

# Of Testimony and Confession

Two Paradigms of the Subject

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this paper is to examine two modes of problematization, which shift the traditional examination of self-truth away from its initially Cartesian focus point. It analyses two new ways — those of Ricoeur and Foucault — of redefining the relationship between subjectivity and truth, two ways of challenging both the Cartesian veridiction mode (the evidence) and the resulting metaphysical offshoot of the subject (the *res cogitans*) and its self-positioning and founding nature (the subjectum). The first method finds a founding paradigm in testimony, while the second takes confession as its model.

**KEYWORDS:** Hermeneutic, testimony, confession, P. Ricoeur, M. Foucault.

## Introduction

Whilst a philosophy of the subject, in its metaphysical or idealist incarnations, might seem to be out of reach, *a fortiori* in its initial Cartesian intention, and in spite of the limits and “things unthought” of philosophies of the anti-cogito, we might nevertheless wonder whether we cannot get past the contradiction of the *foundation* and the *illusion* of the *cogito*, by shifting the sense of the problematization. To mark the sense of this shift and hence of the difference with Cartesian, Kantian or Husserlian variations of what some people call the egological tradition of modern western philosophy, we will talk less of “subject,” of “cogito,” of “substance,” of “me,” than of “self” or of “ipseity.” It remains to be seen, beyond or through this change in lexicon, what might be saved or shifted in a philosophy of the subject which has lost its founding certainties. Our intent is not to review all contemporary attempts to redefine the intersection between subjectivity and truth, but to focus on just two.

Under a Ricoeurian hermeneutic modality, the shift takes place in the substitution of the conceptual *episteme/doxa* couple by the *attestation/suspicion*

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pairing: the attestation is presented as a sort of belief, which is not uttered in the doxic grammar of “I believe–that” but in the hermeneutic grammar of the “I believe–in.” The *testimony* is its paradigmatic form. Under a Foucauldian “archaeological” modality, the problem is not that of knowing under what conditions an enunciation (about an object, oneself. . .) is true, but of knowing how subjects are effectively linked in and by historical forms of veridiction. It is a case of analysing the forms of discursive institutions which enjoin the subject to tell the truth about himself. *Confession* is the paradigmatic form of this.

Our exact intent is not to present a confrontation between Ricoeur and Foucault, due to the radically heterogeneous philosophical position from which Ricoeur and Foucault deploy the direction of the shift of the relationship between subjectivity and truth. The Ricoeurian hermeneutic shift once again takes place within the framework of reflexive philosophy, albeit to subvert it from within. Ricoeur can still call himself post–Cartesian. With Foucault, the shift is far more radical and comes right off its Cartesian hinges: it is less a case of coming up with new and positive reformulations of reflexive philosophy, than of describing the historical forms through which regimes of veridiction transform subjectivities. A philosopher initially trained in the history of sciences in the tradition of a Bachelard or a Canguilhem will most definitely be subject to historical temptations. Whilst Ricoeur might also in one sense call himself a historian of philosophy, he maintains an almost Hegelian gesture, if only to shatter its dialectic and absolute knowledge, in as much as each “moment” in the history of philosophy of the subject is likely to be “taken up.” Nothing of the sort with Foucault, whose historical analyses, severed from any dialectic, are intended to be not only purely descriptive, but also to exceed the strict field of subjectivations and of philosophical regimes of veridiction, so as to better examine modes of veridiction in the field of criminal justice, prisons, psychiatry, etc.

The fact that such a face–off is difficult to organise, in as much as Ricoeur and Foucault are not talking about the same philosophical *place*, does not stop us from outlining the zones of intersection, involvement or exclusion between their two philosophical enterprises. This is demonstrated by the way in which they look to consider regimes of self–veridiction above and beyond the criterion of evidence or of the verificationist model. The self which comes out of these tests of veridiction transformed, will at the same time have lost its founding centrality.

## 1. Attestation of the self and the paradigm of testimony

It is in the preface to *Oneself as Another* that Ricoeur outlines his hermeneutic of the self, the regime of veridiction of which is based on the concept of attestation. The hermeneutic of the self implies a veritative type which exceeds the Cartesian mode of veridiction just as much as the presumption of the self-founding cogito. Of hermeneutic obedience, the notion of attestation nevertheless differs from Heideggerian *aletheia* in as much as it does not put itself forward as a disoccultation of the being in general, but as a belief mode linked to the existence of self in particular. Even though it is a very specific mode of belief — which cannot be reduced to the doxic belief (the *I-believe-that*) — which is uttered in the grammar of the *I-believe-in*. Attestation opposes just as much the regime of veridiction of evidence as the regime of verificationist veridiction that Ricoeur relates to the *episteme* of objective knowledge, though without attestation being assimilated into a simple “opinion.” Defined within the framework of post-romantic hermeneutics, attestation is by no means an immediate understanding: on the contrary, it requires mediation and detour through analysis, explanation and clarification of the self. Whence the constant reliance (for which the hermeneutic of the self searches in the Ricoeurian manner) on intentionally objectivising disciplines such as analytical philosophy and human and social sciences. So attestation does not oppose the idea of science in general, as long as such disciplines attempt to clarify and interpret the beings that we are. It opposes objective knowledge which claims to be a last foundation of self-knowledge. In other words, attestation, which cannot be reduced to a *doxa*, only opposes *episteme* to the extent that it is an *episteme* defined in terms of the last foundation or of apodictic truth.

Of course, Ricoeur does not hesitate to point out family resemblances between the attestation/suspicion pairing and the Aristotelian ontological to-be-true/to-be-false pairing, though he quickly moves on to demonstrate their fundamental difference:

Si par tous ces traits la dimension *aléthique* (véritative) de l’attestation s’inscrit bien dans le prolongement de l’être-vrai aristotélicien, l’attestation garde à son égard quelque chose de spécifique, du seul fait que ce dont elle dit l’être-vrai, c’est le soi; et elle le fait à travers les médiations objectivantes du langage, de l’action, du récit, des prédicats éthique et moraux de l’action. (Ricoeur 1990: 350)

Strictly speaking, it is an attestation, not for all human beings in its anthropological sense, but for all beings who take charge of interpreting themselves by objectifying all signs, texts and symbols in which their existence is perceived. In this sense, attestation of the self is seen less as a general trait of the human condition than as an *existential*. The fragile nature of

this veritative mode of oneself is due to the fact that it is no more than an interpretation. Not a purely arbitrary interpretation, of course; as on the one hand the attestation of the self is also uttered in the ethical grammar of credence — the trust in the power to say, to do, to tell. . . Yet there is nevertheless interpretation which — because it specifically presents itself as belief (albeit doxic), or as confidence — remains less than an apodictic veritative mode. It is also another way of differentiating the attestation/suspicion pairing from the to-be-true/to-be-false pairing: if attestation is indeed the opposite of suspicion, just as the to-be-true is the opposite of the to-be-false, the opposite in the first case is not considered in a purely disjunctive sense but in an almost conditional sense as long as the attestation is conditioned by the test of suspicion: “Le soupçon est aussi le chemin vers et la traversée dans l’attestation. Il hante l’attestation, comme le faux témoignage hante le vrai témoignage.” (Ricoeur 1990: 351)

This is the category of testimony which finally allows us to analogically consider the attestation of the self model.<sup>1</sup> Yet Ricoeur says almost nothing about this in *Oneself as Another*. The question which needs to be asked, and which Ricoeur does not specifically ask, is to what extent testimony may serve as a paradigm for attestation of the self. We have to search in other texts by Ricoeur to show in what this paradigm of testimony really consists. These reflections, sometimes dating back some time, are dispersed throughout various texts, the oldest but also the most complete being the article *L’herméneutique du témoignage*, initially published in « Archivio di Filosofia » in 1972;<sup>2</sup> the most recent reflections, of an epistemological nature, are brought together in developments relating to the historiographical operation. (Ricoeur 2000: 201–208) The testimony is framed in three registers of specification: legal, historiographical and theological.

In all three cases, testimony supposes three distinct operations: perception of a scene which has been experienced, its retention in the memory and its restitution in a narrative. The testimony cannot therefore be reduced to the perception of a situation or event, in the sense of an eye or ear witness who has seen or heard an event. The assertion of reality cannot be separated from the self-designation of the witness. To say “I was there” is to break away from the illusion of an omniscient spectator; it is to report what was seen or heard yesterday and to correlatively attest to the flesh and bone presence, of he/she who was there yesterday and who is offering an account today.

1. Whilst Ricoeur does not make any specific reference to this, testimony and attestation (just like contest, protest) have the same etymological root which goes back to the Latin *testis*, probably originally a third person or party who is witness to a conflict between two other people.

2. Article republished under the same title in RICOEUR 1994: 207–139.

There is only testimony if the fate of the perception is simultaneously transmuted in the narration of the event in what Ricoeur calls the *transport*:

C'est le témoin qui d'abord se déclare témoin. Il se nomme lui-même. Un déictique triple ponctue l'autodésignation: la première personne du singulier, le temps passé du verbe et la mention du là-bas par rapport à l'ici. (Ricoeur 1994: 204)

Yet as from this common property, testimony follows different pathways, depending on the register of specification. In the legal register, testimony's path is only completed if it serves judgement in a regime of veridiction proper to the grammar of the trial right through to the end of sentencing:

La constatation et le récit constituent des informations à partir desquelles on se fait une opinion sur une séquence d'événements, sur l'enchaînement d'une action, sur les motifs d'un acte, sur le caractère d'une personne, bref, sur le sens ce qui est arrivé. Le témoignage est cela sur quoi on s'appuie pour penser que... pour estimer... , bref, pour juger. Le testimony veut justifier, prouver le bien-fondé d'une assertion qui, par de-là le fait, prétend atteindre son sens. (Ricoeur 1994: 111)

Furthermore, within the framework of a trial, the testimony — or, in the case of an appeal court, whatever the judge and jury might make of it — does not just relate to the facts: to testify does not simply mean offering testimony about something, but also to testify *for* or *against* someone. In this sense, to testify is already to plead a case, albeit implicitly. Through testimony, which is just one possible element within a range of evidence, judgement comes down in favour of, condemns or acquits, decides between...

This gives us a better understanding of how and why the paradigm of testimony can have an analogical pertinence with a hermeneutic of the attestation of the self: on the one hand this is because it cannot achieve a regime of apodictic veridiction and be part of the necessary order of things (instead merely of the probable, likely and therefore questionable order); on the other hand it is because it makes suspicion the very condition for the attestation of something and, in the final instance, of self as a reliable voice. Suspicion is possible as from the perceptive phase (did he see/hear correctly? Did he see the whole thing or just see it from a particular angle? Was he hallucinating?); it can be produced or be pushed back to the retention phase (memory distortion) and can be directed onto the declarative phase in the case of a false declaration legally sanctioned as being false testimony or perjury. Of course, the situation can become more complicated when there are contradictory testimonies where one person's account negates someone else's. Even clearer is Ricoeur's cardinal proposition whereby the suspicion is the condition of attestation. In this sense suspicion is not an accident of testimony — indeed it haunts it throughout the trial: there is

testimony only because the parties disagree; the testimony thus calls for debate, argument, investigation. . .

Testimony is never evidence in itself and never definitive evidence; it is similar to a regime of veridiction where the probable requires confrontation and reasoned discussion: testimony is always a fallible and provisional candidate for the status of evidence, even after sentence has been passed, and as long as all recourses have not been exhausted. This is also why witnesses, when they are in the position of third parties at a trial (neither victim nor accused), are always in a dialogical position when addressing listeners who may or may not believe what witnesses say. Ricoeur insists that in such a case the fiduciary and dialogical dimensions of testimony are inseparable. Accreditation is strengthened, i.e. the testimony becomes more credible, though without suspicion ever being eradicated, when witnesses are able to maintain and reiterate their accounts over time. Reiterated testimony is then akin to a promise: to repeat tomorrow what one says today about a scene seen or heard yesterday. By keeping one's word in the face of others, witnesses pass the test of their own attestation and underline their ipseity.

It is notably under these aspects that testimony, in its legal specification, finds a particular resonance in its historiographical specification, without us being able, here, to examine its theological (through testimony of the absolute) or metaphysical (for example, testimony and trace of the Other in Levinas) specifications. Until it has been subject to internal and external review by historians, particularly with regard to the authenticity of the document, regarding confirmation and cross-referencing with other sources, testimony cannot be accorded the status of documentary evidence. Here again, testimony must run the gauntlet of permanent suspicion and is thus considered to be a fallible and provisional attestation as long as no other testimony has contradicted it. Before becoming an evidence, albeit always provisional, historical testimony must always be subject to a series of tests that Ricoeur calls historiographical operations. The same is true of the veritative regime of the attestation of the self: no proof of self without proving self. Just like its legal specification, even though the rules and procedures are different, it must be possible for the historiographical testimony operation to be embedded into a reasoned debate within a public that is no longer that of the courtroom but that of the scientific community of historians. The testimony test cannot be reduced to the critical process of the isolated historian; it must always be backed by suspicion which is mediated intersubjectively by peers and virtually by all informed publics. This is what constitutes the critical public test of testimony.

In its legal and historiographical functions, testimony differs in various ways. On the one hand the difference is found in the type of judgement that follows it. Whilst we might talk about historical judgement, and sometimes

despite the mixture of genres when they attend certain high-profile trials, strictly speaking historians should not use witnesses in order to pass sentence, but must confine themselves to recapturing the past as it happened. On the other hand, regarding the historiographical operation, the testimony category is far more extensive than the legal category of the eye witness. Ultimately, any document, any vestige of the past may become a testimony in what the French historian Marc Bloch calls “witness despite themselves.” Historical witnesses cannot in any circumstances be reduced to people who say “I was there” and who ask others to take their word for it: it suffices that “that was the case,” it suffices that there is a trace problematized by the historian to attest that something did indeed happen, and must have happened in that way. . . Finally, the testimony’s certification and confrontation rituals within the courtroom differ from those which take place within a scientific community: a symposium of scientists is not a court; a historian does not have a judge’s authority to summon witnesses or to punish them in cases of false testimony.

This lengthy detour via historical and legal testimony, whilst it has an intrinsic heuristic value — *a fortiori* if one is examining regimes of veridiction — ultimately aimed to show how it might serve as a paradigm for the attestation of the self. The answer was to be found in texts prior to *Oneself as Another*, showing what exactly underlies this model of the hermeneutic of the self. This threw light on a mode of veridiction which falls within the order of the probable and the likely, which supposes a permanent passage through the test of suspicion, which refuses any last foundation and any form of apodictic truth, which is part of the register of belief and trust. It nevertheless remains that this analogical transfer of testimony is not entirely self-evident under its legal or historical specification. Limits which Ricoeur does not explicitly mention in *Oneself as Another*.

If attestation can be posited for the witness him/herself (attestation correlative to a past reality and self-identifying reference), it is also posited in a legal context when the witness is placed in the position of a third party, i.e. when they testify on behalf of someone else. In this sense, witnesses are not asked to testify on their own behalf. Attestation of the self nevertheless remains pertinent even in this position of a third party adopted by the witness as from the moment that Ricoeur’s self is in no way exhausted in the first person singular but is extended to all personal functions, including impersonal functions. But conversely, how can we transpose the function of a third party to a self which expresses itself in the first person singular, with the risk of desecrating the root of the word, i.e. of witness, of *testis* as a third party? Assuming that testifying on one’s own behalf still has any meaning, it has by no means the same implications as testifying on behalf of someone else.

The problem is even greater if we examine this from the standpoint of the process of suspicion through which the attestation is *attested*.

In the case of a historiographical operation or of court proceedings, suspicion is not exercised by the witness but by someone else: historians, judges, jurors etc. The witness asks to be believed, but accreditation — if it exists — does not come from the witness but from others. Furthermore, in all cases accreditation supposes strict rules and procedures which make it possible to put a witness's testimony to the test. Yet who exercises suspicion once we leave the courthouse or scientific arenas? What accreditation procedures must be justified when the self is no longer witness in a trial? Can we say that the self, as a reflexive instance, can exercise a function of suspicion in the form of an interiorisation of the dialogal and fiduciary structure of accreditation — ultimately, in the form of an interior court? Ricoeur does not directly examine this problem when he takes on attestation of the self and the test of suspicion. However, we might reasonably think that he does not exclude this possibility, particularly when (after adapting it) he himself adopts the Heideggerian *Gewissen*. Yet attestation of the self, particularly when it is examined in the final study of *Oneself as Another*, is constantly modified by an ontology of otherness, notably in its intersubjective form. We can only surmise that whilst the test of suspicion can be applied within oneself, it can only find fulfilment in an intersubjective form. Indeed, this is confirmed in the passages Ricoeur devotes to the ethic of discussion of Habermas and his followers. This therefore means that attestation of the self — and here the paradigm of testimony finds its fullest justification — requires recognition and accreditation from others, without the procedure in question being reduced to its legal format. The others in question may also take an impersonal form: we must therefore add an institutional dimension to the dialogal aspect of the attestation of the self.

## 2. Technologies of the self and the paradigm of confession

We cannot move from Ricoeur's hermeneutic method to Foucault's archaeological approach without transitions or precautions. We must not forget why a comparison of the two methods is complicated: where Ricoeur works to justify a hermeneutic of the self on the ruins of philosophes of the subject, Foucault simply attempts to describe the historical structures through which regimes of veridiction link, constitute and transform subjectivities. Where Ricoeur can still position himself within a post-Cartesian tradition, Foucault prefers to see himself as belonging to a post-Kantian tradition of critical philosophy. Not a critical philosophy which in classic fashion ponders the transcendental conditions of a true enunciation, but a philosophy



which examines the historical conditions of truth-telling, which tries to understand how subjects are linked in and by the forms of veridiction they engage.

Whilst this certainly constitutes the guiding thread of Foucault's works, especially from the publication of the three volumes of *History of Sexuality* through to the posthumous publication of writings taken from his lessons at the Collège de France, we will concentrate here on one particular relationship between subjectivity and truth: confession. This is by no means a trivial choice, in as much as this particular mode of veridiction reverses and radically shifts the problem of truth from its Cartesian location and furthermore allows us to establish an interesting comparison with the paradigm of testimony. Although Foucault examines confession in several of his works, in this paper we will be relying on the recently published conferences he gave at the University of Louvain in May 1981. (Cf. Foucault 2012) It is not possible, within the framework of this paper, to enter into the details of analyses of a book in which Foucault patiently dissects all of the historical manifestations of confession, its transformations from its first formulations in Greek tragedy to its most recent contemporary forms, its registers of legal and Christian specification. What is important is to analyse how such historical forms offer a new regime of veridiction, along with an original conception of the subject.

Confession concerns declaratory acts through which people recognise having said or done something. Yet it is more than a simple declaration and simple recognition, if only through the fact of having sinned. The point to be taken into account is not so much the object of the declaration as the way in which it occurs. To recognise that one has committed a reprehensible act is not necessarily an avowal. Foucault tells us that for there to be avowal, there must be "a certain cost of enunciation" for the person speaking. In the enunciation of an avowal, not only is recognition of what one has said or done by no means self-evident, but said recognition exposes those making the avowal, causes them to run risks. Confession is therefore always a test for those who make it, and supposes personal engagement by the subject. To admit is not just to recognise something in the sense of assertive truth, it means committing oneself. This means that the paradigm of avowal already has one thing in common with the legal paradigm of testimony, because in certain very specific cases the witness can also be put in the position of avowing subject. However, confession takes the subject's commitment a step further, unlike the witness who, placed in the position of third party, testifies for or against another person. In the declaration of the avowing subject, there is an assertion about a past reality and a self-identifying reference, but there is an additional test in that one has to say something about oneself (and not about another person) in

the sense of a self-imputation and of something that one has difficulty in recognising. The test of the avowing subject is thus far greater than that of the testifying subject.

Confession is thus a very particular mode of truth-telling: truth-telling which inseparably concerns what is to be avowed and the person who is avowing. First and foremost one tells a truth about oneself, though always through acts or thoughts. If one can admit to oneself something deep down inside, then like testimony, the confession that Foucault dissects in its historical institutions has from the outset a dialogic and institutional dimension. The test of confession, unlike the internal courtroom of moral conscience for example, takes place before another person who is in a position of authority (a judge, a keeper of conscience, a confessor, a psychiatrist, etc.). There is an asymmetrical dialogic and institutional structure between the avowing subject and the confession destinee. In a position of power, the destinee is never in the position of pure recipient: he/she must specifically put the sincerity of the confession to the test and, where required, force confession. Unlike testimony in a legal context, the process does not consist in the transport of things seen or heard into things said and told to another person, but in the passage from something originally shameful and unsaid to something avowed.

Unlike simple enunciations of true propositions, confession proceeds from an obligation of truth-telling. This is not an obligation (in the Kantian sense of duty), the moral appeal court of which is based on reason; it is an external constraint emanating from an authority which enjoins a subject not only to tell the truth in general, but to tell the truth about him/herself. To analyse this regime of veridiction, as Foucault does, thus requires one to place the question of power at the heart of the relationship between subjectivity and truth, and to deliberately set aside, for example, the reflexive form of *admitting to oneself*. Here, being obliged to tell the truth about oneself only has meaning because an authority puts itself into an injunctive position. It is not just a question of obliging the subject to avow, including by force, by torture, but to test the veracity, the authenticity and the sincerity of the confession. Here the question of belief and accreditation is more radical and dramatic than that of testimony: to increase belief both in the content of the confession and in the person who is confessing. This test of commitment of self is so important that, as Foucault shows, under the Inquisition, after torture confessions had to be renewed before the appropriate authorities:

Il n'y a d'aveu au sens strict qu'à l'intérieur d'une relation de pouvoir à laquelle l'aveu donne l'occasion de s'exercer sur celui qui avoue. Les choses sont évidentes lorsque ces relations de pouvoir sont définies institutionnellement: ainsi dans le cas

de confession judiciaire, ou de la confession dans l'Eglise catholique. Mais il en est de même dans des relations beaucoup plus floues et beaucoup plus mobiles [. . .]. En bref, l'aveu suscite ou renforce une relation de pouvoir qui s'exerce sur celui qui avoue. C'est pourquoi il n'y a d'aveu que "coûteux." (Foucault 2012: 6)

What subject emerges from this test of veridiction, from this specific power relationship? To what self does the paradigm of confession give place? To answer these questions is to measure the considerable difference with the regimes of veridiction at work in subjectivist idealist philosophies, and first and foremost in its Cartesian version. If we can say that radical doubt constitutes a typically Cartesian test of veridiction which allows one to access primary truth, as we know, the result is the proud self-positioning of the cogito. Vice versa, we can say that the test of veridiction of confession gives the opposite result — a humiliated subject.

We sometimes have a misleading understanding of Foucault's notion of technology of the self: confession is an inseparable regime of veridiction and technology of self, but a technology of the self which functions through constraint. Technologies of the self, such as confession, are in no way related to agency, to Goffman's "techniques for secondary adaptation," to Certeau's "arts of doing," to Sen's or Ricoeur's "capabilities" — all of which are technologies of the self which manifest a power, albeit relative, of a subject facing outside constraints. Of course — and this is the thrust of Foucault's technologies of the self — the test of confession transforms the subject; confession underlines a self's before and after. But this subjectivation, this transformation of self is entirely formed under the vertical dependence of an outside injunction and of an asymmetrical authority. The power in question is not so much *power to* as *power over*. More specifically, *power to* — to recognise something — is entirely under the dependence of a *power* which is exerted *over* the avowing subject. We are dealing with a mode of subjectivation that is constituted under a regime of veridiction which is inseparably a regime of *power over*. Yet this subjectivation is anything but self-founding:

L'aveu est un acte verbal par lequel le sujet pose une affirmation sur ce qu'il est, se lie à cette vérité, se place dans un rapport de dépendance à l'égard d'autrui, et modifie en même temps le rapport qu'il a à lui-même. (Foucault 2012: 7)

Although we cannot here go into the detail of Foucault's historical analyses, it is of course with Christianity that confession takes on what we might call its paradigmatic form, particularly as from the monastic institutions which began to flourish in the East and then in Europe during the first Middle Ages. It was within these institutions that confession took on its most radical form through a process of subjectivation that we might paradoxically consider to be desubjectivation — in the sense of a destitution

of the ego — when it becomes permanent and is built against continued obedience, which is manifested in a *humilitas*:

L'humilitas consiste à se considérer comme le dernier au milieu de tous les autres: Alors donc que dans l'Antiquité, la verbalisation se fait à partir du maître en direction du disciple qui est l'instance de l'écoute, au contraire, on va avoir, dans ce nouveau rapport d'obéissance que les institutions monastiques développent, une structure complètement inverse. Pour obéir, à la fois parce qu'on obéit et pour obéir et pour pouvoir rester toujours dans l'état d'obéissance, il faut parler. Il faut parler de soi. La véridiction est un processus; la véridiction de soi-même – le dire-vrai sur soi — est une condition indispensable pour l'assujettissement à un rapport de pouvoir à l'autre. (Foucault 2012: 139)

Of course, Foucault is not philosophically justifying such a mode of obedience and regime of veridiction: he only analyses their content measuring their impact on western culture, even if confession might later on take less radical forms. Yet we can clearly see that the paradigm of confession goes hand in hand with a subjectification of the anti-cogito, whilst for Ricoeur, the model of attestation of the self, which takes testimony as its paradigm, is specifically located at an equal distance between the humiliated cogito and the exalted cogito.

Here it is interesting to compare the few pages that Ricoeur devotes to confession (without it constituting a paradigm for attestation of the self) in the second volume of *Philosophy of the Will*, with the status that Foucault gives it. For Ricoeur, the phenomenology of confession, highly programmatic, is rapidly enrolled into a hermeneutic of evil, the problem being the analysis of modes of verbalising and symbolising evil (myth, gnosis, etc.). At first sight, the avowing subject theorised by Ricoeur is not far removed from that put forward by Foucault, as from the moment that the experience — evil — which must be reflected demonstrates blindness, scandal or alienation. Yet for Ricoeur, the act of avowal itself takes on an ignored aspect of Foucauldian suspicion: “L'aveu exprime, pousse au dehors l'émotion qui sans lui se refermerait sur soi, comme une impression de l'âme; le langage est la lumière de l'émotion; par l'aveu la conscience de faute est portée dans la lumière de la parole; par l'aveu l'homme reste parole jusque dans l'expérience de son absurdité, de sa souffrance, de son angoisse.” (Ricoeur 1986: 209)

For Ricoeur, symbolisation through the confession of evil (not just the evil we have done directly, but also the evil in man, radical evil) is already a way out of blindness: enunciation of the evil frees the avowing subject (this is the dimension that Foucault ignores), even if it does not change the status of *the fallible cogito* which traverses the *Symbolism of Evil*. Even if the avowing subject loses his/her founding position, under his/her Ricoeurian modality he/she would not for this reason take on the humiliating form suggested by

Foucault. Probably because Ricoeur's preferred form of confession remains confession *to oneself*, especially when the hermeneutic of evil is likely to be taken up in reflexive philosophy in the form of *a symbol which leads one to consider* the moral position of mankind in the world. Conversely, unlike Foucault, Ricoeur's hermeneutic ignores confession as an institutional practice which is expressed in dissymmetrical power relationships. Ricoeur's avowing subject is set before texts, symbols and myths, with the avower already becoming a hermeneut; in his/her Foucauldian form, the avowing subject is first of all set before an authority.

For Foucault, far from being a free act, the ability to tell the truth about oneself, to interpret the signs of one's existence, was historically framed in the dual dependency on the Church's institutional authority and on the authority of sacred text. It is also in this sense that the famous *believe-in* as a non-doxic register of Ricoeur's attestation finds historical resonance: the close link between the obligation to believe (in dogma, in God, in the revealed truth, etc.) and the obligation to discover oneself. However, Foucault shows that during primitive Christianity there was a relative dysfunction between the hermeneutic of the self and the hermeneutic of text: whilst for Foucault the hermeneutic of the self is in one sense an invention of the asceticism and monasticism of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, it only had very rudimentary verbalisation techniques at its disposal, unlike the techniques for interpreting texts which as from the emergence of Judaism became available in eminently complex forms. It was not until the Reformation that there was a triple discontinuity which led directly to Ricoeur's hermeneutic of the self: firstly in the refusal to submit the hermeneutic of the texts to the authority of dogma, secondly in the refusal to submit the hermeneutic of texts to the institutional authority of priests. It is in this sense that the avowing subject, as Ricoeur envisages it in *Symbolism of Evil* is already, historically, a "reformed subject," or at least a mode of confession which made the Reformation its own.

Although the Ricoeurian hermeneutic of the self is weighed down by this triple discontinuity, it continues and considerably broadens its outlook. A broadening, on the one hand, in the sense of a secularisation of the hermeneutic of the self where the issue of belief — which finds specific support in the paradigm of testimony — leaves aside the question of belief in God as a final attestation. A broadening, on the other hand, which it owes in part to Schleiermacher, in the sense of a significant extension to the hermeneutic of texts above and beyond sacred texts which have not only lost their dogmatic authority but also their interpretive centrality: texts on history, on law, fiction are all laboratories which allow me to understand and interpret myself. Finally, a broadening that owes much to Dilthey, in the sense of an extension of hermeneutics to all forms of objectivised meaning,

be they symbols, actions or institutions. We can therefore see that whilst Ricoeur's hermeneutic of the self might be part of a historical process which dates back to that of confession — the notion of an obligation to tell the truth about oneself — as a specific regime of veridiction, it is a radical departure in that it incorporates all of its discontinuities and movements of deregionalisation. This is why testimony remains the preferred veritative regime for the hermeneutic of the self in its Ricoeurian modality.

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