The Meaning of Being Human in Ricoeur’s Philosophy of the Will*

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It is easy to lose one’s bearings in the forest of philosophical literature created by Ricoeur and his commentators. Yet the situation is far from hopeless if we hold steadfastly to this rule: there is no better guide to Ricoeur than Ricoeur himself. Of course, this is neither to be interpreted as the immediate acceptance of whatever he says nor the facile abdication of that critical attitude demanded by him. Rather, it is to underline once more the active attention and the patient alertness which must be constantly accorded to him, enabling us to bring out an underlying melody of his thought. For indeed, an unmistakable melody comes forth through his incessant repetitions and accentuations. To hear this harmonious flow is to understand Ricoeur.

Methodological Perspectives: Justification of the Abstraction of the Fault and Transcendence

On the first page of Freedom and Nature, we are immediately struck by Ricoeur’s great concern to justify the provisional abstraction of the fault and Transcendence—an abstraction which determines the scope and approach of this first part of the Philosophy of the Will. Our task in the present section is to examine and understand the justification of this twofold abstraction. In a first point, we look into the necessity and possibility of bracketing the fault; in a second point, the necessity and possibility of bracketing Transcendence.¹

¹ As far as I know, Vansina has done the only thorough historico-critical examination of Ricoeur’s claim—the “ontologization” of the fault in Kierkegaard, Jaspers,
A. Necessity and Possibility of the Abstraction of the Fault

What are the reasons invoked by Ricoeur for the necessity of suspending the fault which "profoundly alters man’s intelligibility"? We may distinguish two reasons: the one pertaining to the level of method; the other, to the level of doctrine. On the level of method, there is a necessity of bracketing the fault because Ricoeur’s intention is to give a pure description of the human’s essential structures—an “eidetic” description in the sense that it is a study of essences or an “elucidation of meanings.” The human essential structures then have to be separated from the fault which distorts them and which is only accessible to an “empirical” reflection. On the level of doctrine, there is a necessity of bracketing the fault because it is ir-rational; it is the “absurd.” By this, Ricoeur means that the fault can be conceived “only as an accident, an interruption, a fall” and “does not constitute a part of a system together with

and Heidegger. With both sympathy and force, Vansina convincingly shows that the young Ricoeur partially misconstrued the thought of these existential philosophers. According to Vansina, Ricoeur upholds a clearer demarcation between finitude and guilt as a way of safeguarding hope and avoiding agnosticism as well as atheism. The ultimate reason, however, is to be found in Ricoeur’s refusal of the fundamental option of existentialism for a radical historicity and extreme subjectivity, severed from all objectivity. See Dirk F. Vansina, “La problématique épocale chez P. Ricoeur et l’existentialisme,” Revue philosophique de Louvain 70 (November 1972), pp. 587-619 (Résumé-Abstract, pp. 636-637); see esp. pp. 612-619. See also Vansina, “Schets, orientatie en betekenis van Paul Ricoeurs wijsgerige onderneming” (1963), pp. 115-116; “Esquisse, orientation et signification de l’entreprise philosophique de Paul Ricoeur” (1964), p. 183.

2 VI, 7; FN, 3.
3 VI, 37; FN, 37. See also VI, 7, 40, 130, 215; FN, 3-4, 40-41, 136, 230. In another article, Ricoeur speaks of the “eidetic reduction” which “consists in grasping the fact (Tatsache) in its essence (eidos).” See “Kant et Husserl” (1954), p. 46; “Kant and Husserl” (1967), in HAP, 178.
4 What Ricoeur means by “empirical” at the time of Freedom and Nature may be gleaned from the following passage: “We need to learn about the world of passions by a method other than existential deepening of eidetics: by daily life, novel, theater, epic. This world constitutes an obscuring of consciousness which does not lend itself to being understood as an intelligible dialogue of the voluntary and the involuntary.” See VI, 263-264; FN, 280 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
5 VI, 7, 27, 30; FN, 3, 24, 27. See also “Note sur l’existentialisme et la foi chrétienne,” La Revue de l’Evangelisation (Le christianisme devant les courants de la pensee moderne) 6 (1951), pp. 147-148.
the fundamental possibilities contained in willing and the involuntary."6 Thus, for Ricoeur, the necessity of bracketing the fault arises from methodological as well as doctrinal considerations.

We have just mentioned that human essential structures are available to an “eidetic” description while actual existence is only available to an “empirical” reflection. If we now add that the possible fulfillment of human existence is evoked in a “poetic” discourse, we come up with the three parts—Eidetics, Empirics, and Poetics—that make up the Philosophy of the Will. To recall the remark we made in Part One, it is with one creative stroke that Ricoeur projected his monumental philosophic program. Let us pause here to show how the double abstraction of the fault and Transcendence bears on the tripartite organization of the Philosophy of the Will. There exists a relationship for it is, in a way, the double abstraction of the fault and Transcendence which dictates the logical priority of the Eidetics over the Empirics and the Poetics.7 First of all, the Eidetics—abstracting from the fault and Transcendence—reveals the neutral structures of human existence, that is to say, “the fundamental possibilities offered equally to innocence and to the fault as a common keyboard of human nature.”8 Secondly, the Empirics—acknowledging the event of the fault—reflects on the concrete existence of faulted human being, prefacing this with an analysis of fallible human being. Lastly, the Poetics—acquiescing to the presence of Transcendence—proposes to express in imaginative discourse the promised reconciliation of human existence with the source of creation. Such a way, however, of presenting the Philosophy of the Will remains static and ignores Ricoeur’s reminder that “the priority in principle of pure description over the poetics of the will does not exclude the possibility that the totality of themes might be elaborated simultaneously.”9 We must therefore strive

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6 VI, 27; FN, 24. See also HF, 10; FM, XVIII.
7 It is interesting to note that twenty years after Freedom and Nature, Ricoeur still maintains the necessity of eidetics or the logical primacy of a phenomenology of the will. See “The Problem of the Will and Philosophical Discourse” (1970), p. 275. See also VI, 10, 257; FN, 6, 272 and Bourgeois, Extension of Ricoeur’s Hermeneutic, p. 141.
8 VI, 29; FN, 26 (emphases added).
9 VI, 36; FN, 34. In the same passage, Ricoeur immediately adds: “Empirics and poetics gave rise to that description as their own prolegomenon.”
to grasp the articulation of the three parts of the *Philosophy of the Will* in a dynamic manner.

*Eidetics, Empirics, and Poetics*—as we understand them—form a methodological ensemble designed by Ricoeur to support a certain vision of being human.\(^{10}\) We have to keep pointing out that Ricoeur wishes to safeguard both responsibility and hope as a way of access to the “reconciliation in ontology” that constitutes his philosophical endeavor.\(^{11}\) As a philosopher vowed to the elucidation of integral human experience, Ricoeur wants to account *rationally* not only for the *reality* of *faulted* human being but also for the *possibility* of *fallible* human being. He must show then not only the relation but also the important distinction between finitude and guilt. In his eyes, the identification of finitude with guilt finds its origin in Kierkegaard.\(^{12}\) From Kierkegaard on, guilt loses its *moral* character and assumes an *ontological* significance in the philosophies of existence, more specifically, those of Heidegger and Jaspers.\(^{13}\) This coincidence of guilt and finitude is esteemed by Ricoeur “to be one of the gravest confusions of contemporary ‘existential’ philosophy,” adding that here, “guilt loses its character as a *bad* use of freedom to become the constitutional limitation of existence.”\(^{14}\) Guilt

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\(^{10}\) In our view, there is an intimate link between method and doctrine in philosophy. After all, isn’t a method forged to unravel a set of problems and unfold a certain vision of reality? We fully agree with Stephan Strasser who affirms that “the method used by a philosopher is not a device which simply helps him to discover the truth” but rather “like the content of his philosophy, an expression of his vision of man, of nature, of the world, and of the transcendent.” See Strasser, “After Scientific Philosophy: Myth or Wisdom?” (1963), p. 41.


\(^{12}\) See VI, 30; FN, 27: “This movement from a theory of the fault as a fall to a theory of the fault as birth and unveiling of freedom seems to be outlined by Kierkegaard, who conjoins the two ideas most equivocally: that corruption is born of the intoxication of freedom and that consciousness is born of the fault.” See also MJ, 143-144.

\(^{13}\) VI, 28 note 1; FN, 25 note 11.

then, according to Ricoeur, is not identical with human finitude. Yet there is no denying the avowal of the fault by guilty human being. Isn’t the human avowal of the fault a recognition of responsibility, and thus of the close relation between finitude and guilt? Human responsibility for the fault has to be accounted for but it has to be conjugated with the hope of pardon which restores, and thus presupposes his original innocence, more original than his guilt. It must then be possible, even if only on the level of “imaginative variation”\textsuperscript{15} to arrive at the neutral structures of human existence, the “common keyboard of human nature on which mythical innocence and empirical guilt play in different ways.”\textsuperscript{16} Against this background, we may now trace the dynamic interaction between \textit{Eidetics, Empirics,} and \textit{Poetics}.

\textit{Eidetics}—with the double abstraction of the fault and Transcendence—is unthinkable without both the \textit{Empirics} and the \textit{Poetics}. As Ricoeur points out, the Eidetics is sustained by both the \textit{Empirics} and the \textit{Poetics}. In Ricoeur’s words:

...the fragile and really veiled experience of my freedom would not support the pure description of this region where freedom rules if it were not completed by the exemplary myths of innocence, by a sort of reminiscence of purity which itself corresponds diametrically to the hope of purity expressed in terms of a Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Empirics}, in its turn, refers to the \textit{Eidetics} insofar as the former deals with the fault or the passions which are seen as “ramifications of
distortions” of the essential structures studied by the latter. Furthermore, the Empirics also holds sway over the Poetics. In order for the fault to be seen “as a lost innocence, as a lost paradise,” it must not be set only against a myth of innocence “before” history but also against another myth of freedom “after” history. As for the Poetics, we have already been made aware that its “hope of purity,” exemplified by the myth of innocence, gives an impetus to the Eidetics of human fundamental structures. The myth of innocence in Poetics, we are told, is “the desire, the courage, and the imaginary experience which sustains eidetic description of the voluntary and the involuntary.” Likewise, the Poetics animates the Empirics of the self-imposed bondage of faulted human being with “...the hope of freedom revealed in the reminiscence of innocence.”

Let us go back to the question of the abstraction of the fault. What, precisely, is suspended with the bracketing of the fault? Ricoeur answers at once that “it is the universe of passions and of the law, in the sense in which St. Paul contrasts the law which kills with the grace which gives life.” Passions and the law form “the vicious circle of actual existence.” The image of this “vicious circle” formed by the self is enlightening for it visualizes to us what Ricoeur calls the fault, that is to say, “a positing of the self by itself: the self as radical autonomy, not only moral but ontological ...” The fault then is a “frenzied preoccupation with the self.” It is not only a self-imposed bondage to Nothing or Vanity.

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18 VI, 7; FN, 3. See also VI, 263-264; FN, 280.
19 VI, 28; FN, 26. See also VI, 31; FN, 29. According to Ricoeur, this is what distinguishes the Christian notion of guilt from the existentialist notion. In the Christian tradition, guilt is conceived “only as fall, that is to say, as a debasement with respect to ..., as a lost primordial innocence...” See “Philosophie et religion chez Karl Jaspers” (1957), p. 227; “The Relation of Jaspers’ Philosophy to Religion” (1957), translated by Forrest W. Williams, p. 632 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
20 VI, 31; FN, 28.
21 VI, 28 note 3; FN, 26 note 13.
22 VI, 23; FN, 20 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
23 VI, 24; FN, 20 (emphases added). See also VI, 293; FN, 310.
24 VI, 32; FN, 29. See also J, 381.
25 In an essay on Jaspers, Ricoeur considers that “vanity” is at the root of “every philosophy which passionately emphasizes the subjective.” In the same passage, Ricoeur specifically makes this judgment of all existentialist philosophy: “The culpability of
but it also introduces the “inauthentic infinite” which blocks the manifestation of the “authentic infinite” of freedom. The fault as passion is “...the will making itself prisoner of imaginary evils, a captive of Nothing or, better of Vanity.” With this self-imposed bondage of consciousness is implied a refusal of necessity which likewise entails a defiance of Transcendence. Here, we have to note that Ricoeur in no way denies the fruitfulness of a reflection on the fault. In fact, he admits that the fault is “an event with immense possibilities” insofar as it is “a discovery of the infinite, an experience of the holy in reverse, of the holy in the demonic ....” But the fault as absurd may only be accessible to an “empirical” analysis of concrete existence but not to an “eidetic” description of essential structures.

After giving the reasons put forward by Ricoeur for the necessity of suspending the fault, we may now inquire on the possibility of practising this abstraction. Is the époche of the fault a feasible enterprise? It would seem so if we keep present in mind what Ricoeur tells us from the very first page of Freedom and Nature—that a pure phenomenological description is not necessarily an “empirical” description, that is to say, “a picture of the forms of man’s actual voluntary activities”; a phenomenological description can be an “eidetic” description. In this sense, Ricoeur conforms to the Husserlian view of “eidetics” as a description that “can take as its springboard even an imperfect, truncated, distorted experience, or even a purely imaginary one.” In no way does this “eidetic” description imply a description of “the lost paradise of innocence” but of “the fundamental possibilities offered equally to inno-

philosophy takes refuge in the concern for Self (Selbst) which animates all of existen-

27 VI, 261; FN, 277.
28 VI, 449; FN, 477.
29 VI, 25; FN, 22; see also VI, 30 note 3; FN, 28 note 16.
30 VI, 7; FN, 3.
31 VI, 28; FN, 25 (Ricoeur’s emphases). See also VI, 7-8, 31; FN, 3-4, 28; H, 24-25, 223-227.
cence and to the fault as a common keyboard of human nature."\textsuperscript{32} It is precisely because this fundamental nature "subsists even within the most complete fault" that there exists the possibility of understanding it.\textsuperscript{33}

B. Necessity and Possibility of the Abstraction of Transcendence

What are the reasons put forward this time by Ricoeur for the necessity of suspending Transcendence "which hides within it the ultimate origin of subjectivity"?\textsuperscript{34} As in the abstraction of the fault, we may distinguish two reasons: the one pertaining to the level of method; the other to the level of doctrine. On the level of method, the "eidetic" description which is suitable for the elucidation of the human's intelligible structures becomes inadequate for the "poetic" elaboration of the human being's reconciliation with the source of creation. On the level of doctrine, Transcendence, as the intimate summit of human subjectivity, is meta-rational; it is the "mysterious."\textsuperscript{35} In a way, the abstraction of Transcendence is inseparably linked to the abstraction of the fault insofar as the experience of the fault implies an affirmation of Transcendence. If fault is the captivity of freedom, then Transcendence is the very liberation of this freedom. In the words of Ricoeur: "Thus men live Transcendence as purification and deliverance of their freedom, as salvation."\textsuperscript{36}

The abstraction of Transcendence, however, does not imply the conception of subjectivity or the Cogito as a positing of the self by itself. Ricoeur repeatedly warns us that this vain self-positing of the Cogito is precisely the fault. To quote him:

The Self—written with a capital S—is a product of separation. The ruse of the fault is to insinuate the belief that participation of the will in more fundamental being would be an alienation, the submission of a slave into the hands of Another. Thus, the Self, taken in this special sense, is the I estranged from being; the Self is an alienated I.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{32} VI, 29; FN, 26 (emphases added).
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} VI, 7; FN, 4.
\textsuperscript{35} In the Marcellian sense. See VI, 7, 181; FN, 3, 192.
\textsuperscript{36} VI, 31; FN, 29 (emphasis added).
\textsuperscript{37} VI, 32; FN, 29.
Human alienation ends with the "death of Self" which is only an aspect of a more radical experience—his reconciliation with Transcendence or his receptivity to the "gift of being" which "heals the rents of freedom." But here, we approach a new creative realm that is properly the domain of the Poetics.

It may be appropriate to bring to a close these methodological considerations by showing the advantages to be gained by the double abstraction of such significant realities as the fault and Transcendence. As a preliminary remark, we need to look at the abstraction proposed by Ricoeur neither as a "reduction of vision" nor as an "amputation of being." We must take care to interpret the meaning of abstraction or epoche in the original sense intended by the founder of phenomenology. In Ideas I, Husserl emphatically insists that the phenomenological epoche is not to be taken as a denial, as an ignoring, or even as a Cartesian doubt. It is in this Husserlian sense, we believe, that Ricoeur's abstraction of the fault and Transcendence must be understood. The fault and Transcendence are provisionally placed within parentheses in order to allow the appearance of essential structures that would otherwise be obscured.

The great merit of the abstraction of the fault consists in safeguarding human responsibility. This responsibility is based on an understanding of the primordial relationship between freedom and necessity—an understanding of freedom as "a rule over motives, powers, and even over the necessity built into its very heart." Since this primordial relationship between freedom and necessity is distorted by the fault, it is not only necessary but advantageous to bracket it. For the fault as a vain positing of freedom can either take the form of a defiance of necessity or the form of a capitulation to necessity. In both instances, there is an evasion of responsibility. Only in bracketing do we break then to the "fundamental possibility of the ego which is its responsibility."

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38 VI, 33; FN, 30.
39 VI, 36; FN, 33.
40 H, 96-104.
41 VI, 33; FN, 30 (Ricoeur's emphasis); also VI, 293; FN, 310.
42 "Méthodes et tâches d'une phénoménologie de la volonté" (1952), p. 139; "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will" (1967), in HAP, 232 (emphasis added).
Likewise, the great merit of the abstraction of Transcendence consists not only in safeguarding human responsibility but above all, the human hope of fulfillment in Transcendence. This restoration of human integrity by Transcendence ushers in a radically new and creative dimension. To avoid thinking of Transcendence as "a sort of violation of subjectivity," it is not only necessary but salutary to bracket it in order to prepare an understanding of its highest mystery as the "something else" awaited by all of us in hope. To sum up, the double abstraction of the fault and Transcendence holds the advantage of safeguarding the responsibility and hope of being human by allowing us to delineate first, with clarity and rigor, the fundamental limits and possibilities of being human.

I. EIDETICS OF THE WILL: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL-EXISTENTIAL DESCRIPTION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL POSSIBILITIES OF BEING HUMAN

Here, we begin our own attempt at a "creative repetition" of the Philosophy of the Will by unfolding the dominant movements of Freedom and Nature. For such a dense work where one can easily miss the forest for the trees, we need to practise a "close reading" of the text as a

\[\text{VI, 33; FN, 30.}\]

\[\text{VI, 451; FN, 480 (Ricoeur's emphases).}\]

\[\text{Ricoeur has rendered his own précis of this first cascade of the Philosophy of the Will. See "L'unité du volontaire et l'involontaire comme idée-limite," Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie (session of 25 November 1950) 45 (January-March 1951), pp. 1-2, 3-22, 22-29; "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea," translated by Daniel O'Connor, in Readings in Existential Phenomenology, edited by Nathaniel Lawrence and Daniel O'Connor (Engl.-wood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1967), pp. 93-112. We take into account the principal ideas found in this presentation, amplifying those points which Ricoeur stresses in the following five articles: 1) "Compte-rendu de thèse" (1951); 2) "Méthodes et tâches d'une phénoménologie de la volonté" (1952), "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will" (1967), in HAP; 3) "Nature et liberté" (1962), "Nature and Freedom" (1974), translated by Donald Siewert, in PSE; 4) "Philosophy of Will and Action" (1967); and 5) "The Problem of the Will and Philosophical Discourse" (1970), translated by Peter McCormick.}\]
whole and several "re-readings" oriented by definite themes. These latter "re-readings" then provoke a kind of revolutionary movement in the entire work, bringing the parts to gravitate around the chosen themes. In this way, we are enabled to select the significant passages germane to the topics under consideration.\textsuperscript{46}

Consequent to this procedure, our discussion will be focussed on three main topics: first, Ricoeur's method which goes \textit{from pure description to active participation}; second, the understanding of the \textit{reciprocity between the voluntary and the involuntary} brought about by this method; and third, the far-reaching significance of this reciprocity—the elaboration of a theory of human freedom or \textit{responsibility as consent to necessity}.

A. From Pure Description to Active Participation

1. The limits of "pure description"

It may be said that Ricoeur, in beginning his study with the proposed task of \textit{describing} and \textit{understanding} the fundamental structures of the voluntary and the involuntary, remains faithful to Husserl, especially to the latter's conception of "eidetic" phenomenology.\textsuperscript{47} From the very first page, Ricoeur not only recalls but also applies the basic lessons which are to be retained from Husserlian "eidetics."\textsuperscript{48} To begin with,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[47] VI, 7, 28 note 2; FN, 3-4, 25 note 12. Through the years, Ricoeur has reaffirmed his allegiance to Husserl on this score. See "Philosophy of Will and Action" (1967), p. 15; "The Problem of the Will and Philosophical Discourse" (1970), translated by Peter McCormick, pp. 275-276; and "A Philosophical Journey: From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language" (1973), pp. 89-90.
\item[48] In his "Compte rendu de thèse," Ricoeur explicitly cites the two methodic axioms, borrowed from Husserlian phenomenology, which ensure the possibility of his enterprise, namely the \textit{eidetic reduction} or the immediate comprehension of the practical operations of consciousness from well-chosen examples and the \textit{intentionality} of consciousness which provides a distinguishing mark to each practical operation. See "Compte rendu de thèse" (1951), p. 633.
\end{footnotes}
description does not necessarily have to be "empirical"; it can be "eidetic" insofar as it is a study of essences or a "rigorous analysis of meanings." Furthermore, this "eidetic" description can use as its basis "even an imperfect, truncated, distorted experience, or even a purely imaginary one." Thus, "eidetic" description discerns then the "essences" which are the a priori structures of all lived experiences capable of being understood directly "in terms of a single model, specifically an imaginary model...." But if from the start, Ricoeur gladly acknowledges the affinity of his method to Husserl's "eidetic reduction," he also critically distances himself from other objectionable aspects of Husserlian method, as for instance, "the famous and obscure transcendental reduction" which is "an obstacle to genuine understanding of personal body." It will be shown how Ricoeur puts his own stamp on the eidetic method.

Ricoeur embarks then on an "eidetic" description that strives to lay open the basic structures or essences of the voluntary and the involuntary. By "essences," he understands "meanings or principles of intelligibility" which are "underivable or even non-temporal." An "eidetic" description therefore searches for the "unchanging meaning" of being human to which all experiences have to be subsumed if they are to make sense. Yet, the essential meaning does not dispel the specificity of these

49 VI, 40; FN, 40–41. See also VI, 19, 37, 215, 405; FN, 16, 37, 230, 431.
50 VI, 28; FN, 25 (Ricoeur's emphases); also VI, 170; FN, 179.
51 VI, 8; FN, 4 (emphases added). See also VI, 185; FN, 195; HF, 128, 161; FM, 170, 222.
52 VI, 7; FN, 4. In a well-thought out article, Kohak examines the reasons for the hesitation of existential philosophers like Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and even Ricoeur to fully accept the phenomenological and eidetic reductions, despite the deep indebtedness of these philosophers to Edmund Husserl. Kohak contends that the phenomenological and eidetic reductions are not only presupposed but also applicable within the context of existential philosophy. What Husserl brackets is not "existence" or the incarnate Cogito understood by the existential philosophers but "existence" insofar as it is spontaneously objectified by the "natural standpoint." It is therefore the causal, objectivist mode of explaining existence—not "existence" as experienced in the first person—which Husserl brackets or "puts out of action." See Erasmus V. Kohak, "Existence and the Phenomenological Epokehe," Journal of Existentialism 8 (Fall 1967-1968), No. 29, p. 22. See also "Translator's Introduction" to FN, XIII-XIV.
53 VI, 8, 130, 400; FN, 4, 136, 425.
54 VI, 215; FN, 230.
experiences. It is in this light that Ricoeur speaks of revealing the fundamental possibilities of being human.

Far from being banal description, however, an "eidetic" description only merits the name "phenomenology" insofar as it is "rigorous," precisely when it poses the preliminary question of the meaning of the appearance itself of things. Eidetic phenomenology exercises its rigor primarily in the clarification of existence itself through the use of concepts and in the delimitation of principal concepts. Rigor, nevertheless, must not be confused with rigidity. Eidetic phenomenology is a "sober" and "patient" brand of reflection. As a "nonreductive yet descriptive thought," it arises from "the commitment to take things as they present themselves." It does not only respect the originally given but also displays a radical openness to the broad and diverse range of phenomena. In no way does it pretend to be a "totalitarian" form of thought but only a "preface" to reflection, leaving certain questions available for further development.

55 VI, 17; FN, 14. See also "L'attention: Etude phénoménologique de l'attention et de ses connexions philosophiques" (1940), p. 15.
58 VI, 399; FN, 425. See also "Méthodes et tâches d'une phénoménologie de la volonté" (1952), p. 114; "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will" (1967), in HAP, 213.
59 VI, 19, 51; FN, 16, 52. See also "Philosophy of Will and Action" (1967), p. 20.
60 VI, 76, 364; FN, 79, 388. We need to precise that Ricoeur distinguishes two tendencies struggling within Husserlian phenomenology. As a descriptive method, it manifests a generous effort to preserve the richness and diversity of the real. But as an idealistic interpretation of its own descriptive activity, Husserlian phenomenology represents a "radical effort to reduce all otherness to the nomadic life of the ego, to ipseity." See "Etude sur les Méditations Cartésiennes de Husserl," Revue philosophique de Louvain 52 (February 1964), pp. 108-109; "A Study of Husserl's Cartesian Meditations, I-IV," (1967), in HAP, 113-114.
61 "L'unité du volontaire et de l'involontaire comme idée-limite" (1951), p. 28; "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea" (1967), p. 112. It
Ricoeur further nuances and deepens his method of eidetic description by differentiating phenomenological understanding (comprendre) from scientific explanation (expliquer). It is important to grasp the methodological contrast between understanding and explanation for upon it rests the manner of approaching the relationship of the voluntary and the involuntary. On the one hand, explanation proceeds "from the bottom up"; it is a reductive movement of thought where "the simple is the reason for the complex." On the other hand, description as understanding proceeds "from the top down"; it is a non-reductive movement of thought where "the one is the reason for the many." As a "distinctive understanding," description unveils "the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary." This relation of reciprocity implies that the voluntary has no meaning of its own. It asserts that only the relation of the voluntary and the involuntary is intelligible. In Ricoeur's terse formula: "The involuntary is for the will and the will is by reason of the

is actually Bréhier who ventures the remark on phenomenology as a "preface" to reflection during the discussion following Ricoeur's exposition.


VI, 8-9, 236, 402; FN, 4-5, 86, 251, 427.

Ibid. See also "Méthodes et tâches d'une phénomélogie de la volonté" (1952), p. 120; "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will" (1967), in HAP, 218.

VI, 8-9, 18; FN, 4-5, 15 (Ricoeur's emphases)
involuntary." It is the voluntary one then which gives meaning to the multiple involuntary.

Explanation results from a "prejudice of naturalism" insofar as it reduces a phenomenon to the causal factors to which it can be attributed. In this way, understanding entails a critique of naturalism insofar as it preserves a phenomenon in its full significance for the Cogito. It involves then a "reversal of viewpoint and a discovery of the Cogito," a "Copernican revolution" in understanding which Ricoeur regards as the first achievement in philosophy.

Ricoeur is not unaware of the limitations of pure description. For one thing, even if eidetic description may not be a naturalistic reduction, it always begins with a "definite loss of being." Although Ricoeur repeatedly sees the necessity of going beyond eidetic description, his whole attitude consists in first drawing out all that it can give. There is thus no question of prematurely abandoning it. The task is to persevere in applying this limited understanding which is an "understanding of the threshold." It is part of Ricoeur's genius not only to have seen the limits of pure description but also to have fully exploited these very limits.

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VI, 82; FN, 86 (Ricoeur's emphases).
VI, 37, 281; FN, 37, 297.
VI, 82; FN, 86. See also VI, 357; FN, 381.
VI, 51, 66, 181; FN, 52, 68, 191.
VI, 16, 206; FN, 12, 221. See also VI, 9, 33; FN, 5, 30-31.
VI, 19, 37; FN, 16, 37.
VI, 37, 82; FN, 37, 85.


The following remarks are indicative of Ricoeur's keen awareness of the limits and validity of a method: "One cannot, as a matter of fact, practise a method without being attentive to its limitations; there is a chance that in discovering what limits a method, one also discovers what justifies and founds it." See "Sympathie et respect: Phénoménologie et éthique de la seconde personne" (1954), p. 380 (my translation). Ten years later, Ricoeur makes a a similar remark: "The consciousness of the validity of a method is never separable from the consciousness of its limits." See "Structure et
2. The resources of “active participation”

We are informed that within each of the three broad sections of Freedom and Nature—corresponding to the three moments of the voluntary and the involuntary—the descriptive method will follow "a transcending movement which appears ultimately alien to the native genius of Husserlian psychology." With this broadening and deepening of pure description, Ricoeur breaks out of the confines of Husserl’s "eidetics" which is "all too clear." The paradoxical thing is that "eidetics" itself presupposes its own surpassing "in a certain tact, in a certain spirit of delicacy which uncovers the birth, awakening and growth within the limits of mature forms."

What is demanded then of us on this new level? The present task for us is the conversion of our onlooker’s passive attention into an active participation in the mystery of our existence. In Ricoeur’s own words:

The bond which in fact joins the willing to its body requires a type of attention other than an intellectual attention to structures. It requires that I participate actively in my incarnation as a mystery. I need to pass from objectivity to existence.

Here, we are being asked to move away from an intellectual into an existential regimen, to take leave of the level of “statics” for the “dynamics” of existence. In Marcellian terms, active participation obliges us to leap from the level of “problem” to the level of “mystery.” On the level of “problem,” “the criteria of validity are independent of the person who recognizes them” while on the level of “mystery,” “I am in ‘involved,’ ‘in the sense that one is involved in an affair.’” Active participation is none other than a recollection (recueillement) which is, at the same time, an

herméneutique” (1963), in CI, 34, 48; “Structure and Hermeneutics” (1974), translated by Kathleen McLaughlin, in CINT, 30-31, 44.

VI, 18; FN, 14.
VI, 204; FN, 219.
VI, 136; FN, 143.
VI, 17-18; FN, 14 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
VI, 129, 155, 252; FN, 135, 163, 268.
80 "L’attention: Etude phénoménologique de l’attention et de ses connexions philosophiques" (1940), p. 27 (my translation). See also MJ, 361.
availability (disponibilité), “an abandon to” and “a relaxation in the presence of” the real.\textsuperscript{81}

With this unabashed use of Marcellian terminology, Ricoeur acknowledges the profound influence of Gabriel Marcel upon his thought. It is significant to note that Marcel’s method of active participation enables Ricoeur to transcend Husserl’s method of eidetic description. By strategically situating himself at the intersection of “two demands: those of thought nourished by the mystery of my body, and those of thought concerned with the distinctions inherited from Husserlian descriptive method,” Ricoeur meets the twin requirements of philosophical thinking which are clarity and depth.\textsuperscript{82} Through the dialectic of pure description and active participation, these two preoccupations are thus brought into a dynamic equilibrium: first, the concern to understand (comprendre) even those sectors of consciousness that seem to resist lucidity and order; second, the exigence—leading back to the existentialist thinkers and even beyond them, to Ravaisson, Maine de Biran, and Descartes—to experience (sentir) the mysterious bond with my body.\textsuperscript{83} In a way, a certain priority goes to understanding which Ricoeur takes as “the duty of the philosopher.”\textsuperscript{84} But if in understanding, we distinguish with the aid of concepts, we only do so in order to promote the living unity of the voluntary and the involuntary. In sum, the originality and force of the method in vigor in Freedom and Nature lies in the fruitful interplay of pure description and active participation.

B. The Reciprocity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary

It may be a valuable aid to first pass in review the global design of Ricoeur’s descriptive enterprise in Freedom and Nature. After this summary recall, we may then proceed to the study proper of the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary. This principle of reciprocity supplies us with two movements of thought to be developed: first, the reintegration of consciousness in the body; and second, the reintegration

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 28. See also MJ, 366-367.
\textsuperscript{82} VI, 18; FN, 15 (Ricoeur’s emphasis).
\textsuperscript{83} MJ, 38.
\textsuperscript{84} ”Compte-rendu de thèse” (1951), p. 634 (my translation).
of the body in consciousness. These will make up the two main parts of this section.

To shed new light on the age-old question of the unity of being human—such is Ricoeur’s principal goal in Freedom and Nature. As he readily attests himself, the three guiding ideas of this book are:

...the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary, the necessity of going beyond psychological dualism and seeking the common standard of the involuntary and the voluntary in subjectivity, and finally the primacy of conciliation over paradox.

The study then of the voluntary and the involuntary offers a propitious occasion to revitalize “the classical problem of the relations between ‘freedom’ and ‘nature,’” or, as we express it in the perspective of our work, between responsibility and necessity.

The reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary is the primary situation that orients Ricoeur’s descriptive enterprise. This reciprocity has to be taken in at least three senses. First of all, it affirms the indivisible unity of the voluntary and the involuntary: “Only the living interrelationship between the voluntary and the involuntary is intelligible.” Secondly, it means that the involuntary has no meaning by itself. Thirdly, it signifies that the voluntary determines the meaning of the involuntary: “The involuntary is for the will and the will is by reason of the involuntary.” This reversal of perspective dictates the circular movement of description which begins by outlining the voluntary function, then proceeds by examining the involuntary structures needed to make the voluntary function intelligible, and ends by integrating the involuntary structures in the voluntary synthesis.

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86 VI, 319; FN, 341 (Ricoeur’s emphases). See also VI, 21, 42; FN, 18, 42.


88 “Méthodes et tâches d’une phénoménologie de la volonté” (1952), p. 119; “Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will” (1967), in HAP, 218. See also VI, 8; FN, 5.

89 VI, 82; FN, 86 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
Decision, action, and consent are the three essential aspects of the voluntary that are distinguished by Ricoeur. According to him: “To say ‘I will’ means first ‘I decide,’ secondly ‘I move my body,’ thirdly ‘I consent.’” 90 These three moments of the will give rise to the three cycles of description that constitute the three main parts of the book.

In determining the three moments of the will, Ricoeur appeals to Husserl’s well-known principle of the intentionality of consciousness—all consciousness is a consciousness of... 91 However, Ricoeur’s interpretation of this “golden rule of Husserlian phenomenology” is distinctive in that it associates the notion of intentionality, not with the reflective acts of pure consciousness, but with the dynamism of the will: “... consciousness constitutes itself by the type of object to which it projects itself.” 92 If we now designate the activity of consciousness as noesis and the object of this activity as noema, we may call the approach of Ricoeur as a noetic-noematic method. This method maintains that the noetic pole is known through the noematic pole; the experiencing consciousness reveals itself in the experienced object. 93 Consequently, the articu-

90 VI, 10; FN, 6. These three moments, which description reveals as complementary, present themselves in a progressive order when considered from the viewpoint of “practical mediation.” This means to say that the distance from things gradually disappears as one moves from decision to consent. See “L’unité du volontaire et de l’involontaire comme idée-limite” (1951), pp. 5, 18; “The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea” (1967), pp. 96, 105.

91 Ricoeur defines “intentionality” as follows: “With Husserl, we shall call the centrifugal movement of thought turned towards an object intentionality: I am in that which I see, imagine, desire, or will. The first intention of thought is not to prove my existence to me, but to relate me to the perceived, imagined, or willed object.” See VI, 42; FN, 42-43; see also VI, 363-364; FN, 387.

92 VI, 10; FN, 6. Ricoeur’s distinctive interpretation of intentionality is also noted by Rasmussen in his book. See Rasmussen, Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology: A Constructive Interpretation of the Thought of Paul Ricoeur, p. 31.

93 Granted that Ricoeur is greatly indebted to Husserl, it is important to find out how the former has “read” the latter. For, as Gisel points out in an impressive article, what Ricoeur retains from Husserl already foreshadows the characteristic traits of the hermeneutic model that will be later on elaborated. Ricoeur strongly objects to the presentation of Husserlian phenomenology as a simple case of psychology of introspection. On the contrary, phenomenology inculcates the lesson that there is no apprehension of the self except through the detour of its objective expressions in the world. In short, the noesis can only be deciphered in the noema. See Pierre Gisel, “Paul Ricoeur,” Études théologiques et religieuses 49 (1974), No. 1, p. 32.
lations of willing are to be discerned in the forms of the "willed" which, as correlate of willing, command the description.

But what are the forms of the "willed"? First of all, the intentional object of decision is the project. The project then is the correlate of decision, the first moment of willing. However, the project only becomes real through effective action brought about by voluntary movement. This effective action or pragma is the correlate of action, the second moment of willing. But the will still has to acquiesce to the necessity to which it cannot change. The detour into the voluntary makes us aware of this necessity which is the correlate of consent, the third moment of willing.

Recalling now the principle of reciprocity between the voluntary and the involuntary, Ricoeur announces that the articulations of willing, not only help in delineating the forms of the willed, but also serve as points of reference for the involuntary structures. Thus, to understand the project as object of decision, one must consider the motives for it. In the same way that motives have to be referred to choice, the bodily abilities as organs of voluntary motion have to be related to effort. Finally, to understand the necessity to which the will must consent, one has to inquire into the three forms of the absolutely involuntary—character, the unconscious, and biological life. Neither motive nor organ, this absolutely involuntary is the invincible situation that limits the will.

After giving a summary overview of Freedom and Nature, let us now turn to the understanding of the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary. This reciprocity may be taken as a struggle against a "dualism of understanding" which Ricoeur also calls a "dualism of method"

...because it is instigated by the very method by which consciousness interprets its own life and because it expresses the two directions of thought, the reflective direction which tends to a positing of the cogito by itself, and the direction of objectification which tends to absorb the body and all subjective life into the system of objects elaborated at the level of scientific consciousness.94

It is important to note that these two movements of thought are interdependent. At the same time that consciousness recoils upon itself and exiles itself in its capacity for reflection, it also expels outside itself the body and pushes it to the side of things.\textsuperscript{95} The task of understanding then is to reinsert these two opposing tendencies of consciousness within a more fundamental attitude—that of reciprocity.\textsuperscript{96} Thus, the recuperation will also take two directions, paralleling the movement of reflection and the movement of objectification: first, the reintegration of consciousness in the body, and second, the reintegration of the body in consciousness. Or to speak in a Marcellian manner, we have to make a “second reflection” to recuperate, first the non-reflective aspects of the voluntary, and second, the non-objective aspects of the involuntary.\textsuperscript{97}

As we have pointed out, the triadic structure of the voluntary and the involuntary gives rise to the three main parts of Freedom and Nature, namely, deciding: choice and motives, acting: voluntary motion and capabilities, and consenting: consent and necessity. Each main part follows Ricoeur’s horizontal procedure of describing, first, the voluntary structures; second, the involuntary structures; and third, their synthesis. Thus, the first part opens with the pure description of deciding, continues with the study of the bodily involuntary and motivation, and closes with the movement from hesitation to choice. The second part starts with the pure description of acting, goes on with the analysis of bodily spontaneity, and finishes with the discussion of moving and effort. The third part begins with the pure description of consenting, proceeds to examine the three forms of experienced necessity—character,

\textsuperscript{95} Ricoeur makes the observation that “the expulsion of the body beyond the circle of subjectivity” may be interpreted, from a certain viewpoint, as “the revenge of a subjectivity which feels exposed, abandoned, thrown into the world and has lost the naïveté of the original compact.” See VI, 21; FN, 18. See also “L’unité du volontaire et de l’involontaire comme idée-limite” (1951), pp. 4-5; “The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea” (1967), p. 95.

\textsuperscript{96} For Ricoeur, “reciprocity” and “practical mediation” are interchangeable terms. By “practical mediation,” he means “the pact, the connivance which binds the consenting will to its situation, to the absolute involuntary element reasserted in its subjectivity.” See “L’unité du volontaire et de l’involontaire comme idée-limite” (1951), p. 18; “The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea” (1967), p. 105.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., pp. 5, 9, 11; ibid., pp. 96, 99, 100.
the unconscious, and biological life—and concludes with the movement from refusal to consent.⁹⁸ One can, however, follow a *vertical* procedure in describing the reciprocal bond of the voluntary and the involuntary.⁹⁹ Here, one puts the accent on the *reintegration of consciousness in the body* and the *reintegration of the body in consciousness* by confronting, side by side the two aspects of this reintegration on the three levels of the will. We prefer to follow this *vertical* procedure in order to stress the primitive pact of the voluntary and the involuntary.¹⁰⁰

1. The reintegration of consciousness in the body

In this movement of reintegrating consciousness in the body, we must “pass beyond self-consciousness and see consciousness as adhering to its body, to all its involuntary life and through them, to a world of action ...”¹⁰¹ Our task here is to show this adherence of consciousness to its body on the three levels of the will: *deciding, acting,* and *consenting.*

a. Deciding

We begin with the *pure description of deciding.*¹⁰² Three aspects need to be pointed out: the *intentional* aspect that culminates in the *project*

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⁹⁸ One cannot but be awed here by the “triadic allure” of Ricoeur’s thought. According to Michel Philibert: “The setting up of a three-way colloquium, like the use of triologies and triptychs, signals an allure of Ricoeur that will mark his work from one end to the other and goes further than school rhetoric.” See Philibert, *Paul Ricoeur ou la liberté selon l’espérance,* p. 7 (my translation).

⁹⁹ This is actually Ricoeur’s procedure in his presentation of the theses of *Le volontaire et l’involontaire* before the Société Française de Philosophie. See “L’unité du volontaire et de l’involontaire comme idée-limite” (1951); “The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea” (1967).

¹⁰⁰ This is the same argument of Michel Renaud in the first Licentiate thesis on Ricoeur presented at the Institut Supérieur de Philosophie in Louvain. See Renaud, “Anthropologie et épistémologie chez Paul Ricoeur” (Licentiate thesis, Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1963), 247 p., esp. pp. 18, 33.


¹⁰² We may take this stage of pure description as an eidetic abstraction within the broad abstraction of the fault and Transcendence. Unlike the latter abstraction
the reflexive aspect that refers to myself, and the receptive aspect that brings out the motivation of willing.

Before analyzing the intentional aspect of decision, let us see the justification of the distinction between decision and voluntary action. It is possible to distinguish them because their interval is not necessarily one of time but of meaning: "It is one thing to indicate an action in a project, another thing to act bodily in conformity with the project." 103 The decision and its execution may either occur simultaneously or separately. In any case, the execution of a project is still its criterion. Notwithstanding this, "a decision can be separated in time from any corporeal execution, yet it is the power or capability for action (movement) which makes it an authentic decision." 104 This "power" differentiates a voluntary decision from a simple wish or command.

The intentionality of decision: the project

Against Descartes who defines thought in terms of self-consciousness, Ricoeur maintains with Husserl that the originality of thought lies in its intentionality—its outward movement towards an object. Before proving my existence to me, thought first relates me to the perceived, imagined, or willed object. 105 In this perspective, "to decide" means to turn myself to the project. Ricoeur offers us this definition of decision: it "...signifies, that is, designates in general, a future action which depends on me and which is within my power." 106 Unlike other types of judgments which "designate in general," 107 decision affirms that something is "to

which remains operative throughout the entire work, the former abstraction ceases at the close of this first stage. With its ceasing, we regain the presence of the body, lived duration, and the event of the Fiat of choice.

103 VI, 38; FN, 38 (Ricoeur's emphases). See also VI, 215, 400; FN, 230, 426.
104 VI, 39; FN, 40 (Ricoeur's emphases).
105 VI, 42, 363-364; FN, 42-43, 387.
106 VI, 42; FN, 43 (Ricoeur's emphases). See also "L'unité du volontaire et de l'involontaire comme idée-limite" (1951), p. 6; "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea" (1967), p. 96; "Méthodes et tâches d'une phénoménologie de la volonté" (1952), p. 117; "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will" (1967), in HAP, 216; HF, 68-69; FM, 78-79.
107 We follow Kohak's translation for "désigner à vide." See his note on this term in FN, XXXVI. From Husserl, Ricoeur borrows the two different ways of designating an object: "in general" (or "emptily") and "specifically" (or "concretely"). To designate
be done." Among practical judgments, decision further distinguishes itself in that it is a categorical affirmation of a personal action. In brief, I involve myself in the project which is to be done by me.

The most significant feature of the project is its future temporality: "To decide is to anticipate." The future is intended by an act within my power. But the future can also be intended by acts not within my power like a command, wish, desire, or fear. In such instances, I submit myself to the future. Far from equating it to the project of consciousness, Ricoeur holds that the future is not an act but the condition of an act, "the fundamental situation which makes possible the future dimension of the project of expectation and other acts." I do not project then a future; I project in the future. Here, we see that consciousness acts within the context of a future it does not create.

Decision, we have seen, signifies an action within my power. Ricoeur clarifies this power or capability of decision with the help of the idea of the possible. To dispel any ambiguity, theoretical possibility has to be distinguished from practical possibility: "An event becomes possible—a specific possibility—because I project it." This possibility of the project, however, has to accord itself with the possibility of the world which has an inflexible order. Both these possibilities converge together in the possibility of the body—its capacity to realize the project. These three forms of possibility, which are contemporaneous, do not exhaust the notion of the possible. The possible not only concerns the action but also the very being of the subject: "For in doing something, I make myself be. I am my own capacity for being." This theme of self-determination serves as the transition to the reflexive aspect of decision.

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in general is to signify an object having definite characteristics, without seeing or imagining its characteristics. To designate specifically is to perceive an object before me, seeing or even imagining its characteristics.

108 VI, 45; FN, 46.
109 VI, 48; FN, 48.
110 VI, 51; FN, 51-52 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
111 VI, 53; FN, 54.
112 VI, 54; FN, 55 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
The reflexivity of decision: self-determination

Ricoeur begins his analysis of the reflexive aspect of decision by pointing out the uncertainty and even unawareness of its reference to the self. The task then is to grasp how reflection is already implied in the action of the self on itself in decision. To achieve this, we have to take up the thematic self-affirmation “It is I who...” and work up to its conditions of possibility. It is primarily in a social context that I become aware of imputing my acts to myself. The experience of responsibility brings out clearly this reflexive imputation of myself:

Someone asks, who did that? I rise and reply, I did. Response—responsibility. To be responsible means to be ready to respond to such a question.\(^{113}\)

The conditions of the possibility of this self-affirmation are revealed by way of two complementary analyses. In the first analysis, Ricoeur shows that prior to the reflexive self-imputation in the action to be done, there is a prereflexive self-imputation. Implied therefore in the reference to the project is an active and non-observant prereflexive reference to the self. In the second analysis, he warns us against interpreting the self as two selves—the one as willing and the other as acting. It is simply that prior to the reflexive judgment, there is a primordial identity of self-consciousness as subject and as object. Thus, the reflexive self-imputation becomes understandable only when taken in dialectic with the prereflexive self-imputation in the project.

The reference of the project to the self leads to the question of the possibility of the self: “Am I who introduces possibilities into the world not ultimately myself possible?”\(^{114}\) To answer this question, it is neces-

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\(^{114}\) VI, 60; FN, 62 (Ricoeur’s emphasis)
sary to be guided by two methodological rules: first, one has to start from the implicit prerelative imputation rather than from the explicit reflexive judgment; second, one has to uncover the most primitive possibility of myself when I determine myself. If self-determination is the same as determining one's action in the world, what possibility of myself comes up with the possibility of action opened up by the project? Before answering this question, one can object that self-determination entails the loss of all possibilities. To this objection, Ricoeur answers that the project precisely opens possibilities only when I intend it. Besides, the description of the project obliges us to seek first of all those possibilities which I open up by deciding rather than those which I lose by it. In deciding, I bring about my possibility in a twofold way: first, with regard to bodily gestures that fulfill this possibility, and second, with regard to the future reality of my life-span and my decisions. My possibility then depends on my doing. Unlike the being of a thing which is determined by something other than itself, my being "creates itself in doing and affirms itself to the extent to which it does—it is being which determines itself."¹¹⁵ The will, in deciding, aims at a project that opens up possibilities in the world and in myself. This is not an arbitrary willing, however, as decision has its reasons or motives.¹¹⁶ What then is the relation of decision to motives? With this question, we touch on the receptive aspect of decision.

The receptivity of decision: motivation

Ricoeur sees the task here as threefold: first, to grasp the distinctive relation of decision to motives; second, to inquire—if motive is a value—whether a pure description of willing implies an ethics; and third, to articulate the link between motivation, self-determination, and the project.

¹¹⁵ VI, 63; FN, 65.
¹¹⁶ One recognizes here the marked difference between Ricoeur's theory of choice and Sartre's theory of choice. In a well-written comparative study, Smitheram painstakingly shows that Sartre's description of motivation is one-sided in that it neglects the involuntary aspects of choice in the act of resolution. Smitheram concludes by arguing for the superiority of Ricoeur's position over Sartre's voluntaristic interpretation. See Verner Smitheram, "Sartre and Ricoeur on Freedom and Choice," Philosophy Research Archives 3 (1 April 1977), No.-2, 34 p., esp. p. 27 (mimeographed).
What then is the relation of decision to motives? This distinctive relation is susceptible of a reductive naturalistic interpretation for even language conspires to confuse a motive with a cause. It is imperative then to distinguish the one from the other. A cause, which belongs to the level of objects, unfailingly produces its effect while a motive inclines the will without compelling it.\textsuperscript{117} The nature of a cause is “to be knowable and understood prior to its effects” while the essence of a motive is “not to have a complete meaning apart from the decision which refers to it.”\textsuperscript{118} Furthermore, the relation of cause to effect is irreversible—the cause confers its meaning on the effect. The relation between decision and motive, however, is reciprocal—the motive can serve as the “support” or “base” of a decision only if the will bases itself on it.\textsuperscript{119} The motive determines the will only if the will determines itself. It is a question of a circle—the circle of motive and decision—which makes us recognize the basic essence of motivation as basis for decision.

After distinguishing a motive from a cause, Ricoeur attempts to demarcate the line between pure description of willing and ethics. First of all, ethics is an abstraction in that it distances itself from the thrust of the project; it moves from the reasons for the project to the reasons for the reasons. Secondly, ethics is a radicalization in that it is a fundamental questioning, not without anxiety, of the ultimate ground of value. Does a pure description of willing then imply an ethics? Ricoeur answers in the affirmative:

Pure description of willing calls for a specifically moral consideration of valuation. What is the relation between valuation and the a priori on the one hand and history on the other?\textsuperscript{120}


\textsuperscript{118} VI, 65; FN, 67. See also VI, 135; FN, 142.

\textsuperscript{119} According to Ricoeur, a motive is given its complete amplitude by saying that it serves as a “support” or “base” for choice. This metaphor of “support” holds together two different notions coordinated in motive: “...the idea of meaning and the idea of a force: a meaning inasmuch as the motive is a justification, a legitimization, a reason to or for; a force to the extent that the motive initiates a movement, inclines or entails.” See “Philosophy of Will and Action” (1967), p. 22 (Ricoeur’s emphases). See also “Liberté” (1967), pp. 979-980; “Phenomenology of Freedom” (1975), p. 188.

\textsuperscript{120} VI, 74; FN, 77 (Ricoeur’s emphasis).
In other words, if values are transcendent and universal, how do they become historically present? It is within the basic context of the motivation of a specific project that values reveal themselves. At the level of pure description, a value only appears to me as a possible motive of decision: "...a value does not truly reveal itself until I adopt it, base myself on it, call on it as a motive of." With Max Scheler, Ricoeur subscribes to the idea that a motive "presents" or "historializes" a value in the sense that the latter is linked to a definite history which I invent. Here, we are confronted with the paradox of value:

...it is not completely a product of history, it is not invented, it is recognized, respected, and discovered—but only to the extent of my capacity for making history, for inventing history.\footnote{VI, 80; FN, 83.}

Values depend upon me in that they are mediated through my action. But I also depend upon values for they only appear as long as I am willing to serve them.\footnote{VI, 72; FN, 75.}

A final question still remains to be answered: How do we link together in decision the determination by a motive and the determination by the self? The nexus of these two determinations is to be looked for in the project which shows the liaison of a specific activity and receptivity in decision. Willing is not a pure act. To will to do something is to accept reasons for it. Ricoeur sheds light on the juncture of the active and receptive aspects in willing by an exegesis of four sets of metaphors—the metaphors of perception, adhesion, commandment and obedience, and motion.\footnote{VI, 73; FN, 75. See also "Dimensions d'une recherche commune" (1948), p. 841.} To take only the metaphor of commandment and obedience, which is foremost applicable to the intersubjective realm, we see that

...the essence of the voluntary act of the capacity for being involves at the same time something like a commandment—to the possible,

\footnote{VI, 75-78; FN, 78-81; "Philosophy of Will and Action" (1967), p. 24. Here, Ricoeur draws heavily from the work of an early phenomenologist, Alexander Pfänder—Motiv und Motivation (1911).}
the body, the world—and something like obedience—of known, respected, and accepted values.\(^{125}\)

By an examination of these metaphors, we are made to realize that the so-called freedom of indifference repudiates the very essence of motivation. The responsible act distinguishes itself from the arbitrary act which does not respond to any value at all. We are also steered away from the dilemma of either determinism or indeterminism. Determinism confuses motive for a cause; indeterminism ignores the basic relation of project to motivating value.

A privileged experience that throws light on this relation is the experience of responsibility wherein the feeling of power implied by the thrust of the project and the feeling of valuing coincide. Even our language brings out this coincidence: "If, in effect, I assume charge of things and beings for which I respond, it is to the extent to which I feel charged with them, that is, to which I receive responsibility for them."\(^{126}\) In responding to a value, I do not only feel responsible for but also responsible to because value is also "the suprapersonal bond of a group of men to which I dedicate myself."\(^{127}\) In the act of willing, I seek to base myself on a motivating value, which, in turn, confers me with a project for its elaboration. One discovers here the primordial bond of project, self-determination, and motivating value. To shatter this bond is to lose the unity of the act of willing. Self-determination, without motives, results in absurdity; self-determination, without a project, leads to anxiety; the lack of self-determination itself in the ability to choose a value ends in a scruple.\(^{128}\)

Let us sum up the pure description of deciding. The properly reflexive moment of decision—self-determination—is only understood by starting from the intentional moment—the project—which always in-

125 VI, 77; FN, 80.
126 VI, 78; FN, 81 (emphases added).
127 VI, 79; FN, 82. One notices here Ricoeur’s effort to maintain again the paradox of values. I do not invent values; I respond to them. But in responding to them, I play a creative role in elaborating them.
128 In connection with this, Ricoeur makes the following remark on reflection as “passion”: “But reflection itself is already a passion when it takes the place of action: in being overly concerned with myself, I keep myself from living, that is, from doing and making myself.” See VI, 343; FN, 366.
cludes a receptive moment—motivation. To decide is to say “I decide to,” “I decide myself,” and “I decide because of.”

Here, we remark that by subordinating the reflexive aspect to the intentional aspect, Ricoeur orients his analysis of decision in a direction counter to both the movement of reflection that posits consciousness by itself and the movement of objectification that absorbs the body into a system of objects. Furthermore, by acknowledging the receptive aspect of decision, he shows us that motives acquire their complete significance only in relation to a will which they generally affect and which in turn determines them by basing itself upon them. Finally, by safeguarding the important distinction between motive and cause, he brings us to see the first instance of the “practical mediation” or “reciprocity” of the voluntary and the involuntary: motive and project are strictly reciprocal in the sense that the development of my choice goes hand in hand with the maturation of my reasons or motives. This is especially illustrated by the case of the hesitating consciousness. It is worthwhile to look at this hesitating consciousness more closely.

To begin with, we have to recognize in hesitation a certain mode of being of the capacity for choice. Hesitation relates itself to an eventual choice in two ways: “Hesitation presents itself at the same time as falling short of a choice and as an attempt at choosing, but the choice to which it refers is always conceived as absent, impossible, desired, delayed or feared.” On the one hand, hesitation is a deficient willing, an “in-decision” that is often painfully experienced. According to Ricoeur, it would be a serious mistake to confuse indecision with the “possibility” proper to my being. What I experience in indecision is not my “possibility” but my “im-possibility.” On the other hand, hesitation is a perplexed willing that seeks to orient itself. In any case, the three basic features of the formed decision are sketched in it. These basic sketches make us aware of the defects of indecision.

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130 VI, 131; FN, 137.
Even when I am unable to choose a definite project, I do not cease to intend practical actions which depend on me. In this sense, the intentionality of a hesitating will differs from that of a deciding will only with regard to the modality of their projects. In hesitation, the project takes on a conditional mode which affects its elements. Thus, the indicator "to be done" qualifying an action as practical becomes problematic; the future of the project remains uncertain; and the possibility of the body appears unalerted. In hesitation, the imputation of the project to myself also assumes a conditional status. This modification of my relation to the project follows from the modification of the project. Just as the affirmation of a project implies the affirmation of the I who will do, the uncertainty of a project also implies the uncertainty of the "I" which projects. This self in a conditional mode must be grasped rightly. It is neither an absent nor triumphant consciousness but a "militant consciousness" that already exists as will by its call to choice in the midst of the doubt which is itself.¹³¹ Finally, in hesitation, the motives take on a conditional mode. The indetermination of the motives is not due to my absence of relation to them but to the non-termination of my choice. If a motive only attains its full significance in relation to a choice, it follows that a wavering choice bases itself on wavering motives. As a hesitating consciousness then, I exist as a tentative self intending a tentative project supported by tentative motives.

After this discussion of the hesitating consciousness, we become even more aware of the articulation within the will between the active moment of decision and the receptive moment of motivation. We now realize that at the heart of the will, there is inscribed "a particular receptivity which one has no right to confuse with a simple passivity."¹³² Ricoeur points out that this special receptivity precisely enables us to resolve the false antimony between value and freedom.¹³³ Values only

¹³¹ VI, 134; FN, 141.
¹³³ Ibid., pp. 23-24; Ibid., pp. 108-109. Ricoeur aims to steer away the reflection on values from two kinds of impasse: the first is to deny the receptive moment of the will, thus positing an objective world of values that oppresses freedom; the second is to stress so much the transcendence of values that it is incomprehensible how an ethical history or a moral experience comes about. By locating values in the moment of
present themselves in the process of elaborating motives. In turn, this elaboration of motives occurs only in reciprocal relation to the elaboration of choice. On the one hand, it belongs to the essence of a free choice to be receptive to values which make values appear here and now for me. On the other hand, it belongs to the essence of values to manifest themselves only as possible motives for a choice which fulfills their meaning by basing itself on them. Ricoeur remarks that when we see later on how the body or involuntary life transcends itself in an affective representation of values, we will have observed the two sides of the “practical mediation” on this first level of the will. But now, we turn to the second level of the will—acting.

b. Acting and Moving

We also begin with the pure description of acting and moving which consists of two points. The first point examines the intentionality of acting and moving as well as their intentional correlate—the pragma. The second point discusses the relation of voluntary motion to the dualism of understanding which breaks its unity into heterogeneous moments.

Before delving on the intentionality of acting and moving, let us remark the intimate bond between action and decision. These two functions of the will can only be separated by an act of abstraction for their distinction is not on the level of time but on the level of meaning. Action is not superficially added to decision from without but is integrally linked to it from within: “This means that the will actually decides about itself only when it changes its body and through it the world.”134 If I do nothing, I did not truly will.

Action was already present in the feeling of power that accompanied the project. It was already prefigured in the act of motivation. In a way, motivation is a form of action. All my knowledge or “the body of my thought” has to be moved like my own body.135 However, in the movement of my body and the movement of my thought, I encounter

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motivation, Ricoeur prepares the recognition of the possibility of an ethical a priori as well as the possibility of an ethical history.

134 VI, 188; FN, 202.
135 VI, 190; FN, 204. See also VI, 205, 277-278, 311; FN, 220, 294, 329; HF, 73; FM, 87.
a resistance. That is why the full description of the will has to take effort into account. To truly will, I must have mastery over the movement of my body and the movement of my thought; effort represents this possession.\(^{136}\)

The intentionality of acting and moving: the pragma

Two difficulties come up in the description of acting according to Ricoeur. The first difficulty refers to the presence of action—its aspect as an event. We can say nothing about action as an event except its relation to the project which it "realizes" or "fulfills." If "to decide" is "to intend emptily" (désigner à vide), then "to act" is "to realize fully" (réaliser en plein) my project.\(^{137}\) In carrying out the project, action goes a step farther than the intentional fulfillment of the project in thinking:

But what distinguishes the realization of a project and the fulfillment of an intention by an intuition is that this realization is my work; it is a bodily operation which joins reality to thought. Can we describe this realization constituted by action?\(^{138}\)

To this first difficulty is added a second difficulty. If acting surpasses thinking in the narrow sense of "empty intention," is it included in thinking in the broad sense—in the integral Cogito? More precisely, can we speak about the intentionality of acting? Avoiding the solution of diametrically opposing thought as light and action as force, Ricoeur opts for their integration by broadening the notion of intentionality and even of thought itself:

Thought as a whole, including bodily existence, is not only light but also force. The power of producing events in the world is a kind

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\(^{136}\) VI, 190, 291; FN, 205, 308.

\(^{137}\) VI, 191-192; FN, 205-206; "L'unité du volontaire et de l'involontaire comme idée-limite" (1951), p. 8; "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea" (1967), pp. 97-98. Here, we follow Kohak's translation. O'Connor, in the above-cited article, renders "désigner à vide" as "to designate in outline."

\(^{138}\) My own translation for the third and last paragraph under "1. Le présent de l'agir," omitted in the English translation: "Mais ce qui distingue la réalisation d'un projet et le remplissage d'une intention par une intuition, c'est que cette réalisation est mon œuvre, elle est une opération corporelle qui joint le réel à la pensée. Peut-on décrire cette réalisation constituée par l'agir?" See VI, 192.
of intentional relation to things and to the world.\textsuperscript{139}

As "an original relation of subjectivity to the world," acting then has to be understood as a "practical intentionality."\textsuperscript{140} This carries the advantage of incorporating force within the experience of the Cogito. It is difficult to grasp this voluntary force which is not a representation but a production of a change in the world ‘through’ the motion of a personal body ...."\textsuperscript{141} We need to safeguard ourselves from the tendency to naturalize this voluntary force in order to grasp acting as a practical intentionality—"a consciousness which is an action, a consciousness which presents itself as matter, a change in the world through a change in my body."\textsuperscript{142}

What is the intentional correlate of acting? Ricoeur warns us not to answer too hastily that it is a movement of the body or a sum of its movements. The terminus of action is not the body but through it, what Ricoeur terms the pragma:

What is "acted" (coining a term to correspond to "perceived") is a transformation of my environment itself, this is the factum corresponding to facere, the "done" as passive perfect, the "being done by me," the pragma.\textsuperscript{143}

The complete pragma is expressed by the entire predicate which answers the question: What are you doing? For example, when I give water to the plants in my room, the complete pragma is the giving-of-water-to-the-plants-in-my-room-by-myself. Basing himself on the studies of Gestalt psychology, Ricoeur points out the capacity of the pragma to elicit the world as a field of action, a milieu open to countless practical and technical changes. The world is not only a spectacle I observe but more profoundly, a situation which I transform through my action. Thus, action binds me to the world which presents a task for me.

\textsuperscript{139} VI, 193; FN, 207.
\textsuperscript{140} VI, 194, 291; FN, 208, 308-309 (emphasis added).
\textsuperscript{141} VI, 194; FN, 208 (emphasis added). See also VI, 201-202; FN, 216.
\textsuperscript{142} VI, 194; FN, 209.
\textsuperscript{143} VI, 195-196; FN, 210. See also HF, 73; FM, 86; "Philosophy of Will and Action" (1967), pp. 17-18.
Having located the terminus of action in the pragma, what then is the significance of the body in acting? To answer this question is to explicate the unnoticed "mediating function" of the body: "...the body is not the object of action but its organ."\textsuperscript{144} From this precision flows the task of descriptive phenomenology to distinguish the specific organ-pragma relation from objective relations which obscure it. For instance, to see the body as a \textit{tool} or \textit{instrument} of action is misleading:

An instrument is what prolongs the organ, it is outside the body; it represents a material rather than an organic mediation between myself and the action produced.\textsuperscript{145}

Furthermore, to liken the organ to a tool is to fall into an infinite and absurd regression. If the tool is an extension of the organ, then the organ in turn would be an extension of willing which would also be then organic. This conversion of organ into an instrument results in the body-object.

After this clarification, Ricoeur nuances "moving" from "acting." Moving is a modification of acting, consequent to a displacement of attention from the pragma to the organ. In daily action, there is a continual diverting of attention from the pragma to the tool and to the organ. But what primarily discloses the body's mediating function is its resistance that is experienced in the exertion of effort:

This situation, which is propitious to reflection on the body, is what we ordinarily call effort. Effort is the moving itself, made more complex by an awareness of resistance.\textsuperscript{146}

Effort is conducive to the reflection on the body but it can also lead reflection astray by reducing the description of moving to the relation between effort and organic resistance. One then replaces the continuity between body and willing by a hard opposition. To prevent this, we must understand resistance from the idea of \textit{docility}:

\textsuperscript{144} VI, 198; FN, 212 (Ricoeur's emphases).

\textsuperscript{145} VI, 198; FN, 213. The Marcellian influence pervades Ricoeur's distinction between the body as \textit{organ} and the body as \textit{instrument} of action. Ricoeur specifically refers to Marcel's \textit{Journal métaphysique}. See also \textit{MJ}, 175.

\textsuperscript{146} VI, 200; FN, 214. See also VI, 292; FN, 309.
...the essence of moving is that the body ceases to will. Resistance can be understood only as a complication of the body which from another viewpoint, corresponds to willing.\(^{147}\)

I also become aware of my body as an organ of movement when I reflect on its capacities. For Ricoeur, a capacity is "the moving itself, retained apart from the act, a potential moving."\(^{148}\) These capacities will be dealt with in the forms of bodily spontaneity. For the present, it is enough to note that the consciousness of moving is difficult to grasp precisely because this consciousness is non-representative but rather active.

The relation of voluntary motion to the dualism of understanding

We have seen that in order to become aware of the noninstrumental relation of the body to acting, we must shift our attention from the pragma to the body as mediating organ. However, this awareness of my body as mediation is also accompanied by the consciousness of effort. Thus, we become aware of the body's mediating function only through its resistance. There is then a paradox in that acting achieves its full significance only when the body as mediating organ effaces itself in the pragma. As soon as I become conscious of my body as organ of acting, I also become conscious of acting as effort. I break then the "practical mediation." It is here that we must call upon "second reflection" to give us some inkling of "the original bond between the acting will, the moved body, and the world acted upon."\(^{149}\)

The difficulty of reflecting on voluntary motion lies then in the fact that it presents immediate consciousness with an indivisible operation which can only be understood by being broken up. The dualism, inherent to understanding itself partitions thought to subjectivity and movement to objectivity. To recover the lived unity of moving and willing, we have "to rediscover a single universe of discourse in which thought and movement would be homogeneous"—the universe of \(\text{sub-}\)

\(^{147}\) VI, 200; FN, 214-215 (Ricoeur's emphasis).
\(^{148}\) VI, 200; FN, 215. In Ricoeur's vocabulary, a capacity is synonymous with skill (knowing how) in the sense of power (being able to).
jectivity. At this point, Ricoeur’s method of diagnostics becomes a vital aid in understanding the moving body. For indeed, the whole sense of this diagnostic method is not the coordination of parallel approaches or realities but a restoration of “the subjective mark of movement, bodily motion in first person (and also, as we have said, in second person).” By his conception of diagnostics, Ricoeur ventures farther from the Husserl of the Ideen and nearer to the Husserl of the Lebenswelt. Ricoeur does not ignore the fact that this broadening of Husserl’s descriptive method threatens to explode it. Yet this should not discourage phenomenology from elaborating the “indices” of the mystery of incarnation. Among these “indices,” a privileged position is occupied by “the elementary experience of being a voluntary force, of being able to move my body and of moving it in fact.”

If there is no parallelism between moving in the first person and moving considered as an objective event, still the remarkable studies of Gestalt psychology can be useful in the diagnostic of the object-body in relation to personal body. This objective knowledge, however, has only a diagnostic value to my reflection about myself and my body. This is not the place to present a detailed comparison of the understanding of action by phenomenology and the explanation of behavior by the Gestalt School. Suffice it to say that the Gestaltist approach reverts to an objective causal explanation on a physiological level while Ricoeur’s phenomenological approach takes recourse in the common subjectivity of the voluntary and the involuntary. A prerequisite for this phenomenological understanding is the radical correction of two false notions regarding consciousness and behavior: first, consciousness is not the disembodied consciousness revealed by introspection; second, behavior is not merely the objectivated behavior described through external observation. In sum, Ricoeur rejects the false dilemma of introspection and behaviorism “by formulating concepts of subjectivity derived

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150 VI, 203; FN, 217. See also VI, 12, 193-194 note 1, 211; FN, 9, 208 note 3, 226.
151 We discuss Ricoeur’s theory of diagnostics more intensively below. See pp. 44-47.
152 VI, 204; FN, 218 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
153 VI, 204-205; FN, 219 (Ricoeur’s emphasis).
equally from perception of the self and from understanding of the behavior of the other as a second person.”

We have seen above how the immediate unity of willing and moving is broken up by the dualism of understanding. Ricoeur now shows that this immediate unity itself already manifests a lived duality. This “dramatic” duality makes us aware that the voluntary mystery of the body is always a repossession of the body’s involuntary usage:

...voluntary motion of the body does not present itself as a native power of an imperium over an inert body but as a dialogue with a bodily spontaneity which calls forth the reign of the hegemonikon.

Thus, if what is first given is a debate with our body, the description of the involuntary should seek to reveal that “simplicitas in vitalitate’ which is more basic than all duality.” It will be the aim then in the analyses of bodily spontaneity to show how the involuntary functions of movement—preformed skills, emotions, and habits—become appropriated by the will.

c. Consenting

We conclude the movement of the reintegration of consciousness in the body with the pure description of consenting. Two aspects will be briefly treated: first, the intentionality of consent as well as its intentional correlate—the necessity, and second, the structure of consenting itself.

The intentionality of consent: the necessity

In an intentional analysis, we always need to keep in mind that the forms of willing are differentiated by their object and the way they intend it. In this way, we are able to distinguish the first form of willing, the act of deciding, which bases itself on motives; the second form of willing, the act of moving, which activates bodily abilities; and the third form of willing, the act of consenting, which acquiesces to necessity. All

154 VI, 212; FN, 227.
155 VI, 213; FN, 227.
156 VI, 213; FN, 228 (Ricoeur is quoting Maine de Biran).
these forms show the same will from the three different viewpoints of legitimacy, efficacy, and patience.

But what makes us aware of the invincible necessity that is the intentional correlate of consent? It is a set of facts which can neither be taken up as motives nor as organs of the will. These irreducible facts which "share the common element of escaping all appreciation as well as all alteration by the will" are already encountered in the analyses of motivation and effort.¹⁵⁷ Let us only take here the case of motivation. All motivation is irremediably particular, incomplete, and contingent because it is limited by each one’s character, unconscious, and life. To use Ricoeur’s own words, my character is "the unique perspective from which all value appears," my unconscious "the background of my biography ... which I cannot reach without the mediation of a third person who must interpret it for me," and my life "a vital fundamental situation which is ...the condition and even the limitation of the Cogito."¹⁵⁸ Character, the unconscious, and life are the three principal directions of the "bodily necessity" to which I must consent.¹⁵⁹

The structure of consenting

But what does it mean to consent? Since it is difficult to describe immediately the essence of consenting, Ricoeur delineates it gradually by comparing it first, with a theoretical judgment, second, with the practical attitude implied in voluntary motion, and third, with a kind of possession. Consent, if it resembles a judgment, is far from being theoretical because it is not a passive contemplation but "an active adoption of necessity."¹⁶⁰ To consent is nothing else but to take upon oneself. In this sense, consent is nearer to a practical judgment like that of decision. Like decision, consent expresses an imperative: so be it! But unlike de-

¹⁵⁷ VI, 319; FN, 341.
¹⁵⁹ VI, 321; FN, 343 (Ricoeur’s emphasis). Ricoeur also uses the terms "situation" and "condition" to refer to third form of the involuntary. See VI, 323 note 1, 325; FN, 345 note 2, 348.
¹⁶⁰ VI, 322; FN, 344. See also “Méthodes et tâches d’une phénoménologie de la volonté” (1952), pp. 118-119; “Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will” (1967), p. 217.
cision, consent is an imperative that does not anticipate a future project but acquiesces instead to a necessity which is already determined. Does consent then resemble the effort of voluntary motion? Yes, insofar as consent is a type of action which also confronts reality with the entire body in order to seek its expression. Nevertheless, consenting is the opposite of moving in that “it is specifically willing without being able, a powerless effort, but one which converts its powerlessness into a new grandeur.” 161 To consent is “to make a necessity my own.” This expression leads Ricoeur to compare consent with a kind of possession in view of further approximating the essence of consent. Like possession, consent does not transform the order of things but the relation of some of them to me. Unlike possession, however, consent is not an inflexible and rigid relation. If there is a better word to describe consent, it is patience:

Patience actively supports what it undergoes. It acts inwardly according to the necessity to which it yields. Consent is patience, as effort is effectiveness, and choice legitimacy. 162

Thus, after successive approximations, a more positive definition of the essence of consenting is arrived at: “Consent is the movement of freedom towards nature in order to become reunited with its necessity and convert it into itself.” 163

At stake then in consent is no other than the ultimate reconciliation of freedom and nature, of the voluntary and the involuntary pursued through the three forms of the will. Decision “intends emptily” a project in the future; effort “realizes fully” this project in the present, thus effecting the bond of freedom and nature. But effort, in encountering bodily resistance, makes us aware that the spontaneity of the body is limited by an invincible necessity whose three manifestations are character, the unconscious, and life. Here, consent comes to achieve the unfinished effort of voluntary action to extend the realm of freedom even into the region of necessity whose nature cannot be altered by the will.

This pure description of consenting, however, brings up three questions. Doesn’t the conversion of necessity into freedom presuppose a

161 VI, 323; FN, 345.
162 VI, 324; FN, 346.
163 VI, 325; FN, 347.
theoretical proportion between the two terms united in consent? Furthermore, doesn't the conversion presuppose a practical reconciliation between the necessity experienced within ourselves and the wishes of our freedom? Finally, doesn't the conversion of necessity into freedom presuppose an ultimate agreement between the three forms of the will—deciding, acting, and consenting?

Let us briefly take up the first question which refers to a psychological difficulty. If the objective explanations of scientific psychology seem more suitable than subjective experience in knowing character, the unconscious, and life, how then can we discover necessity in the first person? Necessity itself seems to demand the distance of objectivity, not only as a matter of method but as a matter of urgency. As in the articulation between motives and decision, between capacities and action, the task here is "to find the subjective indices of necessity within us, necessity such as it affects us and such as we experience it as a mode of existence."164 In the light of this task, a psycho-physiological dualism—which combines objective necessity and inner freedom together—becomes untenable. For instance, if one conceives character, the unconscious, and life as objects of science, there is no way of reintroducing a subject consciousness. This impasse leads us then to discover that only a lived experience of necessity "can be matched with the freedom of consent, for only an internal experience can be partial with respect to freedom and call forth an act of the will which it completes."165 Does this imply then that we neglect the scientific knowledge of character, the unconscious, and life? Not in the least. According to Ricoeur, this scientific knowledge still constitutes a necessary detour, providing an index of necessity.

Let us briefly take up the second question which refers to a philosophical difficulty. What is the precise significance of the conviction in the final accord between necessity and freedom that animates all philosophy of the voluntary and the involuntary? For Ricoeur, this conviction renders possible a reconciliation between necessity and freedom on a higher level. But if there is a theoretical incommensurability of necessity and freedom, it is because of their practical incompatibility. This

164 VI, 327; FN, 350.
165 VI, 329; FN, 351.
practical incompatibility can be presented in two ways: on the one hand, necessity is a practical negation of freedom; on the other hand, freedom is a practical refusal of necessity.\textsuperscript{166}

Since the active pole of refusal confirms the passive pole of necessity, it is better to explicate first the negation implied in the three expressions of invincible necessity to which I must consent.\textsuperscript{167} Firstly, where is the negation in the fact of being or having a character? It is found in the particularity of my character that constrains me: "Character makes me a 'someone,' a 'Jemeinigkeit'; personality (caractère) denies man and the singular denies the universal."\textsuperscript{168} Here is the first mode of the "Ohnmacht der Natur" before which I experience the "sorrow of finitude." Secondly, where is the negation in the fact of having an unconscious? It is found in the obscurity of my unconscious that overwhelms me. The unconscious, as a spontaneous power of unrecognized drives, represents my impotence. Consequently, "all self-possession is fringed with non-possession, the terrible is only a step away and with it all discord and folly."\textsuperscript{169} Here is the second mode of the "Ohnmacht der Natur" before which I experience the "sorrow of formlessness." Thirdly, where is the negation in life—in the fact of being subject to suffering, aging, and dying? Here, negation reaches its culminating point for life indeed sums up "all that I have not chosen and all that I cannot change."\textsuperscript{170} Life as structure reminds me that I am a plurality threatened by division. As a being extended in space, I am subject to the pain of suffering. Life as growth further reminds me that I am a plurality threatened by alienation. As a being dispersed in time, I am subject to the process of aging. Now this destructive process may be considered in two ways: on the one hand, as an irreversible and irrevocable event that happens to me; on the other hand, as an endless and discontinuous succession of events that only acquire meaning in the unity of a task or vocation. Life as birth reminds me of my contingency—I exist as a

\textsuperscript{166} VI, 418; FN, 445. See also VI, 21, 23 note 1; FN, 18, 20 note 9.

\textsuperscript{167} Ricoeur first mentions these three forms of invincible necessity in an essay of 1948 wherein he sketches some of the main themes subsequently developed in VI. See "L'expérience psychologique de la liberté" (1948), pp. 446, 449.

\textsuperscript{168} VI, 420; FN, 447. See also HF, 75-80; FM, 89-96.

\textsuperscript{169} VI, 422; FN, 449.

\textsuperscript{170} VI, 423; FN, 450. See also HF, 80-81; FM, 96-98.
pure fact and I do not posit myself in existence. I am but I could not have been! Here is the third mode of the "Ohnmacht der Natur" before which I experience the "sorrow of contingence."

To the negation of necessity, freedom answers with the negation of refusal. This refusal expresses itself in the threefold wish of absolute consciousness.171 The first wish is for totality whereby I refuse the constrictions of my character. The second wish is for self-transparency whereby I reject the shadows of my unconscious. The third wish is for self-sufficiency whereby I repudiate the contingency of my life. It is interesting to note that the last wish for aseity, the supreme desire of absolute consciousness, is indiscernible from the basic act of refusal. According to Ricoeur, there is a close link between the refusal of freedom and the triumphant self-positing of consciousness. For when the wish for excess freedom is frustrated, the human condition turns into a refused situation which is seen as absurd with the eyes of defiance and scorn.172 Suicide or revolt then presents itself as the foremost human possibility. Thus, consent as the third form of willing may be seen as the overcoming of this very refusal of the human condition. If consent were entirely fulfilled, it would bring about the coincidence of freedom and necessity. It would realize the fundamental meaning of being human. But this full consent remains an unachieved goal.

2. The reintegration of the body in consciousness

In this movement of reintegrating the body in consciousness, we must go beyond the objectification of the body and recover "the massive experience of being my body as a source of motives, as a focus of abilities, or as a background of necessity."173 Our task here is to articulate these three involuntary functions of the body that sustain the will

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172 VI, 438, 447 note 1; FN, 466, 476 note 26.

173 VI, 19; FN, 16 (emphasis added). See also VI, 13; FN, 10; "L'unité du volontaire et de l'involontaire comme idée-limite" (1951), p. 5; "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea" (1967), p. 96.
which, in turn, determines them by its choice, effort, and consent: *body as primordial motive, body as organ of movement, and body as invincible nature*. But first, we have to preface this phenomenological description with a brief discussion of Ricoeur’s notion of *diagnostics* which plays a key role in the recuperation of the non-objective aspects of the involuntary.

**The notion of diagnostics**

In what context does the notion of *diagnostics* arise?\(^{174}\) To answer this question, we have to recall that the empirical sciences reduce the *act* of a subject—with its two distinctive aspects, namely intentionality and reference to a self—into a *fact*.\(^{175}\) In degrading the experience of subjectivity, the “naturalistic viewpoint” of these sciences bring about the objectification of the *personal body*.\(^{176}\) To rediscover the personal body, the “naturalistic viewpoint” must give way to a “phenomenological viewpoint” which involves the insertion of the voluntary and the involuntary in the *same* universe of discourse—that of subjectivity.\(^{177}\)

Here, we locate Ricoeur’s major methodological presupposition—the homogeneous treatment of the voluntary and the involuntary. In other words, it is not allowed to treat the voluntary in terms of subjectivity while dealing with the involuntary in terms of empirical objectivity. The reintegration into consciousness of my existence as body demands nothing less than this homogeneous approach. In proceeding this way, do we not retreat into the incommunicable and private

\(^{174}\) To supplement this discussion of *diagnostics*, one may consult the following: Charles E. Reagan, “Ricoeur’s ‘Diagnostic’ Relation,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 8 (December 1968), No. 4, pp. 586-592; Don Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, pp. 27-32; Mary Gerhart, “Paul Ricoeur’s Notion of ‘Diagnostics’: Its Function in Literary Interpretation,” *The Journal of Religion* 56 (April 1976), No. 2, pp. 137-156, esp. pp. 142-145. While Reagan and Ihde discuss diagnostics as it functions in Ricoeur’s earlier texts, Gerhart considers diagnostics as it functions in Ricoeur’s later texts, more precisely, in his hermeneutical theory.

\(^{175}\) VI, 12, 13, 18-19; FN, 8, 10, 15.

\(^{176}\) VI, 14, 84, 195; FN, 11, 87, 210. We have decided to render Ricoeur’s *corps propre* variously as the “personal body” (Kohak’s translation), as “subject body,” and as “lived body” (to stress the affinity of Ricoeur’s *corps propre* to Merleau-Ponty’s *corps vécu*).

\(^{177}\) VI, 12-13, 122, 193-194 note 1, 211, 319; FN, 8-9, 128, 208 note 3, 226, 341.
experience of a subject? To this objection, Ricoeur replies that the *lived body* is also body in the second person and that *subjectivity* is the subject function of an intentional consciousness, equally applicable to the other and to myself. But isn’t this return to subjectivity a repudiation of the proven results of the empirical sciences? It is in answer to this objection that Ricoeur introduces the notion of *diagnostics.*

Obviously, Ricoeur is not unaware that the body and the involuntary are often better known in the experimental sciences. This appreciation for their value determines his decision “to enter into a close dialectic between the body as a personal body and the object body, to establish specific relations between the description of the Cogito and classical empirical psychology.” But what are these specific relations? And what is the distinction between the “personal body” and the “object body”? First of all, the distinction between the *subject body* and the *object body* does not coincide with the opposition of “two points of view towards myself, as such, unique, and towards other bodies, outside of myself but of two different frames of mind or attitudes—the “phenomenological” and the “naturalistic.” From the *naturalistic* view, the body is seen as *object body,* that is to say, “severed from the subject which each affects and expresses.” The object body is the body “for a pure disembodied spectator”; it is a “link in an even system of objects.” From the *phenomenological* view, the body is seen as *subject body*—the body lived as “someone’s body, a subject’s body, my body and your body.” This subject body is “reciprocal with the willing which I am”; it is the

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179 Unfortunately, Kohak translates *diagnostic* as “symptom” in FN, thus compounding the difficulty of tracing the passages on diagnostics. For instance, see VI, 87-88, 107, 279, 307, 387; FN, 91, 112, 295, 325, 412.

180 VI, 15; FN, 12.

181 VI, 13; FN, 10.

182 VI, 14; FN, 11.

183 VI, 119, 205; FN, 125, 220.

184 VI, 14; FN, 10 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
"existing I." To take the case of the personal body and the body as an object, what is meant by the "specific relations" instituted between them? This means that

...any moment of the Cogito can serve as an indication of a moment of the object body ... and each moment of the object body is an indication of a moment of the body belonging to a subject, whether of its overall affectivity or of some particular function.

For example, joy and anger may be expressed respectively by a smile and a snarl; a stomach ulcer may indicate a failure to cope with studies or with human relations. What impresses most Ricoeur is the second moment whereby the object body indicates the personal body. Here, there is truly a reversal of perspective for phenomenology now becomes the subjectivization of an empirical fact.

We may get the impression that the phenomenological viewpoint becomes a kind of culminating viewpoint. But Ricoeur reminds us that even the objectivity recovered from naturalism by the phenomenological viewpoint has to be related, in turn, to the non-expoundable original experience of existence. That is why the phenomenological concepts themselves will be used as "indications of a living experience in which we are submerged more than signs of mastery which our intelligence exercises over our human condition." Since there is no immediate knowledge of this living and mysterious experience, we can only attempt to keep clarifying it "by contrast and paradox, for we can conceive of mysteries only in terms of problems and at the limit of problems."

To sum up, we must note here that diagnostics is a question of the relation, not of two realities, but of two universes of discourse or two viewpoints of the same body; Furthermore, the two viewpoints do not coincide; they are neither cumulative nor parallel. Finally, diagnostics

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185 VI, 19, 33; FN, 16, 31.
186 VI, 16; FN, 13. See also VI, 84, 107; FN, 88, 112.
187 Following Ihde, we may distinguish two senses of diagnostics in VI: first, a weak sense which is that of correlation or equivalence, and second, a strong sense which is that of subjectivization or interiorization of an objective discourse. See Ihde, Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, pp. 31-32, 34, 39.
188 VI, 20; FN, 17 (Ricoeur's emphasis).
189 VI, 205; FN, 219. See also VI, 395; FN, 420.
is less of an *a priori intuition* and more of a *process of interpretation* to be slowly learned, in the same way a physician masters the medical analysis of symptoms. By proposing the use of diagnostics, Ricoeur contends that not only an *implicit* phenomenology lies concealed in the most objectivistic sciences but also that it can be made *explicit*. For this reason, Ricoeur argues for the close collaboration between phenomenology and the empirical sciences.¹⁹⁰

Granting this, isn’t my purely involuntary life finally inaccessible to me? This objection unfortunately misses the whole point behind Ricoeur’s enterprise. It is *not* a question of a phenomenology of the *purely* involuntary but of the *reciprocity* of the voluntary and the involuntary. I only grasp the involuntary *in relation to* the voluntary: “The involuntary is *for* the will and the will is *by reason of* the involuntary.”¹⁹¹ It is this methodological principle which now serves as a guideline in the description of the involuntary functions of the body.

*a. Body as Primordial Motive*

Here, the task is is “to *clarify* the experience of the corporeal involuntary within the limits of eidetic analysis of motivation and in tension with objective, empirical treatment of the body.”¹⁹² Two things need to be stressed. First, the clarification is still *within eidetic limits* insofar as the relation of the body to willing is seen in terms of the previously understood circular relation between motive and project. Second, the clarification takes into account the objective study of the body. Since affective existence shuns the light of reflection, a recourse must be taken in the approach of diagnostics.

¹⁹⁰ Ricoeur wishes to accord to both descriptive phenomenology and empirical psychology a certain degree of *autonomy*. At the same time, he sees “the need *in principle* for these two relatively autonomous efforts to understand themselves, each one, by and through the other.” See Alden L. Fisher, “Comments” to “Philosophy of Will and Action” (1967), pp. 45-46 (Fisher’s emphases). For an impressive study that takes as *leitmotiv* this striking paradox—the inseparable bond and inevitable confrontation between philosophy and non-philosophy—in Ricoeur’s thought, see G.-B. Madison, “Ricoeur et la non-philosophie,” *Laval théologique philosophique* 29 (October 1973), No. 3, pp. 227-241, esp. pp. 228-233.

¹⁹¹ VI, 82; FN, 86. See also VI, 8, 42, 65-66, 259-260, 403, 422; FN, 4, 42, 68, 275-276, 429, 449.

¹⁹² VI, 85; FN, 88 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
Three cycles comprise the progressively-broadening analysis of the body as a primordial source of motives: first, the nature of need; second, the motives and values on the level of the body; and third, the relation of the values illustrated by the body with regard to other motivating values.

The nature of need

Need, in a strict sense, refers to alimentary or sexual assimilation, that is to say, appetite. Now appetite shows itself as “an indigence and an exigence, an experienced lack of ... and an impulse towards ....”\(^{193}\) Here, lack and impulse are lived in the indivisible unity of an affect. Need is distinguished by these two essential aspects—its intentionality and its unity as lacuna and impetus.

The task of descriptive phenomenology is to recover these distinctive marks from the objectification of need in empirical psychology. The first step of this recuperative description is to see that need is not an inner sensation. When the empirical psychologist approaches need as an inner sensation, he disregards the intentionality as well as its unity as lack and impulse. Certainly, there is a convenience in dividing need into two elements—a sensation and a movement—capable of fitting into the “stimulus-response” schema. But for this schema, sensation duplicates certain physiological processes. One must lay bare the methodological prejudice here—that the affective is a mere translation of the physiological. The second step of the recuperative process is to see that need is not a reflex. While a reflex is “not assimilable to the will and must remain an alien body in the responsible conduct of the individual,” it is the nature of the impetus, which is indivisibly united with the lack, not to be a reflex but to be capable of “suspension” by the will.\(^ {194}\)

Let us now ask: How does bodily need become a motive which can incline the will without compelling it? Here, we must undertake the double analysis of the form of the motive and of the affective matter of the need. We reveal our humanity by our capacity to confront our needs and sometimes to sacrifice them. Although I cannot control need as lack; I can choose to refuse or delay its satisfaction. Doesn’t the person who

\(^{193}\) VI, 86; FN, 89. See also VI, 87; FN, 91; HF, 70; FM, 81.

\(^{194}\) VI, 89; FN, 92-93. See also VI, 101; FN, 105.
goes on a hunger strike show us that need is only one motive among others. But this need, insofar as it adheres to the underivable spontaneity of the body, is not like other motives. The body as existing is what "originally and initially reveals values."\textsuperscript{195} Need makes us aware of the receptivity of the will to values which it has not posited.

Under what conditions can need be a motive, if not like the others, at least among others? First, a negative condition: need is a motive if the conduct assuring its fulfillment is not an irresistible reflex. Second, a positive condition: what makes need a motive is the representation which regulates properly human conduct issuing from need. This representation raises need to the level of a motive for willing. It is thus in imagination—the imagination of the absent thing and of the way to attain it—that need attains a form and becomes a motive for the will. Here, imagination is understood by Ricoeur as "a manner of anticipating an absent reality on the background of the world."\textsuperscript{196} Imagination, however, can only give form to the vague experience of need because it assumes, in the absence of the thing, the role of perception which appraises it of its object and of the way to attain it.

With the recognition of the terminus of need by the imagination, need becomes desire. Ricoeur defines desire as:

\begin{quote}
...the present experience of need as lack and as urge, extended by the representation of the absent object and by anticipation of pleasure.\textsuperscript{197}
\end{quote}

The new and important aspect to understand is "the anticipation of pleasure" which gives to need its affective overtones. Like the representation of the absent object, the "anticipation of pleasure" is rendered possible by the imagination. This imagination of pleasure not only has a material aspect—the affective image of future pleasure—but also a formal aspect—a prereflective knowledge of value: "To anticipate a pleasure means to be ready to say 'this is good.'"\textsuperscript{198} This valuation is not yet a reflective judgment but it goes beyond the simple experience of lack

\textsuperscript{195} VI, 90; FN, 94. See also VI, 75, 82, 117; FN, 78, 85, 122.


\textsuperscript{197} VI, 97; FN, 101 (Ricoeur's emphases). See also VI, 99; FN, 104.

\textsuperscript{198} VI, 97; FN, 102
and the simple representation of the absent object. The function of pleasure then is to give need its form of value. In the lived experience of pleasure, this form of need is inseparable from its matter since the affective image of future pleasure also shows to the will the object of need as good. This form—the prereflective valuation of the good of the body—makes bodily need and pleasure not only a motive among other motives but as the primordial source of all other motives.

The motives and values on the level of the body

We draw attention to two points: first, the complexity and heterogeneity of values on the organic level; second, the necessity to unify the affective confusion of bodily existence by choice.

Bodily existence as affectivity neither constitutes a system nor a unified order.\(^{199}\) It is characterized by a multiple series of disparate values—pain and pleasure, the easy and the difficult. The will to live does not designate a central tendency from which the other tendencies would be derived. Life then on the organic level presents a “multiplicity which must be clarified and unified by the stroke of a de-cision.”\(^{200}\) What gives life therefore its unity? To be sure, this unity does not come from within the affective confusion of life but from without—death: “From dying, life receives all the simplicity of which it is capable ...”\(^{201}\) But my life is unified by death only insofar as it is a sacrifice—an affirmation of values. The paradox here is that my life only appears as a value when it is, at the same time, threatened by death and transcended by other values. We must add then that life receives its unity from death and other values. For this reason, we have to understand the relation of the values and the motives on the organic level to the total field of other values and motives in order to realize the complexity and heterogeneity of motives on which the will bases itself.

\(^{199}\) VI, 136-137, 140; FN, 143, 147.
\(^{200}\) VI, 115; FN, 121. See also VI, 123; FN, 129.
\(^{201}\) VI, 116; FN, 121.
The relation of the values illustrated by the body with regard to other motivating values

In this last cycle, Ricoeur brings out the relevance of the French sociological analyses of "collective representations" to a better understanding of the body as a primordial source of motives. These sociological analyses have the merit of making us aware of "collective representations" as sources of motives, other than organic needs. What must be criticized however, is the way these "collective representations" are transformed into forces or "tendencies which mechanically compete with organic tendencies" in a naturalistic psychology. Thus, the "collective representations" are treated more as causes rather than motives.

Eidetic analysis helps us to rediscover the role of the Cogito in the evaluation of social imperatives. It does not only remind us that a motive is not to be identified with a cause but it also points out that there exists a formal resemblance between the affectivity of the collective representation and the affectivity of the organic level. This formal resemblance enables me to understand the relations between my body and myself, and between my history and myself in an analogical manner: "Just as I have not chosen my body, I have not chosen my historical situation but both the one and the other are the locus of my responsibility."202 Both my body and history are motives that incline without compelling me. For ultimately, it is I who evaluates the values revealed by them; it is I who decides to make them motives for my choice.

Let us sum up our findings in this inquiry on the lived body as a primordial source of motives. First of all, my life does not present a simple value but a level of heterogeneous values; it is a multiplicity that awaits to be unified by choice. Secondly, there is a conflict between the realm of organic values and the still broader realm of social values. This conflict, which is felt in the experience of sacrifice, has to be resolved by choice. Finally, conflicts abound even within the realm of social values. All these make us realize the broad spectrum and complexity of motivation that is offered to human willing.

In this analysis, we see how the most elementary need concerns the Cogito insofar as it brings into play an affective imagination which is already a prereflective knowledge of value. We also see how our bodily

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202 VI, 119; FN, 125.
needs enter a total field of motivation where they are confronted with other values from different levels. The body, as the affective medium of all these values, nourishes motivation. It is thus the primordial source of motivation. Here, we note that motivation constitutes the living relation of the will to the body. At the same time that the will becomes receptive to the involuntary, the body strives to transcend itself to become a human body, the lived-body of a self that wills.203

b. Body as Organ of Movement

This second involuntary function of the body is suggested by the analysis of voluntary action. There, we saw how the body is “traversed” in the practical relation to the pragma. In describing this mediating function of the body, Ricoeur shows us how a phenomenology of the involuntary becomes a phenomenology of the capabilities (pouvoirs) offered by the body to voluntary action. The three kinds of involuntary capabilities are the preformed skills, emotion, and habit. Let us examine Ricoeur’s keen analyses of them.

Preformed skills

There is an initial functioning of the body preceding all knowledge of it and of the world: “As soon as the world presents itself to me, I know how to do something with my body, without knowing either my body or the world.”204 These unlearned gestures which form the basis of all voluntary learning are what Ricoeur calls “preformed skills” (savoir-faire préformés). For the present, it is crucial to grasp the general contrast between preformed skills and reflexes.

A reflex presents three traits: it is relatively stereotyped, easily isolable, and always incoercible. A preformed skill presents three traits antithetical to those of the reflex. First of all, a preformed skill is not a rigid invariable movement like the reflex but already a supple variable structure that discriminately responds to a complex perception. To under-

204 VI, 218; FN, 233. See also VI, 222; FN, 238.
stand the behavior of the organism, one must not start with the reflex but with the preformed skill which plays the ultimate role in human action. Secondly, a preformed skill is not isolable like the reflex but a part of an overall pattern of behavior. While a reflex is produced by stimuli from the outside, a preformed skill is governed by perceived objects that awaken a need, an affective impulse, or a voluntary intention which animates it from within. Thirdly, a preformed skill is assimilable to the will; a reflex is incoercible and thus, unassimilable to the will. Although the reflex is not an obstacle to the will, there is no reciprocity between the two. The reflex is in me but apart from me. In contrast, there is a reciprocity between the preformed skill and the will. As a structural involuntary, the preformed skill primordially binds the perceiving Cogito with the acting Cogito. A preformed skill then presupposes the perception of objects capable of being appropriated by the will. In sum, the preformed skill is "the source of all the bodily aptitudes which alone give substance to the will and allow freedom to inscribe itself into the world." 205

*Emotion*

Here, the limited task is to show the primordial unity in emotion between thought and movement, and to illustrate how involuntary emotion sustains voluntary action, which in turn guides it. For this purpose, it is suitable to begin with "a form of emotion in which the derangement is in a nascent state"—the emotion of wonder (l’émotion-surprise). 206 Following Ricoeur:

Wonder or awe (Cartesian "admiration") is subsequently elaborated by emotive forms of affective imagination by which we anticipate some good or evil. It reaches its culmination in the awakening of desire, its peak in the emotion of joy and sorrow connected with the possession of a good or an evil. 207

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205 VI, 229; FN, 244-245. See also VI, 234; FN, 249.

206 VI, 236; FN, 252 (Ricoeur's emphases).

207 VI, 238; FN, 253 (Ricoeur's emphases).
Let us consider these basic emotional attitudes.

Wonder. It is not only the most basic emotional attitude but also the most laden with meaning for "it already contains all the richness of what has been called the circular phenomenon of thought and the body." Thought and body meet in emotion which is, at the same time, "a shock of knowledge in a disturbance of the body." This aspect distinguishes wonder from a reflex. Wonder may indeed erupt like a reflex, but the eruption of wonder is accompanied by an implicit judgment of the new. At the same time, this judgment of novelty carries repercussions for the body: "The body amplifies and magnifies the moment of thought by giving it the time of bodily impression as the substance of duration." In wonder, we see the first function of emotion which is to awaken the voluntary power of judgment.

Affective imagination. If the emotion of wonder awakens a judgment before the new, the emotion of affective imagination elaborates this implicit judgment. Here, we come upon the second function of emotion. Wonder provides the cerebral element of valuation while affective imagination supplies its visceral element. As the anticipation of good and evil, affective imagination brings about a relaxation of corporeal effort. But this calm is the very prelude to the frenzy of effort engendered by desire.

Joy and sorrow. The emotions of joy and sorrow represent the peak of wonder. After the awakening of judgment before the new in wonder, after the amplification of that judgment in affective imagination, a union takes place between the object and myself:

> In joy I am with my good, in sorrow I am with the evil: I have become that good and that evil. The good or the evil have become my mode of being.

Joy and sorrow are emotions of sanction. In other words, these emotions which fundamentally affect me are accompanied by a capacity for

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208 VI, 238; FN, 253 (Ricoeur's emphases). See also VI, 244; FN, 260.
209 VI, 238; FN, 254.
210 VI, 239; FN, 255.
211 VI, 244; FN, 260.
judgment with regard to the relation between myself and my situation. As in all emotion, this judgment has bodily repercussions. There is no dichotomy between bodily joy and spiritual joy.

*Desire.* With the emotion of desire, we reach the highest point of the corporeal involuntary. Desire begins with the often confused judgment of the suitability of the object for me as well as the possibility of obtaining it. This judgment, however, does not yet make desire an emotion. To be emotion, desire must also be accompanied by "a profound visceral disturbance and an acute alerting of all our senses and all motor regions."²¹² Desire then is "the body which dares and improvises, body brought to action pitch."²¹³ Ricoeur makes the precision that desire is not considered here as a *motive* (which was the case in need) but as a *motor*, that is "a strong inclination to act which arises from the whole body."²¹⁴ If we now shift our attention to the desired object, we find it within the context of a world for the will—a world with an exciting prospect for action.

We bypass the emotions of shock and passion inasmuch as they already complicate and distort the nascent disorder in the emotions of wonder. Here, it is sufficient to remark that even in the emotions of shock, one does not regress to the level of the animal. Ricoeur points out rightly that we have irremediably left this level behind. Even in the most brutal shock, there is still a comprehension and an evaluation.

*Habit*

What is the essence of habit? According to Ricoeur, human habit possesses three traits:

> When I say that I am in the habit of ..., 1) I designate a characteristic of the history of my acts: I have *learned*, 2) I see myself as affected by this history: I have *acquired* a habit, 3) I indicate the use-value of the learned and acquired act: I *know how*, I *can.*²¹⁵

²¹² VI, 248; FN, 260.  
²¹³ VI, 250; FN, 266.  
²¹⁴ VI, 249; FN, 265.  
²¹⁵ VI, 264; FN, 280 (Ricoeur's emphases).
Let us take these traits one by one. The key idea of habit is learning in time. Habit is the process whereby a living being acquires mastery of the body and "through" it, of things. The first trait of habit then refers to its origin; it is not innate but learned by practice. The second trait of habit refers to its twofold way of affecting the will—"acquired" or "being acquired": "Habit affects my will as a kind of nature, a second nature."216 However, habit differs from emotion by the manner it affects me: the former is acquired; the latter overcomes me. The third trait of habit refers to the use-value of the learned and acquired: I know how; I can. Here, habit is seen as a "capacity to resolve a certain type of problem according to an available schema."217 This last aspect of habit prevents us from viewing it as an automatism to which it can also fall.

Two aspects of involuntary habit concern us: the structure of action, whether acquired or being acquired; the triggering of such action. Habit is not an extension of reflex but preformed skill. As such, the internal non-willed coordination of habit does not add any new facts but "indefinitely enlarges body's irreflective usage."218 Following Ravaission, Ricoeur speaks of habit as a "reversion of freedom into nature."219 However, this reversion does not abolish consciousness but only reflective knowledge. By its flexible structure, habit remains open to new involuntary intentions. As for its triggering or involuntary release, there is a specific spontaneity of habit that can neither be reduced to desire nor inclination. This spontaneity manifests itself in a threefold way: the inventive capacity for probing in all directions, for summoning up the useful gesture, and for facilitating the release.220 We have just paid attention to the spontaneity of habit. However, we should not ignore its

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216 VI, 266; FN, 282. See also VI, 277-280; FN, 294-296.
217 VI, 267; FN, 283.
218 VI, 269; FN, 285 (Ricoeur's emphases).
220 VI, 272-275; FN, 288-292.
tendency to degenerate into an automatism. Here arises a defaulting of consciousness and a certain inertia. This threat of inertia reminds us that "through our body we participate in an obscure ground of inertia of the universe." Habit then is the naturalization of the will which can be both advantageous and dangerous;

Here, we note that emotion and habit become comprehensible only in terms of their contrast. In Ricoeur's words:

Habit is "contracted," emotion "takes one by surprise": habit, being old, has prestige; emotion, being new, has power; habit is the fruit of what has endured, emotion is the irruption of the moment.222

This contrast between emotion and habit can only be grasped if we take their properly human, involuntary aspects. When the properly human aspect is neglected, then a naturalistic explanation creeps in. This is the reason why Ricoeur accords the primacy to the "emotions of wonder" rather than to the "emotions of shock and passion," and in the case of habit, to the "flexible habits" rather than to the "automatisms." Only in this way can the original link between the will and the involuntary capabilities be manifested.

This description of emotion and habit shows us how the body is a moving totality of capabilities that presents itself to the will. The body is a practical spontaneity—emotive and habitual—that mediates the will.223 Here again, we see two movements converge. At the same time that the voluntary descends to the bodily involuntary and traverses it to the pragma, the body in turn transcends itself—through its capabilities—to become a human body.

221 VI, 290; FN, 307.
222 "L'unité du volontaire et de l'involontaire comme idée-limite" (1951), p. 15; "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea" (1967), p. 103. See also VI, 297; FN, 315; "Méthodes et tâches d'une phénoménologie de la volonté" (1952), p. 132; "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will" (1967), in HAP, 227.

223 Going even farther, Ricoeur says that our knowledge is also a certain body, a "psychic" body that we move. See "L'unité du volontaire et de l'involontaire comme idée-limite" (1951), pp. 16-17; "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea" (1967), pp. 103-104; "Méthodes et tâches d'une phénoménologie de la volonté" (1952), p. 129; "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will" (1967), in HAP, 225.
c. Body as Invincible Necessity

The two previous analyses of the body as primordial motive and as organ of movement lead us to this description of the body as invincible necessity. It is in the very exercise of my capabilities that I become aware of the necessity which limits me. Here, the task is to recuperate the index of subjectivity in the three forms of bodily necessity: character, the unconscious, and life.

Character

How then do I gain access to my character? If one relies on common sense, one comes up with ambiguities. For common sense, unable to reconcile together the incoercible and the free, successively affirms a false unsituated freedom and a false determination of being human by nature. These ambiguities of common sense may be traced to the following contradictions: first, common sense takes character both as each human being’s external appearance and her intimate experience of her own being; second, it explains character both by the addition of abstract traits and by the use of intuitive metaphors; and third, common sense understands character both by the unique and the general, the individual and the genus.

If one turns now to the science of character or ethology, one sees that an empirical science is unable to directly relate character to the freedom of a subject. Empirical ethology describes character types which it construes as casual factors determining my behavior. Conceived in this way, character becomes an objective necessity which cannot be reconciled with freedom. However, ethology can serve as an index for the discovery of a subjective moment in the Cogito. There is in the subject something which lends itself to a theory of character. To discover the good use of ethology and to show the nexus between freedom and character, Ricoeur urges us to move to the context of subjectivity. In his own words: “...we must start from this freedom of deciding and moving to discover within it a finite nature strangely coupled with its infinite initiative.”224

224 VI, 343; FN, 366.
My character is not only my outward aspect but also my own nature as intimately experienced. My character affects my whole being: "The very decision I make, the way I exert effort, the way I perceive and desire, all bear its mark." It is as undivisible as my self. My character is not a class or a collective type but my unique, inimitable self. In Spinozistic terms, I am not a general idea but a singular essence. My character clings to me. It is the concrete individual who I am. In a sense, character is fate. This fate is indivisible, inimitable, and invincible. My character situates me as a given individual. Yet, I also sense without articulating it correctly that "my character in its changeless aspects is only my freedom's mode of being." My character shows me that my freedom is not an abstract but concrete freedom which is real in a particular, determinate way. Thus, I discover my character "as an invincible aspect of my controllable motives, as an incoercible aspect of my coercible powers, as a non-willed aspect of my decision and of my effort."

What is the bond between my character and the involuntary of my capabilities and motives? Although there are no values inaccessible to me, my character forces me to encounter value only in my own way. My capabilities and motives bear the mark of my character. Indeed, it would be a great mistake to propose to change my character: "I cannot know it in order to modify it, but in order to consent to it."

At the end of this description of my character, ethology must be re-discovered for the intimate experience of character is fleeting and lacks the intentional structure found in the experience of need and desire. This time, ethology plays not only a diagnostic but a mediating role. It mediates my character through the conception of character types, taken as genera and surrounded with differences. In this way, ethology leads me "to respect, to love, and finally, as Alain said, to set free the immuable

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225 VI, 344; FN, 367.
226 VI, 345; FN, 368 (Ricoeur's emphases). Six years later, Ricoeur speaks of "character" in these terms: "A character is a finite figure or form; character is the finite openness of my existence, it is my existence as determined." See "Négativité et affirmation originaire" (1956), in HV, 341; "Negativity and Primary Affirmation" (1965), in HT, 310.
227 VI, 346; FN, 369 (Ricoeur's emphases).
228 VI, 347; FN, 370.
nature in each man and first of all within me." But I must also be
aware of the constant danger of objectification involved in adopting the
teachings of ethology. If I linger to meditate on my invincible mode of
being, I may become overwhelmed by it. Only consent—the act of
"yes"—can save me from becoming spellbound by this invincible ne-
cessity: "A freedom situated by the fate of a character to which it con-
sents becomes a destiny, a vocation."230

The unconscious

The consideration of character is not the most serious crisis of free-
dom: "...the already ambiguous relation between the immutable and the
free is still only the outer shell of a far more enigmatic relation between
the 'hidden' and the free."231 Here, we come upon the unconscious un-
derstood, in the strict sense, as my nature insofar as it is concealed from
consciousness.

To discover the genuine relation between a definite unconscious and
freedom, we have to conquer a double obstacle: the obstacle of a dog-
matism of the unconscious which commits the error of attributing
thought to the unconscious and the obstacle of a dogmatism of conscious-
ness which commits the error of attributing complete transparency to
consciousness. In other words, we must reject the false dilemma of a
definite realism of the unconscious and a definite idealism of conscious-
ness if we are "to pose correctly the new paradox of an indefinite matter
of signification and an infinite capacity of thought."232 To integrate the
authentic results of psychoanalysis, we do not only have to recognize
that the unconscious does not think but also to acknowledge that con-
sciousness harbors within itself an obscure ground which thwarts its
efforts to become transparent to itself. For Ricoeur, consciousness "never
perfectly penetrates a certain principally affective matter which presents
it with an indefinite possibility for self-questioning and for giving mean-
ing and form to itself."233 The analyses of need, emotion, and habit

229 VI, 349; FN, 372.
230 VI, 350; FN, 373.
231 VI, 351; FN, 373-374 (Ricoeur's emphases).
232 VI, 352; FN, 375 (Ricoeur's emphases).
233 VI, 354-355; FN, 378 (Ricoeur's emphases).
already give us a glimpse of the inadequacy of the principle of complete transparence of consciousness. By extrapolation, these analyses point out to us "the existence of a matter of thought which is no longer accessible to consciousness of myself."\textsuperscript{234}

But what is exactly Ricoeur's critique of Freudian realism of the unconscious? Ricoeur admits that the displacement of the conscious to the unconscious is demanded by the psychoanalytic causal explanation. However, he objects to the simplistic interpretation of the principle of homogeneity of the conscious and the unconscious. In this interpretation, consciousness becomes a part of the unconscious and this unconscious, in turn, becomes the essence of thought itself. But if I am to respect myself as free, I must refuse to conceive the unconscious as thinking: "When I conceive of my unconscious as thinking, I yield to this 'cowardice,' to this 'misconception of myself' which in Descartes' eyes is the opposite of generosity."\textsuperscript{235}

If the unconscious does not think, how can psychoanalysis give a "meaning" to dreams and neuroses? It must be noted first that the dream becomes a complete thought only when I wake up and recount it. It is convenient to invoke that this meaning is already given "in the unconscious" and that psychoanalysis only rediscovers this latent meaning through interpretation. But there is nothing in psychoanalysis which obliges us to attribute thought to the unconscious. Yet the fact remains that consciousness has "an obverse, a nether side, inconceivable outside of it or without it, which is not thought in any sense but which still is body."\textsuperscript{236} It is difficult to throw light on the psychoanalytic unconscious as it has no subjective equivalent in my conscious experience. One way, however, would be to distinguish within the act of consciousness a conscious form and affective matter. This affective matter, present in all thought, can be called the unconscious when it is dissociated from the "form" or intention which gives it life and meaning. But this "matter" does not subsist as such because it is always hidden in some "form" like a dream, neurotic symptom, etc. To recapitulate, Ricoeur resolves the difficulty presented by the unconscious within a philosophy of the

\textsuperscript{234} VI, 357; FN, 380.
\textsuperscript{235} VI, 363; FN, 386. See also VI, 382; FN, 407.
\textsuperscript{236} VI, 368; FN, 391.
subject by recognizing in the act of consciousness itself some poten-
tiality "on" which responsible thought imposes its form and meaning.\footnote{237}

At this point, Ricoeur remarks that Freudian realism may still try to
save itself by causalism.\footnote{238} In the causalistic point of view, the "mean-
ing" of the dream is the "cause" which produces the sign-effect of the
apparent symptom. But is it possible to extend the idea of causality to
the acts of a subject? It does not seem so for causality and intentional-
ity do not belong to the same universe of discourse: "Causality is the
objective equivalent of an absolutely unfree motivation."\footnote{239} It is this
unfree motivation which can be reconciled with freedom. Thus, while the
determinism in which unfree motivation is objectified is incompatible
with freedom, the quasi-determinism that is the unconscious is com-
patible with consciousness and freedom. The unconscious makes me
aware that not only my body but also my psyche are capable of being
objectively treated: "...there is an object-psyche as there is an object-
body."\footnote{240} The methodological causality or determinism which is
demanded by psychoanalysis can be interpreted then as the indispensable
objectification of a necessity which is the obverse of freedom.

Freudianism is an evolutionistic explanation which reduces higher
energies to lower forces, the former being derived from the latter which
it considers elementary. In this respect, the non-vital values—aesthetic,
religious, and moral values—would be the sublimation, the disguised
manifestations of the unconscious which is vital, sexual, infantile, and
even ancestral. This unconscious would not only provide the primor-
dial sources of energy but also the mechanisms of the superelevation
of the higher values. According to Ricoeur, this doctrine of Freudian-

\footnote{237} Ricoeur extends here an observation made by Husserl in Ideas I concerning
the possibility of dissociating hyle from the corresponding Auffassung. See Husserl,
Ideas, translated by W.R.Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier Books, 1931', 1962), & 85,
p. 227.

\footnote{238} Ricoeur quotes the following passage from Dalbiez: "The principle of cau-
sality was Freud's guiding star. Every effect is a sign of its cause. This old Aristotelian
axiom condenses in short all the psychological researches of the Viennese master." See
Roland Dalbiez, La méthode psychanalytique et la doctrine freudienne (Paris: 1936);
Psychoanalytic Method and the Doctrine of Freud, translated by Lindsay (New York:

\footnote{239} VI, 373; FN, 397 (Ricoeur's emphases).

\footnote{240} VI, 373; FN, 398.
ism holds a certain appeal to modern man who searches for an alibi for his irresponsibility: "The taste for Freudian explanations, insofar as they represent a total doctrine of man in every man is the taste for descent into hell in order to invoke the fatalities from below."\textsuperscript{241} But this temptation to escape responsibility can also lead to an awakening of my freedom when I understand it as a threat. I then refuse to make my thought conform to something which is not also consciousness; I affirm that \textit{it is I who think}. This assurance of my freedom helps me to integrate what is worth retaining in psychoanalysis. In Husserlian terms, Ricoeur speaks of psychoanalysis as only a hyletics of consciousness which must be subordinated to the phenomenology of its intentions or its forms. For Ricoeur, this is the most favorable interpretation we can give to the Freudian process of sublimation.

In the study of character, we saw that all freedom is a paradoxical synthesis of an \textit{infinite possibility} and a \textit{finite determination}. In the study of the unconscious, we now see that all freedom is also a paradoxical synthesis of a \textit{definite form} and an \textit{indefinite matter} which can only be understood in one irreversible direction—from consciousness to the unconscious. In other words, the unconscious is \textit{for} consciousness and willing. Thus, if the unconscious—the unformed and the unformable, the unwished and the unwishable desires—can not be called my thought, it can not be merely denied in the name of the transparence of consciousness: "...we have to consent to the obscure, to the hidden which can always become the terrible—but with a consent which remains the counterpart of resolute spirit."\textsuperscript{242} In sum, the unconscious is an invincible necessity inseparably linked with freedom. It is an obscure ground of potentiality that affects my decision, action, and consent.

\textbf{Life}

It is life that conveys most to me the invincible necessity that I am. Life is the substratum of all other values. Its loss thus entails the loss of all other values. As Pascal eloquently put it: "The entire universe totters and trembles on my stem." What are the essential characteristics of my

\textsuperscript{241} VI, 378; FN, 403 (Ricoeur's emphasis).
\textsuperscript{242} VI, 384; FN, 409.
life? To begin with, life is felt (erlebt, sentie) before it is known. In experiencing it, I occupy the center of perspective from which there are other perspectives. Next, this affective consciousness of myself reveals life to me as indivisible. I exist as one. Finally, life is basic necessity.

Let us try to understand this basic necessity by examining two metaphors in which it is elaborated. First, there is the spatial metaphor: "I find myself in life"; "I am alive" ("je suis en vie"). What comes to mind is the image of immersion in a medium. This metaphor suggests that I do not posit my life. Second, there is the metaphor of support. Since I do not posit my life, I am posed on it as on a foundation. What does this image of foundation add to the preceding one? It is this: "The life I basically am is unstable, while as a foundation it represents almost an effort of supporting." From these metaphors, we have to conclude that existence is indeed a paradox for it is both willed and undergone. Here, we come upon the ultimate expression of the paradox of freedom and necessity. Freedom is limited not only by a finite manner (character), an indefinite matter (unconscious) but also by the pure fact of existing (life).

Ricoeur’s consideration of life follows three directions: life as the indivisible unity of a structure, life as the process of a growth from infancy to old age, and life as a time which begins at birth and ends at death. The task here is to overcome the triple temptation of making the subject an effect of structure, a product of evolution of the living, or even a result of its heredity.

Life as structure. The biological sciences can be of tremendous help in clarifying the massive experience of being alive. Biological concepts are especially useful insofar as they render intelligibility to life as an original phenomenon. Now, what makes life intelligible to our understanding is its structure (organisation): "Life as indivisible presents itself finally as a higher harmony of diverse functions in the unity of the individual’s structure ...." Once this is accepted, nothing prevents one from extending the concepts of this level to the level of human conduct. Everything then, even the allegedly free will, can be approached as a structural problem resolved by life. But why does the study of life

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243 VI, 388-389; FN, 414 (Ricoeur’s emphasis).
244 VI, 391; FN, 416.
as structure make me deny myself as a subject? It is because, at a certain level of existence, I no longer appear to myself as a task but a “problem resolved” as though by a greater wisdom than myself.\textsuperscript{245} Since the very source of the vertigo of objectivity is in the experience of being alive, it is then from within that I have to awaken as freedom. I have to subordinate my life as a resolved problem to the central experience of my life as an unresolved project. I must realize that the absolute involuntary of my life is only the background of the relative involuntary of my needs and capacities. In the dialogue with my needs and capacities, I perceive my life no longer as motive or organ of willing but the other aspect of this body which I move. Life does not belong wholly to the absolute involuntary but also to the relative involuntary, docile to willing. The paradox is within life itself. My life is ambiguous in the sense that “it is at the same time a resolved problem, insofar as it is structure—\textit{and} a problem to be solved, insofar as it is spontaneity of need, of habit, and emotion.”\textsuperscript{246} Within myself, I experience the interweaving of two involuntaries—“the absolute involuntary of the life which gives me existence as consciousness—and thus is the preface to my humanity—and the involuntary relative to a life which seeks my decision and effort—and thus waits upon my humanity.”\textsuperscript{247}

What is the relation between the two meanings of my life as a task and as a resolved problem? Do I have to exclude objective knowledge of my life from my lived experience of it? How do I relate the subjective experience of willing and the objective knowledge of structure in a coherent knowledge? Ricoeur counsels us to give up harmonizing in a single universe of discourse the concepts of Cogito and those of biology. However, this does not mean that we discard objective knowledge. We can assign to it the secondary function of an index to express the subordinate place of life in the edifice of consciousness. In the same way that we formulated concepts of finite manner (character) and indefinite matter (the unconscious), we now elaborate the concept of a \textit{condition sine qua non}: “... life is the condition sine qua non of will and of consciousness in general.”\textsuperscript{248} This concept of condition \textit{sine qua non}

\textsuperscript{245} VI, 393; FN, 418 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
\textsuperscript{246} VI, 394; FN, 419 (Ricoeur’s emphasis).
\textsuperscript{247} VI, 394; FN, 419-420 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
\textsuperscript{248} VI, 395; FN, 421 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
expresses the diagnostic relation between an objective knowledge and a subjective experience of being alive. This concept makes me aware that the laws of structure do not explain the whole of my life but are an index of my life as the absolute involuntary. Yet this experience remains subordinated to the total experience of the Cogito—the mysterious pact of freedom with factual existence. In this way, the concept of condition sine qua non introduces some intelligibility into the experience of necessity.

Life: growth and genesis. The consideration of my life as a process introduces a new dimension—temporality. My life is not only a structure but also a process in time. I am born; I grow up; I become old. This growth, experienced as sheer fact, poses difficulties for a philosophy of the will. Eidetic phenomenology seems to exclude the possibility that the will could be a history while genetic psychology seems to exclude the possibility that the will is an essence, a meaning. Eidetic description tends to privilege adult age as normative, to isolate the human being as a discontinuous essence. Genetic explanation resolves discontinuities into continuous development. Here appears a new devouring objectivity: I lose myself in my own growth which makes and unmakes me; I have no basic meaning; there is only a history which engulfs me. This objectivity must be dispelled if I wish to catch the significance of that necessity of growth which clings to me.

Can a psychology of ages avoid referring itself to a definite meaning of being human? It seems not. An implicit phenomenology is present behind the evaluation of different ages. It is precisely phenomenology which makes us aware that each age is in its own way a peak. On the one hand, a psychology of ages is oriented by an idea of being human which helps it evaluate ages; on the other hand, a psychology of ages reveals the multiple aspects and makes it possible to respect the fullness of humanity which none of the ages exhausts. Ricoeur maintains that there is no opposition between a genetic psychology pertaining to a history of structure and a descriptive phenomenology pertaining to the meaning of human structures. What he proposes is the paradox of a genesis and an eidetics. We become what we are. But we can only be within the conditions of time which gradually reveal us: "Man grows, but it is his being which becomes manifest in the appearance of his

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249 VI, 405; FN, 431.
becoming: man *advenit*: man comes about.*"\(^{249}\) The meaning of being human is not extratemporal but rather something that comes about in the great events of growth.

My age situates me. Like character, age is a fate which excludes me from certain opportunities and opens me to others from a definite angle: "The field of an unlimited freedom opens only within these finite bounds."\(^{250}\) But my age is also a privileged moment in the flow of life. Although maturity is the absolute peak of my existence, every age is a relative "peak," an ascent towards a horizon of values which finds its perfection in it. The "impetus" from childhood to old age has a "tempo" which makes me aware that organic time, like life, is both a resolved problem and a task. Consciousness does not engender this process yet it is advanced by its decision. This absolute involuntary of growth can be clarified by a genetic psychology whose concepts can serve as objective indices of that experience of growth and aging which adheres to my freedom.

*Life: birth.* My birth, insofar as accomplished, "holds the germ of the full growth of the necessity which casts a shadow on my freedom."\(^{251}\) My birth is the beginning of my life. Yet I have no memory of it. I can only place myself here as a spectator over an objective event. My birth also shows my dependence to two other lives: I do not posit myself; I have been posited by others. By my birth, I have not received only a beginning but a *nature*: "To be born means to receive from another the capital of heredity."\(^{252}\)

Can I have an objective equivalent of my birth? Not at all for there is no objective meaning to the idea of a beginning. Only for a subject can birth be a beginning. In biology, the center of perspective is the ancestor. I explain my filiation not as *my* ancestry, but as my ancestor’s posterity. This implies that the explanation of my being will be *alienation*. I appear as an effect of chance in a chain of effects. This tie with my ancestor, which alienates me, places me at the same time on a level suited to a science of heredity. Here, I become an effect produced by heredity.

\(^{249}\) VI, 406; FN, 432.

\(^{250}\) VI, 407; FN, 433.

\(^{251}\) VI, 408; FN, 434 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
Biology alienates me. Yet, the study of genetics must become a guide in the consideration of myself. I must convert genetics philosophically into an index of my birth. Although I have no experience of my birth, I can elucidate it by interiorizing the objective scientific knowledge of birth. Scientifically, the central idea is not one of beginning but of heredity—the explanation of myself by another. Philosophically, the central idea is that of beginning since heredity is only one aspect of my beginning. Reflection then must reverse the movement of objectification—from the idea of heredity to the idea of my beginning. Genetics speaks of heredity as a multiple capital received from the other. Philosophy expresses this multiple capital of heredity as the indivisible unity of my life, as my self given to myself: "My heredity is my character and my unconscious received from another, that is, my character and my unconscious plus a representation of my ancestor." Biology makes my ancestor the foundation of my existence; I am his effect. But I am my own center of existence.

The Cogito demands that I understand this necessity in myself: "It is I who have come from...and not the ancestor who is the cause of ...." My ancestry is another name for the beginning of my existence. This beginning which escapes my memory shows the most characteristic trait of my experience—I experience life as having begun before I even begin anything: "All beginning by freedom is paradoxically tied to a non-consciousness of the beginning of my existence itself." Like the word "existence," the word "beginning" has a double meaning: there is a beginning which always precedes the beginning of life—my beginning as state; there is a beginning which is the beginning of freedom—my beginning as act. However, it remains that my birth is never reached by my consciousness as experienced event. My birth, unreached by memory, cannot be repeated by it as a choice I could have made. It is a limit to which I can only consent. But can I fully consent to my life, my unconscious, my character?

253 VI, 412; FN, 438 (Ricoeur's emphases).
254 VI, 413; FN, 439.
255 VI, 415; FN, 441.
3. The significance of the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary

We have said that the comprehension of the reciprocity between the voluntary and the involuntary aims at overcoming a certain "dualism in understanding." Yet, after the twofold recuperation of this dualism, a more radical dualism surges up—a "dualism in existence" which Ricoeur also qualifies as "dramatic" insofar as it is unsettling to both monism and dualism. Behind then the "epistemological dualism" is the "existential dualism" of freedom and necessity.

Freedom and necessity mutually negate each other. Negation has to be considered then in order to understand freedom. According to Ricoeur, it is inexact to view freedom as the sole source of negation. Negation appears in two ways: on one hand, it manifests itself as the non-being, the necessity, suffered by freedom; on another hand, it shows itself as the refusal posited by freedom. In short, negation is both undergone and willed. This should not surprise us since we have seen that the Cogito is at once action and passion, initiative and receptivity.

Ricoeur traces the "existential dualism" of freedom and necessity by again examining the three moments of the phenomenology of the voluntary and the involuntary, but this time, in reverse order. It is after this examination that one realizes the significance of the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary as a limiting idea.

First of all, consent to necessity is never fully achieved. Here, the philosophical significance of "suffering" as the impossibility of coinciding with oneself comes up. By "suffering," Ricoeur understands not only "physical pain and interpersonal sorrows" but also the sadness of

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256 VI, 17, 21, 331; FN, 13-14, 17, 353.
257 VI, 20-21, 213, 417; FN, 17, 228, 444. See also "L'unité du volontaire et de l'involontaire comme idée-limite" (1951), p. 19; "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea" (1967), pp. 105-106; "Méthodes et tâches d'une phénoménologie de la volonté" (1952), p. 131; "Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will" (1967), in HAP, 226.
258 Since Ricoeur is not concerned with a general philosophy of negation, he does not aim here at a systematization of negation. He considers negation only with the hope of surmounting it.
259 Will as the power of saying no—such is the message of Descartes and Kierkegaard whom Ricoeur aims to reconcile here. See VI, 418; FN, 445.
aging, of being ‘overstretched’ by time, of being misshapen, finished.”

It covers then the three expressions of invincible necessity which is suffered by freedom— the particularity of character which constricts me, the obscurity of the unconscious which overwhelms me, and the contingency of life which threatens me. It is before these three forms of the “Ohnmacht der Natur” that I experience in myself the sorrow of finitude, the sorrow of formlessness, and the sorrow of contingency.

How is the experience of contingency related to the idea of death? The idea of death differs from everything considered up to now in that I have no experience of it. Death lies beyond the subjective experiences that diminish our being like pain, aging, loss of consciousness (extreme fatigue, fainting, sleep mask it more than reveal it). To quote Ricoeur: “Death is the end, the interruption of limitations as well as capacities. Thus it is an extra-systematic negation which interrupts the Cogito from without.” Where does the certitude come from? One should note that this certitude is a knowledge rather than an experience which I learn from external observation of the death of the other. This general abstract knowledge of my necessary death is contaminated by my subjective experiences of impotence which “personalize” my death. There arises then an exchange between the knowledge of my necessary mortality and the feeling of my contingency. Yet, in the end “death is not in me like life—and like suffering, aging, and contingency—it always remains a stranger.”

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261 For a fuller treatment of this, see above pp. 139-148. Like Sartre, Ricoeur refuses to naturalize consciousness but he strongly opposes the residue of idealism by which Sartre attributes complete transparency and absolute self-possession to consciousness. According to Pierre Colin, it is preferable to compare Ricoeur with Merleau-Ponty. Indeed, the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary evokes the confrontation of the réfléchi and the irréfléchi. But whereas Merleau-Ponty gives prestige to ambiguity, Ricoeur gives profit to intelligibility in the rapprochement of the voluntary and the involuntary. See Pierre Colin, “Bulletin de philosophie. Réflexion et mystère,” La vie intellectuelle (Paris) 19 (December 1951), p. 119.

262 VI, 430; FN, 458.

263 VI, 434; FN, 462 (Ricoeur’s emphases).
To return to the invincible necessity suffered by freedom, this “existential flaw” (*faillle existentielle*) is a *scandal* insofar as it is a mode of the failure of unity.\(^{264}\)

To necessity as non-being, freedom’s response is refusal. Freedom here presents itself as the capacity of refusing oneself, of not consenting to one’s condition. This refusal expresses itself in the threefold wish for *totality* without the constrictions of character, complete *transparency* without the shadows of the unconscious, and absolute *sufficiency* without the contingency of life. As we have noted earlier, there lies behind this refusal of freedom a triumphant affirmation of consciousness which contains “the seeds of a philosophy of despair.”\(^{265}\) For when this exaggerated affirmation of consciousness is frustrated, our *refused* condition turns *absurd*. From hereon, suicide presents itself as one of the highest possibilities. But there might also be *revolt*—”a courage to exist in the absurd and to face up to it.”\(^{266}\) Consent may then be seen as the surmounting of the refusal of the human condition.\(^{267}\)

The second form of the “existential flaw” in the unity of the human being is found in voluntary motion. On this level, voluntary motion is always a “nascent effort, in the same measure that the spontaneity of the body is always a nascent resistance.”\(^{268}\) Voluntary life is experienced as an incessant *debate* with the body, with emotion being played against habit. In some instances, the will makes use of the surprise of emotion in order to awaken itself from the inertia of habit. In other instances, the will makes use of the pacifying function of habit to control the disorder produced by emotion. Corporeal spontaneity is both organ and obstacle. The synthesis between effort and spontaneity remains there-

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\(^{264}\) We prefer to translate the French word “*faillle*” as “flaw.” In the extant translations of Ricoeur’s works, it is usually translated as “fault.” It suggests a split, rent, or imperfection which is anterior to moral evil, legal guilt, or religious sin. See translator’s note in HAP, 226.

\(^{265}\) VI, 438; FN, 465.

\(^{266}\) VI, 438; FN, 466; also VI, 447 note 1; FN, 476 note 26. On revolt as a stance before the human condition, see “L’homme revolté de Camus,” *Christianisme social* 60 (1952), pp. 229-239.

\(^{267}\) We reserve the discussion on consent for later.

fore a limiting-idea. Here, the failure of unity which was previously a scandal becomes a *conflict*.

If we insert decision in the flux of time, we perceive the oscillation of consciousness between hesitation and choice. On this third level, the “existential flaw” consists in the possibility of “reading” choice in two different ways: first, in terms of continuity, as the termination of attention; second, in terms of discontinuity, as the irruption of a project.269 According to Ricoeur, these two interpretations flow from the structure of decision itself, which is at once invention of and reception to values.270 In his own words: “...a fine cleavage runs through our freedom precisely because it is active and receptive, because it is a human freedom and not a creative ‘fiat.’”271

Our freedom is *only* human. To achieve a full understanding of itself, it has need of certain limit concepts. But what are these limit concepts? For Ricoeur, a limit concept is to be understood in terms of the Kantian regulatory idea, “the *a priori* requirement of unifying any field of inquiry whatever.”272 But whereas Kant applied this solely to the field of scientific knowledge, Ricoeur proposes to apply it to the original phenomenological field.

A first limit concept is the idea of God—the idea of a *creative* freedom which would no longer be receptive to motives, which would no longer be dependent on a body, and which would no longer be bound to a necessity. This idea of God is a limit degree of our freedom which is *motivated, incarnate*, and *contingent*. By its power of self-determination, human freedom is an image of God but it is *other* by its receptivity.

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269 VI, 156, 171-172; FN, 164, 180-181. See also “Méthodes et tâches d’une phénoménologie de la volonté” (1952), p. 132; “Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will” (1967), in HAP, 227.

270 In Ricoeur’s view, this is no doubt why there have been always two philosophies of freedom: for the intellectualistic philosophies (St. Thomas, Descartes, Malebranche), a choice is the coming to rest of attention; for the voluntaristic and existential philosophies (Bergson, Jaspers, and Sartre), a choice is the emergence of a new act. See VI, 159, 162; FN, 168, 171.


Subordinated to this first limit concept are other limit concepts. We can understand in general (à vide) the limit concept of a perfectly enlightened freedom. However, my freedom is other than this ideal because my freedom has to continually clarify its motives in a kind of process and to exercise its choice, not as a decree but as a risk. We can also understand the limit concept of a perfectly gracious freedom—"an incarnate freedom as man's freedom, but one whose body would be absolutely docile;" Finally, we can understand in general a "utopia" of freedom—a freedom of the full human scope. For this freedom, there would no longer be the constrictions of character. It would have the complete transparency of its motives and the absolute sufficiency of its nature.

How do we relate our experience of dramatic duality to this limit idea of achieved unity? Our dramatic experience points toward this intentional unity. It is the limit-idea that serves as a guideline and which brings out the conflict, the scandal, and the tension of dualistic categories. Yet we have no other access to this ideal of human unity except through the understanding of the reciprocity between the voluntary and the involuntary. There is then a comprehension of being human as synthesis between activity and receptivity, between gracious will and docile body, between consent and necessity. But this comprehension remains the horizon against which the dramatic duality is lived. Ricoeur concludes by spelling out the task of a philosophy of the will—that of transforming the "dualism in understanding" into a "dualism in existence" under the guiding idea of an only human freedom, that is to say, "a freedom which does not posit itself absolutely because it is not

273 VI, 456; FN, 485. Ricoeur remarks that the athlete and the dancer give us a fleeting glimpse of this gracious freedom. See VI, 292; FN, 310: "...more basically, what makes man intelligible to himself is his myth of himself, the ancient dream of his fulfillment in innocence and graceful action; the practiced ease of a dance, the supple joy of a Mozart are momentary, fleeting glimpses in the direction of a final stage of freedom where there would be no hiatus between willing and ability, where no effort would ruffle the docile coursing of movement with its misfortunes."

274 VI, 144, 156, 389; FN, 151-152, 164, 414. Ricoeur readily concedes that this comprehension is "abstract" insofar as it is a description of the essential structures of being human abstracted from the relation to the fault and Transcendence. See "L'unité du volontaire et de l'involontaire comme idée-limite" (1951), pp. 28-29; "The Unity of the Voluntary and the Involuntary as a Limiting Idea" (1967), p. 112.
Transcendence.” That is why the last words of a phenomenological-existential description of the fundamental possibilities of being human have to be: “To will is not to create.”

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275 VI, 456; FN, 486 (Ricoeur’s emphases).