

# Voyage as an Archaic Metaphor in Ricoeurian Hermeneutics

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The act of travelling (voyage) as an archaic metaphor that refers to the assemblage of all hermeneutic steps will be reconsidered in this paper through a Ricoeurian hermeneutics. In the case of voyage; the emergence of the idea of travelling, facing to some kind of reality, naming the historical and cultural spheres of the “new” place(s) as the base of experience, evaluating the results of action and calling all these memories as “the narration” as a whole construct an authentic knowledge of a life-event. This subsequent form of voyage constitutes a structured experience that brings autonomy in the memory of a voyager-Subject to completion. Thus, voyage as an archaic metaphor that exemplifies all dimensions of human experience and the narration.

**Keywords:** voyage, hermeneutics, metaphor, consent, autonomy

## I. Voyage as an Archaic Metaphor

Journey – in particular – is the movement that a person makes for moving from one place to another. It is an action that allows the traveller to recognize, specify and define the geographical point in the cosmos. The person who is performing the act of travelling may be a philosopher, adventurer, student, or a poet. Each traveller is a single being who passes the forms of existence and someone that has an attitude provided by this experience during the action and/or the space in. In other words, only the person owns the experience.<sup>[1]</sup> In other words, voyage is not only the action, it is also such an experience that gives the traveller the meaning of the world. This world opens itself to the eyes of a voyager through images. The world of voyager is the world of his own experience. It is a self-knowing activity in her own world that is motivated by own experience. Voyages contain pieces of life that the voyager shares with others according to their own horizon (perspective). Thus, “voyage” is not just a length of passive time, rather it is a special active experience that runs from the known to unknown, recognition of Self and a movement to be told later. The *compound* form of a voyage from past to current experience and to the future narrative tells us more than a basic travel or a real/concrete journey. It might be in fantasy, desire or in the fables. The voyage as an archaic metaphor here is used to infer the phenomenon of travelling and its hermeneutics in Ricoeur’s texts about autonomy. This usage of the term is also appropriate when we take the dictionary meaning into consideration. “Voyage” as a noun also refers to the action or the instance of travelling; additionally the course, period and the mental account for it.<sup>[2]</sup>

In order to understand this metaphor we should look closer to the term as an event in Ricoeurian hermeneutics: Voyage as an archaic metaphor -a recollection of memory, action, facts, experience, hope and knowledge- has phenomenological procedures which result in hermeneutics of autonomy. Events as personal experiences that are all participated in also will be stated in texts and by that can become an understanding of life involvement in hermeneutic level. The experimental and decisive features of mobilization here turns all the plain acts into events which have an agency, that means

all experiments belong to a Subject (*Soi*). There is no voyage without a voyager. What Ricoeur calls "narrative autonomy" here is something between the idea without/or before the presence of an action and the some preferences that are made by the Self as an author. According to Ricoeurian conception of autonomy as prolonged mainly in the first volume of *Philosophie de la volonté*, it is more possible to see it as an actual inference of the existence of the human subject in the world, a symptom of existence, rather than the idea that freedom exists by itself in nature.[3] Freedom as an underlying motivation/motive (*decider*), which underlies the structure of all intentional actions and determines these actions (*mouvoir*), also includes the possibility of a person to review Self beyond his empirical definitions, to identify and to consider oneself as an objective form (*consentir*). Thus, the demand for change in the terms of habits and familiarity, astonishment and curiosity can be felt by change, and through various emotions. The dialectical state of the Subject relies on two maxims; i.e. on the one hand, the existing motives that bring s/he to the action; and on the other hand the results of the decision-making process while not taking any action before the main action. Therefore, the autonomy of non-acting manifests itself as a freedom. It is to say that, Ricoeur's ethics of autonomy might appear as the phenomenological level of deciding and in acting as well. Here, action is considered as the existential practice of the *cogito*. In this regard, the voyager is different from the passenger when the hermeneutics of autonomy are taken into granted, because the passenger is passive but the voyager is active between the situations.

Additionally, in a practical sense, as Levy remarks, „the realization of the preparations“, that is, the actions that the traveller wants to take on the journey. ; then “departure into action or departure”, the return from this point consisting of travel or travel experiences, which has turned into a reflection and experience about oneself and the living space, which is regained after all this effort; finally, it is the witness of the journey that can take various forms at the end: it is a kind of completion brought by its own experience and event as the witness of a finished action consisting of saying, telling, writing, painting with understanding what one sees. Besides these, travelling as a *mimetic* movement or action is also the state of integration of the person in the world based on a dual dimension in the search of the traveller: *self-seeking* and *world-seeking*. [4] Hereby, the voyage as an archaic metaphor unfolds itself between the Self and the world. Between “is” and “ought to”, while the voyagers understand the sense of the travel experience, they also create their own values. The agency of the voyager is not limited to the social life as emerged in the urbanized lifestyle. Voyager is trying to eliminate „subjectivity“. Voyager also tries to capture his own laws and the human aspects of his life on earth. Voyager wants to reach nature, unknown places, imaginary geographies, transcendental places. Therefore, “voyage” takes place during confronting with the other on an experimental level. This encounter is partly the meeting of the curiosity and innocence of the unknown. The source of the development in the fields of science, because of travel experiences, found their own formation with the development of the human world.[5] Accordingly, during the voyage, we have a transcendental process from Self to the other, from routines to the unknown, from life to nature. As Romano defines in his eventual hermeneutics; the event, the experience, can only be in the state of “me”. It does not address anyone else. It naturally exists for „me“. The event goes together with the experience of the person, together with all the cumulative things that this experience brings. In other words, changes, inclusions, understandings, syntheses, observations, and phenomenological reductions produced within the experiences of the person come into being during this time. The phenomenology that occurs in the event is inseparable from this „eventual phenomenology“ of the person experiencing the event, which was reconstructed at the time of the event. As soon as the *advenant* event is experienced, it shapes the hermeneutics of this event. He owns his own experience during the periods of exposure and establishes a bond between them.[6] The phenomenon of the event is that in each case the *advenant* has and experiences the event and associates his own experience with his objective and subjective experiences. Witnessing events leads to the occurrence of points (*événementiale*), which are characterized as responding to experiences that reveal important times in life for the person. Events transform the person because

of being tried, and thus the event is owned.[7] That is, experience is a transformation of one's Self, even at the expense of the Self. *Advenant* can make new promises. You can gain new experiences. It also has the opportunity to experience different singularities that may contradict each other ("ipse").[8]

The voyage is a „learning“ function. The travelers can also show the places she has visited and seen as the evaluation of the knowledge brought by a learning obtained as a result of some efforts, as mentioned before. The travelers go through a phase of preparation before the voyage. This step is so-called the preparation and decision process. Preparation is having the necessary materials for the traveller at the beginning of the trip. Then the traveller begins the act. One travels and senses the places s/he sees through own senses and internalizes them. At this point, the trip has achieved its purpose.

For Onfray, travel is a flow of information that helps to understand what is seen and what comes from other senses. Naturally, as a result of the above-mentioned experiences, the five senses that the passenger actively uses during the impressions they get in the world where the subject encounters objects during the journey work freely. As a result of this study, an enlargement of the senses emerges within their functionality. Apart from the usual daily data, the intense data received during the journey are tested and described by phenomenological reduction.[9] This reduction meets the narrative identity and becomes the basic function of a hermeneutic action. This hermeneutic helps the individual to reveal own experience.

## **II. Autonomy as The Hermeneutics of Voyage**

The traveller has discovered new worlds for herself/himself, transferred the impressions that had acquired to the „narrative time“. The traveller has completed her/his journey in „sameness“ and „otherness“. Within witnessing, the journey has come to an end. The events as the statements of encountering different situations and Others, new experiments are ready to make sense of and describe the world of thought. The „narrative identity“ is consequently realized.

In Ricoeur's world of thought, everything is narrative. Narrative encompasses the entire human world as being able to tell what one has understood as a result of telling, writing and reading. In Ricoeur's philosophy, the narrative is the focus of the world, as well as understanding and experiencing at the same time.[10]

“Narrative” here is a special concept that encompasses the entire field of human experience in terms of saying as much, writing as much, reading as much, and finally trying to understand what one understands. The narrative in all its inclusiveness is the focal point. Narrative is experience itself. Narrative is the understanding of what is experienced. Here, narrative is one of the focal points in terms of explaining human freedom in all its forms. In terms of Paul Ricoeur's will-to-nature relationality, we come across a hermeneutic expansion of the idea of narrative autonomy, as a hermeneutic result that shows itself in the world of thought in the scope and content of the narrative.

In the Ricoeurian hermeneutic paradigm, the relationship between life and narrative is an inseparable, mutually nourishing and reciprocally synchronous relationship. This connection between the narrative and human action not only tells us how the idea of freedom emerges in life, but also expresses its place in the narration, that is, in the narrative. The meaning and consciousness of the narrative, “the experimentalising of the narrative” or “the narrativization of life” emerge at the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the receiver.[11] Closing the gap between discourse and experience will find its place as a narrative of freedom in the forms of “action as the marginal exile of discourse” in this framework.[12]

Human action is not solely a physical motion, it includes interests, plans and expectations. This relationship that Ricoeur establishes between experience and discourse is such a pattern that distinguishes human life from other living things in the frame of the semantics of the action.

“Autonomy” in Ricoeur, embodies a dynamic and relational singularity. With this determination, we underline that Ricoeur explains in a different context from existential phenomenology on the one hand and empirical explanations on the other. According to him, it is more possible to see it as an actual inference of the existence of the human subject in the world, a symptom of existence, rather than the idea that freedom exists by itself in nature. Freedom as an underlying motivation in which there is included the structure of all intentional actions. This fundamental motivation indeed determines all actions from the bottom up, and also presents the possibility of reconsidering one’s own self beyond one’s own empirical definitions. By that the phenomenology of autonomy lay on identifying and to consider Self as an objective form in the hermeneutic level as “narrative identity”. Thus, the demand for a change over habits and familiarity, astonishment and curiosity felt by change, and various emotions and freedom of action accompany freedom.[\[13\]](#)

Ricoeur’s idea of freedom is the foremost mental activity involving dynamic and relational notion. According to Verhoef and Visser we may observe its dynamic and relational structure in terms of its reflections to our later decisions and the evaluation of the consequences of a proper action.[\[14\]](#)

Following the bilateral structure of freedom which is included in the bodily/corporeal and intellectual existence of a conscious being, Ricoeur divides human nature into two: the mind and free will that is voluntary, and the presence of the bodily/corporeal/biological human being as the field of involuntary. In the face of these two „presences“, according to him, man is never a bipolar being.[\[15\]](#) Its *involuntary* nature provides a basis for human beings, gives motivation resources, expresses their capacities and limits. *Voluntary* action is thus shown in a body that inevitably depends on it. Therefore, according to Ricoeur, a freedom separate from the bodily/corporeal world is unthinkable. In this case, the voluntary movements of man also bear the traces of his involuntary nature. In that case, freedom is valuable in that it carries with it the idea that all the relationships that are determined can be different. Ethics is not a thought but the action itself.

Nature and freedom are inseparable: nature makes freedom actual, and freedom makes nature meaningful. Nature is the home of freedom. As a living-nature consisting of the body, all the parts constituting my motivation for action are externally determined in this nature but internally in the conditions of existence of the rational self (*Cogito*). With this structure, freedom is not experienced solely based on a mental phenomenon or under the limits of an abstract conceptualization, it almost comes into being within the boundaries of the bodily.

Accepting Ricoeur’s conception of autonomy as a hermeneutic unfolding process from “decision” to “movement”, and an evaluation of the bodily action comparing the possibility of the worldly other events result in consistency and “consent” about the emergence of the idea. As Ricoeur defines this mechanism as an agreement between “my own possibilities” and “the world order”.

The harmony of my own possibilities with the possibilities which the world presents would be incomprehensible if the works of man and of the order of the world could not be fused into the same stuff of existence by the catalyst of voluntary motion. The possibility I project and the possibility I discover are knitted together by action. The man who boards a train joins possibility opened up by his project with the possibility offered by the railway company. An action, as a potency of my body, is outlined at the core of the project itself. The possible then is no longer absolutely blank; it is, so to speak, an „effective“ possibility and no longer „up in the air.“ Here the verbal kinship of the words „potency“ and „possibility“ is revealing enough—the possible is what I can and not merely wish to do. Possibility thus acquires a consistency and

almost physical density: it is on the way to actualization. It is the capacity of actualization of the project by the body.[\[16\]](#)

The connection of the three forms of the possible already announces that of *deciding*, of *moving* and of *consenting*. He gives us an example of taking a train journey:

Decision is a type of „judging,“ that is, of acts which signify, which designate in general. Let us consider four types of judgment: the train will leave tomorrow at 5 o'clock; perhaps the weather will be good; I shall take the express at 5 o'clock; get me a ticket. These statements of an event, a wish, a project, and an order are types of judgment. What do they have in common? Consider the Latin infinitive proposition which could be translated „I am to go on a trip.“ It expresses a level of meaning which might be common to very different acts all intending it in ways which again are quite different. „I am to go on a trip“ is itself not a condition of things stated, or the content of a wish, or a project, or the structure of an order. It is a neutral signification which could be incorporated in acts of different quality. It will occur some day that „I shall go on a trip“: here a positing of existence takes over the meaning and makes a statement of it. Oh, if it were true that „I shall go on a trip“: here the meaning is at the same time called and held in suspension by its hypothetical modifier. In a decision the meaning is inserted into a positing of existence which is not stated but is affirmed as depending on me, as „to be done by me and susceptible to being done by me.[\[17\]](#)

There is a difference in principle (even though it cannot be recognized in all cases) between a *decision* and a *simple wish* or command:

As we shall see, the theoretical distinction can be masked by a tangle of attitudes. Thus the transition from a wish to conditional action is continuous, as when I project an excursion in case the weather is good. The condition is the object of a wish, but the action itself, to the extent to which it depends on me, is an authentic project. Similarly, an order is accompanied by the personal action of the man whom I command, for the order is an extension of the immediate action of direction or control.[\[18\]](#)

The voyager lives in own experience, is an agent of own decisions but the voyager is someone that is restricted by the conditions. The confrontation of wishes to the real actions is a performance, and the agent is the witness of it. The hermeneutics of Self is clearly exemplified through the voyage: Being formed by experience during the narrative hermeneutic life, forms a reconfiguration in the act of understanding. is a narrative arrangement formed as a result of the dialectic between sameness and otherness (*ipse* and *idem*) in his own testimony. By that the hermeneutic of the self is completed through witnessing the consent as an autonomy.

### III. Conclusion

To conclude, voyage as a recollection of action and its narration has phenomenological aspects and hermeneutics outputs in Ricoeur's philosophy in terms of autonomy. The process of an action as decision, movement and consent is apperant in a voyage case that is included here as a sample of Ricoeur. Voyage as an archaic metaphor in Ricoeur's *Philosophie de la Volonté* unfolds as a mimetic movement in the dualistic nature of is and ought to.[\[19\]](#) The agency here at the first sight is a problem of ontology but then it is transferred into knowledge as an epistemological attitude and finally turns into an ethical awareness of phenomenological experiences lived by the Self. Thus, the voyage becomes a philosophical theme to be investigated as done by contemporary interpreters such as Onfray, Romano, etc. The hermeneutics of voyage requires a witness and it as a result implies the autonomy in narrative identity. From singularity to the holistic meaning of universe "being" opens itself in voyages as the whole World history of civilization notes.[\[20\]](#) This historicity leaves us some further philosophical questions for the current situation of humanitarian acts, about the nature of



mobility after pandemics and some other future issues about our autonomy in terms of the Ricoeurian term “consent”.

The events occurred in the contemporary era seem to be highly unpredictable, indeterminant, and ambiguous day-by-day. Post-pandemic world refers us the utmost conception in philosophizing the humanitarian condition is the “autonomy” as a multifaceted form of theory and practice. Under the restrictions, the Subject in this century has experienced a new order of reality without mobility. However, it is a fact that all the civilizations were made by historical intercontinental voyages bringing global results for the future of anthropological elements of life. Thus, the gap between the history and future, theoretical definitions and practical cases, knowledge and prediction, the will and the action might be sharper and more deepened. The role of philosophy at that point is to reconsider humanitarian conditions and should be critical for renovating life and meaning.

In such a world picture what Ricoeur left us is to construct an *authentic* balance between decision-making, moving and consent of. A voluntary motion can be still authentic since it belongs to the person itself, however, the desire, the necessities, motives, and decision of the Self can be understood only through consent that refers to the conscious. Voyages have written the history of human civilization for eras. Hermeneutics of voyage as a cultural heritage can show us the horizon of human understanding and autonomy. Today, to travel is not directly equal to be autonomous or free from the rules completely, but following Ricoeur, we understand that even to decide it, to move for it and to realize the action project is wholly a statement of autonomy in narration at the end.

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## Notes

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