



UNIVERSITY  
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Reader's Report  
on a Doctoral Dissertation of  
Klementyna Chrzanowska-Dodds

**The Bond of Words: The Speaking Self in the Philosophies  
of Paul Ricoeur, Stanley Cavell, and Charles Taylor**

written under the supervision of  
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The choice of the three contemporary philosophers, Paul Ricoeur, Charles Taylor, and Stanley Cavell, is well substantiated by the careful positioning of the research task (*die Sache*). The Author perfectly understands the hermeneutic imperative of the in-between (*Dazwischen liegt laut Hans-Georg Gadamer der eigentliche Ort der Hermeneutik*). Hence, the in-between the continental and analytical traditions, phenomenology and hermeneutics, description and interpretation, being and becoming,

Elaborating on a speech-centered theory of language before proceeding to theorizing about selfhood makes sense only after elaborating the language of the dissertation as the testimony to the hermeneutic belonging together of thinking and speaking/writing. The linguistic sensitivity of a philosopher is not just a matter of personal preference but a necessary requirement. This before and after are not used in the temporal consequential sense but only as possible hints to what is at stake in the happening of the hermeneutic situation (*hermeneutische Erfahrung, hermeneutisches Geschehen*). This is particularly important for exploring the links between the nature of language and the formation of personal identity, particularly in its being on the way (*unterwegs*) toward the narrative identity.

Following the Cavellian notion that the human individual and human language are “faces of one another,” it is decisive to understand what it means to have a language, ζῶον λόγον ἔχον and to have a face, ζῶον πρόσωπον ἔχον. What does having language and having a face signify? When the Author states that “not everything is language, or that all our cognitive experience is linguistic, or that there is nothing to selfhood apart from language,” a question regarding the fundamental understanding of a human being as a lingual being in the world with Others becomes the primary task in need of interpretation.

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■ Hermeneutically speaking, a human being is a lingual and not a linguistic being. This fundamental issue regards using the noun “linguality” versus “linguisticity.” I suggest the noun “linguality” as the English translation of the German *Sprachlichkeit*. English’s co-opting of the Latin *lingua* and French *langage* directly refers to the tongue—langue (literally “tongue”) and individual languages, and *langage* to the system of language itself. Indeed, English used to line up even closer where the word for individual languages was actually the word “tongue.” Since the linguality (*Sprachlichkeit*) is the essential trait of Gadamerian hermeneutics, emphasizing the lingual (and not linguistic) character of human understanding, it seemed to be crucial to moving decisively away from linguisticity, which might erroneously suggest the relationship to linguistics (*Linguistik/Sprachwissenschaft*), thus being not only the unfortunate and misleading translation but strongly problematic. Referencing different dictionaries, we find that “linguistic” may refer either to language or linguistics. There are enough examples in philosophical literature suggesting that “linguistic” in its adjective or adverbial form does not invoke linguistics (*Sprachwissenschaft*) but rather language-relatedness. However, the language reference is—in most available examples—reduced to language as a tool for communication. Therefore, it seems really problematic to render the essential expressions of “*sprachlich orientierten Hermeneutik*” with the adjective or adverbial form “linguistic.” It is truly inconceivable why one should associate the different forms of linguistics with a language and not with a science of language, as in “linguistically mediated nature of understanding,” “linguistic mediation,” or “linguistic understanding.” However, “linguistic skills” can be easily associated with learning a language as a tool for communication and, as such, to be informed by linguistics as the study of human speech. The sheer overall acceptance of the translation of *Sprachlichkeit* as “linguisticity” cannot prevent me from inquiring into the adequacy of the term. “linguality.” Even the accusation of introducing an unnecessary neologism cannot shy away from attempting to express the German meaning as closely as possible to the spirit of English. Linguistic hospitality calls for a careful rereading of the original meaning in German. Acknowledging the main reason for introducing the neologisms only whenever there is no other serviceable term available, The translation of *Sprachlichkeit* as linguality has to do with the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Heideggerian/Gadamerian understanding of language, which is instrumental for Paul Ricoeur.

It is the notion of language that is at the center of part one of the dissertation, *Language: Theorizing from the Heart of Speech*. The Author attempts to elaborate an understanding of language in Ricoeur’s, Taylor’s, and Cavell’s works by focusing on the similarities and complementarity of their respective view on language. The originality of this approach is the concentration on the subject matter, i.e., language, and

not on the presentation of diverse views on language. Historical reconstruction is guided by a philosophical impulse, an engagement of a question as a genuine question worthy of consideration (*denkwürdig*) in its own right. Even though each Author's notion of language is presented in a separate chapter in the context of his own way of thinking, the way of reading each of them happens always in the horizon of belonging somehow together. Ricoeur, the dialectician; Taylor, the historian of ideas; and Cavell, the reader of texts, enter together in a conversation on language that witness to their self-understanding in the belonging to the history of language in its *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Every presentation of a subject matter in a historical perspective is, and always will be, provisional. Therefore, it is problematic for me when the Author writes: "that these are not thorough and objective readings of Ricoeur's, Taylor's, and Cavell's philosophies of language" If the Author is convinced that the presentation is not thorough, why not make it better? If this is only a rhetorical trick, I can live without it. Maybe, it would be more prudent to leave it to the reader to evaluate if the interpretation is satisfactory. More problematic is the second modifier, "not objective." From an Author who writes on Paul Ricoeur, I can expect a more sensitive hermeneutic approach regarding linguality, provisionality, temporality, and finitude of human understanding. Since we do not have God's eye perspective, our understanding will always be provisional, pointing out at the vision of finding ourselves in our thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) into the world with Others. The consciousness (*Bewusstsein*, which is always more *Sein* than *Bewusstsein*) of the essential incompleteness does not impede us from being rigorous and comprehensive in our way of thinking.

As a hermeneutician, I commend the Author for her patience (*ύπομονή* as endurance and perseverance). Reading and rereading, coming back, and moving back and forth are the essential traits of a hermeneutic reading: Reading Ricoeur after reading Cavell after reading Taylor and back again, reading with Cavell his reading Wittgenstein after Emerson, and Emerson after Wittgenstein, send us off on a hermeneutic long way toward understanding. It is exactly the *via longa* that teaches us that turns and returns, destructions and deconstructions, reiterations and repetitions make our engagement with what needs to be understood into the hermeneutic experience (*hermeneutische Erfahrung*). Repetition (*Wiederholung*) is not a mere duplication of the reference but a genuine bringing into the Open (*in das Offene bringen*) what we understand in the mythopoetic hermeneutic as ἀλήθεια.

The choice of seminal texts to interpret the notion of language in the philosophies of Ricoeur, Taylor, and Cavell is representative and well-substantiated. I would wish for more discussion on the specifically hermeneutic aspect of language in Ricoeur and Taylor. However, this comment is rather a challenge for me since I feel called and inspired to do

it because of my reading of this dissertation. I was always very moved by Ricoeur's response to the critique of a particular translation. He was permanently very decisive in calling for a new translation as the reaction to a less adequate one.

Understanding language as the mode of being in the world is a proper preparation for dealing with the hermeneutic self. Part Two, *Coming to Terms with Ourselves*, positions the self in the world in its attempt to arrive at our (narrative) self-identity. It is unfortunate that the Author speaks of the hermeneutic method. In principle, there is no problem with calling hermeneutics a μέθοδος if μετά and ὁδός always express (re)considering new roads toward letting things being seen (*Sehenlassen*) with the concentration of awareness and attention to the road itself, the way things are, and the way we go and things go with us. We can remind ourselves that ὁδός means a path but also a practice. The hermeneutic path is always an enactment. Hence, it is not only the way to go, with all its turns and returns, but also the "how" (*das Wie*) we walk and face the world and Others in and through our lives. This is not merely an etymological entertainment but the genuine practice of hermeneutics (*Hermeneutik im Vollzug*) if we take the title of the second part, *Coming to Terms with Ourselves*, seriously. This seems to be much more relevant than attempting to provide "a definitive theory of selfhood" or "any sort of completeness when it comes to working out the consequences of the linguistic entanglements of selfhood." Hermeneutics is the struggle to situate life not in methodological security but rather within the horizon of creative insecurity and incompleteness. It is Paul Ricoeur who places all human creativity within the horizon of incompleteness—unfinished, insatiable, unfulfilled: "*Under history, memory and forgetting./Under memory and forgetting, life./But writing a life is another story./Incompletion*" (*Memory, History, Forgetting*).

One of this dissertation's significant contributions is showing mutual enrichment instead of fighting between so-called continental and analytical philosophy. Ricoeur was particularly concerned with hermeneutic questions, overcoming the unhelpful division of philosophy along linguistic-nationalistic lines. The work of "analytic philosophers" such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Donald Davidson has important parallels in the work of continental thinkers like Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur.

Ricoeur's role as mediator between European and Anglo-American Philosophy cannot be overestimated. No one has better bridged the gap, dialoguing with analytic philosophers like John L. Austin, Donald Davidson, Derek Parfit, and John Rawls while continuing his conversation with Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida. He is one of the great commentators of the European Tradition. His hermeneutics can be seen as an alternative to postmodern

— deconstruction. Ricoeur himself stresses the importance of acknowledging the dialectical tension in his work.

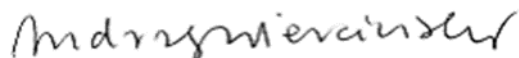
The hermeneutic task of assigning functional roles to words and symbols is dedicated to uncovering the meanings and desires (particularly those with many layers of meaning -- polysemy). By presenting a variety of perspectives on Ricoeur's, Taylor's, and Cavell's ways of thinking, the present dissertation emphasizes various approaches to their work, allowing the differences in understanding and exposition to emerge, thus opening up new critical perspectives for understanding the self in its entanglement in the world. Ricoeur has often pointed out that he means to develop his thinking continuously, expand his understanding, or modify his previous interpretation. As a philosopher who insists that existence itself is essentially hermeneutic, he could hardly avoid endorsing the ideal of an ever-developing interpretation. Only thus does hermeneutic thinking show us its full radiance. Listening to the truly polysemic voices, sacrificing neither truth nor variety, we find ourselves in the horizon of the confusion of voices, which constitutes the tradition that we are (*die Tradition, die wir sind*).

The Author, who remarkably presents her self-understanding as an independent thinker, knows that thinking and speaking belong together (*Zueinandergehören*). Hence, the care (*cura*) of the language is not a matter of formality or merely aesthetic sensitivity but the essential trait of thinking what needs to be thought (*was gedacht werden soll*). Hence, the attention to every word used expresses radical responsibility to the voice that speaks (*das Wort*) and calls for a response (*die Antwort*). The Author understands perfectly that a philosopher thinks something and not only of something, as Hannah Arendt said brilliantly about Heidegger. Speaking of belonging (*Zugehörigkeit*), we hear clearly the German *gehören*, which contains the root *hören*, "listen to." "To hear" means in many languages also "to obey." Philosophy, particularly hermeneutic philosophy, is a way of being in the world with Others, where we understand that our task is to find ourselves in our own thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) as the shepherds of Being (*Wächters des Seins*).

The detailed division into relatively small sections does not help to follow the flow of the argument. Rather, on the contrary, it disturbs the reading and leaves the reader alone in search for the substantiation of the main thought. By reorganizing the structure, the dissertation could be a more phenomenological and hermeneutic study, following Heidegger's notion developed in his seminal *Zeit und Sein* (1962) lecture of showing the way of showing (*Zeigen den Gang des Zeigens*), which is, for me, the main reason for his departure from Husserl's phenomenology already in the 1920'.

■ The thesis will benefit from careful editing and paying attention to details like punctuation. Rereading one's own writing is not only a matter of improving the individual elements and making things look better or more sophisticated. Rather, we can say, with Gadamer and Ricoeur, that understanding is never a simple re-production, but it is always productive (*Verstehen ist kein reproduktives, sondern stets auch ein produktives Verhalten*). Therefore, understanding changes alongside the history of the reception (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of what wants to be understood, and in the case of one's own dissertation, what has been written and seeks to be readdressed with the new hermeneutic sensitivity. Understanding is always understanding differently (*anders verstehen*). Reading and rereading is not a matter of cumulating the information about what was said in the past but thinking again and again what calls for thinking (*die Sache des Denkens*).

Klementyna Chrzanowska-Dodds's doctoral thesis amply meets in scope and quality the conditions specified in Art. 13 section 1 of the Act of March 14, 2003, on academic degrees and titles and on degrees and titles in the field of art (*Journal of Laws* No. 65, item 595, as amended). I wholeheartedly recommend the Academic Council of the Discipline Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University to accept the dissertation and admit the PhD Candidate to the following stages of the doctoral proceedings.



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