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A Philosophical Reading of the Theology of Praxis

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Abstract: This paper explores the theology of praxis from a philosophical point of view. Taking inspiration from the works of Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas, this paper highlights the richness in the understanding of praxis while drawing attention to its complexity. It affirms the importance of language, communication symbols and power structures that are inherent to the theology of praxis. Caution is made not to idealize certain notions like respect and benevolence—however noble they may be—without taking actual cognisance of the actual asymmetrical structure of power relation. An analysis of collective praxis both in terms of conflict and co-operation is done so as to invite the readers to the constant need to be open to new possibilities of appropriating the praxis of Jesus in changing times and contexts.

Keyword: Action, communication, language, practice, pragmatic semantics, symbolics

"The Spirit aids me: now I see the light! 'In the Beginning was the Act,' I write."
-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

In my opinion, all theology must have a practical nature. When we talk about the practical nature of theology, we usually refer to the importance of the narrative of salvation for human experience. However, in recent years, some theologians prefer to focus on human action than on human experience. For example, a French theologian Claude Geffré holds that theology should not only begin from praxis or human action but must also allow itself to be challenged by it.[1] Another French theologian Camil Ménard, inspired by the writings of a Brazilian theologian Clodovis Boff, states that the theological methodology moves an initial praxis to a praxis transformed by the indispensable mediation of one or more theories.[2]

Focusing on praxis or action has some benefits. First, the modes of action are more precise than those of experience. Secondly, action is more susceptible to analysis and based on the analysis, action can be improved. Thirdly, focusing on practices involves both personal and collective dimensions, whereas experience usually involves a personal dimension. Fourthly, action can be thought of only in relation to a context; it is woven into a specific historical milieu with its history, tradition, symbols and agents of action. Fifthly, action is dynamic and it is a locus of relationships, conflicts, judgments, and personal and collective transformations. Finally, action is often critical of acquired knowledge, including knowledge acquired through experience; the study of a particular action makes it possible to understand the gap between professed and enacted theories,[3] an analysis that calls for and offers new knowledge and capabilities.

The theology of praxis makes at least two vital demands on us. First it invites us to improve both our awareness of the situation and our commitment to engage in action. Secondly, it invites us to develop a more rigorous theological method to better understand the significance of our actions for our faith. Although the theology of praxis is primarily about action, there is hardly any reflection on the very concept of action. There is more literature on the relationship between theory and practice. But a clear understanding of the concept of action seems to be essential for research in the theology of praxis. This seems all the more important for the Church as ecclesial practices are said to be the result of divine inspiration or of a mission granted from above. A Christian cannot deny that the Spirit plays an important role in ecclesial practices, but these are nonetheless related to the complexity of human actions.

We need to recognize that the theology of praxis cannot be limited to human actions alone; it must be interested in the divine action as well. The divine action, however, is already the subject matter of systematic theology which thematises it, for example, in terms of revelation, creation and salvation. Theology of Praxis focuses specifically on the divine action manifested through human actions as is the case in the New Testament, the Gospels present to us the actions of the historical Jesus and the Acts of the Apostles (*praxeis apostolon*), speaks to us about the actions of the members of the early Christian community. Thus, theology of praxis is a theological discipline determined by an empirical-hermeneutical relation to actions, particularly but not exclusively to the actions of believers. Its challenge is to bring to light the connection between the divine action and human actions for salvation. Theology of praxis focuses on the interaction between divine and human actions for the

transformation of the world; it is theology rooted in reality and therefore relevant and sometimes normative.

Elements of the Philosophical Tradition

A quick glance at the development of the term praxis in the philosophical tradition can help us to understand its meaning. In Greek, the verb *prasso* means I act, I do an activity, I do it, and "our doing, our conduct, our praxis result from our own deliberation and choice under the guidance of the practical wisdom that Aristotle named *phronesis* and Aquinas named *prudentia*."[4] Activities involving physical labour reserved for slaves were excluded from praxis and were designated by the term *poiesis*. Aristotle, for example contrasts praxis which refers specifically to ethical-political action with *poiesis* which involves productive action; "For production [poiesis] has its end beyond it, but action [praxis] does not, since its end is doing well itself." (NE 1140b) It is within this framework that Aristotle made praxis one of the three fundamental human activities that he considered three modes of knowledge: *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis*.

The Marxist tradition distinguished the term practice from praxis, giving the latter a reflexive character which it denied to the former. In this context, practice seems closer to the ancient *poiesis*.[5] Althusser defines *poiesis* as "any process of transformation of a determinate given raw material into a determined product, a transformation effected by a determined human labour, using a determinate means (of production)."[6] Practice, thus understood, is rooted in particular contexts far from ideal. Praxis incorporates the characteristics of practice, but it is distinguished by its reflexive dimension. David Tracy, who intends to distinguish praxis from practice identified with the application of a theory, defines it as "the critical relationship between theory and practice whereby each is dialectically influenced and transformed by the other."[7] The theory-practice relationship is important in theology of praxis marked by its desire to uncover, criticize and improve the dialectical influence between theory and practice in contemporary situation. The Marxist distinction between practice and praxis has become less important today, so we can focus on the concept of action rather than practice (though these terms are used interchangeably) and recall with Paulo Freire that praxis is "the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it."[8]

Heidegger took up the Aristotelian triptych[9] by making each of its activities fundamental dispositions for the unveiling of the Being. Praxis proves to be the most basic mode of Dasein, mode in which *theoria* and *poiesis* are determined respectively in contemplative and productive disposition. As in Marx, praxis in Heidegger determines and reveals the subject as well as his or her world. MacIntyre identifies praxis with "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended."[10] By interpreting Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*[11] in his book *The Logic of Practice*, Graham specifies that "practices are not merely 'rule-governed behaviour,' but symbolic, purposeful strategies with many layers of meaning.[12]

a. Praxis in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur

Ricoeur makes a distinction between praxis and practice. He refers to practices as "complex actions ruled by precepts of all kinds whether technical, aesthetical, ethical or political."[13] For him, practices consist of chains of actions endowed with structures that are primarily logical, then teleological or historical, prescriptive, and ethical. They are logical because they present relations of coordination and subordination, teleological because they are enshrined in plans of life and in the unity of a life that unfolds from birth to death, prescriptive because they are governed by rules or precepts, ethical because they are marked by an asymmetrical dynamic inviting or respect for others (ethics). It is in practices that subjects express themselves, their goals, the choice of means to achieve their goals, the results of their choices, and their relations to other subjects and the given circumstance in which they act.

Praxis is the plan of life in which practices are expressed, the narrative unity of life, which captures and integrates praxis into a story, the wish for a good or accomplished life in the Aristotelean sense. From the conceptual point of view, it is only a limited idea: the good life is a goal, towards which are directed all our individual actions. The content of good life is, "for each of us, the nebula of ideals and dreams of achievements with regard to which a life is for more or less fulfilled or unfulfilled"[14] The good life is the horizon towards which all our actions tend.

However, such finality goes beyond individual action, of which it nevertheless constitutes the internal dynamic. This proves that the individual life is not a set of closed practices. "This opening, which fractures practices otherwise held to be closed in upon themselves when doubts rise about the direction of our life maintains a tension, most often a discrete and tacit one, between the closed and the open within the global structure of praxis".[15] It concerns above all the text of the action, but also the moral agent who interprets himself or herself in his or her action. Thus, if we accept that understanding the action is for the agent to understand himself or herself, we can say that self-esteem at the ethical level is what the self-interpretation is at the reflexive level. This is the meaning of the good life, the first moment of the ethical goal. But ethics is also concerned with the other whom it institutes as my fellow being who also requires me reciprocally.

b. Dimensions of Action in Habermas

In the wake of Weber, Jürgen Habermas developed a typology of action, which is useful for analysing actions. Habermas distinguishes four types of action: teleological, normative, dramaturgical and communicative.[16] The concept of teleological action (directed to one end) is fundamental to the other types of actions because the teleological structure is present in all four types of action. In fact, what differentiate these four types of action from one another are the conditions according to which we pursue our goals and the manner in which we relate our actions to those of others.

Teleological action is characterized by its focus on the relationship between the means and the end. The success of the action implies the choice and the coordination of the means to arrive at the desired end. The criteria for this action are the knowledge of the external world (means) and the effectiveness of the intervention in this world (end); it is the right coordination between the means and the end of the action. Depending on how the knowledge and interests of the agent of the action meet, this type of action can be

a source of cooperation or conflict. But when we are over preoccupied with the right coordination between the means and the end, we risk turning our action into instrumental or technical.

Normative action refers to the common values of a group by which members of the group orient their actions. The criteria for this action are legitimacy of norms and conformity of actions to the norms of a social group. Admittedly, norms are found in every action, as Ricoeur points out while referring to the rules of action, but there are actions that are entirely defined by its relation to norms and therefore characterized as normative.

Dramaturgical action is that in which participants mutually constitute an audience for one another. Habermas holds that this action is often parasitic of the preceding ones and that it rarely exists in the pure state. The criteria for this action are truthfulness and the authenticity of communication to the internal subjective world, involving the risk of communication becoming manipulation and transforming the dramaturgical action into instrumental.

Communicative action opposes a purely performative or utilitarian objectifying attitude of partners in action and therefore implies a moral dimension. It aims at the interaction of acting subjects in search of agreement or consensus that allows them to coordinate their action plans. Interpretation is its principal task: "the task of mutual interpretation is to achieve a new definition of the situation which all participants can share. If their attempt fails, communicative action cannot be continued"[17] In communicative action, before arriving at a mutual understanding on coordinating mechanism of the action, subjects agree to relativize their expressions when their validity is disputed by the other

participants of the action. Hence the triple criteria of this action: the first related to truth (the statement is true in relation to the objective world), the second to justice (the linguistic action is just in relation to the normative context in force) and the third to truthfulness or authenticity (the intention expressed by the speaker is his or her thought as he or she expresses it). Peukert expresses very eloquently the meaning and the mechanism of this action:

To speak implies the creative projection of an interpretation of the subjective, social and objective reality on to my conversation partner in a way that both opens up to an understanding to that person and invites my partner to share her or his own creative interpretation with me."[18]

The Richness and Complexity of Praxis

Literature often uses the terms action or social action to refer to praxis. We shall therefore do the same, while stating however that praxis involves repetition of action for a certain duration and commitment to it over a period of time. We must also acknowledge that praxis has a social dimension though society consists of cooperating and conflicting individuals with their knowledge and interests. Recent literature on praxis revolves around two poles. One emphasizes the systemic aspect, objectifies praxis and considers individual agents of action as one of elements in praxis. The other is pragmatic and places the agent of the action at the heart of praxis. Although there is tension between the two camps, it seems to us that they are not irreconcilable. We cannot understand the agent of action outside the system of action and the reverse is also true. This tension nevertheless remains fruitful, making it possible to escape reductionism on both sides, and it invites

us to understand these apparently conflicting poles as complementarity.

By borrowing largely from Paul Ricoeur, we shall define praxis as a complex system of actions and interaction of agents of action, oriented towards one or many ends, including relations of coordination and subordination, regulated by rules of different types, marked by a dissymmetry among the agents of action living in a context—whether institutional, sociocultural or religious that influences the action and gives it meaning, but also allows to be influenced by the action. To understand praxis, we need to study the system of action through its semantics and structural poles by investigating "who does what, where, when, how and why". For Ricoeur, "it is in terms of the entire network crisscrossing the semantics of action that we understand the expression 'agent'."[19] He further adds:

> Actions have goals, goals which are anticipated and which have results. But actions towards goals imply motives, the reasons for engaging in the actions that allow one event to be connected to another. These motives are held together by agents who are capable for the consequences of their actions, and consequently a network of interactions is constructed, each item complementing the other. These elements, and more besides, allow narrators and listeners to answer questions like 'what,' 'why,' 'who,' 'how,' 'with whom' or 'against whom' with regard to any action.[20]

If praxis is a complex system of voluntary and goal oriented actions, it involves the goal of individual subjects. These individual subjects interact with others in action, thus praxis is inevitably related to the meaning of human existence.[21] Through the system of action, the human subject makes meaning of human existence.[22] Action therefore involves physical, emotional and spiritual subjects with needs and desires, capable of judgment and choice, capable of coordinating actions and goals according to ideologies of self-representation and representations of the world in diverse and overlapping contexts (personal, social, ecclesial), which influence them and largely determine their representations, goals and actions.

There is no action without a subject and there is no subject without an action. Action is thus the locus both of understanding and of transformation of self and the world. Action influences the subject's being and understanding. In this sense, action is the un-concealment and transformation of the self and the world. Heidegger considers praxis as a mode of Dasein's existence and relates it to the notion of care. Action is the unfolding of the human subject and his or her relation to the world.

a. Praxis as a Hermeneutical Act

We orient our actions according to their perceived or constructed meaning. Thus, hermeneutics is an important aspect of action related to the public dimension of an action, to a meaning that is publically available, as Jervolino points out: "It is a structured symbolic system, a public one, which furnishes single actions with a context and makes them, in a certain sense, readable."[23] The subject as part of the world makes his or her interpretation of the self, others and the world, an interpretation that is susceptible to change and transformation by his or her action. The complex interaction between theory and practice is thus woven, which has relevance for a theology of praxis. Led by the meaning making project in which reality is confronted with interpretation, practice is intrinsically related to theory, as is ethics to hermeneutics.

Interpretations are in process and in conflict. As there are many agents of action, Actions allow for multiplicity of interpretations leading to conflict as there are many agents of action. Both conflict and cooperation are part of an action. This makes complex not only an action but also its analysis, interpretation and evaluation. Which interpretation should be privileged and on what basis? Hence the need for Ricoeur's hermeneutical process or Habermas' communicative action to determine which vision, narrative and metaphor are best suited to the givenness of the world, the interests of the "narrators," and the significance of the action that is likely to transform both the "narrators" and the "listeners." Interpretation, however, has a dramatic dimension for those who are refused the right of a narrative.

The human subject is an indispensable element in the system of action. The subject wishes to inscribe something of his or her self in the system in which he or she evolves. When the subject makes a manifestation of his or her self in the world through the system of action, he or she may have a kenotic experience: in action the subject is divested at least a part of his or her self. Thus, a tragic dimension of praxis is added to its dramatic dimension. The hermeneutical act must be attentive to the dramatic and tragic dimensions of praxis.

The entanglement between the laws of the system and the desire of the subject is problematic.[24] It is because of this entanglement, every action represents the power of the subject, his or her ability to perform certain actions. Von Wright calls this interference, which according to Ricoeur, "consists in joining together the ability to act, of which an agent has an immediate understanding with the internal relations that condition a system."[25] According to Ludwig von Mises, an economist and one of the pioneers in

praxeology, human beings determine their course of action based on three conditions: uneasiness over an existing situation, possibility of a greater satisfaction when the existing situation changes, and representation of the power to act: "to make a man act, uneasiness and the image of a more satisfactory state alone are not sufficient. A third condition is required: the expectation that purposeful behaviour has the power to remove or at least to alleviate the felt uneasiness."[26]

Consciousness of the power to act is a necessary prerequisite for action. We may have good reasons to engage in transformative action but not doing it only because we know that we do not have the power. This is the reason why we feel helpless in the face of a unjust economic system, polarizing national political climate, the inhuman form of globalization, oppressive social structures and mass genocides. According to Ricoeur, When we say "I can" we affirm implicitly of our consciousness of the power to act: "It is only in this phenomenology of the 'I can' and in the related ontology of the body as one's own that the status of primitive datum accorded to the power to act would be established definitely.[27] No ethics is possible without this consciousness. This dynamics of the power to act has not been given enough attention in various theologies of liberation including Feminist, Dalit and Tribal theologies.

Praxis is founded in the will to transform reality; it works through the dynamics of power and makes the human subject commit to action. It is therefore the locus of competition, struggle, domination, submission, exchange and cooperation. Recent studies on construction of power structures inform us that power is not equally shared. Every action is therefore marked by a structural inequality. Whatever be our convictions about kindness and cooperation, to act is

to make an intervention often though persistent persuasion. Ricoeur remarks that the other "is potentially the victim of my action as much as its adversary."[28] Following the Weberian and the Marxist traditions, Habermas has pointed out the effects of instrumental action on the subject who may be reduced merely to a means in the Kantian sense. In our enthusiasm to idealize action, we tend to forget that power is at work in every action and it can create conflict. Praxis is constantly accompanied both by cooperation and conflict resulting from the dynamics of power. To deny this is to turn a blind eye to the ethical call at the heart of the theology of praxis. The asymmetric relation of power is often a problem in ecclesial practices as elsewhere and I wonder if we give pay enough attention to this. We pretend to have an idealized concept of praxis, especially because of our ideology of respect, benevolence and love of others, whilst the actual practice in the Church is to hold an asymmetrical relation which we cannot afford to ignore.

b. Praxis as Communication

The fact that a subject enters in relation with other subjects in action whether through cooperation or conflict suggests that praxis is a locus of communication. The effectiveness of an action depends on the communication among its agents and with the context. To act is to make oneself heard of one's vision of the world and to listen to the vision of others. Thus human action becomes communication. "Human action concerns intended activity. As such it includes communication acts as well as bodily movements."[29]

Austin and Searle highlighted the practical dimension of communication: "to say is to do." However, it also seems to me that "to do is to say," or again "to act is to say." We

can confuse "to do" with "to act" as Hannah Arendt has pointed out in her *The Condition of Modern Man*. However, the level of a pragmatics of communication, "to do" can be taken as synonymous to "to act." This equation may have other implication but it does have a meaning even if it is the complicity of political silence. To the idea speech is action, the school of Palo Alto adds the idea 'action is speech,' thus suggesting that human behaviour is a form of communication,[30] a position which Habermas refutes.[31] We shall be prudent and be content in affirming that action says something.

The pragmatics of language considers discourse as an act and a performance. However, this act and its meaning depend on the context of interlocution that is, on its location, the dynamics of relations between the interlocutors, their positions, culture, beliefs and intention. We know from Heidegger and Wittgenstein that language serves not only to represent the world but also to complete an action by directing oneself to build the world. To speak is to act, or to commit to act on self, others and the world. It is to establish meaning rendering speech into action. When a speaker says something to someone, he does it with an intention to make an impact on the person whom he or she is addressing. The speaker may intend to frighten, to impress, to coax, to seduce or to comfort his or her addressee. The illocutionary force of speech, what one does in speaking, is action.

What we have discussed here is not strange to the hermeneutical theology of action. Paul Ricoeur has invited us to read action as a text.[32] On the one hand, action offers the structure of a locutionary act because it has a certain propositional content and internal features that bring it closer to the act of speech. On the other hand, it also has an illocutionary force insofar as it aims to influence not

only the external world but also the human environment within it. We can thus think of a typology of action and ecclesial action, modelled after the illocutionary acts of Austin and Searle. This is not surprising if we remember that pragmatics (of *pragmata*, actions) is precisely based on actions intended and carried out by the speech act. Since the illocutionary force of discourse is primarily about action, we find these features in praxis. Praxis therefore communicates something.

The first feature of Searle's typology, the assertive trait (by which something is said to be true), seems less obvious. Yet, praxis communicates to us a perception of reality as a truth claim. To lock up mad people in an asylum, for example, is to say that they have no place in our neighbourhood. Praxis, as we have stated earlier, is also an act of interpretation.

The guiding trait of praxis is more evident than the previous one as it is directly oriented to action. It aims not only to change the external world but also to influence human persons, who inhabit it, to engage in action. In fact, it is from an understanding of discourse as performative, and therefore as action, that pragmatics has thematised this trait.

The commitment trait is also obvious: if someone shows commitment in word, he can also do it in action. To give one's presence, time and energy is to commit oneself to the other. Admittedly, there may be tenderness, trickery and other hazards of action, but these also mark the acts of speech.

The expressive feature of praxis is related to the dramaturgical action of Habermas and to the pragmatics of Watzlawick mentioned above. Practice is where the

human person expresses what he or she is with his or her possibilities and limits, and through which he or she says what really matters to him or her, what he or she wants to be, and what he or she wants the world to become.

The act of declarative language accomplishes what it says, a realization that is directly related to action. Declarations of different sorts—declaring a session open, declaring someone as married, elected or dismissed—are already encoded in action in specific contexts, without which these declarations would be false.

Let us add one last element to these communicative features of praxis. It is also the locus of mutual recognition, which in my opinion, constitutes its radical aspect of communication attested by the pragmatics of Palo Alto. The human person's ability to be with (*Mitzein*) others is unique. In the words of Martin Buber, "the basis of man's life with man is twofold, and yet one: the wish of every man to be confirmed as what he is, even as what he can become, by men; and the innate capacity in man to confirm his fellow men in this way."[33]

Communication has "the function of constantly rebuilding the self concept, of offering this self concept to others for ratification, and of accepting or rejecting the self-conceptual offering of others."[34] It is through praxis that the ongoing construction of the concept of the self and identity exchanges are done. In this sense, praxis as communication has a broader meaning than that of Habermas' "communicative action."

Conclusion

The meaning of action emerges partly from its agents and partly from the system of action, which is situated in a larger context. It is detached from the event itself and

from the agents of action. Just like the meaning of the text is distanced from the event of writing and its author, the meaning of an action surpasses the intention of its agents not only because of its public nature, but also because of its entanglement with the system of action and of multiple agencies. We can agree with Ricoeur that an action is detached from its agent in the same way that a text stands out from its author and develops its own meaning. Similarly, the meaning of the action no longer coincides with the intentions of its agents, but resides in the action itself. Like a text, it is open to anyone who knows how to read it. It can therefore receive different interpretations from those made by its agents.

The importance and significance of an action goes beyond its original relevance and meaning. In this, an action opens a world of possibilities. Paraphrasing what Ricoeur says about the comprehension of a text, we can say that what is to be understood in an action is neither the agents' presumed intention, nor the inherent structures of the action, but the outcome of the action.[35] We are at the heart of the hermeneutical work of the theology of praxis articulated in its empirical work. Praxis opens many possible meanings that can be realized in new contexts. Thus, a Christian theology of praxis is always open to new possibilities of actualizing the praxis of Jesus in new ways, thus enabling us to live the Christ event in our own context.

It is on the open-ended aspect of praxis that we conclude our reflections, a choice that is obviously not fortuitous. If Faust replaced the aphorism "In the beginning was the Word" with "In the beginning was the Act," it is because action Praxis and logos, or action and proclamation, are woven together and the theology of praxis must take this into account.

Notes

1. Claude Geffré , Le christianisme au risque de l'interprétation (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 343.
2. Camil Ménard, "L'urgence d'une théologie pratique nord-américaine comme théorie critique de l'agir chrétien au service de la société," in Petit and Breton (eds.), *Seuls ou avec les autres? Le salut chrétien à l'épreuve de la solidarité* (Montréal: Fides, 1992), 300.
3. See Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974).
4. Bernard Lonergan, "Theology and Praxis," CTSA Proceedings, 32 (1977): 1.
5. In philosophy, *poiesis* (from Ancient Greek: ποίησις) is the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before. *Poiesis* is etymologically derived from the ancient Greek term ποιεῖν, which means to make.
6. Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), 166.
7. David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) 243. See also his book *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 69.
8. Paul Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 60.
9. Aristotelean triptych is the artful repetition employed in rhetoric. It comprises of three activities: 1. Tell them what you are going to tell them, 2. tell them, 3. then tell them what you told them.
10. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 187.
11. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu developed the notion of 'habitus' to capture the permanent internalisation of the social order in the human body whilst recognising the agent's practice, his or her capacity for invention and improvisation. In Bourdieu's theory of practice, the world's structural constraints form permanent dispositions. These are schemes of perception and thought,

extremely general in their application, such as those which divide up the world in accordance with the oppositions between the male and the female, east and west, future and past, top and bottom, right and left, etc., and also, at a deeper level, if the form of bodily postures and stances, ways of standing, sitting, looking, speaking, or walking.

12. Elaine L. Graham, Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty, 101
13. Paul Ricoeur, "The Teleological and Deontological Structures of Action: Aristotle and/or Kant?" in A. Phillips Griffiths (ed.) *Contemporary French Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 99.
14. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 179.
15. Ibid., 179.
16. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. 1: Reason and Rationalization of Society*, trans Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 75ff.
17. Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 3.
18. Peukert, "Enlightenment and Theology as Unifinished Products," in Don S. Browning and Francis Schussler Fiorenza (eds.), *Habermas, Modernity and Public Theology* (Crossword Publishing Co., 1959), 59.
19. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 95.
20. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, Vol 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 55.
21. Thomas W. Ogletree, "Dimensions of Practical Theology : Meaning, Action, Self," in Don S. Browning (ed.), *Practical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 85
22. Ricoeur criticizes the semantics of action as the occultation of the subject. See Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 56 ff.
23. Domenico Jervolino, *The Cogito and Hermeneutics: The Question of the Subject in Ricoeur* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), 128.
24. See Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 88-112.
25. Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics*, II, trans., Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (London: Continuum, 2008), 212. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, Vol 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 135; Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, Vol 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 231.
26. Ludwig von Mises*, Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (San Francisco: Fox and Wilkes, 1996), 14
27. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 111. See also page 112 and 181.
28. Ricoeur, "Ethical and Theological Considerations on the Golden Rule," in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 294.
29. Donald Polkinghorne, Methodology for the Human Sciences: Systems of Inquiry (Albany, New York State University Press, 1983), 172.
30. See Paul Watzlawick, J. Helmut Beavin and D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communications* (New York: Norton, 1967).
31. See Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 44-50.
32. Paul Ricoeur, From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II, trans., Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (London: Continuum, 2008), 140-163. See also Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Science of Man," in *Review of Metaphysics*, 25 (1971): 3-51. Clifford Geertz had already proposed to do ethnography as one reads a manuscript: "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
33. Martin Buber, "Distance and Religion," in Asher D. Biemann (ed.), The Martin Buber Reader: Essential Writings (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 210.
34. John Cumming as cited by Watzlawick and others, *Pragmatics of Human Communications*, 84.
35. Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," *Harvard Theological Review* 70, no. 1-2 (April 1977): 1-37.

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