Exemplarity and the "Law of Superabundance"

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Abstract

Paul Ricoeur's critique of social emancipatory projects that claim to be absolutely radical sets the stage for my investigation into the exemplary value of esteemed moral and political acts. Like works of art, such acts reform or revolutionize praxis through refashioning the world from within. By placing textual hermeneutics under the theme of the increase in being evinced by the work of art, Ricoeur's analysis on the way that metaphor as a work in miniature iconically augments reality forges a link between the imagination's productive power and the "law of superabundance." This law inheres in the logic of hope. The hope of the "not yet" and the "much more" thus draws support from exemplary acts that bear the mark of the future through testifying to the reign of goodness, generosity, courage and love.

However, Ricoeur's claim that an eschatology of nonviolence constitutes the critique of ideology's ultimate philosophical horizon raises a question concerning this eschatology's theological equivalent. Ricoeur maintains that the projection of the task of actualizing freedom is the philosophical equivalent of a theology of hope. This theology draws

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its meaning from the "hope of things to come" based on the eschatological event. Correlatively, this task's ethico-political impulse takes root in hope's practical and existential necessity, which inheres in the structure of action. The hope of as yet unfulfilled expectations and demands ignites the passion for the possible and fuels the will and the desire to intervene in the world's course. In contrast to the contagion of violence and evil, moral and political acts' exemplary value stands as a demonstration and proof of hope. The theme of the increase in being that rules over textual hermeneutics consequently has a practical counterpart in the task that an eschatology of nonviolence adopts as its own, namely, the task of actualizing freedom within the historical reality of humankind.

Key terms *Ricoeur, eschatology, theology of hope, nonviolence, hermeneutics*

The question I propose to take up today is: Does Paul Ricoeur's eschatology of nonviolence rest on theological presuppositions regarding the "end times" and the promise of salvation?[1] Although Ricoeur refers to this eschatology in the context of a critique of emancipatory social projects that claim to be absolutely radical, the word "eschatology" itself has obvious theological resonances. The question then is whether the confrontation between the critique of ideology and the hermeneutics of tradition justifies Ricoeur's

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the international conference "Paul Ricoeur in Asia: Reflections on Society, Politics, and Religion," which was cohosted by the Ateneo de Manila University and the University of Santo Tomas, November 19–21, 2015. I would especially like to express my gratitude to Dr. Leovino Ma. Garcia, the conference convenor, for inviting me to participate.

recourse to an eschatology of nonviolence as the horizon of practical reason's ethical and political aims. We cannot discount the suspicion that this eschatology harbors some secret teleological presumption that goodness, justice, and righteousness will prevail. In this case, this teleological presumption would be nothing less than the principal guarantor of the promise of salvation. I am no theologian, so I will leave the question of the promise of salvation's eschatological significance to those more qualified to address it. Instead, I propose to adopt a more pragmatic approach. I will therefore take the idea that an eschatology of nonviolence constitutes the ultimate philosophical horizon of the critique of ideology as the critical touchstone concerning some secret teleological or onto-theological ambition.

An Eschatology of Nonviolence

The critique of ideology's ultimate philosophical horizon takes shape against the backdrop of ideology critique's confrontation with the priority that Hans Georg-Gadamer gives the experience of belonging to history and being affected by it. This confrontation between a hermeneutics of prior belonging and the critique of ideology's emancipatory ambitions highlights the wager Ricoeur makes when he set an eschatology of nonviolence against an ontology of lingual understanding.[2] Ricoeur's intervention in the debate between Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas is well known. Gadamer maintains that the hermeneutical phenomenon of being-

[2] Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*, trans. John B. Thompson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 87; see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989).

affected by history is the ground of all understanding. Conversely, Habermas insists that no dialogical effort to overcome misunderstanding can ferret out the systemic distortions of communicative relations that operate behind our backs. Ricoeur resolves the impasse that arises from setting the hermeneutics of tradition against the hermeneutics of suspicion by insisting on the necessity of a critical detour that exposes ideology's systemic distortions of communicative relations. This critical detour, however, fundamentally alters the terms of the dialectic in which Ricoeur locates the tension between the hermeneutics of tradition's conservative function and the critique of ideology's emancipatory one. As a result, an eschatology of freedom supplants the critique of ideology in the critique of ideology's antagonistic relation with the ontology of lingual understanding.

The stakes of the wager Ricoeur makes in construing this dialectic in this way are considerable. By tying the problem of freedom's actualization to the critique of ideology's emancipatory thrust, he in effect throws a bridge across the chasm separating the imagination's power of invention—which we typically identify with the realm of aesthetic judgment—from the regions in which practical reason operates. As we know, Ricoeur developed his theory of imagination in part in the context of his analysis of the semantic innovation that leads to the creation of meaning within the metaphorical process. For example, the semantic impertinence in the metaphorical statement "The peace process is on the ropes" puts into play predicative tensions between the subject "peace process" and modifying references to a boxing match. Placing terms belonging to different semantic fields in proximity in this way introduces a semantic clash at the literal level. The image of being pummeled by one's opponent and clinging to ropes for support in a last desperate attempt to stay on one's feet is a vivid one. Tying this

image to diplomatic negotiations, where courtesy and civility are the rule, is incongruous at best. The metaphorical attribution of this image of brute violence to the process of negotiating a peace settlement resolves the initial semantic impertinence through mutually enlarging the respective semantic fields of each term. The metaphorical operation, we could say, schematizes this predicative assimilation of nonliteral attributes in the emergence of a new meaning. Or as Ricoeur summarizes: "Imagination is the apperception, the sudden insight of a new predicative pertinence, specifically a pertinence within impertinence"[3] in the thickness of the metaphoric scene.

Ricoeur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, however, also has a place in his explorations of the imagination's productive as well as its beguiling power. In his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia,* Ricoeur is specifically concerned with the cultural and social imagination. Ricoeur's investigations are motivated in part by the fact that sociological diagnoses of social ills do not in themselves explain how the illness works. How, Ricoeur therefore asks, can a social interest be "expressed" in "a thought, an image, or a concept of life"?[4] The regressive analysis he undertakes reaches a limit with the constitution of the social bond. Ricoeur's genetic phenomenology points up the fact that there is no non-symbolic mode of existence where human beings are concerned. It is only by reason of the symbolic structure of social life that practical activities can be

[3] Paul Ricoeur, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdés (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 125.

[4] Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, ed. George H. Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 10. Ricoeur argues that despite the value that diagnostic critiques of these ills have, such critiques leave open the question as to how ideas arise from praxis by overlooking the immediately symbolic dimension of the practical field of experiences.

interpreted through images and ideas that mask real interests and power relations. Accordingly, Ricoeur shows how the concept of ideology inherited from Marx is necessarily grafted onto the ideological phenomenon's integrative function, which in turn accounts for the fundamentally symbolic structure of all social life.[5]

Placing ideology and utopia within the same framework highlights the social and cultural imagination's double-edged power. On the one hand, the imagination plays a formative role in constituting the system of symbolic mediations that give a figure and a body to a cultural way of life. At the same time, the imagination's eccentric function is manifest in the way that possible alternatives rework the real from within. (Ricoeur's theory of *mimesis* similarly underscores the power that works of art have to refashion the real in accordance with the worlds that they project, a theory to which I will return shortly.[6]) On the other hand, the imagination can also bewitch us, as when dissimulating images mask systemic abuses of power or when dreams of unfulfilled pleasures and desires, or the fascination with dystopic variations become a means of pathological escape.

The power that the imagination has when it comes to revitalizing the practical order of everyday life indicates the critical point of contact between a theory developed in the context of language's

[5] Ibid., 260 ff. Ricoeur explains that "[i]t may be that our regressive analysis can go no further, because no group and no individual are possible without this integrative function" (ibid., 258). Hence "[w]e must integrate the concept of ideology as distortion into a framework that recognizes the symbolic structure of social life. Unless social life has a symbolic structure, there is no way to understand how we live, do things and project these activities in ideas, no way to understand how reality can become an idea or how real life can produce illusions" (ibid., 8). This symbolic structure is therefore always already at work in the "most primitive kind of action" (ibid., 8; see ibid., 311).

[6] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); see Ricoeur, *A Ricoeur Reader. Mimesis*, Ricoeur explains, "does not equate itself with something already given. Rather it produces what it imitates, if we continue to translate *mimesis* by 'imitation'" (ibid., 138). *Mimesis* is accordingly "no longer a reduplication of reality but a creative rendering of it" (ibid., 133).

productive potential (i.e., a tensive theory of metaphor) and one that sets ideology and utopia within the same conceptual framework. In a way, this point of contact rests on the strength of a philosophical insight that accounts for our capacity to break with accepted practices and habits of thought in order to pursue different courses of action. As such, the power of invention that we recognize is at work in literary fictions, creative works of art and musical compositions is also the condition for reforming or revolutionizing praxis.[7] Ricoeur's critique of emancipatory social projects that claim to be absolutely radical reserves a place for this power of invention. The idea that such an emancipatory social project rids itself of prejudices, contingencies, and historical constraints ostensibly exempts the social theorist from being affected by the conditions and exigencies that she denounces. However, the kind of totalizing reflection that such a critique entails is a theoretical as well as a practical impossibility. Our capacity to intervene in the world's affairs and to alter its course depends in part on our situation as well as on our powers of invention. In turn, the power of invention—which I will relate to the exercise of good judgment in situation—rescues emancipatory social projects from this theoretical and practical impossibility. Hence the wager, namely, that setting an eschatology of nonviolence in place of the critique of ideology as the latter's ultimate philosophical horizon creates a bridge between the imagination's operative force and the task with which Ricoeur charges practical reason.

[7] Different attempts to rehabilitate the aesthetic attest to the fact that this power is the condition for reforming praxis. At the same time, we need to account for aesthetic experience's transposition onto the plane of ethics and politics in order to give a full account of the imagination's productive role in social and political life. See for example George Levine, ed., *Aesthetics and Ideology* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1990).

Consequently, the idea that an eschatology of nonviolence constitutes the critique of ideology's proper philosophical horizon does not harbor any de facto theological assumptions. We are all aware that the term "eschatology" is itself replete with religious and theological overtones. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines eschatology as: "[t]he branch of theology that deals with the four last things (death, judgement, heaven, and hell) and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind; [or as] a doctrine or belief about the Second Coming or the kingdom of God." To be sure, millennialist doctrines can take a decidedly secular turn. Ernst Bloch's principle of hope is a case in point. Bloch clearly ties this principle to the driving spirit of utopian ventures. For him, this spirit feeds on "not yet" realized potentialities and possibilities fomenting in the hollow space of the present. Bloch recognizes the risk that humanity's historical odyssey toward a utopian homeland might end in disaster.[8] And yet, his confidence that Marxism is the true "quartermaster of the future"[9] strips this chiliastic principle of hope of its practical anchorages. Ricoeur reminds us that Adorno's philosophical stance, "which [although it] knows perfectly well how to recognize evil"[10] loses itself in its relentlessly negative dialectical attack. In Bloch's case in contrast, "the critique of critiques projects the 'principle of hope' into a utopia with no historical handholds."[11] Both Adorno's

[8] See Theodor W. Adorno and Ernst Bloch, "Something's Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing," in Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 3.

[9] Ernst Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, vol. 3, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 1368. "[O]nly Marxism has given rise to the theory-practice of a better world" (ibid., 1370).

[10] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 226.

[11] Ibid.

negative dialectic and Bloch's principle of hope fail to preserve the tension between the space of our experience and the horizon of our expectations from rupturing schismatically. From this vantage point, Ricoeur's critique of the failure of social emancipatory projects that purport to be absolutely radical drives home the challenge of conceiving how an eschatology of nonviolence responds to this failure without itself falling prey to teleological or theological presuppositions.[12]

Before I go on to explain why I think that the wager Ricoeur makes regarding the imagination's power is indicative of the stakes in this critique of emancipatory social projects that purport to be absolutely radical, I would like to offer a few comments as to why Ricoeur distances himself from the kind of totalizing reflection to which the claim to be absolutely radical succumbs. The temptation of thought to elevate itself to the level of the absolute through "grasping history as the totalization of time in the eternal present"[13] is reason enough to guard against the allure of this kind of totalizing reflection. Conversely, the fascination with deconstructing every claim to truth effectively abandons the hopes of emancipatory social projects to the sempiternal dissolution of their intentions and aims. Ricoeur cautions us about the necessity of avoiding this Hegelian temptation while renouncing the Nietzschean love of destiny and the *amor fati*.[14] Instead, he maintains that we have to preserve the tension between the space of our experiences and the horizon of our expectations if there is to be any history at all. On the one hand,

[12] For a related critique of philosophies of history's teleological ambitions, see Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005).

[13] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 3, 193.

[14] Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 206.

the space of experience—a meta-category of historical thought that Ricoeur borrows from Reinhardt Koselleck's semantic analysis—refers to the stratified structure of a *habitus*, the space of which can be traversed in different ways following a multitude of itineraries.[15] On the other hand, the horizon of expectation forms the contours of unfulfilled aspirations, claims, and demands. Expectations are thus inscribed in the present. Hence expectation is the "future-become-present (*vergegenwärtige Zukunft*), turned toward the not-yet."[16]

In view of our own historical situation and the political, social, and humanitarian crises that abound, we may believe we have every reason to think that the distance separating us from better times is virtually insurmountable. We may even believe it is already too late to prevent the tension between the space of our experiences and the horizon of our expectations from rupturing completely. However, holding to such a belief means renouncing the practical task that lies at the heart of any emancipatory project along with this task's permanent ethical and political implications. Ultimately, this task is inseparable from the challenge of actualizing freedom within humanity's historical reality.[17] This task and this challenge set the aim of an eschatology of nonviolence in relief. Can we then renounce this eschatology without abandoning all hope of overcoming the social, cultural, and geopolitical ills that cast the possibility of a better future into doubt?

[15] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, 208.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 210.

Exemplarity and Iconic Augmentation

The question concerning the hope of a better and more just future is critically decisive. For it marks a watershed that separates the critique of ideology's philosophical horizon from the claims of emancipatory social projects to extricate themselves from the circumstances and conditions in which the social theorist invariably is caught up. The wager that inheres in setting an eschatology of nonviolence in place of the critique of ideology underscores the force of the convictions that inform the initiatives that we take in response to the doubts and uncertainties that beset us. Conversely, the institution of normative ideals that would govern a prescribed course of action in advance raises the question concerning the source, origin, or ground of normative precepts. I by no means want to suggest that we should jettison the normative value of the claims different individuals, groups, communities, and nations make. However, we need to recognize that in ultrapluralistic societies as in our current global geopolitical environment, these claims' foundational values are multiple and conflicted. I will set aside for the moment the question concerning the kind of universality we might assign to claims springing from the soil of different cultural systems, convictions, and beliefs. Instead, I will focus on the wager that I think distinguishes an eschatology of freedom from projects that succumb to the temptation of a totalizing reflection.

The question that immediately comes to the fore is whether the eschatological standpoint that rests on the wager I have suggested inheres in this standpoint can be justified or at least accounted for independently of some secret onto-theological foundation. As I said earlier, the stakes are high. Replacing the claim of an emancipatory social project to be absolutely radical with its theological equivalent merely covers over the practical challenge that I am trying to uncover. This challenge is indeed an eminently practical one, since it

concerns how we are able to respond to the demands of difficult situations in cases where there are no prescriptive guidelines or rules that are adequate. We all recognize that the capacity to exercise good judgment in these difficult situations is related to the virtue that Aristotle called *phronesis*.[18] In this respect, we could say that *phronesis* is akin to an act of genius, in that in responding to the demands of the situation we have to invent as much as discover the appropriate solution. The fittingness of the action we take is the demonstration and proof of the act's judicious character. The act's fittingness vis-à-vis what the situation requires thus stands as a testament to this singular act's exemplary value.

The kinship between an exemplary moral or political act and the work of art's power to refashion the real from within authorizes us to pursue the idea that our capacity to respond to the demands of a situation is the ground and support of the wager that Ricoeur makes. Aesthetic experience's lateral transposition onto the planes of ethics and politics underscores the affinity between this capacity for discovering the best or sometimes the least objectionable solution and the artist's creative power. This extraordinary power of invention also resides in the artist's "capacity to respond in a singular manner to the singular nature of the question."[19] The enigma of artistic creation consists in the fact that the artist's experience, which provokes or ignites this response, is itself incommunicable. Only when this experience takes the form of a problem to be resolved is the artist's power of imagination set to work. Ricoeur accordingly emphasizes that:

[18] See Paul Ricoeur, *The Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 154.

[19] Paul Ricoeur, François Azouvi and Marc de Launay, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 178.

> Something of… [the artist's] experience, precisely because it has been carried by a work, is going to be able to be communicated. Her naked experience as such was incommunicable; but, as soon as it can be problematized in the form of a singular question which is adequately answered in the form of a response that is singular as well, then it acquires communicability. The work iconically augments the lived experience, inexpressible, incommunicable, closed upon itself. It is this iconic augmentation, as augmentation, that is communicable.[20]

What, then, does Ricoeur mean when he says that the work iconically augments the artist's lived experience? We might be tempted to think that he is suggesting that the work is a conduit for expressing the artist's thoughts, ideas, feelings, and intentions. Nothing, I think, could be further from the truth. We only need recall that within the context of Ricoeur's textual hermeneutics, the only privilege the author enjoys when it comes to interpreting her text is that she is in the position of being its first reader. How then should we understand Ricoeur's claim that the work iconically augments the lived experience in the aftermath of the destruction of the intentionalist fallacy along with psychologizing and Romantic conceits? Only one avenue seems open to us: to recognize that only the experience occasioned by the work in response to the question, problem or crisis as the artist apprehends it is communicable.

The idea that a work iconically augments our, or the artist's, experience is itself initially puzzling. Fortunately, we can take

[20] Ibid., 179.

Ricoeur's account of the metaphorical process as a guide. As we know, Ricoeur critiques theories that regard metaphor as a simply decorative substitution for a less poetic term or word. His tensive theory emphasizes the emergence in language of a new meaning, as I explained earlier in relation to the example I gave: "The peace process is on the ropes." In this example, likening the peace process to a fighter who is all but defeated enables us to see the peace process as being "on the ropes" despite the distance and the difference between the respective semantic fields of these two terms. Accordingly, the icon is the matrix of the new predicative pertinence that resolves the initial semantic clash. The predicative assimilation of nonliteral attributes produces the image that arises from the metaphorical statement's literal ruins. This image is the concrete milieu in which the meaning schematized by the predicative assimilation can be heard, felt, and read. The matrix of metaphorical attribution thus displays the intended image in the thickness of the imagining scene. The enigma of iconic presentation springs from the way that an emergent meaning arises from the predicative impertinence that sets the imagination to work. Consequently, we resolve this enigma by grasping the intended meaning depicted by the icon.[21] Just as a plot "functions as the narrative *matrix*"[22] of the stories that we tell, the icon is the "schematization of metaphorical attribution."[23] In the case of metaphor, the schematization of the new predicative pertinence is

[21] Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination and Feeling," in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), 148.

[22] Ricoeur, *A Ricoeur Reader*, 105.

[23] Ibid., 126: "Metaphor is the figure of style which enables the preparatory stage to interrupt the conceptual formation because, in the metaphorical process, the movement towards the genre is arrested by the resistance of the difference and, in some way, intercepted by the figure of rhetoric. Imagination thus identified is undoubtedly the productive, schematizing imagination."

the engine of the metaphor's redescription of the real in the light of its heuristic fiction.[24]

The metaphor's emergent meaning clearly depends upon the imagination's operative role. The image of a peace process that has taken a brutal pummeling and is on the verge of collapse is one that is figured in language. Here imagination is at work in drawing out the resemblance between two dissimilar terms. Imagination, Ricoeur therefore tells us, is at work in the process through which a new metaphorical meaning emerges from the ruins of a literal one, as I just indicated. The imagination's productive force is manifest in the metaphorical statement's schematization of the new predicative pertinence. Hence Ricoeur identifies imagination with its productive, schematizing power.

I think that Ricoeur's remarks on the productive imagination and metaphor's schematization of an emergent meaning help clarify why he says that the artist's experience is communicable only in terms of its iconic augmentation. To the degree that this experience is necessarily mediated by the way it takes shape in a work, it only acquires a form of expression in answer to a question, problem or crisis as the artist understands it.[25] The work, however, stands by itself in terms of its power to project a world that each of us could make our own.[26] Like the icon that schematizes an emergent

[24] The icon thus constitutes the matrix that sustains the dynamic tension between a figurative meaning that resolves the predicative impertinence (the metaphorical *is*) and the metaphor's literally nonsensical meaning (the literal *is not*). This tension is the spring of metaphor's power of redescription.

[25] See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 162: "If a work is considered as the resolution of a problem, itself arising out of prior successes in the field of science as well as in the field of art, then style may be termed the adequation between the singularity of the solution, which the work constitutes by itself, and the singularity of the crisis situation as this was apprehended by the thinker or artist."

[26] This power is the condition of the work's hermeneutical autonomy.

meaning, the experience occasioned by a work is one that each spectator, reader, or listener apprehends herself. The work confronts each spectator, reader or listener with the task and the challenge of grasping the "thought" or the "idea" expressed by the work. Similar to metaphor's redescription of the real, the work's mimetic refiguration of our ways of thinking and feeling iconically augments the practical field of our everyday experiences. It is only through augmenting our ways of inhering in the world that the force of the work makes itself felt. We cannot therefore separate the work's ontological vehemence—by which I mean the increase in being effected by a work's renewal of the real in accordance with the world that it projects—from the communicability of the experience occasioned by the work.

Ricoeur's insight that the work's iconic augmentation of the artist's experience is communicable only as augmentation provides a crucial key to understanding how the work's exemplarity figures in the claim it makes. In light of the way that the experience occasioned by a work iconically augments the real, the claim made by a work through projecting an imaginary world that holds out other possibilities with regard to the ways we conduct ourselves and inscribe our lives in the web of living together is the emblem of the work's exemplary value. Ricoeur reminds us that every proposal of meaning is at the same time a claim to truth. The clash between a work's fictive world and systemically frozen outlooks and habits of thought bears out the work's ontological weight in giving a figure and a body to different sensibilities, aspirations, and outlooks. We might be tempted to think that the work is exemplary only if we are convinced that the alternative aesthetically prefigured by the work represents a better or more just way of living. However, tragedy can also be exemplary, as when it instructs us in the fragility of a wisdom forced to decide between irreconcilably conflicting demands. We

could therefore say more generally that the work's response to a crisis, question or conundrum carries the force of a conviction that takes shape in the claim emanating from a work. This conviction can no more be credited to the artist's intentions than can the meaning that the work holds for us, as Adorno made clear in his accusation against art's tendentious politicization.[27] Rather, the force of this conviction belongs to the work's power to break open congealed habits and practices by refashioning the world from within. The work's exemplarity bears the mark of this power. Through setting out alternatives that we could follow by making them our own, the work opens a path into the heart of the real through transfiguring our ways of inhering in the world from within.

I would like to offer one more comment that anticipates the final part of my presentation, in which I will explore whether there is a place for a law of superabundance in an eschatology that ostensibly eschews any theological foundation. The work's exemplarity provides an initial indication as to whether such a law might figure in a philosophical understanding of the logic of hope. Transposing aesthetic experience onto the ethical and political planes highlights the affinity between exemplary works and moral and political acts that we admire. Like works that reply to a question, aporia, or problem in a poetic mode, exemplary moral and political acts answer the demands of different situation in ways that we deem to be appropriate or fitting. The fittingness of the act, I said before, is the demonstration and proof of that act's reasonable—that is, its judicious or prudential—character. The adequacy of the act with respect to what the situation requires, and what circumstances and

[27] Theodor Adorno, "Commitment" in Theodor Adorno et. al., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977).

exigencies allow, is thus the emblem of the act's exemplary value and power. Furthermore, in "apprehending this relation of agreement between the moral act and the situation, there is an effect of being drawn to follow"[28] the example set by the act, so that we seek to imitate or emulate it. This effect, which Ricoeur points out is comparable to, or the analogical equivalent of, the work of art's communicability, rests on our capacity to grasp the "rule" summoned by the act. Like the "idea" or "thought" that a work expresses, the act exemplifies this "rule" by virtue of the answer it provides to a problem or crisis. Here the force of the conviction that I attributed to the work's power to come bursting into the midst of the real becomes the test of the convictions that we hold in light of the act's exemplary value. Here, the increase in being under which Ricoeur places textual hermeneutics following the model of the work of art's capacity to remake reality stands as the test of a deeper conviction that refuses to grant evil an ontological status.[29]

The Law of Superabundance and the Logic of Hope

The conviction that life's abundance of meaning is more fundamental than the destructive forces that assail it sets the increase in being that Ricoeur identifies with the work's mimetic refiguration of the real against the contagion of evil. Within the context of an aesthetic experience, this increase in being clearly depends on the reader, spectator or listener's capacity to grasp the fit of the work. This capacity is inseparable from the operation through which the listener, for example, draws together the

[28] Ricoeur, Azouvi, and Launay, *Critique and Conviction*, 182.

[29] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004). Ricoeur places the "whole of textual hermeneutics…under the theme of the increase in being applied to the work of art" (ibid., 566).

succession of tones that shapes the contours of the melody she hears. The listener's apprehension of a tune or an air's artful inflection is indicative of the kind of judgment on which the listener's grasp of the melody's meaningfulness depends. Following our earlier discussion of the metaphorical process's iconic augmentation of the real, the listener, we could say, grasps the sense and meaning of the melody by schematizing it. In like fashion, a work's mimetic redescription of affective dimensions of the listener's affinity with the world turns on the communicability of the experience occasioned by the work. In the absence of the objective universality of determinant judgments, the communicability of this experience evinces a mode of judging in which the individual work exemplifies the "rule" to which it alone gives voice.

By foregrounding the work's exemplarity in this way, I especially want to highlight how the work brings about an increase in being through summoning the "rule" that I just identified with the listener's apprehension of the fit of the work. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), one of the archaic definitions of the word "fit" is a "piece of music; [or] a strain." Moreover, the OED defines a strain as a "musical sequence of sounds; a melody, a tune." This definition not only provides etymological support for identifying the feelings or moods evoked by a tune with the unique arrangement of its constituent elements but it also points to the fact that the communicability of these feelings and moods rests in part on the listener's ability to hear a succession of individual tones as comprising a tune or an air.[30] There is no increase in being apart from the grasp of the fit of these tones through drawing a melodic

[30] Etymologically speaking, we could say that the listener apprehends a tune through grasping the fit of its constitutive elements.

figure from their succession. In view of my previous remarks, we could conclude that the melody's—or by extension a work's—iconic augmentation of the real is the mark of this increase in being. Consequently, we could say that the conjunction of the work's singularity and exemplarity is both a model of, and a testament to, the way that individual works—and by analogy, moral and political acts—provide handholds for hope through responding to problems, dilemmas, and crises in creative and imaginative ways.

Tying hope to the responses that individual works, acts, and lives provide in answer to the difficulties and challenges that beset us undoubtedly has its risks. Individual responses to problems and crises clearly have the power to refashion the real in accordance with the alternatives they proffer. However, when it comes to the initiatives that we take, there are no guarantees that the courses of action that we pursue are in fact the right alternatives to, or remedies for, our social, moral, and political ills. Every solution to a problem or crisis in which good judgment prevails thus constitutes a kind of a wager. Ricoeur reminds us that the authors of the claim that we make history in circumstances that are not of our own choosing forget that we cannot anticipate all the consequences of our actions.[31] Every initiative that we take runs the risk that the course of action we set in motion will come to nothing, that the ends we pursue will prove not to be the right ones, or that the unintended consequences of our actions will win out over our best intentions. We cannot allow ourselves to become paralyzed for fear of these risks and dangers if there is to be any hope of altering the world's course, and of preventing the tension between the space of our experiences and the horizon of our expectation from rupturing

[31] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 3, 216.

schismatically. Such a hope takes courage in exemplary works and acts. To be sure, this hope is one that is not only accompanied by risks and danger but also carries the force of our convictions as well as our aspirations. Hence like an eschatology of nonviolence, this hope takes root in exemplary works, acts, and lives that are promissory signs of the grace, goodness, generosity, and justice to which we aspire as "expressions of the freedom that we desire to be."[32]

The exemplary value of works and acts thus offers us an important clue as to why Ricoeur refuses to give evil an ontological status. Ricoeur's remarks concerning the difference between good and evil merit citing at length:

> I have always resisted the idea that one could make a system of evil, that its manifestation could give rise to a summons. I am always struck, on the contrary, by its character of irruption and by the impossibility of comparing forms or magnitudes. Is it a prejudice to think that good gathers together, that expressions of the good gather *themselves* together, while those of evil scatter *themselves*? I do not believe that, even in its own manner, evil is cumulative and that there is in this order an equivalent of what I called, in connection with the good and the beautiful, a *Nachfolge*. For the transmission of evil, the only model we have is borrowed from biology; we think in terms of *contamination*, *infection*, *epidemic*. None of that is of the order of *Nachfolge*, of the communicability by means of

[32] Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 151.

> extreme singularity; in evil, there is no equivalence to the iconic augmentation performed by the beautiful.[33]

The emphasis that Ricoeur places on the difference between the increase in being that results from exemplary works and acts and the contagion of evil is telling. Exemplary works and acts bring about an increase in being through iconically augmenting our ways of inhering in the world. In contrast, the spread of evil contaminates and defiles our relation with ourselves, with others, and with the world. The evil that comes into the world through the violence that one individual or group exercises over another here extends so far as to pollute our capacity to think for ourselves (about which Hannah Arendt had much to say), to contaminate our abilities to judge the adequacy of the examples that we elect to follow, and to corrupt our power to act in accordance with our considered convictions.[34] Contrariwise, the summons that Ricoeur identifies with acts that we admire—acts of generosity, courage, and sacrifice in devotion to others—augments our being through gathering good together in testament to the absolute.[35] This summons is inseparable from the

[33] Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction*, 184 (original emphases).

[34] Exercising these capacities to think for ourselves and to judge accordingly presupposes the individual's autonomy and its corollary, *Bildung*. Accordingly, the problem of evil, violence and domination raises the question of justice.

[35] See Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. Ricoeur explains that the term testimony "should be applied to words, works, actions, and to lives which attest to an intention, an inspiration, an idea at the heart of experience and history which nonetheless transcend experience and history" (ibid., 119-120). For him, the irruption of the term's religious meaning opens up an absolutely new dimension within the semantic complex of testimony's profane senses. The originary affirmation that he opposes to the claim to absolute knowledge opens the way to the reciprocal relation between the "promotion of consciousness and the recognition of the absolute in its signs" (ibid., 151). Accordingly, a hermeneutics of testimony and a criteriology of the divine, following Jean Nabert, are therefore as inseparable as are exteriority and height. Exteriority and height are also inseparable to the extent that one's conscience cannot bring about the divestment of one's ego "without the testimony of certain acts, certain lives, that, despite their radical contingency, their plain historicity, speak in the name of the absolute" (ibid., 116). See also my "Aesthetic Experience, *Mimesis* and Testimony," *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies* 3, no. 1 (2012).

act's communicability. As handholds for hope acts, like works, thus distinguish themselves from the irruption of evil through holding out the possibility of a different, more just and even more peaceable future.

Is it a prejudice to set the ontological vehemence of works and acts that augment our inherence in the world against the scourge of forces and powers that corrupt and destroy relations among human beings? In view of the foregoing discussion, the question does not necessarily demand a theological response. Rather, this prejudice—if we can even call it that—draws support from the way that singular acts and works turn our regard for the examples that they set toward our future expectations. As signs of as yet unrealized possibilities and potentialities, works and acts that provide models we can follow ignite the passion for the possible and fuel different social, political, and religious movements' drive for change.[36] Consequently, this passion and this drive animate the logic that bridges between the condition of the possibility of possibilities (that is, the future) and the capacity that we have to break with congealed habits, practices, and systems of thought through responding to problems and crises in novel ways.

The claim that, as the condition of the possibility of possibilities, the future is in some way dependent upon our powers of judgment and invention seems to be a large one. And yet, how can we preserve the tension between a past that has already been surpassed and a horizon of dawning possibilities that breaks open the space of our experiences with the promise of a brighter future apart from the ways that we exercise these powers? Our belief in our ability to

[36] See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995).

exercise these powers is critically decisive. For, as Ricoeur points out, to believe that we are able is already to be able to act, to speak, to tell one's own story, and to hold ourselves accountable for the things that we do.[37] Power, he therefore tells us, affirms and declares itself. The "affirmation of a power to act…presents a noteworthy feature that cannot be proven, [or] demonstrated, but can only be attested."[38] Hence the belief in our own abilities rests on a practical conviction concerning, and a confidence in, our capacities. We attest that we have these capacities through exercising them in conjunction with the approbation that we receive from others. Hence we only overcome the doubts or suspicions that we have regarding our abilities to think and judge for ourselves, and to affect the course of the events in which we are caught up through a leap—a *sursum*—aided by an appeal to the responsibility that we have as historical actors and agents.[39]

The practical conviction that we are capable of intervening in the world's course brings us to the question I posed at the outset: Does Ricoeur's eschatology of nonviolence rest on theological presuppositions regarding the "end times" and the promise of salvation? This conviction, it seems to me now, rests squarely on the belief—or better, the hope—that the future and the possibilities it still holds are not yet closed to us. Exemplary acts and works are springs of this hope. Consequently, the excess of meaning unleashed by these works and acts is the sign of their superabundance in the face of debilitating fears, forces and powers. It may be that hope seems at first to be irrational when applied to the field of human

[37] Paul Ricoeur, *Reflections on the Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 76.

[38] Ibid., 75.

[39] Ibid. See especially Ricoeur's remarks on the place of moral, juridical, or political pedagogy and education.

existence.[40] At the same time, hope's practical and existential necessity inheres in the structure of action insofar as the possibility of intervening in the world's course is still a real one.[41] The structure of action joins our experiences of expectations that have already been met to as yet unrealized expectations, aspirations, and demands. Consequently, this structure constitutes the conceptual framework of freedom's actualization. For Ricoeur, the concept of freedom's actualization links the dimension of realized accomplishments with that of unfulfilled demands. Hence for him, the "kind of dialectic that rules the relation between freedom and its full actualization"[42] is the philosophical equivalent of hope's law of superabundance.

This equivalence between the kind of dialectic ruling over the relation between freedom and its actualization and the law of superabundance might seem to call into question my entire undertaking. And yet, the idea of freedom that animates this dialectic charges practical reason with the task of freedom's actualization within the context of our historical condition. Freedom, Ricoeur tells us, "is the capacity to live according to the paradoxical law of superabundance, of denying death and asserting the excess of sense over non-sense in all desperate situations."[43] It

[40] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 205. For Ricoeur, "the authentic rationality of hope can be grasped nowhere else than at the end of this 'absurd logic'" (ibid.) named by Kierkegaard.

[41] This possibility is the condition of the power we exercise when we take the initiative to act in ways that we anticipate will lead to a better or at least less unjust future.

[42] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 216. Hegel's system is "one that is written from the end toward the beginning" (ibid., 208), such that its rationality coincides with the system's recapitulation of the whole in an eternal present. Ricoeur explains that "there is nothing new in absolute knowledge; it merely concludes the reconciliation already at work in the successive phases of the philosophical process between certitude and truth" (ibid.) Hence the "end is not something that could be awaited or expected—it is the eternal present of thought that sustains the history of thought…. Absolute knowledge is this divine thought that Aristotle called *noēsis noēseths*, the thought of thought" (ibid.).

[43] Ibid., 207.

may well be that hope's authentic rationality can only be grasped at the end of an "absurd logic,"[44] when the reason for hope reveals itself in the excess of meaning that overflows an event, act or work. Ricoeur comments that St. Paul "is the first thinker who tried to elaborate an existential interpretation of the two central Christological events: the cross and the resurrection."[45] Paul's interpretation is at root antinomic, for it sets the "death of the old human being…[against the] rebirth of the new one."[46] That this "second birth is the eschatological event in existential terms,"[47] however, reserves a place for this event's practical dimension at the heart of an eschatology of nonviolence aimed at the actualization of freedom within the historical reality of humankind.

Since it cannot be subsumed under a logic of identity, this eschatological event thus opens the door to hope's philosophical meaning. To be sure, a theology of hope is centered on this event. For such a theology, the "hope of things to come"[48] takes precedence and rules over exegetical concepts of *logos* or manifestation. The eschatological event therefore can only be expressed "as a break, as a leap, as a new creation, as a wholly other."[49] The advent of the new clearly belongs to the logic of hope. According to this logic, the rule of sense over non-sense prevails. The conviction that good gathers together holds to this rule. The "excess of sense over non-sense"[50] is therefore the key to a logic of

[44] Ibid., 205.
[45] Ibid., 206.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.: "[T]his eschatological event cannot be expressed by the means of a logic of identity. We must express it as a break, as a leap, as a new creation, as a wholly other."
[48] Ibid., 204.
[49] Ibid., 206.
[50] Ibid., 207. For Ricoeur, the law of superabundance is therefore the key to this logic of existence.

existence fueled by the demand for the "not yet" and the "much more." The logic of hope is accordingly a "logic of increase and superabundance"[51] that draws support from exemplary acts and lives that bear the mark of the future through testifying proleptically to the coming reign of goodness, generosity, courage, and love.

In the end, the intelligibility of hope countermands the idea that we could develop a rational system that would bind thought and action to history's ultimate reason and meaning. It may be, as Ricoeur says, that "I hope in order to understand."[52] For him, the superabundance of meaning over the profusion of senseless destruction and failure gives rise to thought. By setting the passion for the possible against the sadness of our mortal condition, hope becomes the wellspring of our freedom and of our power to affect the world's course. The projection of the task of actualizing this freedom is accordingly the philosophical equivalent of a theology of hope. As such, setting an eschatology of nonviolence in place of the critique of ideology is this theology's most adequate philosophical approximation.[53] The task of making freedom a reality for those who are victims of violence, terror, injustice, exploitation, oppression and modern-day slavery takes root in our affirmation of the possibility of a better and more just world. Through embracing this possibility, we adopt this task as our own.

* * *

I would like to offer a few final remarks by way of a postscript. The analogy between the logic of hope's religious or theological impulse and an eschatology of freedom clearly rests on our capacity

[51] Ibid., 206.
[52] Ibid., 207. The phrase is a translation of the Latin *Spero ut intelligam*.
[53] Ibid., 209.

to reinvigorate our practices and way of living in creative and imaginative ways. In this sense exemplary works, lives, and acts augment the practical field of our everyday experiences. Such works, lives and acts bring about an increase in being by transcending the real from within. This transcendence from within the real is the source of an excess that overflows the work or the act like a trail of fire. Exemplary works, lives, and acts thus stand as a kind of surety of the logic of hope.

The philosophical equivalence between the projection of the task of making freedom a reality and a theology of hope, however, has its limits. For one thing, a philosophy of hope invariably runs up against our theoretical and practical limitation when it comes to the knowledge we have and the foresight with which we act. More crucially still, setting the passion for the possible against a complacency toward sadness and despair sends us back to the question of the source, origin or wellspring of hope. In a way, the question concerning the source of hope reprises the one I asked at the outset. At the same time, this new question opens a space for relating hope to the givenness or the gift of existence.[54] Whatever religious or theological significance we might attach to the existential or ontological ground of our mortal condition, the "Joy of Yes in

[54] The avowal of the givenness of existence is the spring of the affirmation of this gift. Ricoeur explains that "every religion claims to give a human answer to a questioning that comes from above, from a higher level than the human" (Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricoeur, *What Makes Us Think? A Neuroscientist and a Philosopher Argue about Ethics, Human Nature, and the Brain*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000], 269). Marianne Moyaert points out that for Ricoeur, this moment of transcendence is the vanishing point of the religious phenomenon of a "foundation without foundation" (*fond sans fond*), which constitutes a limit idea for "understanding the illimitable condition of religious experience." Marianne Moyaert, "From Religious Violence to Interreligious Hospitality," in *Paul Ricoeur in the Age of Hermeneutical Reason: Poetics, Praxis and Critique*, ed. Roger W. H. Savage (Lexington: Lexington Books, 2015); see Paul Ricoeur, "Religious Belief: The Difficult Path to the Religious," in *A Passion for the Possible: Thinking with Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Brian Treanor and Henry Venema (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); Paul Ricoeur, "What Ontology In View?" in Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

the sadness of the finite"[55] remains hope's answer to all *amor fati*. It is perhaps worth noting that Ricoeur once said: "Joy is the only mood worthy of being called ontological."[56] Through affirming that we have a part in being, joy becomes the ground and spring of our eschatological aspirations.

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[55] Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 140.

[56] Ibid., 106.

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