Hermeneutic, Comparative, and Syncretic Philosophy

Or, On Ricoeurian, Confucian, and Aztec Philosophy

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On the Internal Crisis of Hermeneutics

The purpose of this essay is to assess the present state of hermeneutics as a philosophical program and, as a result, to suggest some new avenues for its development. Specifically, I forward two closely related new directions for hermeneutical philosophy, namely that by way of global comparative philosophy, and that by way of syncretic philosophy. The reasons for the proposed developments turn on a difficulty that especially faces Paul Ricoeur's formulation of hermeneutics. Given the accuracy of his challenge to Martin Heidegger's "short road," and the broader methodological similarities that Ricoeur shares with Hans Georg Gadamer, I see no other alternative path forward for the philosophical program.[1]

Notably, the present challenge is one that has emerged internally from proponents of philosophical hermeneutics and scholars of Ricoeur's philosophy in particular. It is one that Scott Davidson raises in his essay "Intersectional Hermeneutics," and it is one that Richard Kearney has at least implicitly endorsed in his turn to formulate a "carnal hermeneutics."[2] Unlike Alain Badiou's criticisms, or those that proponents of deconstruction forward, this challenge hits its mark precisely because it goes to the heart of how the hermeneutic circle of reflective inquiry is supposed to operate.[3] It does not deny the major premises of the program, then, but grants that they are true, and concludes, nevertheless, that philosophical hermeneutics cannot function as Ricoeur supposed. The matter is thus a serious one, and if no alternative proved viable, then I think that philosophical hermeneutics would stand as only a topic of historical interest, no longer a living philosophical tradition.

Fortunately for proponents of hermeneutics, there are several paths forward, as both Davidson and Kearney have developed the contours of their own new programs. What the present essay adds are two more paths. Unlike Davidson and Kearney's paths, however, the two I propose, i.e., the comparative and syncretic paths, draw directly from Ricoeur's own philosophical work by developing the model of translation that he forwards late in his career, rather than attempting to replace his hermeneutic models with a new one.[4] An additional advantage is that my proposal links hermeneutical philosophy to the world's philosophical traditions, so that hermeneutics may profitably engage in the new "global turn" in philosophy. Since the matter is complex, I begin with the way in which Ricoeur develops Heidegger's hermeneutics.

From Heidegger's to Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

To understand the character of what might be called "Davidson's collapse challenge" to philosophical hermeneutics, it helps to take a step back and ask what the hermeneutic circle was supposed to consist of. Why, after all, did hermeneutics, a practice of reading Biblical texts, become a philosophical position—something approaching both a method and an epistemological outlook?[5] The short answer, and one that will be sufficient for our purposes, best emerges by recalling the reasons that motivated Ricoeur to develop Heidegger's hermeneutics in the first place.

We can start at the beginning. Heidegger first grafts the practice of hermeneutics onto the program of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology in his lectures which now make up the volume titled *History of the Concept of Time*. What Heidegger argues there is that Husserl's account of truth, his phenomenological sense that is supposed to serve as the conceptual basis for mathematical and scientific truth claims, presupposes a further dimension. Suppose that I have my back to the blackboard, and someone claims that the blackboard is askew. At this point, I do not know whether that proposition "the blackboard is askew" is true. When I turn around, I recognize the phenomenological evidence that would satisfy the proposition as true, and so I recognize its truth.[6] Yet, this adequation of mind and reality in phenomenological evidence presupposes something further, Heidegger argues. I need to have an understanding of the preconceptually articulated world that includes blackboards and things hanging askew for those words to have any meaning—for me or anyone else.[7] In *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that this further world (*Umwelt*) of sense that gives things their meaning is their Being (*Sein*). Individual beings, then, presuppose Being (*Sein*) for their meaning.[8]

Heidegger argues further that the totality of all meanings that make up Being is itself historically conditioned.[9] To put the point intuitively, some things can appear to me *as* space shuttles, but they could never do so for Aristotle. The reason is that the *Sein* of beings for Aristotle held that beyond

the moon was only ether, so that nothing could even travel out of orbit, and he had no conception of physical forces explained quantitively as we have. The Being of beings, then, turns on one's place in history, and the character of that history shifts. For Heidegger, in fact, there has only been one such shift, and it is that which occurred when the pre-Socratic sense of truth (*alētheia*) changed to become a verifiable, or technological, sense of truth, either in Plato's *Republic* or Aristotle's logic. The most basic sense of a being, such as a blackboard, then, is not Being, but the historical changing of Being as a configuration—what Heidegger in his later career called an Event (*Ereignis*).[10]

The epistemological challenge in articulating just in what the most basic sense of being consists thus turns on speaking about a topic that is deeply prereflective. The world that makes sense of beings like blackboards, space-shuttles, and even people, is not something about which one is ordinarily aware. I mostly notice my car, for example, when it breaks down.[11] Only specific modes of conscious awareness, then, reveal a being to me as an object for reflection. And if it is difficult for the Being of individual beings to emerge into my awareness, then the Being of Being itself, the Event, is by that same measure even more difficult. To achieve that stage of awareness, one needs a special reflective approach. We shall have to identify a mood of consciousness that brings beings as a whole into awareness, such as anxiety, and then articulate that mood.[12] At various points in his career Heidegger called this approach "hermeneutics," because the reflection he employed on the appropriate moods of consciousness required interpretation (*Auslegung*) in the way that reflection on the meaning of Biblical texts do.[13]

These points, in outline, suggest the reasons why hermeneutics, a practice of reflection on Biblical texts, became a philosophical outlook that is at once epistemological and methodological in character. Now, to understand Ricoeur's criticism of Heidegger, why it is that he thought Heidegger's approach would never work, it is helpful to begin with Heidegger's own self-criticism.

The hermeneutic circle for Heidegger consists in the fact that we (always) already have an understanding of the Being of beings, but that we need to articulate this prior awareness. We need to move from our prereflective understanding of beings, first into a mood that highlights them, then into a stage of deliberate reflection on that mood called hermeneutics, and finally we hope to arrive at a reflective understanding of the being under consideration. At least, that is the approach for ordinary beings. In the case of the Event itself, since it is hardly comprehensible, the best that one can do is to bring reflective thought to its limits and to recognize those limits—what John Sallis, in his scholarship, has called "the verge."[14] In *Being and Time*, what Heidegger sought to do was to bring his readers to that verge by reflecting on the specific being who asks the question of Being, namely the human being (*Dasein*). Heidegger later recognized this approach to be in error because the very strategy of addressing the character of reality by way of asking about the

limits of human beings is part of the particular *Western* approach to the topic—it is René Descartes and Immanuel Kant's approach *par excellence*—and Heidegger wants to get at the Being of all Being, the Event, not only Being of Western Being. This shortcoming explains why, in his later career, Heidegger undertook to deconstruct Western philosophy as a path to bring our understanding to the verge of thought—and it is this self-assessment that led him to the serious study of the pre-Socratics.[15]

What Ricoeur discerns in Heidegger's work, whether early or late, is an error in argumentative strategy. Ricoeur's early career objection to Heidegger, and what I have developed at length elsewhere, holds that there is no way, in principle, that Heidegger could complete his task.[16] The reasons turn on three misunderstandings. The first is that the strategy of questioning back (*rukfrage*) from a given (e.g., the hanging of a blackboard) to its condition (e.g. the board's phenomenological evidence) is a broadly transcendental strategy of argument. Kant uses this strategy in all three of his critiques. Yet, as Kant outlines in the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, one must not only regress to some prior condition x, one must also show that the x is the only possible (or only adequate) explanation available.[17] Otherwise, it would be possible to argue that the given is explained by anything at all. The truth of the blackboard's hanging, for example, could be explained as the result of an evil genius who makes me perceive it that way. Thus, Heidegger first mistakenly uses the transcendental method.

Second, Heidegger mischaracterizes the truth of mathematics and the natural sciences in trying to question back from (or dig beneath) them. The now discredited positivist view on these disciplines holds that they simply yield an ever-expanding reservoir of truths. But since Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, philosophers of science have recognized that this is not a plausible view of the matter (even if Kuhn's own view has needed significant modification).[18] Because mathematical and scientific truth is not static in the way required, there is simply no given to question back from to some prior level x. There is simply no "truth" of mathematics and science as Heidegger requires.

Finally, Heidegger mistakenly conceives of the beings of our awareness as obstacles to be explained, as givens to reason from, supposing that they are highlighted in specific conscious states. But if our conscious awareness is not so obvious as we naturally suppose, if Sigmund Freud is right about at least that much, then the objects themselves are more likely to serve as points of reflection than moods of conscious awareness. Hermeneutics must be about the objects and persons of the world, not our mind's supposedly clear interiority. For all these reasons, the promised return road that would have completed *Being and Time* proves to be impossible even in principle.

The third criticism, for Ricoeur, nevertheless points the way forward. If hermeneutics is not supposed to investigate conscious moods, but rather the

objects that are the production of our conscious states, then one must take the long path of traversing through all relevant productions, rather than through Heidegger's short road that makes use of a single (or a handful) of states.[19] This long road of traversal, from a given object of meaning precomprehensively grasped, through a moment of articulate reflection, and to a moment of secondary comprehension, is what characterizes the circle of hermeneutic reflection for Ricoeur. Nevertheless, it is also not without its own challenge.

Davidson's Collapse Challenge for Ricoeur

On the Ricoeurian model of hermeneutics, one is to begin with a given that is prereflectively understood (in Heideggerianese: precomprehensively grasped). Then one reflects on that given in an articulate way, only to return, finally, to the given as it was, but now refigured by way of reflection. Ricoeur called this last stage "appropriation," as it was his rearticulation of G. W. F. Hegel's *Aufhebung*.[20] To express the same strategy differently, Ricoeur liked to say that one begins with a naïve given, passes through a moment of suspicion, to be returned to the phenomenon in a second naivete.

The specifics of Ricoeur's method matter for Davidson's collapse challenge. For much of Ricoeur's career the second stage of reflective articulation, the moment of suspicion, made use of structuralist methods. This seems to have had a double purpose. First, structuralist explanations are often counterintuitive, and so helpfully challenge one's naïve view of the phenomenon under consideration. Second, Ricoeur held that structuralism offered a mode of explanation that was appropriate to human disciplines and so was different from scientific explanation.[21] Ricoeurian hermeneutics, in short, is largely tied to structuralism in its methodological execution.

It is at this point that Davidson's challenge enters the philosophical stage. For Davidson, the problem is not, as some had argued, that structuralism plays only a limited role in Ricoeur's philosophy,

> it is that it is granted any role at all. Today structuralism is purely a historical artifact. In disciplines ranging from linguistics to literary theory to anthropology, structuralism has been refuted, debunked and dismissed. As a linguistic theory, it has been criticized for reducing language to a static system and ignoring the question of the production of linguistic meaning (Chomsky 1979). In the domain of literary criticism, its focus on discovering the deep structure of texts has been rejected for blurring over significant textual details that differentiate texts. In anthropology, it has been criticized for imposing a theoretical construct that is not supported by empirical facts about culture (Lett 1987).[22]

In short, structuralism has collapsed as a program of investigation. Insofar as Ricoeur's account of hermeneutics is tied to its methods, it likewise sinks. First naiveté and second supposedly gained after long traversal thus collapse together. That, in brief, is Davidson's collapse challenge.

To my mind, Davidson's criticism hits its mark. To deny it, one would have to show that, somehow, Ricoeur did not mean to use structuralism as he did. Or, since that is not possible, that some number of his investigations made use of other modes of explanation.

For his part, Davidson argues that one could reconstruct Ricoeur's hermeneutics by replacing his structuralist moment of explanation with a multidimensional model, which he calls an "intersectional model." "The main flaw in Ricoeur's account of explanation," he writes, "is more profound than his adherence to structuralism. It might have to do with the fact that structuralism is a 'single-axis' method of explanation."[23] Because phenomena are plurivocal in their meaning, a model that aims at identifying only one axis of meaning is bound to be the wrong approach generally. Instead, Davidson develops Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectional approach to categories of oppression to achieve the stated aim.[24]

Richard Kearney has to some extent followed the other path left open, namely that many of Ricoeur's investigations did not make use of structuralist explanation, and these can profitably be developed. Specifically, Kearney uses Ricoeur's early work on philosophical anthropology to develop an embodied, carnal hermeneutics. Despite his recourse to Ricoeur's work, however, Kearney's articulation leans on Merleau-Ponty's insight that our bodies schematize the world, so that it is possible to use this framework to come to understand our prereflective grasp of meaningful symbols, texts, and translations.[25]

Both paths, to my mind, prove workable, but they share something in common: they both replace Ricoeur's moment of explanation with something else. In Davidson's case, it is Crenshaw's intersectional categories, while in Kearney's it is a development of Merleau-Ponty's embodiment. Might not a more sensible path be to look for an alternative model of explanation within Ricoeur's own work? This is the path I propose, because I think that Ricoeur's translation model of explanation escapes Davidson's collapse.

The Translation Model

In Ricoeur's career, he came to understand that the givens for reflective understanding cluster around different units of analysis. The symbol, which animated his early work, operates at the level of the word in context. The metaphor, which followed closely after, operates at the level of the sentence. The text, finally, finds meaning in a work as a whole and cannot be reduced to the meaning of individual sentences or their sum.[26] It was a surprise to Ricoeur, then, that translations would form their own sort of given meaning.

Even more surprisingly, they look to operate at the level of a whole culture.[27] As a result of this unique position, of all the models of meaning at work in Ricoeur's thought, it is the translation model that most directly puts into question the Being of beings; it is also a model that could not possibly make use of structuralist explanations.

To understand it, one might begin with the initial animating concern of Ricoeur's inquiry when he addresses the topic of translation, namely how is translation among languages, especially widely divergent languages, even possible? The given with which Ricoeur begins his reflective project is thus double. It concerns both the diversity of languages, symbolically expressed in the Bible's myth of Babel,[28] and the fact of translation everywhere in human history.[29] What, exactly, are the conditions for the possibility of this state of affairs?

In response, one philosophical tradition has been attracted to the explanation that turns on the existence of a perfect language in some form. Bacon, for example, sought to eliminate the imperfections of empirical languages as "idols." Leibniz aimed to draw up a lexicon of universal simple ideas, and Walter Benjamin expressed the translator's ideal as a messianic horizon for a perfect translation.[30] But in assessing the prospects of the strategy, it is helpful to recall that Umberto Eco, in his early career, put his considerable intellectual abilities behind the project of developing Q-codes for this task. Yet, by his own admission Eco failed to achieve that aim because the supposed "imperfections" of natural languages are exactly those features that allow it to function in ordinary life. The theoretically perfect language, then, looks unworkable as a solution. What is one to do about this result?

In response, Ricoeur follows Donald Davison's approach in his essay "Theoretically Difficult, Hard and Practically Simple, Easy."[31] While it is theoretically difficult, perhaps impossible, to explain the conditions for the possibility of linguistic translation, it proves practically simple, as it has been done everywhere humans from different linguistic backgrounds have met. If one accepts this response, then, the impasse of translation theory finds a passageway in practice.

Because Ricoeur follows Davidson's pragmatism for the model of translation, then, structuralist explanation plays no role in his reflective inquiry. Rather, one begins with a given, in this case the plurality of languages, confronts a theoretical impasse, the difficulty in explaining the conditions for the possibility of translation, and then is returned to the practice of translation as a sort of second naiveté. This passageway, however, requires a sort of philosophical payment in exchange. For the practice of translation cannot operate in the way of Ricoeur's earlier understanding of appropriation. Rather, translation in practice is made possible by a series of its own conditions.

Ricoeur identifies three of these. Taken logically, the first is a desire to translate. "This desire," Ricoeur writes, "goes beyond constraint and usefulness."[32] Why did Luther wish to "Germanize" the Bible that he thought was held captive by St. Jerome's Latin? Why did Hölderlin seek to write Greek in German? Why did Schleirermacher translate Plato once again? The answer is that each sought to become better, to broaden their own horizon. As Hölderlin himself writes: "What is one's own must be learned as well as what is foreign."[33] Of course, this basic desire has its own conditions. Because one cannot aim at a pure language or a perfect translation, one must hope to find an equivalence without identity, which is the second condition.[34] In this way one can remain faithful to the original sense, not betray it, but at the same time not replicate it, as if a perfect translation were possible. Finally, if one is to achieve this end, equivalence without identity, an ethical condition enters. "It seems to me," Ricoeur writes,

> that translation sets us not only intellectual work, theoretical or practical, but also an ethical problem. Bringing the reader to the author, bringing the author to the reader, at the risk of serving and of betraying two masters: this is to practice what I like to call *linguistic hospitality*. It is this which serves as a model for other forms of hospitality that I think resemble it.[35]

The practical pass for translation thus requires a final, ethical condition. Appropriation for this model of hermeneutics, as a result, must be of a different sort than that which is at stake in Ricoeur's other models, since it cannot be simply cognitive, simply a matter of epistemology.

Because the reflective arc at work in translation makes use of different conditions than Ricoeur's hermeneutic circle in other works, and because it has no place for structuralist explanation, the collapse challenge does not affect the model of translation. One might worry, however, that it is not as effective in achieving the aims of hermeneutic reflection. To put the point in Heideggerian language, does Ricoeur's translation model also point a way to the limits of thought, to the verge where the Being of beings might be assessed? Is it, in short, up to the task of Heidegger's thought?

Bearing in mind the differences between Ricoeur and Heidegger on Events, I think that it does. As a result, it points a way forward for the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics. To understand why, it is helpful to look at the limit case of translation: the untranslatable.

To explain what Ricoeur has in mind, it is helpful to start with a specific case of untranslatability. In broaching the topic, Ricoeur accepts François Jullien's claim "that Chinese is the absolute *other* of Greek—that knowledge of the inside of Chinese amounts to a deconstruction of what is outside, of what is exterior, i.e. thinking and speaking Greek."[36] The reason this is so, Jullien argues, is that Chinese does not have tenses as one conceives of them

in the "West." There are seasons, occasions, roots, leaves, springs, and incoming tides, but no "time" with its neat separation of tense and aspect as one finds it in Greek, and which Aristotle could then assess and call the number of motion in book IV of his *Physics*. What, then, is the translator to do when faced with a conceptual chasm of this sort?

For Ricoeur, this is the place from which the Being of beings might emerge. For when one faces what is truly untranslatable, on must give up the idea of prior meaning.[37] There exists no such thing in the target language of translation, so that one cannot aim to produce a term which functions as an identity without equivalence. Rather, one first starts with a global understanding of both worlds, and then, moving downward from that view to the specifics of the text, one aims to construct a comparable term, which serves as a sort of bridge between the two worlds.[38] If one follows Ricoeur through this process, then in translating the untranslatable one's thought does more than come upon the verge of the Being of beings. Rather, in constructing comparables, the translator effects an Event in making a new culture.[39] Ricoeur puts the matter as follows:

> Is that not what happened in several periods of our own culture, when the Seventy translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, into what we call the Septuagint, something that Hebrew specialists alone can criticize at their leisure? And St. Jerome did it again with the Vulgate, construction of a Latin comparable. But before Jerome the Latins had created comparables, by deciding for all of us that *aretē* was translated by *virtus*, *polis* by *urbs* and *politēs* by *civis*. To remain in the biblical domain, we could say that Luther not only constructed a comparable in translating the Bible into German, in "germanizing" it, as he dared to say, in the face of St Jerome's Latin, but created the German language, as comparable to Latin, to the Greek of the Septuagint, and to the Hebrew of the Bible.[40]

Unlike Heidegger, for whom humans had no agency in effecting the shifting of the Being of beings, Ricoeur thus understands the act of translation, in the construction of comparables for untranslatable chasms, to be an Event. And for Ricoeur, we can name the agents of these events, and they include the Seventy, Jerome, and Luther.[41]

Following Ricoeur through the model of translation suggests a whole range of new avenues for philosophical thought, for it suggests that doing philosophical work at these untranslatable intersections would constitute a most profitable activity. One might do particularly well, for example, to examine the philosophy of the Aztecs, since Nahuatl has no term for "to be," nor any grammatical construction for it. Their metaphysics, as a result, cannot be an ontology in the etymological sense of the word. Neither does it a have a

term for "to have," nor even "words" as we know them in Indo-European languages. It has, rather, wordal sentences or "nuclear clauses."[42]

This suggestion is, at present, but a roughly articulated intuition about how hermeneutical philosophy might proceed by following Ricoeur's translation model. Yet, I think I can make this intuition more concrete by specifying two closely related paths that follow on its course: one by comparative philosophy and another by syncretic philosophy.

Comparative Philosophy

In a provocative piece entitled "If Philosophy Won't Diversify, Let's Call It What It Really Is," written for the *New York Times*, Bryan Van Norden and Jay Garfield argued that most philosophy departments ought to be retitled "Departments of Anglo-European Philosophy." The failure to represent the world's philosophical traditions in departments of philosophy, they argue, simply cannot be explained on the basis of sound philosophical method. Good philosophical reflection must engage with *all* relevant participants, especially the challenging views of other cultures, and philosophy as it is practiced does not do that.

What emerged from the response to their provocation was a book, entitled *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto*. In the course of his extended argument, Van Norden not only rebuts any of the supposed reasons that would support the narrow circumscription of philosophy as one finds in Europe and North America, but also develops how a better form of philosophy might be practiced when he compares the world's traditions of philosophy on specific points. It is this comparative activity that I think might fruitfully follow Ricoeur's translation model. To understand why, it is helpful to make use of a specific case.

Van Norden devotes a section of the book to the comparative analysis of Aristotelian virtue ethics and Confucian virtue ethics. Both of these traditions, he notes, agree with the MacIntyrean criticism of modern moral philosophy, namely that it tries to make sense of our obligations from an inherited and conceptually incoherent model of human ethical development.[43] To recall MacIntyre's argument, on the Aristotelian scheme, ethical progression may be understood to take three separate stages. One begins with an analysis of how one presently is, the first stage, and how one could be if one achieved one's end (*telos*) as a human, in the third stage.[44] It is the virtues that help one to actualize one's presently potential state, and so enable one to live a good life. As a result, their cultivation makes for a second and pivotal stage. MacIntyre argues that the demise of teleology, with the rise of the modern scientific revolution, made Aristotle's outlook implausible. As a result, philosophers during the early modern period were forced to make sense of the second component of the three-part structure, the virtues and their development, without the goal they were supposed to foster. They tried,

as a result, to found them on the first stage, which is untutored human nature. But any such attempt was bound to fail, since the virtues, reconceived as obligations (or Kantian duties) were just those activities designed to contravene one's state as one presently was. The task for contemporary ethics, as MacIntyre envisages it, is thus to reconceive of teleology in a way that does not turn on Aristotle's problematic metaphysical biology.

The Confucian virtue ethical tradition largely agrees with this assessment and may be profitably understood as an alternative view on how the virtues are to be conceived for the performance of a good life. Van Norden notes, however, that Aristotle's account of habituation, the process by which a person goes from the state in which they are to the telos of their nature, is underarticulated in his work.[45] It is at this point, Van Norden suggests, that the Confucian tradition might offer some special help.

In the Confucian tradition, what is only a minor topic for Aristotle takes on an elaborate focus. To simplify the wealth of arguments, Van Norden argues that one may discern three models of human ethical development among various Confucian philosophers: the reform model, the development model, and the discovery model. On the reform model "human nature has no active disposition toward virtue, so it must be reshaped through education and behavior to acquire" the behavior appropriate to our human end.[46] The metaphor that Xunzi proposes is that human nature is like crooked timber, which must undergo significant treatment to be straightened for the right purpose. Proponents of the development model, by contrast, "claim that humans innately have incipient dispositions toward virtuous feeling, cognition and behavior. Ethical cultivation [then] is a matter of nurturing these nascent dispositions."[47] Mengzi, who is notably close to Rousseau on this point, suggests that humans are thus best conceived as "sprouts" that need only the proper care to grow well.

If the first two models of human development find some analogues among "Western" philosophers, then the third, the discovery model, is only superficially represented. It holds that humans have already the virtues fully formed, that they have them innately, and that the task is only to learn to exercise them. Metaphors used are often visual. Lu Xiangshan writes, "[t]he Pattern of the Way is simply right in front of your eyes."[48]

It is unclear, exactly, where Aristotle would fit in this scheme. The quasi-Rousseauian view of the developmental model is likely too sanguine for him, but the reform model is likely too cynical about human beings. Nothing in Aristotle's thought suggests that he thought of ethical development in the way that the discovery model suggests, but, and this is a point that holds for all of them, perhaps new and interesting forms of virtue ethics could be developed from this comparison and their synthesis. For the present purposes, it is perhaps helpful to hold in mind this third option, one where the pupil is taught nothing about virtue except how to wash away the

world's encumbrances that are preventing her from exercising her innate abilities.

With that view of Aristotelian-Confucianism in mind, we are in a position to answer the question that is guiding the present portion of the essay: How does comparative philosophy make use of Ricoeur's translation model? Only a few terms are literally being compared, but the conceptual work required is just like the construction of comparables that Ricoeur articulates. The comparison begins with a given, namely an agreement on the task of virtue ethical development. One moves to an untranslatable, namely a whole series of models used for ethical development that have at best only echoes in the West. Finally, one works towards a bridge notion, a comparable sense of virtue ethical development, a sort of Aristotelian-Confucianism. If done well, one effects an Event in thought.

Syncretic Philosophy

A turn to comparative philosophy is likely the most obvious of the ways to make use of Ricoeur's translation model of reflection. An option that has gone unnoticed thus far makes use of reflection that is situated not between philosophical traditions, but on a work that is itself between such traditions. In order to explain what I have in mind, it is helpful to recall just in what historical and religious syncretism consists. Perhaps the simplest explanation can be relayed in a story.

While travelling in Peru for some research, I noticed that on the tops of many houses one could see a set of figurines which consisted of a Christian cross, surrounded by flowers, and flanked by two bulls. Most commonly, all these figurines were made of metal and welded together at the base. When I inquired about the figurines, I learned from the locals that these were considered the home's guardian spirits. When I asked why the bulls were used, and why they were on top of the roofs, I was told that they were introduced as a replacement for the condor after the Spaniards. In the Incan conception of the world, the condor played the role of connecting the earth and the various domains of the heavens, and so naturally found a place on a home's roof. The Spanish bulls, however, came to be the dominant animal of livelihood for many, and in order to avoid persecution for paganism, many Incans changed their former religious symbols. Also, a cross was introduced, to signal protection by Jesus Christ, and not only by bulls or guardian spirits.

This practice of placing bulls and crosses on top of one's home is thus thoroughly syncretic—rather uneasily blending elements from the conceptual repertoires of the Christian and Incan worldviews, without finding some higher mode of synthesis that would reconcile their differences as Hegelian sublating (*aufheben*) would. For the same reasons, syncretic topics appear to function in a way quite like Ricoeur's constructed comparables. Are there

philosophical cases of this sort of syncretism? If so, what might we learn by reflecting on these events in thought?[49]

There do look to be such cases of syncretic philosophy. In fact, in the decades after the Spaniards invaded what is present-day Mexico, there looks to have been many of these pieces. I do not mean the new works preserved in Nahuatl, but written in Latin letters, such as the *Florentine Codex*, since those fairly accurately represent pre-conquest Aztec views. I mean rather pieces that emerged in the early part of what linguistic experts call stage 3 Nahuatl.[50] At this stage, the language changed to include prepositions, thus marking a generational change in the making.[51]

Among the possible pieces, I think that what is called the *Codex Mexicanus* serves as an exemplary text of syncretic philosophy. Written between 1578 and 1583, the work blends the European *Reportorio* almanac with the Aztec's native *tonalamatl*, or day-count calendar.[52] The work is largely composed of images in a European style but is put to the purposes that native imagery would have served. It also includes some inscriptions in Latin letters to guide the reader. From a philosophical point of view, the work is important because it aims to reconcile, albeit imperfectly, competing conceptions of time: calendric or seasonal time used for harvesting, universal history, and ritual or sacred time.

In order to understand the stakes of the authors' integration, it is helpful to recall that the Aztecs made use of two calendars that were interrelated. The first of these, the 365-day (*xihuitl*) calendar was used for keeping track of the seasons for harvesting. It consisted of eighteen months of twenty days with five unlucky days, called *nemontemi*, added at the end.[53] This calendar could be corrected for leap years, as the Maya had, centuries earlier, completed a more elaborate calendar that included those observations. The other calendar was the *tonalpohualli*, literally the day-count. This was the ritual calendar that the Aztecs used to schedule festivities and important ceremonies. It made use of a thirteen-day "week," which the Spaniards called *trecenas*, and the twenty-day month. Given the structure of this calendar, it would take 260 days for the cycle to repeat again.[54] Finally, these two calendars were conceived to operate together, so that each day would be uniquely designated in the 260-day calendar and in the yearly 365-day calendar. This cycle would take fifty-two years to complete, called the calendar round, and was roughly equivalent to our century.

Although the Aztec calendrical system is foreign to our present record keeping, we also use a combination of two such calendars: the perpetual 365-day calendar and the school year. The Christian Spaniards who first encountered the Aztecs similarly made use made use of a profane 365-day calendar, and mapped a host of sacred festivals, by way of saints' days, into each of the months—nearly one for every day of the year.[55]

As a result of these structures, it proved relatively simple for the authors of the *Codex Mexicanus* to map their 365-day *xihuitl* into the Domincan 365-day perpetual calendar. Most of the Aztec monthly festivals could be similarly mapped, so that Christian Saints could be celebrated when former pagan forces were.[56] At this level, then, the work is mostly synthetic, as a complete correspondence proved possible.

With respect to universal history, by contrast, no synthesis proved workable. Mesoamerican cultures combined their myths of cosmic origins with the history of their people in a way that is a little like the opening books of Genesis. Many of these appear as annals, which record complex genealogies that stem, supposedly, from the first people to emerge in our historical era that they called the fifth sun. The divinity of this lineage in one way served to legitimate ruling families (pages 16–17),[57] but in another respect, it played an important role in explaining the meaning of human existence. The reason is that it placed their lives within a larger historical arc, comparable to the sort of universal history that St. Augustine sketches in the *City of God*.[58] It explains why we are here and for what we might hope.

Yet the Aztec sense of our place in history is deeply incompatible with the Christian outlook. They had no soteriological or eschatological dimension to their myths or genealogies and held instead that our age would come to destruction like the previous four. Since their god, *teotl*, was nothing more than nature, it made no sense that a transcendent being could come to save us from our fate. Where no clear reconciliation proved possible, the authors thus subordinated their history to the Christian outlook, adding the arrival of the Spaniards at the end of their histories, and depicting their triumph as the just triumph of Christianity in its soteriological role.[59]

It is notable both that many of the final pages of the *Codex Mexicanus* are missing, and that others look to have been whitewashed because they depicted a message not in keeping with the Christian view political officials required. The work may have, then, also signaled a different message. The Mayan *Popul Vuh*, when confronted with the same task, chooses the alternative path. Rather than complete the task proposed at the outset of the work, the narrative ends abruptly, stating:

> This is enough about the being of Quiché, given that there is no longer a place to see it. There is the original book and ancient writing owned by the lords, now lost, but even so, everything has been completed here concerning Quiché, which is now named Santa Cruz.[60]

The Mayan authors, then, clearly identify the end of their narrative as a loss of their civilization. The *Mexicanus* authors may have thought similarly, but the book that we have available clearly reconciles the Aztec's conquest with their place in a Christian history.

The third sense of time at work in the text, the sacred time enacted in ritual, proves to be altogether irreconcilable with the Christian sense, and as a result poses the most interest for philosophers. Recorded on pages 13 and 14 of the codex are a portion of the native *tonalpohualli*, the 260-day calendar, which would have carried the burden of regulating feasts, fasts, and other rituals among the pre-Columbian Aztecs. The difficulty is that while the 365-day *xiuhpohualli* is easily mapped into the perpetual calendar, this one is not. Commenting on the topic Lori Diel writes that "these dates do not match the dates of the monthly festivals noted in the perpetual calendar on Mexicanus pages 1–8."[61] As a result, the work merely juxtaposes this (partial) calendar with the others.

The philosophical question that emerges is whether there is some deeper irreconcilability between the exclusively native *tonalpohualli* and the Christian sense of time. Without the space to develop a complete answer, I venture the position that the Aztec sense of time could not be reconciled with a view of time at work in the Christianized perpetual calendar, because the Aztecs conceived of time as a basic constitutive relation that made up beings in our world—trees, people, deer, and the like. At base, *teotl* takes concrete form as *ometeotl*, in existing relations of doubling activities.[62] One of these doubling activities is space, beginning with cardinal coordinates (giving primacy to East and West), and another is time, which is progressively doubled through its interlinking cycles (e.g. the thirteenth day and the twentieth day). Aztec relational metaphysics thus appears to have implied a different sense of time, one which did not sit easily with the Christian time. To put this same point in a broader metaphysical context, time, God and every other being are conceived immanently for the Aztecs, and that metaphysical view stands in deep opposition to the transcendent Christian view.

Given these points, how exactly is the *Codex Mexicanus* a philosophical comparable? Considered as an historical artifact, the work is a syncretic production that brings together the native *tonalamatl* and the Spanish *reportorio*—both of which were works that provided instruction on how to live on a daily basis by coordinating an individual's actions within their community and a broader universal history. While the work endeavors to integrate the senses of time at work in these different metaphysical outlooks, it is the metaphysical failure to integrate these views which suggests how the book is an ethical success. What the manual provides is something new, namely a sense of how to live in two worlds.[63] For this life is one that will inevitably be split because the temporal meaning of the events that coordinate the lives of the indigenous under Spanish rule cannot be uniformly integrated. In this sense, the work is both a comparable text and a comparable philosophical outlook. Moreover, it constitutes an event in thought and by the same stroke sounds a basic existential problem that will be addressed by Mexican philosophers up to the present: how is one to live a split existence?

Samuel Ramos, Octavio Paz, and Gloria Anzaldúa will all take up this question in the twentieth century, venturing their own answers.[64]

Concluding Thoughts

Philosophical hermeneutics was born when a method of Biblical exegesis was grafted onto a philosophical method for answering the basic questions of existence, onto Husserl's phenomenological program. Yet the initial form that this project took, as Heidegger develops it in *Being and Time*, was not able to accomplish the tasks that it set for itself by the standards that it also took to be appropriate. When interpreting, or explicating, the moods of human existence (*Dasein*) by way of regressive questioning, Heidegger took on the task of digging beneath, or questioning back from, the sense of truth at work in the sciences. Yet his approach not only repeated the strategy that was typical of "Western" philosophy, turning to an account of the human being just as Descartes and Kant had done, but also wrongly assumed that the sense of truth at work in the so-called "ontic" disciplines was static and accretional. Ricoeur hoped to remedy this defect by placing a form of explanation—the activity of the sciences—within the arc of hermeneutic reflection itself, rather than keep it outside the process. The difficulty Ricoeur encounters is that the mode of explanation that he used was structuralist, and this form has itself not only lost credibility, but also proves to be too unidimensional for the sort of work philosophers would like to do. Davidson and Kearney have both developed their own replacement models for the explanatory moment in Ricoeur's hermeneutic arc, articulating an intersectional, and a carnal hermeneutics, respectively. They do succeed in saving the enterprise of phenomenological hermeneutics, then, but the present essay has been animated by the pursuit of a mode of hermeneutical reflection that comes from Ricoeur's own work. Is there a workable model in his thought somewhere?

I have argued that there is, and that it may be found in Ricoeur's later account of translation as a practice of hermeneutic reflection. This model uses the practice of translation, which seeks to find identities without equivalences, in the role of explanation for hermeneutic reflection. At the limit case, where one translates between untranslatable languages, the translator constructs comparables that enable thought to move between what cannot otherwise be navigated, and in doing so effects an Event in the Being of beings. It is these Events after all, those like Luther's translation of the Bible, that form a culture, and so provide the prereflective backdrop to make sense of the beings that surround us in the world.

If this analysis proves accurate, then there is a distinctly Ricoeurean way forward beyond the collapse challenge that Davidson articulates. In fact, I think there are two such paths. One aims to produce comparables of philosophical thought through the activity of comparative philosophy. The case examined suggests that an Aristotelian-Confucianism might conceive of

the development of habits along the discovery model, such that each person is always already in possession of the abilities to act virtuously, but that they are encumbered by their circumstances and unable to use them. Meditation, then, might prove a viable path to virtue. The resulting conception produces an Event in thought, one which develops a new notion that allows one to make sense of the relation between the divergent frameworks, but which neither would independently endorse. One may think of this avenue as the synthetic approach.

The other path is diremptive, keeping different frameworks apart, and insisting on their irreconcilability. Yet, it finds a solution for that impasse in a different domain, or at a different level of sense, and in this way constructs a comparable. The case examined is how to live according to the *Codex Mexicanus*. Of the three sorts of time at work in the codex, where time is supposed to give a sense of how to coordinate one's actions in the social and historical world, only two proved possible to integrate. The third, the sense of sacred time found in the *tonalpohualli* and the Christian schedule of saint's days, could not be reconciled metaphysically because the notions at work turn on different views of what there is. The Aztec view is a relational metaphysics, one without substances, and conceived immanently. The Christian view is both a substance metaphysics and conceived transcendently. Yet this metaphysical impasse finds its solution in another domain, at the level of ethical life. For what the manual shows the indigenous reader is how she will have to live by two forms of time, two senses of human socialization, and two ideas about the sacred. The comparable at work here allows one to make sense of the mutually disjointed worlds, and constitutes an Event in ethical thought, as it announces the basic problematic that philosophers in Mexico (and Latin America more broadly) will address up to the present.

I suggested at the beginning of the essay that this solution opens hermeneutic philosophy up to the new turn in philosophical scholarship towards the world's great traditions. The comparative and syncretic approaches, I think, have outlined what I intended. But there is a further implication that follows for future research in this vein. For it suggests a difference in approach to philosophical topics.

To explain what I mean, consider the difference between the activity of research in the hermeneutic tradition and scholarship that has followed in the wake of Michel Foucault's thought. Broadly, scholarship in the tradition of hermeneutic philosophy has been focused on explicating and defending the texts of major proponents, or in applying their thought to individual topics. What has not generally been done, especially with Ricoeur's thought, is to use it as a way to read and interpret other texts. Consider the difference with Foucault. Ian Hacking, for example, uses a Foucauldean method to examine how "madness" has been socially constructed, and so cannot be considered natural in the ways that much medical practice takes it to be.[65] Mark Jordan has used Foucault's approach to explain how the Old Testament story of

Sodom and Gomorrah came to have anything to do with a sexual activity, since the primary sin at work in the text centers on the rights of guests and hosts.[66] Both authors reference Foucault's thought, but both are more interested in using his thought for other ends.

If the above analysis is broadly accurate, then the turn to world philosophy suggested at the same time opens two paths of research beyond what predominates in much hermeneutic thought. The avenues proposed look backwards to Ricoeur as a guide, but forwards to other texts, materials, and traditions. Our aim will be to forge the new, to effect Events of thought, by philosophical translation in the way that the Seventy did, or that Martin Luther did. This new approach, then, promises to be both more inclusive with respect to the world's philosophies, and more impactful with respect to our reflection within that world.

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[1] For a detailed review of Ricoeur's challenge to Heidegger, see Sebastian Purcell's essay "Hermeneutics and Truth: From *Alētheia* to Attestation," *Études Ricoeuriennes/Ricoeur Studies*, vol. 4 (2013): 140-158. The essay also helpfully reviews some differences between Ricoeur and Gadamer's hermeneutics.

[2] For Scott Davidson's criticism, see "Intersectional Hermeneutics," in *Hermeneutics and Phenomenology in Paul Ricoeur: Between Text and Phenomenon*, ed. Scott Davidson and Marc-Antoine Vallée (Switzerland: Springer Press, 2016), 159-173. With respect to Richard Kearney's work, see his essays "Thinking the Flesh with Paul Ricoeur," in *Hermeneutics and Phenomenology in Paul Ricoeur: Between Text and Phenomenon* (Switzerland: springer Press, 2016), 31-40 and "The Wager of Carnal Hermeneutics," in *Carnal Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 15-56.

[3] For Badiou's direct challenge to Ricoeur, see his review essay "The Subject Supposed To Be a Christian: On Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting*," trans. Natalie Doyle and Alberto Toscano, *The Bible and Critical Theory*, vol. 2 (2006): 1-21. It is also worth reviewing his later reaffirmation of his view in the notes to *Logics of Worlds*, trans. Alberto Toscano (New York: Continuum Press 2009), 516-517. With respect to the Derridean, deconstructionist criticism of especially Ricoeur's hermeneutics, see John Caputo's *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 5, 149. For his later reaffirmations of those views, see "God, Perhaps: The Diacritical Hermeneutics of God in the Work of Richard Kearney," *Philosophy Today*

(2011), 56–65. Sebastian Purcell has developed rebuttals to both criticisms which stand in the background of what follows and are worth reviewing on their own. See Purcell's "After Hermeneutics" in *Symposium: The Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, vol. 14 (2010): 160–179; and "Translating God: Derrida, Ricoeur, Kearney," *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*, vol. 5 (2012): 1–20.

[4] To be clear, I do not understand Ricoeur's translation model to stand in opposition to his model of hermeneutics, but rather that it stands as one of his formulations of how to do hermeneutics. It is opposed, and this is my central claim, to the model that he formulated which used structuralism for hermeneutical purposes. It is, if one may put it this way, a rather more pragmatist hermeneutics.

[5] Approaching the topic this way is the path that Ricoeur himself follows in "La tâche de l'herméneutique," in *Du texte à l'action: Essais d'herméneutique II* (Paris: Étitions du Seuil, 1986), 83–111; English translation as "The Task of Hermeneutics" in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 53–74.

[6] This is, at base, how Martin Heidegger explains a categorical intention of truth as satisfied by phenomenological evidence in his lectures title *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1985), 49–50.

[7] Heidegger's actual path in *History of the Concept of Time*, first argues, in §11, that phenomenology as Husserl conceives it, does not raise the question of Being (*Sein*), then, in §12, that it cannot do so because the phenomenological reduction excludes it, and finally, in §13, that it needs to do so, precisely to make sense of the broader world of meaning in which beings find their place.

[8] See especially §§28–33 and §44 of Martin Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 2, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübigen: Max Niemeyer Verlag). For the English edition, see the same section of *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).

[9] Recall that Heidegger argues that care, *Sorge*, is the fundamental mode of being-in-the-world for *Dasein*, and that in §65 he concludes his analysis of *Dasein* by arguing that Temporality is the meaning of care. Temporality, however, turns on one's place in history, which he calls Historicality §§72–75.

[10] This is, of course, what Heidegger intends by the subtitle of his work *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 65, *Beiträge Zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, (Frankfurt Am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989).

[11] This is, of course, Heidegger's point when he distinguishes beings ready-at-hand and beings present-at-hand in §15 of *Sein und Zeit*.

[12] This is the task Heidegger sets for himself in §§46–53 of *Sein und Zeit*.

[13] Ricoeur, in his essay "La tâche de l'herméneutique," sees this process as a tendency to deregionalize hermeneutic reflection writing: "La première tend à élargir progressivement la visé de l'herméneutique, de telle façon que toutes les herméneutiques regionals soient incluses dans une herméneutique générale" (84/54).

[14] John Sallis, *The Verge of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 136.

[15] For Heidegger's self-criticism, see his statement in *Beiträge Zur Philosophie*, 351.

[16] Ricoeur develops this criticism in "Existence and Hermeneutics," in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 3–24. For my own contribution see "Hermeneutics and Truth: From *Alēthia* to Attestation," *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies*, vol. 4 (2103): 140–158.

[17] See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1929), B11–B14.

[18] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). A better general model of this sort is Larry Laudan's reticulated model, which he describes in *Science and Values: The Aims of Science and Their Role in Scientific Debate* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

[19] Ricoeur develops this "object-oriented" approach to hermeneutics from his appropriation of Jean Nabert. One can find his first articulation of the approach in his essay entitled "Nabert on Act and Sign" in *Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 211–222.

[20] Ricoeur explains what he means by appropriation in his essay "Qu'est-ce qu'un texte?" in *Du texte à l'action*, 171 and 119 in the English translation.

[21] Ricoeur explains this at length in his essay "Le modèle du texte: l'action sensee considérée comme un texte" in *Du texte à l'action*, 205–236/144–167.

[22] Davidson, "Intersectional Hermeneutics," 167. The works that Davidson sites in making this statement are Noam Chomsky, *Language and Responsibility* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979) and James Lett, *The Human Enterprise* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987).

[23] Davidson, "Intersectional Hermeneutics," 168.

[24] The article Davidson has in mind is Crenshaw's "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," in *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139–167. Because Crenshaw developed her outlook as part of the critical race theory movement in legal philosophy, one might also be helped by consulting her piece "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, eds. Kimberlé

Crenshaw, Niel Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York: The New Press, 1995), 357–383.

[25] Kearney makes clear that he aims to develop Ricoeur's earlier work published in 1950, just five years after Merleau-Ponty's *The Phenomenology of Perception*, and before Ricoeur took the "linguistic turn" in the 1960s. What matters, for Kearney's project, is that Ricoeur's approach at this stage begins with an understanding of affectivity that is central to Merleau-Ponty. Specifically, he makes use of Merleau-Ponty's self-affection, "Thinking the Flesh with Paul Ricoeur," 32–33.

[26] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016 [2004]), in English as *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 32–33/26–27.

[27] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 46/37.

[28] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 24–25/19–20.

[29] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 19/15.

[30] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 20/16.

[31] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 17/14. This takes Ricoeur's hermeneutics in its own sort of pragmatist direction. Another direction that he might have pursued is a path more like Barbara Cassin's as she develops it in *Philosopher en langues, traduire les intraduisibles* (Paris: Editions de l'ENS, 2014). It may be that Cassin's retrieval of "Sophism," however, is just its own form of pragmatism. In her plenary address "Translation as Paradigm for Human Sciences," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 30, (2016): 243–266 she argues that while there is no absolute good, there are comparative evaluations of better and worse. This sounds not only quite close to Ricoeur, but also suspiciously close to some of Donald Davidson's formulations.

[32] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 25/21.

[33] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 26/21.

[34] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 27/22.

[35] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 28–29/23.

[36] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 44/36.

[37] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 43/35.

[38] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 38/31, 44/36.

[39] This approach to Events is markedly different from Ricoeur's own approach. I have outlined some of the critical differences at stake in my essay "Translating God: Derrida, Ricoeur, Kearney," *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics* (2012): 1–20. The sense of linguistic hospitality at work in welcoming the Other as an Event, as a result, is similarly different from Cassin's as she and her team have developed the notion in the massive *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies, dictionaire des intraduisibles*

(Paris: Seuil, 2004) available in English translation as *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[40] Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 46/37.

[41] The difference between Cassin and Ricoeur on this point is again worth noting. Cassin's *Vocabulaire* is her way of deconstructing the European tradition of philosophy, of bringing it to reflect on the verge of what is unthinkable. She and her team do this, rather than Heidegger's attempt to re-read all the individual thinkers in the "Western" canon. Ricoeur, in contrast, aligns the Event with what is new in thought and how it is sustained by a tradition.

[42] This is the way that the Nahuatl language scholar J. Richard Andrews characterizes the matter in his *Introduction to Classical Nahuatl: Revised Edition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 45.

[43] Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 62.

[44] Van Norden actually has a different understanding of MacIntyre than what follows, but his view does not appear accurate to me. Since it makes no overall difference to his argument, I develop MacIntyre's view as he presents it in chapters four and five of *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

[45] Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 65.

[46] Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 67.

[47] Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 67.

[48] Lu Xiangshan, *Recorded Sayings*, cited in Tiwald and Van Norden, *Readings in Later Chinese Philosophy* (Indanapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2014), 253.

[49] It is at this point that the difference between the present proposal and Cassin's appear most clearly. The English translation of her project *Dictionary of Untranslatables* drops the qualifier *Vocabulaire européen* and I worry that it falls into the trap of false universalization as a result. Having worked with publishers and worried about markets, I fear that what one witnesses is a capitalist inspired misrepresentation of a project that hopes to be a cartography of *European* ideas. The syncretic approach explored here, by contrast, looks to the work of indigenous peoples to guide the path. It is decolonial in character rather than postcolonial then. While false universalization is a *constant* problem for philosophers, I think the syncretic approach has a few more guardrails in place to respect the Other.

[50] I am using James Lockhart's classification of Nahuatl language development post-conquest. See chapter seven of his *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Fifteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992) for more detail.

[51] The philosophical significance of true prepositions in Nahuatl is that the language could no longer be conceived as paradigmatically omnipredicative. It thus moved away from a natural fit with a relational metaphysics.

[52] Loti Boornazian Diel provides the reasons for this several year span in creation in the first chapter of her study, but makes the principle claims at *The Codex Mexicanus: A Guide to Life in Late Sixteenth-Century New Spain* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 8.

[53] Diel, *The Codex Mexicanus*, 21.

[54] Diel, *The Codex Mexicanus*, 49.

[55] Diel, *The Codex Mexicanus*, 22.

[56] The Aztecs were not polytheists, but thought that there was only one god, *teotl*, which was a basic fundamental energy that is nature. This god self-divides into many forces, some of which make up our bodies and animating properties, others of which make up special forces resembling gods. For more, see Purcell's essay "On What there 'Is,' Aristotle and the Aztecs on Metaphysics."

[57] These pages are plate nine in the *Codex Mexicanus*.

[58] Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 2000).

[59] Diel, *The Codex Mexicanus*, 20.

[60] *Popul Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*, translated by Dennis Tedlock (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 198.

[61] Diel, *Codex Mexicanus*, 49.

[62] For more on this point, see Sebastian Purcell, "On What there 'Is': Aristotle and the Aztecs on Being and Existence," *APA Newsletter on Native American and Indigenous Philosophy*, vol. 18 (2018): 11–23.

[63] Again, this point brings the present reflection close to Barbara Cassin's work on hospitality and nostalgia in *Nostalgia: When Are We Ever At Home?*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016). In her concluding essay she brings a variety of threads together writing: "'The faltering equivocity' has become a model; for once, the exiles, the refugees, the Jews, are the vanguard of the 'human condition.' In the end, they embody the least absurd norm" (59). The primary difference from the present investigation, it would seem, is that the Latin American tradition has tried to make this tension livable. It is not the verge of thought for them, but a condition that points the way to a good life—one made possible by an ethics of recognition. That tradition, like Ricoeur, has in mind a threefold scheme of events, rather than a twofold scheme.

[64] I have in mind the following works in particular: Samuel Ramos, *El Perfil Del Hombre Y La Cultura En México* (Mexico City: Editorial Planeta, 1993), Octavio Paz, *El Laberinto de la Soledad* in *Octavio Paz Obras Completas V* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), and Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

[65] Hacking develops some of the methodological points of his approach and their debts to Foucault in "Historical Ontology," and "The Archeology of Michel Foucault" in *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 1–26 and 73–86, respectively. His more detailed analysis of episodic mental illnesses may be found in *Mad Travelers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illnesses* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[66] Mark Jordan's most sustained development of this point may be found in his *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).