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When It's Not Just Rhetoric

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Title: When It's Not Just Rhetoric

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Response to this paper by: C. Plantin

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Entrent alors en jeu les textes, ces enchaînements de phrases qui, comme le mot l'indique, sont des textures qui tissent le discours en séquences plus ou moins longues. Le récit est l'une des plus remarquables de ces séquences [...]. Mais il y aussi toutes les autres sortes de textes, où on fait autre chose que raconter, par exemple argumenter, comme on en fait en morale, en droit, en politique. Intervient ici la rhétorique avec ses figures de style, ses tropes, métaphore et autres, et tous les jeux de langage au service de stratégies innombrables, parmi lesquelles la séduction et l'intimidation aux dépens de l'honnête souci de convaincre. (« Le paradigme de la traduction », Paul Ricoeur, 1999: 18)

I do not believe that we can read an argued text -- follow it, understand it, criticize it -- without noticing the ways in which rhetoric comes in. This would be uncontroversial if everyone did indeed note, in their reading and in their teaching, how the **ways in which** something is said, figuratively or properly, can determine **what** is said. But not everyone does and even those who do have a tendency to see rhetoric as an add-on. So an argued text is said to have dimensions or tiers: a narrative, rhetorical one that, at its best, sets things up, builds bridges, and smooths over rough patches; an argumentative one where all the real work is done, the p's and q's wear the trousers (as Austin might put it). Then this may get taken by those of us who prefer a proper dress code, or are harder-nosed, as an invitation to cut through the rhetoric, to pay it no heed at all (just the facts, mind the p's and q's).

I want to show that taking rhetoric to be only a dimension or feature of an argued text separable from the *what*, and calling for a special eye or ear, can lead us to miss or misconstrue some of the proof. I want to show this inseparability by looking at an argued text.

Paul Ricoeur's text, "Le paradigme de la traduction," will be our test case. There are some pretty good reasons for making it a test case. Firstly, this text is argued and makes abundant use of rhetoric. Moreover, in this text, Ricoeur claims that rhetoric and argument are inseparable, but does not spend much time backing the claim up (cf. *inter alia*, Ricoeur, 1975: 13-47, 1986: 263-288, 2000: 16). So, showing how rhetoric does some real work in this text will give us a bit of both the pudding and the proof. Secondly, in addressing the problem of translation, Ricoeur provides us with a criterion for determining whether real work, as opposed to feather bedding, is done. He takes translation to be, in part, a matter of "saying the same thing in other words." Now, rhetoric can be seen in a similar way, that is, as a matter of "saying the same thing in other words" where the first words are the *proper words* and the others are *figurative*. If the *figurative* is only cosmetic, translators can be happy with just the *proper*. If they are unhappy, then the *figurative* may not be just cosmetic. And if the text is an argued text and if the translators are unhappy getting just the *proper* right, then the *figurative* bits may be said to contribute something to the argument. Setting aside matters of translation, will something go missing if we try to cut through Ricoeur's rhetoric so as to put what he says in other, proper words? What is that something? That is the question.

A full answer to the question will involve following Ricoeur's text from beginning to end. That is the only way to see all the work the figures, metaphor, hyperbole, and others, do as they weave through the text or get called back repeatedly. However, a partial answer can be found

and a start on the fuller one made by calling attention to the ways Ricoeur uses rhetoric, firstly, in setting out the bill he wants to fill and the ways he will fill it and, then, in making and bringing off his first substantive step.

Bill filling

Deux voies d'accès s'offrent au problème posé par l'acte de traduire: soit prendre le terme traduction au sens strict de transfert d'un message verbal d'une langue dans une autre, soit le prendre au sens large, comme synonyme de l'interprétation de tout ensemble signifiant à l'intérieur de la même communauté linguistique.

Les deux approches ont leur droit: la première, choisie par Antoine Bermann dans l'Épreuve de l'étranger, tient compte du fait massif de la pluralité et diversité des langues; la seconde, suivie par George Steiner dans *Après Babel*, s'adresse directement au phénomène englobant que l'auteur résume ainsi: « comprendre, c'est traduire ». J'ai choisi de partir de la première, qui fait passer au premier plan le rapport du propre à l'étranger, et ainsi de conduire à la seconde sous la conduite des difficultés et paradoxes suscités par la traduction d'une langue dans une autre. (1999: 8)

Ricoeur's first words are: Deux voies d'accès s'offrent au problème posé par l'acte de traduire (...). This could be translated as :

(A) Two access roads lead to the problem raised by the act of translating ...

or

(B) Two roads offer access to the problem raised by the act of translating ...

These two versions seem to be equivalent, they appear to say pretty much the same thing in other words and in different ways. It is, of course, a commonplace to talk about method in terms of roads, paths, tracks, and so on. If Ricoeur is just recalling the standard, worn metaphor, clearly, saying "two access roads" or "two roads offer access" will not make much difference. But that Ricoeur may be doing a bit more is fairly easy to see. "Voies d'accès" and "access roads" are, loosely speaking, fairly new terms, at least in philosophical prose, and we may see Ricoeur as updating the metaphor. Still, if this were all he is doing, updating a worn metaphor would be mostly a matter of enlivening his text, of making it more attractive or readable. Then, between versions (A) and (B), there would be stylistic differences, but no substantive differences. The information or the propositional content is the same: *there are two ways to get at the problem raised by the act of translation*. Saying it one way is a bit less lively, but still no real damage is done either way -- providing the story stops here. It does not. (So as to keep my attention on the matter of method and metaphor, I want to forget about the verb "offrir" which is used figuratively and presents its own little selection of wonderments.)

Ricoeur's second paragraph starts out with "*Les deux approches ont leur droit*." This can be rendered in English as : "The two approaches are legitimate". Replacing "Two access roads" by "two approaches" may be just a matter of substituting equivalent or synonymous terms one for the other, but then again it may be a case of *correcting* or *focusing* the "access road" picture, a matter then of *epanorthosis*. It is easy to see Ricoeur as correcting or focusing the access road picture as soon as we notice that the approaches are both legitimate. That is to say, both approaches yield valid results or get us to where it is Ricoeur wants to get us. If this is right, then we may have to see his access road metaphor not as an update or a renewal of the worn

standard metaphor, but rather as way of calling attention to some special or new feature of his own method that is in contrast with and opposed to the standard issue method.

The contrast becomes sharper and the opposition deeper as soon as we recall the ways we have learned to think and talk about method: *orderly procedures, straightforward business, guaranteed results*, along with *competent guides* or *ship pilots and captains* as the seafaring Kant put this part, and so on. In substituting "approach" for "access roads," Ricoeur makes it clear that his method is not *straightforward, risk free, and the results are not guaranteed*. It's a matter of *getting closer to, of moving near, of something tentative, suggested* (note: "suggest" is Ricoeur's preferred verb for signalling stopping points, conclusions, outcomes or results).

Moreover, if readers do notice that the two approaches are put on the same footing, the contrast between Ricoeur's method and the standard issue one becomes still more marked. Those philosophers who do talk about two or more roads hardly ever see these roads as equals. We are expected to *choose* between them. They are competing alternatives. But the "choice" is illusory in one or both of two ways. Firstly, while Descartes does not hold the patent on this, he did put it clearly and distinctly: if we disagree or make mistakes or misunderstand, it's because we fail to use the same and right and only method, that is, we go off and *choose* the wrong method. "Choice", when it is used, clearly replaces "impose", "obligate", "necessitate", and all their neighbours. It is a way of saying one thing and meaning another, a *nicer, kinder, gentler way* of putting us on the right road. Secondly, there is a slight tendency to set the roads up as dichotomies, antinomies, aporia, antithesis, and the rest just so as to better put the preferred one in the limelight. And we might want to recall what Austin said about other famous dichotomies: "they live by taking in each other's washing" (1964: 4).

For Ricoeur, the antithesis is not between the two approaches (Berman and Steiner) but between the standard issue method and the one he favours. This opposition is easy to see if we notice that Ricoeur replaces "problem" with "difficulties and paradoxes" and throughout his text by "enigma", "dilemma", "challenge", "irreversible situations", "test" and so on. If we notice these substitutions, we will see that the bill Ricoeur sets out to fill will not be one of solving problems but one of showing that this or that way of taking a question, a fact, makes better sense and is preferable. This, of course, puts "choices" or "decisions" front and centre in Ricoeur's approach. Indeed it is not hard to see choice or decision as his trademark: he decides on the evidence that such and such a fact *means, fits this way, is a case of (...)*, etc. And this takes us to the next step.

Getting us to see differently

Cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles (Corneille, Le Cid, Acte IV, scène III).

Ricoeur wants to make sense of three facts put in evidence by the act of translating. The first fact is that of the plurality and diversity of languages -- the Babel phenomenon. The second is the fact of translation itself -- humans have always translated in doing business, in making war or love. The third fact is that we use language both to go public and to hide, to tell the full story and not let any secrets out. The sense he makes of these facts will be the outcome or the conclusion of everything he says and does in his text.

However, the success or failure of his attempt to do this, the acceptability of the sense he makes, turns on his getting the readers to see these facts not as an *ordinary facts* but as *enigmas* (or eventually their close neighbours, *paradoxes, dilemmas*, and the rest). Put in another way,

the sense he makes as well as the sense of his attempt will be seen as credible, enlightening, enriching, preferable, and acceptable to the extent that readers see these facts as calling for or requiring special treatment.

His first substantive step, then, is to show that the fact of the plurality and diversity of languages is not an *ordinary fact* but an *enigma*. The sense or meaning of this fact is unclear. It is hard to know what to make of this fact. This is what Ricoeur has to show. (We could say, in other words, that this is still part of the bill setting (*stasis*.)

In casting this fact as an enigma, Ricoeur prepares, opens the door for his next step which will be to show that the ordinary ways of making sense, the speculative, theoretical ways, indeed fail, *in fact and in principle*, to throw any light on this enigma. Then he will go on to oppose the speculative/theoretical to the practical/ethical and suggest that the challenges translators face are ethical ones as opposed to theoretical or technical ones. He will replace the speculative/theoretical alternative -- translatable/untranslatable -- by the practical alternative -- fidelity/betrayal. He will suggest, too, that the ways translators meet these challenges can be a paradigm, a best example for us whenever we come up against similar enigmas. This is not the full story. However, enough has been said for everyone to see that Ricoeur has to start out by convincing his readers of the extraordinary character of the first fact he encounters.

How, then, does Ricoeur get his readers to see that the fact of the plurality and diversity of languages is an enigma? The short answer is that he argues. The longer answer is that he leads his readers from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from that about which we are confident to that about which we are less so, by drawing contrasts or opposing this fact to other facts and expectations in sharp and striking ways which are continually reinforced. He does it, too, by reassuring his readers of his objectivity or fairness or balance. It is, of course, not good enough to just say this, any instruction will come "in drawing the coverts of the microglot, in hounding down the minutiae" (Austin, 1979: 175). We have to see and count the ways. We need his text:

Let's start off then with the plurality and diversity of languages, and let's take note of a first fact: it is because humans speak different languages that translation exists. This fact is that of the *diversity of languages*, to borrow Wilhelm von Humboldt's title. Now this fact is at the same time an enigma: why not one language, and above all why so many languages, five or six thousand say the ethnologists? Every Darwinian criteria of utility and adaptation in the struggle for survival are put in disarray; this innumerable multiplicity is not only useless, it is harmful. In fact, if communication within the community is assured by the integrative power of each language taken separately, communication outside the community is made, at the limit, impracticable by what Steiner calls "a destructive prodigality". But what is enigmatic is not only the jamming of communication, that the Babel myth, of which we will speak further on, calls "dispersion" on the level of geography and "confusion" on the level of communication, it is also the contrast with other traits which also touch on language. First, the weighty fact of the universality of language: "All humans speak"; this is a criterion of humanity along side the tool, the institution, the sepulture; by language, let's understand the use of signs which are not things, but count for things -- the exchange of signs in interlocution --, the major role of language on the level of community identification; here is a universal competency contradicted/denied belied by its fragmented, disseminated, dispersed performances. Whence the speculations first on the level of the myth, then on that of the philosophy of language when it raises the question of the origin of the dispersion-confusion. In that respect, the myth of Babel, too brief and too cloudy in its literary composition, makes us dream backwards in the direction of a presumed lost paradisiacal

language, more than it offers a guide to lead us in this labyrinth. The dispersion confusion is then seen as irremediable linguistic catastrophe. I will suggest in a moment a kinder reading of the ordinary human condition. (1999: 8-9)

Seeing and counting the ways

Opposition (or contrast, as Ricoeur puts it) figures large and centrally. The familiar fact of the plurality and diversity of languages is set off against our expectation of a single language (a more or less equally familiar fact). It is not juxtaposed as in Corneille's oxymoron but set out as a *question* whose force or pressing character is *underscored* by the progression from "one language" to "so many" to "five or six thousand" (epanorthosis, gradation). Setting the expectation out as a question is a discursive strategy imprinting both direction and movement. More importantly, the fact of the expectation is backed up, guaranteed by Darwin (authority, recall, this is part of the familiarity bit) and the contrast made more striking, stronger by the hyperbole: "put in disarray" and "innumerable multiplicity" (which may run close to a pleonasm) and still more so by epanorthosis, gradation again: "not only useless, but harmful". We have, then, a striking contrast between what we get (plurality and diversity) and what we expect (one); all of which makes this fact hard to understand, we don't know what to make of it. It looks like an enigma. All bumble bees can follow bumble bee instructions, why can we not "follow" one another?

But Ricoeur *makes a concession* and, in a way, displays his fairness, objectivity, open-mindedness, and the rest: the fact does indeed satisfy the Darwinian criteria of utility and adaptation. There is no opposition between Darwinian criteria and particular languages, indeed speaking the same language is required for the survival of a particular community. Then, however, he *takes it all back*, by changing the referent from a particular community to the species (call this the globalization move) and *exacerbates* the contrast with more hyperbole: "destructive prodigality" renders communication between different linguistic communities "at the limit impracticable" (note: he does not say "impossible"). And so we are still stumped by the fact of the innumerable multiplicity of languages and really begin to see the fact as an enigma.

The contrast is redrawn or redescribed in still more striking terms: "jamming of communication", "dispersion" and "confusion" and with reference to another *familiar* item -- the Babel myth. This redrawn contrast is not so much discounted as it is overshadowed by another contrast, namely the contrast between a universal linguistic competency and its particular, idiomatic performance. Ricoeur *underscores*, *draws attention* to the overshadowing by qualifying the new fact as a "very important fact". The first fact went unqualified, so the overshadowing and contrast are reinforced.

It is still a question of criteria, but now, in contrast with Darwinian criteria which apply across the board, we get a species relevant criterion, one which is definitive of the human species. We are still on *familiar* ground just because everyone is supposed to know that one way of defining human beings is to say that they all talk (use language) and that they do so as a matter of fact and principle even if some of them don't speak Greek or know how to say *logos*. Ricoeur *reinforces* and *assures* the familiarity of the linguistic criterion ("All human being speak") by putting it in parallel with or along side other known criteria -- all human beings are tool users, institution builders, and they all bury their dead (and if anyone remembers that Dutch hoes are different from English hoes like Civil law is different from Common law or an Irish wake from a

French one, Ricoeur may be seen as pushing the enigma beyond linguistic facts to include other facts about the species). The contrast between this universal competency and its local or particular performances is made striking by his choice of the verb "contradicted" and the cascade, if not gradation, going from "fragmented", to "disseminated" to "dispersed" (words that are clearly not unrelated to Babel; their *recall*, here, keeps the readers eyes on the road). Now the fact of the plurality and diversity of languages looks like a real hair-puller, a full blown enigma. Ricoeur has made his point.

The next nine lines are transitional. They prepare readers for the next step. "Whence" connects this first step (it is the riser/*contremarche*) to the next step whereon Ricoeur examines different attempts to make sense of this enigma. This connection is *underscored* in different ways. "Speculation", of course, answers the question: What do we do when faced with an enigma? But the choice of this word clearly recalls and reinforces the opposition between problem and enigma. Problems get solved, enigmas give rise to speculation (hypotheses, theories, not to say guesses). "Speculation" must be contrasted, too, with "reading" which comes up in the last sentence and is a familiar substitute for "interpretation". Ricoeur *announces* the tenor of what's to come (or to keep the metaphor running, the roughness of the road ahead) by giving a negative cast to "speculation". He does this by associating it with "myth," the myth of Babel ("myth" rather than "story" or "account"). And, if anyone notices the sequencing -- "on the level of myth firstly, then on that of the philosophy of language" --, there will be a temptation to complete the sequence with it's final positive level: "science" or linguistics and ethnology. And if anyone does this, they are sent backwards to Darwin and forward to Sapir and Whorf and Chomsky and Bacon and Leibnitz and Olander and Benjamin (these are the items on the next step all of which will come tumbling down). Anyhow, I think this is the way Ricoeur keeps his readers on track, pointed in the right direction. But he also *takes back* some of the roughness or unpleasantness with "suggestion", "kinder" and the substitution of "ordinary human condition" for "Babel". In doing this, he is reassuring. It's not all negative. The sense to be made of the plurality and diversity of languages may not be that of an "irremediable linguistic catastrophe".

A last word on words. "Labyrinth" works for "method", "enigma" and, properly in these last lines, for the Babel myth. This, too, is a way of underscoring the tight weave of the text.

Doing the *real work*

My job is to show that, in this paragraph, the figures Ricoeur uses, the rhetorical moves he makes just are the proof he gives to support his casting the fact of the plurality and diversity of languages as an enigma. Put another way round, my job is to show that stripping away the rhetoric leaves us with a product that is not argumentatively equivalent to the original.

Rhetoric cut through and through

Cutting through the rhetoric is a matter of saying the same thing in other words, proper words rather than figurative ones. Someone says: "If March comes in like a lion, it goes out like a lamb" and someone else says: "That sounds nice, but cut the fluff and say what you mean". The first someone then puts it properly, in ordinary words, by saying, "If March begins with rough weather, it ends with calm weather". Cutting through the rhetoric may be, of course, both a matter of words and a matter of ways. There are proper ways of requesting the salt and then there are figurative ways. One way may be substituted for the other: We can properly say: "Please pass the salt" or figuratively: "Can you pass the salt?" "Is there any salt in this house?"

"Who hid the salt?" "Did you forget the salt?" "What's missing in this otherwise superb *ragout* is salt" This list of possible substitutions could go on and on, but I think two things are already clear enough.

Firstly, while any of these ways may get the salt shaker into our hands, we are doing more than just asking for the salt or just asking for it in a fancy way. We are saying something about personal relationships, domestic management, culinary skills, and so on. Indeed, we are confirming or even putting in place certain relationships. Secondly, talk about rhetoric in terms of the proper and the figurative and the substitution of one for the other may be a red flag, a warning -- *something unusual is up*. However, this way of talking may be disastrously misleading if it is taken to mean that the figurative will always be a substitute, a special kind of synonym, having the same or equivalent value as some original, proper way or word, which with a little effort and scratching, we can bring to the surface, unmask. Strictly speaking, there are cases where there are no proper ways or words (catachresis).

If this is right, cutting through the rhetoric so as to find the proper kernel of meaning may be in, some cases, the wrong thing to do. I think it is clearly wrong in the case of Gibbon. He wrote: "Boethius stooped, or, to speak more truly, rose to the social duties of public and private life" (Furbank, 2000: 58). This is a clear case of epanorthosis, of saying one thing and then correcting it or taking it back by saying something else. In this case, Gibbon says the opposite.

Is there a proper way of saying what Gibbon said? Can the trope be eliminated? We might think that to do so will be just to strike either:

(A) "stooped, or, to speak more truly,"

or

(B) "or, to speak more truly, rose"

or

(C) write two sentences.

However, striking (A) or (B) or writing two sentences involves making a decision as to what Gibbon was saying, properly speaking. Such a decision is rife with risk just because what Gibbon did say was both "stoop" and "rise". My suggestion is that to make Gibbon talk straight or proper will be either to:

(A) *describe* what he said and did -- Gibbon applied one predicate and then overrode it with its opposite;

or

(B) *say*: "What he *really meant* was _____" (perhaps only mad March hares will rush in to fill this blank).

The damage or loss will be still more manifest should anyone try to put Corneille's "*obscure clarté*" in other words, proper ones.

Cutting through Ricoeur's rhetoric seems to me to be like cutting through Gibbon's. We can describe what he said and did or we can say in other words what we believe he *really meant* but did not exactly or properly say. However, if we believe that Ricoeur said and did what he meant

to say and do (save some obvious slips or oversights), taking the rhetoric out of his text comes down to describing it (8). Such a description might look like this:

The fact of the plurality and diversity of languages is an enigma for two reasons. Firstly, it contrasts with (is incompatible or incongruous with) everything that the Darwinian criteria of utility and adaptation in the struggle for survival of a species lead us to expect (the criteria call for one language). Secondly, it contrasts with the fact that the ability to use language is a defining trait of humanness (the definition leads us to expect a single language). The warrant might look like this: if a fact is indeed a fact but contrasts with (is incompatible or incongruous) our expectations or other known facts, that fact can be said to be an enigma providing that (1) the fact is not an accident or aberration of some kind and (2) our expectations can be backed up.

All this could, of course, be put in some other words or in some different ways, but these words and ways will be good enough to set up a comparison. On the one hand, the description (figureless version) tells the reader **that** a fact contrasts with other sets of facts and expectations and for that reason the first fact has to be taken as an enigma. On the other hand, Ricoeur's argument gets the reader to **see** the contrast and, as a result of seeing the contrast, see (or draw the conclusion) that the fact really is hard to understand (it is an enigma). His argument, his evidence, is to be found in the drawing of contrasts like Gibbon's "message" is to be found in the opposition between Boethius's stooping and rising to social duties. Take the figures away and there is no evidence or, more exactly, there is only an outline, a shadow of his argument. This is a matter of principle and not one of words.

If this is right or close to being right, it is not hard to see that rhetoric does some real work in Ricoeur's argument. But it will be hard to say that rhetoric is just an add-on, an ornament or a dimension of his argument. Clearly, we cannot read his argument -- follow it, understand it, or eventually criticize it -- without noticing the ways in which the ways he says things, the figures he uses, are his proofs. These are steps we cannot skip without misconstruing his argument. Why, then, is it so easy, so common, to believe that saying: "rhetorical argument" counts an oxymoron?

When it's not just rhetoric

[La rhétorique] oscille entre deux pôles qui la constituent: la preuve et la persuasion. Quand la persuasion s'affranchit du souci de la preuve, le désir de séduire et de plaire l'emporte, et le style lui-même n'est plus figure, au sens de visage d'un corps -- mais ornement, au sens « cosmétique » du mot. (La métaphore vive, 1976: 46-47)

Ricoeur will answer this question. Getting the answer out will be easier if we recall the classical work order for proving things drawn up in rough form by Ramus and sharpened up by Pascal. Pascal split the question of proof in two: on the one hand there is the matter of proving; on the other, there is the matter of adapting proofs to the "inconsistencies of our caprices" (cf. Descombes, 1976: 72). On one side, only the truth counts. On the other side, our "assent" to the truth counts. Assent is a good thing in itself but it is sometimes hard to get just because we have so many interests, desires, leanings, and all kinds of other subjective, psychological veils. These are resistances which cloud our intellect or fuzz-up our logic. In this information age, we might call these resistances "fire-walls". In any case, this is where rhetoric goes to work. Its job is to overcome these resistances, break through the fire-walls, by making the truth attractive, lively, full of colour, light and flowers (*colores, lumina, flores*, cf. Barthes, 1970: 218), or crack the

code. The figures are the language of the passions (Lamy); they move us to assent (to the truth) but they have no probative power. Rhetoric adapts the truth to our fluctuating and fanciful nature, but has no part in making it (evident).

Ricoeur's tack is to deny the last part -- figures can play a truth making role. He supports this break with the classical dichotomy by recalling a partly forgotten, partly ignored lesson once taught by Aristotle (1975: 13-46). This lesson has to do with the recognition of the various kinds of truth and the different ways of proceeding in finding and establishing them. Put another way round, his lesson is that one-size-fits-all work orders turn out to be procrustean (see: Ricoeur on Kant's single mindedness, 1986: 278). Different kinds of issues call for different work orders involving different considerations -- "Whether we ought to strike a match or not" is not the same as or equal to, on any level of reflection, "Whether we ought to go to war or not" and neither are the same as or equal to "Will an aspirin a day keep the doctor away or not?" (cf. Austin, 1979: 179).

The part of Aristotle's lesson that has not been forgotten, not wholly anyhow, is that there are some kinds of truth (or issues) that don't have much to do with us. We can discover or get close to these truths, settle the issues, by looking, experimenting (generous funding helps), putting two and two together, and minding our p's and q's. Everyone recognizes or acknowledges these truths providing the blinding veils of subjectivity are pulled back. Here the old saw about truth always prevailing is just another way of saying: "It's true whatever you think." Proof, then, of course, is compelling even though not everyone will be compelled all the time when faced with truths of this sort (Triangles have three sides, no matter how many you count; An aspirin a day will likely keep the doctor away, if all the research is any good).

The other kinds of truth, or issues, have much more to do with us. They are, in various ways, "social constructions". In various ways and up to a point, they are of our making. They depend, too, in various ways and up to a point, on assent, on procuring assent. This is the part of Aristotle's lesson we tend to forget, ignore, or get slightly wrong (Ricoeur reports that Kant forgot or ignored it and if Hegel remembered it, he still got it slightly wrong (1986: 276, 282); without doubt an *a fortiori* here). To put this second part of Aristotle's lesson in the best light, Ricoeur recalls that the Greeks recognized how the word, the well turned word, eloquence, had the power to make some stories or propositions *persuasive* (1976: 13-15). Under the heading "rhetoric", they catalogued all the foolproof and time-tested turns and eloquent strategies according to their power to procure assent. Socrates and Plato, as everyone knows, threw the catalogue out as a matter of principle -- eloquence was misleading, persuasion unnecessary. Aristotle, however, qualified this principle: eloquence *alone* can be misleading but persuasion is *sometimes necessary*. And then he kept the catalogue and paired persuasion with proof.

Aristotle's qualification of this principle and his pairing of persuasion with proof are grounded in his pluralism (ontological and epistemological). There are different kinds of truth or issues some of which have to do with the order of human affairs, a "variable and decision dependant" order (cf. Ricoeur, 1986: 278). The appropriate work order for getting at the truth these kinds of issues put in play will involve doing what persuasion is good at -- procuring assent -- and at the same time, doing what proof is good at -- providing evidence (that is, excluding the arbitrary, the capricious, the prejudged). Put another way, this work order is tailored to handle certain kinds of facts and notably those facts Ricoeur calls the "in spite of" facts: "in spite of fratricides, we promote (campaign for) universal fraternity" or "we translate in spite of the irreducible differences of idioms" (1999: 12). This work order allows us to conjoin features that

logic would have us keep apart. And in conjoining these features brings to light new aspects of the facts. Corneille's *obscure clarté* counts among the best examples of the work this work order can do.

The pairing of persuasion with proof will not subordinate persuasion to proof or dress it up (this was one of Pascal's ideas), but will, as Ricoeur puts it, give persuasion (figures and tropes) a probatory force and proof a persuasive force. Rhetoric is, on this account, the invention of figures that create and maintain a tension between, or a balancing of, persuasion and proof. In this way rhetoric gives us the means to satisfy all at once the need to procure assent and the need to give proof or evidence.

If Ricoeur (and Aristotle) is right about this, there are some important lessons to be learned (recalled). Firstly, it is clear that, in some arguments, the *how* will be inseparable for the *what*. Rhetoric is not a discursive dimension or tier to be examined separately from an illative one. Nor will it be a second rate kind of proof or a proof tailored to the weak-minded. It is proof suited to the nature of the issue at hand. And so using rhetoric can be the right thing to do and when used with excellence merits praise (*encomonium*).

When it's just rhetoric

But rhetoric can be misused. This will be Ricoeur's second lesson (and Aristotle's up to a point). The tension or balance which makes the *how* inseparable from the *what* can be broken. It will be broken whenever the "the *honest* desire to convince" (Ricoeur, 1999: 18, my emphasis) is eclipsed by the desire to win, to succeed in securing assent by any means (seduction or intimidation), independent of understanding ("assent without understanding" (Gross, 1996: 23). But it is possible, too, that we get carried away by our eloquence or the magic of words and allow them to carry the burden without proof. In either case, the tension between persuasion and proof is broken and we get *just rhetoric, feats of prose, ornament*. Cutting through the rhetoric may be just the thing do.

Rhetoric, on Ricoeur's account, like translation, serves two masters (this is the key metaphor in his full argument). When it serves one more than the other, it fails itself and becomes a term of reproach: *just rhetoric* (or just a translation). And, so, it easier to understand how "rhetoric" is sometimes a term of praise and sometimes one of blame.

Flouting "the *honest* desire to convince", of course, is not the same thing as failing to fill the work order. Here shortfalls may come less from any pretending, tricks or infatuation and more from our lack of inventiveness. It's not easy to invent or stumble on the right figures. This takes us to the last question: How does Ricoeur's third paragraph fare in the invention department, as rhetorical argument?

"Rhetorical argument" as pleonasm

The application of Ricoeur's criteria -- honest desire to convince, the absence of seductive or intimidating strategies -- is fraught with risk. On the one hand they are not so much criteria as they are standards everyone is expected to meet (cf. Grice, 1989). On the other hand, taking them to be criteria, it will be hard to pick out any failures just because dishonest intentions, seduction or intimidation work if they are indiscernible from the real things like good counterfeit banknotes get accepted when they are indiscernible from the real things.

"Misleading", however, may be a criterion easier to apply. Anyhow, it is one that applies nicely to figures. We can use figures, say and do one thing so as to say and do some other thing, only if we suppose that no one will be misled. We can talk about a knockdown argument only if we believe that no one will call the police, look on floor, order body bags, or whatever. And so one way of answering the question about Ricoeur's rhetoric will be to ask: Is anyone taken in by all his hyperbole or misled by the epanorthoses or any of the other figures? Some of us may be put off by the repetitions (almost every sentence) and not notice how they build up his case, but no one, or hardly anyone, will take Ricoeur's excursions in hyperbole to have been offered as true, precise, accurate, and complete descriptions rather than as ways of getting his readers to see the importance of what is being underscored, emphasized and as ways of getting them to see that the fact of the multiplicity of languages is incompatible with Darwinian criteria (utility, adaptation) and other facts about language. Should we not see how hyperbole and epanorthosis are connected to contrasting, they will be at their best *cosmetic*, at their worst inaccurate if not false statements. Ricoeur's argument hinges on seeing the figures as evidence for saying that the facts are enigmas. Taking the figures away takes his argument away; not noticing the figures and the work they do is to not notice the argument and mistake his text for an exhortation or something else.

Addenda

1. On translating figures:

Intervient ici la rhétorique avec ses figures de style, ses tropes, métaphore et autres, et tous les jeux de langage au service de stratégies innombrables, parmi lesquelles la séduction et l'intimidation aux dépens de l'honnête souci de convaincre. (1999: 18)

Here is a figure. It is a zeugma or a syllepsis, that is to say a sentence in which a singular verb has two subjects, one singular and one plural with the verb postposed. This could be paraphrased loosely but I think accurately as:

Here [in argued texts] rhetoric with its figures of style, its tropes, metaphors and others comes into play, along with all the language games serving innumerable strategies among which those of seduction and intimidation come in at the expense of the honest desire to convince.

A careful, professional translator might be able to preserve the figure which though not common does occur in English. But the point here is that any attempt to say what Ricoeur says in other words is likely to fail because what he says can not be separated from the way in which he says it; the paraphrase leaves out or misses part of the meaning, the job the zeugma does in the original text. The figure really works in the original text.

To see this work, it will be enough to recall, firstly, that Ricoeur claims that translators serve two masters: the author and the public. And secondly that Puttenham likens the zeugma to someone serving two masters. Ricoeur's use of this particular figure becomes rather sublime. It connects the way something is said to what is said elsewhere in the text. Taken as a zeugma rather than a mistake or oversight in the agreement between verbs and subjects or, rather than looking at the postposing of the verb as a stylistic artifice, we will now see an illustration, an example of something serving two masters. It may be said, too, that the effect of this figure is to support part of Ricoeur's main claim by giving an example. If this is missed, part of the support he gives is missed too. And then there is the postposed verb and the emphasis on action.

2. On ordinary facts

What is an ordinary fact? What is the ordinary treatment? Ordinary facts will fit our working models or our explanatory schemata. Whether these models and schemata are taken to mirror the immanent structure of reality, its laws or whether they are taken to be social constructions, the models and schemata are expected to fit the facts and vice versa. It's a matter of principle. Every fact has its model like every pot has its cover. So in principle we can find the model that fits the fact just as we can always find the cover for the pot.

If, in principle, all facts must fit our models or schemata, when some fact fails to fit we will call it a *problem* and solve it by:

- 1) looking for a model or schema that fits or
- 2) adjusting, reengineering or even replacing our models and schemata with different ones or
- 3) calling it an error or mistake in reporting (We say: "White wires connected to white wires, blacks to blacks, it does not make sense that the light does not work, it's not logical." Then we remember the breaker. A fuller description and the light comes on. We see that the little problem has been solved -- the facts do indeed fit the model -- and we, red faced, recognize and take back our hyperbole).

If none of the above work, we come to grips with the problematic fact by:

- 4) putting it on hold (When the human genomic map is completed ...) or
 - a. sometimes kicking it upstairs and handing it over to the philosophers for safekeeping (Austin has the patent on this expression) or
- 5) calling it irrational, saying that it makes no sense (this is Allan Greenspan's tack when he calls the slowdown in the American economy (fact) not rational because it fails to fit economic models (Ottawa Citizen, 14 February 2001: 1).).

Such are the ways of ordinary facts. These are some of the ways (hardly an exhaustive list) ordinary facts become problematic and some of the ways in which we make their problematic character go away. We get them to fit (solve them) or set them aside or dismiss them.

What then is an enigma? It is a fact all right and it fails to fit our models or explanatory schemata. However, it differs from an ordinary fact and an ordinary problem in that neither a fuller description of the fact nor a revised model or schema will guarantee a fit or a solution. Moreover, we can not set it aside, kick it upstairs or dismiss it because we take the fact to make sense and a sense that is of some immediate interest or importance (the fact is not an accident, it is not gratuitous, etc). Put another way, it is a matter of principle: these facts cannot fit or be made to fit (without damage) the models or explanatory schemata to which we fit ordinary facts. An enigma is a fact said to make sense *in spite* of the fact that it fails to fit our models or explanatory schemata. Making sense of an enigma then cannot be a matter of fitting it, or finding a place for it, in some grand scheme of things; the sense it makes does not come from its relation to models or explanatory schema. But what's left? The sense we make of an enigma depends on a decision, a choice that unless it is gratuitous or arbitrary (if these are different) can be shown, and indeed must be shown, to be preferable to other possible choices (cf. Ricoeur, 1986: 276).

3. Here's Ricoeur's text untranslated:

Partons donc de la pluralité et de la diversité des langues, et notons un premier fait: c'est parce que les hommes parlent des langues différentes que la traduction existe. Ce fait est celui de la *diversité des langues*, pour reprendre le titre de Wilhem von Humboldt. Or ce fait est en même temps un énigme: pourquoi pas une seule langue, et surtout pourquoi tant de langues, cinq ou six mille disent les ethnologues? Tout critère darwinien d'utilité et d'adaptation dans la lutte pour la survie est mis en déroute; cette multiplicité indénombrable est non seulement inutile, mais nuisible. En effet, si l'échange intracommunautaire est assuré par la puissance d'intégration de chaque langue prise séparément, l'échange avec le dehors de la communauté langagière est rendu à la limite impraticable par ce que Steiner nomme « une prodigalité néfaste » Mais, ce qui fait énigme ce n'est pas seulement le brouillage de la communication, que le mythe de Babel, dont nous allons parler plus loin, nomme « dispersion » au plan géographique et « confusion » au plan de la communication, c'est aussi le contraste avec d'autres traits qui touchent aussi au langage. D'abord, le fait considérable de l'universalité du langage: « Tous les hommes parlent »; c'est là un critère de l'humanité à côté de l'outil, de l'institution, de la sépulture; par langage, entendons l'usage des signes qui ne sont pas des choses, mais valent pour des choses -- l'échange des signes dans l'interlocution --, le rôle majeur d'une langue commune au plan de l'identification communautaire; voilà une compétence universelle démentie par ses performances locales, une capacité universelle démentie par son effectuation éclatée, disséminée, dispersée. D'où les spéculations au plan du mythe d'abord, puis à celui de la philosophie du langage quand celle-ci s'interroge sur l'origine de la dispersion-confusion. À cet égard, le mythe de Babel, trop bref et trop brouillé dans sa facture littéraire, fait davantage rêver à reculons en direction d'une présumée lang paradisique perdue, qu'il n'offre de guide pour se conduire dans ce labyrinthe. La dispersion-confusion est alors perçue comme une catastrophe langagière irrémédiable. Je suggérerai dans un instant une lecture plus bienveillante à l'égard de la condition ordinaire des humains. (1999: 8-9)

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