

Ruminations on Ricoeur's Dealings with the Self

Nilo A. Lardizabal, Ph.D.
University of Santo Tomas

Abstract: *If there is one fact about the Self, it is multifarious and diverse. Paul Ricoeur has dab-bled with the notion almost all his entire academic life. And it seems the understanding of it increases. On one hand the self is fallible - it is limited, apparently singled out as a cause of demise for the person. And yet the Self is also the pinnacle of one's person-hood, almost a "savior-like" anthem within the person. Again, the notions seem much varied.*

And yet the Self is crucial to personhood. Ricoeur mentions that the "who" of the per-son is an aspect that the self can explain. And from this one can only imagine how the significant "other" can be just as important as the Self. The person does not move merely by instinct nor impulse; rationality stirs the Self towards liberation from bondage and ignorance. Yet it starts with the Self.

Now what does that Self do? To put it succinctly, it is a rather an active participant in a person's daily life. It is not entirely stagnant nor too active. It seeks docility in order to arrive at the question: Who am I? Indeed, who is the human person? Richer attempts to understand that each person has unity in heterogeneity. That is, within the individual are biological, social, physical, mental and we even daresay, spiritual aspects. The same person is not limited to one or the other, rather, s/he is all.

Finally, the person is enmeshed in ethics. He or she is an individual who aspires for something more for the Self. It is how the person interacts and lives with the other, in harmony and justice. And each story, each narrative is an awakening, or even an illu-mination which contributes to its perfection. Following Ricoeur's mind: How far has the Self gone? Indeed, almost limitless!

Keywords: *Self, Mineness, double allegiance, Selfhood, Narrative*

Introduction

I have always been curiously fascinated by the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Though this piece has been famous way before my time, it seemingly proved something worth thinking about. Bottom line is, any individual may be a Dr. Jekyll “and” Mr. Hyde. One becomes caught up in the interplay of subjective relations or even personal relations, of the sense of entrapment of some valid personality, or the sense of self altogether.

In one of my classes in Chinese Philosophy, we stumbled across two worthy Oriental philosophers of ancient China – Meng Zi and Xun Zi.¹ The former was a great follower of Kong Zi or Confucius, bordering on all the virtues and the improvement of human life and society. The latter was its opposite – rejecting the virtues and emphasizing the importance of law and legalist tendencies to make society a better place just the same. But these two clash at a certain point – the notion of the self. Meng Zi was a firm believer that the self is innately good or virtuous. Concern arises as how to enhance that goodness, and thus bring about change in society. The answer is precisely through education, beliefs and philosophy. Xun Zi, on the other hand, holds that the self is entirely evil, reasoning out that precisely education, beliefs and philosophy are existing institutions to make the evil self good, and thus bring about a change in society.

Now, these are two very important, as well as profound philosophical notions, brought to the reader in a most valid way that deals with self and selfhood. These Chinese sages, like us, have been fascinated just the same on the notion or notions that are extremely close to us, because it deals with none other than us - the human person - the self. From the far West then we have yet a hodge-podge of philosophies concerning the self, and Ricoeur will not be left out. Thus we have nice, lengthy discussions, and some ruminations brought about by a man fascinated by the self and the other. David Vessey, a commentator of Ricoeur, happily warns us though; breezing through these notions was far from simple:

it's as if one were accompanying an experienced botanist on a nature walk, some plants seen over and over are past by briefly, while others bring the tour to an abrupt halt, sometimes even

¹ Cf. Dr. Alfredo P. Co, *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers: Philosophy of Ancient China*. (Manila: UST Printing Office, 1992), pp. 303-380.

*leaving the path to explore something not seen before eventually returning to the main stream more enriched.*²

Paul Ricoeur's book *Oneself as Another*, which came out in 1992, begins by philosophizing the self and its implications. Is self the same as selfhood? And what is their relation to the notion of 'otherness'? This book of Ricoeur is based on the Gifford lectures which he was able to deliver at the University of Edinburgh, around 1986. The lectures were entitled: "**On Selfhood: The Question of Personal Identity**". Far from being a work on psychology, it peruses and examines the meanings of personal identity, and its further acquaintance with selfhood and intersubjectivity.

Civilization has asked many philosophical questions, and they have remained unanswered fully and unsatisfactorily it seems. I say not fully because at least thinkers throughout the centuries have responded to important queries about life, the human person, the self, morality, otherness, even death. One such perennial question deals with "who" the individual is; and the other desires to ask how one ought to live. Ricoeur expressed these questions in his book. Note that Ricoeur was born and lived at a time of very significant changes in all aspects of society, as well as, and especially academically; and he has seen the advent of both postmodernism and analytical philosophies. These two have apparently shattered any notion that borders on metaphysical thought, even inclinations toward it. It rejected ontological and teleological grounds for reasons which follow from such a trend. Yet one cannot remain idle at the enduring questions of the self and its aim. Thus, in almost a fit of fury, he begins to tackle and answer back, aware of course of the notion of 'otherness'. By asking the question of 'who am I', he shows indebtedness to Marcel, even Heidegger. Moral questions on 'How should I live' show him going back to Kant and Aristotle. Ricoeur has always been like this, that is, gathering strength from the others no matter how conflicting, and brandishing it with a new flavor. Vessey comments: "Ricoeur's strength has always been the recognition of the legitimacy of seemingly conflicting views and the elevation of that inconsistency as something which needs to be thought."³

² David Vessey, *The Polysemy of Otherness: On Ricoeur's Oneself as Another*. An article found in http://www.davevessey.com/Vessey_Ricoeur.html, accessed February 24, 2009. Page 1.

³ Vessey, p. 1.

We recall that the early Ricoeur dabbled on the notion of the fallible man. The human person, accordingly, is prone to evil, to injustice and vice. There is, in a sense, an inevitable encounter with dismay and despair. One could surmise then that the self is wounded and menaced by a constant 'pulling down' by human nature itself. But all is not lost because there will come the resurrection of the 'essential man', one encompassed by hope. This intermittent struggle moves the ideal Ricoeur to soothe all these tensions and ambiguities – giving justice to the human person. Almost “savior-like”, this man is pinnacle, the tenth of accomplishments. During the war years, of which he became involved, in fact as a prisoner, he highlighted on the one hand the involuntariness that ensues by the fact that we are mortal, at the same the voluntariness by which freedom moves one to choose for ourselves as agents of action. He would later call this one's “double allegiance”. Probably like body and soul, there is the inclination to the material world and to a phenomenal world bordering on freedom of the will. It is through these where Ricoeur, out of compassion for us, sheepishly puts in the notion of self and selfhood.

Watch your self

The idea of self by Ricoeur is not understood as something metaphysical. There is “selfhood”. It can be defined thus: “Selfhood is an intersubjectively constituted capacity for agency and self-ascription that can be had by individual human beings.”⁴ First of all, it is not to be understood as something abstract. Contrariwise, actions performed highlight or bring out its very notion. I think this is clear in concrete examples. Say, in a theological way, that one committed a sin, a grave one, and the penitent desired to confess it to the priest. The penitent, upon expression of sins, accuses the self, and not any other. The Confiteor prayer in the mass goes: “. . .that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words. . .” The Latin is even more dramatic: “*mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*”. It is an individual, personal accusation. At first glance it seems self defeating, but then again is it? Besides this, selfhood is also beyond mere animal awareness. Animals of

⁴ Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 319ff.

course move by instinct, driven by the need for hunger, copulation and community, to say the least. Movement by instinct in itself is improper to human nature, unaided as it were by rationality.

Quite surprisingly, Ricoeur purports that selfhood involves many other aspects. In the desire to respond to the “who”, it makes an active grasp of oneself. This same individual is subject to very concrete situations – characterized by both the material and the phenomenal. If so, then this individual who experiences and feels and is moved by these events ought to be a “named” person with a specific time and place of birth. And this named person is at the same time linked, is affected and moved just the same by others like him or her in a particular context and culture. All these due to one desire to satisfy the question of ‘who’. Ricoeur further highlights these concepts in the question of personal identity. He says:

What poses a problem to us is rather understanding how the self can be at one and the same time a person of whom we speak and a subject who designates herself in the first person, while addressing a second person. This will pose a problem, for we must not allow a theory of reflexivity to rob us of a definite advantage of being able to consider the person as a third person, and not only as an I and you.⁵

Now this seems to be more complicated than it seems. I think what Ricoeur says is the reality of not just a dualistic consideration of persons, say in a conversation, but the capacity even to see these as even a third, fourth or fifth person. There is a possibility of ranging from one “person” to the other depending on who looks, sees or listens. A healthy conversation for instance may enmesh us into a whole variety of speakers. The self speaks and listens, it quotes others, debunks some, remains silent, becomes aggressive – all these may be highlighted in a single individual, yet expressed in all these different moods, so to speak. Now this third person, and so on, seems to be a difficulty. And Ricoeur confesses to it: “The difficulty will instead be on the understanding how the third person is designated in discourse as someone who designates himself as a first person.”⁶ I just hope that no confusion arises out of this.

⁵ Ricoeur, pp. 34-35

⁶ Ibid., p. 35

To further explain this notion, Ricoeur goes on to say: “*To say self is not to say myself*. To be sure, mineness is implied in a certain manner in selfhood, but the passage from selfhood to mineness is marked by the clause “in each case”. . . The self is in each case mine.”⁷ I think this means that every human person ought to take selfhood as exclusively one’s own, or to see in oneself one who truly is. There is a form of “attestation” to that self. Ricoeur highlights that attestation does not mean something lower than knowledge. This means a kind of testimony, an assurance that the self believes in the truth or in the validity of something.⁸

Let me delve deeper into this. True, there may be openness to doubt and uncertainty in this most crucial notion, but there is also a sense of certainty in it. Vessey understands it thus: “Attestation reveals something – in that sense it belongs to truth as *aletheia* – but it doesn’t posit a foundation (or) a principle (or) a proposition which can be the basis for justifying other beliefs.”⁹ It is indeed belief but rather than “belief that” it is a “belief in”. Though not as rigid as a conviction, it is a sense of trust – “a trust in the power to say, in the power to do, in the power to recognize oneself as a character in the narrative, . . .”¹⁰

Having said that then, we may proceed further on to self. Now, as beings with a “double allegiance”, there is in us encounters with the dialectic of activity and passivity. This makes selfhood’s existence more real, adventurous if I may. Quite surely, one cannot remain active all the time, lest the mortal and frail entity that we have collapses. Neither is there possibility for total inertia or potentiality. An intermingling of both zeroes in the integral development of selfhood. This is significant because it speaks initially of a duality in a person, or rather duality of circumstances and contexts, proving, as Ricoeur would like to express it, that the human person is indeed a complex entity of nature.

Now, what if one harbors an anti-dualistic stance? History in theory as well as philosophical systems have one way or another entertained such notions. Maybe the “I” is distinct from the body. Or the body, in a sense, cannot be abstracted from being mine. Maybe the body is something that is truly mine, and at the same

⁷ Ricoeur quoting Heidegger, *Oneself as Another*, p. 180 (emphasis in original)

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹ Vessey, p. 5

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

time something that I have. Does this jeopardize the question of 'Who I am?' I think that the former queries are valid, and they do strike a familiar chord in history. But other than an 'adventure' towards discovery of something unique (which seems too ambitious anyway), Ricoeur seems to suggest that the notion of selfhood does not involve purely objective facts, as if looking for treasure. There is a need I think to be creatively led to it. Again, attestation comes to my mind. An individual has to achieve it not for the sake of achievement, but an endeavor containing the whole package or process. If there is a clear, delineated distinction between 'my body as mine' and 'the body that I have', then the confusing consequence follows suit. But if it is more than this, more than objectivity even, then there is still hope for understanding selfhood in a much broader sense. Ricoeur seems to say that the consequence of such adventure is a discovery of the individual as a temporal, material, linguistic, social, psychological, and even spiritual entity. Maybe, we now ask in return, there is really a synthesis amidst heterogeneity; or an integration amidst chaos(?); or a fusion in the midst of varieties - a veritable machine in the works! Perhaps that may be saying it too ideally.

Attestation of Self

Rene Descartes has come a long way from his *cogito*, and many philosophers hence have both lauded and criticized him. In his contention of the self, he speaks of the ego as entirely independent from the body and the setting therein. There seems to be then a distinction, a severe one, separating both entities. Ricoeur refuses to follow. The self is accordingly embodied. Yes, it is bound by material circumstances, even influenced by traditions and cultures, yet it is also capable of creating something new; its capability for initiative. Ricoeur calls the former an 'idem-identity', the latter, an 'ipse-identity'.¹¹ What are these? First of all, one has to convey the significance of both, without which there is no self. But it is through the ipse and idem identities where the self's physical and intentional orders are highlighted.¹²

¹¹ Cf. Ricoeur, p. 35

¹² Cf. Ibid.

Ricoeur seems to imply that the self is split. Vessey helps clarify this for us:

Idem-identity also includes the genetic identity which drives change over time and across development making it possible, for example, to identify an acorn at one time with an oak tree later.

It (Idem-identity) does not give us guidance for answering one crucial question of identity, "Who am I?" The answer to that question is Ipse-identity: selfhood. (It) is not dependent on something permanent for its existence.¹³

Now, how do we know if this is so? Unfortunately, one cannot grasp this by any tangible or corporeal manner. Empiricists have nothing to do with it. We thus go back to a dear term – attestation. We border on an assurance or confidence that there are such orders in the human person. More than a hunch, it flows from cogitation. This is the “belief”¹⁴ that the self has the ability to undergo changes and renewal, or even pain and suffering – and come to grips that the self imputes the very same things as its own doings, own sufferings and own renewals.¹⁵

Since the self, as ‘ipse-identity’, is capable of initiating some things new, it must have a genesis. This begins then with desire. Now this is not just an avid or eager aim to achieve, there is instead a conscious undertaking involved. More than just a feeling, it is also reason. It is a “reason that makes the initiative intelligible and meaningful.”¹⁶ In this desire then, it belongs to the order of nature of the human person.

Moving further, if we say that the self is capable of initiative, then it is geared toward change, even changing the world. Action becomes the name of the game. Initiatives and desire are meaningless without effort. Having this in mind, Ricoeur asks two crucial questions. One deals with the nature of the world – what is it, or in it, so that the human person can bring about a change in it? Secondly, what kind of action should be done if it is to change the world? Initially, these are rather heavy queries. We will try to shed light on this.

¹³ Vessey, p. 1

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Cf. Ricoeur, pp. 21-23

¹⁶ Cf. Ibid.

Concerning the first, I guess it would be appropriate to assume that the world has an established order of things. Being so, “intervening”, so to speak, disturbs (in a sane way) that world order. Also, initiative will be without merit if it is not genuine; so Ricoeur seems to call for a pre-arranged system making the intervention worth our while. Lastly, there must be a purpose to all of these. An aimless goal merits a floating accomplishment. Change is impossible without these characteristics or notions. Nonetheless, initiative comes to light by a careful application of such. This relatively satisfies the first query.

Dealing with initiative still brings us to the second query; that of the nature of action. Ricoeur shares this insight: Initiative is the “intervention of the agent of action into the course of the world, an intervention that causes changes in the world.”¹⁷ There are some presumptions, first, that there is a being (bodily agent) possessing certain capabilities to make a change in the world. What are these potentialities? We have the power of speech, action, narration, making promises etc. The second is that this bodily being is constantly enmeshed in worldly situations.

There are some implications to these exposures. Of course, true to the human person, he or she is capable of so many good and positive things, yet within them is also the vulnerability for error, probably mislead others, or even hurt others. We see here Ricoeur almost struggling to see the light. Yes, the human being is full of capabilities, yet not yet, not fully anyway – the person is still vulnerable. Further on, in the desire and movement toward change, there are a host of obstacles and hindrances that come along the way. This may come in the guise of certain uncalled for, and inevitable circumstances, or even because of other human beings. Note that these were presented not necessarily to give a bleak outcome; one has to face the music of life – changing the world is a monumental task, yet it has to begin from square one. The whole package cannot be accomplished without real, life-trying circumstances.

Ricoeur continues his traverse on initiative. It has

*a **disjunctive** stage, at the end of which we recognize the necessarily antagonistic character of original causality of the agent in relation to other modes of causality; and a **conjunctive***

¹⁷ Ricoeur, p. 109

*stage, at the end of which we recognize the necessity to coordinate in a synergistic way the original causality of the agent with other forms of causality.*¹⁸

So we can summarize from here that in a manner of attestation, agents (with self), in all their bodiliness are all capable of initiative, and to further sustain something new in the world, at the same time they are subject to causations binding them to the world. These powers to act can only be meaningful if it can be manifested as such in conjunction with the other causal processes.¹⁹

Narrative and Identity

Paul Ricoeur has a fairly comprehensive notion concerning narrative in itself, but can there be an intertwining, so to say, among the notions of narrative and identity? Recall personal identity, which previously was understood as having both ipse-identity and idem-identity. This is a narrative identity. There are four important points here. First, narratives bring together in a sort of unity many discordant and confusing elements – forming them into a kind of plot. Second, all elements therein, that which a narrative unites is contingencies. Third, like a story, narrative contains not only plot, actions, and events; it further needs characters and personages to make it more exciting. Imagine a story without any personages. This is probably possible but not that exciting. And last, the characters – whether fiction or real – can rise or sink in their status depending on how they have acted on certain situations both trying and joyful. One evaluates how the individual responds when faced with certain events, and in relation to other people.²⁰

Come to think of it, the necessity of considering other people seems not only necessary to “make one’s story whole” or complete, it further enhances an eventual unity in a person’s life as a whole. I think this is what Ricoeur highlights - that the narratives in the human person show the connections within multiple actions at a certain time these were performed. And, a multiplicity of persons and their viewpoints enriches those actions. “The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 102. (emphasis in the original)

¹⁹ Cf. Ibid., pp. 109-112

²⁰ Cf. Ibid., pp. 141 ff.

her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character. "²¹

Vessey shares to us his thoughts:

*We are subjects' in others' stories, others are subjects in our stories; others are authors of our stories, we are authors of others' stories. Our narratives are essentially interwoven with other narratives. We are characters in other narratives – we are our parents' child, our partner's partner, our friends' friend – and they are characters in our narratives.*²²

Isn't life like a story out of a book? Isn't there an interweaving of people and events, drawn together by goals and aims, moving about in the world with others? Yes, our personal identities are shown full blown in these events and circumstances. First, we come to understand our roles and the plot by which we act and move. Then, we intersect with other lives and other plots. We get to know their identities. Ricoeur seems to convey these as "second order stories", that is, those that are linked with families and friends, enemies and others. Now, because of this interaction, one arrives at a conclusion that these encounters, and these people are bodily beings - they are not aliens or fiction. They are determinate, corporeal and real in its true sense. My personal response therefore is respect because these individuals came from a background, culture, language and others which are entirely distinct from my own. With this I enter the ethical considerations of my selfhood. There seems a need to evaluate not only my own actions but also that of others, lest there be a hodge-podge of chaos and turmoil all around. There are things and actions to consider, and evaluation is the key to it. Ricoeur seems to convey this in his work because there is a clear indication of beings "other-than-self" over the self.

Now, how does this work? Quite close to Christian principles, but not in the effort to compare with it, I could say then that the narrative unity of my life is filled with moments that require decision-making and responses to situations. Ethically considered, how have I responded to others? Have I responded positively? Or have I failed to do so? That sense of responsiveness demands that

²¹ Ibid., pp. 147-148

²² Vessey, p. 2

I not only consider myself in the process as if exclusive. No, I must also respond faithfully and thoughtfully to others. Question is, why do I have to respond? And the answer is simple enough, yet not simplistic. I respond to others positively because I want them to live a better life. Moreover, I want them to realize with me that we all participate for and with each other.²³

Selfhood and Ethics

There is a fine distinction, according to Ricoeur, on the terms ethics and morality. The former term “deals with the domain of that which is taken to belong to a good human life.”²⁴ Thus we necessarily peruse here the overall goal or aim of one’s action. Then morality “refers to the expression of such aim in terms of norms regarded as somehow obligatory.”²⁵ This latter term is more universal in scope, and as such, requires that it be obeyed, grudgingly or not. There is a *telos* in ethics, and Ricoeur sees in both a complementarity.

To be more concrete, when one performs or executes an act, there are certain results. Though not limited to this, but usually good intentions result in good actions, and vice-versa. The same is true with inappropriate acts. Ricoeur shares that in actions, there are both ‘action’ and ‘imputation’. The explanation is similar as I have enunciated before. A person who acts does something, and that act is imputable to that same person, and no one else. Such a case opens then actions to moral and ethical implications.

In Ricoeur’s book, *Oneself as Another*, he highlights the Aristotelian view that actions aim for something that is good.²⁶ And, consequentially, a good life not only for oneself and one’s family, but for the good of other institutions. Let me depart for awhile at this point because I remember a Chinese sage who said just the same thing. I earlier pointed out Meng Zi’s philosophy – that human nature is good, and that the individual aims for the good. The concern now is how can one attain that good – in their sense, the virtues of *Re*, *Yi*, *Li* and *Xin*? Meng Zi declares, with Confucius, that it is through certain institutions could these virtues be brought out. Thus, we have the school to help in education, the church or religion dealing

²³ Cf. Ricoeur, pp. 165ff.

²⁴ Vessey, p. 3

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ricoeur, p. 262

with spiritual life, the family as the basic institution and others. The result is a sage, or a wise man (and woman) fit to benefit society as a whole.

Now, there seems to be a similarity, after millennia, in the works of our dear Ricoeur. He implies that in order to garner a good life, one has to maximize the institutions of state or government, family, school, and others. Again, through these, and through interaction with others, the human person can aim and achieve a good life, not only exclusively for oneself, but for others as well.²⁷

It must be understood that the ethical aim is sufficient to guide a human being towards proper conduct. However, Ricoeur adds that apparently alongside this is a certain kind of violence. By violence we do not mean to inflict harm on anyone. But by the fact that actions carry with it a certain consequence to another, then that is a form of violence. An action, because it is an act, impinges something to someone. In other words, it affects another's capacity to act. We see then that an implementation of any ethical aim can turn out to be violent. How can we deal with this then? Ricoeur responds: "By reason of the fact of violence, morality must not be ignored. One must pass on to the imperative, to duty, to interdiction. Every actual aim must be submitted to the 'sieve of the norm.'"²⁸ Thus from an aim that remains an aim, we move on to a sort of second level, the actual consideration of the aim no longer as such, but already as a rule or norm. For instance, the aim of justice or charity, becomes now the rule or norm of justice and charity. There is a more concrete consequence expected having this kind of notion. And I think it really points out the ethical uniqueness of acts.

Turning towards Others

We have seen so far not only the necessary existence of the self but also the inevitable existence of the other. A final thrust can be put forward here in order to maximize the whole being of a human person. Ethically, other persons can benefit the individual by presenting different perspectives in issues. This brings about in the human being what Ricoeur calls "practical wisdom". Now this can be had by engaging in a sort of dialogue or consultation with people

²⁷ Ibid., p. 180

²⁸ Ibid., p. 170.

who are qualified and may serve as competent “advisors”. This “solicitude” with others broaden the horizon of any listener and illumines the mind to see more than just what one thought the real issue is. This cuts straight to the notion of interpersonal. He says that “this critical solicitude is the form that practical wisdom takes in the region of interpersonal relations.”²⁹ Of course, no individual can claim to be knowledgeable of all things, one needs to heighten one’s knowledge through others and interacting with them. Great teachers became students first; experts started out as apprentices. I think it really has to begin from “the grassroots”. And to some extent, it has to begin with others.

It is from these insights where we can cull from Vessey the “polysemy of otherness”. In the heart of that selfhood, there lies also the notion of otherness. “The direction from self to other structures the epistemic awareness of the other as an embodied ego while the direction from other to self structures the call to moral responsibility.”³⁰ Either way, there ensues a cognizance of one or the other, and eventually one’s ability to relate with the other. Who is this other? Is it “another person whom I can look in the face or who can stare at me, or my ancestors for whom there is no representation, to so great an extent does my debt to them constitute my very self, or God – living God, absent God – or an empty place.”³¹ Maybe it can be all of these? But in the tradition of attestation, the individual continues to work for and be constantly conscious of the other. As aletheia, there is an “unfolding”, probably of truth before one’s eyes. What is that truth? That I am an acting and suffering being, and that I have a call, a vocation(?) to make the lives of others better.

Conclusion

It was highlighted by Ricoeur that he seems to shy away from considering himself a man of faith or much less a theologian. Paradoxically, I first encountered his name in theology. If so be the case, then we respect his status, but neither can I deny the wealth of contributions he has shared concerning one’s self and that of

²⁹ Ibid., p. 273.

³⁰ Vessey, pp. 3-4.

³¹ Ibid.

others. He borders into respect and “love” for beings disparate from my own, at least bodily, and calls us to relate with them as if another me; even better, another “self”. With this I applaud him. Maybe his desire to make a change in the world is a step closer than we think. Of course, this may be too idealistic, but it is up to us to make it real – we who have been touched by the life of this man – even unto death.

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