self-examination in real life? And what if the gap is as great as it seems between fiction and life, how have we, in our own passage through the levels of praxis, been able to place the idea of the narrative unity of a life at the summit of the hierarchy of multiple practices?

coauthor, the *sunaition*.[63] However, granted this, question still remains for in our passing from writing to life does not the notion of author suffer from equivocalness?

Another difficulty that the narrative faces is with the idea of the beginning and ending while holding narrative form to be similar in fiction and in life. The reason being unlike that of a narrative where life is grasped together and placed in a singular totality, in real life there is nothing that serves as a narrative beginning or its end, for our birth and the act through which we are conceived belong more to the history of others than to me and as for death towards which we are always moving and for reasons of which we in turn are prevented from grasping it as the narrative end, it will be recounted only in the stories of those who survive us.

Moreover, the fact that one can weave different stories of one's life and can recount several stories that shows no sense of ending further adds to the problem. In addition, in speaking of a narrative unity of life, we encounter the fact that in the world of the text, a story is developed or understood as unfolding on its own, which prevents us from relating to the incommensurable plots of different works of different authors or the plot of the other. However, in contrast, the life history of each one of us being open ended on both sides is observed to be normally entangled in and with the histories of the others.

Finally, in self-understanding, it appears that *mimesis praxeos* covers but only the past phase of life and is thus confined to anticipations and projects that corresponds to a similar schema. A schema following R. Koselleck's proposal in *Future Past*, where the dialectic of the "space of experiences" and the "horizon of expectation" is related to the selection of narrated events that anticipates what Sartre called the existential project of each of us.[64]

However, in reply to all these objections, Ricoeur holds that they cannot and do not abolish the very notion of the application of fiction to life as these objections despite being perfectly acceptable are found to be applicable only in opposition to

[63] Ricoeur, 1992: 160.
[64] Ibid., 161.

those naïve conception of fiction of mimesis, like those of Don Quixote or Madame Bovary.[65]

As far as the equivocalness of the author's position as being the coauthor of a narrated life is concerned is it not true that as many stoic philosopher have shown that we play "a role in a play we have not written" whose author retreats outside of the role? Thus, this multiple role of the author's position should be preserved rather than dissipated since these exchanges between the multiple senses of the term "author" contributes to the richness of the meaning of the term agency. As for the narrative unity of life which is seen as an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience, it is precisely because of the elusive character of real life that we need the help of fiction to organize life retrospectively. In this way, with the help of the narrative beginnings which our reading has made familiar to us we stabilize the real beginnings formed by the initiatives we take. We also with the help of literature have the experience, an incomplete one though, of what is meant by ending a course of action as it in a sense helps us to fix the outlines of these provisional ends. As for death, it can be said that the narratives provided by literature serve to soften the sting of anguish in the face of the unknown, by providing us with an idea of death, though only in an imagined form.

Finally, in reply to the last criticism, Ricoeur holds that narrative also recounts care. This he demonstrates in showing that a literary narrative is retrospective only in the sense of the events appearing as past occurrences in the eyes of the narrator who is recounting. Nevertheless, he holds that in this narration we find projects, expectations, and anticipations by means of which the narrator is oriented toward his or her mortal future.[66] So Ricoeur is of the view that "there is nothing absurd in speaking about the narrative unity of a life, under the sign of narratives that teaches us how to articulate narratively retrospection and prospection."

Therefore, the dialectics between literary narratives and life histories far from being mutually exclusive are complementary. According to Ricoeur narrative is part of life before being exiled from life in writing and returns to it in terms of those multiple paths of appropriation when faced with unavoidable tensions.

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[65] Ricoeur, 1992: 161.

[66] Ricoeur is of the view that the past of narration is but the quasi past of the narrative voice.

4. Self, Others and Recognition

A. The Selfhood of Self-Constancy

To begin with, we in the preceding section have seen that narrative function has ethical implications as the literary narratives themselves provide a vast laboratory where we can experiment with estimations, evaluations, and judgments of approval or condemnation that makes narrative serve as a "propaedeutic" to ethics. This enables narrative identity to serve as a guiding reason for an extension of the practical sphere beyond the simple actions described in the framework of the analytic theories of action to those action which can be developed thematically only within the framework of ethics.[67] So, it is here that in placing narrative theory at the crossroads of the theory of action and moral theory, we make narration serve as a natural transition between description and prescription. Putting it in another way, since the actions refigured by narrative fictions are complex ones, rich in anticipations of an ethical nature it is obvious that the narrative component of self-understanding calls for, as its completion, ethical determinations characteristic of the moral imputation of action to its agent. Therefore, turning to another important aspect of our investigation we will in this section center our discussion around the relation between selfhood and the others, where the notion of self is incomplete without its other, which will become clear as we examine the kind of relation that holds between narrative theory and ethical theory.

The fact that narrative identity has ethical implications can be seen from Walter Benjamin's essay entitled "The Storyteller,"[68] where he recalls the art of storytelling as the art of exchanging experiences understood as the sharing of popular exercise of practical wisdom in opposition to scientific observations. As wisdom always involve estimation and evaluations that fall under the teleological and deontological categories, these exchanges of experiences always involve the approval or disapproval of actions and praise or blame for the agents. Thus, telling a story is deploying an imaginary space for thought experiments in which moral judgment operates in a hypothetical mode.[69] In a deliberately ethical perspective, the idea of

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[67] Ricoeur, 1992: 115.
[68] Benjamin, 1969: 83-109.
[69] According to Ricoeur even historiographic narrative the most neutral form of narrative, never reaches the zero degree of valuation for the historian who tries to be motivated by curiosity rather

gathering together one's life in the form of a narrative is destined to serve as a basis for "aiming at the "good life" with and for others, in just institutions."[70]

Ricoeur holds that it is wrong to assume that literary narratives on the level of narrative configuration loses their ethical determinations because despite the fact that all moral judgments come to a halt with the suspension of action yet the exploration and evaluation of action and characters continues unabated in fiction. Moral judgment is rather subjected to the imaginative variations proper to fiction. The narrative performs its functions of discovery and transformation with respect to the reader's feelings and actions through the thought experiments of evaluation conducted in imagination. For this reason, refiguration of action by the narrative while exploring new ways of evaluating actions and characters, are also explorations in the realm of good and evil where "transvaluing, even devaluing is still evaluating."[71]

However, one is faced with difficulties at the point where narrative theory in following the curve of ethical theory is faced with the question of the distinct, even opposite, fate of identity i.e., sameness of character and self-constancy. Self constancy implies both a notion of "counting on" where the person conducts himself or herself such that the other can count on that person and also "being accountable for" because the other is counting on me. This in turn is united by the term "responsibility" in providing the response "Here I am!" which according to Emmanuel Levinas constitutes a response of self-constancy to the question "where are you?" when asked by another who needs the self.[72] Thus, we see the mediating role of narrative; it makes the two ends of the chain link up with one another. It in narrativizing character narrative returns to identity the movement abolished in acquired dispositions. At the

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than by the taste for commemoration or loathing, brings back to life ways of evaluating which continue to belong to our deepest humanity. In this, history is reminded of its indebtedness to people of the past and this indebtedness is transformed into the duty never to forget as in when the historian is confronted with the horrible, the extreme figure of the history of victims.

[70] Ricoeur, 1992: 172.

[71] Ibid.,164. According to Ricoeur, even the historian, for instance, for whom curiosity and a neutral approach is the key to a successful account of records cannot help but in brining back the way of lives of the people engange directly or indirectly in some way or the other in a sort of evaluation. Thus, no narration however neutral it might be never reaches the zero degree of valuation.

[72] Levinas, 1974: 180.

same time in narrativizing the aim of the true life, narrative identity gives it the recognizable features of characters loved or respected.[73]

However, difficulty still remains with those unsettling cases of narrative identity, where there is such an extreme problematization that the tension experienced between life and fiction far from underpinning the ethical identity, expressed in self-constancy, seems instead to rob it of all support. The problem starts when the plea for selfhood, documented by the troubling cases of literary fiction, such as the dissolution of identity of Musil's character, begins to move in the reverse direction where fiction returns to life. Accordingly, the readers in their quest for identity find themselves confronting, this *Ichlosigkeit,* the hypothesis of their own loss of identity, which was at once Musil's torment.[74] Here, the self refigured by the narrative is confronted with its own nothingness, a nothingness that is different from the one of which there is nothing to say. Rather, according to Ricoeur, there is much to be said about this hypothesis, "I am nothing" for it rest on the perennial question, who is "I" when the subject says that it is nothing? So the emptiness of the response to the question in these moments of extreme destitution refers not to nullity of the question but to the nakedness of it.[75]

Consequently, it is the proud answer "Here I am!" to the nakedness of the question "who?" that, reopens the debate. The problem here is as Ricoeur has pointed out precisely how can one maintain on the ethical level a self which, on the narrative level, seems to be fading way? One cannot simultaneously be raising the question "Who am I?" and be at the same time replying "Here I am!"[76] In reply, one is tempted from the indecidability of these puzzling cases to conclude along with Parfit, that personal identity is not what matters.[77] But doing so would extinguish not only the identity of the same but also the identity of the self, which was believed to have been saved from the disaster that befell the former. However, Ricoeur sees in the gap

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[73] Ricoeur, 1996: 166.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 167.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Parfit, 1986: 255. The argument of Parfit in attacking the basic beliefs underlying the use of the criteria of identity consists in the negation of the series of three assertions i.e., the separate existence of a core self, the determined response to the existence of such a self and in the end the existence of a moral subject.

separating narrative identity and moral identity, an opportunity of working up a living dialectic that transforms the opposition between the two into a fruitful tension.

Again, there arises a muted discord when the voice in imagination that says, "I can try anything" is confronted by the voice that says, "Everything is possible but not everything is beneficial." However, in case of this discord, Ricoeur, in introducing the act of promising between the gap transforms this disparity into a fragile concordance that says "I can try anything," to be sure, but "Here is where I stand!"[78] At the same time, in the confrontation between the troubling question "Who am I?" exposed in those complicated cases of literary fiction and the proud declaration "Here is where I stand!" he introduces the secret break "Who am I, so inconstant, that notwithstanding you count on me?" This secret break at the very heart of commitment is what explains for the difference of the modesty of self-constancy from the Stoic pride of rigid self-consistency.[79] Ricoeur holds that while the characterization of selfhood in terms of the relation of ownership does not pose any problem on the grammatical plane yet it becomes ambiguous on the ethical plane. So, he writes,

> In a philosophy of selfhood like my own, one must be able to say that ownership is not what matters. What is suggested by the limiting cases produced by the narrative imagination is a dialectic of ownership and of dispossession, of care and of carefreeness, of self-affirmation and of self-effacement. Thus the imagined nothingness of the self becomes the existential "crisis" of the self.[80]

B. With and for Others

Understood within the framework of the ethical aim the dialectic between selfhood and otherness the question of "reflexivity" refers to that of selfhood and "solicitude"[81] denotes the need for the other. The question that can be raised here is, how does solicitude link up with reflexivity which seems to carry with it the danger of losing up and moving in the opposite direction from openness? Ricoeur's reply is that solicitude

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[78] Ricoeur, 1992: 168.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] The observation given by Ricer given here is that Reflexivity which opens up the idea of a "good life" indeed seems to carry with it the danger of turning in upon oneself, of closing up, and moving away from openness in the opposite direction of "good life." Thus the need for an other than myself.

is not something added on to self-esteem from outside but rather in creating a break in life unfolds the dialogical dimension of self-esteem where self-esteem and solicitude cannot be experience in the absence of other.[82]

To begin with according to Ricoeur "*To say self is not to say myself*,"[83] so a distinction is always maintained in speaking of esteem of the self and esteem of myself. This can be observed in Heidegger where the passage from selfhood to mines is marked by the clause "in each case."[84] So the question that Ricoeur raises is if this "in each case" is not based upon unexpressed reference to other then on what are we to base it? Another observation is that the self is declared to be worthy of esteem not on the basis of its accomplishments but fundamentally on the basis of its capacity of being-able-to-do which on the ethical plane corresponds to being-able-to-judge. The capacity to evaluate himself to be good in terms of his actions in relation to their goals. This lead us to the question of whether in the route from capacity to realization the mediation of the other is necessary or not. Failure to recognize this *mediating* role of others between capacities and realization according to Ricoeur have led many philosophies of natural law to come up with a subject, complete and already endowed with rights before entering into society who at the end expect protection and rights from state without bearing any responsibility in perfecting the social bond.[85]

This *mediating* role of Otherness is indeed celebrated by Aristotle's in his treatise on friendship as something that repossesses the rights that *Philautia,* which is a refined form of egotism, seems to eclipse.[86] According to this treatise, firstly, friendship serves as a transition between the aim of the "good life," reflected in self-esteem, which apparently is a solitary virtue, and justice, the virtue of human plurality that belongs to the political sphere. Next, friendship is a practical virtue at work in deliberative choices belonging to the realm of ethics that is capable of being elevated to the rank of *habitus*, and not primarily to a psychology of feelings of affection and attachment to others as perceived. Finally, the treatise, which begins with the praise of *philautia*, un-expectedly ends up propounding the idea that the happy man or woman

[82] Ricoeur, 1992: 180.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Heidegger, Being and time
[85] Ricoeur, 1992: 181.
[86] The term comes up in the *Nichomachean Ethics* of Aristotle where he discusses the virtue of friendship. The term *philautia* or self –esteem according to Ricoeur if it has to be realized it cannot be done so without the recognition of the other and by the other.

needs friends. Thus this notion of friendship actually belonging to ethics as the desire to live well with others from the outset can be said to be built on mutual relationship that extends all the way to the commonality of "living together." [87]

This notion of reciprocity can be observed as imposing itself on the ethical plane in form of the idea of mutuality that involves the idea of each loving the other *as being the man he is*.[88] While the inclusion of "as being," constitutive of mutuality averts any subsequent egoistic leanings yet at the same time the reflexivity of oneself is not abolished as mutuality cannot be conceived of in absence of the relation to the good, in the self and in the friend. Even if friendship can be seen as bordering on justice based on the notion of mutuality, yet the two are not to be taken as equivocal for the term justice covers institutions whereas friendship extends only to interpersonal relationship. Thus, Aristotle capture the notion of friendship in the beautiful expression "another self"[89] and says that the greatest good that a friend desire for his friend is to stay just as he is and not for example, to be a god.

Ricoeur in retaining from Aristotle, the ethics of reciprocity, of sharing, of living together holds that in the exchange between human beings who each esteem themselves, friendship adds to the notion of self-esteem, the idea of reciprocity. As for equality, the corollary of reciprocity he says that it places friendship on the path of justice, where there is "distribution of shares in a plurality on the scale of a historical, political community."[90]

However, the relationship of solicitude, according to Ricoeur, is not only confined to the kind of relationship defined under the heading of friendship but one that is principally based on a relationship of inverse disparity. The relation between *autos* and *heauton* is different from the relationship based on equality as the exchange is grounded on a relationship of *giving* and *receiving* depending on whether the pole of the self or that of the other predominates in the initiative of exchange. Here, what strikes one immediately is that in the dissymmetry of injunction as opposed to the

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[87] Ricoeur, 1992: 183.
[88] Aristotle, 1925: 195–96.1156^{a}6.
[89] Aristotle, 1925: 228. 1166^{a}19.
[90] Ricoeur, 1992: 188.

reciprocity of friendship, the self who is enjoined, being summoned to responsibility by the other becomes visible but only in the accusative mode.[91]

To begin with, Ricoeur points out that the whole of Levinas's philosophy of intersubjective relation rests on the initiative of the other. This initiative according to Ricoeur can be said to establish no relation at all for the other represents absolute exteriority. The condition of separation is such that "the "appearing" of the Other in the face of the Other eludes visions, seeing forms, and even eludes hearing, apprehending voices."[92] Indeed, Ricoeur holds that the face is said to no longer appears as a phenomenon but as an epiphany for the one who has been called upon in the act of summoning to responsibility appear but simply in the form of the passivity of an "I."

Here we are then faced with the question which Ricoeur puts it as "whether, to be heard and received, the injunction must not call for a response that compensates for the dissymmetry of the face-to-face encounter."[93] The problem here is that a dissymmetry left uncompensated would destroy the relationship between giving and receiving understood within the structure of solicitude. Yet at the same time the problem is how to lay down this sort of instruction in the exchange of giving and receiving when the capacity for giving is not flowing by the other's initiative?

The solution according to Ricoeur is to dig down under the level of moral obligation and to discover an ethical sense that is not completely buried under the imperative of the norms that grant solicitude a more fundamental status that mere obedience to duty. Thus, he gives solicitude the status of *benevolent spontaneity* which in addition to being intimately related to self-esteem is enclosed within the notion of a good life. Here, the initial dissymmetry resulting from the primacy of the other who command is compensated by the self's recognition of the superior other who in accordance to the sense of justice is said to enjoin upon the self to act. Thus,

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[91] Ricoeur, 1992: 189. According to Ricoeur taking cognizance of the full repertoire of roles involves taking into account the division between the agent and its correlates, the sufferers. Thus the moral problem lies with the great dissymmetry between the one who act and the one who undergoes suffering under a powerful agent on the intention to protect or to frustrate. (Ricoeur: 1992: 144–45.).

[92] Ricoeur, 1992: 189.

[93] Ibid.

the initial dissymmetry of receiving gains an equal footing with that of the primacy of the other through this reverse movement of recognition. [94]

Conclusion

We in this chapter, in following Ricoeur, have seen how narrative constructs the kind of dynamic identity based on the notion that perhaps human life become more readily intelligible interpreted in the light of the stories that people tell about them. We saw how emplotment in synthesizing the heterogeneous elements, brings the multiple incidents, the discordant and the simple succession together by drawing a theme out the disparate events and configuring it into a single story. We also saw how a clarification brought about in terms of the equivocalness of identity, i.e., a distinction between the ipse and the idem, that constitutes the core of personal identity, in light of the aspect of temporality reveals narrative identity as a dynamic identity. This also helps us further in steering clear of those identities as one that is absolute and identity as sheer change. With the passage from action to character we also observed how, the self as the co-author wears the mask of the various characters that tells the story and how, in addition, literary fiction, despite the gap between life and fiction provides a rich field for imaginative experiments that enrich the narrative understanding of ourselves. Yet underlying all these discussions, we in understanding the limits of the circle of sameness-identity that offers nothing original to the notion of the otherness of the other than self, felt the need to move out of this circle into that of the dialectic of selfhood and sameness. Thus, we in the last section of our chapter, in entering into the dialectics of selfhood and otherness were faced with the notion of self-constancy that ushered us to the field of ethics. This self-constancy with its notion of responsibility took us a step further to the question of solicitude, i.e., the necessity for the other as it is not something added on to self-esteem from outside but unfolds the dialogic dimension of self-esteem such that neither can be experienced or reflected in the absence of the other. This passage from the narrative to the ethical theory throws open the question of how the self, as a result of the interaction between the two fields of narration and prescription, gets transformed which will be the focus of our discussion in the next chapter.

[94] Ricoeur, 1992: 190.

CHAPTER 3

Narrative Identity and Moral Agency

Introduction

In the course of our discussion in the previous chapter on the notions of emplotment, narrative identity and time, discourse and action we have dealt with the linguistic, practical and narrative dimensions of selfhood. As a result of this process of narrative configuration, with the move from the field of semantics to pragmatics the theory of action serves as a "propaedutic" to the question of selfhood. This in turn makes the question of self gain precedence over that of action which leads to a major reshuffling on the plane of human action itself. We also have seen how the self is incomplete without taking into cognizance the other and how the cycle of description, narration and prescription in the detour of reflection by way of analysis comes to a full circle with the introduction of imputation. Narrative, in presenting features that can be developed only within the framework of ethics, introduces a novel feature of ethical and moral criterion serving as predicates in the determination of action. Here, according to Ricoeur, in placing narrative at the crossroad of the theory of action and moral theory, a natural transition between description and prescription takes place owing to the fact that the actions prefigured by narrative fictions are complex ones, rich in anticipation of an ethical nature. This transition from pragmatic to ethical, from description to prescription, from prefiguration to reconfiguration is where the importance of the role of narrative as mediation becomes clearly visible. Thus, telling a story is deploying an imaginary space for thought experiments in which moral judgments operate in a hypothetical mode. Narrative, in bringing an irreducible dimension of self understood as an examined life, thus places us on the ethical plane where we say that configuration is complete only when it leads to an examined life.

The focus of this chapter will be on how the self gets enriched as a result of the shift from the field of semantics of action to that of pragmatics resulting in the construction of a self that is not only a speaking, acting, narrating self but one equally characterized by

the traits of imputability, responsibility and recognition. The self as we saw in the preceding chapter is incomplete without the other and it is in this dialectic between the self and the other, the most important dialects out of the three in Ricoeur's scheme of the self, that the shift from the narrative field to that of the ethical field takes place. Thus, here we will in the first section in focusing on how the inadequacy of the notion of ascription to address the relation between the self and its action necessitates the need for a move to the higher level of imputation which in turn is possible only within the field of pragmatics bring out the self's "power to act" as an agent. Next, we will in focusing on the self's power to act discuss how the self informed with desire and capable of initiative can be held responsible for its acts. Following which we will turn to the other end of the spectrum of the acting self and find in its other a suffering being who is the patient or the victim of our actions. With these developments of the self we shall in turn see how as a result of all these qualities that the self acquire in the process of its progress turns out to be a capable human being. And in the final section conclude with Ricoeur's reply to his critics on the issues of the need for personal identity, the inevitability of narrative intelligibility and how narrative bridge the gap between life and fiction.

1. Self as an Agent

Here an examination of the relation between action and its agent will show how an attempt to account for the self's power to act in terms of ascription fails and calls for a transition from semantics to pragmatics. The inefficiency of ascription will further direct us to the reality that the points of anchorage of a properly ethical evaluation of human action lie in the teleological and deontological sense, in the notion of good and obligatory.[1] Moreover, the problem of ascription in accounting for the casual efficiency of the agent will show that an epistemological explanation alone is not sufficient to

[1] According to Ricoeur both ethics and morality have their roots in the intuitive idea of *mores* with its two fold connotation of a) *is considered to be good* and b) *imposes itself as obligatory. Thus* he in reserving the term "ethics" for the *aim* of an accomplished life and the term "morality" for the articulation of this aim in *norms*. Thus he in holding morality which although holds a legitimate yet constitute only a limited and indispensable, actualization of the ethical aim designates it as deontological and ethics as teleological for it encompass morality. Thus, in his philosophy there is a primacy of ethics over morality.

account for the self's power to act and there is a need to enter into the ontology of the self.

The questions "Who? What? Why?" applied to the semantic field of action, form a network of interrelated meanings such that our ability to reply to any one of these questions implies our ability to reply to any other belonging to the same sphere of sense, which, following P. F. Strawson, we shall designate by the term "ascription."[2] Ascription, in designating the critical point of our entire enterprise as opposed to the ontology of anonymous events that poses an obstacle to identifying persons as basic particulars, ascribes an action to an agent. But ascription also involves going beyond the semantics of action which as we have seen is poorly equipped to solve the issue and points to pragmatics.

A. The Basis of Ascription

The earliest treatment of the relationship between action and agent can be seen in Aristotle who in making a distinction between the voluntary action as those performed freely, where the moving principle is in the person (*en auto*) and the involuntary action, those performed despite oneself (*akon*) characterized by compulsion or ignorance of which the moving principle (*arkhe*) is outside the person who is acting, makes it clear that action depends on agent. The most concise expression of this relation is found in terms of the preferential choice that makes the agent the principle of his actions.

This relation between the preferred and the predeliberated through the mediation of the privileged preposition *epi* in making the agent the principle of his or her actions makes the action depend on the agent himself.[3] This can be said to have no parallel on the

[2] Within the general framework of Strawson's theory of predication in *Individuals* the person is placed in the position of a logical subject and is determined by means of the predicates that we ascribe to it. However, according to Ricoeur when Stawson holds that "we ascribe to ourselves certain things" the "we" receives so little an emphasis that it becomes the equivalent of "one," an anonymous self and needs to replaced by "each one" which is possible only with the entry into pragmatics of action.

[3] Aristotle in bringing out the features of excellence of action initially makes a distinction between actions preformed despite being oneself and those actions performed freely. He goes further in making

plane of the physics for with the subtle shift from the preposition *en* (in) to the preposition *epi* (depends on) we reach the core of what is properly human in voluntary action, of which Aristotle says that it is "most closely bound up with virtue." [4] It marks the continuity between physics and ethics. The sort of interconnected relationship, established between the principle (*arkhe*) and the agent (*auto*) results in each of these terms being interpreted in relation to the other. This mutual interpretation is the key to the entire enigma which the moderns have placed under the heading of ascription as this is where the realtion between the theory of action and ethical theory is much closer. Another indirect approach to ascription found in Aristotelian philosophy is the expression "co-responsible" which is indicative of the sort of collaboration between our choices and nature. This certainly extends the responsibility of our acts to dispositions and as a result to the whole of our moral responsibility. The characteristic that we are looking for in answer to the question "who?" as marked by the relation of, "A principle that is a self, a self that is a principle."[5]

B. Contemporary Notion of Ascription and its Difficulties

The modern theory of action gives to ascription a meaning distinct from attribution that transforms the particular case into an exception and places it on the side of pragmatics as the capacity to designate oneself to the theory of utterance and to speech acts. This distinct meaning comes out in P. F. Strawson's own work, where he observes that the physical and mental characteristics in belonging to the person can be said to be possessed

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a finer distinction by including those actions performed not just freely but one that involves the additional qualification of a "preferential choice." This shift in the kind of action from a simple voluntary act to one that involves a preferred choice is marked by the corresponding shift from the preposition *en*(in) to *epi(* depend on). It is this move from the "in" to the "depend upon" which by virtue of making the action wholly dependent on the agent takes us closer to field of ethics, where he or she can be said to be imputable.

[4] Ross, 1908. Aristotle in making a distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions hold that voluntary acts are those where the moving principle is in man himself and involuntary actions, especially those on the plane of physics where nature is "the principle of motion," as those action where the moving principle is outside the person.

[5] Ricoeur, 1992: 91.

by him.[6] It is noteworthy that ascription marks the conceptual network of action "what?" "why?" "how?" and so on that points to the pivotal point "who?" It is first with reference to action itself that we say it is mine, yours, his or hers, that it depends on each of us, that it is in our power. While the agent in deliberation can be said to consider the options that are open it is only in ascription that the agent precisely reappropriates his or her own deliberation in cutting short the debate by making one of the options contemplated as one's own.

At the surface level the interconnections of meaning that tie together the "who?" "what?" and "why?" of action seem relatively simple and it is easy to blame the adverse ontology of events for obstructing the relation between events, action and agents. However, on a closer examination the person as a referential term in Strawson's theory of basic particular, in remaining merely as one of the "things," remains captive to the ontology of "something in general." Thus, here, the notion of ascription, when faced with the demand for recognition of the *Ipse,* is seen as developing a force of resistance comparable to that of the ontology of event.

The first difficulty lies with the third of Strawson's theses[7] which holds that Mental predicates, such as intentions and motives, are directly attributable to oneself and to someone else where in both instance the term retains the same sense. it is part of the meaning of practical predicates that once they are attributable to oneself, they become attributable to someone other than oneself while keeping. However, the difficulty with the splitting of ascription in this manner lies in the fact that attribution is made not only to the "same thing" or to oneself but also to another and the fact that they retain the same meaning in both situations of attribution adds to the complication. This results in an absurdity where ascription in giving a descriptive tenor to the action predicates compensates in a way for this inverse operation by suspending attribution to someone. It leads to a situation where

[6]Ricoeur, 1992: 94. Strawson in his book *Individuals* (1959) comes up with a modified version of the double aspect theory which is better known as the person theory that holds the mental and the physical as both attribute of an underlying entity which he calls the person.

[7] Stawson's theory of ascription holds that, a) Persons are basic particulars in the sense that all attribution of predicates is made either in respect of bodies or persons, b)It is to persons that we attribute phsychological and physical predicates and c) Mental predicates, such as intentions and motives, are directly attributable to oneself and to someone else where in both instance the term retains the same sense.

mental phenomena are not only attributable to everyone and to anyone but their meaning can be understood outside of any explicit attribution.

Ascription now understood in correlation to this suspension of the attribution of practical predicates and the possibility of maintaining it in suspension to a specific agent reveals the particularity of the relation between the question "who?" and the pair of questions "what?-why?" Hence it becomes possible that the theory of action could include a methodical *epoche* of the question of the agent, without appearing to do violence to experience and to its expression on the level of ordinary language.[8] Moreover, the attention given to the content of our intentions and to their motivation tends by itself to separate the "what?" of the thing to be done and the "why?" of the thing done and result in a move away from the "who?" of the action. This separation in incorporating the meaning of intentions and motives into the repertoire of mental phenomena, without specifying to whom these phenomena belong, makes more enigmatic the appropriation which removes the suspension of ascription.

At the end what this dialectics of suspension and appropriation shows is that the *aporia* of ascription cannot be resolved within the framework of the theory of identifying reference. The reason here is that if an agent is to "designate himself or herself" in such a way that there is a genuine "other" to whom the same attribution is made in a relevant manner then there is a need to move from the semantics of action into pragmatics, which takes into account propositions whose meaning implies a face-to-face speech situation of an "I" and a "you."[9]

The second difficulty we have here concerning the status of ascription is that if it is not the same as describing can we by virtue of a certain affinity hold it close to prescription? Now the notion of prescription, in holding actions as capable of being submitted to rules and agents as those who can be held responsible for their actions, is said to encompass action as well as agent. It, with regard to action determines what is permissible and what is not and what is blameworthy or praiseworthy with regard to

[8] Ricoeur, 1992: 98.
[9] Ibid.

agents. It is to this act of designating an agent as responsible for actions which are considered to be permissible or not permissible Ricoeur gives the term "ascription."[10]

According to Ricoeur, it is in Hart's treatment of transition from ordinary language propositions to judicial decisions, that we learn of intermediate propositions, such as, "this is mine, yours, his" that make demands, confer, transfer, recognize—in short, attribute rights.[11] And yet it is in this comparison between imputation and the attribution of rights that we, on the other hand, learn to differentiate between ascribing and describing. Thus, the attempt to pair ascription with that of moral and legal imputation is most legitimate for in the process it has proved to be instrumental in making clear the gap between ascription in the moral sense from attribution in the logical sense. However, according to Ricoeur it can be doubted as to whether moral and legal imputation constitutes the strong form of a logical structure, whose weak form would be ascription. The reason for this doubt stems from the following three reasons:[12]

Firstly, legal statements do not readily apply to actions as simple as those that the grammar and logical sentences like to describe, they enter into equation only when one considers complex actions that involve pragmatics. Secondly, remaining within the framework prescribed by pragmatics, it does apply selectively to actions considered from the perspective of what is blamable and punishable, namely that of "verdictives" that go beyond the simple ascription of an action to an agent. Thirdly, the assignment of responsibility in the ethico-legal sense presuppose a nature different from the self-designation of a speaker, namely a causal tie related to the power to act which is even more primitive than the blamable or praiseworthy character.

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[10] Here, according to Ricoeur, imputation is seen not as an operation added onto ascription, but of the same nature as the latter. This sort of analysis can be referred to Aristotle, who, directly links preferential choice to the idea of praise and blame. According to him the voluntary deserves praise and blame, the involuntary calls for pardon and pity and the criteria of the voluntary are from the start criteria of moral and juridical imputation.

[11] Hart, 1984: 171-94. Here he proposes to interpret propositions in ordinary language of the type" he did that" along the lines of judicial decisions, where a judge rules, for example, that this is a valid contract.

[12] Ricoeur, 1992: 100-101.

Thus, in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, before his theory of virtue, Aristotle, as we saw above, develops an analysis of a fundamental act, the preferential choice[13] which sent us back to a specific analysis of the power to act. This centers on the relationship between action and its agent who is held to be the causal efficiency of this power. It is in this tie of action to its agent that Ricoeur sees the addition of a new and properly practical dimension to the self-designation of a speaker and to his or her interlocutor, as other than self.

Now, to say that an action depends on its agent is to return to the old idea of efficient causality, namely the living experience of the power to act, which the Galilean revolution had cast out of physics. So the question here, the third difficulty, is what do we mean by the "power to act"? This leads to a situation where we are stuck in between reformulating causality appropriate to the human sciences as seen in Collingwood or eliminate it in terms of the ideas of laws as seen in Russell.[14] Moreover, the question is, what would be rational and the merit of restoring efficient causality?

However according to Ricoeur there is a dialectic between this two factors that passes through two stages: a disjunctive stage, where there is the necessarily antagonistic character of the original causality of the agent in relation to the other modes of causality; and a conjunctive stage, where we witness the necessity to coordinate in a synergistic way the original causality of the agent with the other forms of causality.[15] This is where we see the agent's power of acting considered as a primitive datum, not to be confused with a raw datum, emerges at the end of a labor of thinking, of a dialectic as not simply the power to do but of *initiative*, in the strong sense of the word.

Understood in its disjunctive stage, Ricoeur holds that according to Kant, causality is in accordance with the laws of nature, one where the event happens is not the only causality from which the appearances of the world can one and all be derived. There is also another causality, that of freedom where one brings about the event. This is clearly

[13] Aristotle defines preferential choice as "choice will be deliberate desire of things in our power; for when we have decided as a result of deliberation, we desire in accordance with out deliberation.
[14] Ricoeur, 1992: 101. According to Collingwood in his *An Essay on Metaphysics* the cause proper to history can be explained in terms of a person making another person act in a certain way by providing him with a motive for so acting.
[15] Ricouer, 1992: 102.

brought out in the form of the distinction between two types of beginning, one of which is the beginning of the world, the other is a beginning in the midst of the world. It is not a beginning in time but a beginning in causality. So, the latter is a relative beginning with respect to the entire course of the world that is related to freedom.[16]

According to Ricoeur, the hesitations in the move from the description of "what?" to the ascription to a "who?" give rise to the question of the extent to which the efficiency of the beginning extends, and consequently the extent to which the agent's responsibility extends, considering the unlimited nature of the series of physical consequences. While it is true that an agent is not in the far distant consequences as he or she is in a sense in his or her immediate act yet at the same time, the effects of an action are separated off from the agent. Following our initiatives the laws of nature take control of the course of our action. Thus, to the extent that action has effects that are unintended, even perverse, separating what belongs to the agent from what belongs to the chains of external causality proves to be a highly complex operation. However, Ricoeur also holds that without the entanglement of these two modes of connection, acting could not be said to produce changes in the world.[17]

Another sort of entanglement that makes it difficult to attribute to a particular agent a determined series of events is the way, in which the actions of each one of us, according to W. Schapp, are being entangled in stories. Since, the action of each person, his or her history, is entangled not only with the physical course of things but with the social course of human activity, how, in particular, are we to distinguish what belongs to each of the social actors in a group action? Here, the difficulty lies in distributively designating to each participant, as an agent, a distinct sphere of action which in the end is something that is based on decision as it is not an established fact. Thus, Ricoeur, agrees with Hart that attributing an action to an agent resembles an adjudication by which a judge attributes to the parties in conflict what properly belongs to each.[18]

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[16] Kant, 1965: 409.
[17] Ibid, 107.
[18] Ricoeur, 1992: 107.

Ricoeur is in agreement with Kant as well that that freedom as a pure transcendental idea, without any connection to appearances, constitutes the ultimate sense of the faculty of beginning a causal series oneself. Upon this transcendental freedom is founded the practical concept of freedom—that is, independence of the will in relation to the coercion of sensuous impulses[19] Accordingly, the power to act consists precisely in the connection between these two inquiries and reflects the necessity to tie "who?" to "why?" through the "what?" of action. This calls for the play of "initiative" in the practical field which is an intervention of an agent in the course of the world that effectively brings about changes in the world.[20]

Ricoeur finds in von Wright's *Explanation and Understanding* the best representation of a conjunction in the form of a quasi-causal model that joins together teleological segments explainable in terms of practical reasoning with systematic segments explainable in terms of causal explanation.[21] Here the result of a practical syllogism lies in a real action which introduces a new fact into the world order that sets off a causal series, assumed as circumstances by the same agent or by other agents that joins the notion of action and causality. Thus, the merit of the idea of "setting a system in motion" in von Wright's theory is that it brings to the front, the agent's capacity to make one of the things he or she knows how to do, coincide with an initial system-state, thereby setting in motion a dynamic system and determining its conditions of closure.

Therefore, in the end, according to Ricoeur, the origin of the connection that bridges the gap between the two orders of causality, the systemic and the teleological can be found in the answer, "I can", i.e., the capacity of the self as an agent understood not in terms of an epistemological order but with reference to the ontology of one's own body. A body, according to Ricoeur "which is also my body and which, by its double allegiance to the order of physical bodies and to that of persons, therefore lies at that point of

[19] Kant, 1965: 465.
[20] Ricoeur,1992: 110.
[21] von Wright, 1971.

articulation of the power to act which is ours and of the course of things which belongs to the world order."[22]

In the final analysis, what, in fact, distinguishes ascription from the simple attribution of a predicate to a logical subject is the agent's power to designate herself by designating her other.[23] The phenomenon of ascription constitutes, only a partial and as yet abstract determination of what is meant by the *ipseity* (the selfhood) of the self and calls for an impetus to break out of these limits in the search for richer and more concrete determinations to characterize the *ipseity* of the self.[24] Thus, from the problem concerning the *aporia* of ascription Ricoeur holds that it becomes the task of an inquiry into praxis and practices to find the points of anchorage of a properly ethical evaluation of human action in the teleological and deontological sense, only then will we be able to take account of the articulation of ascription and imputation in the moral and legal sense.

2. Desires, Initiatives and Imputation

The inadequacy of ascription to account for the causal efficiency of the self's capacity to act, in the search for an alternative, take us to the notion of imputation in the moral and legal sense of the term that speaks of the self as an acting being. Here, the self as an agent, to whom action are held imputable, is one characterized by desire and equipped with the power to initiate accordingly, for which it at the end is held responsible, in terms of action which are considered permissible or impermissible.

The series of categories under investigation, that of the utterance and the speaker, those of the ability to act and the agent, then those of narration and the narrator, finds a final continuation in that of the imputation of acts and that of a subject who can be held accountable for its acts or in other words in the question of "who is capable of

[22] Ricoeur, 1992: 111.
[23] According to Ricoeur, the Strawsonian consideration regarding the identity of sense which mental predicates maintain in self-ascription tends in the direction of this sort of shift to the linguistic operations in which two types of designation, self and other designation is seen to predominate in a speech situation.
[24] Ibid.

imputation?" It is the reiteration of the one encompassing question 'Who?' in this dispersed phenomenological inquiry throughout the traversed fields of language, action, narrative, and responsibility that compensates for and authorizes taking the assertion of the self to be the correlative answer to the question 'Who?' The fragility of narrative identity brings us to the threshold of the final cycle of considerations relating to the capable human being. Thus, insofar as we undertake to ask the question 'Who?' we are asking about the self.[25]

This notion of capable human being brings us to the heart of the problematic that we have placed, beginning with the evocation of Homeric epic, under the heading of recognizing responsibility. Ricoeur in speaking of imputation defines from the the *Dictionarrie de Trevoux*, the Robert dictionary (1771 edition) that "to impute an action to someone is to attribute it to him as its actual author, to put it, so to speak, on his account and make him responsible for it."[26] In addition to the idea of attributing particular genus of action to its agent, as is with the act of ascription im,putation brings in the idea of being able to bear the consequences of one's acts, particularly acts that are at fault to the extent that another is presumed to have been the victim. This very idea suggests of an account that holds the subject accountable for their acts, to the point of being able to impute them to themselves.

A. Desires and Initiative

It is this distinction between the act of ascription and of imputation that the distinction between the spatiotemporal selfsameness (idem) of the agent and his or her capacity to initiate something imputable (ipse) is corroborated. Accordingly, the self is said to inhabit the two irreducible orders of causality, the physical and the intentional orders, both of which must find expression in a comprehensive account of action. To show what it means

[25] Ricoeur holds that the agent thereby proves to be a strange cause indeed, since naming him or her puts an end to the search for the cause, for naming the self is considered to be sufficient by the one who gives them and acceptable as such by the one who receives them unlike the search for the motives of action which is an interminable investigation.

[26] Ricoeur 2005: 106.

to say that an agent inhabits two orders of causality, we examine in detail just what is involved in an exercise of one's capacity to initiate something. Considering the phenomenon of desire it can be said to be both a force that compels and moves the agent as well as a reason for acting that makes the action intelligible and meaningful. It reveals an agent as inhabiting both the order of nature, in which desire impels, and the order of meaning or culture, in which action make sense, both to himself or herself and to the others who come to know of it. Human being Ricoeur holds, "is as it is precisely because it belongs both to the domain of causation and to that of motivation."[27]

However, an understanding of the two-sided nature of desire is not enough to account for action as talking of action is more than what consist in desire as it is a talk about bringing change into the world. Thus, Ricoeur holds that the central questions about action are:

> "How can a project change the world? What must be the nature of the world, on the one hand, if human beings are to be able to introduce changes into it? What must be the nature of action, on the other hand conceivable notion of a closed system, if it is to be read in terms of change in the world?"[28]

In reply to this question Ricoeur takes up the system theory of von Wright and argues that to conceive the entire universe itself as a closed system is to attempt the impossible, as the only conceivable notion of a closed system is in terms of a partial closed system.[29] A partial closed system is compatible with human action as it allows defining the initial state, the various stages of change, and the terminal state. Both establishing and setting the system itself takes place only because an agent employs their poser to intervene in the world, just like the scienticst, as wright puts it, intervenes in the flow of wordly events to establish an initial system state which they put into motion .

For Ricoeur this analysis points to certain things, basically that the concept of intervention presupposes that there is an ongoing established course or order of things

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[27] Ricoeur, 1991:135.
[28] Ibid., 137.
[29] The model that von Wright proposes is a mixed one as it joins together teleological segments amenable to practical reasoning with systematic segments amenable to causal explanation.

and that human action somehow disturbs or interferes with that course. However, since it allows for genuine human initiative, there is need in of causation that is different from Hume's understanding that explains this kind of intervention. Again, acting is always doing something so that something else happens in the world and knowing how to do that something to brings about the desired action shows that it is always purposive. [30] For these very reasons action is said to be not only ascribable to the agent as the one who intervenes but is also imputable to him or her as the one whose purpose motivates it or the one who initiates it. It is the response "here I am!" by which the person recognize himself or herself as the subject of imputation that marks a halt in search for an answer when the self is confronted with a multitude of models for action and life

Initiative, is thus a purposeful response that one deliberately makes in a worldly situation with its delimiting fields of what one can and cannot do.[31] Here, the self as an agent emerges as a bodily being with capacities and incapacities that inhabits a worldly situation which presents itself as a set of enabling or hindering features. This situation, in its concreteness, while providing the framework of obstacles and workable paths for the exercise of the agent's powers, serves as the counterpart of his or her bodiliness. In doing so initiative also presupposes both cosmic as well as lived time and most importantly it presupposes the non-closure of the world with its own causal regularities but with its permeability to the self's interventions.

Furthermore, the role of the self as an agent in initiative comes out distinctively, as in opposition to the act of enduring or preserving, the self, in the opening of a new course of things and committing himself or herself to the world becomes responsible for these courses of actions that he or she undertakes. It is different from endurance for the self does not merely suffer or endure the circumstances but mindfully commits himself or herself to altering the course of the world, however limited that foresight might be. It is for this very act that initiative of the self is imputable to the self, as an agent.

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[30] Ibid., 109.

[31] Initiative Ricoeur holds is an intervention of the agent which effectively changes the course of the world, the grasp of human agent on things.

Initiative then is a primitive datum that we come to recognize through a dialectic reflection that reveals both disjunctive and conjunctive character vis-à-vis the world in which it takes place. As Ricoeur puts it, initiative displays the antagonistic character of the original causality of the agent in relation to the other modes of causality as well as the necessity to coordinate in a synergistic way the original causality of the agent with the other forms of causality. Thus he writes "an agent is not *in* the far distant consequences as he or she is *in* a strong sense in his or her immediate act."[32]

B. Imputation and Responsibility

Ricoeur's analysis of action and agent, shows that both the action and the agent who performs it belong to a history that makes action possible and so appear conjointly liable to praise and blame.[33] The agent, the "who" of action, is one, who is capable of bodily intervention in multiple ways in the flow of worldly processes and thus of introducing something new that is immediately incorporated into these processes. It is for this very reason that all actions are in principle presupposedly imputable and can be submitted to certain kind of rule for which the agent is held responsible. The responsibility lies in bringing out the fittingness between these rules and the action they perform. Moreover, the reduction of action to event cannot account for the sense agents have of being capable of initiating something that interrupts ongoing processes even while it continues to depend on them. Of course, there are instances where we ascribe actions to agents without imputation but these acts are reasons which cancel the imputation that normally would accompany the ascription.

The very word imputation suggest the idea of an account, to the point of being able to impute them to themselves, to be able to bear the consequences of one's act particularly those wrong ones, in which another is reputed to have been the victim. The predicates assigned to action itself under the banner of imputability are ethico-moral predicates connected either with the idea of the good or bad, permissible or prohibited

[32] Ricoeur, 1992: 106
[33] Ibid., 294

which when applied reflexively to the agents themselves makes them capable of imputation. Thus, imputation can be said to be articulated only in those situation where causal explanations is far removed and where there is the existence of an elaborate moral and judicial doctrines within which responsibility is well framed out on the grounds of a well worked out scale of justice. [34]

Imputation, understood in a strictly juridical sense, according to Ricoeur implies "a set of obligations negatively delimited by the precise enumeration of infractions of a written law" [35]under which a subject who is imputed either offers reparation for a tort committed in civil law or undergoes punishment in criminal law. However, in attributing a blamable action to someone as its actual author, we rediscover our concept of ascription, in the sense of attributing a specific physical and mental predicate to someone moralized and juridized.

The doctrine of Right, in holding an action as a deed, in so far as it comes, under obligatory laws and by such action regards the agent as the author insofar as the subject in doing it does it in terms of the freedom of choice. Thus it holds that "A person is a subject whose action can be imputed to him ... A thing is that to which nothing can be imputed."[36] However, according to Ricoeur, this juridized version of imputability ends up concealing the enigma of attribution of this unconditioned causality to the moral agent under the name of retribution designated as "spontaneity of action" on the cosmological plane. Likewise, Kant's theory of Punishment that we read in Kant's theory of Right, under the heading "On the Right to Punish and to Grant Clemency" recognizes only the wrong done to the law and defines punishment in terms of retribution, the guilty person

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[34] We see the ancient Greeks join praise and blame in the evaluation of actions stemming from the category of a preferential, a predeliberated choice. It is at this point that we find the greatest affinity between us and the Greeks concerning the conception of action and the point where we can claim conceptual advance over them.

[35] Ricoeur, 2005: 106. A semantic analysis brings to the fore the metaphor of an account- assigning the action, so to speak, to someone's account. This metaphor suggests the idea of an obscure moral accountability of merits and faults, as in a double-entry bookkeeping system of credits and debits, with a view to a kind of positive or negative balance sheet. The metaphor of a moral record underlies the apparently banal idea of rendering an account and the apparently still more banal one of giving an account in the sense of reporting, telling at the end of a "reading" of this odd record or balance sheet.

[36] Kant, 1996: 16.

meriting the punishment solely by reasons of his crime as an attack on the law. From this results the elimination as parasitic of any taking into account of either rehabilitation of the condemned person or the protection of his fellow citizens.

Therefore, Ricoeur holds that, "it is left to phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophy to take up the question left hanging in this way about the self-designation attached to the idea of imputability as an aptitude for imputation."[37] It is with the introduction of the idea of responsibility that the classical idea of imputability is saved from its purely juridical orientation that in turn opens new horizons. Unlike the idea of an infraction that tends to counter pose to the offender only the law that was violated but with the introduction of that of responsibility there is shift from the act to that of the suffering and finally find its way to the victim who is the recipient or to whom the wrong has been committed. It is toward this suffering that the idea of responsibility reorients that of imputability. Imputability thus finds its other in the real or potential victims of a violent act.[38]

This reorientation, with the extension of the sphere of responsibilities in space and time of human power over environment that goes beyond the harm in which the actors and the victims are held to be contemporary, has remoralized the idea of imputatbility in its strictly juridical sense.[39] As a result of this change in emphasis, the focus shifts from the idea of damage done to that of the vulnerable other as the object of responsibility which is further facilitated by the corresponding change in the idea of assigning charge to the person who is held responsible for the other who is under his or her care. This expansion of assigning an entity to the agent's care makes what it vulnerable or fragile the ultimate object of responsibility and in doing so clearly brings the self into the centre of our focus.

The inclusion of the vulnerable other no doubt brings in its own set of problems of determining the sphere of responsibility as it applies to the future vulnerability of

[37] Ricoeur, 2005: 107
[38] Ibid., 108.
[39] On the juridical plane, we declare the author responsible for the known foreseeable effects of his action, among them the harm done to the agent's immediate entourage. On the moral plane, it is the other person, others, for whom one is held responsible.

human beings and their environment. The fact that the farther our power extends, that farther our capacity for harmful effects extends and that farther extends our responsibility for damage done does not lighten the issue but rather complicates it. However, with the acquisition of penal law, that of individualizing the penalty, the idea of imputability regains its moderating role. Imputation also has its own kind of wisdom that finds its just measure between an unlimited responsibility that would result in indifference or flight from responsibility and the inflation into infinite responsibility. The key lies in not allowing the principle of responsibility to get too far from the initial concept of imputability and limiting the sphere of spatial and temporal proximity between the circumstances of an action and its eventual harmful effects. Thus, what comes out at the end is that following Ricoeur we define Imputability as, "the ascription of action to its agent, *under the condition of ethical and moral predicates* which characterize the action as good, just, confirming to duty, and, finally, as being the wisest in the case of conflictual situations."[40]

3. Vulnerability and Equality

In the previous section, with the reorientation of focus from the notion of imputation to that of the broader one of responsibility that resulted in the corresponding shift of responsibility from the harm done we were led to the other who is reportedly the victim. Thus, here in this section we turn our attention from the discussion of the agent as the one who is capable and being the author responsible for the effect of his action, to the other who at end of the spectrum is said to be suffering being, for whom the agent is said to be held responsible. This section will bring out a totally different picture of the other where unlike in solicitude the relationship between the self and the other is built around the notion of equality, we will at this time witness a relationship that is rooted in inequality. This notion of responsibility where one find its other in the real or potential victims will further necessitate the call for a notion of the self, a notion of "each" that becomes possible only in an institution that allows for an expansion of the relationship beyond the

[40] Ricoeur, 1992: 292

one to one interpersonal relationship and encompasses the third party whom history has forgotten. The possibility of an inclusive relationship that of "to each his or her right" is realizable only with the move towards a just institution which we will see in the latter half of our discussion.

A. Vulnerable Being

The other is the one whose empty place has continually been indicated in our philosophy of action, where suffering is to be understood not simply in terms of physical or even mental pain, but in terms of the reduction, even the destruction, of the capacity for acting, experienced as a violation of self-integrity.[41] Here initiative, in the manner of suffering-with the other in contrast to the assignment of responsibility by the voice of the other belongs exclusively to the self who gives his sympathy, his compassion, in sharing the other's pain. On the other end in contrast to this act of charity or benevolence, the other appears to be reduced to the sole condition of "receiving." It is in this sense that a sort of equalizing occurs, originating in the suffering other, as the self, whose power of acting is at the start greater than that of its other, finds itself affected by all that the suffering other offers to it in return and from the suffering other there comes a giving that is no longer drawn from the power of acting and existing but precisely from weakness itself. This Ricoeur holds is perhaps the supreme test of solicitude as sharing the pain of suffering is not symmetrically opposite to sharing pleasure.

According to Ricoeur, it is a kind of dissymmetry upon which Emmanuel Levinas constructs his ethics, one which Aristotle fails to notice, where unequal power finds compensation in an authentic reciprocity of exchange, and one in which the suffering other finds refuge in the shared whisper of voices or the feeble embrace of clasped hands in those moments of agony. Here, the self reminded of the vulnerability of the condition of mortality is said to receive more from the friend's weakness than he or she can draw or give in return from his or her own reserves of strength. This kind of solicitude in the self evokes spontaneously by the other's suffering as well as by the moral injunction coming

[41] Ricoeur, 1992: 190.

from the other reveals an important aspect of the self, the affective flesh of feeling which further justifies the choice of the term "solicitude."[42]

Thus, it has to be noted that the equation of equality undergoes different experience with the existence of the various kind of relationship between the self and the other. While in friendship that serves as a midpoint between the self and the other equality is presupposed as there is shared desire to live together. However this, equality is reestablished only through the recognition by the self of the superiority of the other's authority in case of the injunction coming from the other. And equality is established only through the shared admission of fragility and, finally, of mortality, in case of initiative that comes as sympathy from the loving self for the suffering other.[43]

Thus, in perceiving itself as another among other and in its search for equality in the midst of inequality, and in the wish for the "good life," solicitude adds to self essentially the dimension of lack, the fact that we need friends, mutual friendship in the sense of Aristotelian "each other" (*allelous*).[44] This relationship of mutual friendship between the self and the other can be understood in terms of the relationship of reversibility, nonsubstitutibility, similitude. The relationship of reversibility can be found in language in the context of interlocution, in the exchange of personal pronouns where when the speaker says "you" to someone else, that person, the listener at the other end understands "I " for himself or herself. Thus, when another addresses the self, the listener, in the second person, he or she feels implicated in the first person, "I." this relationship concerns simultaneously the roles of speaker and listener where the capacity of self-designation applies equally to both the sender as well as the receiver of the discourse.

The idea of nonsubstitutibility takes into account the persons who is playing these roles. In a sense, nonsubstitutibility is equally presupposed in the practice of discourse but in another way than in interlocution, namely in relation to the anchoring of the "I " in use. Because of this anchoring I do not leave my place and I do not eliminate the

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[42] Ricoeur here makes a difference between sympathy in the sense of the wish to share someone else's pain which is not to be mistaken with simple pity in which the self is said to be secretly pleased to know that it has been spared the pain.
[43] Ricoeur, 1992: 192.
[44] Ibid.

distinction between here and there, even when I place myself in the place of the other in imagination and in sympathy. What language teaches, precisely as practice, is verified by all practices. The agents and patients of an action are caught up in relationships of exchange which, like language, join together the reversibility of roles and the nonsubstitutibility of persons. Solicitude adds the dimension of value, whereby each person is "irreplaceable" in our affection and our esteem.[45] In this respect, it is in experiencing the irreparable loss of the loved other that we learn, through the transfer of the other onto ourselves, the irreplaceable character of our own life. It is first for the other that I am irreplaceable. In this sense, solicitude replies to the other's esteem for me. But if this response were not in a certain manner spontaneous, how could solicitude not be reduced to dreary duty?

Finally, coming to similitude, which Ricoeur places it above the ideas of the reversibility of roles and the nonsubstitutibility of persons. It is not just the natural accompaniment of friendship, but of all the initially unequal forms of the bond between oneself and the other. It is an outcome of the interface between esteem for oneself and solicitude for others which is based on the belief that I cannot myself have self-esteem unless I esteem others as myself.[46] The term, "As myself" implies a recognition that just as I hold myself in esteem, the other too, is capable of starting something in the world, of holding himself or herself in esteem. Thus, the equivalence between the "you too" and the "as myself" in bringing out clearly the paradox of the exchange at the very place of the irreplaceable can be said to be based on the trust and the extension of the attestation in the self's own capacity of "I can" and self-esteem. And this is the point where the esteem of the *other as a oneself* and the esteem of *oneself as an other* becomes fundamentally equivalent.[47]

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[45] Ricouer, 1992: 193.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 194

B. Equality in Just Institutions

The fact that the other is also other than the "you" and the aim of living well implied in the very notion of the other is not limited to interpersonal relations but extends further than face-to-face encounters calls for a sense of justice that includes the life of "institutions." This initiative introduces another important dimension of justice that of "equality" which essentially involves an ethical feature, and in going farther than solicitude adds a new qualification to the self, that of "each" or to each, his or her rights.[48]

For Ricoeur, the term "institution," despite being bound up with interpersonal relations, implies a structure that is yet irreducible to and goes beyond these relations of an "I" and a "you" as it involves the extension of interhuman relations to all those who are left outside of the face-to-face encounter, those who remain third parties. The idea of plurality here suggests a plea for the inclusion of the anonymous in the literal sense of the term within the fullest aim of the true life. This structure of "living together" belonging to a historical community of people, nation, region, and so forth is fundamentally characterized by the idea of being bonded by common mores as opposed to that of domination or constraining rules.

Ricoeur draws from Hannah Arendt who sees public action as a web of human relations within which each human life unfolds its brief history, and considers power as having a political significance as based on the notion of "plurality" and "action in concert" irreducible to the state.[49] This instantaneous aspect of wanting to act together is not limited but must be spread out over a span of time and is not restricted to the past but has to do with the future in its ambition not to pass but to remain. However, this idea of "action in concert" with its desire to live together is given the status of something "forgotten."[50] It is ordinarily invisible as it overshadowed by relations of domination and

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[48] Ricoeur, 1992: 194.
[49] Ardent, 1972: 143. she holds that power corresponds to the human ability not simply in acting but acting in concert and is never a property of an individual but in belonging ot the group remains in existence only as long as the group keeps together.
[50] Ricoeur, 1989: 141-59.

"can be discerned only in its discontinuous irruptions onto the public stage when history is its most tumultuous."[51]

However, despite its illusiveness this power as wanting to live and act together, brings to the ethical aim the point of application of justice. Here, the kind of justice is not limited to the construction of legal systems but implies "the sense of Justice" on the fundamental level understood in terms of the first virtue of social institution that marks the extension of interpersonal relationships to institutions.

The reason for holding institutional mediation, where there is the intersection of the private and the public aspect of justice and one where Ricoeur sees ethics and politics overlap, to be indispensable is because the first kind of justice was understood in terms of a distributive operation in a political community. This aspect of *distribution* that moves to the forefront beginning with Aristotle to the medieval philosophers and to John Rawls, is on that is fundamental to all institutions and not limited to the economic plane to the extent that it govern the allotment of roles, tasks, and advantages or disadvantages between the members of society. It accounts for the cohesion between the individual, the interpersonal and the societal.

The ethico-judicial framework of the analysis having been made more precise, to this ethical core common to distributive justice and to reparative justice Ricoeur gives the name equality *(isotes)*.[52] Thus Ricoeur holds that equality, "is to life in institutions what solicitude is to interpersonal relations." And just as solicitude provides to the self another who is a face, likewise, equality provides to the self another who is an "each" which has its place in a higher ethical plane not to be understood at the grammatical plane. Thus, the sense of justice, in holding a person to be irreplaceable, not only presupposes an interpersonal relationship understood in terms solicitude but adds the notion of "equality" that encompasses all of humanity.

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[51] Ricoeur, 1992: 197.

[52] Ibid., 202. By equality, here Ricoeur after Aristotle employs it in terms of "proportional equality" that defines distributive justice and not arithmetic equality as persons in a society have unequal shares related to unequal merits.

4. Capable Human Beings

The self therefore is the product of a narratively structured life and it is within the framework of such narratives that we ask the central who-questions: "Who is this?"; "Who did this?"; "Who is responsible?" To answer to the question "Who am I?" according to Ricoeur is to tell the story of a life.[53] And in doing so one can gain insight into who one is by situating one's character traits, the values one endorses, the goals one pursues within a life story that traces their origin and development; a life story that tells where I am coming from and where I am heading. This narrative, as has been mentioned earlier, is not to be understood merely as a way of gaining insight into the nature of an already existing self. On the contrary, the answers provided to these questions are by the self who is the "who" of the story. In addressing the question "who" of our action which is tied up with a discussion on the kinds of capacities, narrative identity takes us further to the field of ethics where those features presented by narratives can be fully developed. Thus, what comes out of this configuration process is a capable human being. This sequence of the most noteworthy figures of the "I can" constitutes as we shall see the backbone of Ricoeur's analysis and gives the fullest form to the idea of action. It constitutes a legitimate enrichment of the notion of self-recognition through the epistemic mode of certitude and confidence attached to the modal expression of "I can" or attestation in all its forms with that of recognition.

A. Who Speaks

Instead of proceeding directly to consider capacities relative to action that intervenes in the course of the world, Ricoeur, in order to enlarge the field of "I can" moves back to those capacities implied by the use of speech. A reason for this move is that we can mark out the "cause" and the "principle" of the acting and suffering agents in the Aristotelian theory of action in their voicing of their decision and wishing.[54] Again in terms of the modern pragmatics of discourse, there is an important aspect that J. L. Austin rightly

[53] Ricoeur, 1985: 442.
[54] Ricoeur, 2005: 94.

brings out in saying that to speak is "to do things with words."[55] Thus, through this capacity of recognizing himself or herself in his or her capabilities of being able to speak, Ricoeur confers on the notion of human action, the justification of the self as the capable human being and sees in it a prolongation of the famous Aristotelian assertion of being as potentiality (*dynamis*) and as act (*energeia*).[56]

Moreover, speaking as a way of exercising the "I can," in moving from the orientation of the statement to the act of stating, the utterer of the statement, is seen as a fitting pragmatic approach that offers reflexive philosophy a valuable analytical tool. In this way, the hermeneutics of the capable human being verified through the detour of the question "who is speaking?" makes explicit the utterer of the utterance. In the expression "I say that" the "I," according to Ricoeur, does not figure merely as a lexical term but as a self-referential expression by means of which the speaker as the one who makes use of the first-person singular, in turn, designates himself or herself as the one who is not substitutable.[57]

Another way in which reflection on the speaking subject becomes a subject of particular interest in the inquiry into recognition is that it is produces interlocutory situation where self-reflexivity is combined with otherness as the speech pronounced by someone is a speech act addressed to someone else. In addition, the illocutionary character of a simple constative in the form "I affirm that" is more often a response to a call from other. So for Ricoeur the theory of speech acts is incomplete if there is no correlation between the illocutionary aspects of these acts and their interlocutory character. In this respect, the structure of question and answer is seen as constituting the basic structure of discourse where the speaker and the interlocutor in implicated. It is here that self designation receives more than a strengthening of its illocutionary force from this call to other for it establishes the presence of a speaking subject capable of saying, "Me, my name is so and so."[58]

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[55] Austin 1963.
[56] Ricoeur, 2005: 94.
[57] Ibid., 95.
[58] Ibid., 96.

B. Who Acts

The next major use of the modal form "I can" is to do with action itself in the limited sense of "making something happen," in the physical and social environment. Here, the subject in declaring that "I did it" recognizes himself or herself as the "cause."[59] However for the modern thinkers, this term has to be reconquered from the operation of objectification so that a difference between what "happen" and what "makes happen" is clear. In doing so a distinction has to be made between the semantic analysis of action sentences whose open-ended structure differs from that of the close attributive proposition in terms of a reason for acting, marked by intention in the former and a cause in the sense of a rule-governed succession in the latter. Thus ascription as attribution to a person is said to be a part of the meaning of intentional action where an agent is said to be related to the action in the sense of making it happen.

The term ascription points to the specific characters of attribution of which we say that he or she "possesses" it, that it is "his" or "hers." In the vocabulary of the pragamatics of discourse, ascription is directed to the agent's capacity to designate himself or herself as someone who does or has done this. It binds the "what" and the "how" to the "who." Which is brought out well by Aristotle in saying that "but we deliberate about what is in our power to do, that is, about those things which can be objects of action."[60] However, the challenge is not to let this "spontaneity of causes" become absorbed into the moral phenomenon of imputation, for which the ability to do something constitutes a radical precondition. This ability to do something comes down to an ability to encompass a series of fragmentary actions, upon which this ability confers a kind of wholeness, which later will find the rule governing its configuration in narrative. In the absence of such a configuring operation, the efficacy of the beginning may seem unlimited. Another problem that arises with the issue of the interweaving of one person's actions with those of the others is the question of how to mark off the share belonging to each person given the complexity of interactions? The solution, according to Ricoeur, lies in going back to the acting subject's avowal, where he or she in his capacity and

[59] Ibid. Ricoeur points out that this declaration of the "I did it" was something which the Homeric and tragic heros were capable of affirming.
[60] As found quoted in Ricoeur, 2005: 98. (Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1112a33-34).

confidence takes upon himself or herself the onus of initiative in which the power to act is actualized.[61]

C. Who Narrates

Next in the series of phenomenology of the capable human being is the act of narrating which, as the reflexive form of talking about oneself narratively, stands out in the series of narrative phase that traces the question "who?." It is in the act of emplotment that an intelligible configuration is conferred on the heterogeneous collection composed of intentions, causes, and contingencies, a unifying power which according to Ricoeur is nothing less than poetry itself. However, this unity can put in peril this identity of a unique kind as it rests on the dynamic equilibrium between a demand for concordance and the admission of discordance. An important implication of this configuration as emplotment lies in its application to "character" no less than to action who "carries out" the action in narrative. This makes the character a narrative category who in being emplotted its role in the story stems from the same narrative understanding as does the plot.

Thus, from this long detour through narratology it come down to the reader of plots and narratives to refigure his or her own expectations through the models of configuration offered by plots engendered by imagination on the plane of fiction, to which Hans Robert Jauss adds the new pair function of writing and reading.[62] Learning to narrate oneself is also learning how to narrate oneself in ways ranging from servile imitation to stages of fascination, suspicion, rejection in the search for a just distance with regard to such models of identification and their power of seduction. However, this personal identity associated with the ability to narrate oneself cannot be characterized without taking into account the fact that the speaker and the agent have a history of their own, i.e., without the temporal dimension both of the self and its actions.[63]

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[61] Ricoeur, 2005: 99.
[62] Jauss 1982
[63] Ricoeur, 2005: 101

Therefore, Narrative identity is that identity which is considered as enduring over time, which "at the intersection of the coherence conferred by emplotment and the discordance arising from the peripeteia within the narrated action" unfolds, in the dialectic between the immutable *idem* and the changing *ipseity*.[64] So even in extreme cases where personal identity becomes indecipherable the question of personal identity can be seen to take refuge in the naked question, "who am I?" The question of *Ipseity* can be said to disappear totally only when the character, loses its capacity to hold oneself accountable for one's acts and thus escapes the problematic of ethical identity.

At the same time since the story of a life includes interactions with others, the problem of narrative identity is also characterized by the dialectic of identity in terms of the otherness. Riceour agrees with Schapp, in holding that our being caught up in interwoven stories, far from constituting a secondary complication, must be taken as the principal experience in such matters.[65] This interweaving can be observed on the individual as well as on the collective level of identity and it is in this situation of confronting others, that, narrative identity reveals its fragility. Another problem that confronts this identity is that the resources of configuration offered by the work of narrative makes it possible to narrate differently which can be effectively employed by the ideologies of power to manipulate the fragile identities, through the symbolic mediations of action and this is the point, where we witness the *ipse*-identity seen as slipping into the *idem*-identity.

D. Who is Imputable

The fragility of narrative identity relating to the capable human being with its series of questions, "Who speaks?" "Who acts?" "Who narrates?," bring us to the final question of considerations "Who is capable of imputation?" This notion of imputation in contrast to causal explanations brings us to the heart of the problematic that of recognizing responsibility and can be framed only within well-worked-out codes and after balancing

[64]Ricoeur, 2005: 101.
[65] Ibid, 103.

offenses and punishment on the scales of justice. The very idea of imputability suggests the idea of an account, which makes the subjects accountable for their acts and in being imputed to bear the consequences of one's acts, particularly faulty acts in which another is reputed to be the victim. This takes us from the legal to the moral plane where the predicates assigned to action are ehtico-moral predicates connected with the idea either of the good or that of obligation.[66]

The form of self-designation implied in imputation in a way recapitulates the preceding forms of self-reference or self-esteem. It in a strictly juridical sense presupposes a set of obligations negatively delimited by the precise enumeration of infractions of a written law where one has either to make reparation or suffer punishment. However, it is in attributing a blamable action to someone as its actual author that we rediscover the concept of ascription as moralized and juridized.

It is in this reorientation of imputability toward the suffering victim in which the actors and the victims are held to be contemporary that one passes to that of responsibility which shields imputability from its purely juridical reduction. For this reason Ricoeur holds that, imputability finds its other in the real or potential victims of a violent act.[67] The change in emphasis of responsibility, where the agent instead of being held responsible for the action as on the juridical plane to that of being held responsible on the moral plane for the other, who is in my charge, makes the agent, responsible for the other.

However, this extension of responsibility to the vulnerable other involves its own difficulties as it results in the extension of the scope of responsibility further to the future vulnerability of human beings and their environment. However, this is where the idea of imputability regains its moderating role in holding that to the extent our power extends, that far extend our capacities for harmful effects and to that extend our responsibility. Thus, it in its wisdom has found out a measure that balances the extremities of flight from responsibility on the one hand and unlimited responsibility leading to indifference on the other hand by not allowing the principle of responsibility to get too far from the initial

[66] Ricoeur, 2005: 105.
[67] Ricoeur, 2005: 108.

concept of imputability where passing reparation or punishment is given in proportion to its spatial and temporal proximity and in relation to that of an action and its harmful effects.[68]

5. Ricoeur's Response to His Critics

The arguments in this section is based on a discussion between David Carr, Charles Taylor and Ricoeur[69] and Ricoeur's review of the problem of personal identity in Parfit's Reductionism. The purpose of bringing these arguments here is with the expectation that they in addressing the issues surrounding the narrative would at the end, perhaps, provide a) a justifiable response to the non-narrativist objection, in response to the standard model proposed by Carr b) bring out the necessity of narrative intelligence, in response to Taylor's reading of the insufficiency of nomological structure while accounting for history, and c) stress on the notable import of narrative identity, in addressing and providing an alternative to Parfit's reductionism,.

A. On Life and Narration

According to Carr, the significance of narrative is such that it is fast becoming a discipline in its own right and has become the battleground of different disciplines, with different approaches and ends. However, at the same time, despite this diversity, there is a consensus on the relationship between narrative and the real world that real events do not have the character of those we find in stories and treating them as if they did have such a character results in falsification. Carr terms it as the standard view.[70] Thus, for instance, among literary theorists we find this view expressed by structuralists and non-structuralists alike as well as among the historian, whose concern is presumably with the

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[68] Ibid., 109.

[69] The discussion here is based on the article "Discussion: Ricoeur on Narrative" that appears in "On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation" edited by David Wood. It is based on a round table discussion of "Time and Narrative" volume 1, between David Carr, Taylor and Ricoeur.

[70] This standard view, in capturing the core and reflecting in a direct or indirect way an overall objection of the non-narrativst against the narrativist in our discussion in chapter one, will be taken here as comprehensive of the various non-narrativist standpoint. Thus, an answer to the objections raised by this model can be on the whole seen as an answer to the objections made earlier.

real world that since narrative history contains elements of fiction it must be replaced by scientific history.

According to this view, fictional stories are distinct from 'reality' or 'real life' not just because they tell of events that never happened, but also because they in presenting them interrelates the events fictionally.[71] Thus, for any discourse which claims to represent the real to the extent that it does so in narrative form, it is said to be alienated from reality as such form are 'imposed upon' reality and distorts life. For this reason, narrative in its best is seen to constitute an escape, a consolation and at its worst an opiate, a self-delusion as it is something imposed from without by some authoritative narrative voice in the interest of manipulation and power.[72]

Carr disagrees with this standard view, not so much because of its approach to narrative but more because of what it rather implies. It instead of providing a genuine insight into the relation between stories and the real world, can be said to originate from frustration, pessimism and skepticism. Far from being an escape from reality he sees it as an extension, enrichment and confirmation of reality which is not to be understood merely as a mode of discourse but more essentially perhaps as the "mode of life."[73] Given this interest, he in discerning susceptible elements of what is called the standard view in Ricoeur's version raises the following questions.

To begin with Ricoeur's view of narratives, whether historical or fictional, in describing the world in terms of "as if it" [74] can be said to radically move away from Aristotle's view. As a result of this, narrative in allowing the possibility of myth, folktale and epic becomes is too broad that it widens the gap between narrative portrayals and the real world making them incompatible and thus fallible to the objections of the

[71] Wood, 1991: 162.
[72] White, Foucault and Deleuze, all of them are in agreement that in either of the case stated here, narrative serves an act of violence, a betrayal, an imposition on reality or life and on ourselves.
[73] Wood, 1991: 173.
[74] According to Carr Aristotle in *Poetics* says that history 'describes the thing that has been' and poetry, 'a kind of thing that might be', however, he sees in Ricoeur's narrative, a departure from Aristotle, the portrayal of a thing that never could be as its very form is incompatible with the real world.

standard view. Again, the way in which the plot is said to bring together heterogeneous elements is understood to be nothing out of the ordinary everyday engagement. Moreover, the way in which plot unites the levels of temporality by surmounting the merely sequential with the configurational in Ricoeur, has been shown to be defective by Husserl and other phenomenologist who are of the view that since time experience is essentially configurational, so mere sequence is a myth.[75]

In the light of the fact that life already is a synthesis of the heterogeneous it seems that the plot in synthesizing does nothing more than merely mirror those life activity. Moreover, following Ricoeur's emplotment it appears that our temporal experience is essentially confused, unformed, mute without the help of literary artifacts. In addition, while Ricer, in reading Augustine talks of discordance at the level of experience, Augustine rather seems to be contrasting the comprehension of experience with the incomprehension of theory. Even the word "aporia," used by Ricoeur originally implies a theoretical, not a practical difficulty.[76] While it is true that Practical experience presents us with many difficulties but on the other hand one can question if the paradoxical nature of time is one among these?

There no doubt is a difference between life as told in narrative and life as lived. But for Carr the question is can Ricoeur's account of the difference, played out merely in terms of the chaotic and the formed, the confused and the orderly, constitute a sufficient account? Again, if this holds true, what would then be the fate of the truth-telling narratives such as history, biography and the like, including those historical narratives which claim to be radically transformed by its scientific aspirations? For according to the standard view any explanation is doomed to fail in view of their narrative status. Finally in light of the view that "time becomes human time to the extent that it is articulated in a narrative mode" questions can be asked, whether this amounts to asserting that such articulation must take the form of literary productions or even, more broadly, texts? If the reply is yes, does it not amount to saying that life cannot be lived without literature?

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[75] Wood, 1991: 172.
[76] Ibid.

In response to the problem formulated in Carr's 'standard' theory Ricoeur accepts it as the central problem and agrees with Carr that, life itself is not a history and so there can be no coincide with any narrative, for, the only possible relation of *representation* between history and life can be one of violence. But in agreeing so, Ricoeur points out that this issue is closely related to the problem of refiguration and that the solution to this difficulty can be found in his suggestion of a triple mimesis.[77] To begin with, $Mimesis_1$ constitutive of nothing other than the pre-narrative character of life serves as the retroactive reference of every narrative configuration. This very basis of narrative clearly brings to attention, the fact that life itself is an inchoate narrative. Thus, Ricoeur does not see how this circular character between the three mimeses would lead to the 'standard' theory. Instead, he holds that the effect of refiguration can survive only through transformation into well-made fictions as we humans are in search of a meaning of life as our experiences, eaten away by discordances, itself is an ill-wrought history,.[78] Thus for him, perhaps the circularity between prefiguration, configuration and refiguration may facilitate an escape from the dilemma of holding history either as representing or distorting life.

In addition, according to Ricoeur, the concept of refiguration based on mimesis far from being understood as mere 'imitatings' designates a dynamic kind of production which is at once 'revelatory' and 'transformative.' Thus, narrative as a dynamic operation helps not only escape the dilemma of understanding history either as falsifying life, doing it violence, or as merely reflecting the series of events. The alternative provided by narrative, according to Ricoeur, lies in embracing both the horns of the dilemma that stands for "a *life* in search of its own *history.*"[79]At the same time, Ricoeur holds that the view that history is not life finds it justification on the observed difference between a theory of action and a theory of history. The reason being, though the constitution of history involves the activity of configuration, the historian is not concerned with the reconstruction of the agent's motives, unlike the action theorist but with those non-intentional effects, indeed the perverse effects of actions, such as heterogeneous

[77] Wood, 1991: 180.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 181.

elements, non-volitional effects which appears only retrospectively. Consequently, according to Ricoeur, "History tears itself away from life."[80] Ricoeur finds in Hannah Arendt, perhaps, a way out of the alternatives Carr's standard theory poses, which holds action as making an appeal to history for history she writes "discloses the who" of the action. [81]

However for Ricoeur, the bigger problem is not the question of whether history and life are strangers to such an extent that history constitutes an intrusion, a falsification, or a consolation, as the one posed by David Carr, but more with the objection of circularity, between life and fiction. This circularity is in Ricoeur's view not a product of the method employed but is expressive of life's true situation, so for him the reply to the question as to whether life needs to be understood through literature is in the affirmative. He holds it true to the extent that, we are not born into a world of children but as unspeaking children life 'in the raw' we come into a world already full of the narratives of our predecessors which is beyond our reach. So in this stage of prefiguration or $mimesis_1$, action is already symbolically mediated and what is prefigured in our life includes previous refiguration by the other who teach us. Thus, literature, both history as well as fiction, tends to reinforce a process of symbolization already at work. However, in saying so Ricoeur does not sees in this circularity a vicious circle but sees in these "an extension of progressive meaning, from the inchoate to the fully determined." [82]

B. The Necessity of Narrative Intelligibility

The focus of the discussion between Taylor and Ricoeur is on Taylor's summary of Ricoeur's view that narrative intelligibility is essential for historical science as it cannot be conceived exclusively on the basis of atemporal social sciences. In Ricoeur's introduction of narrative intelligibility, Taylor sees the beginning of a closer tie amongst those who stood for a purely nomologically hermetic science on the one hand, and the

[80] In wood, 1991: 181.
[81] Ibid., 182. Ricoeur in referring to the work of Hannah Arendt's book *The Human condition* refers to the argument made by Arendt that action is said to make an appeal to history because history discloses the who of the action.
[82] Ibid.

others, who simply maintain a 'narrativist' stance, on the other. The outcome of this endeavor according to Taylor is that historiography remains a transformed narration which is "comprehensible only on the condition that we do not cut our moorings from our point of departure."[83]

To begin with, in the *nomologicaily hermetic* explanatory model based on a "relation of subsumption" [84] holds that what is formulated in the *explanans* constitutes the totality of the real, the *explanandum* is related to the *explanans* only as an example, a particular case or partial manifestation of it. This type of relation advocated by logical positivist and predominant in the prestigious natural sciences is gaining currency in the circle of "structuralism" with a slight alteration that the requirement for the general laws to cover particular cases is being replaced by the demand that results be engendered through the transformations of a system. This has led to the widespread confused babbling in various disciplines of the "death of the subject."[85]

However, Taylor follows this explanation by bringing in a counter model of relationship in the form of the paradigmatic example of *langue-parole,* where the relation between the act and structure is based on "a relation of renewal" as opposed to that of subsumption. Here, language despite being viewed as a structure of possible formations and transformations is said to be "purchase on the real only by virtue *of parole,*"[86] where the structure is said to have real existence only through the repeated acts of communication by members of a linguistic community.

The rationale behind this is that there is always disparity in human actions and so perfect adequation with a structuralism is something that is impossible. A structure cannot play both the roles of *explanans* as well as *explanandum* as is projected in the

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[83] In wood, 1991: 174.
[84] According to Taylor, Ricoeur wanted to contest the subsumptive model, structured on a strange mistrust of the event, which played an important role in post war French historiography. He sees them as a kind of finesse which was equivalent to the depths of stupidity, which philosophers unlike hisotrian cannot afford to commit in their pursuit of what is exceptionally valuable and interesting works.
[85] In Wood, 1991: 175.
[86] Ibid, 176.

subsumption model. The reason here is that reducing the role of events to that of a mere example, especially in the explanations of human sciences, leads to a more or less scatter-brained reductionism of non-significant structures as was the case with behaviorism. Furthermore, what generate interests and makes history are not the regularities but those moments of divergence which capture our attention.[87] Thus, according to Taylor, what remains at the end is nothing other than "the undeniability and insurmountability of the site of divergence" transformed by structures of renewal which perhaps creates the need for another kind of explanation,[88] in which Ricoeur sees an opening for the possibility of a narrative mediation.

Ricoeur in complete agreement with Taylor's summary of his' stand on the nomological model is also appreciative of Taylor's introduction of the *langue-parole* relation as a counter-model to the nomological model. He refers to William Dray in holding that the historian does not *establish* but *employs* laws as laws are always interpolated into a previous understanding.[89] An 'event' being constitutive of what happens is nothing other than the result of the insertion of the nomological into the factual. Accordingly, despite the fact that in explaining an incident, we enumerate the events in *seriatim* as physical laws intervene one after another, yet we at the same time put them in accordance to a narrative series.

However for Ricoeur the two models are not simply alternatives, but operate together in a certain way. In explaining this he takes the help of von Wright's mixed explanatory model[90] which holds that explanation, in terms of history, contains nomic and teleological segments. This explains the reason for the extraordinarily unstable epistemological status of history as there is on the one hand the insertion of nomological elements into a narrative framework, and on the other, the combination, in a mixed

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[87] With regard to this Ricoeur in his Time and narrative volume I in citing benchmarks historical moments like the French Revolution, the American war of Independence, the Industrial revolution, etc show the absurdity in trying to envisage an explanation to these great events strictly in term of a nomological model.
[88] In Wood, 1991: 179.
[89] Ibid., 182.
[90] von Wright, 1971.

model, of nomic and teleological segments. So the question is can we give an account of this transformation in a meaningful communicative way? In reply Ricoeur holds that there is a transitional zone between the explanatory level of history and narration. For this reason Ricer holds that art in the largest sense of *poiesis* reveals structures which would have remained unrecognized and transforms life, elevating it to another level.

In introducing this transitional epistemological stage Ricoeur employs the notion of *singular causal imputation,*[91] developed by Max Weber and Raymond Aron. It is in this attempt to introduce a second connector at this stage, that of the quasi character that Ricoeur find a reinforcement of the narrative theory developed by literary criticism. The transition between history and story may thus be assured by the construction of the quasi-character i.e., for instance by that species of artifacts from historical methodology. Thus, what makes an event to count as an event, a 'turning point' in the course of time, lies not in the duration but in its capacity to produce significant change.[92]

However, Ricoeur is willing to keep the existence of an ultimate intersection between history and fiction on the condition that the polarity between history and fiction is first maintained. In this respect he reminds us that we are not only inheritors but equally debtors which in some way renders us insolvent else one might end up like Faurission of France who in denying history declares that what happened in Austchwitz is only what is said about for nothing *real* has happened. Thus, it becomes our duty of restitution of "rendering" what has happened for the past is not just about what is absent from history but with the right of its "having been."[93]

Having said this, we as "readers" are at the point of intersection between fictive and historical narrative.[94] This is so because what we call human time according to

[91] Ricoeur defines singular causal imputation in his *Time and Narrative* vol. I as " the explanatory procedure that accomplishes the transition between narrative causality – the structure of "one because of the other" which Aristotle distinguished from "one after the other" – and explanatory causality that, in the covering law model, is not distinguished from explanations by law."
[92] In wood, 1991: 185.
[93] Ibid., 186.
[94] In wood, 1991: 186.

Ricoeur is a fragile construction resulting from the intersection between the imgainary universe, on the one hand, which in reconstructing human actions make them understandable and the reconstructions of history placed under the sign of debt, on the other. Thus for him a man of fiction is no less a debtor, not in terms of the 'having been', but with regard to a vision of the world to which he never ceases doing justice. This task of doing justice to the world in turn is of importance for us as a hermeneutic key to the reading of phenomena. [95]

The importance of imagination can be seen in that it is only through transformation that discoveries are made. It is in this sense of indebtdedness that what is implicit, is inchoate, the forgotten victims in the historical past along with those impeded possibilities that history has inhibited, massacred comes alive. Here we see the role of fiction coming to the aid of history in liberating these inhibited possibilities as what has taken place in usurping the place of impeded possibilities has also prevented something else from happening and existing. Likewise, according to Ricoeur, fiction can save these impeded possibilities and turn them back on history for what has not taken place but had the possibility of, can be said to "has been" in a certain way, though only in a potential mode. [96]

C. Personal Identity does Matter

The essence of Derek Parfit's view of 'reductionism' in *Reasons and Persons* lies in the fact that the "impersonal" description of the facts, whether related to a psychological criterion or to a bodily criterion of identity, when pursued to its logical conclusion yields as something that can be described without presupposing a personal identity. He holds that these facts can be describe without even explicitly supposing that the person exist as "personal identity constitutes a supplementary fact, which does not consist simply in physical and/or psychological continuity."[97] Therefore, for Parfit if the connection, whether psychical or physical, is the only important thing about identity, then, personal

[95] Ibid,187.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Parfit, 1984: 210.

identity is not what matters. This daring assertion has important moral implications, to wit the renunciation of the moral principle of self-interest and the adoption of a sort of quasi-Buddhist self-effacement of identity.

In examining this view Ricoeur's main disagreement with Parfit is not on the issue of the coherence of the impersonal position, but more with the reduction of the hermeneutic of selfhood to the position of a Cartesian ego and identifying it as a 'supplementary fact' following the reduction of mental states and bodily facts to impersonal events.[98] The self according to Ricoeur cannot simply belong to the category of events and facts and is not to be seen as a supplementary fact for the inevitable question here is, if it is not for the self who is called on to be deprived of self-assertion then to whom do we attribute the fact that identity no longer matters? So for him, the undecidability of the answer to the question of identity leading to parfit's conclusion that identity is not what matters arises from the believe that the question itself is empty. And, the problem with this, according to Ricoeur, lies to a greater extent in its employment of science fictions instead of literary fiction as is the case with narrativist in addressing the issue.

The narrativist in dealing with the problematic of coherence, of permanence in time offers an alternative solution through a detour of the fictional narrativity which elevates identity to a new level of lucidity as well as perplexity not attained by those stories in which the course of life is immersed. It thus constructs the durable properties of a character, what one could call his narrative identity, by constructing the kind of dynamic identity found in the plot, through the mediation between permanence and change. The advantage of this detour through the plot is that in providing a model of discordant concordance it construct situations in which selfhood can be distinguished from sameness. Thus, even, when the case is as demonstrated by Robert Musil's novel, 'the man without qualities,' where the anchorage of the proper name becomes so derisory that it becomes superfluous to the extent that the unidentifiable becomes unnamable, we do not escape the problematic of selfhood. In narrative, with respect to the category of the subject, a non-subject is not nothing. Indeed, according to Ricouer, we would not be

[98] In Wood, 1991: 193.

drawn to this drama of dissolution nor be thrown into perplexity, if the non-subject were not still a figure of the subject, even in a negative mode." Thus, the reply, "Nothing, or almost nothing" to the question, he hold, is still a reply simply reduced to the starkness of the question who.[99]

Another important fact is that despite the imaginative variations conducted, narrative fictions remain rooted to the invariant, i.e., the corporeal condition which constitutes the unavoidable mediation between self and world, of our being-in-the-world. However, in Parfit's puzzling cases where imaginative variations are constructed in terms of technological dreams, our corporeal existence, the very invariant condition of a hermeneutic of existence is taken as a mere contingent state. Moreover, the imaginative experiments are based on a single sameness, the sameness of the manipulable brain, the substitutable equivalent of the person. However, for Ricoeur this manipulation amounts to a violation not merely of the rules but of the existential condition under which all rules, laws and facts exist and so these imaginative variations are not unrealizable and ought to be prohibited even if they are realizable.[100]

In addition, in case of scientific fiction the subject who undergoes the various experiments lacks relations, i.e., the other person for the only things present is the person's brain and the other, the experimental surgeon, who is more of the grand manipulator and the replica of the person is in no sense an other. On the other hand, Ricoeur agrees with A. J. Greimas that in fictional narrative, the conflict between two narrative programmes in involving semiotic constraints are ineliminable from the narrative field, as interaction is constitutive of the narrative situation.[101] Moreover, since sameness and alterity are two correlatives existential in narrative fiction so, in the course of the application of literature to life, what we carry over and transpose into the exegesis of ourselves is this dialectic of the self and the same.

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[99]In Wood, 1991: 196.
[100]Ibid., 197.
[101] Ibid.

The refiguration by narrative confirms this aspect of self-knowledge which goes far beyond the narrative domain, namely, that the self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly by the detour of the cultural signs articulated in terms of symbolic mediations that involve action and the narratives of everyday life. At the same time underlying this remarkable characteristic of self-knowledge is narrative mediation or that of self-interpretation where the reader in appropriating the figural nature brings out what "turns out to be a *figured* self—which imagines itself *(se figure)* in this or that way."[102]

Ricoeur holds the thought experiments offered by literature, precisely, those cases of dissolution of sameness as purgative virtue. Subsequently, there is an extent to which we agree with Parfit that identity is not what matters yet at the same time it points to the undeniability of the fact that this is uttered by someone. So the sentence 'I am nothing' still retain its paradoxical form as long as this nothing is imputed to an "I," a self deprived of assistance from sameness. Ricoeur equated this nothingness of permanence-identity to the null case of transformations that is so close to Lévi-Strauss. It is rather the case that the question, "who am I?" cannot be effaced as there are many instances of dark moments in personal narrative where there is this experience of the null response that far from declaring the question empty returns to these moments and continues to reflexively ask the question.

Conclusion

Hence, an assessment of how the notion of selfhood gets enriched with its entry into the ethico-moral field in passing from the narrative stage to that of prescription can be shown in terms of the three interrelated problematic of the hermeneutic self, the indirect approach of reflection through the detour of analysis, the dialectic of sameness and self-constancy and the dialectic of selfhood with otherness.

First of all with the addition of Imputability to the self understood earlier in terms of a speaking acting and narrating self is a self capable, not only of prioritizing its preferences and acting knowledgeably, but a self that is capable of being able to evaluate its action.

[102] In Wood, 1991: 199.

A self to whom action can be imputed that involves not only placing an action under his or her responsibility but placing it under the category of permissibility or impermissibility, in addition to holding the self as culpable or inculpable.

Again with the introduction of the ethico-moral consideration in the dialectic between selfhood and sameness, within the framework of temporality, what emerges is the concept of responsibility. Understood in terms of the future, it implies that the self, despite the fact that the consequences of his actions have not been expressly foreseen and intended, assumes responsibility for his or her action, in delegating the events to count as his or her own works. With reference to the past that affect us which despite the fact is not entirely our own work, the self in recognizing its indebtedness with respect to the past, holds himself or herself responsible for having made what he or she is today. These two retrospective and prospective responsibility joined together give rise to what is called the responsibility in the present where the self in accepting himself or herself today as the same self who acted yesterday and will act tomorrow, hold oneself responsible. This dimension of the self clearly brings out the notion of *ipseity* understood in terms of self-constancy that is irreducible to empirical persistence.

Lastly, the introduction of the ethico-moral considerations into the dialectic between self and the other, brings to the concept of the self as another, an important characteristic feature that of recognition. This is where the self in reflecting on the movement from semantics to pragmatics carries his or her self-esteem understood in terms of good towards solicitude, i.e., in terms of equality and reciprocity of acting and suffering being, which in turn leads us further to the notion of justice, i.e., proportional equality in terms of the "each" in a just institution. Thus, what emerges at the end is the notion of a self who is not simply a speaker, an actor, a narrator but who by virtue of the response "Here I am" to the question "who?" is said to be one qualified with the character of imputability, responsibility and recognition.

Conclusion

Introduction

Narrative identity in the first place is the specific identity that is assigned to an individual or to a community which resulted from the union of history and fiction. It, in putting forth a proper name in response to the question "who is the agent, the author?" designates a someone, who is the same throughout a life, starting from birth to death.[1] Thus, Ricoeur agrees with Hannah Arendt that an identity is a construction, which in reply to the question "who?" consists in telling the story of his or her life. However, identity understood in this sense implies a dual identity one of which is understood in the sense of being the same (*idem*) and the other understood in the sense of oneself as self same (*ipse*). The difference between them is that while the former is a formal identity, the latter, being a narrative identity, is constitutive of self constancy.

The self, here in appearing both as a reader and a writer of his or her own life is reflective of the changes, the mutability and the cohesion of one's life in time. It is this identity of self constancy that distinguishes the self of self knowledge from the egoistic and narcissistic ego. Therefore, the story of the self being refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories makes "this life itself a cloth woven of stories told."[2]

At the same time the fruitfulness of the narrative identity can be seen in that it is equally applicable to the community as well as to the individual whose narrative in turn becomes for them their actual history. This circular relation between what is called "character" and narrative, in turn, can be said to serve as a striking example of the threefold mimesis, a wholesome circle of refiguration, where the third mimetic leads back to the first relation by way of the second. Thus, Ricoeur write that "in a word, narrative identity is the poetic resolution of the hermeneutic circle."[3]

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[1] Ricoeur, 1985: 246.
[2] Ibid., 246.
[3] Ibid., 248.

Findings of the Study

In the beginning of our discussion, we saw, in the non-narrativist version, the existence of the threat of an unbridgeable gap that separates fiction and life, as stories are said to be recounted and life is lived. For the non-narrativist it is this constant endeavour of narrating one's daily experiences to others in a storying way and with great gusto that one can be said to be drifting away further from the truth. And it is in this process of telling and retelling the past that one shifts away from the facts as this involves changes, smoothening and enhancements.[4] Thus, the result is obvious for the more we narrate ourselves, recall and retell our stories, the further we risk moving away from the truth of an accurate self-understanding of our being. Thus, they see this narrative tendency to look for story or narrative coherence as highly unnatural and ruinous and a gross hindrance to self-understanding.[5]

However, a narrativist maintains that if one is to successfully identify and understand what someone is doing then unless it is understood in the context of a set of narrative histories that is inclusive of both the history of the individual and that of the setting in which they act and suffer there can be no successful interpretations. In the same manner we consider the action of others intelligible because basically action itself has a historical character. Thus Macintyre writes, "It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told – except in the case of fiction."[6]

It is in the light of the above debate, we sought to focus how the narrative theory with its dynamic capacity for emplotment, brings about a synthesis of heterogeneous incidents in configuring a unified story and in finding a concordance in the midst of the discordance configures a unifying theme out of the series of succession. It is here that narrative intelligibility, not to be confused with mere theoretical understanding, intervenes in symbolically mediating with its dynamic power of creative imagination and helps reformulate the relation between life and

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[4]Strawson, 2005: 82. Stawson points out that this tendency is not just a human psychological foible. But recent research has shown this to be an inevitable consequence of the mechanics of the neurophysiological process of laying down memories that every studied conscious recall of past events brings an alteration.

[5] Strawson, 2005: 82.

[6] Macintyre, 2007: 212.

narrative. This Ricoeur holds is comparable to the practical wisdom of moral judgement (*prudentia*)[7]. Moreover, this life of narrative activity being inscribed in the tradition of a living transmission is said to be the result of interaction of innovation and sedimentation and is compared to the most creative moments of poetic composition. Thus, narrative here, in characterizing the interval between birth and death, stands for an examined life that is worth living, a life as *aiming at the "good life" with and for other, in just institutions.*[8]

Ricoeur's narrative identity that occupies an epistemological place between the alternative of *cogito* and anti*cogito* is one that is arrived at following the indirect manner of positing the self. This hermeneutics of the self in posing the question "who?" understood in terms of the four subsets, take us to the field of personal identity in following the transition of the three interrelated problematic of hermeneutics. Thus, by means of an analysis in the field of semantic, the dialectic of sameness and selfhood in the field of pragmatics as well as narrative and the dialectic of selfhood and otherness we follow the journey the self takes. In addressing the question of selfhood we, in our quest for narrative identity, begin from the semantics of action to the practical field that further leads us to the greater field of narrative which finally, in finding itself inadequate, guides us beyond the practical sphere of simple actions to the domain of ethics. Here, the merit of these long loops of analysis, according to Ricouer, characteristic of the indirect style of a hermeneutics, lies in the fact that it is this very feature of narrative that makes it stand apart in complete opposition to the demands of immediacy of the *cogito.*[9]

The question of "who?" primarily when applied to the field of semantics raises the question of *whom* does one speak in designating a person as distinct from a thing, it designates the agent himself or herself as the one "who" is the "locutor." However, since, the question "who is speaking?" as a speech act leads us to the next question, the question of "who is acting?," which is at the same time a move from the field of semantics into that of pragmatics. However, the projection of the question in this manner shows the inadequacy of the field of pragmatics which directs us further to the field of narrative. So, we come to the next question of "who narrates?" Here is where the question of identity that, in being tied to the notion of temporality, comes up

[7] In Wood, 1991: 23.
[8] Ricoeur, 2005: 172.
[9] Ricoeur, 1992: 17.

clearly with its division and the corresponding dialectic between *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity. According to Ricoeur, it is in this question of "who narrates?" i.e., in narrative identity, that the concept of action is brought back in its "full scope of meaning." Correspondingly the subjects of action now comes along with the broad spectrum that includes acting and suffering individual. However, with this inclusion, narrative in finding itself confronted with the actions whose treatment can be justified only with the inclusion of ethical studies, takes us to the next level of question "who is imputable?." This is also where we find the question of "the other" than self that realises its potentiality with the entry into the dialectics of selfhood and otherness. Here is where we find the autonomy of the self tightly bound up with the solicitude for the other and with justice for each individual. So what emerges at the end is not the self who speaks, acts, narrates and is importable but a self who is endowed with responsibility and recognition.

These questions, taken together have as their thematic unity human actions and that these notions of action acquire an even increasing extension and concreteness with the shifting of the question from the self to that of the self in conjunction with the other. Therefore, in the process we saw that by reason of those features peculiar to human actions and the special bond between actions and its agent there is a resulting shift in the focus from the action to the self, implied in the power to-do. However, the question of action in serving as a propaedeutic to the question of selfhood does not stop rather it gives rise to a significant reshufflings in the plane of human action itself. This is the crucial point where, narrative identity, in playing its configurative role to its fullest can be said to serve as a transitional and relational function between description that prevails in the analytic philosophies of action and the prescription that designates all the determination of actions that involves ethical considerations.

This demonstrates how the self in the narrative finds its identity on the scale of an entire life, in shuffling between the brief actions and the *connectedness of life* of which Dilthey spoke.[10] It is in this double gaze of being able to look back in the direction of the practical field and looking ahead in the direction of ethical sphere

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10 Dilthey writes in his *Die geistige Welt: Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens.* that "In psychology it is precisely the connectedness which is originally and continually given in lived experience: life presents itself everywhere only as a continuum or nexus" (Dilthey, 1924a: 144).

that we see the chain of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration coming to a full circle. This is where life is said to come to a completion in the form of an examined life.

Following our study of self beginning with the reflection on the "Who?" through the detour of the reflection of "what? why? how?" we saw the returning of the self in response to this answer. Therefore, we discover a self to whom the term *imputability* can be applied.[11] This results not simply in the act of placing an action under someone's responsibility but a clear cut underlining of the relation of the act to the agent, for which the agent can be held culpable and inculpable in accordance to the permissibility or otherwise of the action.

Again, to the self that emerges as a result of placing our ethico-moral considerations in terms of the dialectic between selfhood and sameness, Ricoeur gives the term *responsibility.*[12] Responsibility, understood in terms of delegating the unforseen events to count as his or her own, works in the future. Recognition of its indebtedness with respect to the past for having made what he or she is today and responsibility in the present, leads to the acceptance of himself or herself as the same self who acted yesterday.

To the self that emerges as a result of the entry of the dialectic of the self and the other, the term *recognition* is given.[13] Recognition, according to Ricoeur is "a structure of the self reflecting on the movement that carries self-esteem toward solicitude and solicitude towards Justice." Thus, what emerges at the end is that it introduces into the very constitution of the self, the element of reciprocity in terms of friendship and proportional equality in terms of justice.[14]

Limits of Narrative Identity

Narrative identity by Ricoeur's own admission "is not a stable and seamless identity" for in the first place it is always possible to construct a different and even opposing

[11] Ricoeur, 2005: 291.
[12] Ricoeur, 2005: 294.
[13] Ibid., 296.
[14] Ibid.

plot on the same subject as well as similar plot on the same subject.[15] At the same time in the exchange of role between history and fiction while the historical component draw the narrative towards the side of historical chronicle at the same time the fictional narrative also draw it toward those imaginative variations which is in the end destabilizes narrative identity. Thus Ricoeur writes that, "narrative identity thus becomes the name of a problem at least as much as it is that of a solution."[16]

Moreover, Ricoeur holds that, "narrative identity does not exhaust the question of the self-constancy of a subject."[17] The act of reading for instance leads us to say that the practice of narration lies in a thought experiment where we try to inhabit world foreign to us. In doing so the act of reading can become a provocation to act differently but this impetus is transformed into a action only through a decision whereby the person takes up the responsibility. Thus, Narrative identity fails to realise self-constancy, i.e., it is only in the ethical act of transition to the ethical field that self constancy reaches its potential. There is no ethically neutral narrative, since every act of reading involves an implicit or explicit inducement aimed at persuading the reader at looking at the world from a different evaluative perspective. However, at the end it belongs to the reader who as an agent is capable of initiating an action to choose one among the multiple proposals and make it his own choice. Thus, this is the point, according to Ricoeur, where narrative in encountering its limits and has to team up with non-narrative components in the construction of an acting subject.[18]

Some Observations

Given that Narrative identity, on the one hand, covers a practical field greater than that of the semantics and pragmatics of action sentences and on the other hand calls for the extension of the action beyond the narrative into the field of ethics, question arise as to whether the claim that the identity constructed by narrative, as a viable alternative, be justifiably sustained? No doubt narrative by merit of its configurational function serve as a mediator between the act of description and prescription and so perhaps its role as

[15] Ricoeur, 1988: 248.
[16] Ibid., 249.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ricoeur, 1988: 249.

something that befits a transitional mode of study can be discerned through this activities. However, granted that this is true, question arises as to whether within such a restricted field of action, a justifiable definition of self, which by its very nature is evasive, can come out.

While it is true that narrative, owing to the fact that it, in making clear the distinction of equivocity of identity between self-sameness and self-constancy, is able to account for the fluid and dynamic nature of self, constitutive of self-constancy, change, mutability within the cohesion of one lifetime. However, at the same time, it appears that too much attention is given to this aspect of self constancy that the notion of the samneness has been overshadowed. Here the question raised by phenomenologist like Zahavi, "Are Narratives the primary access to self?"[19] becomes significant. Perhaps there is a need to operate with a more primitive and fundamental notion of the self and understand deeper its implication for as we have seen only in the dialectic between the sameness and the self-constancy can the notion of self be said to attain the meaning of its selfhood. Thus, one of the options following the suggestion of Zahavi would be to distinguish between a minimal experiential self that deals with a primitive form of self-givenness or self-referentiality indicated by the term "self" and the "person" as an extended narrative self[20] on the other hand or as Damasio puts it between the core self and the autobiographical self.[21]

The word "person" even in terms of its origin can be traced to the Latin term *persona* that refers to masks worn by actors and is related to the characters in a play or a story conveyed by the expression *dramatis personae.* While self refers to the first-personal givenness of experience because of which an experiential life is said to be inherently individuated whereas on the other hand person refers to a more tangible kind of individuality that manifest itself in personal history.[22] Unlike the experiential core self, the person do not exist in a social vaccum. It is as Husserl would put, "personality is rather constituted only when the subject establishes social relations with other."[23]

[19] Zahavi, 2007: 179-201.
[20] Ibid.
[21] A. Damasio, 1999: 19.
[22] Zahavi, 2007: 179-201.
[23] Husserl, 1973: 175.

However, it has to be noted that though this experiential core self might be said to involve a certain amount of abstraction yet there is no question to its reality.

It is true that a narrativist, in necessarily favouring a certain perspective of one's own experiences and actions to the exclusion of others, makes his or her own choice the voice of the narrative.[24] So unless there is a standard model by which one can figure out the extent of truthfulness which narrative and life mirror one another in their correlation while coming up with an identity of the self how are we to talk about the truth and falsity of one version of narrative over the other? Of course for a narrativist like Ricoeur the solution to this problem lies in the ethical responsibility of an agent, subjected to imputation, to narrate faithfully the events of life. But this way of resolving the issue, where narratives in seeking a solution, find its answer in the sphere of ethics raises question as to the competence of narrative. While it is true that any answer that provides long lasting solution to the question of self identity is anticipated and so the objection that we raise here are not to be understood as goings against the fact that ethics can provide the solution rather our objection is in the way the narrative in claiming to define the self resorts to ethics.

The objection is with respect to the claim of narrative capacity to construct an identity in placing itself between the act of description and prescription. Here, what we observe is in the construction of narrative identity, narrative, instead of drawing on its own resources, in finding itself unable to come up with a justifiable explanation of self, relies on the act of prescription. Following this can we not say that narrativist in defining the self, in discovering it inadequacy, finds it complementary in an ethical perspective of self to complete constructing the picture of the self. So, does this not somewhere lead to a realization that narrative, despite playing an important role in the configuration of a self and in the process of bringing out important dimensions of the self in the realization of the inadequateness of itself indirectly seems to be hinting at the need to be supplemented by other version of the self.

In the light of the above observations being made and in recalling J. N. Mohanty, we can, in conclusion, say that the question of identity in being equivocal is difficult to

[24] Zahavi, 2007: 179–201.

be captured in a single stroke. The reason is because a person in himself or herself is "a being with a very complex structure, consisting in what I have called layers of selfhood,"[25] The problem with all the popular theories, including narrative theory lies in the fact that in claiming to provide an exhaustive, all comprehensive theory of the self they fail to see the larger picture. All of them actually fail to see that their theories are in fact, shaped with respect to their preferred choice of interest, thus they cover just a particular segment of the whole. However, the task that lies before philosophy is thus to unravel this higher-order complex account of identity with its various layers of nested identities that is comparable to the layered skin of an onion.[26] Therefore, the challenge before us is to discover a multidimensional approach that would replace this unidimensional approaches. An approach which in unravelling these layered identities would do justice to the concept of self-identity without either belittling it or exalting it nor reducing it to a merely assimilated notion of identities with no real internal correlation between them but one that in its endeavour would reflect the true network of connections in which the true nature of self comes out clearly at the end.

[25] Mohanty, 2000: 72.
[26] Ibid., 85

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