

# The Relevance of History in a Post modern milieu: Paul Ricoeur’s critical hermeneutics of history

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## Introduction

The conducted research study is an exploration of Paul Ricoeur’s Critical Hermeneutics of History. It reflects on and interpret proposals made by Paul Ricoeur on three major contentions: The relevance of history and of memory, history and historical discourse; historical discourse and fictional literature. It depicts the relevance of history in our postmodern milieu, The study is conducted in Madalag, Aklan to indigenous people known as “AkeanonBukidnon” simply to assess their reactions to Paul Ricoeur’s contention on the relevance of history and of memory, historical discourse and fictional literature.

### The Postmodern Condition

In my book, *Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*, I indicated there the following diagram: [See Nery]

### The Transition to Post-Modern World

#### *The Distinction Between Modern World and Post-Modern World*

<i>Modern World</i>	<i>Post-Modern World</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual subjectivity</li> <li>• Private interiority</li> <li>• Self-subsistent autonomy</li> <li>• Superiority of reason</li> <li>• Neat and tidy systems of order</li> <li>• History is always progressive</li> <li>• Exaggerated hope in science and technology</li> <li>• Everything fits into an ordered purpose</li> <li>• God is a supreme being who rules the world</li> <li>• God intervenes on our behalf, but from a distance</li> <li>• The experience of God’s absence is terrifying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The human being is a relational being</li> <li>• Shared affectivity</li> <li>• Inter-dependent autonomy</li> <li>• Trust in feeling and reason</li> <li>• Order dependent on changing needs within traditions</li> <li>• Awareness of the limits of science and technology</li> <li>• Life lived in openness to mystery</li> <li>• God accompanies us on our journey</li> <li>• God shares in our inmost life, love and works</li> <li>• Our experience of God’s absence is a mode of Presence inviting us to creative new ways</li> </ul>

In his book *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean Francois Lyotard upholds that the foundation of knowledge have been transformed from modern to a postmodern condition. This transformation radically altered the game rules of science, literature and the arts. The human needs and desires of the mass society were diversified. Through multiple media technologies, the voice of

the oppressed, women and cultural or ethnic groups are more potent means of expression. The old economic boundaries of nation states were eclipsed by global ones. The grand universal schemes of political leaders are redundant, powerless in the face of global economy, which is beyond their control. Lyotard stated further in his book *the differ and*, that the notion that every

particular identity can be construed as a language game. Within any particular language game there are rules and methods and common vocabularies which participants use to differentiate their own language game from others. In this world, no one particular language game has total control. In some language games their rules render communication between them futile. Other postmodern thinkers believed on the following: first, Baudrillard believes that America is so engulfed in the imagery of its mass media that the lines between reality and fiction are blurred. The law imposed is the law of confusion of categories. Everything is sexual. Everything is political. Everything is aesthetic. Each category is generalized to the greatest possible extent. It eventually loses all specificity and is reabsorbed by all other categories. Second, In his book *Maladie Mentale et Personalite*, Foucault categorized the psychological, moral, cultural, national and international status of human beings. In his assertion, society could be organized accordingly. Third, Ferdinand de Saussure's text *Course in General Linguistics* represents the first comprehensively systematic study of language, analyzing words as linguistic signs, which he established were arbitrary, and could be construed only within a system. Language is a composite of signs. A sign is a combination of a signifier (sound image) and a signified (an idea, a concept).

As Baudrillard and Lyotard would say, the postmodern condition is a result of the refusal of narratives to be subordinated to any other, a result of a great plurality of cultural systems not only in Asia but globally which claim for themselves their own legitimacy and would guard their autonomy jealously as to refuse to recognize any other center than their own. Postmodernity's centerless multiplicity of cultural entities all claiming equality and the right to be as they please in accordance with their own respective narrative legitimation, thus, proposing the unavoidability of pure difference or incommensurability

The postmodern condition is characterized as a Hyperreality. Hyperreality alludes to the visual

or unreal nature of contemporary culture in an age of mass communication and mass consumption. This phase is known as implosion. The old structures of class have banished. It is characterized as the void of the masses. They lost all meaning. They have been analyzed through statistics, polls & marketing & no longer respond to enlightened political representation. They absorbed neutralized ideology, religion & the transcendental aspirations. The law that is imposed is the law of confusion of categories. Everything is sexual. Everything is political.

The postmodern condition is known as the age of simulation – computerization, information processing media, cybernetic control system & the organization of society in accord to simulation codes and paradigms replacing production as the organizing principle of society. In language, it fosters deconstruction wherein the text structures our interpretation of the world. Language shapes us. There is dominance of logos/speech (logocentrism). All text exhibit difference allowing multiple interpretation (equivocation). In brief, vagueness.

The postmodern condition exhibits the primacy of theory wherein a text is any set of representational or signifying social or cultural product. It ascribes to the decentering of the subject. Human personality is rejected. The author becomes decentered. Intelligibility and ideology are deduced from the cultural community which the writer belongs. Concerning reading, text and writing, the author is absent from a text. The text is merely a structure of signifiers which are capable of being read. Ideologies would tell: manipulative, hegemonic, exploitative, commodificatory, oppressive

The crisis in academe and even the cultural survival of the indigenous people need a reconceptualization if they are to cope up with the onslaught of postmodernism. Interdisciplinary attempts to master the field, coercing it into intellectual performativity. Classroom discussion is an example of distributed thinking. Dialogue is a deliberative inquiry. Education as inquiry begin

with what students find problematical building upon what they continue to find interesting, intriguing and important. The text as a model technique and the community paradigm of deliberative inquiry pedagogy is a kind of schema, experience, thoughtfulness and imagination. Many disciplines conceive their own articulations as explanatory rather than argumentative. Reasoning and judgment add up to reasonableness to be able to reason and be open to reason. The formation of future teachers will have to keep in the forefront of its attention the role of the teacher as pedagogical expert, as model of reasoning and judgment and a model of cognitive self defense.

The Postmodern Condition and its incredulity toward metanarratives, broke open a large fissure of uncertainty in many disciplines. The accelerating efficacy of such postmodern viewpoint is constituting a profound impact on the discipline of history. In recent years, the consequence of the debate among historians engendered new directions. At present, serious challenges pertaining to the truth of written history and the knowledge of the historian are in evidence. While controversy concerning the truth-value of history has a long tradition, postmodern paradigms ascribed for new ways of viewing and doing history. Historical truth, objectivity, facts, events and knowledge are all targets for revision. The acceleration of the old ideal of historical objectivity is dismissed and beyond restrained. The very notion of historical truth is now often considered hopelessly naïve. Postmodern proposals depicts a contemporary crisis in the discipline of history. What is viewed as a radical skepticism and a virulent relativism are considered to be an assault on traditional forms of all that history stands for, including objectivity, knowledge, clarity and evidence. Facts and truths that are objectively discovered and conveyed were assumed to be the emblem of historical accounts, but this depiction of history is changing.

## The Relevance of History and of Memory

As discussed in school, the relevance of history are as follows:

First, history collaborates for us to understand people and societies. Consequently, history furnishes a storehouse of information about people and societies milieu. Data from the past are considered vital and extensive evidence in the inevitable quest to figure out how societies function. Only through history can we grasp the causes of change; and only through history can we understand what elements of an institution or a society persist despite change. Second, the presence of the divergence of usage of history in our own lives. The pastness of the past bestows the ways people in distant ages constructed their lives.

Third, history offers a terrain for moral contemplation/understanding. In real, historical circumstances, history shares inspiration not only of certifiable heroes, great people who worked through moral dilemmas, but also of ordinary people who provided lesson in courage, diligence, or constructive protest. Fourth, history provides identity. It gives facts about genealogy and its interaction with a larger society. History narrates the story, demonstrating distinctive features of the experience, its understanding of values and a commitment.

Fifth, history is indispensable for laying the foundation for genuine citizenship that encourages habits of mind vital for a responsible societal engagement. Sixth, History is indispensable in the constitution of experience in dealing with and assessing a number of evidence by gaining skills and competence in sorting through diverse usage of evidence, assess conflicting interpretations and analyze change and continuities.

Seventh, the essentiality of history in the world of work by fostering research skills, the competence to discover, identify and evaluate diverse interpretations. It develops writing and speaking skills as well as the analytical demands

of expounding trends in the public and private sectors. Finally, without history, sensible inquiry into the political, social or moral contentions in society is inconceivable. Without history, a society shares no common memory of their past, their core values and discretions in the past for present milieu. And without historical knowledge and inquiry, people cannot be well informed and will not participate efficaciously in the democratic processes of governance and the fulfillment of the nation's democratic ideals.

Historical memory is the key to self identity, to envisioning one's place in the stream of time, and one's engagement with all of humankind. The primal role of history is engendering sense where the past is interpreted to understand the present and anticipate the future and bestow a sort of orientation for us as we, in the present, continually face a future. It is this identity that AkeanonBukidnon holds on to their culture. As a *'tomandok {original inhabitant}'*, They persevere to pass on their unique culture to their next generation.

The postmodern response to these assumptions is crafted on new modes of historical perspectives as essential. The old enlightenment fantasies of certainty and objectivity generated to be at the core of historical writing are no longer taken into consideration. Since it is now unsustainable, history is apparently represented to be just one more foundationless, positioned articulation in a world of foundationless, positioned articulations.

Writing history is merely a subjective enterprise, exclusively grounded on literary construction or framework without objective foundation. Concurring on the story straight constitute merely a fragment of endeavoring with the events of the past. Under the template of postmodern paradigm new wave historians accorded that a discovery of an accurate recounting of historical events in time is an inconceivable function.

In this scenario, writing history, is constitutive more with inventing meaning than

exploring and discovering facts. Any pursuit of the veracity of historical occurrence in the past becomes tremendously dubious. How then are we to grasp written accounts of past events as new wave historians influence and re-shape the discipline of history? Does the discipline face an accelerating crisis?

The contemporary debates over history writing and historians also have enormous repercussions even for biblical veracity, which in some aspect, asserts to be anchored to real events in history. As an adjunct to historical queries, there is another linking dimension to our present context that merits consideration. Textual interpretation is much influenced by the contemporary interest in literary criticism and narrative.

The narrative turn has drawn the focus of literary theorists, philosophers, biblical exegetes, theologians and historians becoming the object of intense entangling debate. What is the linkage, or deficiencies thereof, between history and historical accounts of the past? How might narratives recount something about the real world? In the light of contemporary literary theories fostered by new wave historians, how are we to view textual narratives?

Ricoeur endeavored to make sense of the past and our ongoing participation with it. The past cannot be accessible undoubtedly. Yet, traces of the past remain. Through them we attempt to exhibit the past in the present. We do so through memory, reading and writing of history. Ricoeur, however, ascribed of the past as notoriously fallible. Historical accounts can only be exhibited partially. The past cannot be depicted just as it was. Henceforth, it could be misrepresented, rather than depict, the past.

Ricoeur repudiates any assertion that historical knowledge can be or even correctly aspire to be definitive or absolute knowledge. He declines Hegel's or Marx's assertion that there is one universal history wherein all local histories are fused and made fully intelligible. He also negates the positivistic conception that there are bare,

unchallengeable and uninterrupted facts waiting to be discovered that are accessible either to memory or to the historian. Ricoeur, however, ascribed that there can be authentic objective historical knowledge.

In his book, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Ricoeur offers his argument for this lifelong conviction. The threshold of his argument is on account of things purportedly remembered, for without memories there could be no history involving people. There is the individual's memory of what he or she has encountered or done or suffered.

Analogously, there is a set of memories that individuals share with other members of their group. In such collective memory, a group of people has access to past events and deeds that have been reconstructed and recounted to them. Such collective memory antedates individual memories. We are born into a familial discourse replete with accounts of our group's (family, locale, nation, etc.) past. Our individual memories is formed in contradictory to the backdrop of this collective memory

History is indispensable for it attempts to present the divergence between remembering and imagining, to examine the assertion to truth made by and memory. In the threshold of Platonic philosophical inquiry into memory, truth and falsehood are accorded equivalent ontological and epistemological status implying that they are versions of the same thing. Within this is the query of whether history is mimetic or imaginary. Here a commitment to critical agency is pertinent to critique what are defined as false testimonies or false height and withstand them with more reliable accounts.

Ricoeur engages in several contentions such as the influence of commemoration and the abuses of memory and of forgetfulness. For Ricoeur, it is a memory of memory. The contention of memory is thus of a representation of the past, which in the final analysis, is the presence of something absent.

History is not synonymous to imagination which alludes to what is unreal and fictitious. The

elucidation of memory to veracity is a pertinent trait. Ricoeur upholds memory and imagination are alike in one pertinent sphere: they both constitute the presence of something absent. For Aristotle, if memory is time, then even being is articulated in several ways. Memory alludes to the past and it is in the same allusion, or rather, it is its very adherence to the veracity of the past that comprises the epistemic dimension of the contention of memory.

If memory is not a thing, it is not an object, it is an act and an action, its epistemic dimension is a mixture with its pragmatic dimension, which engenders an exercise. For Ricoeur, memory constitutes an objective trait, one does not just remember. But one rather remembers something. There is memory as an intention (act and action) and remembrance as the thing intended at. Memory is singular as a competence and as an effectuation. Remembrances are plural, one constitutes remembrances.

Ricoeur also alluded to memory as solely about events, but being so, it is a composition of a form of knowledge. There is no historical community, Ricoeur adheres, which is not born from a milieu that we can assimilate without hesitation to violence (MFF, 96). Some people win and others lose, some people are glorified and others are humiliated.

This argument is a composition acknowledging that history is inevitably and inextricably linked with conceptions of time, founded on Aristotle's observation but memory is of the past, which is contrasted with the sensation of the present and the conjecture of the future. Ricoeur intends to depict potential solution to the problem of the veracity or falsity of memory and henceforth the contentions of mimesis and imagination by disengaging our initial impressions, or representation and impressions; fulfilled through the act of recollection.

Ricoeur exhibits a process of recalling individual events from the past and those recollections as mirrors of reality and nature that are dynamic, addressing the perseverance of endeavor to recall.

Thus, a divergence is constructed between spontaneous, relaxed simple evocation and laborious, stress freak endeavor to recall, between the sim[le passive presence of memories and the effortful agentic act of recollection. This generates the probability of error or illusion in the act of remembering to the fore.

This basis then allows Ricoeur to construct a framework on affirmative phenomenology of memory. The key argument stems from reading of Husserl's philosophical viewpoints which suggests that reproduction is an act of imagination. Memories return to us as images that are then exhibited in a form that seeks to be real i.e., non-imagined, non-imaginative. This elevates what Ricoeur calls the background query of trust wherein exploration of memory influences the study of history, in a sphere that we are all implicated as agents in the quest for historical truth, inasmuch as we ascribed either faithfulness or the desire to be authentic to something.

The necessity of those remembering and their historians to be authentic to something influences us into the usage and abuses of exercising memory – the pragmatics and practicality of memory as an action, power or competence –in other words, how and why we do remembering. This arises for another key theme: how does the exercise of memory affect the ambition for veracity? The possibility of bad mimetics or abuse of memory and history implies that both are vulnerable because of the eclipse of the object and the essentiality of representation. There are 3 levels of abused memory held by Freud, Weber, Marx and Nietzsche that Ricoeur took into consideration.

1. Pathological therapeutic sphere – blocked memory (Freud), repressed memory (Ricoeur)
2. Practical-manipulated memory – (Weber, Marx)
3. Ethico-political sphere – memory abusively summoned; forced memory (commemoration-rememoration)

Justice to the other, paying our debt to those game as well as inventorying their heritage and accorded moral priority to the victim of history are implied humanistic responses to the query of the duty of memory.

Memory is argued to be first individual and then collective; a significant shift in the process of the historiographical operation. As Ricoeur expounds, for the private; individual disposition of memory, in which memory consciousness is inextricably linked to the past and is integral to personal identity. Yet there are possibilities of collective memory and an intermediate sphere of reference where exchanges are constituted between living individual memory and public memory.

Collective memory presupposes someone's attestation that he or she has witnessed something and recalled it accurately. This person consequentially testifies: "I witnessed x occurring. If you don't believe me, you can ask someone else who were there." Testimony of this sort, bestowed and received, underpins a group's collective memory, its "common knowledge." It also demonstrates that there is a social affinity among the group's members that undergirds their trust in one another's words

For an enrich conception of such engagement, we turn to Ricoeur. For Ricoeur, historiography is a representation in that historical narrative is a species of symbolic discourse. In being a sort of discourse whose narrative form is wedded to its content (narrativization of events), historical narratives conveys beyond what they utter simply as narratives. As mediation they transmit a meaningful efficacy that goes beyond the framework and form alone. In Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, he indicated that grasping together of disposition and events as actions performed in time is represented through a similar grasping together in narrative known as emplotment. In being figurative symbols historical narratives are more or less successful in disclosing.

The meaning, coherence, or worthwhileness of events, while asserting to the realism of events, through their narration, depicts

historical narratives as representations diverging from other narrative discourses in alluding to a “real” human past, in contradictory to an imaginary referent in terms of fiction. Historiography is governed by the same structured human imagination, which does not presuppose that historical narrative is more or less authentic.

The function of doing historical research and writing history is to support, correct, and refute collective memory. Ricoeur call this “historiographical operation”. Such operation, for Ricoeur, does not deal directly with individual memory except as attested to and believed by others. It constitutes distinctive but disengageable constituents, all of which are interpretative activities.

The first configuration is the construction and employability of archives constituting, in some sort, (e.g., documents, artifacts), traces of the past. Ricoeur exemplified that the crucial traces are documents that listed testimonies and attestations, reports about their presuppositions. Archival endeavor is itself an interpretative activity.

Directed by their interests, historians, librarians, etc. identify which traces to preserve. Historians framed queries or hypotheses, without which archives would remain mute, directed them to detect “facts, capable of being asserted in singular, discrete propositions, most often constituting the mentioning of dates, places, proper names, verbs that name an action or state” (MHF, 178). These are not affirmative facts. They failed to correspond either to actual occurrence or to the living memory that an eye-witness might have had of them. Facts are established only through the historian’s queries and are themselves interpretations of the archives.

The second configuration of the historiographical operation is that of explanation/understanding, the activity by which historians allude to facts to one another. Ricoeur repudiates the supposed dichotomy between expounding of facts through external causes and their understanding or conception of facts through reasons or intentions. Ricoeur considers action as

always interaction and henceforth a fusion of doing and undergoing. There is no uniquely privileged paradigm for historical accounts. The historian must be attentive to the intricate entangling meanings of “why” that are indispensable to engendering action intelligible.

The third configuration of the historiographical operation is the activity of generating a verbal depiction of some sort of the past as a text. This inscription is always rhetorical and as such considered interpretative. The entirety of historiographical operation shapes a sort of circle of interpretation. The historian’s writings themselves are included for selection for being collected in archives or libraries. They furnishes material for subsequent explanation/understanding and are always subject to revision, exemplification, and re-writing, often based on further subsequent events.

In our postmodern milieu, in historical education in school, classroom discussion is an example of distributed thinking. Dialogue is a deliberative inquiry containing a definite effort at cognitive exploration on essential self correctiveness fostering reflexivity. Education as inquiry begin with what students find problematical building upon what they continue to find interesting, intriguing, and important resulting to shared experiences and shared values communicating insights to one another, across differences in historical and social circumstances allowing them to be confident of their own self-identity vis-à-vis the identity of other seemingly dominant cultures

The text-as-model technique and the community paradigm of deliberative inquiry pedagogy is a kind of schema, experience, thoughtfulness and imagination. Many disciplines conceive their own articulations as explanatory rather than argumentative. Reasoning and judgment add up to reasonableness: to be able to reason and be open to reason.

Given the interpretative nature of the entire historiographical operation, historical knowledge, like medical diagnosis and prognosis, always

constitute the disposition of likelihood or credibility rather than certainty. It springs to a judgment. The historiographical operation, like memory, is always inextricably linked and is subject to oblivion. There is always something significant to a historical schema that is left aside, unnoticed, or that simply dissipated on ashes of dust heap. Something of the past is always irretrievably dissipated and comprises no actual remembering encompassing everything available for recall. Actually, we composed nothing better (MHF, 278, translation modified).

Historiographical operation is thoroughly interpretative and yet, the objectivity and veracity of the historian's account consists the probability to represent. The point of departure of this operation is testimony. Even inauthentic testimony alludes to a world wherein something actually happened, something objective. All testimony alludes, at least implicitly, to some particular group and the social bond that fosters the activity of bestowing and receiving testimony among its members. To exemplify that historians represents historiographical operation well they offer a substitute depiction of the past. A well done substitute is faithful to the accessible proof deserving a confirmation of being authentic albeit it is always amenable, reformable or subject to revision.

In his book 'Memory, History, Forgetting', Ricoeur proposes that the reception of such meaning is bestowed to the citizen, located between the figures of the historian and the judge without for a minute suggesting that any sort of absolute objectivity and the judge who interprets and applies law in rendering a verdict absolute objectivity or infallible impartially is somehow possible. Rather the citizen springs as a third partner between the historian who constructs and generates representations

Concerning the judge who interprets and applies law in rendering a verdict, the citizen's vision diverged from these two figures in being structured on account of personal experience, variously instructed by penal judgment and by

published historical inquiry. Located between the historian and the judge, the citizen's intervention are never completed because of unceasingly contested actions. These interventions are grounded on the quest for a quasi-final assured judgment. A similar imaginative framework can be substantially constructed for the Christian believer, as a member of the religious community or *ekklesia*, who also intervenes, in this instance between the historian or exegete and the judge or religious practitioner (priest, pastor).

In constructing representations of the past, Ricoeur upholds that historians generate symbolic discursive monument articulating an intention to metaphorically stand for the past. A historian thus creates a sort of past discursive monument, like those historical monuments that is transmitted to us from the past, as an account of veracity. Ultimately the communities are suggested to determine the efficacious meaning in which these representations are generated. It is in this conjunction that Ricoeur locates the interaction between the historian and the citizen – and we may again insert the believer of a member of another community. For history is not merely an amplification of the collective memory of a given community, it corrects, criticizes, and even refutes the memory of that community when it folds back upon itself and encloses itself within its own sufferings to the turning point of rendering itself blind and deaf to the suffering of other communities. It is along the path of critical history that memory encounters the sense of justice (MHF, 77). Behind the historian's intention to veracity is the attempt to disclose the face of those who formerly existed, who acted and suffered, and who were keeping the promises they left and is considered an unfinished agenda.

The actualization of this attempt to construe and explicate the past will of course be unceasingly deferred, for no one will ever write the final historical account of anything. Rather, the enlightenment of the historian's intention can only be signified and accepted, Ricoeur asserts, in the community of readers in which the narrative has



been fashioned. Here, the community's intention to remain faithful to memory, be it national or religious or something else, stems up in opposition to the historians intention to remain authentic to history and the judge's intention to render a just verdict.

At this crossroad between history and memory and law, the citizen and the believer can actively reposition his or herself in the attempt to fulfill a better viewpoint, pursuing a sphere of justice. It is this efficacious repositioning, of fulfilling a new gaze, a transformed perspective or an enriched horizon, that Ricoeur more efficaciously accentuates by engaging how historical narratives and common memory can remain in constructive dialogue.

This efficacious repositioning is akin to the process of hermeneutic appropriation which aims at conception of contextualization. When we approach a text as readers our intention is grasp it, we do not intend to project ourselves into the text but to receive an amplified self from the apprehension of proposed worlds in the text itself. We consider the proposed world of meaning in a text just as we abide by the rule of a game we participate in; yet as in any played game, during the act of playing/reading a new experience springs that is not coextensive with the subject playing the game or reading the text.

In order to consider this experience we must simultaneously let go, submitting ourselves to the game and to the text. If we transfer the endeavor of appropriation in texts to that of historical representations, we can visualize that the stories produced by criticism can be appropriated by citizens and believers, exemplifying memory's horizon of meaning and thus resisting the enclosure to which it is sometimes prone.

British historian Simon Schama popularized or influenced history in British school system. He insists that history is not a placebo for the arguments and defects that any given community may be plagued by, but neither will critical history allow a genealogy of self-congratulation. History is by definition a contested subject due to the

nature of the practice wherein historians participate.

Schama envision history as a composition of critical practice persevering to unceasingly generate better histories, a practice that informs and embodies good citizenship. Such history will always be contested. Unceasingly open to revision, the very act of critical scholarship will preserve the means wherein better histories can be generated. This activity not only endeavors for communities to persevere, it assist them thrive. It fosters critical thinking, the building of better arguments, and the cultivation of political virtues like tolerance without any attendant sanctimony.

Schama's contextualizing with Ricoeur focused on critical history unceasingly engendering the call of justice from other citizens and other communities by negating the citizens of liberal democracies to allow memory to shut off itself in an insular sphere. Noll's interpretation with Ricoeur centered on critical history unceasingly elucidating the kerygma or proclamation of the word in the new testament by repudiating the believers and listeners of the Christian message to block up their ears with the voice of memory alone. While there is much more to be gleaned from Ricoeur's philosophy of history, it is at least possible for us to consider his endeavor here so as to improve formulating the framework of promise and the efficacy of how critical history and common memory can endeavor together for good.

Another historian in the person of Noll exemplified that Christians who conceived their shared history will be more aware of specific historical disposition, more aware of the notion of scriptural interpretation and its engagement to specific culture and context and ultimately more aware of the fallibility of a community's competence to live faithfully in light of sacred texts. Noll insists that intellectual inquiry as practiced in Christian history remained a vigorous composition of the faithful Christian life, collectively and individually. Both historians considered history constituting an inextricable engagement between the historian's practice and

particular sorts of virtues, be they political or religious.

### History and Historical Discourse

A reply to postmodernism and its influence on historical queries has been for some scholars to asserting that the text is history. Daniel Marguerat, in an argument in postmodernism and historiography, contends that there is no history without the written plots and interpretations of the historians. He elucidates that any divergence between history and written accounts of history has now been dissipated. A somewhat similar contention is advanced by Paul Veyne, who proposes a narrativist paradigm of history that is plot centered. There is no history without the writing of a plot. History, Veyne adheres, is a constitution by the written construction of plots.

Some scholars conceived history and writing history as pertinent in pointing on the role of the historian as an interpreter and the worthwhileness of narrative configurations, but comprises the severe disadvantage of reducing history to interpretation and emplotment, hence devaluing any divergence between historical discourse and history. How do we arrive at historical discourse, a selectively written account of history? A number of debate occurred on this contention and it is impossible to disclose the exemplified divergence of perspectives here, I shall contiguously ensue Ricoeur's endeavor and commentary on this controversial aporia. Ricoeur suggests a critical three-fold historiographic operation that comprises, at each sphere, enrichment and problematization.

First, Ricoeur exemplifies, the threshold situates on investigation of what we discover in sources and documentation. These detail sources, for example, traces, testimony, and chronicles can be analyzed and to some degree verified as to their credibility. Sources are not, in this sphere, what Ricoeur alludes to as *la connaissance historique* (historical knowledge). In Ricoeur's claim, on this sphere, historical occurrence has a twofold epistemological status: it engenders statements of

details that can be affirmed or negated by testimony, trace or documentation, and constitute a function in the entirety of its overall explanation and narrative configuration, where it passes from the status of a verifiable occurrence to an interpreted occurrence. Albeit the instability of the engagement between the occurrence and its documentation there is no reason to assume that the occurrence was not an actual event in the world prior to its documentation.

Second, there is an explicative/comprehension sphere, which concerns not just 'who', where, and when, but why, to what effects, or consequences. This sphere is a composite of such elements as social, political or economic considerations that ripple out from an occurrence in the past. On this sphere, as Ricoeur alluded, there are compulsions and conflicting paradigms of the *erklären* (explanation) and *verstehen* (understanding) of past occurrences as historical knowledge: some explicate by subjecting the past to laws or regulations, others grasp by anchoring the past to a teleology, the contexts of epistemological value are fused to one or the other of these paradigms or harnessing and articulating the past.

Consequently, both attempt, albeit in different ways, to establish something of a scientific dimension of historical discourse although centering on understanding (Dilthey) or explanation (Hempel). However in Ricoeur's view, the problematic is that explanation without understanding or understanding without explanation consequentially in a truncated epistemology.

In the debate between these paradigms, Ricoeur accentuated on the endeavor of G.H. von Wright in *Explanation and Understanding* (who determines the compulsion between Plato and Aristotle). Wright attempt to synthesize the regulatory and the causal or teleological in engagement with human action. In discovering such a point of view promising, Ricoeur ponders the ensuing queries: does a narrative ordering assure the unity of a fused paradigm? This query

leads us to the next stage of historiographic operation.

Third, the interpreted sources and the explication and understandings are configured in (re)writing a grand historiographical narrative which intends to be a representation of the past. This (re)writing representation is anchored to memory, the intentionality of the historiographer, and the target of recounting veracity about the past in dependence on the previous sphere. At this point, the historiographical operation is brought to closure. Ricoeur prefers the term 'representance' for the fused three sphere operation so as to accentuate the historical representation in endeavoring towards the shedding to enlighten the targeted allusion. These three divergences, yet connected spheres of operation, offer critical knowledge of the past.

Ricoeur's threefold contextualization of the historiographical operation depicts that history and historical discourse are not to be equated. For Ricoeur, there is a behind the text or an outside the text that merits consideration in historical inquiry. Trace, testimony, and representance, stand for something that occurred outside the text. While the behind or outside the text are not the only mechanism in the interpretation of historical discourse, they nevertheless remain valid interests. Historical occurrences only become historical discourse when they are written, while history remains history even though it is not written down. Henceforth, we are not merely interested in texts, but in the credibility of interpretation of the historical disposition of the events which the texts represent.

### **Historical Discourse and Fictional Literature: To Turn to Literature**

The disciplines of literature and modern literary criticism constituted a marked impact on the discipline of history. The contemporary accentuations on literature is a pivotal reason. This was inaugurated by both French and Anglo-Saxons theorists. The fulcrum of argumentation on this section will be to evaluate Ricoeur's reply to recent

presuppositions that attempt to transform historical discourse into fictional literature and then to map out his own proposals for preserving a divergence.

The intention of the historian is to explicate the past by 'discovering' 'identifying', or 'uncovering', the 'narratives' that he buried in chronicles, and that the divergence between 'history' and 'fiction' resides in the fact that the historian discovers his narratives, whereas the fiction writer 'invents' his, viz. in this sense they are made by historians; but it is not clear that it follows from this that they are made-up (and are therefore, fictional)

A pivotal figure who frequently construed the above argument is Louis Mink. Recently, he was one of the first to pose the problematic of the engagement between historical discourse and fiction. Mink adhered that both type of narrative literature recount. His presupposition is well acknowledged, however, it springs with it the following query: if both types of narrative account, is there any divergence between a historical and fictional recounting? Mink warns of an impending jeopardy if the divergence between historical discourse and fiction dissipates, albeit he remains somewhat perplexed as to how one might preserve the contrasting viewpoints. How have postmodern paradigms in the discipline of history attempted to respond to this problem? This vexing query merits further investigation.

From this point, it is time to sketch an assessment on the literary turns endeavored on two postmodern new wave scholars: Hayden White and Hans Kellner. White's enterprise is a composite of a deeper impact on the argumentation, and henceforth it is worthwhile to pursue. In his assertion, there has been a reluctance to regard historical narratives as what they most manifestly are: verbal fictions, the framework of which are as much invented as discovered and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences.

This contextualization of the historian's function, however, obscures the extent to which

‘invention’ also plays a configuration in the historian’s operations. White’s intricate taxonomy is inconceivable to expand here. My purpose in what ensues is to demonstrate briefly something of its trajectory.

Two of White’s concocted themes are that the historian invents as much as discovers, and that narratives are a mode of recounting, not a mode of discovery and exploration. He visualizes the historian as endeavoring with disordered and unconnected chronicle type data. The writer then imposes a sequential order, beginning, middle, end, and an employment strategy, which is a composite on the form of romance – tragedy-comedy –satire. By virtue of this imposition of a form, which is the mode of an explication, moral meaning or framework is integrated to the narrative. In White’s perspective, a plot form or structure functions as a restraint paradigm, a sort of pre-encoding, a meta-history. This is because emploting presides over and is that through which the historian is accountable to recount the narrative.

In White’s elucidation, history-writing thrives on the discovery of all the possible plot structures that might be invoked to endow sets of events with distinctive meanings. And our conception of the past accelerates precisely in the sphere to which we succeed in assessing how far that past concurs to the strategies of sense-discretion that are configured in their present forms in literary art.

The historian constructs narrative meaning through the preferred plot form or typology as a literary endeavor on the narrative sphere. This literary constitution endows the narrative a fictional framework mechanism, while a credible representation of events in the world pales into relative obscurity on the referent register of the grand narrative.

The fact that the framework of narratives is not in dispute, yet there are queries in necessity of consideration concerning White’s presuppositions. Why should narrative construction, which many scholars acknowledge, banish historical

occurrence, sense and reference? Does narrative construction exclude a credible representation of the past?]. Furthermore, why should one presuppose there is no narrative structure (beginning, middle, and end), which a narrative may reflect, prior to its literary construction. Actually, there are more queries other than exhibited here.

White’s accentuation on the structured imagination and its correlation to creativity and form are notable. In Ricoeur’s presupposition, on the other pole, he deplores the impasse in which H. White encloses himself in treating the operations of employment as explicative modes, at best indifferent to the scientific procedures of historical knowledge, at worst a substitute for these. There is a real category mistake here which engenders a legitimate suspicion regarding the competence of the rhetorical paradigm stemming an efficacious demarcation line between historical narrative and fictional narrative. It should be noted that in Ricoeur’s text, he always emphasizes hermeneutics of suspicion.

White’s paradigm is a composition of further drawbacks. He both neglects the realist dimension of fiction and accentuates on an almost exclusive core on the preference of pre-narrative strategies and employment, to the detriment of regarding the fidelity of a representation of the past. One of the marked consequences of the strategy is that it becomes expedient to envision historical discourse a constitutive of, rather than a linkage to, historical occurrence and life.

Envisioning historical discourse and historical investigation today is a composite of an efficacious influenced by White’s endeavor? He shared an efficacious accomplishment to moving historical discourse from the domains of history, literature, science and epistemology, and situating it exclusively in the realm of literature. White relegates or reduces historical inquiry to a third level (in Ricoeur’s operation) literary quest. In that circumstances, White’s perspectives render it extremely complex to deduce divergences between historical discourse and fiction.

The major aporia that such an incompetence springs is that it purs in question the reality of the past. For Ricoeur, it is the engagement between the organizing paradigms of the discipline of history and those which restrained the framework of literary fictions which has provoked declassification of history as knowledge with a scientific pretension and its reclassification as literary artifice, and in engagement to this caused a weakening of epistemological criteria of divergence between history proper and the philosophy of history.

This brief assessment of Ricoeur's interaction with two contemporary scholars should not be interpreted as merely a critique of their perspective, but also as a means of conveying his own affirmative proposals. Here, clarity is indicative of how, in Ricoeur's presupposition, an over-determined literary core constitutes the inclination to reduce historical discourse to fictional literature and rhetorical strategies. Ricoeur efficaciously ascribe to sustain the divergence between historical discourse and fictional literature in that historical discourse has diverging concerns, referents and targets.

The reductionism of White and Kellner springs with it an epistemological dilemma concerning the fidelity of a representation of the past. Ricoeur's compulsion with such scholarship has been underscored in demonstrating that the literary – narrative turn, in the school of thought, is now more often concerned with literature and literary criticism, than it is with epistemology and scientific inquiry. Ricoeur efficaciously shared to the move towards narrative as a literary vehicle for recounting events of the past, but he also intends to caution interpreters to the deficiencies and perils of a declassification of historical discourse into fictional literature and appeals for a vigilant explications, and conceptions queries pertaining the past.

Another contemporary scholar who generated a marked influence on the field of history is Hans Kellner. In his endeavor on language and historical representation, Kellner

upholds that he does not believe there are narratives of the past out there waiting to be disclosed or that there is any straight way to write a history. No historical discourse is straight, even though it constitutes methodological rigor or honesty of the historian. Any historical text, albeit, its straight appearance, is to be conceived as rhetorical invention: crooked. Historical epochs or events represented in the text are literary fashions that focuses more on self-understanding, than with something that occurred in the past.

Recounting invented narratives, Kellner ascribes, is how humans understand themselves. There is always a human language narrative outside the narrative that demands to be treated. Having the narrative crooked for it is merely a fabrication, for Kellner, equally surmounts to something of a reading strategy. This alludes to reading a historical text for the field of consideration and discretion. It is not concerned about as to what degree concealed, that have forged or fabricated specific tactical writing schemes. Deficiency or non-substantial historical proof an endeavor to construct the past though language and rhetorical conventions, which attempt to engender the potentially petrifying and disordered chaos. On this sphere of conception, rhetoric and language construction are a reality construction.

In challenging what he terms, 'the ideology of veracity,' Kellner elucidates that we are accountable to face the constructed nature of the human world, and to accept that meaning is always reducible to human objective. Narratives and narrative order constructions are oppressive weapons employed by historians in the attempt to mask anxiety and the fear of anarchy regarding the past. Acknowledging a language – rhetorical construction of reality, Kellner expounds, amounts to the most profound respect for reality in that the reality of the past is merely a by-product of the historian.

Historical investigation, for Kellner, is not interested in sources, explications and construal of historical occurrences in time, but in rhetoric.

Ricoeur, however, explicates that when the quest for rhetoric becomes the sole driving efficacy of the discipline of history, other legitimate historical interests are declined. If one concurs Kellner's perspective, veracity dissipates, and with it, historical reality.

As an adjunct to the value of Ricoeur's proposals and his critique of White and Kellner, it is pertinent to elucidate further something of his response to the aporetic disposition of representation of the past and then to reflect on his perspectives concerning the problem of differentiating historical discourse and fictional literature.

A number of his personal reflections engenders thought. Ricoeur affirms the spontaneous realism [of the historian implicated by what he alludes to as 'the intentionality of the historical conscience']. Ricoeur's perspective here is that, the historian is constitutive of an ultimate object people like us, acting and suffering in circumstances that they generated, and with desired and non-desired consequences. This perspective anchors the paradigm of history and the paradigm of action.

People of the past are distinct, yet this distinctiveness is not so great that people of the present have no competence to grasp them. The creative linkage model here is language, integrated with the viewpoint that all languages can be translated into our own.

A historian, furthermore, is inextricably linked, in a practical, spatio-temporal manner to the object of study. This schema, centered chronologically albeit it may be, endowed the essential condition of dating an historical occurrence. In Ricoeur's presupposition the worthwhileness of this linking goes beyond merely formal chronology. In dating an occurrence the historian possessed the competence to anchor past actions to calendar time, a combined time between lived present time and chronological time.

Ricoeur intends to demonstrate that historians are indebted to those who came before them and that they receive an inheritance from those of another

time. There are others, from the past, who shared enormous contribution to shape us who we are. A concluding reflection on the aporia of representation of the past is an appeal to trace. Trace is something that someone has left in passing through a place in time. Ricoeur stressed that two ideas are involved here: on one pole, the conception that a mark has been left by the passage of some being, on the other pole, the conception that this mark is the sign standing for the passage. The worthwhileness of the trace combines a connection of causality between the thing marking and the thing marked, and a linkage of signification between the mark left and the passage. The trace constitute the value of effect-sign.

The representation of the past, Ricoeur contends, is not a copy of projection, a correspondence of mental image and something absent, but rather a something represented standing in place of that which once was and no longer is. In this aspect, the trace does not belong to some sort of articulation of a native realism, but to what raising: as historiographical and fictional narratives both recount; the question is, is it possible to maintain any differentiation between them? In reply to this query, Ricoeur efficaciously asserts in contradiction to White and Kellner for this differentiation. He appeals to the veracity of representance in that it comprises the expectations, demands and problem of historical intentionality.

A representance of the past is expected to be anchored to a reconstructions of actual events, real people, and factual circumstances. This historical narrative articulation can be said to constitute a pact between author and reader. Historians, on this presupposition, are not mere narrators, but a person who exemplifies a case for the actual events and real people they attempt to depict. Historical discourse has a target – a credible representation of the past. Ricoeur held that: it is in no way such intention to cancel or to obscure the divergence between history and the entire set of fictional narratives in terms of their assertions on veracity. Documents and archives are

the sources of evidence for historical inquiry. Fictional narratives, on the other pole, negates the burden of producing evidences of that sort.

It can be accentuated that as fictive as the historical text may be, its elucidation is to be a representation of reality. And its mode of ascribing its viewpoint is to support it by the verificationist procedures proper to history as a science. In other words, history is both literary artifact and a representation of reality. It is a literary artifact to the extent that, like all literary texts, it constitutes the tendency to assume the status of a self-contained system of symbols. It is a representation of a reality to the extent that the world it depicts – which is the ‘works world’ – is the assumption to stand for some actual occurrences in the real world.

In fictional literature, there is equally a pact between author and reader, but there is no expectation, nor demand, for the same aspect. Of an extra linguistic referent on the narrative register. While historical discourse and fiction are narrative, in that both are configured through the imagination and emplotment, historical discourse is irreducible to fictional literature. First, the intention, objective and expectation of the author and reader are differentiated. Second, historical discourse intends to represent past occurrences in the real world. Furthermore, in historical discourse in contradictory to fiction, every endeavor must be engendered to endeavor back from the third level grand narrative to explication and conception, to documentation in traces and testimony, in order to critically assess the third level narrative assertion. Historical discourse adheres to represent an actuality behind or outside the text.

Thus, Ricoeur challenges the thread of critique through the observation that historical writing must pass through documents, causal/teleological explication and literary emplotment, but none of this sphere constitute fictional. Assessment that suggest history is mere fiction. Those are paradigms of style or imagination, refined taxonomies, and is not a pertinent alternative to the naïve realism of some

historical writing. Ricoeur clarified that he is not in opposition to narrativity in constructing meaning and concur that narrative cannot be viewed as a neutral, transparent garment thrown over a signification complete in its meaning. It is worthwhile to remember the equality of status that explication and documents contribute in its quest to merit the veracity of historical discourse, and always return to the testimony of the witness that endows correspondence between representation and event. Consequently, alluding to the past must be a composite of both a claim to reality and a statement about how we experience the world. It may be inferred that it is both epistemological and ontological.

The Respondents Response to Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics of history

All 15 respondents, the tomandok of Barangay Medina in Madalag, Aklan, Philippines agreed and responded to Ricoeur’s notion of history. The tomandok’s wanted to remember their memory of what their ancestors did. Their culture was passed on to them and so they believed they are indebted with the past. They said it is a sort of gratitude to them. As what they said in their own language: *basigabaan kami konindinamon taw-an itimportantansyaroculturahamanon.*

I narrated to them true to life stories of the holocaust event and world war 11. I also told them stories like Les Miserables. In both fiction and non-fiction, they like it, responded affirmatively and said they learned something from both.

## VIII - Conclusion

Ricoeur’s endeavor on hermeneutics is endowed with worthwhile insights for the contentions addressed in this research. First, in contrast to a postmodern uncertainty pertaining to historical discourse and history, Ricoeur adheres there is a real history outside the text and a scientific and epistemological pretension in writing history. His framework of a critical threefold historiographic operation is carefully crafted to involve diverging sources, explication and conception of viewpoints,

and a grand narrative. Historians engender and construct historical discourse as a representation of something that was there in the world. The differentiation between a text and a world outside the text is pivotal if the discipline of history is to remain concerned with the manner it once was.

Second, while Ricoeur has accentuated the literary aspect of historical discourse, he efficaciously critiques a postmodern declassification of historical discourse into fictional literature. He ascribed to a divergence between the two on the ground of an historical intentionality of representation that targets real people, events, and circumstances. Historical discourse is marked by the veracity of representation which author and reader expect to be reconstructions of the past. Literary strategies and rhetorical constructs however, which attempt to function as modes of explanation, divert an interest in an epistemological veracity of the past and are a deficient substitute for critical investigation. Furthermore, Ricoeur underscores the pertinence of epistemology for historical inquiry. This means that historical discourse does not engender the meaning of past occurrence through a literary endeavor, but that it is centered on with explanation and understanding grounded on the traces – the marks left in passing – testimonies, and documents, which are regarded to a real world outside the discourse. Fictional literature bears no such burden. The discipline of history must remain attuned to the risks of a declassification of its subject matter.

#### **IX – Recommendations**

1. The application of the hermeneutics of suspicion is indispensable.
2. Should the testimony be certified and accredited, a physical, spatial and social space is made for testimony, that qualified personnel might use with the intention to preserved, organized material, and allow consultation.
3. Archives must always be questioned to establish how the observation occurred and assure that the testimony and the nature of

the testimonial artifact (voluntary, involuntary, written material, etc.) to be critiqued and to encourage collaboration.

4. Testimony enters a critical zone, being confronted with other, perhaps conflicting, testimonies and a mass of other archival documents. Memory passes from being personal to being a public claim about the past when it contributes to an archive. Memory is externalized in testimony, inscribed, preserved and sometimes consulted by historians.

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