

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE STAIN OF ASSOCIATION AND THE BURDEN OF MEMBERSHIP:
INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS IN PAUL RICOEUR AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

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For my parents

Robert and Denise Le Chevallier

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Introduction

We live in a world suffused with institutional injustices. They reach our churches: a recent grand jury investigation in Pennsylvania revealed not only that there were over 300 priests who abused minors, but also that bishops in six dioceses played an instrumental role in moving these priests. The grand jury report that revealed these abuses to the public identified that certain patterns of action seemed consistent across dioceses and that there seemed to be “a playbook for concealing the truth.”¹ Indeed, sex abuse scandals have plagued Hollywood, universities, and even the Olympics. Institutional injustices also bear out in our governments. In 2018, the U.S. Government detained families crossing the border and through controversial zero tolerance policies that jailed and separated over 3000 families, including hundreds for whom it seems impossible to reunite them as parents have already been deported, while children were placed in holding facilities not equipped to care for minors.² This is seen even with local governments, evidenced by unjust policing tactics like the black boxes in Chicago where detained suspects were tortured before being officially entered into the system. One could blame mass disparities

¹ “Pennsylvania Grand Jury Says Church Had a ‘Playbook for Concealing the Truth’ - The New York Times,” accessed September 23, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/14/us/pennsylvania-child-abuse-catholic-church.html>. Since the publication of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, there have been critiques made precisely around the introductory summary from which most of the reporting is pulled. See Peter Steinfeld, “The PA Grand-Jury Report: Not What It Seems,” *Commonweal*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/pa-grand-jury-report-not-what-it-seems>. The original report can be found at attorneygeneral.gov. While I am hesitant to attribute an intentional conspiracy on the scale identified by Attorney General Josh Shapiro, the sex abuse scandals represent one of the most significant institutional crises of the Catholic Church in the modern era. The implications of my research is that regardless of intention, actors within the institution are shaped by it to a degree that all within it (including lay people) can be shaped by the insidious norms that lead to an effective coordinated coverup. It is precisely for this reason that I will argue a responsibility for each and not simply for those in positions of power.

² The Associated Press, “Judge Transfers States’ Case Over Family Separations,” *The New York Times*, August 8, 2018, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/08/08/us/ap-us-separating-families-states-lawsuit.html>.

of wealth, segregation in housing, or discrimination in labor markets. We have also increasingly become aware of environmental issues as institutional injustices from corporate pollution, to dam construction over indigenous lands, to environmental racism in segregated Flint, Michigan, to the protests at Standing Rock.³

Institutional injustices can present themselves to members of institutions as an ironic defeat of agency. They only come about through the peopled institutions that give rise to them. They are only possible because of the organization of communities that enable collective human activity. But from the perspective of individuals and most members of institutions, apart from withdrawal, it can often seem and feel that there is little we can do to effect change in these institutions. In cases like families, governments, and churches, even withdrawal can seem like an impossible option.⁴ This feeling of impotence is amplified by a conceptual pairing of power and responsibility, in which responsibility (both as guilt and responsibility to bring about reform) is in the hands of those who are already in positions of power, leaving few with confidence that change will occur. Might there be another way of conceiving our role in institutions?

This dissertation tackles this problem by addressing the question of our responsibility for institutions. How might we impute to ourselves responsibility for institutions whose history precedes us, whose norms and symbolic frameworks form us and structure our action, and whose actions bleed far beyond us. What would it mean to articulate a care for institutions? In this, I am concerned with developing models of responsibility that can go beyond the sphere of the personal accountability to extend over these wider social forms. I am also concerned with

³ As this dissertation will argue in Chapter 8, environmental degradation is the institutional problem par excellence.

⁴ In “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” Political Philosopher John Rawls’s describes (with minor empirical exceptions) the political relation of the citizen as “a structure we enter only by birth and exit only by death.” John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 445.

reconstructing models of institutions that can account from the prominent and insidious role that they play in our moral lives, warranting our concern for them.

In addition, I ask the further question: If we accept the normative role that institutions play in shaping our values, how do we deal with the conflict of institutions as it arises within ourselves and between institutions? Institutions bear within them not only specific norms, values, and routine practices, but also their own internal means of adjudicating justice and legitimating claims. This means that an appeal to justice to resolve these issues can easily steamroll over the internal concerns and values of a community denied their place in models of justice, thus creating new institutional injustices. This is a particularly pressing though often unrecognized question as we face environmental issues, a topic I will engage extensively in Chapter 8 of this dissertation.

To address these questions, this dissertation reconstructs a model of institutional ethics based around what I call a care for institutions and a concern for institutional relations within two distinct corpuses: first, the work of French Philosopher Paul Ricœur (1913-2005) and, then, the Modern Catholic Social Teaching (CST) Tradition. Mirroring my treatment in this dissertation, I will first discuss Ricœur and then the CST tradition as they stand on their own, for despite some very specific historical and conceptual encounters, there is little direct overlap, but as we shall see, incredible resonance and even productive dissonance when brought together.⁵ Ricœur's work is ideal to engage an ethic of the institution. Institutions play a prominent role in his social ethics, identifying them as a means by which we relate to the distant other. In *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur incorporates the institution centrally in his moral vision through his ethical aim

⁵ As I discuss in the section introduction to Part III, Paul Ricœur, Emmanuel Levinas, and John Paul II had an intellectual friendship, sustained by frequent visits at the pope's invitation to his summer residence, Castel Gondolfo. My extensive research has not revealed any place in which Ricœur substantively engages with the CST tradition.

for the self: to pursue the good life, with and for others, in just institutions.⁶ This triptych gives equal weight to these distinct relations—self, other, and institutions—developing each first through a teleological analysis (the ethical in his terminology), then passing them through the sieve of a deontological analysis (the moral), ultimately making a final appeal to phronesis or practical wisdom (informed by the convictions of the teleological) as a means of applying this ethics to the ground and adjudicating the inevitable conflicts that arise from within moral analysis. Not only does Ricœur identify the institution as a moral mediator, but he places a desire for just institutions alongside care of self and care of the other encountered face-to-face.

But, Ricœur's treatment of institutions within *Oneself as Another*, the work that launched this dissertation, leaves much to be desired. Although he identifies a desire of just institutions, he fails to make clear the role the self can play in bringing about just institutions. Does this desire rise to the level of responsibility? Even the very concept of institutions seems under-theorized in his text.

In this dissertation, I argue that despite a relative thinness in Ricœur's most important treatment of the self and institutions, his broader corpus provides more resources for developing the type of institutional ethic that can help ameliorate agential paralysis and respond to the demand for action. This leads me to an archival exploration of his work, followed by a synthetic reconstruction, in which I develop a model of institutional ethics that is never explicitly laid out in his own text but that is nonetheless consistent with his own thought. This institutional ethic develops first out of a *souci de l'institution* (care for institutions), which includes both an articulation of the other-regarding responsibility of each for them (Part I), as well the self-regarding concern as selves within deeply this deeply entrenched and penetrating phenomenon of

⁶ Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

institutions (Part II).⁷ The second pole of an institutional ethic is a concern for institutional relations, which includes developing tools and principles for adjudicating the conflict between them. Despite a robust account, as reconstructed, of an ethic of institutions that includes social responsibility, an understanding of (moral) institutions, a sieve for justice, and a process for adjudication, Ricœur largely brackets actual historical institutions.⁸ Such bracketing leaves the

⁷ When reconstructing a model of an institutional ethic, I was left with the choice of how to enter into the question. I chose the umbrella term “care for institutions” because it captures an important starting point of my project: how to orient to institutions from the locus of the person within them. I wanted to avoid a mere third part abstract account as I do not see this as ameliorating agential paralysis. While both history and other agents do limit the possibility of personal and collective action within institutions, I did not want to add to the problem through framing. While Ricœur uses a *souci de l’institution* or care for institutions in a few essays, I have adopted it as a means of giving structure to one of the distinct elements of an institutional ethic. See Paul Ricœur, “L’éthique, la morale et la règle,” *Autres Temps. Les cahiers du christianisme social* 24, no. 1 (1989): 52–59; Paul Ricœur, “Éthique et Morale,” *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 46, no. 1 (1990): 5–17; Paul Ricœur, “Approches de La Personne,” *Esprit* 160, no. 3/4 (1990): 115–30. Taking the care for institutions as a departure point, a second question is presented: do we desire just institutions because of the other mediated to us through them or because we stand to benefit from them? True to its title, Ricœur’s *Oneself as Another* presents the possibility of both. As selves, we realize the harms and benefits of institutions, and thus recognize its effects on others. We realize ourselves as an “each” within institutions, lending itself towards a model of justice that takes as a classical formulation, *suum cuique*, or to each their own. For all its truth, however, I am more convinced that a reform for institutions needs to start from a concern for others, now mediated through institutions. Thus, I explore under this title of care for institutions, responsibility in Ricœur’s work. Later I also address the self-regarding aspect of institutions as I treat the “necessary” and “ambiguous” roles they play in our lives. If they not only mediate our relations to others, but are necessary for the development of the self, and present to ourselves values that shape and form our orientation to others, we have deep cause to be concerned about them and to desire just institutions. This category of “care for institutions” also provides an umbrella term under which I can group and analyze pieces that address our obligation to create, sustain, and reform institutions in the CST tradition.

⁸ Ricœur’s treatment of and approach to institutions is not systematic (though I demonstrate that it is schematic and coherent) and he never dedicates a monograph to the topic. It is unsurprising, then, that the location of the brackets shifts from essay to essay. In his treats the institution qua institution (for example in his most important earliest piece, “Le socius et la prochaine” in Paul Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 3rd ed., Collection Esprit (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 113–27. Subsequent essays lift certain brackets to include more formal understandings of institutions. For example, his essays “L’état et violence” and “le paradoxe politique,” also in *Histoire et Vérité*, treats a formal understanding of the state. Ricœur’s engagement with a social understanding of sin does not arise from a formal understanding of the state, but when he lifts the brackets of the

reader hoping to understand how institutions themselves might understand social responsibility, the nature of disparate institutions, and their relation. Such historically contingent understandings may be challenged by Ricœur's account, and in turn, push back and correct.⁹ This reconstruction sets up a first pole of the dissertation. In Part III, I lift the brackets to allow into the history of effects captured in the construction and development of CST tradition.

The CST tradition is a documentary and, largely, epistolary tradition, which canonically marks its beginnings with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. For over a century, it has served as a growing, developing, and diversifying body of thought on "the social question." The social question, however, is not one question. It has changed over time, first dealing with church-state relations, later with family and economic life in the wake of the industrial revolution, then to questions of war and peace, and economic development, and most recently, to the environment.

formal to account for the historical, including the fact of French colonialism in Algeria in Paul Ricœur, "Responsabilité et Culpabilité Au Plan Communautaire," *Le Semeur* 56, no. 4 (June 1958): 3–6. Ricœur also treats other institutions (ranging from more formal treatments to more historical treatments) in occasional pieces Paul Ricœur, "État, Nation, École" 23 (April 1953): 54–57; Paul Ricœur, Olivier Abel, and Alberto Romele, *Plaidoyer pour l'utopie ecclésiale: conférence de Paul Ricoeur (1967)* (Genève: Labor et fides, 2016). Bracketing is a common technique within phenomenology and Ricœur's own analysis is characterized by successive lifting of brackets. Thus, across his unfinished trilogy on the will, Ricœur moves from a purely phenomenological account of willing (Paul Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and Involuntary*, trans. Erazim Kohák, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1966).) to the inclusion of fallibility (Paul Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, Rev. ed., The Philosophy of the Will (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986).), to the entry of fault into the world (and word), as evidenced in the spontaneous confessions and symbols captured in historic texts (Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Religious Perspectives (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).).

⁹ Jeff Stout offers a great example in how institutions and movements in the flow of history can reciprocally engage with philosophical accounts in his book *Blessed Are the Organized*. There he captures well how an understanding of power and domination at the Industrial Area Foundation (IAF), forged through on-the-ground activism and broad-based organizing, can both be illuminated by as well as correct Foucault's understanding of power. See Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 301–3, n. 33.

There is perhaps no other modern tradition of social inquiry like the CST tradition. It reflects an ongoing reflection of the role of the church in the modern world (alongside its expectations of the roles of other social institutions). A process of tradition forming (akin to the canonization of scripture) both presumes and conveys authority textually.¹⁰ While other traditions like the World Council of Churches and the Parliament of Religions also issue similar missives over time, none have the effect of the social encyclical tradition. While addressed over time to an expanding set of constituents,¹¹ from Leo's papacy onwards, these have been open

¹⁰ The popes writing within this tradition (from Pius XI onwards) remain the most cited figures of this tradition. Only as recently as Benedict XVI does one see contemporary philosophers cited. It is rather remarkable in *Laudato Si'* that Francis cites not only philosophers (including Ricœur), but religious authorities from other Christian traditions, citing the Patriarch Bartholomew (dubbed by others "the green pope".) Francis, "Laudato Si'," Vatican Website, May 24, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html n.15. With the exception of the writings of Pope Pius XII, all the encyclicals and conciliar documents found in this dissertation can be found on the Vatican website www.vatican.va. As is the custom, I will cite encyclicals by section number throughout this dissertation.

¹¹ The first letters were addressed to ecclesiastic leaders of the Church. *Rerum Novarum* (and all of Leo's globally addressed encyclicals) are written "To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, and other ordinaries of places having Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See." See Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum," Vatican Website, May 15, 1891, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html. Yet even with this more exclusive named audience, the use of natural law reasoning presumed a capacity to speak beyond the confines of the church, and the use of the telegraph ensured dissemination for Leo XIII, who was still considered a "prisoner in the Vatican." His various missives were frequently commented upon, summarized, and even cited directly within the *New York Times*. *Pacem in Terris*, the first encyclical to be addressed to "all people of good will" was the first and last encyclical to be published in full in the *New York Times*. See John XXIII, "Text of Pope John's Encyclical 'Pacem in Terris,' Calling for a World Community; Introduction ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE Public Officials Enjoined to Advance Common Good While Guarding Civil Rights Pontiff Assesses the Effects of New Technology on World Political Relationships," *The New York Times*, April 11, 1963, sec. Archives, <https://www.nytimes.com/1963/04/11/archives/text-of-pope-johns-encyclical-pacem-in-terris-calling-for-a-world.html>. Francis latest encyclical addresses not only "all men and women of good will," but "every person living on this planet" in Francis, "Laudato Si'", 3. While he does not spell this out, we can presume this means to include all people of bad will, for global environmental degradation is not just a matter of care for the distant other, but also of self-interest.

letters that had a global audience. With the centralization of authority in the modern Roman Catholic Church and the sheer number of Catholics in the world, these encyclicals have not only had a global reach, but they have become part of the grammar and vocabulary of social ethics within the Roman Catholic Church. In full disclosure, I am a Catholic. But my interest in this documentary tradition is not one of mere biography and the successive reflection within the Catholic Church on the church in the modern world and the nature of persons and institutions and the role this tradition plays in shaping the vocabulary and grammar of the ethical and political practices of lay Catholics as individuals and Catholic Movements well warrants their inclusion in this dissertation.

Alongside the Catholic Church's continual efforts to respond to the social questions, since its inception in the late 1800's, the CST tradition has recovered moral resources from the historical tradition of theological inquiry¹² and developed new concepts to articulate a Catholic social ethics amidst changing historical and social circumstances. I will argue in this dissertation that the CST tradition has developed its own inter-institutional ethic that provides resources for thinking about the play of institutions both within the church and beyond. In the process, it has developed principles that demonstrate the rich possibilities of inner-institutional reflection and that can help serve to fuel the more formal ethic reconstructed from Ricœur's work.

I do not stay simply with a reconstruction of two distinct ethics of institutions. In Part IV of this dissertation, I argue that the juxtaposition Ricœur and CST can be rendered productive rather than destructive. From Ricœur, I reconstruct a fundamental ethic of institutions that could

¹² This is exemplified by Pope Leo's encyclical "on the restoration of Christian Philosophy," *Aeterni Patris*, in which he exhorts ecclesiastic leaders around the globe "in all earnestness to restore the golden wisdom of St. Thomas, and to spread it far and wide for the defense and beauty of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, and for the advantage of all the sciences." Leo XIII, "Aeterni Patris," August 4, 1878, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html, 31.

function within a pluralistic society. The CST tradition honed itself in the forge of the occasional, responding to historic crises as they arrived utilizing and expanding on this relatively new tradition. I draw them both into dialogue, not only pointing out their relative strengths and shortcomings vis-à-vis the other (Chapter 7), but I render them productive as I sketch the outlines of an institutional ethic for environmental degradation (Chapter 8).

The CST tradition might seem like an odd dialogue partner with this French Calvinist philosopher, who policed the boundaries of theology and philosophy for most of his life. While friends with John Paul II, Ricœur never published on the CST tradition. Likewise, only recently has the CST tradition drawn explicitly upon contemporary thinkers (including Ricœur).¹³ Nevertheless, there are core resonances between these two bodies of work that make the dialogue all the more fruitful. The person takes a central role in both works, with Ricœur from the outset and in the CST tradition starting from developments made by Pius XII and Vatican II. There remains a conviction in both corpuses that institutions are vital to the project of becoming human and that we have distinct for the human other met through institutions. Finally, both push towards addressing the interplay of institutions, challenging a social hegemony.

Similarly, there are contributions that each can make to the other. This dissertation primarily relies on Ricœur, identifying from him the various ways in which our moral lives are caught up in institutions. Yet, he nonetheless keeps specific institutions within history largely at arm's length. What the CST tradition demonstrates is that institutions within the history of their effects can develop thick accounts of their own moral role vis-à-vis others and in the fires of concrete ethical issues, forge convictions that can help guide moral reasoning. These convictions,

¹³ Francis, "Laudato Si'", n. 59.

I contend, can help supplement Ricœur's model of practical wisdom used to adjudicate conflict between institutions.

To address both Ricœur and the CST tradition—each substantial bodies of work in their own right that exhibit their own continuities and discontinuities—I take a genealogical and historical approach. I do not presume systematicity across either corpus. Instead, this method leads me attend to the development of key concepts within both bodies of work as they span the length of these traditions, a development marked by contingency as Ricœur, for example, is influenced by his reading of Hans Jonas¹⁴ or as the CST tradition is transformed as Pope John Paul II takes a preexisting developing emphasis on the person and rereads key aspects of the tradition through the prism of phenomenology and personalism. This allows me to draw on the depth of these bodies of work, noting schematic themes which recur, develop, and shift over time without needing to sacrifice the contingent nature of their developments. For Ricœur, these shifts occur over a publishing career spanning 69 years. For the CST tradition, these themes shift across eleven papacies over 140 years.¹⁵ The CST tradition particularly lends itself to a genealogical approach because it enables us to acknowledge the significant methodological shifts that occur within the development of this tradition without having to make recourse to incoherence. Instead of a systematic body, we can analyze a tradition that reflects (a carefully structured) ongoing conversation.¹⁶ My work thus takes on an archeological quality as I excavate

¹⁴ I detail the influence of Hans Jonas on Ricœur's mature articulation of social responsibility in Chapter 2.

¹⁵ I do not treat every pope during this period, nor even every shift and development in the CST tradition. I am guided in my analysis and selection by the question what institutional ethics is implicitly present in the CST tradition.

¹⁶ I am influenced here by MacIntyre's discussion of tradition as an ongoing conversation around shared understandings of the good. See Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition: Being Gifford*

from earlier works concepts and principles that carry through, develop, transform, and even migrate into different philosophical contexts.

But my task goes beyond the historical. As I trace, I also engage in a form of model building, reconstructing and setting in a constellation core concepts that play a part in articulating an ethic of institutions in these respective traditions: responsibility, social justice, institutions, necessary societies, institutional ambiguity, subsidiarity, *phronesis*, and so on. I thus identify core elements that comprise a care of institutions and a concern for institutional relations. Across this dissertation, I develop an ethic of institutions through a constructive engagement with Paul Ricœur and the CST tradition.

Outline of the Text

This dissertation is divided into parts that deal with core concepts and traditions. The reason for this model of organization is that it allows me to hold together arguments that span multiple chapters but that remain thematically related. Thus, while each part stands alone in its analysis, they each advance the argument in key ways. Given the length of this dissertation, I use introductory remarks at the opening of each part to help situate the argument. In Part 1, over two chapters, I excavate and reconstruct two models of responsibility in Ricœur’s work that I claim must be held together: responsibility-as-imputation and a responsibility for the fragile other.¹⁷

Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh in 1988 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990). But I have greater confidence in the ability to speak across traditions (and not just to render their difference productive for those of us outside of them) as exemplified in my pairing, and ultimate synthesis, of these two distinct ethics of institutions.

¹⁷ Ricœur does not set apart this first model of responsibility as a “responsibility-as-imputation” as I have throughout this text. I do so as a means of highlighting and distinguishing the two accounts that I pull from his broader corpus. It is only with the development of a responsibility for the fragile in his 1992 essay “Responsabilité et fragilité” that one sees two distinct models of responsibility. See Paul Ricœur, “Responsabilité et fragilité,” *Autres Temps. Les cahiers du christianisme social* 76, no. 1 (2003): 127–41. This social model of responsibility is cemented as a distinct, supplementary from by the time one gets to his last work before his death, *The Course*

My argument begins by attending to the dominant model of responsibility that one finds within Ricœur's work. While not known as a "responsibility" theorist, as one might find in the work of philosophers like Marion Smiley,¹⁸ legal theorists like Larry May,¹⁹ or Christian theologians like H. Richard Niebuhr,²⁰ I demonstrate that responsibility is nonetheless a consistent and central theme across Ricœur's corpus.

In Chapter 1, I trace responsibility across four different stages in Ricœur's career: personalism; phenomenology; the hermeneutics of evil; and finally, his mature hermeneutical phenomenology. I identify that even this model of responsibility-as-imputation as it takes on certain developments, Ricœur nonetheless maintains it across his career. For example, in his first published text, *Note sur la personne*, written in 1936, Ricœur describes the intimate relationship between personhood and responsibility, which for him at this stage involves a reflexive claiming of an action and standing in solidarity with such an action. This theme of responsibility is developed as he moves from this early personalism, through his philosophy of the will, where it stands in relation to the voluntary and involuntary, and guilt serves as an epiphanic site for our capability of agency and responsibility. He continues, to the hermeneutics of evil, where it becomes marked as a historical moral achievement as one moves from the symbols of stain, to sin, and to guilt. Finally, responsibility-as-imputation finds its most robust articulation as the summit of the capable self as our ability to claim authorship over our act is nested with a range of other capacities as a part of his vision of *l'homme capable*, the capable self. At the outer limit,

of Recognition. See Paul Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer, Institute for Human Sciences Vienna Lecture Ser (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005), 108–9.

¹⁸ Marion Smiley, *Moral Responsibility and the Boundaries of Community: Power and Accountability from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁹ See Larry May, *Sharing Responsibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992),

²⁰ See H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

this can develop into a type of role responsibility, the form of responsibility attached to the increased and far reaching capacities, powers, special relations, and tailored obligations that we gain through our role in institutions, such as one's responsibility as a manager or educator. Throughout his treatment of responsibility-as-imputation, Ricœur privileges the first-person perspective, emphasizing the necessity of reflexivity in responsibility, even if it comes from the mirror of the judgment of others.

In Chapter 2, I turn to the question of collective forms of guilt and responsibility. I note a development in Ricœur's understanding of guilt and responsibility, which opens up the possibility of considering forms of guilt that operate at institutional levels, and corresponding forms of responsibility. Ricœur's first treatment of collective guilt was critical and skeptical. This is found in a response he wrote in 1949²¹ to Karl Jasper's *Schuldfrage* or *The Question of German Guilt*.²² Jasper's introduces four categories of guilt: criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical, with two of these representing collective forms of guilt. Ricœur casts doubt on the possibility of collective guilt, arguing that it is a mere aggregation of individual guilt. Yet, 9 years later, Ricœur reverses (without ever retracting) his position on collective guilt. In an essay called "Responsabilité et Culpabilité au plan communautaire,"²³ Ricœur argues that there needs to be a new articulation of collective forms of guilt and responsibility for today which can supplement the achievements individual responsibility.

²¹ "La culpabilité allemande" in Paul Ricœur, *Lectures 1: Autour du politique* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1991), 143–54.

²² Karl Jasper, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

²³ Ricœur, "Responsabilité et Culpabilité Au Plan Communautaire."

I would also note, though, that Ricœur was also in the process of writing *The Symbolism of Evil*,²⁴ in which he explores various different primary symbols of evil, including more expansive collective forms, such as stain and sin. I would posit that we see Ricœur living out his famous phrase from that book: the symbol gives rise to thought. Ricœur suggests institutions as a new avenue for thinking about guilt. If individual guilt reveals a certain capacity, what then is the capacity that is revealed by collective, institutional guilt.

This leads me to excavate and uncover a form of responsibility in Ricœur's work that is born from his engagement with Hans Jonas, which is distinct from the agential form and supplements it. Responsibility-as-imputation is largely retrospective, anchored in our capacities and attested to by the reflexive self. This supplementary responsibility is prospective, anchored in the fragile other, and experienced as a call or charge from the fragile other who gives one the confidence to act. It is not born, first and foremost, from an awareness of one's capacities or from recognition of one's past actions. Importantly for my work here, Ricœur identifies this responsibility not simply as for the fragile person, but also for the domains which amplify human fragility, namely, institutions. This social model of responsibility motivates a personal movement towards collective action.

I next turn to consider what guilt might correspond to this social responsibility. I take up Ricœur's challenge to think of new forms of guilt, suggesting a "stain by association." Yet, as I shall explore, guilt invites dangerous pathologies: one can take on too much guilt, overburdening the self and leading to agential paralysis, or one can take on too little guilt, stunting one's capability to claim responsibility. In my work, responsibility serves as the cipher for a healthy

²⁴ Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*.

model of guilt. Recognizing the stain left by our institutional association, we can become more aware of the responsibility that we each bear to the institutions of which we form a part.

Thus, within Part I of this dissertation, I reconstruct a two-pronged model of responsibility in Ricœur's work that holds together as complementary two accounts of responsibility: 1.) responsibility-as-imputation and 2.) a social responsibility for the fragile which enables us to claim responsibility over institutions. It brings us to the threshold of an institutional ethic, but it does not yet cross it. In these chapters, I have yet to discuss a key question: just what are institutions? I have selected responsibility as a gateway into our relationship to institutions, but it does not exhaust it. In Part II of this dissertation, my argument regarding our responsibility for institutions continues by exploring the nature of institutions, identifying the various ways in which we are morally caught up in them (Chapter 3) and articulating how we might work towards just institutions (Chapter 4).

While institutions play a vital role in Ricœur's ethic, he does not discuss them widely within *Oneself as another*. In Chapter 3, I delve into his career to reconstruct an understanding of institutions. Many thinkers identify institutions as spheres that fall outside of the moral.²⁵ It is held that politics is war by other means or the sole responsibility of a corporation is maximize the profits of its shareholders.²⁶ At worst, theorist have identified them as obstacles to the moral life, that is to say, fundamentally immoral.²⁷ In contrast, I argue that my reconstruction of Ricœur's account of institutions mark them as moral realities, in contradistinction from the

²⁵ Political realism from Hobbes onwards is practically built on this assumption.

²⁶ Milton Friedman, "A Friedman Doctrine: The Social Responsibility Of Business Is to Increase Its Profits," *The New York Times*, September 13, 1970, sec. Archives, <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/09/13/archives/a-friedman-doctrine-the-social-responsibility-of-business-is-to.html>.

²⁷ See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1991).

widespread assumption that they are amoral realities. I structure the chapter as a reconstruction of institutions in his work around a constellation of themes that I select and draw from across his career: 1.) institutions as mediatory, 2.) institutions as necessary to meaningful freedom and meaningful action, 3.) institutions as ambiguous, and 4.) institutions as vital to actualizing a basic good of living-together.

In this constellation of concepts, we see both other-regarding and self-regarding orientations built into institutions.²⁸ They are vital to mediating relationships to the distant, faceless other, often only encountered through institutions. They are also necessary to the self's actualization. This concept of necessity is first articulated as Ricœur adopts the Hegelian dialectic of freedom and institutions found in the *Philosophy of Right*, and then a subsequent anthropological thread, in the work of Clifford Geertz. Through engagement with these authors at different points in his career, Ricœur identifies institutions as necessary to meaningful freedom and necessary to understanding human action. Here, we see institutions as necessary to the self.

Moreover, this account also opens up the possibility of analyzing the more insidious ways institutions form us and structure our action as well²⁹ as the basic goods that underpin them.

²⁸ Both other-regarding and self-regarding elements are important for a care for institutions. By entering into the ethics of institutions through a responsibility grounded in the fragile other, I have privileged the other-regarding. But this preferential option for the other, does not diminish the importance of the self-regarding aspect, or even propose that it should not be given equal theoretical consideration. Ricœur models this evenhandedness already in his treatment of the care of self, care of other, and care of institutions in *Oneself as Another*. Yet, in our own moment, where it is more challenging to see the distant other and to recognize our responsibility for them, and where it is easy to claim one cannot make a difference, and thus sustain the status quo, I think this "option" for the distant other is merited.

²⁹ For example, the Wells Fargo scandal did not come from a mere aggregation individual choices, but institutional cultures. Similarly, a segregated city legally and materially embodies implicit norms and values that not only structure the actions of persons, for example, prohibiting a real estate agent by custom or law from selling to black families in particular neighborhoods, but also shape the norms and values of persons in those cities, contributing at the very least to

Institutions are ambiguous. While moral realities, they are not necessarily ethical. I summarize how Ricœur develops the concept of the political paradox that highlights the possibility of the arbitrary and the danger of dominion in exercise of the power of the state. I maintain that while described in the context of the political, these ambiguities are present in any institutions where power is exercised and hierarchies exist. Nevertheless, institutions also capture a basic good. They are not neutral. They are not necessary evils, as has been argued throughout Western Philosophy from Hobbes³⁰ to Luther³¹ onwards. They express a basic good, the good of living-together.

But an account of social responsibility does not tell us what to do to reform our institutions. The model of responsibility that I reconstruct is not a substantive account in which responsibility replaces prudential judgment.³² Likewise, an account of institutions as moral realities, as mediating, as necessary, as ambiguous, and as pursuing the good of living-together does not tell us according to what measure we should evaluate, construct, critique, reform, or bring to an end institutions. To accomplish this, Ricœur adopts John Rawls' claim of that justice is the virtue of social institutions.³³ This leads to a key step of measuring institutions according

implicit bias (as the impression of who belongs where is explicitly and implicitly inculcated), if not, on a stronger account, to forming persons to racism.

³⁰ See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck, Rev. student ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³¹ See Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed, 1523," in *Luther's Works*, ed. Walther Brandt and Helmut Lehmann, trans. W.A. Lambert, vol. 45 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 75–130.

³² I rely upon Gerald McKenny for this distinction. See Gerald P. McKenny, "Responsibility," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, ed. Gilbert Meilaender and William Werpehowski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³³ See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999). There is an unpublished, handwritten essay by Ricœur entitled "Le pouvoir politique: fin du théologico-politique?" where, among the riches in that document, he distinguishes between the Church and the State, measuring the latter according to justice and the former according to charity. The study of institutions in Ricœur's work would greatly benefit

to justice (as opposed to other moral virtues like charity or other goods like profit). Yet, Ricœur rejects a unitary notion of justice (as found in Rawls), opening up the possibility of different orders of justice within different institutions, as argued by Michael Walzer³⁴ and others.³⁵ While justice appears to provide a path forward, the fragmentation of justice as embodied in different institutions gives a disjoint, particularly as we rise above the ethics of one institution to an inter-institutional ethic, as necessitated by any social problem.

In Chapter 4, I explore Ricœur's treatment of Rawls, Walzer, and others, and I work constructively to argue that the apparent conflict between institutions rising from the clash of distinct, embodied norms, values, and models of justice carries as well the seeds of an inter-institutional ethic. Conflict need not be destructive, it can also be productive. This conflict of institutions and the capacity to find temporary resolutions to them points not just to our capacity to think institutionally, but also our ability to think across institutions. *Phronesis* or practical wisdom becomes the mean of adjudicating conflict through an enrichment in the basic convictions undergirding our life together in institutions.

Thus, across four chapters, I reconstruct an ethic of institutions from Ricœur's work, identifying not only a responsibility that we each bear for institutions, but also a capacity for practical judgment that enables us to find temporary solutions to the conflicts that arise between

from the transcription and dissemination of this essay. Even here, I think CST could help press against a binary understanding of these terms, with Benedict XVI arguing for a strong relation between charity and justice, such that justice is a first form of charity. From an institutional frame, that would allow us to claim that justice is due to all within the church, while still suggesting See Benedict XVI, "Caritas in Veritate," Vatican Website, June 29, 2009, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html.

³⁴ See Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

³⁵ Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

institutions at the level of norms and principles. This expands upon the picture of the capable self, to identify one who is distinctly socially capable.

This reconstruction of Ricœur’s model is nonetheless incomplete. Institutions do not stay within easy confines. More often than not, they make demands both descriptively and normatively on other institutions. Religious institutions in particular, which claim to reorient our lives, push in every direction within one’s personal and social life. Rather than seeing this as anathema to public, inter-institutional discourse as you might find in Rawls,³⁶ religious thought can exhibit its own creative engagement with institutions and even institutional relations.

In Part III of this dissertation, I reconstruct an institutional ethic from the full length of the CST tradition.³⁷ Chapter 5, I once more engage in a genealogical analysis of concepts across

³⁶ See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*.

³⁷ My choice of the CST tradition (meaning the documentary tradition of papal documents and conciliar writings from the papacy of Pope Leo onwards) reflects a very specific choice. I have chosen these documents as the subject of my research because they stand as one of the best modern examples of a “tradition” of social ethics of transnational importance that continues funds local innovative activities. I do not explore these more local activities in my work, but projects like Clemence Sedmack’s CST research lab at Notre Dame represent exciting efforts to explore this tradition as it is embodied (and developed and changed) in living practices on the ground. My focus on the CST tradition likewise should not be taken to mean that other Catholic social ethics could not similarly be taken up and brought into conversation with Ricœur’s institutional ethic. Liberation theology, for example, represents one of the most important developments in Catholic social ethics since Vatican II. It has even impacted papal teachings, giving rise to the analysis of “structure of evil” and introducing the concept of the “option for the poor” into the vocabulary of the CST tradition. Its sharp critique of institutions and prophetic call to make ones dwelling with the poor is likewise blunted (for the worse) in its adoption into the CST tradition. Yet, even liberation theology does not monolithically reflect the traditions of social inquiry of Latin America. One could also study the Christian Democratic movements as found in Europe and as found across Latin America (and especially in Chile). Across Africa, one could look to inculturation ethics and later developments of inculturation as liberation. Indeed, inculturation theology, which takes as its departure point the interface of dynamic local cultures and traditions of inherited faith exemplifies the type of issues that I raise in my final chapter on an inter-institutional environmental ethic. While the content of my work does not treat inculturation ethics, I am deeply influenced by the questions raised within it. My treatment of institutions could be seen as analogous to the work of inculturation ethics, but for an American context. We too are subject to the influences of broader cultural trends that interface both richly

texts as I trace within this tradition the development of concepts that comprise a care for institutions and a concern for inter-institutional relations. In writings of Leo XIII (1878-1903)³⁸ and Pius XI (1922-1939), concepts like social justice, the common good, the three societies, subsidiarity, and solidarity create the backbone for an institutional ethic based on natural law. In Chapter 6, I identify a pivotal turn to the person starting with Pius XII (1939-1958) that opens this ethic to personalism and redefines each of these categories, rendering the care for institutions and institutional relations into a subspecies of the care for the person.

As I document in Chapter 5, a care for institutions is emerges from principles like the common good and social justice. The common good plays a central role in early CST tradition, serving, according to Leo XIII as the primary purpose of government.³⁹ As “the” common good, it is the good of society. Yet, the Catholic tradition, from Aquinas onwards, has often held a vision of the good operating according to concentric circles. The common good has been a concept plagued by its definite article. There is a way in which each and every institution has a common good, captured both in the extrinsic goods which are the goods pursued, and the intrinsic good, which is the collective action that is enabled by and that sustains the institution itself. The common good, then, can serve as a way of understanding the norms and purpose of each institution without sacrificing the persons and their activity within them for the goal

and insidiously with faith traditions. We too must also face reciprocal critique born at this intersection. Finally, we must also account for our engagement with the religious other, whether of a different faith or of no-faith. Institutions allow us to treat this engagement as it becomes sedimented into social bodies.

³⁸ These parentheticals date spans following Leo’s name (and all the other popes) reflect the duration of Leo’s papacy, not the length of Vincenzo Gioacchino Raffaele Luigi Pecci’s life. Leo’s was a remarkable and long life, having been born in the Latnium (the former papal states) in 1810 and dying in Vatican City in 1903. See Russell Hittinger’s commentary on him in John Witte and Frank S Alexander, eds., *The Teachings of Modern Roman Catholicism on Law, Politics, and Human Nature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 39–75.

³⁹ See Leo XIII, “Diuturnum,” Vatican Website, June 29, 1881, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_29061881_diuturnum.html.

pursued. Pope Pius XI's introduction of the concept of social justice serves as key piece connecting individuals to the common good. While the term is widely understood as simply a new translation of Aquinas' category of general justice, or legal justice, it incorporates into CST a vocabulary for speaking of the responsibility that each bear to the common wealth to contribute to the common good. While this is expressed certainly in ideas like following laws and paying taxes, it also opens up an important avenue in work to reform institutions, like seen in the civil rights movement. An ethic to treat our social institutions emerges out of the occasional writings that are at the beginnings of the CST tradition.

I also maintain in Chapter 5 that the early CST tradition is already concerned with relations between institutions. It holds an understanding of plural institutions, interrelated and irreducible. These are called "necessary societies" by Pius XI because of the distinct role they play in human happiness: the domestic society of the family; the ecclesial society of the church; and the political society of the state. This plurality gives rise to the need to address the interrelation between institutions, captured in the concept of subsidiarity. Here, Pius XI indicates, help or "subsidiium" should not be furnished by one institution in such a way that it absorbs or destroys another institution. For many, this term simply means that decisions and actions should take place at the lowest level. But this asserts an overly simplified hierarchy. Instead, I draw on Russell Hittinger to argue that another way to understand this is that decisions should take place at the most proper level, respecting the distinct role of each institution. This enables the articulation of a principle for institutions to furnish help to each other, without absorbing another.

In Chapter 6, I argue that there is a major shift towards the person in the tradition beginning during World War II with Pius XII's Christmas message that plays out on each of these concepts over the rest of the CST tradition. In John XXIII (1958-1963) and the second Vatican

council (1962-1965), the common good becomes defined according to the flourishing of persons and communities within a distinct society. In the place of social justice, John Paul II (1978-2005) introduces the concept of solidarity, arguing, akin to Ricœur, that it is a way of seeing the other, including the distant other not just as an instrument, but as the neighbor. Solidarity becomes a response to structures of evil. Even subsidiarity is transformed, with Benedict XVI (2005-2013) and Pope Francis (2013-present) emphasizing its role in promoting the development of capacities of people and communities.⁴⁰ The care for institutions becomes a subspecies of the care for persons.

Having reconstructed two free standing institutional ethics, we can now set them in conversation. In Part IV of this dissertation, I draw Ricœur into dialogue with the CST tradition and move towards a constructive inter-institutional ethic that can make contributions to contemporary environmental ethics. Having excavated and traced the core concepts and principles that I argue can be reconstruct an institutional ethic in both Ricœur (Chaps. 1-4) and in the CST tradition (Chaps. 5-6), in Chapter 7, I engage in a comparative analysis of Ricœur and Catholic Social Thought. I juxtapose the elements that comprise a care for institutions and concern for institutional relations in the models I have reconstructed, identifying resonances in the areas of social responsibility/obligation, institutions as moral, and the concern for domination among institutions. My admiration of Ricœur in this dissertation is exemplified in the lengthy treatment I afford him over Part I and II. Nonetheless, I identify that Ricœur's lack of direct engagement with institutions in his theory leaves gaps particularly when trying to move towards inter-institutional ethics. Meanwhile, the CST tradition lacks the depth of penetration of institutions in our lives found in Ricœur's work. I propose that one read the shortfalls of these

⁴⁰ Here, we can see a distinct contribution that subsidiarity can make to Ricœur's inter-institutional ethic, connecting institutions to *l'homme capable*.

two traditions productively, and argue convictions born from the CST tradition can help fund such an institutional ethic scaffolded from Ricœur's theory.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I demonstrate the fecundity of this type of institutional inquiry by addressing the contested terrain of environmental ethics. Environmental ethics provides an ideal testing ground for the institutional ethic that I am outlining in this dissertation. Our relationship to the natural world is often mediated through larger institutional structures, ranging from zoning laws by local governments, to pollution corporations, to carbon emissions that have taken place over centuries. Likewise, discrete environmental systems are contested terrains. The same plot of amazon rain forest could be figured by the state as territory, by a logging company as a source of material resources, by a pharmaceutical company as a site for untapped medical research, by an animal biologist as a quickly diminishing site for research into the relations between animals and ecosystems, by a tour company as a site for leisure, and by a local indigenous community as a site for the sacred.

This contested terrain provides a common terrain for bringing together Ricœur and the CST tradition. Ricœur's work is able to help account for this mix of *bios* and *logos*, keeping us from a purely constructive account of nature, while also enabling us to have a differentiated account across institutions. His work also can point towards how natural systems are one further means by which we are related to the distant other. A responsibility for the fragile human other is able to extend over natural systems that increasingly render humans fragile, calling for both a change in policies, but also a need to respond to existing vulnerabilities. The CST tradition has recently made a significant contribution to environmental with Pope Francis's recent social encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si*, the first dedicated to this issue. I argue that the twin prongs of care for institutions and institutional relations migrates into this encyclical, now set in

terms of environmental degradation. This is reflected in Francis's turn to the technocratic paradigm, a criticism of a monolithic world view, transported from the sciences, but extended to every domain.

A common argument in environmental ethics is that one should just replace a worldview dominated by utility value to a world view dominated by some other axiology: biocentrism, theocentrism, etc. Francis does devote a chapter to identifying Christian resources to treat environmental issues, calling for not just a care for other persons, but also a care for the natural world that has a value apart from utility. But I see even greater nuance in his account. He does not simply just call for the replacement of a scientific mindset with a religious mindset, but instead a dialogue across various systems, formalized through the concept of an integral ecology. He identifies that the problems of natural systems and human systems are not separate, but interrelated. One must attend to the dual cry of the earth and the poor, one needs an integral ecology that takes into account the relation between natural systems and various human systems. Here, he calls for something akin to a multi-institutional environmental ethic.

Yet, Francis offers perhaps a too irenic view of these institutional relations. Here, Ricœur's attention to the conflict between institutions and the turn to *phronesis* can fruitfully dialogue with this papal view, inviting the development of a religiously informed phronesis. In turn, the CST tradition can illustrate some of the rich convictions necessary for funding phronesis that remain for the most part subdued in Ricœur's work, expanding concepts like responsibility even further. I propose that at the heart of environmental ethics is the social question of how we want to live together. As such, this dissertation serves as a prolegomena for a more developed institutional environmental ethic.

A word about terminology is needed. This dissertation seeks to develop an ethic of institutions. This is a nebulous term that has had various articulations across multiple disciplines.⁴¹ My project set out in part to understand just what it might mean to “pursue just institutions” in Ricœur’s work, and thus I devote a whole chapter to tracing its development in his thought (Chapter 3). While institutions (even in his work) are capacious, including language, constitutions, norms, rules, and organizations, in my various examples and in my treatment of institutions in Chapter 7, I have largely focused on institutions in their most concrete forms: institutions as organizations. This emphasis is further solidified by the CST tradition’s focus on social bodies. Such an emphasis partly arises from making sense of my own responsibility in the various institutions of which I form a part. I also remain convinced though that the ethic I develop here nonetheless can be extended to the broader field of institutions.⁴²

To summarize, this dissertation explores the dynamic relations between individuals and institutions, the ways in which we are caught up in institutions, the myriad of ways in which they form us and mediate our relationships to others, and their distinct ambiguities. I look at how we may impute responsibility to ourselves for the institutions of which we are a part. But, to move into an institutional ethic is already to move into an inter-institutional ethic, as captured by the concept of the common good in CST. We must always weigh and evaluate the particular norms of an institution against other norms within society. Phronesis, I maintain, serves as one means of adjudicating this conflict. Such an approach is particularly important in helping adjudicate one of the most pressing issues of our day, the contested terrains over which environmental ethics must

⁴¹ For a clear articulation of this long history, see W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, Fourth edition. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014).

⁴² Ricœur even includes language as an institution.

tread. Institutions pervade our moral lives. A greater sense of our responsibility for them can help awaken us to our collective capacities to work to reform them.

Part 1: Responsibility in the work of Paul Ricœur

Ricœur is not known as a responsibility theorist. But I demonstrate from a comprehensive engagement with his writings that spans his career that an account of responsibility-as-imputation is at the heart of his philosophical anthropology. Further, I also show that he develops a social responsibility that supplements this primary agential mode and enables an extension of responsibility to institutions. Over the next two chapters, I shall outline and reconstruct these two models of responsibility found within Ricœur's work: 1.) a traditional agential responsibility as accountability that is imputed to oneself, that is to say reflexively assigned to oneself according to actions one has made as an agent, and 2.) a model of responsibility anchored in the fragile other, experienced as a call that grounds a social model of responsibility. The former is the theory of responsibility operative throughout most of Ricœur's career, developed extensively and deeply embedded in his philosophy of the capable self. The latter model of responsibility represents an important development, adapting to the limits of the accountability model by anchoring responsibility not to an agent's power or capacity, but instead to the call a fragile other, a fragility which is amplified and mediated through various domains.¹ It serves as a supplement to this

¹ There is a lengthy robust recent history of the concept of responsibility, particularly of models that buck a traditional juridical account. The concept of responsibility as a "answer-to" has in particular had a robust history of effects. This is captured in the German rendition of responsibility, *ver-antwortung*, rendered literally as "answering to." Karl Barth (who Ricœur read), for example, identifies a "responsibility to God" at the base of the task of theology. See Karl Barth et al., *Church Dogmatics*, Study ed., [new study ed.], vol. 1 (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 18. H. Richard Niebuhr (who Ricœur did not read) argues in *The Responsible Self* that responsibility is the root symbol that we need for ethics today. His particularly understanding of responsibility draws on this same etymological root, as he describes the self is as responsive to actions upon the self, while existing within a community. Ricœur also was influenced by another major contributor to reflections on responsibility, as he helped introduce French audiences in 1959 to Max Weber's 1919 talk "Politics as Vocation." Weber's distinction in this talk between the "ethics of conviction" and "ethics of responsibility" provide an understanding of prudential political responsibility today. See Paul Ricœur, "PAUL RICŒUR," *Esprit*, no. 270 (2) (1959): 225–30; Max Weber, "MAX WEBER," *Esprit*, no. 270 (2) (1959): 231–45. For a period of time,

former model, enabling a model of social responsibility and serves as a threshold to the ethics of institutions reconstructed in this dissertation.

In Chapter 1, I will genealogically trace the development of this first understanding of responsibility: responsibility as agential imputation. This will pass through distinct methodological stages in his career from the personalism exemplified in Ricœur's earliest published text "Notes sur la personne"² (notes on the person), where one "stands in solidarity with one's actions," to his phenomenological analysis within Ricœur's philosophy of the will, where he posits the reciprocal relation between the voluntary and the involuntary (expanding responsibility as a result), to his understanding of guilt and the other ways of symbolizing fault as he engages in his first hermeneutical analysis, finally to his Gifford lectures (published later as towards the end of his career, a synthesis of hermeneutics and phenomenology as he incorporates of the imputation of responsibility into a picture of *l'homme capable* (the capable human). While the mode of responsibility-as-imputation provides a robust vision of responsibility, this model is nonetheless inadequate to the task of developing an ethics of institutions, for it proves incapable of treating communal harms, except according to our small contributions to them.

In Chapter 2, I return to Ricœur's post-war writings, to explore the limits of a model of imputation, by addressing Ricœur's varied and conflicting treatment guilt and responsibility at the collective or communal level. Ricœur ultimately proposes the need for a model of communal responsibility, without, in this period, providing a philosophical framework for it. In the second

Ricœur employs this distinction as well. But by the time he is working on the concept of responsibility and fragility, it is no longer an active part of his lexicon. Indeed, a Q/A session with students following a presentation on responsibility and fragility transcribed at the archives indicate that Ricœur found the distinction overdrawn. For a thorough treatment of seminal works in responsibility set within the frame of a constructive project of Christian theological ethics see William Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics*, New Studies in Christian Ethics (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

² Paul Ricœur, "Notes Sur La Personne," *La Semeur* 7 (May 1936): 437–44.

part of Chapter 2, I will identify a new model of responsibility developed from Ricœur's engagement with the work of Hans Jonas. Instead of being pushed to the group level, as one finds in certain corporate forms of responsibility,³ Ricœur's account supplements traditional responsibility with what I call a social account of responsibility that is still located within the self (who remains the locus of action), but that is anchored in the fragile human other, experienced as a call from that other a (hence answering), and that is oriented towards the future, i.e. towards what can be done.

In presenting these two models of responsibility over two chapters, I make several arguments. First, in Chapter 1, I argue that responsibility is a theme that spans Ricœur's career, extended and nuanced in his earliest works on the philosophy of the will, and later set into the capacities approach. This opens up a possibility, already alluded to within his earliest works, of considering responsibility in accord with a variation of human power, allowing for a consideration of positional responsibility. Second, in Chapter 2, I maintain that there is a lacuna present within the historical trajectory of Ricœur's work on this first model of responsibility-as-imputation, raised by his treatment of responsibility and guilt at the communal level. I propose that a second model of a responsibility for the fragile is not simply tacked on to Ricœur's thought, but responds to this lacuna, and thus plays a central role in the development of his social and political thinking.

These two chapters are also part of a larger, third argument. I maintain that holding together both accounts as prongs in a twofold model of responsibility enables a greater articulation of responsibility within institutions. For example, Responsibility-as-imputation accounts for the type of positional responsibility needed to understand power, responsibility, and

³ See Peter A. French, *Collective and Corporate Responsibility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

accountability within institutions. Meanwhile, a social model of responsibility (that is anchored in the fragile human other, but extended over institution) allows claims to responsibility that are not limited by vertical hierarchy, but can be extended horizontally to all members of institutions. While both accounts are necessary within institutions, integrating this this social account of responsibility is a vital step in the development of an institutional ethic for the self (and not just for the institution) as people each seek to construct, reform, and even dismantle institutions in the pursuit of living-together in more just institutions. Both accounts of responsibility will return in Chapter 8, where I explore the powers and limits of an institutional ethic within environmental ethics.

Chapter 1: Responsibility-as-Imputation

Given that Ricœur never wrote a monograph on responsibility it would be easy to assume that it plays an unimportant role in his work. Yet, despite its peripheral role in his legacy, responsibility bears centrally on a philosophical anthropology worked out across his entire career. In this chapter, I will trace the genealogical development of Ricœur's primary understanding of responsibility, responsibility-as-imputation, across four distinct moments in his career: personalism, phenomenology, his early hermeneutics, and in his development of *l'homme capable* (the capable human) during his phenomenological hermeneutics. This conception of responsibility is that of an agential form, self-imputed by agents. Ricœur's work on this agential form of responsibility spans his career. In one of Ricœur's earliest texts, responsibility is central to his philosophical anthropology, distinguishing between *la personne* (the person) and *l'individu* (the individual), during a period when Ricœur was heavily influenced by personalism (Section 1). In Section 2, I discuss how responsibility is extended and developed through his doctoral dissertation, later published as the first installment of his unfinished philosophy of the will, *Philosophie de la volonté: t.1 Volontaire et l'involontaire*¹ (*Freedom and Nature*²). In this text, Ricœur extends the reach of responsibility to each moment of the will, situating it at the intersection of the voluntary and the involuntary. He also explores the implications of an inchoate imputation of responsibility wedded to willing, allowing for responsibility to be reflexively self-revelatory of the agent (and later our capacities). In section 4, I unpack responsibility in *The Symbolism of Evil*, where Ricœur highlights the achievement of individual responsibility through the development of the category of guilt as a mark of moral progress in human history. He also highlights alternative modes of symbolizing fault. Finally, I present

¹ Paul Ricœur, *Philosophie de La Volonté. I. Le Volontaire et l'involontaire* (Paris: Aubier, 1949).

² Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*.

Ricœur's most mature treatment of responsibility in his later works, where it eyes a central piece of *l'homme capable*, marking this trait not only as a phylogenetic achievement of the human community as moral beings, but also an ontogenetic achievement of individual organisms on the path to becoming persons.

I argue throughout this chapter that not only is responsibility-as-imputation a perduring concern through Ricœur's career, but that it is central to his philosophical anthropology, placed as one capacity among many in his philosophy of the capable self. Nonetheless, such a model remains essentially individualistic, and thus inadequate to the task necessitated by an ethic of institutions on its own. Tracing this dominant model of responsibility will help set up for the next chapter where I reconstruct an account of responsibility for the fragile that must supplement this primary model of responsibility-as-imputation.

Section 1: Responsibility and the Person

Responsibility can be found at the center of some Ricœur's earliest reflections on the human person. In 1936, a Ricœur published one of his first philosophical reflections, a text entitled "Note sur la personne."³ At this time, Ricœur was also increasingly influenced by the personalism of Emmanuel Mounier, then editor of the journal *Esprit*, which had only started four years earlier.⁴ In this text we see the stamp of Ricœur's initial concerns for personalism, carving out space for considering the person between the dual threats of the epoch: the Scylla of

³ Ricœur, "Notes Sur La Personne."

⁴ Ricœur had completed his aggregation two years prior, had recently gotten married, and had become a part of a regular Friday philosophical discussion group hosted by Gabriel Marcel, the Christian existentialist who greatly influenced Ricœur and to whom his first published book, *Le Volontaire et l'involontaire*, is dedicated. See François Dosse, *Paul Ricœur: les sens d'une vie (1913-2005)* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001), 32–40. Dosse's text is an indispensable intellectual biography of Ricœur.

deterministic Marxism and the Charybdis of existentialism. In his reflections, we find responsibility at the heart of his philosophical anthropology.

Ricœur first establishes a sharp distinction between *la personne* and *l'individu*, in order to arrive at a picture of the person. The individual is characterized by perduring and involuntary characteristics: temperament (the product of biology), character (psychology), and mentality (social, economic and religious). To define the person, Ricœur proceeds negatively, identifying the person as that which escapes determination by anonymous forces.⁵ In so far as these aspects of the individual follow particular laws, they can be studied. The person, however, is not the object of empirical study.⁶ The person is not a *lui* (a third-person) but a *moi* (I) or a *toi* (you).⁷ With the individual and the person, Ricœur sets up a binary between pure passivity and agency.

When Ricœur identifies the core of the person, he looks to two characteristics: responsibility and vocation. Here, we see an early emphasis on responsibility, as he identifies it as a central mark of the person. Linked to agency, responsibility signals that element of the person which is not moved, which encapsulates freedom.⁸ Ricœur writes, “The person acts and is

⁵ This distinction reappears in *Oneself as Another* under the categories of identity. There is *idem* or identity from a third-party perspective and *ipse* or the self as known reflexively. Whereas, the individual and the person stand in sharp distinction here, they stand in reciprocal relation to one another under the sign of narrative identity in *Oneself as Another*. See Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*.

⁶ Ricœur, “Notes Sur La Personne,” 438.

⁷ In this essay, these sharp distinctions are eventually overcome, not by dialectic, but by a principle of incarnation.

⁸ Later, Ricœur turns from “freedom” to “capability” as a means of linking agency to freedom. See Paul Ricœur, “Ethics and Human Capability: A Response,” in *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, ed. John Wall, William Schweiker, and W. David Hall (New York: Routledge, 2002), 279–90.

not acted upon.”⁹ Unsurprisingly, he draws upon a basic agential conception of the self in his understanding of the person. It is only with an acting self that we find a responsible self.

According to Ricœur, responsibility is not ascribed to a person as if by a third-party judge. In this essay, it is described almost as if it is the result of an action or posture by the agent. Ricœur writes, “The person is the one who claims a certain act, who stands in solidarity with this act, who assumes the consequences, who is responsible.”¹⁰ Responsibility is not defined by causal action alone. Rather, it is tied to an agent taking this further step of identifying with and standing in solidarity with this action, and owning its consequences. Here, we see in Ricœur’s first instance of reflexive imputation as a form of responsibility. Not all action originating in an individual would signal responsibility. Perhaps we are given the keen insight that not all acting individuals are persons, or at least not fully, but that it involves an accomplishment. This accomplishment points as well to a theme that will be developed later: imputation as a capacity.

The second aspect characterizing the person is that of a vocation. With the notion of vocation, we begin to see the person no longer as an isolated individual acting, but responsive to other forces, and in particular, to external inspirations. Ricœur writes,

The best consciences (religious or not), have always felt that their task was to hear the call of some utopia, some myth, some value from which they had their charge: hearing this call is to have a vocation; the person ready to respond to it feels themselves responsible, they engage in the measure where they try to inscribe their vocation in visible actions in the duration, — to incarnate it. These actions are the witnesses of their vocation.¹¹

⁹ “La personne *agit* et n’est pas agie.” Ricœur, “Notes Sur La Personne,” 439. Unless otherwise noted, the translations presented throughout this dissertation in parentheses are my own. Where good translations are available (as is the case for almost all of Ricœur’s monographs), I have relied on those so as to enable non-French reading readers to more easily engage with Ricœur outside of this dissertation.

¹⁰ “La personne c’est ce qui revendique un certain acte, ce qui se solidarise avec cet acte, en assume les conséquences, en est responsable.” Ricœur, 439.

¹¹ “Les meilleures consciences (religieuses ou non), ont toujours senti que leur tâche était d’écouter l’appel de quelque utopie, de quelque mythe, de quelque valeur dont elles avaient la

With the idea of vocation, Ricœur sets the person in relation to an external call that is a source of responsibility. How is this a source of responsibility? As form of divine office and mandate as one would find in Ricœur's Calvinist background? As a judge? As the provider of moral context? In this brief article, the dynamics are not clear. The article introduces the theme of the origin and source of responsibility that Ricœur returns later in his career in both models of responsibility. Already with the idea of vocation, Ricœur pushes against a solipsistic reading of responsibility. Responsibility already entails responsiveness.

What does this early essay indicate? Among other things, Ricœur introduces many themes here in sharp relief and easy dichotomies which he will set into more nuanced polarities throughout his career. Ricœur likewise moves on from personalism (though never wholly abandoning the 'person'). Importantly for this dissertation, we see responsibility placed at the heart of Ricœur's philosophical anthropology, a position from which it will not be displaced, even as it later comes to be joined by several other capacities as Ricœur develops *l'homme capable*. As the agential concept of responsibility reappears at various points in Ricœur's career, it is not as an isolated concern, but a theme nourished throughout his work as it is treated within the dynamics of agency, within the hermeneutics of evil, as a capability, through collective fault, and finally as Ricœur addresses the responsibility for the fragile. This agential responsibility-as-imputation will, as I shall highlight in further chapters, point to a capacity for responsibility that is both pertinent to modern topics like environmental ethics, but also limited in its capacity to deal with collective action problems such as environmental degradation in the Anthropocene.

charge: entendre cet appel, c'est avoir une vocation; la personne prête à y répondre se sent responsable; elle s'engage dans la mesure où elle s'efforce d'inscrire sa vocation en actions visibles dans la durée, - de l'incarner. Ses actions sont des 'témoignages' de sa vocation." Ricœur, "Notes Sur La Personne," 442–43.

Section 2: Action, Responsibility and the Phenomenology of the Will

Ricœur earliest treatment of responsibility in “Note sur la personne,”¹² places responsibility at the center of his philosophical anthropology of the person. This is not a passing theme in his career. As Ricœur returns to the theme, now through the methodology of phenomenology, responsibility is placed once more at the center of his reflections in his incomplete, multivolume *Philosophie de la volonté* (the philosophy of the will). There is particular emphasis on this theme in his first volume, *Philosophie de la volonté: t.1 Voluntaire et l’involontaire (Freedom and Nature)*, and in *Philosophie de la volonté. Finitude et culpabilité. II. La symbolique du mal*¹³ (*The Symbolism of Evil*), the second tome of the second volume. These two texts give us the advantage of treating responsibility from two ends of a spectrum: 1.) responsibility known intimately in the phenomenological analysis of individual willing and 2.) responsibility known from the distance provided by a hermeneutical analysis of the perduring symbols of evil as expressed in texts of confession and prophetic denunciation of a culture. Within these two volumes, we see an exploration and emphasis on individual responsibility. Within *Freedom and Nature*, this is achieved through close attention to the role of freedom, which Ricœur equates with responsibility, while *The Symbolism of Evil* explores the progressive development of our understanding of evil through the progression of the primary symbols of evil, culminating in the symbol of guilt. Continuing our reflections on responsibility-as-imputation with these two books, we can attend to imputation as revealed by both responsibility and guilt. Both of these will present a strong image of individual responsibility-as-imputation, the first form of responsibility addressed in this chapter.

¹² Ricœur, “Notes Sur La Personne.”

¹³ Paul Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté. Finitude et culpabilité. II. La symbolique du mal*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1976).

In *Freedom and Nature*, Ricœur provides a phenomenology of the will, identifying each stage of willing (decision and motivation, action or movement, and consent) to corresponding elements of the involuntary. He adapts this method from Husserl, whom he was introduced to while in the prisoner of war camps. Ricœur later played a prominent role in introducing Edmond Husserl to French audiences through his text *A key to Husserl's ideas*.¹⁴ According to the phenomenological method, one brackets key facets including the sensory in order to get at the eidetic or categorical meaning of a thing. Ricœur thus abstracts from the concrete of action in order to lift out the component parts that form its essence. Ricœur presents a complex view of human action that goes well beyond the scope of this chapter to attend. I will focus on those elements that touch on his understanding of an agential responsibility, namely one that anchored in freedom and action, but that nonetheless extends through reciprocal relations of the voluntary to the involuntary. As we shall see in subsequent sections, with his hermeneutical turn, Ricœur lifts brackets that enable an isolated focus on the individual to set action and responsibility against the backdrop of the interpersonal and social.

In focusing on a reciprocal relation between the voluntary and involuntary, Ricœur argues for an “all too human” freedom, which exists within and in response to both relative and absolute forms of the involuntary. Ricœur’s treatment of the will displays a nuanced understanding of freedom, once more avoiding the Scylla of an “absolute freedom,” or an “over-humanization” in the terms of William Schweiker and David Klemm¹⁵ and the Charybdis of determinism.

While the terms freedom and the voluntary are not synonymous with responsibility, they nonetheless form core background concepts necessary to make sense of it. Thus, while Ricœur

¹⁴ Paul Ricœur, *A Key to Husserl's Ideas I*, trans. Pol Vandavelde, Bond Harris, and Jacqueline Bouchard Spurlock (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ See David E. Klemm and William. Schweiker, *Religion and the Human Future: An Essay on Theological Humanism* (Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

is quite explicit in his sections on decision about the role of responsibility, it is likewise present at each of the specific acts of the will. Even more precisely, responsibility exists at the interface of the voluntary and the involuntary. Thus, Ricœur's work not only deepens our understanding of responsibility, but he extends it to the interface of the voluntary and the involuntary.

Ricœur walks this narrow path between absolute freedom and determinism by setting up a reciprocal relationship between the voluntary and the involuntary. Here, he is battling against a dualism which would easily keep apart a seemingly "objective" world of things, and a "subjective" world of consciousness.¹⁶ First, he argues that the involuntary only gains meaning in light of a voluntary act of the will to which it stands in relation. He writes, "Need, emotion, habit, etc., acquire a complete significance only in relation to a will which they solicit, dispose, and generally affect, and which in turn determines their significance, that is, determines them by its choice, moves them by its effort, and adopts them by its consent. The involuntary has no meaning of its own. Only the relation of the voluntary and the involuntary is intelligible."¹⁷ What does Ricœur mean when he maintains that the involuntary only has significance in light of the voluntary? Without a voluntary act, much of these structures of the involuntary sit in the background. It is in action, which is always voluntary, that these involuntary elements operate. Thus, there is a type of passive receptivity, which allows these different involuntary elements, whether as motive or as habits to take a stage in action and meaning.

Setting these in a reciprocal relation, Ricœur also identifies the voluntary as informed by the involuntary. A voluntary action is not derivable from the involuntary, but it needs the involuntary structures. Ricœur writes, "The involuntary refers to the will as that which gives it its

¹⁶ Paul Ricœur, "L'unité du volontaire et du l'involontaire," in *Écrits et conférences 3: Anthropologie philosophique*, ed. Johann Michel and Jérôme Porée (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2013), 97.

¹⁷ Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 4–5.

motives and capacities, its foundations and even its limits.”¹⁸ Ricœur is proposing here that there are basic givens, which are needed to make sense of certain voluntary actions. Thus, Ricœur eschews a sense of absolute freedom, as the will can only be understood according to these basic involuntary elements.¹⁹ First, I will address this reciprocal relation as it plays out in decision-making, pairing it with his extended discussion of responsibility, then I will turn briefly to the other two moments of the will: action, and consent.

Ricœur’s method has two steps. First, he describes the act of the will from a perspective of pure phenomenological description, that is to say, how, under brackets that allow us to attend to the moment of willing itself as it presents itself to us as a phenomenon. Then, in a second step, he situates the involuntary within this act of the will. With this process, we see that even the mode of argumentation matches his central assumption that the voluntary is not derivable from the involuntary, but stands in reciprocal relation to it. This can be seen within Ricœur’s account of decision.

2.1: Decision

The first act of the will that Ricœur isolates at the intersection of the voluntary and the involuntary is decision. Decision precedes movement, but, for Ricœur, these are often experienced simultaneously. He defines decision with an appeal to imagination, responsibility and motivation. He writes, “To decide means first of all to project a practical possibility of an

¹⁸ Ricœur, 5.

¹⁹ One obvious example is in willing around basic necessities. Yes, my choice of steel cut oats over captain crunch is not determined, but nor can it be understood without understanding basic involuntaries that are explicit and implicit, from a baseline biological need for food, to motives to not be hungry by 11 am, to cultural values that privilege the hardier and healthier meal, and so on. Absolute freedom is incomprehensible. It would be akin to me saying that I chose to eat carpet tacks for breakfast. Unless we assume a confusion or perhaps a motive to shuffle off this mortal coil, this would not make sense. Only against the background of the involuntary can we make sense of voluntary action.

action which depends on me; secondly, to impute myself as the author responsible for the project, and finally to motivate my project by reasons and variables which ‘historialize’ values capable of justifying them.”²⁰ With the projection of the of an organized plan, Ricœur incorporates into decision an imaginative future. This is not an unbound imagination, for Ricœur proposes that an authentic decision presumes the capacity to carry out the decision.

Ricœur incorporates responsibility-as-imputation into his definition of decision. This is not an automatic ascription of causality, nor is it a second step of “solidarity” with the action, as seen in “Note sur la personne.” Instead, Ricœur here suggests that it is built into the heart of decision-making. In an essay entitled “Méthode et tâche d’une phénoménologie de la volonté,” Ricœur turns to an analysis of French language to lift out this integral concept of imputation: “‘I decide’ envelops an ‘I *myself* decide.’”²¹ Ricœur stresses the reflexive element that is at heart of decision-making. It is myself who determines myself. This act of imputation can take more conscious and explicit roles, such as when one claims responsibility over a sphere which falls within one’s power,²² or more implicit roles, perhaps even pre-reflexive roles, such as in the sudden act of a decision.²³ The variance in these positions suggests that imputation can be

²⁰ Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 84.

²¹ “‘je décide de ...,’ enveloppe un: ‘je *me* décide.’” Paul Ricœur, “Méthode et Tâches d’une Phénoménologie de La Volonté,” in *Problèmes Actuel de La Phénoménologie*, ed. H.L. Van Breda, O.F.M (Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1951), 118. This turn to language is the start of a hermeneutical approach that will be developed over the better part of Ricœur’s career.

²² See Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 58.

²³ Ricœur even suggests that there is already a rudimentary sense of imputation already built into the project itself. He writes, “Mais, fouillant à la racine de cette imputation réfléchie de moi-même, je découvre une imputation irréfléchie, implicite à mes projets même. D’abord la décision court là-bas, auprès des lieux et des êtres, et conjure la nouvelle œuvre par signes à l’impératif; et tandis-que je me projette moi-même dans l’action à faire, que je me désigne, si je puis dire, à l’accusative comme un aspect du projet, je me mets ainsi moi-même en cause dans le dessein de l’acte à faire; et ce moi imputé là-bas n’est pas encore un véritable Ego, mais la présence sourde de mes pouvoirs eux-mêmes irréalisés, projetés et appréhendés dans la figure de l’action qui aura lieu.” (“But, excavating for the root of this reflective imputation of myself, I discover an

exercised in gradations (pointing towards responsibility as a capacity),²⁴ but that it is never fully absent from the act of decision-making.

This raises a central point regarding responsibility within this text: its epiphanic or revelatory character. Ricœur identifies in this same period of his career that feelings of both responsibility and guilt can serve to reveal ourselves as actors. He writes,

Now in waking up from anonymity I discover that I have no means of self-affirmation other than my acts themselves. 'I' am only an aspect of my acts, the subject pole of my acts. I have no means of affirming myself on the fringes of my acts. This is what the feeling of responsibility reveals to me.

Besides, it is after the fact, and in a situation of guilt, that reflection appears to itself as an articulation of a connection between the agent and the act which is more fundamental than all reflection. It is I who have done this. I accuse myself, and in accusing myself retrace the vestiges of my signature on the act. Accusare: to designate as the cause.²⁵

The very feeling of responsibility and guilt reveal to us this inchoate activity of imputation.

Ricœur goes further still identifying that a reflective engagement with responsibility and guilt reveals myself to myself, reveals me as a responsible subject, reveals me as agent. This

revelatory aspect of responsibility will serve as an important piece of all of our reflections. If, for example, there is a form of collective guilt, what does that reveal of the agent? If there is a

unreflective imputation implicit even in my projects. First the decision, there runs there, near the places and beings, and conjures a new work under the sign of the imperative. And while I project myself in the act of doing, I also designate myself, if I can say, to the accusative as an aspect of the project, I thus incriminate myself in the design of the act of doing. And this me imputed there is not yet a veritable Ego, but the deaf presence my unrealized powers, projected and apprehended in the figure of the action which took place”) Ricœur, “Méthode et Taches d’une Phénoménologie de La Volonté,” 128.

²⁴ This first act of imputation often goes unnoticed even to the self. Ricœur suggests that the quickness of the act of willing leaves neither the time nor occasion to consider this pre-reflexive, (perhaps) rudimentary and inchoate claim to authorship. He suggests the possibility of a more conscious engagement with imputation, as one sets forth for a project, or claim responsibility over a sphere over which one has power (see Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 58.). I would propose that Ricœur is already laying the groundwork for considering imputation as a capacity itself. We see then, both a continuation of conscious imputation as found in “Note sur la personne”, while also further deepening the concept of responsibility by building it into the very definition of decision-making.

²⁵ Ricœur, 57–58.

responsibility for fragile beings beyond our immediate and proximate sphere of action, what does this reveal of the agent? Analogously, I will suggest in the next chapter that a form of stain by association can serve a similar function in revealing to us our responsibility for institutions.

In *Freedom and Nature*, Ricœur's conception of willing is built on the thesis that there is a reciprocal relationship between the voluntary and the involuntary. Where does the involuntary fit in here? The final piece of the definition of decision-making is that it motivated by reasons and variables. I do not simply decide... I decide because of x . Ricœur locates the involuntary aspect of decision in this final aspect, that of motive. Motives, he identifies, emerge out of two fundamental involuntary structures: the body and history. These are involuntary, and at the same time, loci of responsibility. The body gives rise to a complex assortment of values, which precede any conscious valuation. Food and wine are considered goods. These initial values are born out of lacks (needs), which find their fulfillment in some external object. These needs provide basic incentives that transform into motives. Incentives, however, are by nature not compulsory. We can evaluate these various incentives, and opt not to be nudged by them. Ricœur holds this even as he presents a host of values that emerge from our organic level: pleasure, pain, the useful, the agreeable, the easy, and even the difficult. Each of these values incentivizes decisions, but cannot explain away the voluntariness of decisions, precisely because they are non-compulsory. In this respect, they are relative involuntary structures.

Ricœur does not limit the involuntary structure of decisions to the body or to an atomistic individual. With the concept of history, Ricœur incorporates into willing a sense of social values, which likewise motivate decisions. Following Henri Bergson, Ricœur identifies that the social

takes on the form of collective representations that are found present in discrete individuals.²⁶ These collective representations are involuntary precisely because they are not subject initially to change as they are received in decision-making. Like our bodily motivations, these too can be judged, criticized, and evaluated. Thus, Ricœur identifies both bodily and historical involuntary motives as sites for responsibility. The values, symbols, and norms of institutions that I discuss in Chapter 3 represent a development of these collective representations. I further argue in Chapter 8 that this can be further developed to include symbols of nature that are non-exclusively transmitted through institutions. What is important to note here is that we already see the incorporation of these external, collective representations into the phenomenology of willing and into the structure of responsibility. This means one does not relinquish responsibility either for one's actions (agential responsibility-as-imputation) or for institutions (a social responsibility for the fragile) simply because one did not construct oneself these collective representations.²⁷

2.2: Action

Decision is but one moment in Ricœur's treatment of the voluntary and the involuntary. He extends it as well to action.²⁸ Action elicits those basic mediums through which decisions are

²⁶ We can imagine, for example, how various fashions go well beyond basic needs, and yet incentivize, at various times and places, decisions to make one purchase over another. Some, I might imagine are more ephemeral and obvious social values, while other values may be more deeply laden and obscure, such as a fundamental democratic value which shapes American discourse.

²⁷ Too often today there is a presumption that freedom and a banal *creation ex nihilo* are synonymous. Even Kant's conception of freedom of being autonomous or auto-nomos, a law unto oneself, does not presume that one creates the law from scratch. Instead, the self-legislator authorizes discovered law (even if it comes from outside) as binding upon oneself. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²⁸ There is an intimate relation between decision and action within Ricœur's work. While decision-making and action are distinct, this is more on the level of meaning than, for example, by a separation of time. Often the act can be simultaneous with the decision. Ricœur even builds in to his understanding of the decision basic features which link it to action. He presumes that a

activated, and those habits, which can persist even apart from a conscious decision. In action, the body is introduced as both the vehicle of action and a site for a whole new range of involuntaries.²⁹ Yet, it is precisely in turning the voluntary into the natural where there can be an erosion of the voluntary and a false dismissal of responsibility. Ricœur describes that habits, be they personal or even professional, can take on a character of inertia, leading one to thoughtlessly continue a task. This would seemingly be the perfection of the habit that can also be the largest threat to the voluntary. In my estimation, while Fordism exemplifies this at the corporate level, this is reproduced at every level of human organization. The danger is in identifying as involuntary this habituated professional behavior and the ensuing inertia, and thus placing it beyond the scope of responsibility.³⁰

2.3: *Consent*

The dynamics of consent presents perhaps the most interesting space to consider the limits of this view of responsibility. Ricœur's treatments of the structures of the involuntary in

decision is something that can be fulfilled according to a subject's basic capacities. Further, he identifies that action is the testing ground for a decision, writing, "The man who does not carry through did not truly will." *Freedom and Nature*, 201.

²⁹ Ricœur identifies that it is not the body which is moved, but that the body becomes an organ for some concrete action in the world. Thus, as in the example he provides, one does not move one's arm, but one writes a letter. See Ricœur, "L'unité du volontaire et du l'involontaire," 104. This reliance on the body introduces new categories of the involuntary, not as motives, but instead as organs of action. Ricœur includes in here learned skills, habits, and reflexes, identifying the latter as the lower limit of the voluntary. Mastering action and activity, becoming comfortable in our body, discovering capacity and the limits of capacities is a slow incorporation of various aspects of the involuntary, which eventually feels "natural": "Every voluntary hold on the body repossesses the body's involuntary usage." Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 227. It is perhaps only as we lose control of aspects of our bodily control through sickness or age that we remember these involuntaries. Ricœur thus sees a range of possibilities and gradations to describe this level of interaction between the voluntary and involuntary.

³⁰ Examples of this proliferate within our institutional life where habits and practices are sedimented and often precede our involvement in, say, a corporation. One becomes enculturated into a culture where the processes of a company become second nature and where one might not even think to do otherwise, because that just how it has always been done.

decision-making and action deal with relative forms of the involuntary. Thus, involuntary motives present themselves involuntarily and incite through a complex presentation of pre-reflexive values that lead to particular actions. For motives, there are a complex and heterogeneous presentation of values, which vary according to particular circumstances and whose incorporation into voluntary action is subject to the decision of an individual actor. At the level of consent, Ricœur treats absolute structures of the involuntary or necessities which are not subject to change at any one moment, and which remain a constant backdrop.

Ricœur identifies three necessities: Character, the unconscious, and *bios* or life. These are fundamental background structures, which are irreducible to the flux of motivations presented in the act of decision-making, and which serve as origins and horizons. Thus, character is that distinct and indelible perspective that comprises a subject; the unconscious serves as a horizon for all my motivations; and life is that fundamental necessity upon which all voluntary action is dependent. Ricœur names consent as the act of the will facing these necessities. With it, one engages in that final act which authorizes and owns these necessities³¹.

³¹ In the translator's introduction to *Freedom and Nature*, Czech philosopher, Erazim Kohák describes consent as Ricœur's means of addressing the question of the absolute involuntary, which includes not only the givens and limits of an individual, biological person, such as character, life, and death, but also "what Heidegger called *Geworfenheit*, in the sense of being stuck with the particularity of my situation." Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, xxiii. Rather than allowing this absolute involuntary to finally trump human freedom, they are taken up and adopted in consent. Kohák writes, "This ultimate act of the will is not simply a passive acknowledgement of necessity but its active adoption in the decision to accept it as mine and in the strange effort of patience which realizes this decision." Ricœur, xxiii. I see a strong link between his treatment of consent here and his later work on narrative identity. Ricœur largely brackets in his phenomenological account the social and historical, but these too present factors that remain beyond our control, particularly as one constructs the narrative of one's own life. It is always overlapping in with the lives of others. Even the most critical events of one's life, birth and death, are narrated by others. Narrative identity functions to subsume the disparate choices, actions, and events under the sign of one story, owned by an author. See Paul Ricœur, "Life in Quest of a Narrative Identity," in *On Paul Ricœur: Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. David Wood (London: Routledge, 1991), 20–33. Consent also foreshadows and appears to be a constitutive

This is not as a separate act of willing from decision-making but, like action, a completion of it. Ricœur writes, “This type of the involuntary, whether in the form of character, of the unconscious, of biological life, etc., is the terminus of that original act of willing which at first is even more hidden than its terminus: to this I consent.”³² What might this mean? Decision-making does not appear in a vacuum, but always against the backdrop of these basic necessities. Deciding and refusing consent, on my reading, are antithetical. To truly have solidarity with one’s action, to use the language of “Note sur la personne,” is to also authorize it within the context of the necessities in which it takes place. Referencing this consent to necessity, Ricœur will say in an interview conducted in 2003, “[...] there is, after all, and since the beginning of my work sixty years ago, the idea of mortality which traverses everything through and through.”³³ This assent to finitude allows one to claim authorship over one’s actions even in the face of elements that fall beyond human control. It is a condition of becoming a responsible agent.

Yet consent suggests an impossible, or better yet, endless task. Ricœur says as much in his

part of a robust understanding “attestation,” a critical concept in Ricœur’s understanding of *l’homme capable* as both agent and patient. As I will discuss below, this is the reflexive knowledge of the embodied self that is necessary for all action. When I act, I already attest that I am one who knows that I can act. In his treatment of this concept in Ricœur’s work, William Schweiker writes, “Put as a formula, Ricœur’s type of humanism arises from an attestation to being in the self and yet also insists that we are ‘human, only human.’ Acknowledgement of the limits on human thought and action, limits rooted in our finitude and the reality of others, is necessary to a proper grasp of our existence. Only when human beings repent of idolatry about their own power and knowledge is the dignity of human life manifest.” William Schweiker, *Dust That Breathes: Christian Faith and the New Humanisms* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 128. Paired with consent and attestation, the type of acknowledgement of finitude that Schweiker mentions here is not the passivity and fatalism of the tragic, but instead an incorporation of the finite and human limits into the structure of human action and human identity.

³² Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 8.

³³ Paul Ricœur and Sorin Antohi, “Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue between Paul Ricœur and Sorin Antohi,” trans. Gil Anidjar, *Janus Head: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and the Arts* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 20.

essay “The unity of the voluntary and the involuntary,” where he writes, “Consent to necessity is never achieved. Who can entirely accept oneself concretely, daily?”³⁴ Here we are reminded that while Ricœur is presenting a phenomenological account of willing, responsibility is subject to gradations and variance. Thus, while an inchoate responsibility is present in every decision, there can be a greater and less degrees of it. Likewise, consent is not an act that is perfectly achieved. We see here already the foundations laid for the type of capacities-based approach which Ricœur forwards in his later career.

Ricœur has bracketed here the question of fault, as well. If we have difficulty with consent simply to finitude, how do we face consent when fault is incorporated into our history? This becomes a place where Ricœur’s theory of consent hits the ground of moral theory. Consent to an action in common parlance is itself a moral situation. Often this alludes to the active consent of a bystander for external acts of injustice. But this is not the type of consent Ricœur addresses. He treats consent as a distinct moment within a larger act of willing, injecting freedom into the discussion so that it runs all the way down. Consent enables the claiming of one’s own actions even as one stands in the history of effects of preceding actions, including evil. Ricœur writes within an essay entitled, “Guilt, Ethics, and Religion,” that “to affirm freedom is to take upon oneself the origin of evil.”³⁵ This taking up of the origins of evil means that one does not simply appeal to an ancillary evil to explain away one’s responsibility for one’s actions. This preserves humanities’ originary good—we are not radically evil. We are not evil’s beginning

³⁴ “Le consentement à la nécessité n'est jamais achevé. Qui peut s'accepter jusqu'au bout, concrètement, quotidiennement?” Paul Ricœur, *Écrits et Conférence 3: Anthropologie Philosophique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2013), 116.

³⁵ Paul Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Northwestern University Press, 1974), 431.

point, but always find it preceding us in this world, even as we take it up and continue it.³⁶ With consent, freedom is nonetheless preserved in the face of prior evil: we consent to it, making its origins in human action our own. Here, we see confession, then, as a vital step to freedom.

The pairing of the voluntary and the involuntary presents a useful prism for considering responsibility as it relates to institutions. When we move beyond the scale of just the individual and attend to the relations of persons to institutions, we precisely enter the realm of the voluntary and the involuntary. Rules, regulations, forms of actions, institutional norms and values, and so on are each presented to the person implicitly and explicitly as means of shaping one's action. This can even include the history of institutions of which we form a part representing a rigid involuntary fact, inescapable even if we leave an institution. Each of these institutional involuntaries present as well different opportunities for considering responsibility, whether it be through the active participation in set structures of action or simply consent to this prior history. Yet, while this model enables us to claim responsibility for our actions within institutions, it fails to enable us to claim responsibility for institutions, including, as I shall treat in my final step of this dissertation, for the ways in which they mediate our relationships to natural environments.

What does Ricœur's first extended treatment of responsibility-as-imputation indicate? In *Freedom and Nature*, Ricœur develops a traditional form of agential responsibility rooted in the concept of imputation that both expands responsibility and limits freedom as it interfaces with a range of involuntaries. The phenomenon of responsibility and guilt can serve as epiphanic of a basic, pre-reflexive capacity to impute responsibility at the heart of the project of willing. Here, freedom and responsibility go hand in hand with the former making possible the latter's basic

³⁶ Ricœur identifies this as one of the possible meanings of the serpent Adamic myth, where the serpent is always already in the Garden, representing the ancillary evil to which we consent. See Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 256–60.

move of solidarity with one's action. As illustrated above, this is no simple model. Forwarding the thesis that the voluntary and the involuntary stand in a reciprocal relation with one another, Ricœur nuances and extends responsibility across three different moments of willing. Thus, he identifies at discrete moments of the involuntary—motives, capacities and habits, and necessity—a space for responsibility. The final moment, that of consent to absolute necessities like character, history, or even preceding evil, allows for humans to properly claim ownership over their actions. We see, then, the beginnings of themes that Ricœur develops across his career: capacity, the revelatory aspect of a reflexive philosophy, and a focus on the person (later the self) as the locus of action and responsibility.

But there are limits inscribed in Ricœur's initial approach that are consequences to his phenomenological method. While he touches upon social elements at different points of his analysis, acknowledging the influence of social values on decision-making, and pointing towards our desire for fulfillment by being a member of society, Ricœur bracketing any political or social perspectives. The result is an individualistic account, that stands incomplete, with the danger of it becoming solipsistic if taken on its own.³⁷ What results, though, is that question critical to my study, namely responsibility for collectives and institutions, remain beyond the bounds of this account. In order to treat this aspect of his work, we must join him in lifting the brackets, and turn to the question of guilt.

³⁷ As demonstrated in subsequent chapters, Ricœur's corpus does not fall into solipsism. In later interviews, however, he himself identifies a certain danger in the focus on the I. Instead, he moves to the *soi* (self) as a means of speaking not just of myself, but of all selves. In an interview, he states, "C'est par ce chemin que je me suis efforcé de quitter les ornières d'un certain solipsisme, d'un certain idéalisme que j'ai moi-même traversé alors que j'étais plus proche que je ne le suis maintenant de Husserl, et surtout du Husserl des Méditations cartésiennes." Paul Ricœur, *Éthique et responsabilité*, ed. Jean-Christophe Aeschlimann, Langages; Variation: Langages. (Neuchâtel: A la Baconnière, 1994), 24. ("It is by this route that I have endeavored to leave the ruts of a certain solipsism, a certain idealism that I myself traversed when I was closer than I am now to Husserl, and especially, the Husserl of the *Cartesian Meditations*.")

Section 3: The Hermeneutics of Evil: from Defilement to Individual Guilt

The question “who acted?” is rarely separated from good and evil, praise or blame. While Ricœur’s analysis of action can show the extent to which responsibility is embedded in the dynamics of action, it is a far cry from responsibility *in situ*. Adopting a phenomenological method, Ricœur’s initial volume on the freedom of the will brackets the question of evil. In order to gain a fuller appreciation for the concept of responsibility in his early work, we also must pass through his work on guilt and culpability, which takes us out of his pure phenomenological analysis and into hermeneutics. With the former, Ricœur honed in on the phenomenon of willing as it presented itself to the reflective self, bracketing the cultural forms that might serve to interpret and obscure the phenomenon. With hermeneutics, Ricœur now attends to the embedded self, captured in language as sedimented in myth, narrative, text, and other cultural forms. Guilt is not only the subjective mode by which we become aware of our responsibility, linking agent to action, but the development of the symbol of guilt has played a significant role in nuancing our understanding of responsibility, allowing for discrimination and gradation. As Ricœur will note, the development of individual guilt is perhaps the most significant development in moral thought.³⁸

A word of caution is needed. As might already be imagined, responsibility is not exhausted by guilt. I am arguing that Ricœur develops two forms of responsibility: a past-oriented agential responsibility and a future oriented responsibility for the fragile. Guilt is tied specifically with this past-oriented form. Even here, in the imputation of accountability, guilt is only a part of the picture. As Aristotle underlines, moral actions are subject to praise or blame.³⁹

³⁸Ricœur, “Responsabilité et Culpabilité Au Plan Communautaire.”

³⁹ Aristotle. and Martin Ostwald, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1st ed., Library of Liberal Arts (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 1109b. 30.

This obvious point cannot be overstated, as we are trying to draw out the underlying concept of responsibility, to which guilt can be a window, but indeed, also a frame which confines and limits our gaze.

Guilt plays an important role in Ricœur's understanding of responsibility. While the two are not synonymous, as I indicated above, the sentiment of guilt serves as a gateway to the subjective awareness of responsibility. This is a retrospective awareness of responsibility. Yet, despite the negative feelings associated with this, the feeling of guilt is revelatory, helping me to draw a line between my acts and myself as an actor. The feeling of guilt is reflexive. It points back to myself as an actor and simultaneously designates and attributes responsibility. I am the actor. I am the agent. I am the responsible one. As such, we might imagine that guilt has been an indelible feature of human existence.

Individual guilt, however, has not been a universal feature of human reflections on evil. Within Paul Ricœur's *The Symbolism of Evil*, guilt is but one of the primary symbols which has been used historically to figure fault. As I shall discuss in this section, it is preceded by two other symbols, defilement and sin. Addressing the differences between these can help us to better understand Ricœur's claim that individual responsibility is a moral achievement, while also raise questions regarding the particular limitations of the guilt model. It can also help us to mark out certain earlier forms of the collective attribution of fault, which serve to inform Ricœur's treatment on non-individualistic forms of guilt and responsibility

The Symbolism of Evil marks Ricœur's hermeneutical turn in a dramatic manner. It is the last text of Ricœur's unfinished trilogy on the philosophy of the will, launched by *Freedom and Nature*. *The Symbolism of Evil* is volume II of *Finitude et Culplabilité* and preceded by volume I,

l'homme faillible (1960) (*Fallible Man*).⁴⁰ In *Freedom and Nature*, Ricœur had bracketed the question of fault (and the other) in order to get a “pure description” of action apart from the contingencies of history (as already described above). This provides Ricœur’s philosophical anthropology and signals that Ricœur’s departure point for evil is not “human nature” in its most fundamental sense. In *Fallible Man*, not treated in-depth in this dissertation, Ricœur lifts the brackets imposed by the phenomenological method, going beyond a fundamental ontology in order to account for fallibility, those internal tendencies that lend towards fault. While past the realm of pure description, in this text Ricœur relies nonetheless on philosophical inquiry to orient the reader to the occasion of fault by identifying the fundamental disproportions of the finite and the infinite within the person in the domains of thinking, acting, and feeling which open a space for fallibility. While evil does not originate in human nature, “the *possibility* of moral evil is inherent in man’s constitution.”⁴¹ But it is only with *Symbolism of Evil* that Ricœur treats evils entry into the world. For Ricœur, this is outside the scope of pure philosophical inquiry, who is unable to think the starting point of evil on its own. Instead, he makes a hermeneutical turn, attending to how evil presents itself in the “word,” which is to say, how humans meaningfully describe evil in the “world.”

In *Symbolism of Evil*, Ricœur engages in a method he identifies a “re-enactment in the sympathetic imagination.”⁴² He draws upon historical texts of avowal or confession and denouncement, as well as the resources of the history of religions (to understand pre-textual

⁴⁰ While *The Symbolism of Evil* is the third text, it is paired with *Fallible Man* as comprising the second volume. The projected third volume, on the poetics of the will, was never written, as Ricœur’s hermeneutical turn took him through many other “detours.”

⁴¹ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 133.

⁴² Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 9.

encounters with evil) so as to imaginatively engage with the textual presentation of evil.⁴³

Confession (in its various forms) is seen here as the most simplistic presentation of evil, and while the texts themselves are not spontaneous, they would harken back to the spoken experience of fault. While not the cause of evil itself, language is the condition of possibility for this fault to have “meaning,” or in the case of symbols, multiple meanings. Language helps to reveal the consciousness of fault.

There is a basic humanistic presumption underlying Ricœur’s methodology here. He presumes a fundamental accessibility across cultures and history, rooted in the shared premise of the human. In *Fallible Man*, Ricœur writes

The openness of my field of motivation is my fundamental accessibility to all values of all men in all cultures. My field of motivation is open to the whole range of the human. This is the meaning of the famous statement: “Nothing human is foreign to me.” I am capable of every virtue and every vice; no sign of man is radically incomprehensible, no language radically untranslatable, no work of art to which my taste cannot spread. My humanity is my essential community with all that is human outside myself; that community makes every man my like.⁴⁴

Each vice and each value of every human culture is accessible to us. For Ricœur, this does not necessitate that one employ these vices or virtues—rather, he asserts a fundamental unity that links humans in terms of our “accessibility” to these fundamental motivations. With this humanistic principle in mind, we can better understand why Ricœur initially rejects the rationalized explanations of evil—such as original sin—in favor of the “spontaneous” expressions of confession. These latter instances tap precisely into these field of motivations, and

⁴³ It should be noted that Ricœur specifically does not engage at this point with the mythic representations of evil, which follow in part II of the *Symbolism of evil*. Nor does he treat their subsequent rationalizations, such as in the concept of “original sin.” Both of these are forms of explanation. Instead, Ricœur, suggest that the texts of avowal or confession precede these mythical treatments and rationalizations. Further, it would seem to me that his method of sympathetic re-enactment would necessitate a text more accessible to a modern imagination, as might be available in a text of confession.

⁴⁴ Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 60–61.

thus give greater access to these root symbols than subsequent explanations and rationalizations. But we should not make the mistake of assuming that the practice of imaginatively accessing the motivations and sentiments embedded in a text of confession is easy. Indeed, the lengthy detour that Ricœur takes through the study of psychology and hermeneutics after he publishes *The Symbolism of Evil* would indicate that this is no simple or easy task. But what becomes clear is that it is not an impossible task.

A central question of this dissertation is how one claims responsibility for social realities which seemingly extend well beyond the bounds of our proximate sphere of responsibility. While Ricœur does not initially consider these questions directly, his treatment of the symbols of evil explicitly touch upon non-individualistic forms of symbolizing fault. In attending to the developments that he traces across the three symbols, I note a phylogenetic progression—that is to say, species wide or (in this instance) group wide progression—towards individual guilt and individual responsibility. Thus, individual responsibility becomes identified not simply as an individual achievement, as is found in “Note sur la personne,” but also as a human achievement. Nevertheless, it is seemingly an open question in these sections as to whether more collective forms that eventually lead towards “individual guilt” in Ricœur’s analysis are left behind or preserved. In the following chapter, I propose recovering such symbols to articulate a stain of association that can serve to awaken us to our collective responsibilities.

3.1: Defilement/Stain

Ricœur opens *The Symbolism of Evil* with a consideration of the symbol of defilement, a concept which we no longer have proper access to, and thus must take the oblique approach

through the history of religions.⁴⁵ Defilement resists the concept of agency, as it is constituted by an objective pole as the matrix of purity and impurity map onto the external world. This is a world of taboos that can be transgressed, regardless of the intention or ignorance of the agent. Here, we see that this objective order of the cosmos is first known in its transgression.⁴⁶

The negative effects of this impurity extend likewise beyond the agent; the impure has a positive power, captured in the symbol of the infectious. Any encounter with the impure spreads to the person like a physical external substance. The stain is symbolic of this transgression, employing the double meaning of a physical stain that is negated, in the pointing towards the more opaque meaning of some sort of non-physical stain or diminishment of the person.⁴⁷ This objective order extends to the individual in the form of suffering, a direct result of the violation of taboos. This suffering is the product of vengeance, either from the impure itself, or from a faceless other. Thus, as we find captured in biblical imagery, it is the blood of Abel, spilled upon the earth that cries out to God.

The subjective side of defilement is not responsibility, but fear. This is a fear of punishment, which quickly transitions to become an ethical terror, a terror of transgressing the taboo. While much of defilement passes, this core element of fear persists across the symbols.

Defilement carries communal implications, as suggested by its subsidiary symbol of

⁴⁵ In defilement, ethics makes its debut into the world. The subjective pole of defilement is first found in the dread terror of violation, whose product is suffering. With suffering as a symptom of violation, it is explicable. It also inspires a fear that migrates from a fear of physical suffering, to a fear of the diminishment of one's own person. According to Ricœur, the speaking of this dread is one of the ways ethics enters into word (Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 42.), for with it, comes the expectation of a "just" punishment and a transformative end (Ricœur, 44.). This fear, is not eliminated, but carried on to each of the other systems, culminating in the scrupulousness of guilt and the servile will.

⁴⁶ There is a surprising analogy here to the order of justice, also first often known through the experience of injustice.

⁴⁷ See Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 35. See also, Ricœur, 41.

infection. This perhaps best seen in the brief example lifted out by Ricœur when he highlights a Greek distinction of the fifth century BCE, between voluntary and involuntary criminals, with both suffering the punishment of exile.⁴⁸ As an example of this phenomenon of “involuntary criminals” he turns to Thucydides: “Thucydides, for his part, recounts the sacrilege—a murder in the holy places of the Acropolis—which rendered the members of the family of the Alcmaeonides *ἐναγέϊς* [under a curse] and made them bear the weight of expiation.”⁴⁹ While Oedipus could be considered an involuntary criminal due to ignorance, with the family of the Alcmaeonides guardians, we see a people defiled, not because of actions they took, but because of actions their husbands, brothers, sisters, fathers, or grandfathers took. Defilement is described then as spreading indiscriminately.

Stepping back from this text, and contrasting it with the agential model of responsibility set up thus far, one of the dangers elicited by the symbol of defilement is a break between agent and consequences. Seemingly, this caesura imperils responsibility as an agent can no longer take ownership over the consequences of their actions. Ricœur speaks of such possible lapses as regressions. Yet, the advantage of such an account is that it can capture sentiments that many might feel in an institutional age. I am not guilty in any demonstrable way for the sex abuse scandals that have racked the American Catholic Church over the last 17 years (and now all over the globe quite recently), and yet, neither is it incidental to me. As I shall discuss in the next chapter, defilement may be inappropriate for responsibility-as-imputation, but, to paraphrase the famous line from *The Symbolism of Evil*, perhaps this symbol can still give rise to thought in our institutional age.

⁴⁸ See Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 37. This is quite distinct from the voluntary and involuntary as it relates to the will treated above.

⁴⁹ Ricœur, 37.

3.2: *Sin*

With the primary symbol of sin, Ricœur indicates a transformation of fault from a world that is primarily textured by purity and impurity, to an ethical world seen first through the paradigm of covenant with God. The objective pole is framed in the religious realm: one's fault is a stretching of the dialogical relationship with God—one's sin is a fault before God. The objective aspect of sin is no longer purely external; instead, it is rooted in a relationship that is damaged. This is captured in marital symbols like Israel's adultery, but also spatial symbols such as missing the mark.⁵⁰ Ricœur primarily uses the verbal act of prophetic denouncement for his sympathetic "re-enactment." These carry the quality of a standing tension of the infinite demand of god (Be holy, for your God is holy), and finite commandments (exploitation of the poor, idolatry, etc.). For Ricœur, the ethical moment is found in the "slackening of an impulse that is fundamentally hyperethical,"⁵¹ as the infinite demand gives way to explicit means of appeasing God.

It is in exploring the positive aspects of sin (in contrast to sin as privation and nothingness), that Ricœur is able to address a more corporate aspect of evil. Before being shifted to the singular sinner, sin, as manifest in the world, is public. Ricœur, in fact, employs the communal to demonstrate the realism of sin : "[...] because it cannot be reduced to its subjective measure, neither can sin be reduced to its individual dimension; it is at once and primordially personal *and* communal."⁵² In its rationalization as a hereditary original sin, Ricœur identifies a hyperbiological definition that is created partially in an effort to preserve this communal element

⁵⁰ Ricœur, 57 and 74.

⁵¹ Ricœur, 55.

⁵² Ricœur, 83.

of unity of humanity, captured in the ecclesial phrase, “nous autres pauvres pêcheurs,”⁵³ (‘we poor sinners’). He states the need to try and maintain some aspect of the corporate, that is captured in the Adamic myth and the avowal of confession, prior to an “fanciful explanation.”⁵⁴

Nonetheless, across his chapter on sin, we already see a tension developing regarding individual and communal sin, which results in the elimination of the category of the corporate. This communal dimension of sin is captured throughout the Hebrew scriptures, as seen in the example of the religious rites of the purgation of the temple.⁵⁵ Ricœur highlights this within the symbol of captivity, which points towards a historic, communal event, as well as an individual experience of bound freedom. Ricœur, who already posits an exclusively individual model of responsibility in *Freedom and Nature*, traces the development towards this position across defilement, sin, and guilt. He does not present the possibility of plural modes, but instead traces an almost linear development. He writes, “There is no question of denying that the personal imputation of fault marks an advance over the scandalous collective responsibility that permits someone other than the guilty person to be punished. But it must be understood that the price of this advance is the loss of the unity of the human species, gathered together ‘before God’ by the

⁵³ Ricœur, *La symbolique du mal*, 2:85. While Ricœur employs religious language here, it is not entirely clear that Ricœur limits this symbol to the church community. In an essay from 1958, entitled “Le Droit du Punir,” (“The right to punish”) Ricœur proposes that one of the dangers of the persistence of this ecclesial mentality of “nous autres pauvres pêcheurs” (we poor sinners) is the tendency towards a substitutive rationality. Each individual fault is a mark against society, and so, like the scapegoat, the burden of the sin of the structures of society upon the individual criminal being tried. Cf. Paul Ricœur, “Le Droit de Punir,” *Cahiers de Villemétrie*, 1958, 1–26.

⁵⁴ Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 84.

⁵⁵ Cf. Jacob Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary: The Priestly ‘Picture of Dorian Gray,’” in *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 75–84; Baruch Schwarz, “The Bearing of Sin in the Priestly Literature,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, Ind.: J.E. Eisenbrauns, 1995), 3–22.

more than biological and more than historical bond of fault.”⁵⁶ In this citation, we see that the communal dimension of sin in its total and hyperbolic form is sacrificed along the road to personal imputation. But also, no space is carved out for a more intimate corporate sin, except perhaps one that is still governed by the logic of individual imputation. An arc is traced across these symbols, leading towards a collective achievement, namely the development of an individual imputation of responsibility found in guilt. This achievement comes at the cost of the collective “we.” In Chapter 2, I argue that such a sacrifice is premature and that recovery remains possible.

3.3: *Guilt*

The final symbol Ricœur treats is that one we are most familiar with as it best characterizes the symbol of evil in our world today. Guilt is marked by a rupture from defilement and sin by the radical move inwards. Fault is no longer founded on an externality apart from the agent: impurity and stain covering the violator or even sins imputed by God, describing a person’s actual situation, including sins forgotten or unknown. Instead, guilt focuses on the self-awareness of the sinner of their sin.

The internalization of fault leads to two significant developments: the individualization of responsibility through imputation⁵⁷ and the nuancing of fault by degrees of culpability.⁵⁸ With this first mark, there is a breaking away from the “we” of guilt, towards a concern for the individual. It is this conscious engagement with guilt through imputation which enables an extension of freedom over evil, identifying evil not as the situation in which humanity is caught, as with sin, but instead, as the origin point of evil, with its acts.

⁵⁶ Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 84.

⁵⁷ Ricœur, 106.

⁵⁸ Ricœur, 106; Ricœur, 102.

With this new, reflexive treatment of fault, another key development is the assessment of guilt according to degrees. Ricœur identifies this as a development within penal thought within Greek philosophy, supplementing a legalistic understanding of fault for a religious one. Whereas sin has at its extreme the infinite demand for perfection, guilt relativizes justice, identifying varying gravity among acts and varying degrees of complicity within acts.⁵⁹ Thus, the whole machinery of the voluntary and involuntary, ignorance and constraint, etc. are incorporated into the metrics of guilt and responsibility.⁶⁰

As Ricœur will remark in another text, this is one of the most significant achievements within moral thought.⁶¹ Why? Because it draws a link between actor and action, enabling the type of blame that is necessary to hold individuals accountable. The modern rhetoric of the Anthropocene is a valuable case for this. In identifying humanity as a single agent who is impacting the world on a global scale, there is an interesting way in which this unifies humanity in a similar way to Ricœur's conception of original sin, we sinners before God. This functions to cut distinct lines historically and currently between discrete actors and the effect of this action. It also levels the varying degrees of fault, to one, uniform level. All have sinned in this new Adam. If this is the sole means of figuring fault, then we lose the capacity to name those particular individual, corporations, and governments who have contributed to the great acceleration of carbon emissions. We also level out fault among all humans, assessing the blame as equal for the farmer in the amazon with the farmer in France, the American consumer with the Kenyan.⁶²

⁵⁹ Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 107.

⁶⁰ The negative side of guilt, which we will not go into here, is the development of the pathology of scrupulosity.

⁶¹ Ricœur, "Responsabilité et Culpabilité Au Plan Communautaire."

⁶²This problem is raised in Christophe Bonneuil, Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, and David Fernbach, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us* (London: Verso, 2016).

From this new development of guilt within the history of moral thought, arises a sense of responsibility. Ironically, it is in violating the law and experiencing guilt, according to Ricœur, that conscience is born: “a responsible agent appears, to face the prophetic call and its demand for holiness.”⁶³ While there is already a preceding sense of responsibility as fault, guilt makes possible a responsibility rooted in freedom, a responsibility that one imputes to oneself. This birth of responsibility is an important development, historically and phenomenologically.

3.4: The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought

For Ricœur, guilt inevitably finds its shortfall in the unending extension of law and the seeking of justification, which gives rise to a concept that Ricœur identifies as unreachable by logic alone: the servile will. This is captured in the apostle Paul’s symbol of the enslaved body, “obliterated freedom” as one yields oneself to unfreedom. Here, we see a resumption of the symbol of defilement, tempering an otherwise purely internal guilt, affirming the externality of evil and the primordial good.⁶⁴ Ricœur’s concluding section provides the warrant for the hermeneutical move. The self impacted by evil, cannot be expressed philosophically, because it becomes inscrutable to itself. It is only through symbol that this can be known.

Through the three primary symbols of defilement, sin, and guilt, Ricœur presents a progressive development towards the symbol of guilt, and the bound self as the picture of fault. Guilt is presented here as a moral accomplishment as it draws a tighter link between actor and action, culpability and punishment. While “Note sur la personne” blatantly, and *Freedom and Nature* more subtly identified the imputation of responsibility as an accomplishment of the person, here, we see the phylogenetic accomplishment of individual responsibility through the development of guilt.

⁶³ Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 143.

⁶⁴ See Ricœur, 155.

Yet, the disappearance of one key theme, the communal, raises a question. Does this narrative of progress towards guilt implicitly reject a “reactivation” of the other symbols? In this instance, Ricœur seems to identify that any appeal to defilement or sin would be a regression. It appears that a robust model of responsibility-as-imputation forecloses the possibility of considering more communal forms of responsibility (and fault). The victory of individual responsibility seems total. As I shall treat in Chapter 2, though, Ricœur returns to this question, pushing at the edge of imputation, and proposing the need for a supplementing model.

Nevertheless, certain limits are already set. There is a moral danger to modeling a vision of fault and responsibility in which those who have not committed fault are (justly) punished for these transgressions and crimes. There is a need to preserve the effects of the moral revolution that are born out through guilt and imputation: a sense of ownership, a nuancing of guilt, and an affirmation of freedom. As Ricœur returns to the question of guilt and responsibility at the communal level, these limits will persist.

What can be said about this progression is that it fits neatly into a narrative that privileges the individual imputation of guilt, allowing one, to use the language of “Notes sur la personne,” to claim solidarity with one’s actions, even negative actions. This emphasis on the subjectivity of guilt (in contrast to the objectivity of sin) will remain an important current in Ricœur’s conception of responsibility, particularly as we turn next to the concept of capacity and attestation.

Section 4: Responsibility and l’Homme Capable

The final development in Ricœur’s work on agential responsibility-as-imputation is his identification of responsibility as a capacity and his incorporation of it into a more expansive philosophical anthropology, a philosophy of *l’homme capable* (the capable man, or more

accurately, the capable human). Already I have highlighted several antecedent elements to this move: a view of responsibility and the person as an accomplishment; the presence of inchoate and explicit forms of imputed responsibility in the philosophy of the will, and individual responsibility as a phylogenetic achievement of humanity in moral thought in *The Symbolism of Evil*. This latter element suggests already a possible role for larger institutional frameworks to play a role in the development, support, and recognition of capacities.

With the turn towards the self as *l'homme capable*, there is a significant shift in both temperament and method. Guilt largely fades into the background. While perhaps still revelatory, it is also dangerous, more paralyzing than enabling, a point sharpened by a turn to a capacity approach which is concerned with both power and impotence.⁶⁵ Ricœur identifies his work as moving from the “culture of guilt” of the 1950’s and 1960’s to a greater appreciation of human capacity,⁶⁶ as found in his 1986 Gifford lectures (later partially published as *Soi-même comme une autre*⁶⁷ or *Oneself as Another*⁶⁸). There, he builds up a picture of the self around four basic activities: speaking, acting, narration, and imputation, later adding more capacities to this list, such as promising and inserting oneself into a symbol system. The move, though, is more than one of emphasis. Drawing in these various elements under the new concept of *l'homme capable*, brings a distinct perspective, with a renewed emphasis on identity, the reflexive self, and a host of basic capacities that rank responsibility as one among them. In turn, this affects the role of

⁶⁵ Ricœur’s discussion on the possibility of guilt as contributing towards an impotence to act in the interview entitled “Entre convictions et Tolérance” (“Between conviction and tolerance”) is illuminating on this point. See Paul Ricœur, A Fraise, and Y Brault, “Entre Conviction et Tolérance. Interview de Paul Ricœur,” *Adire* 9 (May 1993): 9–26.

⁶⁶ Ricœur and Antohi, “Memory, History, Forgiveness.”

⁶⁷ Paul Ricœur, *Soi-Même Comme Un Autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

⁶⁸ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*.

responsibility, setting it alongside not just other basic capacities, but also other moral capacities, identifying a constellation of capabilities.

Capability has gained a more prominent place in recent ethical inquiry through the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.⁶⁹ One of the aims of the capabilities approach as it is found in these two authors is to enable a “thin” ethic that can function within a liberal democracy. Nussbaum’s conception of capacity has a pragmatic function, serving to guide policy makers, rather than to develop a robust philosophical anthropology. Thus, there is a greater emphasis on the catalogue of recognizable everyday capacities. These capacities already bear a certain predilection towards their articulation as rights, in which the aim of society would be making possible the fulfillment of these capacities. Nussbaum identifies in the list of capabilities a range elements which fall out of Ricœur’s perspective, as they do not fit in the scope of his philosophical anthropology. These include longevity of life; the capacity to have basic needs filled like food, shelter, and movement; the capacity to avoid unnecessary pain; the ability to use senses, to have attachments, the capacity for a conception of the good, the ability to care for others and animals, to laugh and play, etc.⁷⁰ These capacities are meant not only to be universal among humans, and thus fitting for a pluralistic context, but also subject, to some degree, to empirical metrics, so as to be of use for policy makers.

⁶⁹ See Amartya Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). Ricœur at several points references Amartya Sen and his work on capabilities as influential to his own. Cf. Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, 134–35. While Ricœur takes up this discourse more explicitly later in his career, one can trace its antecedents throughout his work.

⁷⁰ Cf. Martha Craven Nussbaum, “Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings,” in *Women, Culture, and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*, ed. Martha Craven Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover, WIDER Studies in Development Economics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 83–86.

While Ricœur also proposes capabilities that can function within a pluralistic setting, his claims venture deeper than Sen and Nussbaum, in so far as his treatment of it is a philosophical anthropology of human capability. What is a philosophical anthropology? Ricœur writes, “By philosophical anthropology I mean an inquiry aimed at identifying the most enduring features of the temporal condition of man—those which are the least vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the modern age.”⁷¹ In attending to deep and enduring structures, Ricœur hopes to draw out elements central to the human condition, irrespective of the times. His work on *l’homme capable* draws together a constellation of core concepts that inform his work on particular capacities: identity as reflexivity and attestation, idem/ipse, and nesting capacities among others. In contrast to Sen and Nussbaum, then, the capacities to which Ricœur attends are those basic and enduring capacities that play a fundamental role in the development and construction of the self.

One key difference between Ricœur’s approach and Sen and Nussbaum’s is that he privileges the reflexive, first-person perspective. I have already identified this as implicit in both the imputation of responsibility and guilt. It takes a new meaning within a capabilities approach, uncovering for the self capacities that are buried and inaccessible. A first-person perspective is another key difference in Ricœur’s approach from a social scientific approach. Already in Ricœur’s career a first-person subjective view is privileged. Here, Ricœur aligns himself with the reflective philosophy tradition, exemplified in Jean Nabert. Ricœur writes, “reflectivity, emphasizes the mind’s attempt to recover its power of acting, thinking, and feeling—a power that has, so to speak, been buried or lost—in the knowledge, practices, and feelings that

⁷¹ Paul Ricœur, “Action, Story and History: On Re-Reading The Human Condition,” *Salmagundi*, no. 60 (1983): 60.

exteriorize it in relation to itself.”⁷² As we see here, reflexivity takes on a more pointed meaning in a capacities approach. While capacities could be described externally, in Ricœur’s work, a reflexive approach augments the importance of capacities and our awareness of capacities. It allows for a self to actually exercise those capacities.

But gaining a reflective awareness of the self is in no way self-evident. Ricœur, who coined the phrase hermeneutics of suspicion, is well aware of our capacity to self-deceive and dissemble. In *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur refers to our present state as the broken *cogito*: after Nietzsche and Freud, we no longer have the capacity for the certainty of Descartes. This does not lead to the dissolution of the self or our capacity to act. But it does require new modes of considering our knowledge of the self.

Ricœur’s intervention into this murky landscape of self-delusion, self-deception and self-doubt is to introduce the concept of attestation. Attestation within philosophy is considered a weak warrant for a proposition. Ricœur adapts this concept in *Oneself as Another* to describe as a knowledge about the self (and thus about selves) that can be maintained in the midst of skepticism and suspicion. It is quite distinct from its epistemic counterpart. It is not a strong doxic belief about the world, but a weaker, yet more fundamental affirmation, not an “I believe that” but an “I believe in”⁷³ present within our most fundamental activities.

This intersects in an important way with Ricœur’s sense of capacities. When one speaks, acts, narrates or imputes responsibility, present therein is the fundamental affirmation of one’s capacity to speak, act, narrate or impute responsibility, that is, one can speak, one can act, and so on. Ricœur’s attestation preserves a form of knowledge distinct to the first-person perspective

⁷² Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricœur, *What Makes Us Think?: A Neuroscientist and a Philosopher Argue about Ethics, Human Nature, and the Brain*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 4.

⁷³ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 21.

present in his reflexive approach. We are not necessarily always cognizant of this knowledge. It can be obscured, forgotten, covered over, and, in both extreme and banal circumstances, pounded out of one.⁷⁴ Yet, this knowledge is within our grasp. It is inchoately present in these basic activities. It is the knowledge, a trust more than a certainty, that when I speak, act, narrate, and impute, that I am a being who can speak, who can act, who can narrate a story about others and myself, who can impute both authorship and responsibility to myself.

With the concept of attestation, Ricœur provides a new foundation for the first-person perspective that has been present in his work since his early writings on the person. Here, that revelatory aspect of myself as actor and myself as one who can impute responsibility is attested to, and recognized by the self. Ricœur is identifying that the awareness of myself as a person who can impute responsibility to myself is a key part of my becoming a moral human being.

Is this simply a general affirmation? Ricœur is not explicit on this point. Still, his indication that we seek recognition for our capacities within different domains of our life would suggest that these fundamental capacities do invite particularization.⁷⁵ I hold that a claim to this capacity for responsibility in the family sphere points both towards one's general ability to impute responsibility, but also one's particular ability within this specific sphere. Likewise, the

⁷⁴ Ricœur's comments on torture in *Oneself as Another* are illuminating on this point. See Ricœur, 220–21. Elaine Scarry's seminal work *The Body in Pain* perhaps illustrates even more the destructive capacity of torture. It is not mere self-esteem which is destroyed, but even basic capacities central to self-esteem, such as our capacity to narrate our own experience. See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Torture is an extreme, interpersonal instance, rarely encountered. Simone Weil does an excellent job in her essay "Factory Work" of identifying the banal ways in which structures and institutions can *boulverse* or bulldoze over the individual. See Simone Weil and George Andrew Panichas, "Factory Work," in *The Simone Weil Reader* (Mt. Kisco, N.Y.: Moyer Bell, 1977), 53–72.

⁷⁵Paul Ricœur, "Asserting Personal Capacities and Pleading for Mutual Recognition," in *A Passion for the Possible: Thinking with Paul Ricœur*, ed. Brian Treanor and Henry Isaac Venema (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 22–26..

failure for my capacities to be recognized, particularly in this case, the capacity to impute responsibility, can lead to an impotence—capacities always also include incapacities.⁷⁶

How, though, do we go from attestation to a capable self? Another important piece of Ricœur's picture is a complex understanding of identity, which both incorporates reflexivity, while also preserving a more static, enduring understanding of identity. Ricœur accomplishes this through the distinction of *idem* and *ipse*.

Idem characterizes those enduring features of identity that give a stable sense to identity over time, particularly as seen from a third-person perspective.⁷⁷ Ricœur looks to the word *soi-même*. *Même* translates to "same." While this linguistic distinction does not exist in English, with it, Ricœur wades into a discussion which has been present since John Locke. Sameness for Ricœur indicates that aspect of identity which always remains the same across time. Thus, my mother can identify that I, Michael, am the same as the Michael represented in a picture of me when I was seven. There is a preservation of my identity in a strict manner across time.

Ipse is that self-awareness characterized by attestation. This is simultaneously constituted by self-awareness and self-determination. How might this be so? *Ipse* refers to selfhood, that part of identity which we recognize and attribute to ourselves. This is perhaps better described with recourse to another term, narrative identity: the process by which we draw together disparate

⁷⁶ This is also applicable in other spheres. For example, an employee at a mortgage firm can be told that it is not her responsibility to think about the ethical issues involved in providing loans to future homeowners who do not have the assets to support such a loan. Pushing responsibility up always to the higher levels is a means of insulating moral inquiry, and debilitating the full moral development of individuals.

⁷⁷ We see here a similar category to that of the "individual" from his earliest essay and the involuntary necessity of "character" in *Freedom and Nature*. While both those earlier works involved some form of relation, captured in "incarnation" in "Notes sur la personne" and the meaning of the voluntary found in reciprocal relation to the involuntary in *Freedom and Nature*, in *Oneself as Another*, there is Ricœur's best treatment of this interrelation under the category of narrative identity. For an accessible treatment of this category, see Ricœur, "Life in Quest of a Narrative Identity."

parts of our sense of selves: our history and memories, our jobs, our capacities, our values, as well as important figures in our lives. We draw upon these potentially discordant elements, in order to try to construct a concordance, a sense of ourselves. Thus, I have incorporated new aspects of my identity into my own self-identity over my life: I was not only the son to my mother, but I became the brother to a growing family, an uncle to my nephews and nieces, a husband to my wife, and son-in-law/brother-in-law to a new family. I also came to understand myself as an ethicist, a student of religion, and scholar of Paul Ricœur. These each are aspects of my identity that I have grown into.

This bears directly upon Ricœur's understanding of imputation. Whereas it is possible to ascribe an agent and even causality to an agent, only a self can impute. He writes, "Ascribing is what is done by anyone, by each one, by one, in relation to anyone, each one, one."⁷⁸ We can ascribe an action to ourselves, just as we can ascribe it to any agent. The agent is not anonymous, but nevertheless replaceable. Only a self, however, can impute responsibility to herself. Here we are reminded of the force of Ricœur's first treatment with this: a person stands in solidarity with their action. This is not mere ascription of causality or even guilt. It is the owning of an action by a self. This is an important achievement, which I do not want to diminish, even as I stress the limits of individual imputation in the face of corporate harms. Thus, in Chapter 8, I devote a section to exploring the limits of responsibility-as-imputation for environmental ethics before turning to the supplementary account of a responsibility for the fragile.

In Ricœur's treatment of capacities, he does not present a single capacity that defines the self, such as the ability to act and impute, as we see in his earlier text, but a host of capacities which are nested in to each other. These capabilities go far beyond economic markers of success.

⁷⁸ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 35.

For Ricœur, basic capacities are those distinctive powers (innate and acquired) that mark out the human. In *Oneself as Another*, he works through four powers, reflexively known in their very practice. He introduces this as responses to the question “Who?:” who speaks, who acts, who narrates, who imputes. The affirmative, I speak, I act, I narrate, I impute, to which Ricœur later adds, I promise, all can be reformulated as capacities: capacities to speech/language, meaningful action in society and nature, the ability to emplot events, making sense out of a world that already bears the imprint of narrative, and the ability to claim authorship and responsibility for my actions. Already, we can see how these capacities are not simply attested to, but that they play a key role in the very formation of our ipse identity. It is only a self who can narrate, who can pull together the disparate events of their own lives. It is only a self who can impute responsibility who can identify themselves as authors of not just their actions, but their life, and claim responsibility for it. These are nested capacities, with later elements dependent on the former.

In many respects, Ricœur’s work *Oneself as Another* represent the beginning of his mature articulation of his capabilities approach and not its summation. For example, Ricœur adds additional basic capacities. In *Oneself as Another*, imputation stands alone as the moral capacity of the self. But later texts add additional fundamental moral capabilities such as “promising,”⁷⁹ entering into a symbolic order or an order of recognition, and placing oneself under the rule of justice.⁸⁰ With these new capabilities, intersubjective and social elements are introduced. After all, we are always promising before someone. It follows that one of the virtues of a capabilities approach is this ability to discover related capacities that shed light upon ourselves.

⁷⁹Ricœur, “Asserting Personal Capacities and Pleading for Mutual Recognition.”

⁸⁰ Ricœur’s essay “Le destinataire de la religion: l’homme capable” seems to present his most capacious understanding of the capabilities that emerge with the self. See Ricœur, *Écrits et Conférence 3: Anthropologie Philosophique*, 415–44.

This expansion of Ricœur's treatment of capacities is evidenced in his evolving treatment of the concept of imputation. In Ricœur's initial definition of imputation in *Oneself as Another*, the concept already appears reliant on another capacity not named there. He writes, "The term "imputation" can be used to designate the act of holding an agent responsible for actions which themselves are considered to be permissible or not permissible."⁸¹ When we impute, we are already considering acts to be either permissible or impermissible, suggesting a sense of praise and blame operative in action and imputation. This added moral layer of considering acts as permissible and impermissible suggest that already imputation itself is dependent on a prior capacity, a capacity to recognize permissibility and impermissibility. Such a capacity is analogous but not equivalent to a more traditional understanding of conscience in the tradition of moral theology, exemplified in the Thomistic idea *synderesis*, a habit which grasps and directs us to the first principle of practical reason: seek good and avoid evil. Rather than a prescriptive sentiment that dictates particular actions (as conscience sometimes described), treating first principles, Thomas's *synderesis* points to a more basic capacity that does not need investigation, namely the apprehension that there is a good that is desirable and an evil that is to be avoided. The most significant point is illuminated by the terms "permissible" and the "impermissible," which signals a more Aristotelian social understanding of norms.

Ricœur provides a candidate for such a capacity in his later reflections. In his 1996 essay, "Le destinataire de la religion : l'homme capable," ("The destination of religion : the capable human") he identifies such a capacity, which is "the capacity of an acting subject to submit her

⁸¹ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 99. "On peut appeler imputation l'acte de tenir un agent pour responsable d'actions tenues elles-mêmes pour permises ou non permises." SA, 121

actions to the demands of a symbolic order.”⁸² It is by this capacity, that a subject is able to recognize themselves under obligation, to see certain acts as permissible or impermissible.⁸³ In Chapter 3, I will identify institutions as playing a central role in embodying this symbolic order.

The capacity approach underlines a central facet to Ricœur’s philosophical anthropology. We do not arrive into this life (or into institutions) as fully formed subjects. Indeed, Ricœur’s turn to capacities draws special attention to the desire to live in just institutions, as those very institutions become a central part of our formation of our fundamental capacities: the threshold of humanity is our life in institutions. In the subsequent chapters, I will develop this theme. At this time, it is worth highlighting that this presents a developmental picture of the human, one that is phenomenologically rooted, however, and not psychologically rooted.

With the developmental self, one can find a warrant for claims implicit in the picture of the person that Ricœur presented first in “Note sur la personne.” If our becoming persons, or rather, capable selves, is an accomplishment, it is precisely because we do not enter this world as formed subjects, but instead as developing creatures. Just as individual guilt is symbolically developed

⁸² “[...] la capacité d'un sujet agissant à soumettre son action aux exigences d'un ordre symbolique.” Ricœur, *Écrits et Conférence 3: Anthropologie Philosophique*, 418.

⁸³ In the extended quotation, We see in this capacity Ricœur’s embrace of Kantianism, as well as wider social forms of obligation. He writes “La force de l'adjectif symbolique est d'englober sous une seule notion emblématique les multiples présentations qui peuvent être dites figurer l'injonction: impératif, injonction, mais aussi conseil, avis, coutumes et traditions, récits fondateurs dédiés à des vies exemplaires, éloges de sentiments moraux dont le respect ne serait que l'un d'entre eux, à côté de l'admiration, la vénération, la culpabilité, la honte, la pitié, la sollicitude, la compassion, etc. En outre, le terme symbolique rappelle par son étymologie que ces figures, qui ensemble composent le schématisation de l'obligation, opèrent comme les signes de reconnaissance entre les membres d'une communauté.” Ricœur, 418–19.

(“The force of the adjective symbolic is to enclose under one sole emblematic notion the multiple presentations which can be said to figure injunction: imperative, injunction, but also counsel, advice, customs and traditions, founding stories dedicated to exemplary lives, praises of moral sentiments of which respect would be only one among them, besides admiration, veneration, guilt, shame, pity, solicitude, compassion, etc. In addition, the term symbolic recalls by its etymology that these figures, which together make up the schematization of obligation, act as signs of recognition between the members of the community.”)

over time, so too individual responsibility is an achievement that is reliant on key symbolic structures which aid in its attainment. This gives a certain opening to considering areas of growth within this capacity.

Another implication of this is that capacities will vary from person to person. Capacities involves both powers and impotencies. Ricœur recounts in an interview of a conversation with a judge where the same young defendants that he saw before him in the court did not know the word “stealing.”⁸⁴ An inability to set actions meaningfully into a social context of significant language leads to an inability to properly impute responsibility. This extends to each of the capacities. Our ability to act will vary according to our respective power. Our ability to narrate varies according to natural and acquired talent. Likewise, events in our lives and structures can serve to inhibit either the development of our capacities or our awareness of them. While his phenomenology of the will indicated an inchoate capacity to impute responsibility, built into our own sense of guilt, here we are given a more finely tuned language for treating variance in capacities.

The diversity of capacities and their dependence upon each other presents a much more nuanced understanding of human development. Recall, in earlier works, Ricœur privileged a call and a responsibility as born out of that call as a marker of the person. In Ricœur’s mature philosophical anthropology, there are a host of nesting capacities, important on their own and for other capacities, enabling the consideration of the developing capable self. Even these are the most basic capacities, that is to say, those distinctive capacities which mark us off as human. Ricœur, identifies that there are a host of other capabilities, acquired and developed in the

⁸⁴ Ricœur and Antohi, “Memory, History, Forgiveness,” 18.

respective spheres of our lives, leading us to seek recognition for these capabilities.⁸⁵ The benefit to Ricœur's approach is that it elevates central capacities that are fundamental to the human, while remaining open to the host of capacities discovered in life. This enables a privileging of those capacities fundamental to our personal and social development without neglecting or denying the expansive and expanding field of human capability.

Another strength of Ricœur's position is that it allows a developmental analysis. Development, that is to say, the honing and acquiring of capacities is already presupposed in the nesting of traits that Ricœur presents above. This developmental analysis can be presumed from a few indicators. First, if one's ability to impute responsibility is reliant on other basic capacities, then we must assume an ontogenetic process by which one becomes a moral person. Second, even if we did not have these interdependent capacities, Ricœur identifies that these most basic capacities are "at the intersection of the innate and the acquired."⁸⁶ Already I have indicated that Ricœur identifies that personal responsibility is a cultural development. This would imply that the imputation of responsibility is not innate, counterfactually to our I experience, but instead acquired.

The developmental aspect of our capacities points towards another feature pivotal to this dissertation, which can only be touched on briefly in this chapter: the role of institutions in the development of our capacities. An interpersonal aspect to our capacities is already quite obvious. Speech often presupposes someone to whom we are speaking. As assumed across Ricœur's work, action often implies both an agent and a patient. Responsibility incorporates the interpersonal as it acknowledges one to whom we hold ourselves responsible. Yet each of these

⁸⁵ Cf. Paul Ricœur, "Capabilities and Rights," in *Transforming Unjust Structures: The Capability Approach*, ed. Mathias Nebel and Nicholas Sagovsky (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 17–26; Ricœur, "Asserting Personal Capacities and Pleading for Mutual Recognition."

⁸⁶ Ricœur, "Asserting Personal Capacities and Pleading for Mutual Recognition," 22.

capacities also already points towards a social or institutional aspects. Some of these institutional elements are mere background conditions. For example, while we may speak to an abstract person, this speech act already presupposes a shared language that extends beyond the interpersonal. Indeed, this is the institution of language. The same is true of meaningful action⁸⁷ or promise making. Is it simply the “institution” of accountability upon which a capacity to impute responsibility is reliant? Perhaps, though I suspect that this is an abstraction from a variety of ways in which individual responsibility is propagated across civil society.

Yet Ricœur’s interest in the role of institutions in capacities extends beyond more abstract institutions like language, to include the very concrete peopled institutions of state and religion, as well as the whole host of social bodies that play a role in bestowing recognition. The state is instrumental in providing a “public space of appearance,” which allows for us to exercise our capacities publicly.⁸⁸ Religion provides a whole new set of capacities beyond those of the state. And each organization plays a role in self-esteem, as it recognizes or fails to recognize capacities. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, this is a central warrant for the incorporation of a desire for just institutions into our basic (subjective) ethical aim. That is to say, there is a fundamental desire for just institutions, because institutions are essential to our achievement of our capacities and for other selves to likewise acquire and perfect their capacities.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Here one might point towards George Herbert Mead, early American pragmatist, who theorized a third-party observer as a part of every significant action. See George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

⁸⁸ Ricœur adopts this concept from Hannah Arendt in *Oneself as Another*.

⁸⁹ Aristotle also stands in the background of this discussion. For Aristotle, the polis play an essential role in the formation of the citizens who form a part of the polis. Thus, different constitutions give rise to distinct forms of citizens. See Aristotle and Stephen Everson, *The Politics* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1988). That the formation of citizens is not simply incidental, but wrapped up in ethical considerations renders the question of which constitution one ought select not simply a question of expediency, but a question of ethics.

Institutions play a central role in the capacity of responsibility. As I have already noted, individual responsibility is a social achievement, which can be traced through the various primary symbols of evil (defilement, sin and guilt). Various institutions play a role as persons acquire this capacity developmentally, from systems of learning to judicial systems. Most importantly, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, institutions extend not only our reach for power, but also our responsibility.

In sum, Ricœur's later work sets the imputation of responsibility among a list of basic capacities, which serve as distinguished markers of humanity. These capacities are interrelated and increasingly dependent on the other. The imputation of responsibility is the bridge towards our ethical capacities. Each of these capacities are tied into Ricœur's reflective philosophy, emphasizing the subjective. Priority is given to selfhood over sameness, without negating the importance of sameness. This places a stronger emphasis, then, on the self-imputation of responsibility than on the attribution of responsibility. Yet, the shattered cogito likewise points to our capacity for dissembling. Thus, the knowledge of self, and in particular of one's capacities is not on the order of epistemic doxa, with the strength of Cartesian certainty, but instead the trust of attestation. Ricœur's reflexive philosophy is not simply concerned with the knowing subject, but the acting subject. These initial points are important as we go beyond the bounds of attributable responsibility to consider the limits of responsibility both at the level of collective action and institutions.

Today, the polity is one among many institutions that forms us. Again, the structures and values of institutions are not neutral, but play a vital role in shaping the ethical member requiring moral analysis, such that you can have a person fulfill the ethical obligations of a group, even become an ethical exemplar for the groups stated goals, while being morally abhorrent when placed under the scrutiny of moral analysis.

Ricœur's treatment of the capacity to impute authorship/responsibility represents the height of his development on this theme. Ricœur nests it among a host of capacities, incorporating into a model of the self that is not static, but developing. The central role of attestation in affirming our capacities is also highlighted. He opens a space to consider more fully the role of institutions regarding our capacities. He likewise allows for a consideration of a variance of capacities among individuals.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the dominant model of responsibility in Ricœur's work—agential responsibility-as-imputation—across four moments in Ricœur's career: personalism, phenomenology, his early hermeneutics, and the capacities approach characterized by his mature hermeneutical phenomenology. The concept of responsibility-as-imputation is preserved as an important thread across Ricœur's career, ever pointing back to an agent: the person, the free actor, the bound self, and finally the capable self. Ricœur's work on imputation has advanced it in important ways vis-à-vis the involuntary, while also historicizing it as a presence in moral thought through his archeology of symbols. Finally, in his turn to a capabilities approach, Ricœur formalizes reflexive aspects already present inchoately in his thought, he provides greater nuance, allowing readers to discuss its role among other capacities, including moral capacities, such as promising, and inserting oneself into a symbolic moral order; a variation of capacities among individuals. Ricœur presents, then, a robust vision of responsibility-as-imputation, which addresses the involuntary, its achievement through the symbols of evil, and its role within a developing picture of the self. It consistently plays a central role in his philosophical anthropology, and its conceptual use is not diminished, but only enhanced by the addition of multiple capacities through which to understand it.

I have also hinted along the way in this chapter that there have been one key costs in this emphasis on imputation: a turn away from the communal to the individual. In this chapter, I have identified the development of a robust picture of responsibility-as-imputation. In the subsequent chapter, I shall attend to its limits and will introduce a supplementary account of responsibility, a responsibility for the fragile, that serves to respond to deficiencies of responsibility-as-imputation, opening up space for a social account of responsibility that nevertheless remains rooted in the self.

Chapter 2: Responsibility for the Fragile and the Stain of Association

The question of guilt raises often the question of “who?” Who acted? Who is responsible? Who is complicit? Who is guilty? In the previous chapter, I explored one powerful tool for exploring this constellation of questions by tracing responsibility-as-imputation across four distinct moments in Ricœur’s career. But, when harms are inflicted by individual agents, but are caused by collectives and institutions, the question of “who” is stretched and pushed to the limit: “Who” no longer has a clear, single answer and there is no clear single agent to impute responsibility. Who is responsible for systematic racism, environmental degradation, or societal wide economic inequality? Are our guilts accorded to our discrete contribution or does our participation render us guilt for the whole? Even as particular actors may be held responsible in systematic injustice, due to the role they hold or flagrant abuses they help perpetuate, this does not exhaust the question of guilt. The failure of the responsibility-as-imputation model to adequately account for communal and collective forms of guilt suggests the need for a more expansive form of responsibility.

In this chapter, by tracing the arc of Ricœur’s work on collective guilt and expanded forms of responsibility, I argue that he develops an account of responsibility through attention to the fragile that supplements responsibility-as-imputation and leads to responsibility for institutions¹ and that enables me to develop a negative account of such responsibility as the stain

¹Ricœur is explicit that this is a supplementary account. See Paul Ricœur, “Responsibility and Fragility,” *Arc* 21, no. Spring (1993): 8. This emphasis on a supplementary account has an impact on the subject of responsibility. In contrast to other major theories of institutional responsibility, the initial locus of responsibility for Ricœur’s more developed account of social responsibility is not the collective, but the self. See Peter A. French, *Collective and Corporate Responsibility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) and Tracy Lynn Isaacs, *Moral Responsibility in Collective Contexts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Such a starting point allows us to tackle head on the challenge of claiming responsibility for institutions in which one might have had little to no role in bringing about. One finds a similar starting point in

of association. Such an account of responsibility is a vital first step in crafting an institutional ethic. I trace the development of Ricœur's treatment of social guilt and social responsibility through his career. In Section 1, I identify key changes in his treatment of more collective forms of guilt as he moves from an outright dismissal of these more expansive forms of guilt on the basis of a narrowly defined model of responsibility-as-imputation, towards an identification of the need to address a more varied understanding of guilt. In Section 2, I reconstruct a new model of responsibility for the fragile that supplements responsibility-as-imputation, in which the individual responds to the call of responsibility from the fragile other, which extends over the institutions that mediate our lives with the social other. In the third and final section, turning back to the question of guilt, I propose directions towards the development of an understanding of guilt which complements this model of responsibility for the fragile, attendant to the dangers which Ricœur identifies in his later career that guilt can pose to individuals. Thus, with this chapter, I will both reconstruct a Ricœurian model of responsibility that can extend to institutions and construct a form of guilt as the stain of association, that affects all who belong to institutions afflicted with structural injustice.

Section 1: The Problem of Guilt and Communal Responsibility

Ricœur's does not first address collective guilt in the abstract. Unlike the case with the imputation of individual responsibility treated in Chapter 1, he does not start by carving out a

Larry May's social existential approach. See Larry May, *Sharing Responsibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Whereas, May develops an account of retrospective shared responsibility, the social account of responsibility I reconstruct in Ricœur is prospective. Nonetheless, I propose the need for an articulation of some sort of moral stain to reflect our participation in unjust institutions. This moral stain is akin to May's moral taint, which derives from May's reading of Karl Jaspers's category of metaphysical guilt (which I will treat later) and Anthony Appiah's discussion of divestment in South Africa. See May, 146–62. While Ricœur ultimately appears to shy away from guilt, I construct here a negative articulation of our expanded responsibility, built on symbols endemic to Ricœur's work as found in *The Symbolism of Evil*.

distinctive place for a consideration for collective responsibility in relation to the person or their capacities. Instead, Ricœur first wades into this question in response to the events of the day that defy the nuanced metrics of individual guilt: the events of World War II and the Holocaust.²

Ricœur first treats the question of collective guilt in response to Karl Jasper's seminal 1946 text *Die Schuldfrage (The Question of German Guilt)*³.

Written following World War II, in *The Question of German Guilt*, Jaspers seeks to address the question of German guilt in light of the Nazi atrocities and to provide resources for self-examination. Drawn and expanded from talks that were first given to professors at the University of Heidelberg, it seeks to present an honest description of guilt for the German people in a time of accusation and confusion. Jasper's aim is to respond to a crisis of the nation by helping Germans to have a better understanding of themselves both before others and before themselves. Thus, with his typology, he can respond to both those who through different techniques seek to evade a self-ascription of guilt—according to Jaspers, in Germany, “No one is guiltless”⁴—as well as those who misapply different kinds or degrees of guilt to themselves. Jaspers has a stake in this question, wrestling with his own sense of guilt as a German who did not support the Nationalist Socialist Regime.

² Ricœur discusses in an interview that he had an interest in guilt before the war. Indeed, it was even this which first attracted him to Jaspers, the subject of Ricœur's first book. On this point Ricœur states, “Gabriel Marcel avait publié avant-guerre les premières études en français sur Jaspers, en particulier un grand article sur les situations-limites, qui m'avait considérablement frappé car je commençais alors à me préoccuper du problème de la culpabilité.” (“Gabriel Marcel had published before the war the first studies in French on Jaspers, in particular a grand article on the boundary situations, which struck me considerably, for I had begun thus to preoccupy myself with the problem of guilt.”) Joël Roman, Etienne Tassin, and Jacques Message, “J'attends la renaissance, interview with Paul Ricœur,” in *A quoi pensent les philosophes* (Paris: Autrement, 1988), 175. As far as I can tell from his published works, Ricœur does not address the question of culpability in a direct manner until after the war.

³ Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*.

⁴ Jaspers, 16.

The core of the book revolves around a distinction of four different kinds of guilt: criminal guilt, political guilt, moral guilt and metaphysical guilt. Since Ricœur later adopts these four categories in his own work on guilt, it is worth laying them out in full. These four forms of guilt transition from more individualistic forms of guilt to more communal forms of guilt, and likewise move from an external and objective accuser to an internal accuser. Further, each of these is distinguished according to the arbiter of guilt and the mode of expiation or response. While they are distinct in type, in actuality, Jaspers identifies that they often can overlap. Further, while distinct, they each are unified in metaphysical guilt.

Criminal guilt is perhaps the most recognizable forms of guilt. This book is written with the Nuremberg trials (1945-1946) in the background, where German atrocities were attributed to the highest leadership of the Nationalist Socialist Government. The question of the criminal guilt of the wider populace was an as of yet undetermined question. Criminal guilt includes all those cases of violation of law. This need not be simply the positive law of the nation state; after all, in Germany, the 1935 Nuremberg laws legalized the early discrimination of the Jews. These joined a host of other regulations that allowed for the legal targeting and restriction of certain groups, including homosexuals, Jehovah Witnesses, and the disabled. Thus, Jasper's treatment of criminal guilt includes international laws and natural laws. Criminal guilt is tailored to individual acts, including complicit cooperation. There is an objective quality to this form of guilt, as it is the judge who assesses guilt. The response to this guilt is punishment.

Political guilt is perhaps the most controversial form of guilt that Jaspers identifies. Here, one is guilty for being a member of a state that has committed injustices and atrocities such as one found in Nazi Germany. Jaspers writes, "A people answers for its polity. Every German is made to share the blame for the crimes committed in the name of the Reich. We are collectively

liable. The question is in what sense each of us must feel co-responsible.”⁵ This too is objective, and is arbitrated by the “victor.” This liability takes the form of the response to this political guilt: reparations. The force of Jaspers distinction here is that it is inappropriate to apply the category of individualized, criminal guilt to an individual for simply being a member of a state, while still preserving the responsibility (and concomitant guilt) of a citizen for her state. As Ricœur will note, you cannot criminalize a people.

While political guilt is ascribed indiscriminately to all members of a state, regardless of their action, moral guilt brings the nuance of conscience, as an individual assesses her own action and inaction in larger corporate harms. Like political guilt, moral guilt is concerned with the actions of the state. In contrast, though, it removes itself from the strict confines of legal distinctions of criminal or non-criminal and into the realm of the conscience. Moral guilt is individual, even as it considers a realm of collective action. What is asked is how one has tacitly or explicitly supported or contributed by one’s action or inaction to the crimes of the state. Moral guilt is an acknowledgement that there are chains of action that lead to political violence and injustice, and that several actors contribute to this chain, without ever rising *per se* to the level of criminal guilt. Here, the arbiter of guilt is not an external judge, but one’s own conscience and the response to this guilt is repentance and transformation of the self.

The final category, metaphysical guilt, is the broadest. Here, Jaspers moves once more to a collective form of guilt. Metaphysical guilt is a result of a failure of human solidarity. “This solidarity is violated by my presence at a wrong or a crime. It is not enough that I cautiously risk my life to prevent it; if it happens, and if I was there, and if I survive where the other is killed, I

⁵ Jaspers, 55.

know from a voice within myself: I am guilty of being still alive.”⁶ This solidarity extends beyond the bounds of normal duty. While survivor’s guilt has become a mainstay of holocaust literature to describe the guilt experience in having survived the camps, Jaspers’s metaphysical guilt expands to include every event of witnessing injustice. The ubiquity of this type of guilt makes it almost analogous to original sin. Here, Jaspers also brings in a religious focus. The ultimate arbiter of metaphysical guilt is not the judge, victor or conscience, but God. The response to it is a pious and humble transformation of self before God.

While Jaspers’s distinctions are instructive, on the whole, there are several ways in which they are problematic for my own project of considering a responsibility for institutions and, thus, cause for not adopting them directly, but instead taking of taking the longer detour through Ricœur. Jasper’s work is distinctly shaped by his post-war period context. For example, the arbiter of political guilt is designated as the victor. Such occasional writing hinders here Jaspers’s conceptualization. Who is the arbiter of political guilt today? This is complicated in circumstances of structural injustice, where there appears to be no definitive victor. Further, the weight placed on the objective end of political guilt also seems to erode the possibility of an imputed personal responsibility. Instead, political guilt reads more like a justification for the types of sanctions that can be placed upon a state following war. Moral guilt is perhaps the most promising form of guilt to consider for structural injustice in so far as it does concern itself with any act of commission or omission (within the realm of duty) in supporting the unjust acts of the state. Nevertheless, Jaspers’s text does not set out to provide a general ethic. Additional theorization is needed to parse out precisely what type of moral accountability individuals do have for structural injustice. At the end of the chapter, I propose that the concept of the stain of

⁶ Jaspers, 65.

association can similarly help us to today to think reflexively about our own contemporary moral situation. Now, though, I turn to the role that *The Question of German Guilt* plays in Ricœur's own trajectory of thinking on collective harm and responsibility.

1.1: Ricœur's Response

Ricœur's engagement with *The Question of German Guilt* is the initial means by which he approaches the question of non-individualistic forms of guilt and responsibility.⁷ While Ricœur is initially quite critical of Jasper's typology, he engages with this book at multiple points in his career. As such, I can use his various treatments of this book and related themes to track Ricœur's developing position on the question of collective guilt and non-individualistic forms of responsibility. Ricœur first treats *The Question of German Guilt* in 1949, two years after it was first published in German in an article entitled "La culpabilité Allemagne." This article is divided into four parts, with the first two sections devoted to exegesis, a third section devoted to critique, and a fourth section that considers the implications of this text for France. While some of Ricœur's initial critiques remain constant across his career, there is an overall shift in tone which centers around one question: is there such a thing as non-individualistic, collective guilt.

In this first article, I identify certain analyses that remain consistent across Ricœur's career. Ricœur establishes that one of the polarities set up across Jasper's four types is between distinction and unification. He does not criticize Jasper's for identifying distinct aspects of guilt, but he does question whether there are indeed distinct forms of guilt. In this early text, Ricœur

⁷ This was far from Ricœur's first exposure to Jaspers's work. Ricœur had already published a monograph with Mikel Dufrenne that treats Jaspers's philosophical work prior to the publication of *The Question of German Guilt*. See Mikel Dufrenne and Paul Ricœur, *Karl Jaspers et la philosophie de l'existence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1947). In fact, Ricœur will consistently identify Jasper's treatment of guilt as a limit-situation, as addressed in Ricœur's own monograph, as influential on his own understanding of guilt. I will treat this influence below in section 3 of this chapter.

stresses that the different forms of guilt each are unified not against the backdrop of the metaphysical (as Jaspers argues), but the “legitimate” forms of guilt labeled here (criminal, moral, and metaphysical—not political) are all aspects of the same one, individual guilt: a moral guilt that is transposed into different contexts and against different measures. Ricœur writes, “It seems that this is the same guilt, moral and individual, which first projects itself on the plane of the law—where crime can be defined by the stranger—then reflects itself on the plane of conscience—to the plane where the friend can help, but not the stranger—and finally it measures itself to the demands of the infinite, divine, perfect love, before whose eyes, ‘there is no just, no, not even one.’”⁸ Ricœur stresses then, the pole of unification over distinction. For Ricœur, there are not four types of guilt—not even three—instead, there is one guilt that manifests different aspects as it is projected against separate planes with distinct audiences, accusers, and allies. In identifying all the types of guilt as the same moral guilt, he suggests that this can provide the necessary unifying moral concept to underlie these different aspects of guilt. This is insurance against the arbitrariness of placing guilt in the eye of the accuser.

Political guilt and, more generally, collective guilt are, however, notably absent from Ricœur’s reconstructive summary cited above, where it is the same moral and *individual* guilt which warrants and unifies the distinct types of guilt. When Ricœur turns to his evaluation of Jaspers, his sharpest critique falls on Jaspers’s concept of political guilt. This critique takes two approaches: 1.) that it is not moral, and thus not properly a form of guilt, 2.) that it is not truly collective in any meaningful sense.

⁸ “Il semble donc que ce soit la même culpabilité *morale et individuelle* qui d’abord se projette sur le plan de la loi — où le crime peut-être défini par l’étranger —, puis se réfléchit au plan de la conscience — au plan où l’*ami* peut encore aider, mais non plus l’étranger —, et enfin se mesure à exigence infini, divine, de l’amour parfait aux yeux duquel ‘il n’est pas un juste, non, pas même un seul’.” Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 152.

Ricœur's first critique is that political guilt is not properly moral, but instead a form of *dommage* or tort. Recall that Jasper's identified a few characteristics to political guilt. The subjects of political guilt are the citizens of a polity, now subject to the judgment of the vanquished. It is distinct from criminal guilt; and people are not criminalized, thus such citizens cannot be prosecuted criminally on the basis of being members of a vanquished polity alone. Furthermore, the manner of responding or expiating this guilt is through various forms of reparations, be it fiscal or be it as a limitation of power. Jaspers's category seems to serve two goals: first, it justifies the harms citizens will incur as a result of reparations and restrictions on autonomous self-government. Second and more fundamentally, it draws a link between a polity and its people, such that all Germans are guilty for the actions of the state, regardless of their wishes, aims, and intentions. Ricœur locates a problem first through teasing out that which appears to bind political guilt together. Jaspers writes, "A people must answer for its polity."⁹ What is it that binds them then? Citizenship? Membership? If so, on Ricœur's account, then it would appear to extend to emigrants and even opponents to the regime. We might even further posit that this would extend to victims of state action who are a part of that regime. As such, according to Ricœur, this seems to fall outside of the realm of not only guilt, but also responsibility.¹⁰ Instead of guilt, Ricœur identifies this as tort as one might find in a civil suit: an action which leads to liability and civil damages, but not criminal guilt. Each bear indirectly the burden of this tort claim against their nation, and will suffer the consequences of it as a social body. There is a moral aspect to this tort given the actions taken by the Nazi state. It is not for Ricœur, however, a distinct form of guilt, nor even an aspect of moral guilt.

⁹ Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, 55.

¹⁰ Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 150.

Ricœur's second critique is more telling. Here, he argues against the notion that there can be such a thing as collective guilt. According to Jaspers, it is a guilt that all members of a polity bear. He distinguishes it from criminal guilt, so it is not prosecutable before a judge. Nevertheless, Ricœur calls this collective only in an improper sense. It is collective in a "statistical" manner and not by way of actual attribution. He argues, "it is collective by a lack of distinction of innumerable individual guilts; not by nature, but by defect of enumeration. Collective guilt only ever has an improper sense—it leads to two things: a sanction, which can be collective on the purely political plane of tort; and a guilt which, by the indivisible accumulation of individual faults, fuses with the collective responsibility of tort."¹¹ It is evident here that Ricœur is not carving out a space for such a thing as collective guilt. The very notion of collective guilt appears here to be the work of abstraction and averages, accumulation, fusion and confusion. Even as there may be collective acts, it appears that guilt is only tied to one's discrete participation in those acts. Both guilt and responsibility are on this account individual.

As indicated by my reconstruction of responsibility-as-imputation in the previous chapter, this focus on the individual is neither contingent nor incidental. The individual imputation of responsibility for one's actions was Ricœur's primary understanding of responsibility and guilt throughout most of his career (even as this underwent developments in *Oneself as Another*). Ricœur identifies the awareness of moral responsibility as a distinct achievement for moral thought.¹² Ricœur's shift of focus in his reading of Jaspers to the individual maps on to Ricœur's broader understanding of historical moral progress. To set this in themes of *The Symbolism of*

¹¹ "[...]elle est collective par indistinction des culpabilités individuelles innombrables; non par nature, mais par défaut de dénombrement. La culpabilité collective n'a jamais qu'un sens impropre—elle se ramène à deux choses: une sanction, qui peut être *collective* sur le plan purement politique du dommage; et une culpabilité qui, par cumulation indivise des fautes individuelles, fusionne avec la responsabilité collective du dommage." Ricœur, 150.

¹² Ricœur, "Responsabilité et Culpabilité Au Plan Communautaire," 3.

Evil addressed in the previous chapter, the move away from the indiscriminate attribution of fault found with the symbol of stain and defilement towards an individualized understanding of fault represents a moral victory in so far as the overarching moral symbolic order supports the imputation of responsibility for one's action. To then later allow an indiscriminate application of fault (as found in political guilt) would seem to be a regression that undercuts this moral development by derailing the link between act and agent.

I deduce that the focus on individuals and on action as the medium of guilt harmonizes well with an arc in Ricœur's thought that traces across his career: a growing development of a philosophical anthropology of the capable self. At this early stage in his work, to focus on the communal elements of fault can be seen either as a confusion, as Ricœur identifies above, or even worse, a moral regression, as a community falls back to a culture of shame and stigma that divorces action from actors. But that is not the end of the story.

1.2: A new form of collective guilt?

The question of collective guilt does not remain settled for Ricœur. In 1958, nine years after he first treated Jaspers, Ricœur returns again in his article "Responsabilité et Culpabilité au plan communautaire" to the question of responsibility, guilt, and Jaspers—this time with a particular attention to the question of collective guilt. In stark contrast to his earlier treatment of Jaspers, Ricœur argues that there needs to be an articulation of a collective form of responsibility for today, which can supplement the achievement of individual responsibility.¹³

¹³ This text is written during the development of *The Symbolism of Evil*, in which Ricœur traces multiple conceptions of fault, including the model of sin, which contains both a communal and a personal dimension of fault. This hermeneutical expansion is likely as responsible (if not more so) for this expansion in Ricœur's thought on guilt as the events of the day that he cites as illustrating the need for such an expanded model of guilt.

This article proceeds in four parts. First, Ricœur discusses individual responsibility, identifying briefly the developments that have led to this achievement through both penal and religious reflection. Then, Ricœur turns to collective responsibility, an idea present in ancient thought, at risk of being lost today. He identifies in the Jewish notion of sin, an idea of collective responsibility that is irreducible to individual responsibility. In the third part, Ricœur identifies three contemporary events located in different social spheres that illustrate the need for a robust concept of collective responsibility, rather than simply applying the paradigm and metrics of individual responsibility. These are alienation in social structures, war, as found in the Nazi actions in the holocaust, and the recent French colonial history (and war) in Algeria. Finally, Ricœur raises the question of how one might develop a more robust understanding of collective responsibility and guilt by again turning to Jaspers.

This essay establishes at the outset the achievement of individual responsibility. Here, Ricœur uses the language of *conquête* (conquest) to describe the development of individual responsibility, identifying it as “the greatest victory of the moral conscience.”¹⁴ This victory results, according to Ricœur, from developments within penal thought, which prior to the individualization of guilt, resided in the sovereign (political or religious) who is offended. A similar revolution takes place, according to Ricœur, in religious thought, evidenced through the developments during the exilic period, as individuals were no longer seen as inheritors of their father’s guilt. For Ricœur, these developments reduce the arbitrariness of both punishment and suffering. Focusing solely on prominent texts treating responsibility in Ricœur’s work such as *The Symbolism of Evil* or *Oneself as Another*, this might be the sole narrative one adopts, and thus present a skewed picture of responsibility in his overall work.

¹⁴ “la plus grande victoire de la conscience morale.” Ricœur, “Responsabilité et Culpabilité Au Plan Communautaire,” 3.

In turning to collective guilt, Ricœur identifies that the achievements of individual responsibility can eclipse the real truth inherent in the concept of collective guilt. This might be effected if the history of moral development is construed as a linear progression, where an achievement means the negation of something prior. Ricœur writes, “[...] collective responsibility does not only contain archaic beliefs, destined to be abolished by the new affirmation of individual responsibility; it contains also a profound truth threatened to be lost.”¹⁵ Focusing on the archaic, one might dismiss the wisdom present in the idea of collective guilt. Ironically, Ricœur himself might have fallen prey to this trap nine years prior. A similar danger can be attributed to our relation to “myths.” As Ricœur notes in the *Symbolism of Evil*, a project he likely was working on when he wrote this text, when we identify something as a myth, we indicate that we no longer regard it as our proper history. The danger lies in then taking a second step, stating that as myth, it no longer has something to say to us or our times.

Ricœur’s argument proceeds through a few steps. He first identifies collective guilt through attention to the idea as it is found in Jewish texts. Here he identifies that within the idea of a sin held in secret, unknown to all but God, there is a place for both individual guilt and communal guilt.

This truth—the Jewish idea of a sin held secret—far from reducing itself to the sentiment of guilt, that is to say, to the subjective conscience of being guilty, this idea expresses more rather the true situation of man before God, beyond all effective conscience, this realism of sin, irreducible to variable opinions and more or less moving of interior guilt, makes also a place for a guilt irreducible to this or that individual, to an evil striking the morals of the community of people considered as a whole, to a sin indivisible into individual sins.¹⁶

¹⁵ “[...] la responsabilité collective ne contenait pas seulement une croyance archaïque, destinée à être abolie par l’affirmation nouvelle de la responsabilité individuelle; elle contenait aussi une profonde vérité, menacée d’être perdue.” Ricœur, 3.

¹⁶ “Cette vérité, l’idée juive du péché en gardait le secret: loin de se réduire au sentiment de culpabilité, c’est-à-dire à la conscience subjective d’être coupable, cette idée exprimait plutôt la situation véritable de l’homme devant Dieu, par delà toute conscience effective : ce réalisme du

There is a stark contrast here from his prior treatment. Whereas collective guilt before was simply the statistical aggregation of individual fault, here he identifies that communal guilt and individual guilt can exist side by side, one irreducible to the other. Ricœur identifies the prophetic denunciations of whole cities by Amos as indicative of a form of collective guilt. Ricœur neglects, but could have also turned to the legal resources of scripture, such as Leviticus, where a “scapegoat” is necessary to clean the interior of the temple of the accumulated sins of the people, sins not washed away by an individual’s own rites of ablution and work of expiation.¹⁷ The key point, coherent with Ricœur’s thought, is that one can find within the Jewish textual tradition rich resources for figuring fault in both its individual and communal dimension.

Turning to the present, Ricœur asserts that with a rise in a concern for individual responsibility, there is likewise a diminishment in concern for social justice, and a failure to properly diagnose them. Blinded by individual responsibility, one might say, echoing H. Richard Niebuhr, that people fail to really ask the question, “What’s going on?”.¹⁸ Or, in asking this critical question, people may frame their answers purely individualistically. Instead, Ricœur notes that matters of social concern, such as the unequal redistribution of wealth, the exploitation of the poor, and slavery are viewed as individual faults, rather than social ills.

In order to buttress his claim for the need for collective guilt, Ricœur highlights three examples which rebuff the application of individual guilt: alienation, the Nazi war crimes, and

péché, irréductible aux appréciations variables et plus ou moins émouvantes de la culpabilité intérieure, faisait aussi sa place à une culpabilité irréductible à celle de tel ou tel individu, à un mal frappant les mœurs de la communauté du peuple considérée comme un tout, à un péché indécomposable en péchés individuels." Ricœur, 3.

¹⁷ See Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary: The Priestly ‘Picture of Dorian Gray’.” See also Schwarz, “The Bearing of Sin in the Priestly Literature.”

¹⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

the recent colonial experience of war in Algeria. Then he further uses these examples to highlight how these cases not only resist an individualistic framework, but how a failure to attend to collective dimensions can lead to further harm. His choice of examples range from the seemingly benign to the horrendous. With the case of alienation, here specifically meaning the insights of a Marxist critique of an alienation of workers from the products of their labor and the institutions and powers which affect their labor,¹⁹ Ricœur identifies that earlier critiques of money within both philosophy and religious thought were limited in so far as they addressed economic issues as an individual fault. Here there is a failure to see the real problem, which leads to its perpetuation.

With the case of the Nazi war crimes, Ricœur highlights the dangers of the myopic vision of individualistic responsibility within the penal process of Nuremberg, leading to a miscarriage of justice. Ricœur writes,

Each accused, entrenched behind the categories of individual guilt, found an alibi in the commandments of a superior, in group-suggestion [groupthink], in the education received; from alibi to alibi, the physical destruction of several million Jews became a crime without criminal; and it was true in a sense, for the crime was the product of a system, and it was impossible to exit the system swarming with individual consents and neglects which permitted it, without which anyone has, properly speaking, produced it.²⁰

¹⁹ This is the first definition Ricœur gives within his 1968 encyclopedia entry on alienation. See in Paul Ricœur, "Alienation," in *Encyclopædia universalis*. (Paris: Encyclopædia universalis France, 1968), 660–64. He proceeds in that entry to identify the semantic variances and ambiguities of the term. In "Responsabilité et culpabilité au plan communautaire," Ricœur's use is quite straightforward and general.

²⁰ "Chaque accusé, retranché derrière les catégories de la culpabilité individuelle, trouvait un alibi dans le commandement d'un supérieur, dans la suggestion du groupe, dans l'éducation reçue; d'alibi en alibi, la destruction physique de plusieurs millions de juifs devenait un crime sans criminel; et c'était vrai en un sens, car le crime était le produit du système, et il était impossible de faire sortir le système du fourmillement des consentements et des abandons individuels qui l'avaient permis, sans qu'aucun l'ait à proprement parler engendré." Ricœur, "Responsabilité et Culpabilité Au Plan Communautaire," 4.

A narrowly prescribed use of individual responsibility gives rise to the evasion of responsibility, as the metrics of imputation fail to capture the complexities of collective action in the form of systems and institutions. Not only does this lead to a failure to treat the whole, but it likewise eliminates the ability to properly treat the parts, where individual actors do indeed contribute to the crimes that make up the whole. Conceptual constraints create the “crime without a criminal.”

Finally, with the Algerian case, an issue directly tied to his intended French audience, Ricœur identifies how a failure to attend to the collective dimensions of colonialism can lead to the justification of things which would never be allowed at an individual level. Ricœur highlights how torture, which is practically universally denounced, gains justification within a colonial context. The thread of his critique does not end, though, with the actions of the colonizing state, but of the whole system of colonization itself. These three instances not only illustrate the need for non-individualistic forms of responsibility because they present a gap in our analysis—a failure to properly analyze the problem—but also because a failure to attend to these aspects distorts our moral judgment, leading to the excusal of terrible crime and the justification of others. The absence of a broader account of responsibility has deep impacts on understanding the past, attending ethical issues in the present, and making plans for the future.

I contend that this essay represents a turning point in Ricœur’s work. He poses the question of how to move forward. Given the evolution of moral thought to the point of embracing individual moral responsibility, would it not simply be a reversion to revive the idea of communal sin? Ricœur turns, in fact, towards Jaspers as an instance of the type of creative rethinking of guilt that is needed. Whereas Ricœur held reservations about collective forms of guilt, and thus collective forms of responsibility in his earlier treatment of Jaspers, here we see

an (unacknowledged) reversal. In the fourth section of the essay, Ricœur returns to Jaspers, suggesting that he marks an initial path towards treating the question of collective responsibility.

Ricœur maintains certain reservations about Jaspers's particular categories. Whereas previously, Ricœur critiqued political guilt for being amoral and collective, here, he simply critiques it for its amoral character. He suggests that locating the judge with the conqueror leads to an arbitrary application of guilt. Ultimately, Ricœur suggest that political guilt is a false category, a "fantome,"²¹ not because it is collective, but precisely because we have not properly attended to the collective dimensions of moral guilt.

But Ricœur suggests that Jaspers has taken the right step. We must multiply the categories of guilt. We need a pluralistic understanding of responsibility in order to account for "nous autres pêcheurs" (we other sinners).

Ricœur does not provide a solution here, but he does begin to point towards what such a responsibility would need to account for: our shared lives together as they traverse institutions. Ricœur writes, "This part of humanity which is not 'me,' but 'us,' is likewise challenged by ethics; humanity can only respond via the institution; when humanity does not respond, it is culpable, but culpable in its failing institution. Thus, the 'we' can be guilty like the 'I.'"²² In response, then, to his earlier question: "Who, therefore, confesses institutional sin?"²³, we find a response: We do. I will treat this "we," and the ways in which our lives are related to one another through institutions in the following chapter. Such an account of responsibility for institutional failures are vital for developing a response to institutional harms in general, but, as I will treat in

²¹ Ricœur, 5.

²² "Cette part de l'homme qui n'est pas moi, mais nous, est également interpellée par l'éthique; l'homme n'y répond que par 'l'institution; quand il n'y répond, il est coupable, mais coupable dans son institution défaillante. Ainsi le 'nous' peut être coupable comme le 'moi.'" Ricœur, 5.

²³ "Qui donc confessera le péché institutionnel?" Ricœur, 5.

Chapter 8, it is particularly apt for treating environmental harms insofar they result from our collective action.

But opening up the possibility of collective guilt mediated through our institutions, Ricœur raises a problem. If guilt, as we saw in Chapter 1, can disclose a form of responsibility and agency, what does collective guilt reveal? What capacities does this point towards? With these questions in mind, I turn to Section 2 of this chapter, arguing that a new form of responsibility develops within Ricœur's work capable of meeting the conceptual needs posed by this form of guilt. Here, we do not see a replacement of responsibility-as-imputation, but an additional form of responsibility, which can serve to better articulate the responsibility mediated through our institutional relations: a responsibility anchored in fragility.

Section 2: Responsibility for the Fragile Other

As the previous chapter demonstrated, responsibility-as-imputation has played a central and developing role across Ricœur's corpus from his earliest writings to his developed vision of *l'homme capable*. The last section illustrated the limits of Ricœur's early myopic embrace of an individual account of responsibility when it came to issues of collective guilt raised by Jasper's work and indicated a (unacknowledged) reversal in his work on the question of collective guilt and responsibility. Despite this shift, he did not issue retractions and neglects to philosophically warrant the communal model of guilt and social responsibility he calls for. But his late-career engagement with Hans Jonas provided the occasion to develop just such a social account of responsibility, though now to the neglect of guilt.

In this section, I turn to a second model of responsibility which develops out of Ricœur's engagement with the work of Hans Jonas. Through Ricœur's engagement with Jonas in the early 1990's, he adapts and adopts a supplementary model of responsibility, which he incorporates into

his developing capabilities approach, thus filling in a critical gap. For this enables Ricœur to philosophically warrant the type of institutional responsibility he already proposes in the late 50's, while still rooting it in the first-person capabilities approach that is developed through his career. This new model—a responsibility for the fragile—is marked by three characteristics: it is 1.) prospective, 2.) anchored in the fragile,²⁴ and 3.) experienced as a call or charge. While Ricœur draws on aspects unique to Jonas's position, this supplements, rather than replaces Ricœur's more traditional conception.

I argue that Ricœur's new model provides the philosophical basis for a model of social responsibility, including but not limited to political responsibility. This foundational picture of responsibility for the fragile other, I contend, creates a framework of social responsibility not anchored in a particular political model or even institutional model (such as the church), even as it is inevitably informed by these contexts. I will work through each of the characteristics of this responsibility for the fragile, identifying the preexisting roots within Ricœur's work, and exploring the implications of this framework. Hence I will show that Ricœur's social account of responsibility is not mere adoption of Jonas, but creative dialectical engagement leading to the integration of a new account of responsibility into Ricœur's vision of the responsibility that impinges upon the self.

²⁴ I should note that "anchor" is my own locution and not Ricœur's. This characteristic, while central, needs to be read as part of the is but one feature of a constellation that makes up the concept of responsibility here. With anchoring, I am indicating that responsibility is tethered to fragility (but not grounded in it). It is not simply a question of is equaling ought. This fragility qualifies the call and enables us to speak of it across human communities. Thus, while responsibility is experienced as a call, the call of the fragile is distinct from other calls one might feel: the call of the erotic, the call of vocation, the call to community, and so on.

2.1: Ricœur reads Jonas—Towards a Responsibility for the Fragile

In 1979, Hans Jonas published his seminal text, *The Imperative of Responsibility, In search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*.²⁵ In this text, Jonas identifies that today we have unprecedented power as a result of technological developments to affect people and environments at greater distances from ourselves across space and, more importantly, in time. Our power is such that it can threaten our very human existence. This leads Jonas to propose an imperative to not act in such a way as to imperil the conditions of responsible human existence. In the preface of *The Imperative of Responsibility*, Jonas proposes that it is necessary to place responsibility at the center of ethical thought, for the reason that “Responsibility is a correlate with power and must be commensurate with the latter’s scope and that of its exercise.”²⁶ I read Jonas as implicitly arguing this model of responsibility is not novel, but is already implicit in the social roles found across several human societies when he looks to the parent and the statesman as archetypes of this responsibility. With the former, he places emphasis on the fragility of an infant which elicits our responsibility. In contrast to the context that gave rise to ancient moral philosophy, today the effect of human action exceeds our visceral sense of our impact as it is stretched over time and space. To address the global problem posed by human power, Jonas asserts responsibility must be future oriented, and even rely on the imaginary of the “heuristics of fear,” as we will never be aware of the full effect of our actions. Jonas also proposes an alternative doctrine of being which, with the eclipse of religion, can help bridge the is/ought divide, and enable us to discriminate between different goals.

²⁵Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). This text was first translated into English in 1984 and into French in 1990. In *Soi-même comme un autre*, Ricœur cites the German edition. His more robust engagement with Jonas’s text follows its publication in French.

²⁶ Jonas, x.

Ricœur's engagement with Jonas's theory of responsibility stretches out over several years with his earliest, and perhaps best known, treatments reflecting the least significant impact and least penetrating analysis. In his first treatment of *The Imperative of Responsibility* in *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur primarily focuses on the temporality of responsibility, discussing the need to include a future orientation to responsibility. Here, he draws on Jonas's appeal for a consideration of the distant future in ethical decision-making, given the potential disastrous effects of human action on the environment. It is not altogether clear, though, that a prospective view cannot simply fit into his already developed theory of responsibility-as-imputation. In Ricœur's "little ethic," we do not yet get a new vision of responsibility.

But after the publication of the French translation of *The Imperative of Responsibility* in 1990, Ricœur gives a more extended treatment of Jonas's work over a series of articles that ultimately leads Ricœur to develop a new, supplementary account of responsibility: a responsibility for the fragile. With the 1991 article "Éthique et philosophie de la biologie chez Hans Jonas,"²⁷ Ricœur treats an expansive view of Jonas's two primary ethical texts, *The Phenomenon of Life* and *The Imperative of Responsibility*, in which he lays out Jonas's naturalistic ethic, and isolates a theory of responsibility for the fragile as a stand-alone concept that can exist apart from the naturalistic grounding Jonas provides. This is followed by a 1991 lecture, later published under the title "Responsabilité et fragilité,"²⁸ in which Ricœur presents a new model of responsibility to supplement the agential responsibility-as-imputation model reconstructed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. This text becomes the base for several different articles published in English over the next ten years by Ricœur. This model of responsibility

²⁷ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures 2: La contrée des philosophes* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1999), 304–23. This was first published in *Le Messager européen* in 1991 and later republished in *Lectures 2*

²⁸ Ricœur, "Responsabilité et fragilité."

continues to be incorporated into Ricœur's work, and remains present even in his final publication before his death, the *Parcours de la reconnaissance (The Course of Recognition)*.²⁹ It only finds extended treatment, however, in his essays on responsibility and fragility.

Thus, Ricœur isolates and highlights this key aspect of Jonas's framework, incorporating it into his thought. Is this simple appropriation? I would argue that here is an instance of the mode of dialectic that is operative throughout Ricœur's career. Ricœur is able to draw something distinctive out of Jonas's philosophy. Yet, through this exchange, Ricœur is also able to externalize and crystalize elements from his own thinking into this new figure, enabling a deeper engagement with concepts which preexisted in his own work. This is not always explicit, given Ricœur's penchant for not citing his own work. With the exception of the key element brought in by Jonas, an anchoring of responsibility within fragility itself, one can trace themes present across the three elements of this model of responsibility within Ricœur's prior work. But even with this external influence, as Ricœur incorporates this model of responsibility into his own definition—not as a replacement for responsibility-as-imputation, but as an integral supplement to it—responsibility becomes something new, with models describing different ways in which responsibility bears upon the self. In order to give parse this supplementary account such that I can use it constructively, over the next three sections, I now provide an analysis and contextualization of this supplementary model of responsibility according to its distinct elements: a responsibility that is 1.) prospective, 2.) anchored in the fragile other, and 3.) experienced as a call. Through attention to Ricœur's wider corpus, I will demonstrate that while Jonas serves as an important intervention for Ricœur in each of these three characteristics, it is not because of the adoption of a foreign framework as a new appendage (as might be presumed

²⁹ Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, 107–9.

from a bald reading of the texts), but because Jonas's texts leads Ricœur to creatively and critically integrate and synthesize latent themes already present in his work, now under the auspice of a new, supplementary responsibility for the fragile.

2.2: *A Prospective Responsibility*

When Ricœur first engages with Jonas' *Imperative of Responsibility* in *Oneself as Another*, it is precisely the prospective, future oriented aspect which he lifts out. Here, he identifies that in response to new technological powers, Jonas proposes a new concept of responsibility which takes "into consideration the long-term consequences of the decisions of public powers and of citizens in the age of technology."³⁰ Focusing on the effect of actions by authorities and citizens, Ricœur identifies that this is a push in the opposite direction from the deep focus on intentions. This stands in contrast to a concern of the interior as captured in the primary symbol of guilt and in the concept of imputation. Responsibility must now consider the effects into a distant future that pass well beyond our ability to predict.

Already, Ricœur is marking out that responsibility might be distinct from a traditional model of responsibility, lifting out the unique paradox of responsibility and action. He writes, "The consequence is paradoxical: with imputability, there can be guilt without realization, without actualization; with responsibility, there can be guilt without intention; the bearing of our acts, a concept we evoked above, extends beyond that of our projects."³¹ Here we might acknowledge that the subjective priority that we discussed above predominantly addresses our capacity, and need not first and foremost address the content of our responsibility.

Ricœur ultimately argues that both the retrospective and prospective responsibility are unified in the present. Here, it would be worth recalling that Ricœur had by this point already

³⁰ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 294.

³¹ Ricœur, 295.

engaged in his extensive study on time and narrative over three volumes. In the first volume, he draws on Augustine of Hippo to describe the human experience of time as a three-fold present, with the past as memory, the future as anticipation and the present as attention. An aporia arises as the soul stretches across these three experiences, giving rise to the experience of the dissented soul. Ricœur describes this as the human phenomenological experience of time. Ricœur's treatment of responsibility mirrors the understanding of human time found within *Time and Narrative*. Instead of simply privileging a retrospective view of responsibility attendant to past events, often known as accountability or guilt, space is carved out for an understanding of responsibility which is future oriented.

While Jonas impact on Ricœur around prospective responsibility is decisive, this is not Ricœur's first time suggesting the need for a prospective view in ethics or philosophy. In fact, a prospective perspective can be found during several periods of Ricœur's thought, though not always explicitly tied to the concept of responsibility. The concept of the prospective can be found much earlier in Ricœur's work than his treatment of Jonas. It is used to describe how artists employ symbols (such as of the of the human) with an inbuilt orientation towards future possibilities in his work on psychoanalysis³² and a way of understanding art's function vis-à-vis the self.³³ A prospective form of thinking is actualized under the notion of utopia, as a means of envisioning a different social future. It can play a role in moving a society from where it is to an as yet unrealized reality. This is more intimate than a simple horizon of possibility. In *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, the identity of the community incorporates not just history/memory, nor the present people, but also a consideration about who we might be in the future. Ricœur writes,

³² See "Psychoanalysis and the Movement of Contemporary Culture" in Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 121–59.

³³ See "Art and Freudian Systematics" in Ricœur, 196–208.

The deeper we dig under appearances, the closer we come to a kind of complementarity of constitutive functions. The ruling symbols of our identity derive not only from our present and our past but also from our expectations for the future. It is part of our identity that is open to surprises, to new encounters. What I call the identity of a community or of an individual is also a prospective identity. The identity is in suspense. Thus, the utopian element is ultimately a component of identity. What we call ourselves is also what we expect and yet what we are not.³⁴

The identity of the community, and then by extension, some aspect of personal identity (which, we might posit, incorporates the identity of community, while also having its own prospective identity) is bound up in prospection. In Chapter 8, I will illustrate with reference to contemporary scholarship in environmental ethics that one can adapt a traditional “polluter pays” account of responsibility to a prospective account. It nevertheless fails to account for the range of institutional mediations to the natural environment.

Prospection *is* tied to an understanding of responsibility in Ricœur’s social and political thought. In his 1965 essay, “Prévision économique et choix éthique,”³⁵ we see an early example of Ricœur’s turn towards both a vision of responsibility that is future oriented and that extends beyond a personal responsibility towards a communal vision of responsibility. Ricœur is responding to a particular vision of society, one which seeks to order itself according to social and economic rules towards greater success. He identifies that this type of social organization is not a matter of necessity,³⁶ but instead a collective choice. But this raises a problem, for up until now, ethical theory has largely been concerned with “personal choice” and not collective choice. When it has addressed larger societal issues, as “social ethics” have done, Ricœur identifies that

³⁴ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 311.

³⁵ “Prévision économique et choix éthique” was originally published in 1965. It was included in the third edition (1967) of *Histoire et vérité*.

³⁶ Here we see Ricœur standing in stark opposition to his contemporary Jacques Ellul, who indeed identified that we are so caught up in a “technological society” that choice and freedom in any real sense are eviscerated. See Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson, Extensive Underlining edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1964).

this is largely in response to issues of disorder or social injustice, and is largely retrospective.³⁷

Ricœur proposes that the question of a prospective view of society, anchored in collective choices in the present, requires a commensurate vision of responsibility, oriented to the future, attendant to our collective choices. He suggests that it is specifically the educators—here meaning an assorted group of agents and institutions that includes moralists, philosophers and churches—who are charged with the task of awakening our general society to this responsibility and responding to the obstacles which obstruct both the realization and carrying out of this responsibility.

But prospection does not truly distinguish an agential model of responsibility from this new model that I argue that Ricœur is proposing. Even within Ricœur’s 1949 *Le volontaire et l’involontaire*, there is already introduced a future oriented aspect with the idea of “the project,” though this is still well within the confines of a “predictable” future. The temporal element will remain a question for us to hold on to. It is with the second characteristic (anchoring responsibility in fragility) and third characteristics (experiencing it as a mandate/call), that we get a distinctive form of responsibility.

2.3: Anchored in the Fragile—Extended to the Institution

The distinctive feature of this supplementary account of responsibility is that it is not anchored in an agent’s capacity, actions, or even by the sphere over which they might exert their powers, as one might find in responsibility-as-imputation, but rather that it is anchored in another fragile human being. Thus, under this new model, responsibility becomes uniquely and distinctively other-regarding, for even the origin point of responsibility is shifted from my action

³⁷ As can be seen from the prior section, Ricœur himself contributed towards this type of social ethic with his essay “Responsabilité et Culpabilité au plan communautaire,” in which a non-individualistic, but still retrospective responsibility is posited.

and capacity to the vulnerability of the other.³⁸ How is fragility located in Ricœur's work preceding this engagement with Jonas? Where does this find itself located in Jonas's work? How does it fit within Ricœur's earlier treatment of fragility? What limits does he initially set for it and where does it extend?

The concept of fragility already runs well through Ricœur's career. He identifies it as characteristic of humans with regard to both their finitude and fallibility. He sees it embedded in politics and political language, the same force which helps carry out the decision of a historic community, can be used to oppress others. There is likewise a fragility in identity, in the encounter with another. With all this, the stage was ripe for an engagement with fragility at the level of responsibility. Jonas provides such an opportunity.

Ricœur draws this concept of a responsibility for the fragile from Chapter 4 of Jonas's *Imperative of Responsibility*.³⁹ Jonas's chapter opens by sketching out briefly the new ethical paradigm in which he embeds this vision of responsibility: Jonas roots goodness in being itself, and more specifically, within the notion of purposiveness, which is the yes of/to life that includes implicitly and forcefully a no to non-being. Being is concerned with the maximization of purposiveness, "enhancing its difference from non-being."⁴⁰ This fundamental saying of yes to

³⁸ Responsibility always has a feature that is other-regarding. The traditional model of accountability is parceled and accorded through the measure of one's action. Under this new model, responsibility is anchored not through one's past action, but in the fragile other, regardless of past action. Thus, while previous accounts are other-regarding, they are ciphered through the self's activities.

³⁹ See Chapter 4, "The Good, The "Ought," and Being: A Theory of Responsibility" in Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*.

⁴⁰ Jonas, 81.

being and no to non-being becomes the ontological grounds for an objective ethic, the rational grounds of obligation.⁴¹

Jonas also identifies that it is necessary to have a subjective ground, a psychological ground, which binds together the subject to the object. For this, he turns to the sentiment of responsibility, which he identifies as concerning itself first not with conduct or consequences, but the “*matter* that has claim on my acting.”⁴² This leads Jonas to identify two paradigmatic cases of responsibility: parental and political, both which have as their matter other human beings. It is to the perpetuation of responsibility within human beings, and thus within the world, to which one must first be responsible. This takes on a more concrete form, though, as Jonas highlights the vulnerability characteristic of humans, obvious within the infant, but present nonetheless in the citizen.

When Ricœur addresses this within “*Éthique et philosophie de la biologie chez Hans Jonas*,” he isolates this theory of responsibility from Jonas’s ontology. Ricœur identifies that the principle of responsibility is “autoreferential,”⁴³ and thus can be divorced from Jonas’s

⁴¹ One can see other authors who take up similar positions (but perhaps with greater clarity). For Example, William Schweiker’s research project on “enhancing life” can also be seen as circulating around a fundamental “yes to being.” Importantly, his work moves beyond individual organisms to systems. This allows for the viability of this project as he can incorporate the vital place for key disvalues such as the death of an organism due to predation, because these are in fact necessary for any ecosystem. See Klemm and Schweiker, *Religion and the Human Future*. As Arthur Schopenhauer indicates so evocatively, everywhere life consumes life. See Arthur Schopenhauer and David Berman, *The World as Will and Idea: Abridged in One Volume*, Everyman (London: J.M. Dent, 1995). If the “no to non-being” is incorporated too individually in a universalizing or global ethic, then one can fail to account for basic descriptive features of how we understand the functioning of the natural world in light of Darwinian theories of evolution. This is expertly addressed by Lisa Sideris. See Lisa H. Sideris, *Environmental Ethics, Ecological Theology, and Natural Selection*, Columbia Series in Science and Religion (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

⁴² Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 92.

⁴³ Ricœur, *Lectures 2: La contrée des philosophes*, 316.

naturalistic ontology.⁴⁴ The responsibility one takes to act so as to preserve humanity and the conditions fitting for humanity, is an act to preserve responsibility itself.

In Ricœur's adoption of Jonas, he sloughs off Jonas's specific ontological framework of purposiveness in being, and even discards the imperative of responsibility, lifting out simply the tie between vulnerability and fragility. Given Ricœur's earlier emphasis on fragility, it is not surprising that this theme resonated so well. Of all the elements which he could pick out, he isolated this one and reduced it to an ordinary everyday experience, the fragile around us.

But responsibility for the fragile is not responsibility for *any* fragile thing. Like Jonas, Ricœur roots this specifically in human fragility. In his own writing, Ricœur does not appeal to the circular logic of responsibility being responsible for the perpetuation of itself in other beings. Instead, Ricœur appeals to the experience of responsibility itself. He writes, "See, when a child is born: from the sole fact that it is there, it obliges. We are rendered responsible by the fragile. Well, what does it mean rendered responsible? This: when the fragile is not something, but someone, as in the case in all the situations considered— individuals, groups, communities, humanity itself— this someone appears as confided to our care, put in our charge."⁴⁵ Ricœur makes an appeal to the same instance as Jonas, the care for a child, but identifies within it a

⁴⁴ Ricœur is trying to separate the form of responsibility in Jonas's work from his naturalistic understanding of human morality. This is not divorced from ontology as such. But Ricœur does not make explicit how this fits into his own ontology of the capable human. I've tried to make explicit these connections in this chapter and the subsequent by attending to a negative capacity for guilt and a vision of us as capable institutional selves.

⁴⁵ "Voyez, quand un enfant naît: du seul fait qu'il est là, il oblige. Nous sommes rendus responsables par le fragile. Or, que veut dire : rendus responsables ? Ceci : quand le fragile n'est pas quelque chose mais quelqu'un, comme ce sera le cas dans toutes les situations considérées — individus, groupes, communautés, humanité même — ce quelqu'un nous apparaît comme confié à nos soins, remis à notre charge. Nous en sommes chargés." Ricœur, "Responsabilité et fragilité," 129.

phenomenal experience of feeling charged with the responsibility for someone which reveals a fundamental fact about this form of responsibility: it is anchored in a human fragility.

Anchoring responsibility in fragility does not yet give a full picture of what this fragility is, nor how it is making a claim upon us. In a commencement speech at McGill University, He states, “In speaking of fragility, we ordinarily think of a physical condition that results from our weakness, our vulnerability, our subjection to sickness and to death.”⁴⁶ This is, for Ricœur, a basic conception of our fragility: we are human beings who are vulnerable to forces, both natural and historical,⁴⁷ which can impinge on our flourishing and our being. There is, then, a basic objective component to fragility.⁴⁸ This enables a closer alignment with perspectives on natural laws account of human flourishing found in the CST tradition, though Ricœur privileges a first-person perspective that is often lost in the CST tradition’s tendency towards broader ethical pronouncements intended to form members of the church and impact political governance and

⁴⁶ Ricœur, “Responsibility and Fragility,” 7.

⁴⁷ Ricœur writes in the same speech, “By the fragile I mean both those who may perish by virtue of natural weakness and those who are endangered by the blows of historical violence which are incorporated in human action.” Ricœur, 8.

⁴⁸ There is an ambiguity in Ricœur’s work around the ontological status of the fragile. While Ricœur discards Jonas’s ontology of being and purposiveness, he maintains his own implicit ontology tied to a human fragility characterized by basic conditions of finitude that can be amplified by human activity. Setting human fragility alongside the experience of being called would seem to indicate that it is the claim made upon us by the fragile other, in virtue of their fragility, that grounds responsibility. And yet, he also states that the city is fragile (or perishable), thus grounding our responsibility for it (see Roger-Pol Droit and Paul Ricœur, “La Cité Est Fondamentalement Périssable. Sa Survie Dépend de Nous,” *Le Monde*, October 29, 1991, LexisNexis Academic.). Is it fragility as such that obliges us? Ricœur’s narrowing of a fragility that impinges on our responsibility to human fragility leads me to believe that it is not fragility per se that obliges us, but the distinct fragility of other capable humans. Further, “it is, Ricœur writes, always *another* who declares us to be responsible, who makes us responsible, or, as Emmanuel Levinas says, *calls* us to responsibility.” Ricœur, “Responsibility and Fragility,” 9–10. For Ricœur, responsibility cannot be divorced from the call. We see the phenomenal experience of being charged with responsibility is prioritized over simply attributing responsibility. This is to say the mere presence of fragility isn’t sufficient to describe this phenomenon; one must also feel called to responsibility. When we read this as a constellation of three distinct but necessarily related features, we avoid collapsing ought into is.

policy making. While human finitude is, perhaps, an original condition of fragility, it is amplified by technology, our increased power over our globe, and by our social life together.

Responsibility for the fragile can seem quite burdensome, and thus the limit to the human fragile other serves as an initial limit. In tethering responsibility to human fragility, Ricœur would initially seem to cut off whole other domains from the sphere of this form of fragility. It would not, for example, seem to be operative in animal rights. While limiting the fragile appears to make such an account more tenable, as I will discuss in Chapter 8, it also proves an obstacle to developing an institutional environmental ethic from Ricœur's work alone. There, I will look to the CST tradition to offer a corrective to this account. Yet, this account is not solely limited by the fragile human other.

Ricœur acknowledges that this responsibility for the fragile moves beyond the most basic instance. From a recognition of basic human fragility, he identifies distinct domains which amplify human fragility. In Ricœur's 1992 lecture, he identifies a pluralistic civil society, politics and international society as domains of fragility.⁴⁹ In his 1993 commencement speech, in addition to politics, he also identifies the ecosystem, life sciences, and the economy.⁵⁰ As I will elaborate in the subsequent chapter, each of these are fragile institutions, spaces which mediate our shared lives with others, through which human fragility is amplified. Our political life not only touches upon fundamental features of our basic fragility, but, as we shall see, our belonging to and recognition within public spaces is essential to our development as persons. The ecosystem, already touched upon extensively in Jonas's work, plays upon our basic fragilities. At the lower limit, environmental degradation can, among other issues, lead to food insecurity and an unequal distribution of the damages of pollution in the form of environmental racism. At the

⁴⁹ Ricœur, "Responsabilité et fragilité," 130–38.

⁵⁰ Ricœur, "Responsibility and Fragility," 7–8.

upper limit, it can serve as a threat to humanity itself. The life sciences, a theme also touched upon by Jonas, elicit the potential impact on future generations through the effect of genetic manipulation of future progeny. As the 2008 recession well indicated in the U.S., the economy can wipe out whole reservoirs of fiscal security, and lead to vast inequalities at the level of wealth and income that can affect an individual's basic capacity to thrive and even survive.

Ricœur moves beyond identifying these domains as simply spheres which mediate relations to human others, and thus venues for responsibility, to proper objects of responsibility themselves, rendered so as a result of the fragile humans dependent and affected by these domains. This is already signaled in Jonas, who extends a care for the human, to a care for the environment which can sustain this type of human. Ricœur affirms such a position within “*Éthique et philosophie de Hans Jonas*,” arguing not for a responsibility for the environment *qua* environment, but nevertheless extending a care for it as the land upon which humans live.⁵¹ This is likewise true for each of these domains: politics, economy, the life sciences, civil society and international society. Thus, when Ricœur says in an interview to *le Monde* that “The City is fundamentally perishable. Its survival depends on us [...],”⁵² we can also take this to imply that we are responsible for the city. It is precisely for Ricœur this human element, be it in social organizations or the environment, which elicit both a sense of the fragility within those mediums and bodies, but also a fragility which commands our responsibility.

In his book, *Paul Ricœur: The promise and the risk of politics*, Bernard Dauenhauer presents this model of responsibility for the fragile as Ricœur's conception of “political

⁵¹ In Chapter 8, I will argue that Pope Francis introduces a type of institutional logic in his symbol of nature as creation that enables us to speak of a care and responsibility for the environment *qua* environment.

⁵²“La Cité est fondamentalement périssable. Sa survie dépend de nous.” Droit and Ricœur, “La Cité Est Fondamentalement Périssable. Sa Survie Dépend de Nous .”

responsibility.”⁵³ Having passed through the extension of this responsibility beyond its most basic instance to the domains that amplify fragility, we are now in a position to affirm the veracity of Dauenhauer’s claim, but only in part. Ricœur develops here a model of responsibility, which by virtue of the fragile human beings affected therein can extend to the political. But it is not limited to it. Instead, it would appear as a far more expansive form of responsibility, which crosses multiple domains: the private and the public; the cityscape and the landscape; the polity, civil society, and the ecclesial; the corporation and the classroom. This responsibility is not grounded in any particular membership or contract (hypothetical or real), but in a relationship to the fragile other. Thus, with this supplementary account, Ricœur provides a political responsibility and a social responsibility without exhausting its application or grounding it in any one particular model of politics.⁵⁴

Despite its apparent unending capaciousness, Ricœur limits the understanding of fragility and, in turn, delimits responsibility. First, as I have noted, he limits it to the sphere of the human. But even within these confines, Ricœur further narrows the scope of fragility. In an essay first delivered as a lecture in 1992, “Responsabilité et Fragilité,” Ricœur distinguishes fragility from tragedy. Both concepts are close, as they each signal human finitude and are born from some human conflict. But it is precisely the link to responsibility which distinguishes fragility from tragedy. Here, we can see that the model of responsibility being articulated here is not supplanting the earlier model of responsibility-as-imputation, but instead supplementing it. What

⁵³ See Bernard Dauenhauer, *Paul Ricoeur: The Promise and Risk of Politics* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

⁵⁴ For me, this most critically means that we can locate this responsibility in non-democratic institutions such as the church or the corporation.

marks out a difference then, between tragedy and responsibility is a relation to human action. Tragedy carries with it a fatal dimension. But fragility elicits human action.⁵⁵

It is crucial to discern the line between fragility and other phenomena appear to limit responsibility such as necessities like chance, fate, fortune, luck, providence or even natural disaster.⁵⁶ Environmental degradation, for example, seems to raise the specter of fate. It is not by accident that contracts often exempt from “acts of God.” Issues such as climate change and resulting subsequent effects (like the Marshall islands disappearing from rising oceans⁵⁷) can appear like natural disasters—beyond even the categorization of the tragic because they appear not to be born from human conflicts. But anthropogenic environmental degradation is human action mediated through the natural elements, whether polluted waterways, overfished oceans, or even global warming, characterized by carbon filled atmospheric powers.⁵⁸ There can be a tragic

⁵⁵ Ricœur’s treatment of the tragic is not the only one, nor even the most compelling. A key feature of Ricœur’s picture of the tragic in this essay is an inability to respond. This appears to rest on an external sense of response. But David Tracy carves out a space for a response to the tragic as captured in necessities such as fate, providence, chance, luck, etc. This tragic is an active response which even enables joy amidst suffering. But what is key to take away from Ricœur is not his treatment of the tragic (which is not even limited to this essay), but his identification that while responsibility is not anchored in our capacity, fragility nonetheless presumes the possibility of a response.

⁵⁶ Ricœur restricts the distinction to fragility and the tragic. See Ricœur, “Responsabilité et fragilité,” 128. His distinction between the tragic and fragility can be given greater substance when seen in light of other domains presented. Following, for example, the case of debt and mortgages in the United States, there is a fate-like element to the crashing of housing markets. No one could really have any control over the prices of homes as our economy is currently structured. But the structures that leave borrowers bearing the full burden of this cost is a human institution, not subject to fate, but to human action. Human power is exerted over the lives of others. It thus is a domain of responsibility.

⁵⁷ Coral Davenport and Josh Haner, “The Marshall Islands Are Disappearing,” *The New York Times*, December 1, 2015, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/02/world/The-Marshall-Islands-Are-Disappearing.html>, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/02/world/The-Marshall-Islands-Are-Disappearing.html>.

⁵⁸ I remain convinced that global weirding better captures the effect (but not the gravitas) of climate change. I draw this from Thomas Friedman. See Thomas L. Friedman, “Opinion | Global

element where, born from over a hundred years of aggregate and institutional human action, as well as calcified cultures and economies incapable of change, there seems to be nothing we can do. Yet, where anthropogenic environmental crises, or even natural disasters,⁵⁹ interface with human institutions that render some more vulnerable than others, we are in a situation of fragility and responsibility. We are not, first and foremost, concerned with origins (which are the domain of responsibility-as-imputation), but in how we might respond. On this account, wherever there is a possibility for response, even amidst disaster, we are facing fragility, and, it follows, in a situation where we might be beckoned us to responsibility. Even as the catalyst of a catastrophe presses against the capacity for any particular individual to act, our institutions often stand as a sign of our basic capacity to respond together.

What is it that makes a responsibility for the fragile distinct from a responsibility-as-imputation model? The distinction between fragility and responsibility does not rest on whether the event is caused by a person or not. That something might be a natural disaster, like an earthquake removes the question of imputation for the cause of an event. If an event were the result of others, such as a CEO laying off workers, an outsider would likewise not impute to themselves responsibly for an event. Insofar as there are people affected by either by an

Weirding Is Here,” *The New York Times*, February 17, 2010, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/17/opinion/17friedman.html>.

⁵⁹ A natural disaster is not a tragedy in so far as it is not a “human conflict.” Yet, in the aftermath of disasters, human conflict is rife and can assume the same fatalism embodied in natural events. Looking closely at Hurricane Katrina, one can see how non-necessary human inequality leads to an increased frailty before the hurricane and inequitable harm after the Hurricane, particularly during the recover. This is brought home in a forceful way by Michael Dyson as he underlines the economic conditions and racial forces that red line disaster in Katrina. See Michael Eric Dyson, *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2006). As extreme weather events become more predictable and common in an age of “global weirding,” we will need to consider how our responsibility precedes such events, focusing on the bolstering resilience of human communities, particularly those without the resources to secure themselves.

earthquake or a famine, and it is possible for a person/community/institution to respond, then this bears on fragility and not the tragic (as Ricœur construes it). In this model, Ricœur does not ground responsibility in the human agency that does harm. Instead, he anchors it in fragility itself. This decoupling of responsibility from power allows for anyone to experience the call of the fragile and to feel the burden of responsibility. This shift is important, precisely because of the new circumstances to which this responsibility responds, circumstances where different collective spheres and domains mediate human action, affecting fragile persons. Yet an important piece of claiming responsibility, which has not yet been accounted for here, is how this model of responsibility binds to those agents it claims. Where does this connect with actual, capable selves who take responsibility? For this, we turn to the final characteristic, the call of the fragile.

2.4: The Call of the Fragile

The final characteristic of this responsibility anchored in fragility is that it is experienced as a call/charge. It is with this element, that Ricœur lifts out the preeminently social element of this model of responsibility, while also inserting it more explicitly into a vision of the capable self. Here, he rounds out the phenomenon of responsibility for the fragile, drawing the link between the object and subject of responsibility, while, through the notion of confidence, he makes possible a link between responsibility for the fragile and imputation.

Anchoring responsibility in fragility is not sufficient to fill out the concept of responsibility. In a traditional understanding of responsibility, the object (human action) and the subject (human agent) are proximate to one another. The activity of imputation, identifying one as the author of a moral action is a capacity exercised by the agent. By anchoring responsibility within another, Ricœur introduces a potential problem. How does one come to experience this charge of responsibility?

It does arise from some capacity to see the fragile other or a disposition of sympathy that draws us towards the other of our own volition. For Ricœur, we are called. By who? Not by some third-party observer, the judge who may, as in the case of a traditional model of responsibility, hold up a mirror and reflect back to us who we are as responsible agents. The call of responsibility comes from the very object of responsibility, fragile persons. Here we see a profoundly other-oriented model of responsibility, which identifies the other not as pure passivity, but with both passivity and activity. We experience this responsibility as a charge or burden, placed by another.⁶⁰

This notion of a call presents the preeminently social character of this model of responsibility. Ricœur notes this in an interview in 1991, where he states, “It is a notion eminently and actively social: one is responsible before another who can demand accountability.”⁶¹ Not only, then, does this responsibility take on a social nature by virtue of the various domains in which it is found, distinctly social domains, but in identifying the call as coming from a fragile other who can hold one accountable, Ricœur moves this from an account anchored in one’s agency and action, to a social account in which we are called to responsibility.⁶²

⁶⁰ We find a resonance here with the claim made upon us by the other in Emmanuel Levinas’s work. The two were friends, and while I have not drawn it out in this dissertation, there are deep influences by Levinas on Ricœur’s work (even as he rejects an absolute heteronomy of the other). Ricœur even incorporates Levinas in his treatment of the call to responsibility, writing (as I cited above), it is always *another* who declares us to be responsible, who makes us responsible, or, as Emmanuel Levinas says, *calls* us to responsibility.” Ricœur, “Responsibility and Fragility,” 9–10.

⁶¹ “[...]c’est une notion éminemment et activement sociale: on est responsable devant un autre, qui peut nous demander des comptes [...]” J.P. Manigne, “Paul Ricœur. Nous Sommes Responsable Du Périssable,” *L’actualité Religieuse Dans Le Monde (Les Religions Sous Le Feu Des Médias)*, August 1991, 42.

⁶² What if one just does not feel the call? Given my discussion in Chapter 1 of the mirror of responsibility found in the third-party role of the judge, I would maintain that this responsibility

This is not the first time in Ricœur’s career that he has treated some sort of notion of a call. We see here a circle completed from that first article mentioned at the outset of Chapter 1, “Note sur la personne,” where responsibility and the call were both placed at the center of his philosophical anthropology. But in that text the call had a vertical direction, it was a response to some god, philosophy, or even ideology. Even as late as his Gifford lectures, there is maintained a sense of call with the “soi-mandaté” or responsible self, who experiences the call of conscience.⁶³

In locating the call as originating *from* the fragile other, *for* the fragile other, there is a shift of this call from a vertical relation to a horizontal relation. This is significant, in so far as many of the domains in which responsibility might arise are seemingly vertical domains: corporations, churches, political sphere, and the economy. These are domains in which a positional model of responsibility (where responsibility is tied to one’s role or position) would warrant saying to a member of those institutions that this fragile and vulnerable other is not your concern, it is the concern of those in positions of authority: bishops, managers and CEO’s,

also needs to be cultivated and can be found in gradations. Set against the background of a capability framework, I would also assert that complete deafness to this call is a deformation of our moral capable selves. Are we called universally to all fragile humans, as Peter Singer seems to contend? See Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1972): 229–43. In contrast to flattened approach to globalism, in Chapter 3 I press for a more institutional response, arguing that they become sites for exploring our particular relationships to the fragile others, both near and distant. While Ricœur largely avoids religious language, we see a similar argument made from a Christian perspective for the responsibilities born of particular relations at the social and political level in the work of Eric Gregory. See Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

⁶³ Responsibility as a responsiveness to the other is a common trope in responsibility ethics. One can find it in august thinkers like H. Richard Niebuhr and Karl Barth. Both take a theological approach that figures our responsiveness as a response to God. Ricœur is not presenting “responsiveness” as a comprehensive vision of responsibility in so far as this account supplements the account presented in Chapter 1. Thus, a narrower focus on the fragile other actually allows this concept to do more work for him, extending responsibility over institutions.

elected officials, etc. Ricœur formulates a social responsibility, not tied to our power or position (though clearly our response will be linked to our relative powers), but anchored in the fragile other.

Locating this call in the fragile other also has another important effect, in so far as it preserves the activity of the fragile other. This preserves a basic tenant of Ricœur's philosophical anthropology: the subject is both *acting* and *suffering*: one who acts and one who undergoes.⁶⁴ Both theoretical and practical discourses around the fragile other can easily turn the fragile other into an object of pure passivity. This is seen in colonial discourse such as *la mission civilisatrice*, where the benevolence of French colonizers warranted the "spread of civilization," and it is found in contemporary discourses about charity work for the poor. Identifying the other as fragile can create an asymmetry of power and capacity, where the responsible self-exerts their help upon a purely passive self. Even from a position of "benevolence," this is a subtle form of violence that fails to recognize the proper dignity of the human other. In formulating the fragile other as the source of the call, Ricœur inscribes both passivity and activity into these both hypothetical, and very real others.⁶⁵

Yet, on what basis might we have the capacity to respond to this fragile other? With imputation, as a reflexive and often retrospective action, responsibility is tied intimately to one's capacity to act. In *Freedom and Nature*, this presumption of capacity is built into Ricœur's basic conception of making a decision. Ricœur later incorporates attestation as that fundamental knowledge and confidence in one's ability to enact basic capacities such as to speak, to act, to

⁶⁴ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 145.

⁶⁵ A similar move is made in Ricœur's treatment of guilt, as we shall see below. There, the accuser is not limited to the victim. This has very real implications, as at times the victim is unable to accuse, either due to death, or to the humiliating destruction of basic human capacities such as speech or the ability to narrate which are central to accusation. Here, justice demands that people take up voices on behalf of victims when they cannot for themselves.

narrate and to impute responsibility. Where does confidence come to fulfill a call that ultimately comes from outside oneself?

In this new model, Ricœur locates this confidence not as originating from the self, but as being instilled by another, the fragile other. He writes, “The fragile [person] who is someone who counts on us; who waits on our help and aid; who has confidence that we will do it. This line of confidence is fundamental. It is important that we encounter it before the suspicion [of the burden], as being intimately linked to the request, to the injunction, to the imperative. It results in that the feeling of responsibility that we feel, that we are made responsible by... for...”⁶⁶ In contrast to a figure like Levinas, the direct link between a self and the fragile other is not simply the burden or charge of responsibility, but also the confidence in our capacity to act to care for this other. This charge, imperative, and line of confidence go hand in hand. It is with this notion of confidence, that we see a joining of imputation and responsibility for the fragile.

Ricœur’s focus on a call is perhaps the most tenuous aspect of this new model of responsibility. Do we, in fact, experience a call from the other? Is this just the pangs of conscience? How do we account for the range of people who never experience such a call? What if one just doesn’t feel the call? Ricœur never takes up these challenges. One could appeal to the veracity of the experience found in the archetype and the moments in life where we encounter this beyond the specific roles of the parent or the politician. But I find if we take seriously the occasional experience of the claim of another, then a dynamic capabilities approach is more useful for elucidating the call. In Chapter 1, I discussed of the role of the mirror of responsibility

⁶⁶ “Le fragile qui est quelqu'un compte sur nous; il attend notre secours et nos soins; il a confiance que nous le ferons. Ce lien de confiance est fondamental. Il est important que nous le rencontrions avant le soupçon, comme étant intimement lié à la requête, à l'injonction, à l'impératif. Il en résulte que dans le sentiment de responsabilité nous sentons que nous sommes rendus responsables de.... par... .”Ricœur, “Responsabilité et fragilité,” 129.

of a third-party role of the judge plays in awakening one to responsibility. I also presented Ricœur's vision of *l'homme capable*, which recognizes responsibility-as-imputation as a capability that needs to be developed. A responsibility for the fragile is directly tie to other, and it is not at all apparent that third-parties can't help awaken us to this responsibility. I would maintain that this responsibility for the fragile also needs to be cultivated and can be found in gradations. Set against a capability model, I would also argue that deafness to this call is a deformation of our moral capable selves.⁶⁷ The call, though, is not just a summons to action, but also a means of helping us pass from the sentiment of impotence to action.

⁶⁷ There are several other alternative means of linking the self to the other in social accounts of responsibility. Take, for example, Iris Marion Young's social connective model. The social connection model use as a departure point the various ways in which one's actions and one's advantage resulting from structural systems lead a citizen to be caught up in larger structural processes of civil society and the state that lead to unjust background conditions. It is these background conditions that are the focus of evaluation, and not per se, one's individual actions. See Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, Oxford Political Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). While Ricœur identifies responsibility simply in the fragility of the other, Young's attention to the manner by which we act within or benefit from certain social structures and thus must take responsibility for them. This might seems more "fair" in so far as it draws explicit links between responsibility and the actions and privileges of a self. It is attractive in the manner that imputation is attractive: it has clear links between a person's actions and benefits, and their responsibility. Can it, then, give us a broad account of social responsibility? Such an account serves to extend responsibility to the privileged, but fails to illustrate how we each are responsible for reforming institutions, including those who themselves are vulnerable. Ricœur's account has a broader reach. I also suggest in the next section, quite counter to Young's assertion that guilt is unhelpful, that a model of guilt guilt itself can be helpful in awakening us to this responsibility. There is an alternative account in Marion Smiley, who in theorizing about "forward looking collective responsibility," cautions against a simplistic grounding of such responsibility in capacity and instead points to a constellation of issues, including "including who is causally responsible for harm (fault), how we value particular projects, whose interests count in the community, where our rights lie, and fairness." Marion Smiley, "Future-Looking Collective Responsibility: A Preliminary Analysis," *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (September 2014): 11. This differs from Ricœur in so far as his account of responsibility is not a substantive account. It does not provide for us answers as to what to do. Locating responsibility as a response to the fragile other, though, does serve as a moral impetus for taking up a manner of consideration. We are not simply selecting to change circumstance, but responding to a phenomenal claim upon oneself. It is only in making more explicit the reform of just institutions that we get a clearer answer as to how responsibility leads one to act.

We are charged with responsibility, but this call inspires a capacity to act, over which we can take ownership. Ricœur identifies this confidence as fundamental. I agree, for this form of responsibility can be a balm to a rhetoric of impotence that enables a convenient expiation of responsibility. How could one have any confidence in one's capacity or ability to be a parent, before ever exercising that capacity? It is not so much that one have a prior awareness of this capacity, but that the charge of responsibility elicits this capacity. Confidence ties this view of responsibility to a much wider discourse of capacity.

But this takes a sharper turn as we look beyond the paradigmatic case of the parent to the extension into the different domains of responsibility.⁶⁸ If institutions are only understood according to a positional responsibility, then a positional understanding of agency and power also follows. As a citizen, as a member of a church, as a part of a corporation, my burden of responsibility in accord with my role might be small, but so is my power. But this model of

⁶⁸ Are we called universally to responsibility for all fragile humans, as Peter Singer seems to contend in his seminal essay "Famine, Affluence, and Morality?" In contrast to a flattened approach to globalism, I press in this dissertation for a more institutional response. In Ricœur's treatment of responsibility, the concern for institutions is largely founded on their role in amplifying fragility. This would not appear to contend with Singer's account, and just redirect our concerns to global institutions. But in the subsequent chapter, I argue that institutions bear on us in distinct ways in so far as they mediate our relations to distant others and that they shape and structure our own actions and norms. In light of this, I argue that they become sites for exploring our particular relationships to the fragile others, both near and distant. Chapter 3 of this dissertation takes a vital step in developing an institutional ethic that aims lower than Singer's global responsibility, but that nonetheless higher than ourselves. They are simultaneously vehicles for action and objects of concern in their own right (for the harm they do and the malformation of the self they permit). While I would not dismiss the broader claim engendered in Singer's argument—our globalizing world does mean we bear obligations for institutions even in which we have limited relations, thus justifying humanitarian concern around the world—nonetheless, I hold to the importance of attending to particular institutions in our midst that we blindly ignore. While Ricœur largely avoids religious language, as we shall see in the next chapter, his treatment of the Good Samaritan enables us to approach even the distant other through relations of love particularized by the medium of institutions. We see an argument made from a Christian perspective for the responsibilities born of particular relations at the social and political level in the work of Eric Gregory. See Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love*.

responsibility suggests that we bear this charge of responsibility for the fragile other, and that this bond also elicits the confidence in our capacity to do so. Ought implies can, but within limits. I would suggest that this may not be our capacity as individuals, but instead, a confidence which pushes, in the case of institutions, towards a greater corporate and collective action. Ricœur, does not identify here a more robust conception of capacities. It is clear, though, that as we treat domains that extend well beyond the individual, we would likewise have to think more explicitly about capacities and powers towards social action.

But one key piece is missing from Ricœur's account: a clear sense as to what one must do. We can gather from his appeal to the baseline elements of the human fragile other that taking responsibility includes incorporating our concerns for the material vulnerability of the other into our account. Responsibility is not, in Ricœur's work, a substantive principle that decisively directs human action.⁶⁹ By claiming a responsibility for the domains of institutions, they enter under our care, but there is not a clearer account as to how one ought act. For this reason, I maintain that responsibility brings us to the threshold of an institutional ethic. But it does not provide clear indications for what we must do. This, I maintain, requires a more substantive account of institutions and what it might mean for them to be just. I develop both of these in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

With a prospective responsibility, anchored in the fragility of the other, and experienced as a call from the fragile other that extends over various fragile institutions, it is unclear whether we might, as we opened this chapter, raise the question of guilt. What does guilt mean in a

⁶⁹ Here, I am relying on categories introduced by Gerald McKenny in his chapter on responsibility. He identifies figures like H. Richard Niebuhr and Karl Barth as maintaining a substantive principle of responsibility, meaning that responsibility does the work of *phronesis* or practical wisdom. See McKenny, "Responsibility."

framework that is not anchored reflexively in our own action? It is to this question that I now turn.

Section 3: The Stain of Association and our Social Responsibility

This chapter opened with Ricœur's dismissal of the possibility of collective forms of guilt. If one adopts a perspective of guilt anchored in the individual imputation of action to an agent, notions of collective forms of guilt may be well-intentioned, but they are at best confused, at worst absurd. Yet, as I detailed, Ricœur's later work evidences the need for different forms of guilt beyond individual guilt. He identifies guilt which persists at the institutional level, looking not simply to the paradigmatic case of the Shoah, but also to more contemporaneous events, like the war in Algeria and colonialism. Nevertheless, a residual doubt about guilt carries across Ricœur's career. Guilt is not responsibility, even if it can point towards it. For a significant portion of his career, guilt appears to fade into the background, surfacing only again with Ricœur's work *Memory, History, and Forgetting*,⁷⁰ as well as interviews from the same period. Now, having passed through the development in Ricœur's work that enables us to discuss a

⁷⁰ See in particular his epilogue on Forgiveness, the section titled "The Odyssey of the Spirit of Forgiveness: The Passage Through Institutions" where Ricœur appears to adopt in full Jasper's categories: Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. D. Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 470–76. Here, Ricœur adopts Jaspers's schema as a means of discussing forgiveness and punishment in the institutional context (or as he aptly adds, the context of the distant other). In this setting, according to Ricœur, offenders are placed under indictment by an authority. Thus, forgiveness, or the lifting of sanctions or punishment, can itself be a matter of injustice when done without due regard to the offended parties. Ricœur's principle of "just distance," developed among other places in his two books on justice (*The Just* and *Reflections on the Just*, also provides a useful frame for ensuring that one doesn't follow contemporary trends that trumpet victim's rights to the point of injustice towards either the accused or even the indicted. Ricœur's use of Jaspers in this context is distinct from the stain of association that I am developing in that I use Ricœur's responsibility for the fragile as a cypher, and thus take the phenomenal experience of the self (including being seen in the mirror of justice) and not titular authorities as my guide. My concern is for understanding something like the intuition of political guilt, but from the inside.

responsibility for social institutions, we must ask ourselves how does the negative side of responsibility, guilt, fit back into this.

First, what does Ricœur mean by guilt? While it takes different forms in his thought, sometimes as a disclosure of action, sometimes as one of the primary symbols of evil, sometimes as a psychological and neurotic phenomenon, throughout, Ricœur maintains a distinctly subjective focus on guilt.⁷¹ Above I treated guilt first as a revealer of human agency, and then as

⁷¹ The subjective focus is strongly influenced by Ricœur's early engagement with the existential philosophers Karl Jaspers and Jean Nabert. This is evidenced in particular by *Karl Jaspers et la philosophie de l'existence*, one of Ricœur's earlier works, written with Mikel Dufrenne in 1947. In it, the authors discuss guilt as one of several *situations-limites*, boundary situations in which we find ourselves. A situation is a means by which Jaspers characterizes the historicity of the embodied freedom which is the subject of his study. We find ourselves within them and submit to them. Boundary situations are characterized by an "opacité intellectuelle" and an "irrévocabilité." See Dufrenne and Ricœur, *Karl Jaspers et la philosophie de l'existence*, 175. The former trait, characteristic of all "situations," describes its subjective nature: it affects me discretely and uniquely, and it is impossible for me to step outside of it to observe or examine it. See Dufrenne and Ricœur, 175.

While we can never escape situations in general, in most "situations" that we find ourselves, we can move from one to another, playing an active role in changing it. It is, in Ricœur's words, *revocable*. While boundary situations share in the intellectual opacity of "situations," they are irrevocable. Jaspers specifies (non-exclusively and non-systematically according to Ricœur) a small list of particular boundary situations: death, suffering, combat, and fault. There are similarities between these. Death and suffering can come about with no action on my part. Combat and suffering, in contrast, both involve my own action. Despite the involvement of the voluntary, however, these latter are limit situations because "elles naissent inévitablement de mon action et retombent sur moi comme la contrainte de la souffrance et de la mort" Dufrenne and Ricœur, 185. ("they are born inevitably of my action and they fall back upon myself like the coercion of suffering and death.") While one finds oneself within these seemingly inescapable situations, the goal of this existentialist philosophy involves assuming and transcending, or as Ricœur puts it, transcending in assuming.

Ricœur also cites Jean Nabert's work on guilt as influential in his thought. Nabert is, according to Ricœur, the leading example of the reflective philosophy tradition. See Changeux and Ricœur, *What Makes Us Think?*, 4. Guilt, for Nabert, is one of the "givens of reflection." See Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 460. Nabert's philosophical influence is perhaps best seen in his *affirmation originnaire* (primary affirmation), which follows from the focus he places upon guilt at the outset of Nabert's text *Éléments pour une Éthique*. Jean Nabert, *Éléments pour une éthique*, Philosophie de l'esprit (Paris: Aubier, Éd. Montaigne, 1962). The primary affirmation attests to a fundamental positive choice underlying the critical investigations and negations instigated by all critique, including the analysis of finitude, fallibility and guilt. It preserves the

one of the primary symbols of evil, a hermeneutical and phenomenological phenomenon which both is confessed as a part of individual experience, but also codified in language beyond the individual. In his later work, Ricœur addresses “the sentiment of guilt,” which I will focus on here.⁷² He distinguishes this from objective forms of guilt. Objective guilt is that form of guilt as might be assessed by a judge or jury, condemning individuals according to their actions. It is objective precisely because it is exterior. The sentiment of guilt is subjective and reflexive, and focuses on the internal effect of guilt, accused either by another or oneself. It is akin to attestation, our reflexive awareness and affirmation of our guilt.

In Ricœur’s formulation of an extended model of responsibility for the fragile, guilt does not enter the discussion. As mentioned above, Ricœur describes his own work as shifting from the “cultural of guilt” of the 1960’s to a vision of the capable self.⁷³ It might be tempting then, to follow the trail of prominent theorists of social responsibility like Hannah Arendt and Iris Marion Young and disregard guilt for social and institutional injustices as unhelpful. Arendt identifies the challenges of indiscriminate guilt, stating “Where all are guilty, nobody in the last instance can be judged.”⁷⁴ Young identifies that fixing blame detracts us from seeing the task before us,

philosopher from a pessimistic theoretical nihilism. As one might gather from my reading of Ricœur, I see this positive affirmation present even in his treatment of institutions.

⁷² Paul Ricœur, “Le sentiment de culpabilité: sagesse ou névrose,” in *Innocente culpabilité*, ed. Marie de Solemne (Paris: Dervy, 1998), 9–29.

⁷³ Ricœur and Antohi, “Memory, History, Forgiveness,” 17.

⁷⁴ Hannah Arendt, “Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility,” in *Collective Responsibility: Five Decades of Debate in Theoretical and Applied Ethics*, ed. Larry May and Stacey Hoffman, Studies in Social & Political Philosophy (Savage, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991), 278. Arendt’s statement is incredibly important in helping us to nuance our understanding of guilt here. This is why I propose moral stain as a means of distinguishing it from legal guilt. We should not allow, for example, the stain of being a catholic in a church that has actively covered up sex abuse scandals to flatten or distribute the guilt of bishops who covered up or were negligent. Yet, to dismiss this stain of association is also misguided. Indeed, it can be the very fuel of indignation.

leading people to focus on themselves rather than the work of justice.⁷⁵ Ricœur's work indeed also could cohere with this broad condemnation of collective guilt, identifying guilt not only as potentially unhelpful, but also dangerous, as it becomes hypocritical, excessive, and even solipsistic. Ricœur also identifies another danger: never entering into guilt in the first place.⁷⁶ In addressing "the sentiment of guilt," in contrast to objective guilt determined by a third-party judge, Ricœur focuses on the subjective side of fault, opening a Pandora's box to "unhelpful" subjective sentiments which can become unmoored from actuality.

Ricœur treats the sentiment of guilt in a general manner. In response to the dangers of guilt and the dangers of not entering guilt, Ricœur identifies responsibility as the cipher for understanding abstract guilt. A guilt which points back to our responsibility is a healthy form of guilt. Any guilt which fails to connect us to our responsibility—be it either because of its excesses or its deficiencies; its misrepresentation or its tendency towards inversion—is an unhealthy form of guilt.

The case of not entering guilt reminds us by negation that guilt can indeed be helpful. This is to say that there are cases, generally speaking, where one ought to feel guilt, and a failure to do so can be a failure to realize one's responsibility. It is my aim here to indicate that this is not only true in the case of our imputable responsibility, but also in the case of a social responsibility anchored in the fragile other. Guilt does not stop at the offending agent. Again, responsibility must be the cipher. In so far as guilt can awaken us to the responsibility we have towards the fragile other and the institutions which mediate our relationship to her, there can be a healthy, social guilt. We can apply this to Ricœur's retrieval of Jasper's categories of guilt. We can also extend this beyond to other social forms of guilt. Thus, walking the precipice of

⁷⁵See Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 118.

⁷⁶ Ricœur, "Le sentiment de culpabilité: sagesse ou nèvrose."

excessive guilt and a complete absence of guilt, we find a guiding path in any sentiment of guilt which can lead us back towards an awareness of our responsibility for the other, resulting not in paralysis and incapacity, but a renewed sense of our capacity to act.

In *The Symbolism of Evil*, Ricœur emphasizes a transition from collective forms of understanding fault to individualistic forms. He later marks as a significant moral achievement, which fits with a model of responsibility that privileges the imputation of individual action to the agent. Yet, Ricœur also identifies the need for other forms of guilt to make up for the loss of collective understandings of fault in the transition from sin to guilt.⁷⁷ We would expect that Ricœur's understanding of guilt would also shift with the new developments in his understanding of responsibility.

Attending to the sentiment of guilt privileges the self as the locus of guilt, the landing point so to speak. But this need not mean that it only addresses "individual guilt," or guilt for those acts which we can impute to ourselves directly or by extension. There are, it would seem, healthy limits set upon guilt through attending simply to criminal guilt. While responsible for our actions, there is a limit set in space and time. Can one be responsible for the chain of effects which may originate with a person and lead through time to deleterious effect on others? To how many generations of effects do we hold them responsible? Our legal system tries to incorporate reasonable limits (reflecting this worry of moral thought) so that we do not bear too much. We might consider this a vertical form of guilt, which extends from an agent through time and space

But focusing on the sentiment of guilt also allows opens up space for me to reflect upon and construct a horizontal extension of guilt. Can one feel guilty for one's family, one's church, one's nation, or all of humanity? There is not, in principle, any de facto reason barring one from

⁷⁷ Both these points are laid out in Ricœur, "Responsabilité et Culpabilité Au Plan Communautaire."

feeling such a sentiment, even if it is inadvisable or even inappropriate. In focusing on the sentiment of guilt, the reasonable barriers set around guilt within the sphere of criminal guilt are lifted. Here, one can speak of guilt for collectives, provided that one recognizes that it is a self who experiences or feels this guilt and not some collective consciousness.⁷⁸ I am nevertheless isolating the self as the locus for the feeling of guilt. There is not a collective consciousness which feel this guilt, even if the symbols of guilt come to cast a hue upon a community and are reinforced by those apart of it.

It is important to note that Ricœur does not dismiss “objective guilt.” In fact, there is an interesting development in Ricœur’s thought as, in his later career, he explicitly preserves the role of the other within the sphere of guilt, acknowledging both the victim and the accuser (who could be the victim, a third-party, or even the self). This expansion of guilt mirrors the expansion of responsibility within his work, which likewise holds the other as the subject or concern of responsibility and as the source of responsibility through the call to be responsible.

3.1: The Dangers of Guilt

It is worth attending here to the dangers of guilt. As I mentioned above, Young identifies an approach to social responsibility via guilt as unhelpful. Following Ricœur, I would also suggest that it can be unhelpful and, even more, that it is dangerous. Guilt itself is dangerous since (as I will treat below) it can lead to scrupulosity and, in taking on endless and excessive guilt, a new form of moral and agential paralysis. It is also dangerous when we fail to enter into it. Yet, the dangers tied to guilt seems to provide all the more reason for treating the issue, for despite all seemingly reasonable arguments brushing it aside, the sentiment of guilt will likely persist. Ricœur’s treatment of the negative side of our responsibility for the fragile is not

⁷⁸ Another way of considering collective guilt is to see how the symbols of guilt are cast upon a particular community and then reinforced through activities such as liturgy, education, etc.

extensively addressed in his later career, but considering his wider discourse on guilt, we can responsibly extend his treatment of guilt in its more individual forms to consider the special case of responsibility that I have carved out. So, while guilt may often be unhelpful, there is the possibility of a healthy form of institutional guilt, which can awaken us to our responsibility.

As I touched upon in Chapter 1 and above, Ricœur treated the manifold expressions of fault early in his career. Within his treatment of fault within *The Symbolism of Evil*, Ricœur works through three primary symbols of evil that he identifies as present within the history of religions and confessions of fault. Ricœur traces a progressive move both historically and phenomenologically through the three symbols of evil—defilement, sin, and guilt—moving from indiscriminate stain, to an objective and infinite demand of both the individual and the community, to the radical interiorization and individualization of fault through the sentiment of guilt and the awakening of responsibility. While there is a progression through these ultimately leading to where we find ourselves now, bound and captive, while also guilty, each stage incorporates elements of the former. Thus, guilt maintains the force of the ethical dread of defilement and the infinite demand of sin.

There are particular dangers to guilt. Sin is characterized by the infinite demand of God and the finite commandment. In guilt this dynamic is internalized giving rise to a Pharisaic scrupulosity, as the agent seeks to fulfill each and all the rules, being overcome by guilt in their failure to do so. The new link between responsibility and fault means that this is a voluntary heteronomy.

For Ricœur, guilt is marked first by a rupture from defilement and sin.⁷⁹ This rupture is

⁷⁹ Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 100. Ricœur does not stay at rupture and identifies there is a “resumption” of elements from stain and defilement which enable an influx of the involuntary, “in order to express the paradox toward which the idea of fault points—namely, the concept of a

marked by the radical move inwards. Fault is no longer founded on an externality apart from the agent: impurity and stain covering the violator or even sins imputed by God, describing a person's actual situation, including sins forgotten or unknown. Instead, guilt is a turn to a focus of the self-awareness of the sinner of their sin. This leads to the individualization of imputation and the nuancing of fault by degrees of culpability.⁸⁰ Thus, the objective pole is now measured according to an internal reality.

From this guilt a sense of responsibility arises. Ironically, it is in violating the law and experiencing guilt, according to Ricœur, that conscience is born: "a responsible agent appears, to face the prophetic call and its demand for holiness."⁸¹ This birth of responsibility is an important development, historically, and phenomenologically. Born out of a progression towards the individual, Ricœur's analysis leads to sifting from guilt the capacity for imputation of responsibility, which becomes part of the cornerstone of his ethical realization of the self as self.

But Ricœur's initial treatment of guilt is too focused on the individual. He later calls it almost solipsistic.⁸² When Ricœur returns to the theme of guilt, it follows upon his extensive work on the self, in which he incorporates into the constitution of the self a three-fold account of otherness: the near other, the distant other, and the other within the self. Concurrently, Ricœur also expands responsibility to take into account both the near and distant other.

One of the significant shifts in Ricœur's later treatment of guilt is a more nuanced incorporation of the other within his understanding of guilt. Ricœur identifies the other in the presence of the victim, for fault, on his account, always involves some agent who suffers. It also

man who is responsible and captive, or rather a man who is responsible for being captive—in short, the concept of the servile will." Ricœur, 101.

⁸⁰ See Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 106; Ricœur, 112.

⁸¹ Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 143.

⁸² Ricœur, *Ethique et responsabilité*, 24.

involves the other who is the source of accusation. It would seem that within these two roles there are a myriad of options of who it could be. The victim potentially could be the self; it could also be another. The accuser could be the victim, but it also could be a third-party, or even the self.⁸³

With more dynamics at play, the danger is not so much scrupulosity any more. Instead, it is a related but distinct danger: limitless guilt. Ricœur identifies here a hyperbolic, rhetorical guilt akin to that found in *The Brothers Karamazov*—“I am guilty of all, and more than anyone else.”⁸⁴ This raises that difficult question of knowing where guilt and where responsibility end. Where does one draw limits? Here, we are in the realm of excess guilt.

In addition to its excess, Ricœur also is well aware of the danger of hypocrisy in guilt. In a dialogue with Marie de Solemne entitled “Le sentiment de culpabilité: sagesse ou névrose,” he identifies three possibilities: first, we could deny our guilt before another when we are accused. Second, we could deny our guilt before ourselves, a form of bad faith in which we flee our own internal judgment. Finally, we could “faire semblant”⁸⁵ or pretend. This means we could dissemble and deny our guilt before ourselves, a form of bad faith, or we could, in the proper definition of the term, pretend to be something we are not. In this final category, we might imagine this to mean a pretending to be innocent when in fact we are guilty. We might also imagine that a person may pretend to a partial guilt that they do not feel, so as to evade a more

⁸³ This is analogous to the construction of the role of the other in our treatment of responsibility above, though less fixed. There, the fragile other is both the subject of responsibility and the source of the call, preserving them as both passive and active agents. In the aftermath of violence, where a victim might be rendered passive beyond the possibility of activity, in total degradation or in death, there is not the same potential worry of another speaking on their behalf, in fact, it can be a duty.

⁸⁴ Paul Ricœur, “Responsabilité: Limitée ou illimitée?,” in *Le crime contre l’humanité: mesure de la responsabilité? : actes du cycle des conférences “Droit, liberté et foi”*, juin 1997, ed. Paul Ricœur and Barreau de Paris (Paris; Saint-Maur: CERP ; Parole et Silence, 1998), 26.

⁸⁵ Ricœur, “Le sentiment de culpabilité: sagesse ou névrose,” 19.

trenchant critique either of himself or the system we are part of and to avoid significant changes.

A final and important danger that we must also wrestle with is the danger of never entering guilt in the first place. Whereas Ricœur describes the excess of guilt as neurosis, he describes the failure to enter guilt as psychosis.⁸⁶ Ricœur discusses in this instance youth offenders who have no conception of the stealing they commit as a wrong. The implications, I think, are far more reaching than he lets on. Here, there is a failure at the level of capability, a person who fails to feel the sentiment of guilt when they ought. We can imagine several reasons for this: a failure to see the harm they do to another, a failure to enter into the symbolic structure we share with others that communicates harm and fault, or a failure to recognize actions as their own. This final danger of not entering guilt recalls for us that while guilt may be at times unhelpful and even dangerous, it also is a critical part of our moral psychology. Failing to attend to it can open up a sphere that legitimates this final danger of never entering guilt to begin with.

In treating these different dangers of guilt, Ricœur adopts the language of health, discussing alternatively neurosis, psychosis, and wisdom. The feeling of guilt does not per se lead to moral insight into our actual (objective) guilt or into the harms that we have committed. The actual feeling is vital but is not alone sufficient to analyze a situation of fault. It can be neurotic, moving us to paralysis before the heavy burden of our guilt or even to a failure to register the import of actions, not feeling guilt at all.

On this narrow path between too much and too little guilt, Ricœur points out the way towards a healthy guilt: Responsibility is the new cipher for a healthy guilt. If the sentiment of guilt can awaken us to our responsibility, this is a healthy form of guilt. Failing to do so, it tends towards neurosis or even psychosis.

⁸⁶ Ricœur, 28.

Is this simply an instrumental use of the sentiment of guilt, bent towards moral purposes? Do these metaphors of health gild over a moralist intention? I would suggest that Ricœur's solution is more complicated and holistic than that. Ricœur does not spell out precisely why it is the case that a guilt that avers from our responsibility is prone towards neurosis. I maintain that we cannot understand this health metaphor unless we set it against the background of Ricœur's philosophical anthropology and, in particular, his capability approach.

Ricœur's mature philosophical anthropology operates around a few key principles. First, humans are "acting and suffering subject[s]." ⁸⁷ Second, this acting and suffering is seen best on the terrain of human capabilities. Third, these capabilities are reflexively attested both explicitly and implicitly by the self in their actions and reflections.

In Chapter 1, I identified several core capabilities that Ricœur identifies as fundamental to the development of the human person. He is most widely known for basing these capabilities around speaking, acting, narrating, and ethical action. ⁸⁸ Humans are working projects, developing out of these basic capabilities which comprise the person and extending to the myriad of other capacities with which we pursue the good life.

The neurosis of guilt can be read not simply according to a psychological model, but also according to Ricœur's capability approach. In different ways, the various neurotic forms of guilt attack our capability. This is most evident with the experience of excessive guilt. Here, an individual is rendered passive by the experience of guilt, unable to respond. Guilt and unlimited responsibility become an impossible burden, rendering future action impossible. Ricœur

⁸⁷ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 112.

⁸⁸ C.f. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*. This latter category is sometimes simply reduced to the single capacity of "imputing responsibility for my actions." At other times, it is more expansive, including as well relations to the second person and to broader institutions, as he includes a capacity for promise making, and a capacity to find oneself under obligation within a moral system.

dismisses this neurotic guilt, suggesting the prudent need to set limits.⁸⁹ At the level of responsibility, he suggests the need for sage prudence to dictate was is too much.

Yet, less guilt or no guilt is not the solution. Ricœur also entertains other problematic gradations of guilt. If we deny the guilt of individuals, there is a removal of the possibility of certain forms of capability. Ricœur treats this through attention to the case of criminal guilt as he writes, “If you completely deprive an accused, become a condemned, of the responsibility for his act, you will never obtain his participation, his collaboration in some enterprise of rehabilitation or resocialization.”⁹⁰ We might imagine here an instance where a person’s responsibility is explained away by a third-party perhaps with recourse to pathology, identifying the individual as not responsible. When within the normal parameters of the human sphere, a denial of our guilt and responsibility is not neurosis but a form of hypocrisy. In this instance, individuals fail to exercise their capacity to responsibility and renege on the opportunity to work towards their own rehabilitation.⁹¹ This is but one instance. Various forms of hypocrisy—denying one’s guilt before

⁸⁹ Ricœur says in an interview: “La sagesse sera peut-être d'accepter que l'insondable ne doit pas me dévorer, ne doit pas m'engloutir. Je dois donc limiter ma culpabilité à ce que j'aurais pu faire, et que je n'ai pas fait. Car si je ne puis pas dire: ‘Voilà, ceci j'aurais pu le faire et je ne l'ai pas fait’ mais que je me borne à seulement penser ‘Je suis coupable de tout’ à la limite je ne suis coupable de rien!” Ricœur, “Le sentiment de culpabilité: sagesse ou névrose,” 19. (“Wisdom will be maybe to accept that the immeasurable must not devour me, must not engulf me. I must therefore limit my guilt to that which I could do, and that I did not do. For, if I can not say: “voilà, this I could do and I did not do it,” but I lead myself only to think” I am guilty of all..’ at the limit, I am guilty of nothing.”)

⁹⁰ “Si vous privez entièrement un inculpé, devenu un condamné, de la responsabilité de son acte, vous n'obtiendrez jamais sa participation, sa collaboration à quelque entreprise de réhabilitation ou de resocialisation que ce soit.” Ricœur, “Responsabilité: Limitée ou illimitée?,” 28.

⁹¹ I would contend that responsibility in this instance might be a first step to restoring each of the other capabilities: our ability to act, speak, to narrate, to place oneself under the obligation of a symbolic order of norms and regulations, and so on. To take the instance of narration, if one fails to claim responsibility for one’s acts, one erodes the narrative link between my actions and myself as agent. One may develop the capacity for elaborate fictive narration, but in the instance where it matters most, our own narrative identity, there is fundamental failure. This self-deception has a corrosive effect on our narrative capacity to narrate our own life truthfully by

oneself and others, pretending either to a guilt or innocence you do not feel, mitigating one's own responsibility by accepting partial blame, but diffusing the rest among others dismissing guilt because of the common practice of others—each contribute towards the stunting of responsibility, foreclosing the full development and activation of this capability by failing to properly impute responsibility for one's own proper actions.

Ricœur also highlights the instance of children who experience no guilt, in the face of some instance of transgression. He recalls that responsibility has its own paradox: it is presumed, as above, but it is also a task to be achieved. He identifies that a child who fails to feel guilt may have a deficiency in the capacity to enter into a symbolic order, an order which communicates and conveys interdictions, senses of authority and obligation.⁹² In this instance, it is a failure of another capacity that renders one incapable of experiencing proper guilt. There is, then, a pedagogical task in properly forming individuals, both in the content of the symbolic order itself, but also in the very entering in to that symbolic order. The former might be exemplified by white privilege and other forms of structural racism in which one is are unaware of their own participation and benefit from racial structures. The latter, unchecked, is characteristic of the sociopath.

To recapitulate, identifying responsibility as a cipher for healthy guilt, Ricœur highlights the capability paired with guilt, but not exhausted by it. Attention to our proper responsibility enables us to strike a measure for guilt, not falling into excess and impossible burdens. Responsibility is not exhausted by guilt, but also found on the other side of it. As the case of the criminal above indicates, responsibility following transgression and injustice breeds new

substituting a an integrating narrative of these various aspects of the self (including darker actions), with a false narrative, where the truth of our lives is left on the editing floor.

⁹² Ricœur, "Responsabilité: Limitée ou illimitée?" 28.

possible, often morally necessary course of action in restoration, rehabilitation, and reconciliation.

3.2: Institutional Guilt and Responsibility for the Fragile

Thus far, I have treated Ricœur's work on guilt and responsibility in a general way. This largely applies, then, to the traditional understanding of guilt and the imputation of responsibility. So where does this fit with the model of extended responsibility that I identified above and the institutional fragilities and harms it treats? In both Ricœur's earliest treatments of guilt and his later works, he casts doubt on the possibility of collective guilt. At the opening of this chapter, I discussed Ricœur's initial treatment of collective guilt and responsibility in his review of Karl Jaspers's *The Question of German Guilt*. In an interview late in his career, Ricœur likewise calls into question collective guilt, stating that we can apply neither the guilt nor the responsibility ensued by collective harms on a personal level.⁹³ An individual cannot bear themselves personally the guilt of the collective. I would suggest that such an action is analogous to the individual who bears excessive guilt: it is too much for any one individual. Just as a family member cannot claim full responsibility for the collective actions of their clan, a citizen cannot bear individually the crimes attributed to the nation. This would, to use the language of Jaspers, confuse criminal guilt with political guilt.

Yet, Ricœur not only discusses institutional guilt, but he also, in his work *Memory, History, and Forgetting*, adopts and incorporates Jasper's four categories of guilt into his epilogue treating the question of forgiveness.⁹⁴ He reiterates the importance of the distinction between criminal guilt and political guilt, underlining that an individual cannot be tried criminally for collective harms that he shares in only by belonging to a political body. Just as

⁹³ Ricœur, "Le sentiment de culpabilité: sagesse ou névrose," 18.

⁹⁴ Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 470–77.

there is a form of response or expiation appropriate to criminal guilt, so there is a form of response appropriate to this guilt by association.

Thus, the maxim that one cannot bear collective guilt individually does not mean that these events are incidental to us, nor that we are not implicated by them. I cite in full Ricœur's response as to whether collective guilt can be taken up by an individual.

That's it. Simply by the fact that I belong to multiple indigence. Because I belong to a family, a city, a state, as a historic collective, there is the fact of actions of whom the subject will be just this collective as moral person. It is thus impossible to redistribute one by one the acts. When, for example, my country engages in a war of aggression, it is about my country; I am culpable of something, but this culpability is an effect of my belonging. On the personal plan, I must thus only assume the responsibility created by this belonging.⁹⁵

We see reiterated here a central theme of Ricœur's treatment of guilt at the institutional level. We do participate in multiple institutions that are sites of both specific and general injustice. No one person can bear the guilt of the whole. Some will participate more willingly in these systems, and may indeed incur criminal guilt for actions they can impute directly to themselves. Some of these actions are only possible by virtue of the institution itself, such as a general's role overseeing prisoners of war, and they will nevertheless incur moral or criminal guilt for their imputable actions, resulting in specific responses such as prosecution or sanction. Ricœur affirms in the citation above that there is a guilt for simply belonging to such an institution. It is not the guilt of

⁹⁵ "C'est cela. Simplement par le fait que j'appartiens à de multiples indigences. Parce que j'appartiens à une famille, à une cité, à un état, comme à une collectivité historique, il y a de fait des actions dont le sujet sera justement cette collectivité comme personne morale. Il est alors impossible de redistribuer un à un les actes. Quand, par exemple, mon pays s'engage dans une guerre d'agression, il s'agit bien de mon pays ; je suis bien coupable de quelque chose, mais cette culpabilité est simplement un effet de mon appartenance. Sur un plan personnel, je dois alors seulement assumer la responsabilité créée par cette appartenance." Ricœur, "Le sentiment de culpabilité: sagesse ou nèvrose," 18.

imputation, but, one might say, a stain by association.⁹⁶

Ricœur first uses the terminology of stain when discussing the primary symbol of defilement. What characterizes the stain is the indiscriminate manner in which it attaches itself to individuals. Qualified as such by the term “by association,” we would stress with this form of guilt, that it spreads like a stain over all who belong to the institution in question, be it a family, a city, or a state.

Given our discussion above regarding the neuroses of guilt, we might imagine that this addition of guilt by association amplifies the potential problems, even if the stakes are lower.⁹⁷ While Ricœur denies that an individual can actually take upon themselves the full guilt of the collective, in the same way that an individual can assume excessive guilt for their individual actions, so too we might imagine an individual paralyzed by claiming individually the guilt of the whole.

Likewise, we know far too well the possibility of too little guilt, relinquishing any sense of guilt by association. Individuals not only wash themselves easily of the individual guilt of living in a society characterized by widespread gun violence, racial discrimination, massive economic inequalities, or significant environmental degradation, but they likewise pay no mind to any sense of stain by association for their institutional affiliation with these harms.

As above, I would indicate that responsibility once more becomes the cipher for a healthy

⁹⁶ Jasper has inspired others to consider collective forms of guilt. Thus, one can find some similarities here to Larry May’s appropriation of Jasper’s category of metaphysical guilt to describe the moral taint that arise from harms that are born out in community. See May, *Sharing Responsibility*, 146–62. May develops this as part of a “social existentialist account.”

⁹⁷ I suggest the stakes are lower here than the “psychosis” of not entering guilt that Ricœur discusses, because this whole framework of responsibility for the fragile is still intimately related to the capacity for imputation. While, as Ricœur suggests, there might be a chicken/egg scenario regarding the call to responsibility and the capacity for imputation, a failure at the capacity level for individual guilt or responsibility would be detrimental to an awareness of our responsibility for institutions and our ensuing guilt by association.

understanding of this stain by association. A healthy guilt by association is one which awakens us to our responsibility. But the responsibility it points towards is not our responsibility-as-imputation. This type of mismatch is quite common in our society. For example, individuals respond to the overwhelming feeling of guilt regarding our collective role in climate change by purchasing a hybrid or increasing their recycling. Likewise, good interpersonal relations with people of other races can be taken to expiate the stain left by racist structures.⁹⁸ While these activities are not bad, they are neither expiate this stain of association, nor are they substitutes for taking up our responsibility for our institutions.

So what sort of responsibility will this stain by association point towards? Precisely the type developed over this chapter: a responsibility for the fragile distant other and the institutions that mediate our lives to them. The presence of structural injustice is a reminder that the fragile other is not an abstraction; everywhere people are rendered vulnerable by our actual institutions. This fragility is mere potentiality, but people actually suffer. The stain of association is a reminder that this is not incidental, and can awaken us to the call not just of the abstract figure of justice, the third other, but the actual fragile other, whose needs and whose claim is laid bare. As I will suggest in Chapter 8, such a sense of stain can awaken us to our responsibility for

⁹⁸ Recall, in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Martin Luther King identifies not the virulent racist, but the moderate as the greatest obstacle to progress. He writes, “I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action’; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a ‘more convenient season.’” Martin Luther King, *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Signet Classic, 2000), 72–73. The white moderate here is insufficiently aware of the moral stain bearing upon them by the racist structures of this country, unaware of the call to responsibility made by their fellow fragile citizens, but also failing to heed their voices as they are invited to participate in bringing greater justice to all.

institutions that contribute to environmental degradation in the Anthropocene, for it is institutions that embody our collective action problems and institutions that can serve as answers to them.

But what of the objection that the apparent absence of the sentiment of the stain of association among us indicates that it is at best unhelpful, at worst, the artifice of a moralist bent on perpetuating a culture of guilt? The criticism would be aimed at me as much as it is Ricœur, as I am extending his thought over areas he is not as explicit. In this, though, I would recall the paradox of responsibility. It is both presupposed and it is a task to be achieved. We cannot make a claim to collective action, without presupposing a responsibility for collective action. Likewise, responsibility is a capability to be cultivated. This is as true for our ability to impute responsibility to our own actions, and the capabilities which make that possible, as it is for the capacity to hear and recognize our responsibility for the fragile. The sheer absence within our own American society of an appreciation for our association in collective harms is no reason to doubt its veracity or its efficacy in pointing towards our collective responsibility. It is instead, a clarion call to educators and activists of all forms.

Rather than simply dismissing guilt for institutional injustice as unhelpful, theorists today need to recognize that guilt is operative even at this level. It is a potential danger in its excesses and its deficiencies. A failure to attend to it is an invitation to allow either to run rampant, or to fail to identify and cultivate forms of guilt which can awaken us to our responsibility for the fragile other and the institutions which mediate our lives to them. For some, this guilt will be our first step into an awareness of our collective responsibility. For others, it will only follow an attunement of their sense of responsibility towards the fragile other. Ricœur's work is a reminder of both the dangers and the fruitful possibilities of such a form of guilt, and while he did not develop explicitly the link between what I call a stain of association and the responsibility for the

fragile, there are ample resources within his work for making this connection.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced out the development of a new model of responsibility within Ricœur's work which supplements his understanding of responsibility-as-imputation. First, I identified Ricœur's shifting position with regards to collective and institutional forms of guilt, identifying the limits of an imputation model to treat collective guilt. Second, I charted out the outlines of the new model of responsibility developed out of Ricœur's engagement with Jonas. This model is prospective in scope, anchored in fragility, and experienced as a call which originates in the fragile person. It is not limited to care for fragile persons, however, for it is extended over institutions which amplify human fragility, institutions which themselves become objects of responsibility. Finally, I explored the possibility of naming a form of guilt to match this newly articulated responsibility, a form of guilt distinct from individual guilt, tied to not to our actions, but to belonging to institutions characterized by structural injustice, a stain of association, spread indiscriminately over all who belong to such institutions. I identify that this guilt is not an end unto itself, but serves to awaken us to our shared responsibility for the fragile. With a theory of a responsibility for institutions now in hand, in the next chapter we now turn to Ricœur's theory of institutions, which both mediate our shared lives together, and are the proper subject of justice.

Part II: Institutions and Institutional Ethics in Ricœur

While I have reconstructed from Ricœur a model of responsibility that can extend over to the many institutions that pervade our lives, this only brings us to the threshold of an ethic of institutions. We may now describe the subjective dispositions that enable us to care for institutions under our moral purview. This will require a more complete picture of institutions or how one might conceptualize an “ethic of institutions.”

Over the next two chapters I will fill in these missing pieces of the puzzle. Taking a similar tack to my work on responsibility, in Chapter 3, I will draw upon texts published across Ricœur’s career in order to develop a model of institutions. I first rely on a core definition presented in *Oneself as Another* that identifies institutions as structures of living-together. Drawing on this emphasis on “living-together,” over and against more diffuse institutions like language, I will privilege more formal, “peopled” institutions like organizations. I will introduce three further concepts that elucidate and describe key aspects of institutions in Ricœur’s work: institutions as mediatory, necessary, and ambiguous. While I draw these concepts from Ricœur’s long but unsystematic treatment of institutions, I elevate them to the level of distinct markers of institutions and use them in broader fashion than their original context. Thus, these categories that I introduce will allow us to mark the dynamic shifts in his understanding, while also illustrating a certain coherence across these changes. Each of these parts illustrate a further central piece: institutions as moral, as opposed to amoral. Thus, we see institutions as subjects of moral concern, not simply because of their role mediating to the fragile other (as in Chapter 2), but further because of the goods pursued in them, the necessary role they play for the self, and the ambiguities they present. This moral nature of institutions is the true warrant for my attention to peopled institutions.

From a grasp of the moral dimensions of institutions, one must move to an ethic that is able to judge them and adjudicate between them. In Chapter 4, I argue that Ricœur not only offers an ethic of institutions, as he draws upon and transforms Rawls, but that he further provides the resources to ground an inter-institutional ethic that can help adjudicate between the conflicting play of institutions

Chapter 3: Institutions in the Work of Paul Ricœur

A look at the news can give the impression that we are in a nadir of institutional life. The sex abuse scandals of the catholic church, the detention of migrant children, the rise of mass incarceration of minorities, the failures of schools across the U.S., hyper-partisan politics, and an inability to face growing threats from environmental degradation are all contemporary examples of “performance failures” of our institutions. This impression is amplified by our increased exposure to institutional failures through pervasive, enduring, and recurring airtime made possible by new media. Institutions can seem external to ourselves, and what appear to be moral institutional failures can lead one to desire to wash one’s hands of the whole lot of them, or at least those that appear well beyond our control, and retire to some sort of Benedict option.¹ Institutional distrust is intensified all the more as more organized institutions present as metonymies of the leadership that have publicly failed: the Roman Catholic Church becomes synonymous with its bishops, our government with our elected leaders, our corporations with their CEO’s. It is hard to imagine ourselves as central parts of institutions that have lost our collective confidence.

Yet, it seems in this present moment this nation is particularly aware of the fragility of

¹ This term has become recently popularized by columnist and blogger Rod Dreher in his book by the same title. See Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York, New York: Sentinel, 2017). Influenced by Alasdair MacIntyre’s work (especially, it would seem *After Virtue*), Dreher uses the term to describe a lay (partial) withdrawal from the world (analogous to the monastic withdrawal that characterizes Benedictine monasticism) in order to form communities in which people could live, raise their children, and cultivate virtues in a fashion seemingly impossible in modern secular culture. The withdrawal, on my account, is partial because these are not self-sufficient communities (as monastic orders would once have considered to have been) and typically involve remaining reliant upon the broader culture for employment, food, security, transportation, health care, etc. In the language of this dissertation, we still remain caught up in moral relations to distant others mediated through a multitude of relations. To allow a partial withdrawal to mean an eschewal of responsibility is indeed a washing of one’s hands à la Pilate.

institutions and the need for vigilance. The 2017 Women’s March was the largest 1-day protest in U.S. history with over 4 million Americans pouring into the streets.² There seems to be unprecedented conflict between the judiciary and the executive branch of our federal government. U.S. citizens are viscerally aware in this moment of the presence of institutions pervading their lives and the fragility of these institutions. This awareness of institutional fragility is evidenced in recent shift in fears of U.S. citizens documented in the Annual Chapman University Survey of American Fears. In 2014, Walking alone in the dark topped American fears; in 2017 and 2018, fear of “Corrupt Government Officials” topped the list.³ This is joined on the list by other prominent “institutional fears,” such as the fearful anticipation of whether one’s insurance coverage will persist next year, whether the economy will crash again, and whether we are not only making our environment unlivable not only for future generations, but also for this present generation through environmental degradation and climate change. Today, narratives of disgust and distrust slide into narratives of fear.⁴

² Barb Darrow, “Turns Out Attendance at Women’s March Events Was Bigger Than Estimated,” *Fortune*, January 23, 2017, <http://fortune.com/2017/01/23/womens-march-crowd-estimates/>.

³ See Lorraine Boissoneault, “In 2014, Americans Feared Walking Alone at Night. Now They’re Worried about Government Corruption,” *Smithsonian*, October 20, 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/2014-americans-feared-walking-alone-night-now-theyre-worried-about-government-corruption-180965332/>; “America’s Top Fears 2017 - Chapman University Survey of American Fears,” *Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences* (blog), October 11, 2017, <https://blogs.chapman.edu/wilkinson/2017/10/11/americas-top-fears-2017/>; “America’s Top Fears 2018 - Chapman University Survey of American Fears,” *Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences* (blog), October 16, 2018, <https://blogs.chapman.edu/wilkinson/2018/10/16/americas-top-fears-2018/>.

⁴ Fear has long been in U.S. waters, shaping everything from national security discussions to immigrant debates. Now, contemporary headlines have appeared to shape American fears in new directions. American fears are not disconnected from wider narratives, but influenced by them. Two recent texts trace contemporary American political fear narratives back to the Cold War. See William F. May, *Testing the National Covenant: Fears and Appetites in American Politics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011); Elaine Tyler May, *Fortress America: How We Embraced Fear and Abandoned Democracy*, First edition. (New York: Basic Books,

Ricœur's work on institutions provides a useful entry into our present moment. I hold this to be true because he firmly roots our moral lives in institutions, elevating the stakes of our concern for institutions, presenting a hopeful image of their possibilities, and tempering his analysis with a clear-eyed awareness of their inescapable fragilities and ambiguities. In Ricœur's work, I also find a capacious understanding of institutions that I identify as both other-regarding and self-regarding. Aware of institutions' moral undertones, he also hones in on their paradoxical and inescapable ambiguities. I shall indicate that institutions are central to our lives and yet also deeply fraught. Distrust may be merited; disinterest is not.

In this chapter, I will engage in a genealogical attempt to understand institutions in Ricœur's work by tracing his evolving understanding of them across his lengthy writing career. In the process, I will seek to reconstruct a model that draws from distinct elements that emerge from his corpus as a whole (but that are isolated, elevated, and set in constellation by me) as key markers of institutions: institutions as structures of living-together, as mediatory, as necessary, and as ambiguous, arguing for the distinctively moral (as opposed to amoral) character of institutions. Thus, while a whole tradition of *realpolitik* dating back to Thomas Hobbes and Niccolò Machiavelli would dispense with moral concerns in institutions, I maintain from this model that the moral pervades our institutional lives, within and beyond the political.

In the last two chapters, I traced out two complementary understandings of responsibility. My work sought to show that Ricœur develops an understanding of responsibility which can not

2017). Elaine Tyler May aptly reminds that currents of fear have long pre-existed this moment for many black citizens who lived through American lynching. To this we could add segregation, the lynching of Hispanics and the cultural (and ethnic) genocide of Native Americans. Her text focuses on the quotidian security apparatus which Americans have built up around themselves. Christian ethicist William May identifies a religious undercurrent to our fears, naming a Manichean impulse to dualism and proposes (as an alternative) a monotheistic tempering of nationalism.

only address an agent's direct work within institutions, as one might find from an extended model of imputation in which she is responsible for those within her sphere of action, but that Ricœur also develops a social model of responsibility which can extend over institutions which do not immediately fall within her direct sphere of activity, but that nevertheless mediate her relations to the fragile other.

Implicit already within this understanding of responsibility is a partial theory of institutions. In treating Ricœur's social account of responsibility (a responsibility for the fragile), I have already identified so far that institutions are peopled structures that mediate our relations to others. As we shall see, these two facets form the core of a complex model of institutions that Ricœur develops and dynamically changes across his career. These can be traced back to Ricœur's earliest significant work on institutions in the early 1960's. In this same early period, as we shall see, Ricœur also discussed the ambiguities of power and institutions, through his idea of the political paradox, a term which takes on three distinct meanings through his career, but that convey at each point the inescapable vagaries and challenges of institutions. This complex, and sometimes sprawling theory of institutions will develop across Ricœur's writings as he engages in dialogue with Georg Hegel, Max Weber, John Rawls, Hanna Arendt, Michael Walzer, Luc Boltanski, and Laurent Thévenot. It is the aim of this chapter to lift out a coherent working model of institutions from Ricœur's work by identifying and drawing out four central keys to approaching his work: institutions as structures of living-together, as mediatory, necessary, and ambiguous. These same concepts will also help us to see dynamic shifts in his understanding of institutions.

While the last chapter sought to articulate responsibility for the fragile as a central means by which we are invested in institutions, in this chapter, responsibility for distant others is merely

one way in which we are implicated, caught up, and invested in institutions. The aim of this chapter is to give us the ability to better understand institutions, and the means by which they penetrate our moral lives. In the subsequent chapter, I will address how we might, from this understanding, make normative claims upon their functioning both within and between institutions. Chapter 3 and 4 are critical steps along the way to my constructive application of institutional ethics in Chapter 8, where I argue that our moral relations to the natural environment are also caught up in our institutional relations.

Institutions play an important, if peripheral role in Ricœur's work across his career. That institutions enters so many different periods of his work, ranging from periods where he focused on Christian political theory; hermeneutics and ideology critique; ethics of the capable self; the phenomenology of memory, the philosophy of recognition; and the working out of theories of justice is both to our benefit and a burden. It can cause any singular treatment of his work on institutions to be narrow or myopic, isolating some single aspect at the exclusion of others. Alternatively, a full treatment would not only be piecemeal, but it can cause an imaginary synthesis, drawing, perhaps unwittingly, constructive links between his varied treatments of institutions where none exist. My own project will suffer the necessities of both. I do not treat Ricœur's work on institutions for their own sake, but specifically because they can help us better address the responsibility of each for them. We cannot simply unpack the idea of responsibility, without better understanding the very spheres over which I claim Ricœur's model of responsibility extends. Yet, as Ricœur does not have a single systematic treatment of institutions—and he is far from being classified as a systematic thinker, far more committed to the change brought about by engaging new dialogue partners than making connections across his career—any synthetic presentation can give rise to a false synthesis. While Ricœur is not

systematic, he is, nonetheless, schematic, and themes in his treatment of institutions recur and develop. His various detours through his career enable a multifaceted approach to the theme of institutions. Following some of these major themes enable me to present a constellation of themes which form the nebulous concept of institution. My synthetic work makes explicit connections already present but scattered and constructively connecting themes. Synthesis may be unavoidable, but with these dangers in mind, it can be done in more responsible ways that cohere with Ricœur's thought as a whole. What it makes possible is a grasp of Ricœur's understanding institutions not possible from reading any one text.

Finally, in this chapter, I hone in on the concept to trace out the features of institutions across Ricœur's career and reconstruct a model of institutions that coheres with his work. I begin with a broad, overarching definition of institutions found in *Oneself as Another*: institutions as structures of living-together. In my argument, this definition provides important key orientations to seeing institutions as moral, in pursuit of a distinct good. Then, I proceed to trace through three features of institutions that I maintain give institutions shape throughout his career: institutions as mediatory, institutions as necessary to the self, and institutions as ambiguous. While drawn in more and less explicit ways from his work, I isolate these concepts as distinct markers of his understanding of institutions and set them in constellation, holding together what might otherwise be viewed as disparate understandings of institutions. Together, these four sections make possible a subsequent step of going beyond mere description to a robust understanding of the moral place of institutions. I will argue that this reconstructed model of institutions locates them as matters of moral concern as they enable the good of living-together, as they mediate relations to the distant other, as they structure our action and provide occasion

for the development of our capacities, and as they remain paradoxically ambiguous, always open to arbitrariness, domination, and violence.

Section 1: Institutions as Structures of Living Together

Institutions play a role in Ricœur's ethics across his career, making selecting starting point a challenge.⁵ Among the various definitions he provides in his career, he describes institutions as the site of mediation to the distant other,⁶ as "rules relative to social actions in life"⁷, and as "values, norms, and laws" that mediate between individuals.⁸ Such definitions capture common legal, sociological, and economic understandings of institutions.⁹ Rather than

⁵ Any reader of Ricœur's *Time and Narrative* should be wary of allowing the inordinate privilege placed on sequential time to dictate how we tell a story, whether it be the life of a person or the life of an idea. While chronological order is ready at hand when faced with a career worth of publications, opting for it (or not) ought be intentional. In my estimation, academic writing is far closer to narrative than to a timeline, involving the synthesis of heterogenous elements across multiple orders both in the world and in the text (including chronology, logic, and persuasion). I deliberately have gone "out of order" in order to emphasize a themes that runs across Ricœur's work, but remain subdued until later. This step better serves an underlying argument in this chapter regarding the moral nature of institutions, advancing that institutions as moral is broader than as mere vehicles for action (as seen in Chapter 2).

⁶ Cf. "Le Socius et al prochaine" in Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 113–27. In this text, he also describes it as any form of social organization as would be studied by sociology.

⁷ Paul Ricœur, "La Philosophie et Le Politique Devant La Question de La Liberté," in *La Liberté et L'ordre Social: Textes Des Conférences et Des Entretiens Organisés Par Les Rencontres Internationales de Genève* (Boudry-Neuchâtel: Les éditions de la Baconnière, 1969), 53.

⁸ "la valeur, de la norme, de la loi." Paul Ricœur, "Le Problème Du Fondement de La Morale," *Sapienza. Revista Internazionale Di Filosofia e Di Teologia* 28, no. 3 (1975): 318.

⁹ Definitions of the category of "institution" vary across time and disciplines. W. Richard Scott provides a useful overview of this history attending not just to sociology and social theory, but also to law and economics. He provides his own overarching definition of institutions: "Institutions comprise regulative, normative, and cultural cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life." Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 56. Scott's definition is dense and capacious, synthetically capturing various perspectives on institutions over time. I would maintain that what distinguishes Ricœur's position from a host of others is his use of this morally freighted term. While Scott's own definition incorporates the "normative" in so far as institutions provide ethical references, Ricœur provides a substantive account that posits this "will to live-together" as a fundamental to all institutions. It is, thus, more apt for a "moral account" of institutions. It is a "moral account" that this chapter seeks to unfold. One important take away from Scott is that contemporary

beginning with the first instance, allowing chronology to dictate beginnings, my launching point is Ricœur's definition of institutions as found in *Oneself as Another* during his 3-part study on ethics (teleology), morality (deontology), and practical judgement: institutions as structures of living-together. While relatively late in his career, this initial definition presents the clear-eyed but redeeming vision of institutions seen across his career, while also incorporating many of the aspects of his earlier definitions.

Ricœur's discussion of institutions take place within his study on "ethics," framing its treatment, as he sets the discussion of institutions within a teleological framework of the pursuit of some goal, aim, or good. Institutions thus become partially described not by governing rules, but according to a good which is desired, and as the means of achieving this good. Thus, not only do institutions fit into the Ricœur's aim for a good life, but it is also understood according to a particular good which it seeks to achieve. In this first treatment of institutions within *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur avoids the potential proliferation of institutions and appears to focus on one particular aspect: a fundamental desire to live-together.

Ricœur provides a definition of institutions within *Oneself as Another* which shall be the starting point of our inquiry, placing a fundamental good at the base of institutions. He writes, "By institution, we understand here the structure of *living-together* [(*vivre-ensemble*)] of a historic community—people, nation, region, etc.—a structure irreducible to interpersonal relation and meanwhile reliant on these in a remarkable sense that the notion of distribution will

institutional theory overlaps more explicitly with a study of organizations, with some theorists even suggesting organizations are simply another form of institutions. My reading of Ricœur also indicates that there is a strong overlap between institutions and organizations. While my concern for applied ethics lead me to largely focus in my examples on institutions as organizations, Ricœur's theory is not limited to organizations, except in so far as he maintains, on my reading, a "peopled" understanding of institutions, meaning they never truly exist as structures independent from human communities.

permit us later to clarify. It is by common mores and not by constraining rules that the idea of the institution is fundamentally characterized.”¹⁰ This compact, but nonetheless incomplete definition offers an important orientating key at the outset of this chapter. Ricœur provides here a descriptive account of institutions, set within an ethical framework. One feature of this framework is that even here institutions are being treated according to the aim that they fulfill. This is captured with the phrase *vivre-ensemble* or living-together and structure.

Vivre-ensemble or living-together in another context might simply be descriptive. A family, city, or state might describe people as living together. Ricœur’s common language description of institutions here is also shared by sociologists. In 1991, Robert Bellah et al describe institutions as *patterned ways of living-together*,¹¹ suggesting that institutions are vital to describing our social life. What this term makes clear at the outset is an emphasis on institutions as peopled, part of our communities, and placed at the heart of the basic activities by which we live with one another. Such a term is merely descriptive for the sociologist.

But I propose that this term is more than a description of cohabitation or even community. Ricœur’s work on institutions points to “living-together” as a basic good sought through institutions. This definition arises in the 7th study of *Oneself as Another*, in a chapter

¹⁰ “Par institution, on entendra ici la structure du *vivre-ensemble* d'une communauté historique - peuple, nation, région, etc. -, structure irréductible aux relations interpersonnelles et pourtant reliée à elles en un sens remarquable que la notion de distribution permettra tout à l'heure d'éclairer. C'est par des mœurs communes et non par des règles contraignantes que l'idée de l'institution se caractérise fondamentalement.” Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 227. Ricœur’s privileging of common mores is exemplified in his focus on a teleological analysis before the procedural (which is closer to rules and regulations). With my introduction of the symbolic in subsequent sections, we also see the cognitive elements present in institutions.

¹¹ Robert N. Bellah et al., *The Good Society*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1991), 4.

devoted to exploring the teleological aspects of his ethic.¹² As teleology is a mode of analysis that is organized around discerning the aim of any thing or activity, understanding that aim under the aspect of the good (it is desirable), it is an appropriate place to ask the “why” and “what for” of institutions. In this study, he articulates the ethical aim of the self: to pursue the good life, with and for others, in just institutions. I maintain that the same teleological frame that underscores the aim can be applied to this definition of institutions. It is not simply descriptive—by institutions we live together—it also presents a core aim of institutions: they express and enable us to live out a fundamental *vouloir vivre-ensemble*, a will or desire to live-together. Institutions are, one might say, the means by which communities live-together. At the basis of the organization of institutions, then, is a good that is pursued: the good of living-together.

Ricœur draws this concept of living-together from Hannah Arendt, who links the will to live-together with the power that undergirds political institutions broadly construed. Ricœur adopts her terminology here as well. In contrast to “force,” (which might be seen as a power-over), power is that collective capacity to enact the will to live-together. This power undergirds institutions, and becomes their source of legitimation. Thus, he writes, “Power only exists where a joint action is ruled by a recognized institutional bond.”¹³ Ricœur identifies power as the

¹² As I shall detail further in Chapter 5, Ricœur’s developed ethical theory in *Oneself as Another* comprises of three different ethical modes (Studies 7-9): an ethical or teleological account, a moral or deontological account, and an account of practical wisdom. He uses these three modes to consider three distinct relations caught in what he identifies as the ethical aim: to pursue the good life, with and for others, in just institutions. This comprises of a care of self, care for the other, and care for institutions. The teleological serves as an initial point of reflection, providing much of the content of understanding what, for example, the good life or living well with others might mean. The deontological serves as a filter through which these teleological considerations winnowed as they face the challenge of universalization. But the turn to practical wisdom marks that Ricœur thinks that the deontological is insufficient and leads to potential conflict, which can only be resolved by an appeal to those initial convictions formed in the teleological.

¹³ “Le pouvoir n’existe que là où une action en commun est réglée par un lien institutionnel reconnu.” Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 17–18.

horizontal axis or bond of the institution. It preserves the stubborn fact that institutions only exist by the consent of those who form them. We shall return to the theme of power in greater detail later.

The small phrase “living-together,” introduced into this definition of institutions, might seem innocuous. But I posit that by embedding this basic good in institutions Ricœur bucks a classic understanding of institutions within political theory in which in their most basic form, social organization are a necessary evil in the pursuit of some other aim: security, prosperity, or some other external good.¹⁴ Instead of a Hobbesian compromise in which order is sought to preserve against the violence of the war of all against all, what brings people to form the institutions at the base of society is this desire to live-together. This underlines a fundamental moral overtone to institutions. The implication, captured in the subsequent lines of the definition, is that common mores take priority over constraining rules. Something which is shared and forms a part of our interactions with one another precedes the inevitable rules and regulations born in institutional life.¹⁵

Overemphasizing the origin of institutions in this a will or a desire to live-together can occlude the structural nature of institutions which have histories and in which we are often passive agents. There is a stability introduced into the concept of institutions as Ricœur calls them structures or (elsewhere) “an organized living-together.”¹⁶ These terms denote historicity, duration, and even the techniques of organization that can give rise to hierarchy and authority.

¹⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*.

¹⁵ If my reading of Ricœur is correct, then this also marks a fundamental similarity between Ricœur and the Modern Catholic Social Teaching (CST) tradition, which marks off humans as fundamentally social and that the goods born from institutions are more than just the external goods they provide such as security or the material goods born from collective action, but also the goods of relationship. Likewise, for CST, while one must avoid reducing the goods of institutions to the material, neither can ignore the material.

¹⁶ “un vivre-ensemble organisé.” Ricœur, “L’éthique, la morale et la règle,” 55.

While this desire to live-together is fundamental to their legitimation, institutions have both an inertia and momentum apart from the distinct expression of that will to live-together at any one point. While we act within and through institutions, they are likewise characterized by our passivity, for fundamental feature of institutions is that they are bearers of the past as the choices and actions of others become concretized as sedimentations of value, habits, processes, and rules that fundamentally shape or direct our action.

The term structure also points to the vertical axis of institutions. This is seen in the categories of authority and, in the case of the state, domination. Weberian social theory defines the state as the power which has the legitimate monopoly over violence, in which domination characterizes the relation between the governed and those governing.¹⁷ Ricœur rejects Weber's analysis as totalizing for institutions but nevertheless maintains that this vertical axis (which is irreducible to the horizontal axis of power-in-common) is true of all institutions, especially the political apparatus.

A final feature which connects and links both structure and the desire to live-together is Ricœur's rooting of both of these in a historic community. Here we see analogues to Eric Weil's definition of the state, adopted by Ricœur as early as 1957 in his essay, "La 'philosophie politique' d'Eric Weil." In this essay, he writes, "The State it is the organization of a historic community; organized as State, the community is capable of making decisions."¹⁸ Ricœur returns to this definition of the state several times throughout his career.¹⁹ One of the important features

¹⁷ See Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968).

¹⁸ "L'État, c'est l'organisation d'une communauté historique; organisée en État, la communauté est capable de prendre des décisions." Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 96.

¹⁹ For example For example Ricœur, "Le Philosophie et Le Politique Devant La Question de La Liberté"; Paul Ricœur, "Philosophy," in *Main Trends of Research in the Social and Human Sciences*, ed. Havet, Jacques, vol. 2, 2 vols. (The Hague: Mouton, 1978); Paul Ricœur, "Éthique

of this definition is precisely this link to a historic community. In this essay, Ricœur notes regarding this definition a central point: while the historical community precedes the state, it is the state which makes possible the organized action of a community, enabling it to enter history.

I identify a key limit here. Ricœur inserts the notion of the historical community as well into the notion of the institution. The institution is historical and it is tied to a historical people. For whatever pretensions to the universal an institution may bear, it is always rooted in an actual historic community. Thus, while there are formal elements that I lift out as related to institutions, in actuality, Ricœur's understanding of institutions opens itself to a diachronic analysis rather than a synchronic.²⁰

I hold that for Ricœur, then, the institution is a structure which first and foremost understood as enabling the good of living-together. This definition can be applied to the full range of our political structures at all levels of governance, ranging from the judiciary, to our executive offices, to our legislative offices, to the penal system, to our police forces, and even to our military. I also maintain that this likewise extends to institutions within civil society and even, it would seem, to the family. Setting institutions within a framework of aiming at the good of living-together is a first mark of identifying institutions as moral spheres and not merely amoral social spheres that can be described through sociological or economic analysis.

et politique," *Autres Temps. Les cahiers du christianisme social* 5, no. 1 (1985): 58–70, <https://doi.org/10.3406/chris.1985.1000>.

²⁰ This link to historic communities can, I suggest, serve as a window into Ricœur's anti-structuralism. Rather than a fixed and abstract representation of structures, Ricœur's hermeneutics and his understanding of institutions is caught up in the dynamic life of people who rely upon, and even bring into being, institutions for the sake of living-together. The advantage to this "peopled" understanding of institutions is that it enables the claiming of responsibility for institutions to actually have prospective meaning. That is to say, while individuals may do very little as individuals to impact institutions, in their institutional roles and through collective action persons can effect change on the whole range of institutions that exist from language, to family structures, to organizations.

Such a compact definition fails to give a full account of Ricœur's understanding of institutions. Nevertheless, it provides a substantial base from which we can explore other core central characteristics which give form to the institution and further illustrate it as a moral reality. Over the next three sections, I will trace three themes through Ricœur's career that are central to seeing the dynamism and continuity in his developing understanding of institutions: institutions as mediatory, necessary and ambiguous.

Section 2: The Mediating Institution

A central feature of Ricœur's understanding of institutions is their mediatory character. This characteristic serves as a core building block for my thesis that Ricœur presents a moral vision of institutions. I have already raised an implicit understanding of the institution as mediatory in Chapter 2. There, I argued that Ricœur develops a concept of responsibility which responds to the fragile other, and extends over the institutional spheres which amplify human fragility. Embedded in this theory of social responsibility is an account of institutions as linking the self to distant and fragile others. This characteristic of mediation is not incidental to Ricœur's understanding of institutions, but in fact a central and longstanding feature of institutions in his corpus. Yet, there is ambiguity in his work as to the object of mediation. Who is the other to whom we are related through institutions? What is the nature of this mediation? In this section, I will trace the development of this theme through across three stages in Ricœur's career. I begin with the institution as mediating relationships to the "socius," the social other encountered only through institutions. Then I turn to the institution proper as a neutral, non-person, the third-party mediator. Finally, I treat how the institution mediates to *le chacun*, the each, a category which synthesizes the previous steps, encompassing both the distinct human other of the socius and the

functional other of the “third-party” other. Throughout, I will argue that this mediatory quality marks the institution as a moral reality, subject to moral evaluation and critique.

2.1: Le Socius et la Prochaine

Early in Ricœur’s career, he had an interest in the intersections of philosophy, politics and religion which gave rise to a rich (if intermittent) reflection on institutions, the self, power and the other. “Le socius et le prochain” is one Ricœur’s earliest theological works addressing our relation through institutions to the distant other. First published in 1954,²¹ this text unfolds around a discussion of the meaning of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) as it relates to contemporary times. The central thesis of this text is that it is the same love that is directed towards the *prochain* (the nearby or proximate other, or neighbor who is known face-to-face as found in everyday encounters) and to the distant other (encountered as distant only through the mediation of institutions, known often only in the abstract). It is this love, Ricœur argues, which in turn challenges Christians²² to maintain, reform, and create institutions.

The essay unfolds as a response to the *étonnant* or astonishing proposition that there is no “sociology of the neighbor.”²³ He divides this essay into three levels, which correspond to three moments of philosophical reflection: a level of “astonishment” in which he engages with the biblical text, a level of “reflection” where he considers our modern age, and a level of “meditation” that considers the two in tandem. Thus, these three moments develop a dialectic. The first moment establishes the principle of the neighbor born out of the biblical text,

²¹ Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 113–27. “Le socius et le prochain” was initially published in Albert Plé, *L’amour du prochain* (Paris: Les Éd. du CERF, 1954). It was later collected and published in *Histoire et Vérité* in 1955.

²² While Ricœur engages with Christianity throughout his career, it is remarkably pronounced in this earlier period of his career, when he was involved with movements like “Christianisme social.” C.f. Dosse, *Paul Ricœur*, 2001.

²³ Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 113.

characterized not as a person, but as a relation. The second moment sets up the seemingly contrasting tenor of our own age, characterized by ever increasingly mediated relations represented in the figure of the socius, the social other encountered through institutions. These seemingly contradictory positions would lead to the conclusion that there is no place to consider institutions in the love of neighbor, or vice-versa. Finally, in the third moment, Ricœur provides a synthesis, identifying that the disjunction of neighbor and socius is a false dichotomy. Instead, he places the encounter with the proximate other and the distant other under the same sign of love of neighbor, which can serve to warrant the existence of certain institutions or motivate reform of others. I will discuss below the most salient points.

In his exegesis of scripture, Ricœur establishes the first pole of the dialectic, the theme of the neighbor. Unfolding from the claim that there is no “sociology of the neighbor,” Ricœur argues that the neighbor is not a person or even class of people, but an orientation. He writes, “There is therefore no sociology of the neighbor, no science of the neighbor. One does not have a neighbor; I make myself the neighbor to someone.”²⁴ There is no sociology of the neighbor, because it begins as a comportment or an orientation to the other, not a person. The significance of this first point can be missed when set in the context of the parable. It is not surprising. After all, in Luke’s gospel, in response to the question “who is my neighbor?,” Jesus offers the story of the Good Samaritan, asking them to do likewise. In effect, he asks them to *be* the neighbor to another. Setting this in the context of the “sociology of the neighbor” would appear to cast aside the first-person, interpersonal perspective, in favor of a third-person bureaucratic perspective. Ricœur preserves the agent as locus of action, folding in, as we shall see, the third-person as the object of concern into first-person perspective, rather than moving to the global view of

²⁴ “Il n’y a donc pas de sociologie du prochain ; la science du prochain ; on n’a pas un prochain ; je me fais le prochain de quelqu’un.” Ricœur, 114.

statistical analysis privileged a third-person perspective. This is a central component to his “theme of the neighbor”²⁵ and the later means by which he discusses the critique of personal relations and institutions.

At the level of reflection, Ricœur establishes the second pole of his dialectic: our age as an institutional age, characterized by mediated relations in opposition to the intimacy of the events found in biblical times. It is at this level where Ricœur begins to provide his understanding of institutions as mediatory, in this period of his work, mediating relations to the distant, social other. Our age, according to Ricœur, is not (seemingly) characterized by the proximity of neighbor, but instead the distance of the *socius*, the other to whom we are related through institutions. This might lead some, Ricœur posits, to suggest that we are not in the age of the *prochain*. Ricœur writes,

We do not live, we are tempted to say, in the age of the “neighbor,” but in that of the “socius.” The socius is the person that I attain through her social function; the relation to the socius is a mediated relation. It attains the human as ... roman law, the evolution of modern political institutions, the administrative experience of large states and the social organization of work, not to mention the practice of several world wars, have little by little forged a type of human relation always more extended, always more complex, and always more abstract.²⁶

With the *socius*, Ricœur gives a name to the other encountered through institutions. While the term *socius* itself drops out of use in Ricœur’s subsequent writings, the concept of a “distant

²⁵ His exegesis also adds to this theme the claims that institutional roles can serve as obstacles to this encounter with another and that the meaning of our actions is only known retrospectively in light of an eschatological history.

²⁶ “Nous ne vivons pas, sommes-nous tentés de dire, dans le monde du “prochain”, mais dans celui du ‘socius.’ Le socius, c’est celui que j’atteins à travers sa fonction sociale; la relation au socius est une relation médiante; elle atteint l’homme en tant que ... Le droit romain, l’évolution des institutions politique modernes, l’expérience administrative des grands États et l’organisation sociale du travail, sans compter la pratique de plusieurs guerres mondiales, ont forgé peu à peu un type de relations humaines toujours plus étendues, toujours plus complexes, toujours plus abstrait.” Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 117.

other” mediated by institutions nevertheless remains.²⁷ Its presence this early in his career (1954) is evidence to the longevity of the concept of the other of institutions in his work and warrants my turn to a genealogical approach. Here, as later, this distant other” is not characterized by a face-to-face encounter, or to use the language of the essay, through the event of encountering another. Instead, this distant other is only known through the mediation of institutions, loved, as he shall say later in the essay, in a collective and statistical manner.²⁸

Ricœur also addresses the general origins of institutions, setting them in time immemorial.²⁹ While for Ricœur this age is characterized by the *socius*, he is not saying that the institution came to birth in modernity. This would give the impression of a radical shift that occurred at some point with the passage into modernity: a transition from an era of immanence and encounter, an age of the “I-thou,” into the age of the *socius* in which we have “fallen.” In fact, Ricœur places institutions alongside tools and language at the beginning point of humanity.³⁰ There is not, he indicates, a natural existence and then an artificial, social existence.

²⁷ Even the term distant can be deceptive. It distinguishes not a physical proximity but a mode of relation: face-to-face vs a social relation.

²⁸ Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 119.

²⁹ While Ricœur’s later writings privilege an analysis of political institutions, here, he treats institutions in their broadest sense. Later he also is more inclined to give a specific definition. Here, Ricœur leans instead on the contours of the academic disciplines, identifying institutions as “All the forms of social organization which are the proper object of sociology.” Ricœur, 123. Ricœur’s writings in *Histoire et Vérité*, where this essay is compiled, as well as elsewhere indicate a sense of the vast array of institutions, including an article entitled “État, nation, école” that touched on the question of schools in relation to families and the state. Placing the institution within this essay in general terms, rather than the specific terms of state or school indicates that the mediatory nature of institutions is pervasive, and that the critique of the *prochain* born out of this essay likewise cuts across all institutions.

“Il n’y a pas là quelque chose de nouveau ni de soudainement malfaisant; le départ de l’homme, c’est à la fois le départ du langage, de l’outil et de l’institution: à partir de là il n’y a plus que des questions degrés, mais pas de question de différence de nature entre une existence sociale artificielle.” Ricœur, 117. (“There is nothing new or harmful in that. With the appearance of man comes language, tools, and institutions. From this standpoint there is no question of an essential difference between a so-called natural social existence and an artificial social existence, but only

As he will later say, distinct institutors always arise from other institutions, and thus while particular organizations, and even nation states may have their founding, there is no beginning point before institutions.³¹ Instead, it is simply a question of degrees. What would seem to characterize this age, then, is that there both an increase of mediation in our lives, as well as an increase of awareness of this mediation.

Returning to the question of the neighbor, Ricœur suggests two possible, but false alternatives born out of this apparent dichotomy of the socius and the neighbor. First, perhaps, the gospel is anti-modern, leading us to assume that it is necessary to forgo institutions in some form in order to render the distant other. On my reading, this would replace the false dichotomy of a natural state and artificial social existence with the dichotomy of graced state and artificial social existence. Second, one could claim that our modern world is so characterized by this mediation of institutions that it replaces the world of the neighbor, maintaining a similar dichotomy, but shifting the emphasis. The neighbor becomes lost in an unreal past, the province of “the human of regret, dreams and myth.”³²

I propose that one implication of this dichotomy would be the establishing of different ethical zones. The type of ethic that enables a first-person concern for the neighbor would not be the same ethic that would govern institutions. Institutions might even appear as amoral domains or perhaps domains that are governed by a more statistically oriented ethic like Utilitarianism. With the movement to the third part of the essay, we see Ricœur folding in the concern for the other of institutions into the first-person concern of the individual who asks today “who is my

questions of a difference in degree.” Paul Ricœur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley, New ed., Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 101.)

³¹ See Paul Ricœur, “Le Problème Du Fondement de La Morale,” *Sapienza. Revista Internazionale Di Filosofia E Di Teologia* 28, no. 3 (1975): 313–37.

³² “l’homme du regret, du rêve, du mythe.” Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 119.

neighbor.” This reflexive, first-person ethical engagement with institutions and the persons encountered through them will be a hallmark of Ricœur’s treatment of institutions throughout his career.

In the third part of Ricœur’s essay, “the level of meditation,” Ricœur dismisses both these alternatives, identifying them as growing out of the false dichotomy of socius and neighbor. Instead, Ricœur goes a step further, not simply identifying an interrelation between proximate, intimate and social relations, but unifying the relation of the distant other and the proximate other under the sign of love. He sees them as “two dimensions of the same history, the two faces of the same charity.”³³ This leads Ricœur to identify that these are not distinct loves, but instead one love:

It is with the same movement that I love my children and that I concern myself with juvenile delinquency; the first love is intimate, subjective, but exclusive; the second is abstract but vaster. I am not free from the obligation towards other children in loving my own; I am not free of my obligations towards others, for I do not love them as my own, or as individuals, but always in a certain collective or statistical manner.³⁴

The intimate other and the distant other are not the same. The engagement with the distant other already involves some sort of abstraction or calculation, seen as a figure of statistics, rather than individuated as a person. The distant other is loved in a “collective” manner. Still, it is important to remember the first-person perspective that is employed from the beginning of the article. A third-person view would deem these as two separate domains. A first-person perspective, however, is able to unite these two relations under one motion of the self: the love of the

³³ “deux dimensions de la même histoire, les deux faces de la même charité.” Ricœur, 119.

³⁴ “C’est du même mouvement que j’aime mes enfants et que je m’occupe de l’enfance délinquante; le premier amour est intime, subjective, mais exclusif; le second est abstrait, mais plus vaste. Je ne suis pas quitte envers les enfants en aimant les miens; je ne suis pas quitte envers les autres, car je ne les aime pas comme les miens, aussi individuellement, mais toujours de quelque manière collective et statistique.” Ricœur, 119.

neighbor. Such a first-person perspective is also found in the model of responsibility for institutions described in Chapter 2.

This gives rise to a new ethical disposition which encompasses both proximate and distant relations, *la theme du prochain*, or the theme of the neighbor. I see here a non-conclusive, practical, critical dialectic.³⁵ Ricœur's dialectic is not of two forms of love, surpassed and formed into a third, conclusive form of love. As already mentioned, these loves have seemingly conflicting aspects. Proximate relations are characterized by intimacy. Distant relations are characterized by vastness and even abstraction. This leads to the false assumption that seemingly incongruous loves, they are simply two different forms. In placing them under one sign, Ricœur sets them in tension, leading to a practical, critical dialectic, as the characteristics of one are used to critique the concrete circumstances that might be rooted in the other.

La theme du prochain is not an occasional critique to be applied when things are going wrong. Instead, lending to the inconclusiveness of this dialectic, it is a standing critique of both proximate and social relations. Ricœur writes, "The theme of the neighbor brings about the permanent critique of the social good: according to the measure of the love of neighbor, the social bond is never intimate enough, never vast enough. It never becomes the equivalent of the encounter, of the immediate presence. It is never vast enough, because the group only establishes itself against another group and closes in on itself."³⁶ *La theme du prochain* functions as a

³⁵ Ricœur later develops this type of dialectic into a methodology. At this point in his career, it is not worked out as such, but one can see the type of elements which he uses to later identify himself as "post-Hegelian," a focus on the real, without the conclusiveness of the historical dialectic.

³⁶ "La thème du prochain opère donc la critique permanente du bien social: à la mesure de l'amour du prochain, le lien social n'est jamais assez intime, jamais assez vaste. Il n'est devienra jamais l'équivalent de la rencontre, de la présence immédiate. Il n'est jamais assez vaste, puisque le groupe ne s'affirme que contre un autre groupe et se clôt sur soi." Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 125.

standing critique, indicating the necessity for both intimacy and vastness. The need for this critique remains constant even as the form that the critique provides is adaptable to the circumstance. This is only one of a few ways in which this dialectic is inconclusive. The tension here is not overcome, but is constant, applying itself according to the circumstances. The need is never resolved either. Even in the abstract, this remains unresolved.

According to Ricœur's analysis, institutions today are also predisposed towards particular evils. Ricœur pinpoints objectification as a central evil endemic to institutions. This is identified by Ricœur within the repetitive labor found in industrialization, where the worker is a replaceable cog within a machine of production.³⁷ He likewise extends it to social services, which treat each participating in it as a discrete human object, a human stamped with a number. Finally, there are, of course, the typical human moral frailties in which even in the most ordinary institutions (like a garden club), a person can abuse what authority they have to dominate over those under them.

Ricœur uses the love of neighbor not to focus on "technical faults," but instead to situate the harms done to individuals by the humans who employ these tools of human organization. In a passage where he underscores once more that the problem is not, à la Rousseau, an artificial social existence that is against nature. Ricœur writes, "The vice of the social existence of modern man is not to be against nature; it is not naturalness which lacks, but charity."³⁸ Ricœur maintains a distinction between the technical faults and moral faults of institutions. The love of neighbor is not a critique of an overextension of the "horizontal," but instead of the vertical: "That is to say,

³⁷ We see this characterized well separately in Simone Weil's essay "Factory Work" in Simone Weil and George Andrew Panichas, *The Simone Weil Reader* (Mt. Kisco, N.Y.: Moyer Bell, 1977), 53-72.

³⁸"Le vice de l'existence sociale de l'homme moderne n'est pas d'être contre-nature; ce n'est pas de naturel qui manque, mais de charité." Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 124.

the tendencies of a social organism to absorb and exhaust at their level all the problems of human relation.”³⁹ It is a means again of lifting out the human element, by identifying that tendency to eliminate and destroy these elements endemic to institutions. It is not a technical problem, but a human problem requiring attention to human actors—this entails that it is a moral problem.

This is not uniquely a negative critique. Ricœur also identifies that the love of neighbor can “justify an institution, amend an institution, or critique an institution.”⁴⁰ Institutions are not the necessary byproducts of the fall, such as Luther’s conception of the state,⁴¹ but distinctive goods for the type of human relations they make possible.⁴² Certain institutions, then, may be required by the love of neighbor. What may first come to mind are the many charitable organizations in our cities, like food pantries or homeless shelters. This ethic of the love of neighbor can equally motivate for the reform, amendment, or creation of new political institutions as well. The creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in response to the concerns about air safety and other forms of pollution in the 1970’s could serve as a political example.

³⁹ “c’est-à-dire la tendance des organismes sociaux à absorber et à épuiser à leur niveau toute la problématique des relations humains.” Ricœur, 124.

⁴⁰ “justifier une institution, amender une institution ou critiquer une institution.” Ricœur, 122.

⁴¹ See Luther, “Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed, 1523.”

⁴² Later, Ricœur will join Hannah Arendt in identifying that institutions are the means by which we express our desire to live-together. Further, he also joins her in identifying a central role for political institutions. Ricœur’s position stands in stark contrast to the more pessimistic view of institutions and technology put forward by his contemporary and fellow French protestant, Jacques Ellul. Ellul, famous for his work on the technological society, identifies that institutions have rendered us unfree, as people are mired in propaganda, lacking any direct access to the world, but instead existing in a world suffused with words, where institutions develop on their own apart from the guiding influence of humans (who appear as parts of institution, but at the level of cogs who secure their continued effective functioning), and where the logic of institutions supplant human reflection, that is to say, can replace ought. Cf. Ellul, *The Technological Society*.

Another trend which will run through Ricœur's work on institutions is the first-person perspective exemplified in the moral engagement with institutions that Ricœur brings to bear in this essay. Ricœur begins the essay responding to the question as to whether there is a sociology of the neighbor. As I indicated, the turn towards love as an orientation opens up a focus on a first-person perspective. While this perspective is not unusual when considering intimate relations, when considering distant relations that traverse institutions, this is a significant move. The very nature of institutions as sites of collective actions, organized hierarchically in some fashion serves both to centralize certain forms of power and responsibility, as well as disperse thinly other forms of responsibility both in space and time. For example, while blame can easily be placed on the head of an automobile company for intentionally averting emissions regulations in their cars, responsibility for environmental degradation is spread across nations and generations. Either circumstance can lead to a paralysis of action, as responsibility and power is either concentrated or thinly dispersed. While not suggested by Ricœur, I posit that "a sociology of the neighbor" can have the same effect. It is an outsourcing ethical reflection to an external third-person view, without linking it to actors who can be motivated towards change. The parable does not ask who is responsible in the narrow legal sense often found today, but who is the neighbor. Ricœur's *theme du prochain* does not dictate a solution, but instead identifies institutions as spheres of moral concern, which require a recognition and care for the persons to whom we are related through them. Evident here is an early focus on the role of the person as an ethical actor even in the midst of human institutions. We shall see that Ricœur develops this further within *Oneself as Another* with the ethical aim.

A sociology of institutions could easily reveal our social connectedness. Ricœur's essay is not innovative in identifying the "social relation." Instead, I maintain, what he offers with *la*

theme du prochain, is not only a means of critiquing institutions, but, more importantly, a way of identifying that the relationships mediated through institutions are morally impinging upon me. Our distant relationships are subtle and unpronounced. They are not in our face in the same way as the encounter with the man by the road in the parable of the Good Samaritan. They and the institutions through which we relate to them are easily ignored, left to the responsibility of others: the politician, the CEO, or the bishop. When considering the *prochain* again in this third moment against the background of the eschatological sayings of Jesus, Ricœur writes, “It seems to me that the eschatological judgment wants to say that ‘we will be judged;’ on that which we would have done to persons, without even knowing it, by acting through the most abstract institutions, and that, it is ultimately the point of impact of our love on individualized persons for which will be judged.”⁴³ Here, one finds Ricœur’s strongest words on the moral weight of our relationships mediated through institutions. Despite the ease of ignoring them, the anonymity of our labor, the seemingly dispersed or dislocated responsibility, there is still a call to act. This is not a call for a form of positional responsibility, calling those in power to take up their charge, but instead, as in the parable, a call to each to go and do likewise.

Ricœur’s essay “Le socius et le prochain” highlights that institutions mediate our relations to others and that this relationship is morally textured. It is but one of his earliest work addressing our moral relationship to the distant other mediated to us through institutions. Ricœur’s understanding of the other of institutions develops along with his shifting understanding of institutions. While Ricœur incorporates the understanding of a social role within his concept of the socius, in his later work, the social role becomes abstracted from any

⁴³ “Il me semble que le Jugement eschatologique veut dire que nous ‘serons jugés’ sur ce que nous aurions fait à des personnes, même sans le savoir, en agissant par le canal des institutions les plus abstraits, et que c’est finalement le point d’impact de notre amour dans des personnes individualisée qui sera départagé.” Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 126.

distinct person, through the concept of the rule, putting the concreteness of the other encountered through institutions in doubt. If left there, I contend it would be a false step, but Ricœur will subsequently synthesize both accounts under the sign of the *chacun*, or the each of “to each its own.” It is to this abstract other we now turn.

2.2: The Third-party Other; A Non-person Neutral Rule

With his essay “Le socius et la prochain,” Ricœur lays a foundation for characterizing the institution as that which mediates our relation to the distant other, the socius, to whom we often only relate through the institution. Ricœur proposed that a theology of neighbor love can help transform institutions, so as to relate to the distant other as if near. Further, Ricœur employs the socius to help schematize a relation. As he writes in the 1968 report, “Urbanization et Secularization,” “This signifies, at least, that all social relations cannot be transcribed in the language of ‘I’ and of ‘thou’.”⁴⁴ Already, we see echoes of a theme that will run through Ricœur’s work: the need for a further reflection beyond the ‘I’ and ‘thou’ to encapsulate our social and ethical relations. While Ricœur abandons the term socius, he continues throughout his career to develop the concept of the mediation of institutions and the distant other.

When Ricœur returns to the theme of institutions as mediatory, his position on this “third other,” not encapsulated by ‘I’ or ‘thou’ develops in a much different vein. In “le problème du fondement de la morale,”⁴⁵ published in 1975 and “Avant la loi Morale: l’éthique,”⁴⁶ published in 1985, Ricœur begins to lay out the groundwork for the three-fold ethical aim which will partially characterize his ethic in the Gifford lectures that result in *Oneself as Another*. This

⁴⁴ “Cela signifie, au moins, que toute relation sociale ne peut être transcrite en langage du « je » et du ‘tu’.” Paul Ricœur, “Urbanisation et sécularisation,” *Autres Temps. Cahiers d’éthique sociale et politique* 76, no. 1 (2003): 114.

⁴⁵ Ricœur, “Le Problème Du Fondement de La Morale.”

⁴⁶ Paul Ricœur, “Avant La Loi Morale: L’éthique,” in *Encyclopaedia Universalis. Supplément II. Les Enjeux*. (Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis France, 1985).

three-fold ethic is broken down according to the singular pronouns of French: *je* (I), *tu* (you), and *il* (he/it). The “third-party” other here, captured in the *il*, is described not as another person to whom we only relate socially, as might be found in the socius but instead, as a non-person, that captures the social relation already present in all I-thou encounters.

Ricœur’s engagement with the other of institutions takes on a very different tack in the essay “le problem du fondement de la morale.” With this essay, Ricœur raises the other of institution as the “third-party” other, posing the question for us as to whether the other mediated by institutions is an actual other, or instead a hypothetical other. Published twelve years before his Gifford Lectures this essay serves as a prototype for the schema which eventually comprises of the ethical aim argued for in *Oneself as Another*. The aim of the essay is to establish a foundation for morality which is more primitive and radical than law.⁴⁷ While not yet set in the terms of “ethics” and “morality,” we can see in this essay, an early effort to secure the priority of the ethical, or teleological, over the moral, or deontological (which in *Oneself as Another* must pass through the critical deontic screen). Paralleling the later developments in *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur uses here the same concept of an ethical intention and identifies that this ethical intention will cross three moments: freedom and the attesting I, freedom in the second person, and the mediation of institutions.

While Ricœur uses the terms “ethical” and “moral,” which will later characterize a primary division in his ethic between the teleological and the deontic, the ethical here has not yet taken on its teleological character. Instead, both the “I” and the “you” are anchored in the category of freedom. For the “I,” this is rooted in our fundamental capacity, captured in the phrase, “I can.” At this elementary level, the first step of ethics is that movement from belief (“I

⁴⁷ Ricœur, “Le Problème Du Fondement de La Morale,” 173.

can”) to historical reality where I can attest that I can.⁴⁸ In “Avant la loi Morale: l’éthique,” Ricœur will identify fallibility, our capacity for fault, as being that distance between the two⁴⁹ as one moves from “I can” to “I do.”⁵⁰

Likewise, the “you” is anchored in freedom, captured in that desire of a self for the other to also experience freedom, and is founded on the reciprocity of recognizing the other as another “I,” an “alter ego,”⁵¹ establishing an ethical relationship based on reversibility and reciprocity. This follows the “I,” for without confidence in one’s own freedom, one could not recognize another’s. Here, Ricœur lays out the foundation which will appear in his later work in *Oneself as Another*: “The other is like me! Like me in alterity, other than me in similitude.”⁵² From this, Ricœur surmises that that most basic interdiction, do not kill, arises first from this positive recognition of the freedom of the other.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 313.

⁴⁹Ricœur, “Avant La Loi Morale: L’éthique,” 42.

⁵⁰Ricœur, 42.

⁵¹ Ricœur, “Le Problème Du Fondement de La Morale,” 317.

⁵² “L’autre est *mon semblable* ! Semblable dans l’altérité, autre dans la similitude.” Ricœur, “Avant La Loi Morale: L’éthique,” 43.

⁵³ Ricœur also captures this “do not kill me” in that iconic phrase of Emmanuel Levinas’s: *me voici* or “here I am.” The reply operates in multiple modes and contexts in both Levinas and Ricœur, illustrating the deep integration of their dialogical phenomenology with their ethics. *Me voici* captures the attestation of the self in the face of the question of the other. See Ricœur, *Soi-Même Comme Un Autre*, 33. This is how one speaks (in impotence) before the violence of the other—“Here, I am, do not kill me.” It is also the response to the call of the other that obliges us to responsibility. As Levinas writes in *Entre Nous* “An unlimited responsibility emerges in this fear for the other, a responsibility with which one is never done, which does not cease with the neighbor’s utmost extremity—despite the merciless and realistic expression of the doctor, ‘condemning’ a patient—even if the responsibility comes to nothing more at that time—as we powerlessly face the death of the other—than saying ‘here I am,’ or—in the shame of surviving—than pondering the memory of one’s wrongdoings.” Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 169. *Me voici* is dialogical and reflexive, making a basic claim to recognition, while also speaking to the demand of other.

The third moment comprising this conceptual network of the ethical intention is the mediation of institutions. Institutions here are defined broadly as “values, norms, and laws.”⁵⁴ Part of what Ricœur captures, with this term, is that Hegelian recognition that a first-person freedom and the freedom of the other are always posited within an already existing context of values and norms already detailed in Hegel’s concept of *Sittlichkeit* or ethical life. Institutions capture the historicity of an agent, who is always acting in and through institutions that precede her.⁵⁵

Ricœur’s treatment of the mediation of institutions introduces the “third-party.” In contrast with the socius that related to distant others, separated by and mediated through the institution, the third-person here is a “non-person,” a “neuter or a neutral term”⁵⁶. When describing the *il* of institutions, Ricœur does not refer to some sort of generic “he,” but instead the *il* of *il faut* or the “it” of “it is necessary,”⁵⁷ striving for a functional, but non-substantivized “objectivity.” In effect, Ricœur is wrestling here with the problem that we use terms like justice,

⁵⁴ Ricœur, “Le Problème Du Fondement de La Morale,” 318.

⁵⁵ As I indicate throughout this dissertation, even as Ricœur identifies that he departs from Hegel (captured in that ambiguous phrase “post-Hegelian Kantian”—I will return to this phrase later), he is also very much indebted to Hegel. In the next major section of this chapter, I discuss more explicitly Ricœur’s engagement with Hegel’s understanding of the necessity of institutions, even as he subsequently rethinks the warrant for this necessity through hermeneutics. Similarly, while Ricœur discards *Geist* or spirit in as some superior ethical agency (on Ricœur’s reading) that encapsulates a purified communal morality, he nonetheless adopts the Hegelian concept of *Sittlichkeit* or “objective morality,” that is, a morality as embedded in our institutional life. For Ricœur, the recognition of *Sittlichkeit* is not a new third “agency” beyond the agency of a self or the other, but instead a new terrain for practical reason to take place. See Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 240. It is interesting to note that both Hegel and Ricœur come from Reformed backgrounds (in contrast to Kant’s Lutheran heritage). As exemplified in Calvin’s *Institutes*, where the third use of the law is pedagogical, the Reformed tradition bears a deep concern for the formation of social life. See Book II, Ch.7, section 12: Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T McNeill, vol. 20, Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM Press, 1961), 360. I will return more explicitly to Hegel’s concept of *Sittlichkeit* below.

⁵⁶ Ricœur, “Le Problème Du Fondement de La Morale,” 318–19.

⁵⁷ Ricœur, 318.

courage and temperance, which play roles within our action, but without these categories having substantive essences. In response to this problem, Ricœur suggests that the institution is a neutral category which can play this role.

Privileging the functional role of the “third-party other” enables Ricœur to stress the historicity of this mediation. Institutions do not mediate unambiguously but introduce an element of passivity in our own action as we rely upon structures which embody values, norms, and laws, and are dynamic, subject to an ongoing cycle of “inertia,” “innovation,” and “sedimentation”.⁵⁸ Our actions and relations mediated through institutions pass through structures which pre-exist our use of them, which bear their own histories, and which shape and structure actions, even as they are subject to change themselves. Thus, even a friendship is shaped by the settled norms of a friendship in society, norms which themselves are open to change. I shall return to this theme and the many influences on Ricœur (Hegel, Weber, Geertz, Arendt) in the subsequent section under the subheading of meaningful action.

What is striking in this piece is the absence of any distinct “other” beyond the “I” and the “thou.” The third-party is not actually a third-person. It is not the distant other of the socius. Instead, the third-party is the institution itself which mediates our relations to one another, a neuter, non-person which embodies the history of effects as crystalized and sedimented into norms, values and laws. The institution is the mediatory principle.

If the institution mediates, to whom does it mediate? Ricœur is unclear on this point. He identifies that institutions play a necessary role in mediating between “two freedoms.”⁵⁹ The only freedoms he has yet discussed are in the first and second person. What is apparent, then, is that Ricœur at this point is identifying a functional role of the institution, located at the heart even of

⁵⁸Ricœur, 320.

⁵⁹“deux libertés.” Ricœur, 319.

I-thou relations. Yet, this is nevertheless a third-party, for it does not derive from this encounter between these two freedoms, but points towards the wider historic community of which two actors form a part. While distinct from the I-thou relation, this third-party other nevertheless appears as the historic mediation between them, making sense of an already ethically textured world in which we act. The third-party, then, is a functional other. This other is akin George Herbert Mead's generalized other.⁶⁰ It is not a distinct or actual other, but rather, a functional term which enables the imagination of another beyond the face-to-face other, which secures the actuality of society and community. Within language, it is the premise that words have a secure meaning beyond the two parties speaking. Similarly, with actions and norms, a third-party serves as a hypothetical repository for shared social norms that nevertheless function in I-thou interactions.

This framework on the whole is adopted in Ricœur's 1984 essay, "Avant la loi moral: l'éthique." Again, the ethical intention is presented as a triad, though in this essay he maps it more explicitly to the three pronouns *je*, *tu*, and *il*. Like above, the institution not only captures the historicity of ethics, but it also is historically inescapable. You can never find a moment preceding institutions, you only move from one to the other. This is especially true when we consider not just concretized organizations, but more abstract social forms such as marriage, religion, the state, and so on. This echoes Ricœur's earlier claim in "Le socius," where there was no time before institutions. But now each institution is presented as being born of prior institutions and institutional forms.

Likewise, the institution is philosophically inescapable. Even in dyadic pairs, there is a need for a reference to external neutral terms like friendship, justice, equality, which cannot be

⁶⁰ See Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*.

defined simply within an I-thou relation. The institution here is *la règle* or the rule, and like above, it serves as a functional third-party other which mediates between two freedoms. It is a third-party not because it is a third-person, but because it is a necessary third component of dyadic pairs, a rule which explains action between them.

Yet, in this essay, Ricœur does begin to include discussion of other social relations through Alfred Schutz's categories of I-thou, us, and them.⁶¹ Our I-thou relations, while rich, cannot be extended to incorporate that wider field of sociality. Ricœur writes, "We may be disappointed, but we cannot make that the *they* equal the *we*. Only a small part of human relations can be personalized; the rest (*they*) remain anonymous and reduce themselves to the play of roles (I wait for the postman to deliver the mail, without hoping that he will ever become my friend)."⁶² Here, Ricœur is drawing on categories from Schutz. For Schutz, a "We" relation is a similar to an I-Thou relation, in that we recognize another as another person, and share our lives with them. In contrast, a "They" relation is a relation purely of ideal types. The other to whom one relates in this instance is understood not as a distinct person, but instead according to a type, developed from past encounters, or, in large part, from a role, such as a police officer or a postal worker.⁶³ We see resurface the distant other, mediated through institutions. But now this distant other appears purely relegated to the social role that she bears.

⁶¹ Ricœur mentions these categories in "Le Problem Du Fondement de la Morale," but does not address them. In fact, his interpretation in this essay appears to differ with the more accurate account of Schutz's categories in "Avant la loi Morale."

⁶² "Nous pouvons en être déçus, mais nous ne pouvons pas faire que le *eux* égale le *nous*. Seule une petite part des relations humaines peut être personnalisée ; le reste (*eux*) reste anonyme et se réduit à un jeu réglé de rôles (j'attends du postier qu'il livre le courrier, sans espoir qu'il devienne jamais mon ami)." Ricœur, "Avant La Loi Morale: L'éthique," 43.

⁶³ Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* ([Evanston, Ill.]: Northwestern University Press, 1967). Ricœur appears to draw the example of the postman from Schutz, who himself identifies it as coming from Felix Kaufmann's "Soziale Kollektiva." See Schutz, 198, fn. 58.

These essays do not expand the field of concern as one finds in “Le socius et la prochaine” identifying those relations which fall outside of the I-thou dyad or making any meaningful contribution to the role that institutions play regarding them. “Avant la loi morale,” with its reference to Schutz, does appear to acknowledge these external relationships, but largely reduces them to social roles. This is perhaps fitting for a period in Ricœur’s career where he seems to identify Weber’s methodological individualism as the best alternative to Hegel’s theory of institutions.⁶⁴ In identifying the institution itself as the third-party, these essays accomplish two tasks. First, they establish a conceptual network which will serve as the basis for the ethical aim in *Oneself as Another*: Second, rather than simply identifying institutions as a third distinct sphere, he already begins to indicate here how they play a functional role that extends both to reflexivity and alterity, for they serve as depositories for the sedimentations and crystallizations of past choices, preferences, and valuations as norms, customs, and values. I will expand these categories my subsequent section on necessary institutions.

⁶⁴ As the title indicates, in the essay “Hegel and Husserl on Intersubjectivity,” Ricœur weighs and compares these two great philosophers around whether Husserl successfully promotes a phenomenology that does not need the concept of *Geist* as a “entity superior to consciousness, to a common, collective, or historical spirit.” “Hegel and Husserl on Intersubjectivity” in Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 227. Ricœur points to Husserl’s work in the intersubjective as playing the vital role occupied by *Geist* in Hegel’s work (a concept which Ricœur rejects elsewhere; see Ricœur, “Le Philosophie et Le Politique Devant La Question de La Liberté.”), but argues that Husserl needs to be supplemented by a thinker like Weber, whose “interpretative sociology” can fill in the gap left by a transcendental philosophy. Whereas *Geist* serves to provide continuity across social spheres, this is now replaced with methodological individualism. By the time Ricœur is writing *Oneself as Another*, he leaves behind this aspect of Weber, and through his engagement with figures like Rawls, he adopts a more substantive understanding of institutions. Identifying these alternatives does not represent Ricœur’s rejection of Hegel in full, but rather, a rejection of key aspects and an effort to find alternatives that enable a fuller embrace of those parts of Hegel that Ricœur adopts (such as *Sittlichkeit*).

Yet, these essays also raise a vital question. Who is the other encountered through institutions? Is it the socius, a distant other known by their social role, but nevertheless real as an object of love? Is it a non-person, third-party other? Is it a generalized other? Perhaps it is a third-party other which gains further specification through the concept of social roles?

Ricœur's identification of the institution as the third-party other risks erasing the distant other or taming them through an overidentification with their social role. This solution seems insufficient. Yet, known largely through institutions, the other known through social roles cannot rise to the level of concreteness that would characterize the face-to-face other. How does one resolve this tension? I maintain that these dynamic shifts find a resolution in Ricœur's subsequent work. As I discuss in the next section, there is a fusion of the functional other and the distant other in the figure of the *chacun*, which serves both as a functional principle, as well as a stand-in for the actual other to whom we relate through institutions. Ricœur draws upon Arendt's notion of plurality to cement the institution as both a relation to and an embodiment of a distant other, encapsulated in the *chacun*, simultaneously the everyone of institutions, as well as the each encapsulated in the classic statement of justice, *suum cuique*, "to each their own." Here, this category not only serves to include those others without faces—people with whom we never enter I-thou relations—it also preserves the functional role of institutions expressed through the "third-party."

2.3: *Le Chacun and the Distant Other*

In *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur turns to consider the other who is other than you, and relations of justice which extend beyond face-to-face relations. Here, we have a new presentation of the other that is captured in three terms: plurality, *sans visage*, and the *chacun*. The first two terms set the context and parameters for the third, anchoring the other of institutions within a

historic community that extends beyond interpersonal relations. Each of these terms reflect upon Ricœur's new articulation of the mediation of the institution and the other to whom these relations are mediated. What results, I contend, is a fusion of the categories of the distant other and the functional other presented above now in the concept of the *chacun*, capturing both the concreteness of the other, while also recognizing that it is through the social roles distributed by institutions that they are known.

Plurality

Plurality is a term which comes from Arendt's political philosophy. It represents the community captured in the "public" of public space. For Ricœur, this becomes a means of rooting institutions specifically within a community, albeit one we need not be personally related. Instead, this is the realm of the interhuman.

Ricœur did not initially identify plurality as explicitly with the other to whom we are related through institutions. In Ricœur's earliest treatment of Arendt's concept of plurality, he identified it as the network of relations, which place a condition on human activity. This, he identified, leads to a certain fragility of action. He writes in the preface to the French translation of Arendt's *The Human Condition*, "Furthermore, the action cannot escape the condition of 'plurality.' This means that for each agent the resulting action rarely coincides with her original intentions. This constraint expresses the dependence of individual action with regard to the network of human relations. It implies that some do the action and that the others undergo it. Humans are at the same time agents and victims."⁶⁵ This notion of plurality corresponds much

⁶⁵ "De plus, l'action ne saurait échapper à la condition de la 'pluralité.' Cela veut dire que pour chaque agent le résultat de l'action coïncide rarement avec son intention originare. Cette contrainte exprime la dépendance de l'activité individuelle à l'égard du réseau des relations humains. Elle implique que les uns font l'action et que les autres la subsiste. Les hommes sont à la fois des agents et des victimes." Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 61.

closer to the sphere of the interhuman, a recognition that our action takes place not simply in a face-to-face context, but in a much larger context beyond the interpersonal. In underscoring the fragility of action, Ricœur highlights that these spheres of the interhuman do not consist in uniform actors.

By the time Ricœur treats Arendt again his article “Pouvoir et violence,” the notion of plurality becomes much more of a normative understanding of the subject of institutions. Ricœur writes, “This condition of plurality is straight away characterized as the plurality of equals, which corresponds exactly to the elimination in the political plane of the relation between domination in the definition of power.”⁶⁶ Plurality is no longer characterized simply as a condition of human action, the fact of many humans living together. Now, it is more fully ensconced in the normative conception of power: Plurality is not simply a collection of others, but a collection of others who are equals.

Within *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur draws together these two strands, emphasizing both this web of relations of the interhuman and the normative understanding of the plurality as a plurality of equals. It is worth citing his introduction of the term plurality in full:

The idea of plurality suggests the extension of interhuman relations to all those who are left outside of the face-to-face encounter of an “I” and a “you” and remain third parties. The third party, however, is straightaway, and no pun intended, *the inclusive middle term (tiers inclus)* within the plurality that constitutes power. In this way, there is a limit imposed on every effort to reconstruct the social bond on the sole basis of a strictly dyadic dialogic relation. The plurality includes third parties who will never be faces. A plea for the anonymous in the literal sense of the term is therefore included in the fullest aim of the true life.⁶⁷

With this web of relations, Ricœur embeds institutions into this wider polity expressed by plurality. It is not *per se* the political community captured by the state, but rather the public of the

⁶⁶ “Cette condition de pluralité est d’emblée caractérisée comme pluralité d’égaux, ce qui correspond très exactement à l’élimination au plan politique de la relation de domination dans la définition du pouvoir[...].” Ricœur, 28.

⁶⁷ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 195.

public space, potentially extending across political borders, and even across time, as human action enters narration. Plurality roots institutions in a human community that is more than interpersonal relations. It makes space, as we shall see, for the anonymous.

Sans Visage

Plurality also extends to include the other *l'autre sans visage*, those who will never be “faces.” With this phrase, Ricœur points to Emmanuel Levinas’s alterity ethic, which informed the second moment of his ethical aim, pursuing the good life “with and for others,” but develops beyond it. The face is not the literal configuration of eyes, ears, nose and a mouth, but instead stands in for Levinas as that aspect which claims me.⁶⁸ In Ricœur’s terms, the face gives rise to both responsibility and solicitude for the other. The face of the other is not a phenomenal event, but an epiphany to the self.⁶⁹

To identify that this other is one who will never become a face to me is not to say that there is a category of the forsaken, those who will always remain faceless. Instead, Ricœur reemphasizes that same simple point made already in “Le socius et la prochaine”—there are those to whom I will only ever relate through the mediation of institutions. To be without a face in this context means primarily that one will never have the type of I-thou relation in which the other becomes manifest to me like an epiphany. It may be those with whom we never relate, someone living on the other side of my city. It may also be those around us, but with whom we never interact or only marginally. While far less profound in depth or intimacy, the vast majority of our relations take place within institutional spheres.

⁶⁸ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity; an Essay on Exteriority*. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

⁶⁹ “En vérité, le visage n'apparaît pas, il n'est pas phénomène, il est épiphanie.” Ricœur, *Soi-Même Comme Un Autre*, 221.

This point is rendered sharper by setting it in Levinas's categories. Our relation to the other extends beyond interpersonal relations and beyond the pedagogy of the face, who reveals in epiphany our call to responsibility. Here, the face of the other cannot instruct us with its "*me voici*,"⁷⁰ the *here I am*, which, according to Levinas's ethic, instructs us not to not kill the other. The mediation of the institution buffers such a call. It not only signals that the other of institutions is encountered only through institutions or institutional relations, but also that we cannot rely upon the ethic implicit within interpersonal relations in order to anchor our responsibility and care for this other. Here, we see Ricœur departing from the position initially held within "Le socius," where it is precisely the extension of the intimacy of a neighbor ethic that one sought to address the problems of anonymity implicit in the mediation of the institution. While Ricœur appears later to recapture some sense of that with the concept of "recognition," here he is seeking to anchor our ethical relation in some other concept.

Le Chacun

Ricœur does not allow the other to simply be either an undifferentiated mass or even an indiscriminate web of relations. In his 1996 essay entitled "Le bonheur hors lieu," he returns to language familiar from "Le socius," identifying this as an actual other, the *lointain*, or distant other. He modifies this other, however, with a further designation, *le chacun*, writing, "Beyond the other signaled by her face, there is the other without a face, but not without name, [le *chacun*] the *each of 'to each his just shares', the each of just shares.*"⁷¹ Ricœur once more is employing ordinary language as a means of getting at a basic concept of social relations. Whereas in "Fondement morale," this third-party is designated by a non-person neuter term, Ricœur here

⁷⁰ Ricœur, 55.

⁷¹ "Par-delà l'autre signalé par son visage, il y a l'autre sans visage, mais non pas sans nom, le *chacun* du 'chacun sa juste part,' le chacun des partages justes." In Paul Ricœur, "Le bonheur hors lieu," in *Où est le bonheur?*, ed. Roger-Pol Droit (Paris: "Le Monde" éd., 1994), 333.

explicitly identifies this as a person: an each and not an it. Ricœur gives us a name for the faceless other, but we do not yet have its meaning.

The term *chacun* presents a confounding set of issues. It is an indefinite pronoun which translates both to “each” or to each their own and to “everyone.” Is this each and everyone indistinct? Does it refer to a general other, like the third-party above? Is it an abstraction? Is the third other somehow reduced to a strict principle of equality, where each becomes a nondescript member of a community?

Further, what is at stake in answering these question? In Chapter 2, I argued that institutions mediate relations to distant fragile others. If we become unable to identify and grasp this distinct other as fragile, in contrast to any other member of the community, it would appear impossible to understand for whom one is responsible. Are we simply responsible for generic “citizens” or for distinct people and communities, rendered fragile and vulnerable by the same institutions that mediate our relations to them?

Unfortunately, in his most prominent texts in which he adopts this designation for the other encountered through institutions, Ricœur is not clear on the matter. *Chacun* is a vague term, rendered even more unclear when translated into English. The thread to understanding this term *le chacun* is precisely in the phrase he sets in apposition to it: the *suium cuique*, “à chacun son droit,”⁷² to each his right; to each his due. *Chacun* is immediately connected to a notion of justice and further, the concept of distribution.

But in order to understand precisely the contours and characteristics of the *chacun* we need to follow further the implication of this reference to the *suium cuique*, “à chacun à son dû.” This will elaborate how *chacun* serves both as a descriptor of the actual other encountered

⁷² Ricœur, *Soi-Même Comme Un Autre*, 223.

through institutions, as well as a functional term that sets us on a path for considering how we might reform just institutions. With this, we see that the *chacun* in part, serves as a stand in for the social roles distributed to each who form a part of an institution.

From the late 1980's onwards, Ricœur engages with John Rawls' *Theory of Justice*, and adopts core tenets from this work. Here, we see Ricœur positing that justice is the first virtue of social institutions. As I will elaborate in the next chapter, Ricœur applies the basic principles of Rawls' theory in order to give a moral sense. In this chapter, I lift out one small element from his engagement with Rawls: institutions are the basic structures of society which distribute primary goods, defining them as "rights, liberties, and opportunities, and income and wealth"⁷³ to be distributed. Ricœur agrees with the point of distribution, but provides an expanded sense of the goods. In *The Course of Recognition* Ricœur lists commercial and non-commercial goods that are distributed: "roles, tasks, rights and duties, advantages and disadvantages, prerogatives and burdens."⁷⁴ At first this may not seem far off from Rawls' own later additions. After all, there, he expands "opportunities" to include "powers and prerogative of offices and positions of responsibility in the political and economic institutions of the basic structure," freedom of movement and free choice of occupation against a background of diverse opportunities, and even includes "the social bases of self-respect."⁷⁵

For Ricœur, this system of distribution does more than simply extend material goods or even political positions. It has a unique role in establishing individuals as part of the social world. Ricœur writes, "Individuals would lack social existence without such rules of distribution

⁷³ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 54.

⁷⁴ Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, 223.

⁷⁵ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 181.

which confer upon them a place within the whole.”⁷⁶ Ricœur is arguing here that the nature of public appearance, of being part of a community, is tied to the rules of distribution. I want to suggest that it is precisely the term “roles” that warrants Ricœur’s claim that without the distribution of social goods we would not have a social existence.

In a 1988 interview entitled “J’attends la renaissance,” Ricœur explicitly links the three terms of distribution, *chacun*, and role. He writes, “I would like to connect the reciprocity in the distribution of tasks or of roles and the notion of the *chacun*: the institution distributes roles and thus engenders the ‘*chacun*.’ But the operator of distribution is other than these roles.”⁷⁷ Here, he lays out a direct relationship between these three terms. The institution is the structure which distributes. The object of distribution here are social roles and it is precisely these roles which give rise to the “*chacun*.” Further, there is no Leviathan; the distribution of roles is not a subsequent role given to another. What might it mean to say that one distributes roles and that this gives rise to the *chacun*? If we return to the concept of the *socius*, it is that person to whom we only encounter through the mediation of institutions. If it is now the *chacun* to whom we relate through institutions, one could conclude that it is precisely through roles that we are encountering this other.

Ricœur makes rather explicit that the *chacun* is neither an abstraction nor anonymous. In “Approches de la personne,” he writes, “I will not say that the category of *chacun* identifies to that of the anonymous, following too quick an identification with the “one” of Kierkegaard and of Heidegger. The *chacun* is a distinct person, but I only encounter it through institutional

⁷⁶ Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, 223. Here again, we see the influence of the Hegelian concept of *Sittlichkeit* coming through.

⁷⁷ “J’aimerais relier la réciprocité dans la distribution de tâches ou de rôles et la notion du *chacun* : l’institution distribue des rôles et ainsi engendre le ‘*chacun*.’ Mais l’opérateur de distribution est autre que ces rôles.” Roman, Tassin, and Message, “J’attends la renaissance,” 182–83.

channels.”⁷⁸ Here the contrast between the French indefinite pronouns of *chacun* (each) and *on* (one) serves to establish the *chacun* as a distinct person, whereas, elsewhere, he identifies that the *on* is not only anonymous but also that “it coagulates into an indistinct mass.”⁷⁹ However we may encounter a *chacun*, this human other is never merely an abstraction.

I maintain that identifying that we only encounter the *chacun* through institutional channels means that we meet them through the role that is given to them. Thus, Ricœur often makes recourse to an example that he first appears to adopt from Schutz, that of the postal worker. This is sometimes the courier, identifying the faceless other as the one who sorts mail whom Ricœur will never meet,⁸⁰ and sometimes even the mailman who brings him his mail, yet with whom he will never have a face-to-face relation. Yet Ricœur adds regarding this latter example, “I owe him something, he owes me something....”⁸¹ Here we see that the notion of roles does not turn this distant other into a non-person, for obligation can and does arise apart from face-to-face relations. This is an obligation, in fact, that is partially determined by the roles that are conferred ranging from the citizen, to the manager, to the student, to the clergy person,

⁷⁸ “Je ne dirai pas que la catégorie du chacun s'identifie à celle de l'anonyme, selon une identification trop rapide avec le ‘on’ de Kierkegaard et de Heidegger. Le chacun est une personne distincte, mais je ne la rejoins que par les canaux de l'institution.” Paul Ricœur, “Approches de La Personne,” *Esprit* 160, no. 3/4 (1990): 118.

⁷⁹ “Il coagule en une masse indistincte” Ricœur, Paul, “Théonomie Et/ou Autonomie,” *Archivio Di Filosofia (Filosofia Della Rivelazione)* 62, no. 1–3 (1994): 32.

⁸⁰ Roman, Tassin, and Message, “J’attends la renaissance,” 182.

⁸¹ “Je lui dois quelque chose, il me doit quelque chose...” Ricœur, “L’éthique, la morale et la règle,” 55. This is a very clear-cut example of a social role which conforms to a profession and the person serviced by this profession. But it is not always the case. Ricœur also (following Levinas) identifies that the orphan and the widow form the old testament as social roles with distinct tribal obligations. See Roman, Tassin, and Message, “J’attends la renaissance,” 183. I should note, though, that these are not obligations which simply free float, unmoored from the person who bears the social role, as if to say that rights are simply conferred upon one by institutions. In an essay entitled, “Who is the subject of rights?,” Ricœur anchors rights in the person as a bearer of rights. Cf. Paul Ricœur, *The Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1–10.

and so on. It is through roles, with the incumbent rights and responsibilities that we have social existence. Each institution has a role in distributing social roles that come with understandings of rights and responsibilities. The *chacun*, then, does not name a generic other, so much as capture a relationship in which each of us share to the institution. We are each an “each” to whom concomitant rights and responsibilities are given. We will have to return later to the specific theme of the conferral of rights and the formation of the subject in institutions. It is simply worth underlining that institutions are vital to us for the actualization of the capacities which are the root of social rights.

We ask again, who is the *chacun*? It serves as a stand-in term, pointing back to the institution as a site of distribution, and the *chacun* as the recipient of this distribution. First and foremost, it would seem that the *chacun* is tied to the social roles that are distributed, and indeed, Ricœur’s most common discussion of the *chacun* is tied to possible roles. Ricœur returns often to the example of the postal worker. He also discusses the widow and the orphan according to their roles.⁸² But this would be too thin if we only considered a role as merely a social identifier. Instead, it might be better to understand the *chacun* as personal focal point of apparatus of distribution, perhaps most easily identifiable by a social role, but only in so far as it is also tied to the rights, responsibilities and the commercial and non-commercial goods tied to it.

Thus, through the concept of *chacun*, inflected by the concepts of plurality and *sans visage*, Ricœur brings together the distant other of “le socius” and the functional, third-party other of “Le probleme du fondement.” This allows a fusion of both the “who” and the “how” of

⁸² “Dans l'éthique de l'Ancien Testament, quand on dit ‘la veuve et l'orphelin’, on évoque justement des rôles. En ce sens, le véritable prochain serait le plus inconnu de mes lointains !” (“In the ethic of the old testament, when one says ‘the widow and the orphan,’ one is precisely evoking roles. In this sense, the true neighbor would be the most unknown of my distant others!”) Ricœur, “L'éthique, la morale et la règle,” 56.

mediation. It serves itself, then, as a mediating position between two very different views of the other of institutions.⁸³ The other we encounter are actual others, met through institutions, but who are already codified by the social roles they bear, roles which are distributed through institutions.⁸⁴ Part of what is left out in Ricœur's later articulation is the sedimentation of values, norms, and laws addressed through the functional other of the third-party. While this may overlap with the *chacun*, both in the values laden in the roles distributed and the rules governing distribution, this is a broader category that I will pick up in the subsequent section. This also provides an opening for my constructive engagement with the CST tradition, as I propose that an

⁸³ I have traced the problem of identity of the other through the work of Ricœur and locate a mediation position in the *chacun*. Seyla Benhabib locates a similar issue in her treatment of the generalized other and the concrete other in *Situating the self*. The challenge she poses is that taking the generalized other as one's departure point can lead to a form of epistemological blindness that will invariably leave out particular persons concerns for justice, particularly those of women. Yet, this does not lead her to suggest abandoning the generalized other in favor of the concrete other. Instead, developing a moral vision relying on "the reversibility of perspectives" and an "enlarged mentality," she holds that one can "recognize the dignity of the generalized other through an acknowledgement of the moral identity of the concrete other." Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 164. My concern with Ricœur is similar. Without a concrete other, there is no fragile other to call us to responsibility. Yet, this fragile other encountered through institutions is precisely framed through these institutional lenses. Within the *chacun*, however, we do not simply find the pure individual. It is the other encountered through social roles. Rather than diminishing the other, it is a recognition of their social embeddedness. This mediating position enables, I maintain, the benefits of both the generalized other and the concrete other, while avoiding the trap of atomism in our understanding of the claim of the other by reducing them to individuality divorced from the social modes in which they develop and are recognized.

⁸⁴ The emphasis on institutions is vital here. First, it delineates a sphere of interest. Ricœur's three-fold ethical aim comprises of the self, the other, and institutions/the other encountered through institutions. We might compare this to Peter Singer's concern for the distant. See Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." In his work, the other is any person, regardless of how near or far, mediated or unmediated. The fact of the possibility of a connection to someone starving on the other side of the world is sufficient to garner a moral claim. In contrast, through Ricœur's work my focus is on the other mediated to a person through institutions. This both shapes the medium of ethics (leading in the next chapter to treating justice) and limits the scope of who one encounters. Similarly, by distinguishing between three different relations (self, other, social), Ricœur is also able to recognize the different claims placed upon us. The concern for the social does not swallow up or diminish the claim of the other upon one who encounters another face-to-face as one might deduce from Singer's work.

inside view of moral traditions established in an institution can help not only reform institutions, but also adjudicate conflict between institutions.

Across Ricœur's career, we find an emphasis on institutions as mediatory. Here the subject of ambiguity is the very nature of the other of the institution. I have traced two strands of the other. First, there is the other as *socius*, a person who can be the object of love, but that is nonetheless only known statistically. Second, the other of institutions is simply an abstract other, which serves a functional role in human relations. These coalesce, I argue, in the *chacun* which represents the other as an actual person, but also one who is subject to the distribution of roles by which one encounters another. By mere definition and observation, one can say that institutions mediate our relations to one another, to those, following the definition provided above, with whom we live together.

But I have also argued that this mediatory character provides a first threshold for understanding institutions as moral spheres. Within the *socius*, this is captured in the Christian orientation brought to the institution in *la theme du prochain*, which can serve as a means of supporting, reforming, or creating new institutions. Further, the moral character of institutions is internalized as they take on a more functional role in Ricœur's work. With the concept of rule, the institution itself gives content to distinct human relations. This is brought to full fruition with the *chacun*, a term which preserves both the actual persons inhabiting institutions, as well as the functional role of institutions through the notion of distribution. Thus, a profoundly other-regarding element can be traced along with Ricœur's shaping of institutions as mediatory through his career. In Chapter 8, I will adapt this concept of mediation to argue that institutions likewise mediate our relationship to natural environments. Now, I turn to a more self-regarding

orientation, as I sketch out the “necessity” of institutions in human freedom, action, and development.

Section 3: The Necessity of Institutions

Even apart from the moral concern born in the other-regarding orientation of institutions captured in the mediation to the distant other, whether to the *socius* or the *chacun*, institutions are centrally important to the self. One of the reasons for which we desire just institutions is the role they play in shaping and forming us as persons, becoming capable persons within them.⁸⁵ In addition, then, to the other-regard enabled by the mediatory character of institutions, there is also a self-regarding moral concern for institutions motivated by what they do for each who form a part of them. Across Ricœur’s work, another characteristic can be traced, institutions as necessary to the self.

In “Le socius et la prochaine,” Ricœur asserts that institutions have been a part of humanity from its inception, as natural, and thus as necessary, to us as art or language. But in this early text, this is simply an assertion with no philosophical or historical warrant.⁸⁶ Ricœur subsequently works out a more substantive account for the historic and current necessity of institutions to the self who forms a part of them over the course of his career, leading him to advocate for G.W.F. Hegel’s dialectic (while denying the Hegelian temptation of the objectification of spirit in the state), to appeal to Max Weber’s theory of social action and Clifford Geertz’s concept of symbolic mediation, to adopt Arendt’s notion of the “public space of

⁸⁵ This is a point of major overlap with the CST tradition in which institutions exist to help us become fully human, serving as nurseries to be formed as a particular type of person: Families as partnering persons, the Church as saints, the polity as citizens.

⁸⁶ Leo XIII seems to make a similar claim about the family who is primordial and is antecedent to the state (and thus has its own proper dignity with regards to it). See Leo XIII, “*Arcanum Divinae*,” Vatican Website, February 10, 1880, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_10021880_arcnum.html.

appearance,” and to return to Hegel under the concept of recognition. In this section, I stitch together these three moments using as thread the concept of the necessity of institutions for the self. First, institutions are identified as necessary for the actualization of human freedom. Then, they play an essential, though non-exclusive role in meaningful action. Finally, they play a necessary role in the development of selves. Even as Ricœur’s position regarding these figures and the nature of institutions shifts through his career, there is nevertheless a consistent effort to identify precisely how institutions are a necessary part of human development, underlining a fundamentally hopeful disposition towards institutions in his work.

3.1: Hegel and the Necessity of Institutions

Ricœur’s first attempt to work through the role of institutions play for the self comes through his engagement with Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, best exemplified in his 1967 essay “La philosophie et le politique devant la question de la liberté.” Hegel builds an ethic out of the dialectic of freedom and institutions, in which an indeterminate, solipsistic, arbitrary freedom becomes actualized through the engagement with right, into institutions: the family, civil society (here largely meaning economy), and the state. Drawing on Hegel, Ricœur proposes this dialectic as a new avenue for philosophy to engage with political philosophy, for the apparent conflict between freedom and institutions is resolved by defining (normatively) institutions precisely as that site where norms and rules of action enable each person to actualize their freedom without harming another. Freedom does not in actuality precede institutions. For Ricœur, we enter simultaneously into freedom and the institution.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ This is also Hegel’s position, who Ricœur draws from. As captured in the *Philosophy of Right*, but also in his earlier works with his distinction between *Begierde/Anerkennen* (desire/recognition) in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel posits Self-consciousness as only achieved socially. See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, A Galaxy Book, GB 202 (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Georg

Ricœur opens the essay describing what he considers to be a typical account of philosophical freedom. This is an abstract, solipsistic vision of freedom characterized by the reflexive tradition. It is solipsistic because it is “in me and for me alone; from me and to me.”⁸⁸ This freedom exists for the self. It is characterized by that “terrible power, which is to say yes or no, that of affirming or denying.”⁸⁹ It is expressed as a “power of the alternative, power over contraries, power to prefer and to choose, freedom is first this for reflection.”⁹⁰ Ricœur identifies the benefits this freedom has given both to psychology and morality, marking out what depends on one and what does not, as well as to the study of the sciences through Descartes, and the study of causality through Immanuel Kant. But ultimately, Ricœur finds this account of freedom wanting, precisely because it is an abstraction, lifted out from a single reflective moment, and hypostasized as a universal concept of freedom. Instead of helping to think through freedom amidst others and in the context of the power of institutions, it serves as an obstacle to philosophical reflection.⁹¹

Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). This distinguishes him from other romantics and German Idealists. I am grateful to William Z. Goggins for indicating this point to me.

⁸⁸ “en moi et pour moi seul; de moi à moi,” Ricœur, “Le Philosophie et Le Politique Devant La Question de La Liberté,” 42.

- “terrible pouvoir, celui de dire oui ou non, celui d'affirmer ou de nier.” Ricœur, 42.

⁹⁰ “pouvoir de l'alternative, pouvoir sur les contraires, pouvoir de préférer et de choisir, la liberté est d'abord cela, pour la réflexion.” Ricœur, 42–43.

- One might object that this “solipsistic” account of freedom is an inadequate representation of the philosophical tradition. Ricœur certainly draws more from Hegel here than from recent scholarship when describing the history of freedom in the reflexive tradition as solipsistic. When Ricœur authors an entry entitled “la Liberté” two years later in 1971 in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* (republished in Ricœur, *Écrits et Conférence 3: Anthropologie Philosophique*, 201–36.), he provides a much more substantive account of the philosophical account of freedom, discussing the various dialectics of action which are developed in order to discuss a free or responsible agent. Here, he leans on figures like Edmund Husserl, J.L. Austin, and Kant. Nevertheless, he identifies this as one plane of freedom, to which must be added a second plane, that of a *liberté sensée* or a meaningful freedom. Here, we see that even the discourse of motive, intention, decision, and responsibility do not yet satisfy the conditions necessary for a

The crux of the essay arises in the second part where Ricœur adopts and argues for the dialectic of freedom and institutions, drawn from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.⁹² Ricœur argues here that a meaningful freedom necessitates institutions, and in turn, institutions are only true institutions in so far as they actualize freedom.⁹³ This is then a normative and not a descriptive account of institutions.

The dialectic moves from an abstract, undetermined freedom to a concrete model of freedom. To get to institutions and meaningful freedom, following Hegel, Ricœur introduces the project of rights as that which enables the freedom of two subjects. He describes them as vague and general, on their own insufficient to bring about an institution, only the product of positive law. In the dialectic of freedom, rights serve as the basis for institutions. Born out of this dialectic, rights (following Hegel) are not simply the distinct particular rights of speech, movement, etc., but more fundamentally, the recognition of freedom.

Thus, Ricœur identifies that rights lead to institutions. Here, we see an early definition of institutions (already mentioned in Section 1), largely based on the concept of rules and

meaningful freedom. Such an account is substantiated in the next subsection, as Ricœur turns to symbolic networks to give content to the discourse of action.

⁹² Ricœur also explores in this essay the merits of Rousseau's solution in the social contract and the concept of the general will, which leads, according to Ricœur, to an alienation of "chacun à tous." Ricœur, "Le Philosophie et Le Politique Devant La Question de La Liberté," 49. In his encyclopedia entry, "La liberté," Ricœur looks also to Aristotle, addressing the discussion of free action and ethics as a part of a large ethical-political discourse, and Kant, with splitting of practical reason into the sphere of duty and the sphere of desire, before turning to Hegel. Cf. "La Liberté," Ricœur, *Écrits et Conférence 3: Anthropologie Philosophique*, 218–22.

⁹³ Dialectic is a mode of reasoning which, according to Ricœur, is concerned with the presence of opposites in this world, and the conviction that some oppositions can lead to a "productive opposition" leading to new realities or new possible interpretations. See Paul Ricœur, "What Is Dialectical," in *Freedom and Morality*, ed. John Bricke (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1976), 173. Here the opposites considered are an abstract solipsistic model of freedom characterized by a lack of any constraint or determination. The second apparent opposite is the institution, and here in particular the political institution, which has the sovereign power of decision-making and the power of constraint. For Ricœur, the new reality born of the dialectic of freedom and institution is "liberté sensée" or a meaningful freedom.

regulations. He writes, "But, what is an institution? It is the ensemble of regulative rules of actions of our social life, permitting the freedom of each to be realized without detriment to that of others. This definition has the merit of mutually engendering institutions and freedom."⁹⁴ The institution becomes both an embodiment of and a securing of the concept of rights. This definition of the institution privileges the interpersonal embodiment of rights, not simply an individual claiming their own right, but a system of rules that enable each to develop their own liberty. This follows from a dialectical mode of thinking where the conditions of the subsequent development of a concept (from rights to institutions) are already found in the earlier idea. Consequently, Ricœur can claim that the entry into freedom can also be the entry into institutions.

This dialectic leads to a definition of both freedom and institutions that are normative. There is a myriad of institutions in the world which circumscribe and stifle human freedom. The dialectic both shows that it is not necessary to institutions that this be the case, while also demonstrating that there is something important to human freedom actualized within institutions. Ricœur writes, "Every institution is justified where one can recognize an organ of freedom in the process of being realized. Every movement of freedom is justified if it can be recounted by the other, guaranteed by the law, and protected by the public order."⁹⁵ The normative account can work as critique and justification for institutions and for individual claims to freedom. It sets freedoms in conversation with our interpersonal and social sphere, while also placing institutions

⁹⁴"Or, qu'est-ce que l'institution? C'est un ensemble de règles relatives aux actes de la vie sociale permettant à la liberté de chacun de se réaliser sans nuire à celle des autres. Cette définition a le mérite d'engendrer mutuellement l'institution et la liberté." Ricœur, "Le Philosophie et Le Politique Devant La Question de La Liberté," 53.

⁹⁵ "Toute institution est justifiée où l'on peut reconnaître un organe de la liberté en train de se réaliser. Tout mouvement de liberté est justifié s'il peut être reconnu par autrui, garanti par la loi, protégé par l'ordre public." Ricœur, 54.

under a microscope for considering the means by which they do and do not promote human freedom. Here, we come to understand not only institutions that can work to nourish freedom, but also a freedom which is not abstract, but concrete and meaningful.

It is the state, for Ricœur, which comes to be the site of meaningful freedom. As throughout his career, Ricœur relies on Hegelian political philosopher Eric Weil's definition of the state: "The State is the organization of a historic community. Organized as state, the community is capable of making decisions."⁹⁶ Here, the state is privileged as a site of action. But rights and a constitution can serve to ensure that one can see oneself somehow in this general will, that it will not simply be a majority rule. Thus, Ricœur writes, "The meaning of the state, if there is one, is to assure the coincidence of the common will and subjective liberty, lived in the conscience of each as a pursuit of a particular goal."⁹⁷ It is in a modern state that we can consent to a common, collective choice, and where we pursue our own goals and projects. Organized as state, it becomes the means by which a collective action is possible. The dialectic of two wills, passed into rights and enshrined in a constitution is to serve as the means by which we each are able to nevertheless pursue our own aims. Even as the modern state is characterized by an increased sovereignty and extensive reach, it is not its constraining power which defines it, but instead this possibility of meaningful freedom, captured in a constitution.

But Ricœur makes quite clear that there are few if any states which succeed in this endeavor. That this is a normative definition of institutions means that there is in no guarantee that any such state has ever been established which perfectly reflects this. Thus, Ricœur devotes

⁹⁶ "L'Etat, dit-il, est l'organisation d'une communauté historique. Organisée en Etat, la communauté est capable de prendre des décisions." Ricœur, 48.

⁹⁷ "Le sens de l'Etat, s'il en a un, est d'assurer la coïncidence du vouloir commun et de la liberté subjective, vécue dans la conscience de chacun comme poursuite d'un but particulier." Ricœur, 55.

a third section of the essay to the combat of liberty. This is a theme we shall return to when we treat the ambiguities of institutions.

One of the implications of Hegel's work for Ricœur, is that freedom actualizes itself within the customs, mores, and institutions of a community even when done imperfectly. Institutions, prey to innovation and sedimentation, are the repositories of the effects of free acts. While Ricœur in this essay largely treats institutions against the backdrop of the state, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* also address other formal institutions: civil society, here meaning economic life, and family. These different institutions serve as the foundation for Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit*, which is the embodiment of customs, mores, and institutions that are traces of actualized freedom that form the ethical backdrop of our society.

On its own, this article seems insufficient to the task of developing an institutional ethic. Assessing institutions according to the norm of freedom appears a rather blunt instrument to measure and evaluate the range of institutional forms that exist. Further, as a normative principle, it fails. While he continually engages with Hegel, Ricœur will leave this particular understanding of the necessity of institutions behind.

Yet, from Ricœur's engagement and adoption of Hegel's dialectic of freedom and institutions, there are some key takeaways. For example, it demonstrates the virtues of a self-regarding engagement with institutions. In this instance, institutions are figured as a central means by which we enact a meaningful freedom. While in his later works, Ricœur does not employ the dialectic of freedom and institution, the necessary role between institutions and human action and capacity remains. Thus, there also remains the desire to further advance and reform institutions. Second, following from this self-regard, we also find in Ricœur's adoption of Hegel the articulation of a necessary relation between institutions and human existence, or rather,

between institutions and meaningful freedom. This inflects upon the understanding of institutions, which are then normatively measured according to their enacting or inhibiting actualization. For Ricœur, this project of meaningful freedom remains unachieved, and thus this remains a normative and not a descriptive depiction of institutions. Finally, this adoption of Hegel also inflects upon freedom. Freedom, in order to be actualized, is reliant upon institutions. It is reliant, in so far as individual freedom finds its concretization and actualization in institutions. It is through institutions that action becomes meaningful, thus for Ricœur, institutions are necessary for human action. But as Ricœur further reflects on the nature of meaningful action, he departs from Hegel on this point (though Hegel never truly disappears in Ricœur's work). Instead, Ricœur turns to the sociological accounts of action found in Weber and Geertz. This opens up to a rich engagement with the concept of symbol as it relates to action. It is to them we now turn.

3.2: Max Weber, Clifford Geertz, and Meaningful Action

Ricœur's rejection of Hegel leads him to seek out a new means of understanding institutions and actions in light of Weber and Geertz. With Hegel, Ricœur holds a strict relation between institutions and meaningful freedom. Freedom figured abstractly, as being completely free from constraint is an arbitrary freedom. Freedom dialectically engaged with right, and having passing through institutions is a meaningful freedom. Ricœur sees in Hegel an attempt to ground morality not simply in law but in the institutions that form a part of our life: family, economics, civil society and politics. The temptation is that the state serves as the summit of these institutions and thus can provide a firm grounding for morality. Hegel allows for an objectified "mind" as that source of ethics, which becomes, Ricœur worries, hypostatized in the

state.⁹⁸ The temptation arises in the effort to locate this firm foundation of morality within the state. Individual freedom becomes swallowed in this ideal but non-existent state, which nevertheless becomes blurred with the actual state. Instead, Ricœur identifies the need to hold these in tension: the constitution which gives form to the state and the actual government in which we find ourselves. Ricœur rejects the Hegelian temptation, but still holds out for a practical dialectic of freedom and the state, a dialectic, however which remains incomplete and open, rather than closed.⁹⁹

But Ricœur does not completely let go of Hegel, nor some of the themes raised out of his work. The insight of the principle of *Sittlichkeit*, that institutions and wider society bear the imprint of the actions of freedom in values, norms, and laws still holds. To address the continued role of these external forces in freedom and action, Ricœur turns to sociology. Still concerned with pursuing a meaningful freedom, Ricœur makes recourse to Weber's social action and Geertz's symbolic mediation. Here, a more tenuous relationship between action and institutions is developed. While Hegel's institution is normatively, freedom actualized, within Ricœur's deployment of social action and symbolic mediations, institutions form a part of the symbolic web also constituted by conventions and beliefs¹⁰⁰ from which we draw rules, symbolic mediations, and norms which render our actions meaningful.¹⁰¹ In the wake of Ricœur's

⁹⁸ Ricœur, *From Text to Action Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, 203–4.

⁹⁹ Cf. Ricœur, "What Is Dialectical."

¹⁰⁰ Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 58.

¹⁰¹ I will not delve into Hegel's hermeneutics and I will only skim the surface of Ricœur's hermeneutical theory as it lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that even as I have selected a hermeneutical turn to signal a transformation of the concept of the necessity of institutions that is distinct from Ricœur's earlier engagement with Hegel on institutions, there are ways in which even Ricœur's early hermeneutics is analogous to Hegel. For Hegel, a central task of philosophy is the elevating *Vorstellung* (representations/image) to the level of *Begriff* (concepts). See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of*

hermeneutical turn, meaningful freedom takes on a new aspect. The contrast is not to the arbitrary abstract will of solipsistic freedom, but inscrutability: the inability for others, perhaps for even oneself to interpret an action. In order to understand how an action might be ‘readable,’ we look to Ricœur’s treatment of the *mimesis* or imitation of action within *Time and Narrative*.

Action plays a crucial part of Ricœur’s theory of narrativity. Following Aristotle, he describes plot, the basis of narrative, as the “mimesis of action.” Ricœur devotes a whole chapter

Religion, trans. Peter Crafts Hodgson, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Ricœur uses Hegel’s treatment of the philosophy of religion to serve as an interpretive key that underlines an expansive understanding of these categories and a more natural relation between them, directly captured in his word choice in translation. Ricœur translates Hegel’s *Vorstellung* as *pensée figurative* or figurative thoughts and *Begriff* as *pensée conceptuelle* or conceptual thoughts. See “Le Statut de la *Vorstellung* dans la philosophie hégélienne de la religion” in Paul Ricœur, *Lectures 3: Au frontières de la philosophie* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994), 41–62. This allows, according to Ricœur, to not only understand only the narratives and symbols of religion as figurative, but also theological concepts like Trinity and Creation. These are figurative thoughts, which, according to Ricœur, having already encountered the concept, are now post-philosophical, returning to representation. See Paul Ricœur, “Foi et Philosophie: Problemes de La Langage Religieuse,” Fonds Ricœur, n.d., http://www.fondsriceur.fr/uploads/medias/articles_pr/foi-et-philosophie-problemes.PDF. When Ricœur says that the symbol gives rise to thought, it would seem that Hegel’s insight of concretized knowledge stand in the background? Every analogy gives rise to not only similarities, but also differences. This is reflected precisely in the polyphony that characterizes Ricœur’s work. He closes a 1971-1972 course on Hermeneutics stating “Entre le savoir absolu et l’herméneutique il faut choisir.” (“Between absolute knowledge and hermeneutics, one must choose.” Paul Ricœur, *Herméneutique: Cours Professé à l’Institut Supérieur de Philosophie de l’Université Catholique de Louvain 1971-1972* (Paris: Fonds Ricoeur, 2013), 137. Ricœur’s denial of the Hegelian temptation to absolute knowledge leads to the inevitable and necessary conflict of interpretations. But this does not fall into a form of subjectivism. Instead, the hermeneutical circle in Ricœur’s work is an opening to new modes of being as the reader encounters through the world of the text new modes of being that can expand the reader’s understanding of herself. See Paul Ricœur, “Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics,” *New Literary History* 6, no. 1 (1974): 107. In his shift to narrative, Ricœur moves from polyphony, to the concrete processes by which ordering and meaning making occur, particularly with attention to mimesis (or imitation) and narrative as the activity of emplotment. There is a distinct emphasis on meaning making which includes reading the residue of meaning in the world (mimesis₁), synthesizing and emplotting disparate elements into narrative (mimesis₂), and (creative and critical) reconstruction by a reader (mimesis₃). Thus, Ricœur leaves behind the meaning of a world revealed through the elevation of representation to concepts, to a far more fluid and dynamic process of meaning making written through with creativity.

to breaking down what this might mean, developing a three-fold mimesis: mimesis₁, which is the pre-textual world of action; mimesis₂, which is the “as if” of constructing a text that imitates the action of an already configured world, and mimesis₃, which is the reconstruction of the narrative by the reader engaging with the text. Mimesis₂ serves as an intermediary between the mimesis₁ and mimesis₃, thus placing as much importance on the already textured world, and the reader, who not only reconfigures a text, but also draws upon these sources for their own action and narrative configuration of their life. Action is present across all three. His theory of narrative, then, is not about a stand-alone, self-subsisting text, but rather a text which imitates the world, and finds its fulfillment in the reader.

Imitation for action is only possible because the world already is permeated with “readable” action. This is the basic premise of mimesis₁. Ricœur writes, “literature would be incomprehensible if it did not give a configuration to what was already a figure in human action.”¹⁰² This figuration of human action is broken down in mimesis₁ into three elements. The semantics of action comprises of the conceptual network which are used to help distinguish an action from any other physical movement. A person can ask “questions about ‘what,’ ‘why,’ ‘who,’ ‘how,’ ‘with whom,’ or ‘against whom’ in regard to any action.”¹⁰³ Second, the symbolic mediation of action, through which events become readable in their context. Finally, there is the temporal elements of action, which disclose an already phenomenal experience of time present in actors. Here, I will only touch on the symbolic mediation of action, arguing for a less strict, but nonetheless vital connection between institutions and action.

If the semantics of action help us to understand the grammar of action by laying out the constitutive parts which must be grasped and weaved together in narrative emplotment (be it

¹⁰² Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:64.

¹⁰³ Ricœur, 1:55.

history or fiction), it is the symbolic mediations which help us to interpret their content.¹⁰⁴ Actions always come mediated through symbols. The second component of mimesis₁ is a grasping of the symbolic structures that enables an author to contextually interpret the actions present in culture. Ricœur had already worked with the concept of the symbol before, most notably, in *The Symbolism of Evil*. But in order to consider symbolism as it is embodied in action, Ricœur adopts a slightly altered understanding, striving between the impoverished symbol if it is taken just means a representational notation, and a rich (but perhaps cumbersome) conception of symbol, as he uses in his earlier work on metaphor and evil, where a symbol always indicates a word with a double meaning.

Ricœur argues for a broader definition which can later incorporate his own earlier work on symbols and metaphor, while also allowing a new space to consider this implicit symbolic structuring of praxis. Thus, Ricœur aligns himself with the philosopher Ernst Cassirer, where “Symbolic forms are cultural processes that articulate experience.”¹⁰⁵ This direct link between experience and symbols casts a wide net enabling one to now consider the relation between symbols and action. Yet, in distinguishing between implicit and explicit symbolism, Ricœur is able to maintain the link between the rich use of symbols, the implicit symbols present in action, and the symbols as refigured within the text of a narrative.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ William Schweiker has dealt with this extensively in Chapter 3 of his book *Mimetic Reflections*. See William Schweiker, *Mimetic Reflections: A Study in Hermeneutics, Theology and Ethics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 88–132.

¹⁰⁵ Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:57.

¹⁰⁶ In a 1977 conference paper, entitled “La structure symbolique de l’action,” Ricœur distinguished between a constitutive symbolism and a representative symbolism. See “La structure symbolique de l’action,” in Ricœur, *Écrits et Conférence 3: Anthropologie Philosophique*, 277–304. The former comprises human action. The latter comprises when symbols are explicitly deployed, such as in a narrative or in ideology. As Ricœur notes in *Time and Narrative*, he finds this vocabulary inadequate. He instead replaces it with the more ordinary language of implicit and explicit. See Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:243, fn 5. Ricœur does not

Every action, according to Ricœur, is mediated by symbols. When identifying that an action is symbolic, Ricœur is not suggesting somehow that this is either unreal, or even that he is only talking about a particular class of actions, such as the action of swearing on the bible or the burning of a flag. Ricœur is proposing that even the most basic actions are structured by symbols, given form by symbols, and mediated by symbols.¹⁰⁷ What does this mean? Ricœur writes, “Before being submitted to interpretation, symbols are interpretants internally related to some action.”¹⁰⁸ Symbols undergird every action, whether done expressly to be symbolic, such as the giving over a bible at a christening, or done simply as a part of everyday life, such as returning a book to the library. This latter example also indicates that the presence of symbols shaping action need not be something of which we are conscious, even as it is ever operative in

explain why this terminology is inadequate. We could guess, for example, that these are taken not merely as different loci of symbolism, but also different forms. The choice to use “implicit” and “explicit” draws a tighter connection between the two manifestations of the symbols. This would cohere with the tighter connection that Ricœur draws across the three-fold mimesis. Not only are symbols seen in action, they are then also imitated in a text, and reconfigured in a reader’s imagination, and potentially, in their own subsequent action.

¹⁰⁷ Ricœur opts first for “symbolic structure of action” (in the essay of the same title) and then for symbolic mediation (in *Time and Narrative*) over the term “symbolic action” which originally comes from Kevin Burke in Kevin Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Forms. Studies in Symbolic Action*, Baton-Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1941. This original term is later adopted by Geertz, who also uses the term symbolic mediation, the term Ricœur ultimately prefers. In “La structure symbolique de l’action,” Ricœur discusses his choice of the term, writing, “J’ai préféré un titre moins abrégé pour signifier que l’action n’est pas à proprement parler symbolique puisqu’elle est réelle, mais qu’elle est structurée par des symboles.” (“I prefer a title less abbreviated in order to signify that the action is not, properly speaking, symbolic, because it is real, but that it is structured by symbols.”) Ricœur, *Écrits et Conférence 3: Anthropologie Philosophique*, 277. While I am discussing actions being structured by symbols here, as Chapter 8 of this dissertation will indicate, my interpretation of Ricœur’s use of symbols runs even deeper. In *Interpretation Theory*, Ricœur identifies that symbols mediate *bios* (life) and *logos* (word). See Paul Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 59. In Chapter 8, I use this as a departure point for thinking about how institutions play a role in transmitting and sedimenting different symbols of nature.

¹⁰⁸ Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:58.

our engagement with others.¹⁰⁹ Symbolic mediation is what allows us to distinguish between different behaviors. Thus, Ricœur notes, the raising of a hand could mean a gesture of greeting, a vote, or hailing a taxi depending on the context.

For Ricœur, institutions form a part of the symbolic framework that provides the context of any particular action. He writes, “Before being a text, symbolic mediation has a texture. To understand a ritual act is to situate it within a ritual, set within a cultic system, and by degrees within the whole set of conventions, beliefs, and institutions that make up the symbolic framework of a culture.”¹¹⁰ As a part of a constellation of social processes, institutions are part the backdrop for an action. While for Hegel the objective march of spirit meant that institutions served as vital pass to the summit of meaningful freedom in Absolute Spirit—Thought knowing Itself—in rejecting the final step of Hegel’s dialectic, it seems to me that Ricœur evacuates objectified spirit from *Sittlichkeit*, making institutions one among many forces which render an action meaningful. We see here that symbols for Ricœur form a part of a substrate of all meaningful human action, as well as those more enduring products of human action: customs, mores, and institutions.

Symbols have an essentially public character. As a background to this discussion of symbols is an understanding that all action is social action. In other essays (though not in *Time*

¹⁰⁹ Regarding constituent symbolism, the predecessor to Ricœur’s concept of implicit symbolism, he writes, “Il s’agit d’abord d’une médiation immanente à l’action, antérieurement à toute constitution en activité autonome qui serait l’activité symbolique; parfois même s’agit-il d’une structuration qui échappe totalement aux individus et qui, en ce sens, constitue la structure inconsciente de la communauté.” Ricœur, *Écrits et Conférence 3: Anthropologie Philosophique*, 279. (“It is about first an imminent mediation of action, before any condition of autonomous activity which would be the active symbol, sometime even it is about a structuration which totally escapes the individuals and which, in this sense, constitutes the unconscious structure of the community.”)

¹¹⁰ Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:58.

and Narrative), Ricœur draws explicit links between Weber's work and Geertz's work.¹¹¹ A social action presupposes that when agents act, they must take into account the actions of others, not simply as objects of actions, but as people who will react, further advancing an action or inhibiting it.¹¹² Ricœur argues that symbolic mediation is the means by which actions are social.¹¹³ Symbolism is "a meaning incorporated into action and decipherable from it by other actors in the social interplay."¹¹⁴ Yet, Ricœur's appeal to a wider symbolic framework of a society also indicates another way in which it is public: we are born into symbolic frameworks which we share with others and which precede us. This is not to indicate that these symbolic frameworks are determinative in any causal way, but that they are nevertheless inescapable. Every meaningful action and interaction is reliant on symbolic mediation.

Symbolic mediation is what renders actions readable. They provide the rules of description and interpretation, governing how we understand social interactions. Here, Ricœur accepts the basic premise that human action is rule-governed. It is not arbitrary or even nonsensical, but instead, with the proper understanding of the symbols present in a culture, one can interpret actions.¹¹⁵

Yet, even as they are not "constraining rules" these symbols structure action on a social scale. Following Geertz, Ricœur likens them to genetic codes. Ricœur writes,

We can clarify this function of social regulation by comparing cultural codes to genetic ones. Like the latter, the former are "programs" for behavior; they give form, order, and direction to life. Yet unlike genetic codes, cultural codes arise in zones not subject to genetic regulation and only prolong their efficacy at the price of a complete

¹¹¹ C.f. "Practical Reason" in *From Text to Action*.

¹¹² Ricœur, *From Text to Action Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, 194.

¹¹³ Ricœur, *Écrits et Conférence 3: Anthropologie Philosophique*, 278.

¹¹⁴ Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:57.

¹¹⁵ Ricœur notes, though, that symbols as he is treating them are not the tropes that the ethnographer might use to unpack a culture, community, or society, but instead the means by which the culture understands itself. See Ricœur, 1:58.

rearrangement of the encoding system. Manners and customs, along with everything Hegel put under the title “ethical substance,” the *Sittlichkeit* prior to any *Moralität* of a reflective order, thus take over from the genetic codes.¹¹⁶

This analogy to genetic codes better illuminates how these are both rules and non-constraining. A genetic code internally dictates the form that an organism. Similarly, symbols structure action internally. They are not superadded after the fact, but are at the starting point of a formation of action, giving it its shape and form.

Symbolic structures are not mere rules for interpretation or codes that give form to action, within them are also norms. The reference in the citation above to *Sittlichkeit* is telling, for even as Ricœur rejects the hypostatic status of “objective mind” and the state, which would give an epistemic and ontological anchor to norms present within “ethical substance,” nevertheless, he holds to the descriptive strength of this phenomenon. We always act in a place already textured with ethics, as we act according to norms established within culture. The presence of these norms through symbolic mediation also inflects action. Ricœur writes, “As a function of the norms immanent in a culture, actions can be estimated or evaluated, that is, judged according to a scale of moral preferences. They thereby receive a relative value, which says that this action is more valuable than that one. These degrees of value, first attributed to actions, can be extended to the agents themselves, who are held to be good or bad, better or worse.”¹¹⁷ Within *Time and Narrative*, this allows for an author to create circumstances, for example, in which a tragic character befalls misfortune, rather than just punishment. By placing a grasp of symbolic structures in mimesis₁, Ricœur is affirming the already ever-present ethical norms in culture.

This is a theme already underscored above when I discussed the third-party other. Institutions are central means by which values, norms, and laws partially structure our own

¹¹⁶ Ricœur, 1:58.

¹¹⁷ Ricœur, 1:58.

action. These are not fixed norms and eternal norms in either culture or a particular institution. Instead, as with the concept of tradition in Ricœur's work, they are subject to innovation and sedimentation. They are structures with their own history. Norms shift over time as a result of new action from individuals and communities. One could point to any number of social issues, whether it be racism, homophobia, or environmentalism to see how norms within our disparate institutions respond with both inertia and change. An institution's intransigence and our failure to recognize the ways in which our own actions are shaped and structured by the institutions of which we form a part is all the more reason to bring moral scrutiny to them. Institutions are not amoral phenomena.¹¹⁸ In fact, they play a central role in conveying and transmitting distinct moralities.

With the theme of norms, we must also raise the question of the unity and cohesiveness of the symbolic network that Ricœur proposes. Is a society cohesive at the level of norms? Against Ricœur, I argue that an institutional account provides a fractured picture of norms. This can already be deduced from his rejection of the final step of Hegel's dialectic. I suggest that the unity which is provided within the actualization of *Sittlichkeit* is rendered asunder with the rejection of the Hegelian temptation of objective mind. If spirit is no longer a stand-alone substantive force, and yet the dialectic of freedom persists, is there any reason to believe that the

¹¹⁸ Granting my point that institutions are not amoral, it is worth asking whether some institutions are more morally relevant than others. As will become evident in the next chapter, Ricœur's work clearly privileges the state as a subject of concern and attention, not only because of the ambiguities and potential to violence distinctive of the state, but because the political institution plays a vital role in making possible the public sphere in which institutions interact. This is but one way of privileging particular institutions. One might also ask interrogate how different institutions disproportionately form us. While Ricœur never sets up a hierarchy, he does nonetheless criticize the "false pretensions" of the family and the state in his 1953 essay "État, nation, école." He identifies, for example, that while families are a site of generation and formation, they nonetheless remain indebted to wider norms, customs, and linguistic frameworks within which the family operates.

seeds are not already sown for an internally diverse, perhaps even pluralistic culture of norms? One can also find warrants for this in Ricœur's later work. This fracturing can be seen across institutions within a society, a point which will be driven home for Ricœur later in his career with recourse to Michael Walzer's *Spheres of Justice* and Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot's *Economies of Worth*. Ricœur uses these authors to point to the plurality of the concept of justice, but one could easily suggest that strands are already laid for this with the fragmentation of *Sittlichkeit* and the distinct and competing presence of norms across institutions within society.

The fracturing of norms and symbols can have far-reaching effects on action around our most pressing social issue: environmental degradation (a domain which Ricœur only lightly touches in his work). Take for example a patch of amazon forest, figured simultaneously as material resource for harvesting by a logging industry, a contested site for conservation by environmental activists, a place of leisure by a local resort, a sacred space by a church, and a discovery ground for new medicine by a science laboratory. Here, the same space is a contested terrain, understood in terms of value (material and otherwise) and symbols differently. In Chapter 8, I will argue that we can use this initial framework found in Ricœur's work to advance environmental ethics by arguing that our symbols of nature are also sedimented within transmitted by institutions, thus shaping and forming our interactions with natural environments. This gives way to the necessity of an institutional environmental ethic.

I maintain that this symbolic network of norms reveals the potentially insidious nature of institutions. While engaging with Hegel, institutions for Ricœur became sites of moral concern precisely because they were the only means by which meaningful freedom could be actualized. The state, with its full potential for arbitrariness served as a central site for such an articulation. The move to a sociological understanding of institutions as existing as part of a network which

provides symbolic meaning and ethical valuation to actions does not render the moral concern for institutions as any less poignant. Instead, the concerns are now more understated and diffuse. Institutions embody the ethical valuations of the past. Our very actions bear the mark of these valuations. Thus, a theme like structural racism takes on a new meaning in light of this. Not only would it comprise the means by which racism is encoded in distinct rules and regulations, but likewise in the valuations and norms that symbolically structure action. Institutions are of moral concern precisely because of the way they already ethically texture our actions and interactions. Our inescapable passivity can only be countered with vigilance.

Whereas in Ricœur's adoption of Hegel, institutions were normatively necessary for meaningful freedom, in his adoption of Geertz, meaningful action is inescapably informed by institutions, but not by strict logical necessity. As we shall see, the fundamental role that the institution plays for action shall be reaffirmed with Arendt's concept of "public space of appearance" and in the concept of recognition.

3.3: Hannah Arendt, the public space of appearance and recognition

I have presented two separate moments in Ricœur's career with distinct models of the relation between human action and institutions. In the first, through Hegel, this is defined as a necessary relation, for freedom is actualized only in institutions. In the second, institutions roles are less strict but nonetheless important. According to this second model, action is only meaningful in so far as it connects to a wider symbolic context. More than simply rules of interpretation, the symbolic network also leads us to norms. Institutions form a part of this framework. This renders the potentially harmful effects of institutions less direct than in Ricœur's engagement with Hegel (which focuses primarily on the state) but more insidious and diffuse. As a result, we no longer can suffice with simply addressing the political, as Ricœur was

prone to do throughout his career, but must also treat the symbolic structures which are related to each of the institutions that play a role in shaping and structuring our action.

With a less tightly fixed connection between institutions and action, it might appear that the necessity of institutions drops out in his work. I maintain that this is not the case. Instead, Ricœur develops an even deeper connection between selves and institutions in his later work as he engages with Arendt and, subsequently, the concept of recognition. In this period of his work, we return to institutions not merely as the site of "norms, values, and laws," but the actual space of community (already well present in Ricœur's definition of the state as adopted from Eric Weil). Ricœur identifies this space and the concomitant social structures are necessary for the full development of the capacities of the person. Ricœur situates this discussion in a wider conversation between the advocates of atomism, in which individuals are seen as full bearers of rights before entering institutions and an approach which recognizes that there is no "before" of institutions, that in fact those core capacities of the self which entreat respect find their development within institutions.

In order to first argue for this position, Ricœur makes recourse to Arendt's concept of the "public space of appearance." This public space defines the realm of the political and ontologically precedes the actual organization of the political realm. Ricœur writes, "By this the political thinker wants to say about this: before any specific determination in terms of state, that is to say, politics of domination, the human city constitutes the visible milieu required by the activities that we characterize by practices as elaborate as the trades and professions, the arts, sports, games, activities of leisure."¹¹⁹ So, even as this space is defined as the political realm, it is

¹¹⁹ "Par là, ce penseur du politique voulait dire à peu près ceci: avant toute détermination spécifique en termes d'État, c'est-à-dire politique de domination, la cité humaine constitue le milieu de visibilité requis par les activités que nous caractérisons par des pratiques aussi

not limited to what we might consider political activities, such as voting, legislation, or the enforcement of law. It consists of all these different practices and activities by which human action is public.

For Arendt, Ricœur notes, action has a revelatory character of a who.¹²⁰ Here, he stresses the who, which points back to the responsible agent, as well as the term “revelatory.” Only action as words and deeds that take place in the space of appearance, where it is seen publicly, are worthy of entering into history. So, it is not accidental that this is called the space of appearance, for it is here where agents, through actions, appear before others.

The result of such a space is that within it we act with particular interests and ends, goals and visions. Further, the space itself is already founded on the principle of plurality. As discussed in Section 2.1, our lives are not exhausted by relation to ourselves, or simply to face-to-face relations with others. In Arendt’s work, this is not simply the distant other, but the fact of plurality, the realm of the interhuman. Concretely, this means that our goals and interests will collide with community with interests and ends. To these, we will have to either subordinate our interests or contextualize them. For Ricœur, this fundamental community is the most basic level of the political.

But the more central claim from Ricœur’s argument for my chapter is that this public appearance of human action is necessary for the fulfillment of human development. Ricœur warrants this by proposing two possible philosophical anthropologies. In the first, the individual

élaborées que des métiers et professions, des arts des sports, des jeux, des activités de loisir.” Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 162.

¹²⁰ See “Preface à *Condition de l’homme moderne*” in Ricœur, 43–66. This is not so far off from Ricœur’s treatment of action in *Freedom and Nature*. But Arendt brings out a distinctly social component. Here we see again how Ricœur’s engagement with thinkers partly relies on resonances that already exist within his work and differences that enable extensions of his thought.

is the autonomous bearer of rights before entering the community. Thus, like a contract, individuals can treat the social community as any voluntary association that can be exited with obligations terminated at will. This is a form of atomism, which, following Charles Taylor, Ricœur identifies as ungrounded in our own experience, based often on a fictitious understanding of origins, and a concept of individuality that comes late in social evolution.¹²¹

According to the second philosophical anthropology, it is only in community that we fully develop as persons and subjects of rights. He asks, rhetorically, “Or, must we rather, with Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, consider as arbitrary this representation of a subject bearer of rights, outside of any communal bonds, and hold the political dimension as constitution of the being even of the acting human?”- For Ricœur, we do not arrive fully formed into the social bond. Even the concept of a subject of rights that precedes social existence is a fiction.¹²² We become ourselves within the institutions of which we form a part.

¹²¹ Ricœur, 163. Ricœur draws this from Taylor’s essay “Atomism” in Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, vol. 2, Philosophical Papers ; (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 187–210.

¹²² “Ou bien devon-nous avec Aristote, Hegel, Marx, considéré comme arbitraire cette représentation d’un sujet porter de droits, en dehors de tout lien communautaire, et tenir la dimension politique pour constitutive de l’être même de l’homme agissent?” Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 163.

¹²³ Of course, many political theorists who posit the subject of rights (Hobbes, Locke, Rawls) would agree that rights arises in the social context. I wouldn’t want this, however, to blunt the strong atomist account that comes through in Locke and Hobbes, which does nonetheless isolate individuals and ignore the “necessary” role of institutions in our being and becoming. As I’m arguing throughout this dissertation, such a position bears on our obligation to society. Yet, the atomists would deny such an account. In describing the atomists, Taylor notes, “our obligation to belong to or sustain a society, or to obey its authorities, is seen as derivative, as laid on us conditionally, through our consent, or through its being to our advantage.” The corrosive nature atomism, whether held in full by a theorist or inchoately within the broader public is that it allows one to not simply wash one’s hands of one’s positive obligation, but also one’s negative implication in structural injustices. Harms not consented to and not benefited from do not incite stain or corporate guilt, nor do they move one to reform institutions except in so far as they align with self-interest or volition.

How does Ricœur justify this claim regarding the self's relation to institutions? Here, he appeals to a capacities approach. It is only through certain institutions, he claims, that capacities that we hold as central to the human can flourish. Ricœur gives different frameworks of support for this. First, is an appeal to the need for a secure and well ordained space in which central activities and practices can take place and appear. To act in Ricœur's thought is to be able to have an effect in society or in nature.¹²⁴ The public space, then, is the sphere in which our actions are seen. The public space makes possible Kant's appeal to publicity.¹²⁵ It is, according to Ricœur, the space of achievement. The city is the "visible milieu"¹²⁶ in which central activities take place, allowing for the development of capacities.

The contrary would be institutional spheres that prohibit or limit core activities, but a capabilities approach and an appreciation for institutions outside the political reveals possibilities of resistance. Such worlds are explored in science fiction. In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, the effect of banning books leads not only to the curtailing of reading, but would, following Ricœur, lead to a diminishment in one's ability to narrate (a consequence stunted by Bradbury's own superb narration). For historical examples, one might look to totalitarian governments where the press and the arts are restricted or universities where the products of research must conform to ideology, whether it be in the humanities or even in agricultural studies (as exemplified in soviet

¹²⁴ Ricœur, "Asserting Personal Capacities and Pleading for Mutual Recognition," 23.

¹²⁵ The emphasis of actions requiring this public space presents an actual form of Kant's hypothetical test to publicity in which maxims that could not be aired publicly (because of the resistance they would invite) ought not be pursued. See Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, trans. David L. Colclasure (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2006), 104. As has been reiterated throughout this dissertation, our institutions are moral spaces. Our actions within them (which are also moral) invite a reciprocal (but often asymmetrical) relation, as our own actions present moral norms and values that measure against, conform to, or confront the sedimentation of values in our wider culture and symbolic networks.

¹²⁶ Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 162.

agricultural policies¹²⁷). Here, larger structural forms inhibit personal and communal activities and capacity building. Yet even in Bradbury's dystopia, communities of resistance are born. In less organized fashions Primo Levi's memoir of his time at Auschwitz *If this is a man* captures this well in a passage where he is impelled to recollect and recount Dante's "Canto of Ulysses" from the *Inferno*, noting remarkably that "For a moment I forget who I am and where I am"¹²⁸ and later that he would "give today's soup,"¹²⁹ to connect complete the fragment in his head, leaving unstated that to miss a meal in the camps is a death sentence. Tied up with our humanity is a becoming that involves the living and expressing of fundamental capacities before others.

In other essays, Ricœur reiterates the theme of the "third-party other" addressed above. Our most basic capacities presuppose a relation to institutions broadly construed. There is, for example, a public component to making a promise. Ricœur identifies a triangular paradigm in promise making, with the self holding itself to its promise, the other holding one accountable, and a third, generalized public rule that promises should be held.¹³⁰ This generalized rule is not simply implicit in the nature of promising, but is tied to the public space which holds this to be true.

The role that institutions play in the development of human capacities gains further

¹²⁷ Sam Kean, "The Soviet Era's Deadliest Scientist Is Regaining Popularity in Russia," *The Atlantic*, December 19, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/12/trofim-lysenko-soviet-union-russia/548786/>.

¹²⁸ Primo. Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 113. The American edition of the text led to the unfortunate editorial decision to change the title, thus blunting the prophetic unfinished question emblazoned on the opening page and present throughout the book. It is worth recalling that while dramatically better than Levi's experience, Ricœur too was in an internment camp, but one for prisoners of war. His own experience of forming a small philosophy school in the camps (even with the support of his guards) represented the creation of a minor alternative public space, a space of resistance as they exercised these essential capacities even as they lived in confinement.

¹²⁹ Levi, 114.

¹³⁰ He addresses this in the essay "Individu et identité personnelle," in Ricœur, *Écrits et Conférence 3: Anthropologie Philosophique*, 352.

specification through the concept of recognition, a theme that Ricœur explores towards the end of his career. As I identified in Chapter 1, Ricœur identifies a list of basic capacities fundamental to being human: acting, speaking, narrating, imputing responsibility and making promises. For Ricœur, these capacities not only imply an institutional support, as suggested above, but they also demand recognition. This recognition takes place in interpersonal spheres in the very contexts where we actualize these capacities.¹³¹ Furthermore, there is a social recognition of ourselves as capable agents.

The role that institutions have in the development of our capacities is taken up and pluralized through the concept of recognition, as adopted from Jean-Marc Ferry's *Puissance de l'expérience*¹³² and Axel Honneth's *The Struggle for Recognition*.¹³³ From Ferry, Ricœur adopts the concept of "orders of recognition," in which institutions mediating the recognition of people as capable social agents. Ferry's orders of recognition comprise three grand domains or complexes, such as the socioeconomic complex, the sociopolitical complex, and the sociocultural complex. Within each of these, Ferry marks out distinct systems: a financial system, a democratic system, a pedagogical system, etc. Ricœur does not adopt the specifics of the domains illustrated by Ferry. Nevertheless, he preserves the basic insight, a plurality of institutions serves as a medium of social recognition and thus social esteem. Yet recognition is not merely bestowed, it is demanded, leading Ricœur to identify that the struggle for recognition lies at the base of the social bond.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Cf. Ricœur, "Asserting Personal Capacities and Pleading for Mutual Recognition."

¹³² Jean-Marc Ferry, *Les puissances de l'expérience: essai sur l'identité contemporaine* (Paris: Cerf, 1991).

¹³³ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1995).

¹³⁴ Ricœur's focus on the theme of recognition in his *Course of Recognition* marks a return to his engagement with Hegel.

The link between institutions and capacities also develops into an obligation towards institutions. Whereas from the first model, obligations are conditional, based solely on consent, according to the second model “these obligations are irrevocable, for the simple reason that the *mediation* of the community one belongs to permits human potentialities to develop fully.”¹³⁵ The community and the institutions which structure the community’s life together makes possible the development of core capacities of the person, and, thus, our obligation to the community is bound up with our very development. Recall, that for Rawls ideal theory, society is “a structure we enter only by birth and exit only by death.”¹³⁶ Voluntary consent to enter society does not fit into the basic picture of understanding its role in our lives. In fact, institutions are a nursery for humanity, a point in which we will later find agreement in the CST tradition. Ricœur writes further, “Well, if the individual only becomes human under the condition of certain institutions, then the obligation to serve these institutions is itself a condition that the human agent continues to develop.”¹³⁷ Not just any social structure will support the type of human development he is discussing. Clearly one form that would not support such a development would be the type of totalitarian governments to which Arendt’s texts serves as a response. If we extend Ricœur’s analysis of recognition to this earlier insight regarding social obligation, one could make the case that our obligation towards institutions run far wider than the overarching political institutions addressed through the public space of appearance.

In this section, I have argued that the necessity of institutions for the self is a key thread to understanding across Ricœur’s career. This theme is first articulated with Ricœur’s

¹³⁵ “ces obligations sont irrévocables, pour la simple raison que la *médiation* de la communauté d’appartenance permet aux potentialités humaines de s’épanouir.” Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 163.

¹³⁶ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 445.

¹³⁷ “Or, si l’individu ne devient humain que sous la condition de certaines institutions, alors l’obligation de servir ces institutions est elle-même une condition que l’agent humain continue de se développer.” Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 163.

engagement with Hegel, as he draws out a dialectic between freedom and institutions to identify institutions as the necessary site of meaningful freedom and action. I traced how Ricœur would appear to abandon this strong role for institutions as he rejects the Hegelian temptation, and turns to Weber and Geertz to give an account of meaningful action. While the moral concern for institutions in this instance becomes less direct and more diffuse, it nevertheless remains central as institutions play a vital role as part of the symbolic network that confers meaning and value to actions. Finally, I identified a renewal of the strong necessity of institutions for the self, not through the dialectic of freedom, but through the role that institutions, both political and otherwise, play in advancing the development and recognition of the self. For Ricœur, this leads to particular obligations of the self towards these institutions. Institutions are necessary; thus, we have all the more reason to be concerned for them.¹³⁸ Our concern is only amplified further as one comes to understand their inescapable ambiguities.

¹³⁸ I have argued that Ricœur holds institutions to be central to the project of becoming human, indeed a moral human. Perhaps the strongest critique of this stance would come from the sociologist and holocaust survivor Zygmunt Bauman. He argues in *Modernity and the Holocaust* that there are pre-societal moral impulses and that institutions, with their constraining rules, not only fail to advance the project of moral formation, but that they can even impede our moral impulses. See Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Bauman's position on institutions is inherently pessimistic. Such a pessimism runs deep in European history. Rousseau would assert at the outset of *The Social Contract* that "Man was/is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract, with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy*, ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 46. Rousseau's pessimism does not run all the way down (as with Bauman) for his later *Émile ou de l'Éducation* exemplifies his efforts to illustrate how one can reconcile the "natural man" and society through a narrative centering on the tutelage of Émile. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou, De l'éducation*, vol. 117, GF-Flammarion. Texte intégral ; (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1997). As Section 4 of this chapter illustrates, Ricœur is aware of the ambiguities of institutions. Even the various component parts illustrated in Section 3 point to a capacity for harm. Are institutions necessary? If our philosophical anthropology presumes a basic sociality, as Ricœur's does, then it seems that institutions remain inescapable. I hold, however, that is precisely because of their role in human action and development that we must be attend to institutional harms. If institutions held no possible positive moral role, the prudential answer, it would appear, would be to try and do away with them all together.

Section 4: Institutions as Ambiguous

Already, I discussed how institutions are part of the moral sphere. In Section 1, I argued they fulfill a basic good, the good of living-together. In Section 2, I identified that they mediate our relationship to the distant other. This is achieved both as a formal other, as the third-party other, and as a concrete other. Both these poles are encapsulated in the concept of the *chacun* or the each of "to each their own." In section 3, I identified how institutions are moral in so far as they are necessary. Here, we saw that even as Ricœur rejects the "Hegelian temptation," he maintains this trope of the necessary as he migrates from the dialectic of human freedom, to the category of meaningful action, finally to the public space of appearance and recognition. We also saw, secondarily, that institutions are moral in another sense: they are repositories for the sedimentations of ethical norms and values, the *Sittlichkeit*, or ethical culture, in Hegel's terminology. They shape and influence the norms and values of those who participate in them. Institutions are firmly in the sphere of the moral. But this does not lead Ricœur to identify institutions as instantiations of the good. Quite the contrary, they are moral in contrast to amoral, not immoral. These are key facets, for Ricœur not only identifies that institutions are inescapable, but that there are aspects of them that are fundamentally good. That institutions are necessary, that they mediate our relationships to others, that they play a key role in communities does not preclude the possibility of fault. I maintain that a final feature necessary for reconstructing Ricœur's understanding of institutions is that they are also fundamentally ambiguous.

Just as Ricœur first develops the mediatory role of institutions in relation to distant others ("Le socius et la prochaine"), with his 1957 article, "Le paradoxe politique," he argues for the distinct ambiguity of the political institution, introducing the concept of "the political paradox." With this idea, he identifies that the state has its own particular forms of alienation, distinct from

economic alienation. Subsequently, he uses the same concept to address the relation between domination and power in the political communities in *Oneself as Another*, and then again later to discuss the relation of the political to other institutional domains that bear their own distinct goods and metrics for legitimation (treated in Chapter 4). As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, Ricœur predominantly devotes himself to considering political and juridical institutions. But he also extends some of these concepts to other institutions, and treats specific forms of fragility and alienation in other spheres. In this final section, I will treat the two of the three forms of the political paradox, before turning to the ambiguity of other institutions.¹³⁹

4.1: The Political Paradox I

The political paradox is a term that Ricœur use at different stages throughout his career to address particular ambiguities of power as found within the political sphere, taking three successive forms.¹⁴⁰ The first and original paradox highlighted is a relation between politics and violence, the second concerns itself with relations of power, domination and authority. The final meaning, which I will explain in the next chapter as I reconstruct the inter-institutional nature of Ricœur's ethic, revolves around the relation of the sphere of the political to other spheres. I maintain that these paradoxes can have applications beyond the political and reveal fundamental ambiguities to our institutional life.

Before treating each of these, I would make two comments on the concept. First, as is apparent, Ricœur is treating here the ambiguities of political institutions, which include the state, law, military and police forces. This emphasis on the political is present throughout his career. It

¹³⁹ The third political paradox raises the question of relations among institutions. I explore its implications in the subsequent chapter.

¹⁴⁰ Ricœur describes these successive uses of the term political paradox in Paul Ricœur, François Azouvi, and Marc B. de Launay, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 95–104.

is not that other institutions are unimportant. Instead, Ricœur holds that the political institution has the greatest capacity for expressing our own liberty (Hegel), as we see ourselves in the general will, as well as the greatest potential harm, since (following Weber) it is the only institution with a monopoly on legitimate violence.¹⁴¹ It is a blend of freedom and constraint.

Second, the term paradox as Ricœur uses it implies a certain inescapability. Thus, while I privileged above a certain fundamental good of institutions, in this section, I am also highlighting the ambiguities that cannot be excised from institutions. Every state and, indeed, every institution is marked by fallibility.¹⁴² Part of the task of the previous two sections was to highlight why the stakes are so high: institutions represent a core relation to the other in our midst; institutions structure our own action and are vital to our development. I have largely held off till now on commenting the inherent ambiguities of institutions.

Even in its original form, the notion of the political paradox coalesced over years. The term is first coined by Ricœur in an article entitled “Le paradoxe politique,” first published in 1957 in the journal *Esprit* as a part of a special issue entitled “The flames of Budapest.”¹⁴³ As the name signals, the whole issue responded to the soviet invasion of Budapest in 1956 and the decimation of Hungarian resistance. As Ricœur recounts, “At the time of this terrible event, I was asking myself how it was possible that the Communists—and we had many of them among our friends, especially at that time—could so easily condone political violence.”¹⁴⁴ Françoise Dosse

¹⁴¹ Weber states that “A compulsory political organization with continuous operations (*politischer Anstaltsbetrieb*) will be called a “state” insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order.” Weber, *Economy and Society*, 54.

¹⁴² Again, in contrast to a figure like Bauman, I hold that institutions are fallible, but not inherently immoral as a phenomenon. If institutions were “fallen” rather than fallible, I am unsure if one could even craft an “ethic of institutions.”

¹⁴³ Ricœur, Azouvi, and Launay, *Critique and Conviction*, 95.

¹⁴⁴ Ricœur, Azouvi, and Launay, 95.

provides an even more complicated picture, listing among other critical events of the same year the Suez crisis, exemplified in the failed efforts by Israel, Great Britain, and France to invade Egypt in order to try to wrest control back of the Suez Canal. Both at home and abroad there is a failure of the political.¹⁴⁵

Ricœur's article is responding to these multiple contexts, shaping the initial framing of the problem. There is the event of the soviet invasion of Budapest. There is a background Marxist theory in which economic alienation is the prime institutional problem, which upon being resolved would seemingly resolve political alienation. Finally, there is the situation in France, a country which had experienced its own political turmoil that year with the Suez crisis. Each of these are in the background of Ricœur's reflections, shaping the manner by which his argument precedes. But the concept of the political paradox maintains a generative force for him well beyond the events and interlocutors of the first essay.

Ricœur's central thesis in this text is that the political is autonomous from economic relations, both in terms of its ideal form, and its potential faults. That is to say, it is irreducible to economic problems and resolutions found in new economic arrangements. We can see here a rebuttal of the claims that a resolution of the economic alienation diagnosed by communist thinkers would lead to a political utopia. Instead, the political is prey to its own distinct ambiguities. The paradox is that the same goods enacted in the political activity of the state is the very site for arbitrariness and violence.

The core argument is that there is a distinctive ideal of politics, perhaps only known retrospectively, but that conveys the truth of politics that undergirds our political life together. Yet, this ideal always must move to the concrete, in which enters the irrational and the arbitrary

¹⁴⁵ See Dosse, *Paul Ricœur*, 2001, 231–38.

as actual decision-making invites temptations to grandeur. Ricœur explores this ideal through attention to Aristotle, whose teleological vision of politics is such that “the individual only becomes human in this totality which is ‘the universality of citizens’; the threshold of humanity, it is the threshold of citizenship, and the threshold of citizenship is only by through the City [...]”¹⁴⁶ For Ricœur, however, this is too vague. He next turns to Jean Jacques Rousseau’s idea of a social contract. Rousseau in particular allows Ricœur to identify that the autonomy of politics as such is also an autonomy from economic relations. In effect, Ricœur argues that even barring the actual existence of an original bond, that a retrospective view of politics identifies it not simply as optional, but as a consent of the people to be equal before the law. In a Hegelian vein, Ricœur identifies that “The state appears as that which the wills desire in order to realize their freedom, namely, a reasonable and universal organization of freedom.”¹⁴⁷ Ricœur posits, then, this ideal form of the state, which serves as a rational force, necessary in order to become human in so far as it enables the actualization of human freedom within a rational order. Further, the political sphere is irreducible to economic relations.

The root of the political paradox is found in the move from the abstract to the concrete. Politics must always proceed from the ideal which is the “truth of politics,” to its actual application, an activity which is inherently caught up in power. Ricœur writes, “Let’s say that politics is the ensemble of activities which have as their object the exercise of power, thus also the conquest and the conservation of power; little by little, every activity will be politics which

¹⁴⁶ "l’individu ne devient humain que dans cette totalité qui est ‘l’universalité des citoyens’ ; le seuil de l’humanité, c’est le seuil de la citoyenneté, et le citoyen n’est citoyen que par la Cité [...]." Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 298.

¹⁴⁷ “L’État apparaît comme ce que veulent les volontés pour réaliser leur liberté à savoir une organisation raisonnable, universelle, de la liberté." Ricœur, 302.

has as its goal our even simple effect to influence the distribution of power.”¹⁴⁸ The ideal of politics is the true aspect of politics, reflective not simply of a dream, but something which does indeed hold and organize our lives together. Within the thick of politics, however, we are no longer in the retrospective of the ideal, but the prospective of actual decision-making and planning. It is here where the arbitrary and irrational enter, as actual decisions are made. At every level of politics in practice there is the exercise of power and human agency, which invites caprice and irrationality. Politics in action necessarily opens up to moral fragility.

The political paradox is the impossibility of disentangling these realities: our politics is such that it indeed is a necessary part of our lives, necessary to become human, as the Greek’s might say, or to truly actualize our freedom, if seen through a Hegelian vein. Yet, caught up in the actual exercise of politics is the use of power as actual actors make decisions and enforce them. This invites both irrationality, caprice, and the abuse of power. The ideal form of governance is also always paired with its concrete. Thus, a constitution requires a government and even police. The goods inherent in the ideal form of politics require power and force in their concrete actualization. So, even as politics gives rise to certain form of rationality expressed in a constitution, this requires a state and the associated institutions of a legal system, an administration, and a police force to bring that rationality to concrete actualization. This use of power and force can give rise to unique forms of political alienation that simply are not addressed by eliminating economic oppression.

¹⁴⁸ “Nous dirons que [*la politique*] est l’ensemble des activités qui ont pour objet l’exercice du pouvoir, donc aussi la conquête et la conservation de pouvoir ; de proche en proche, sera politique toute activité qui aura pour but ou même simplement pour effet d’influencer la répartition du pouvoir.” Ricœur, 304. In this essay, Ricœur relies upon a distinction between *le politique* and *la politique*, with the former representing politics or polity in its ideal form, and the latter, politics as representing the actual governance of the state.

One ambiguity in this initial account is whether the “ideal” of politics is too abstract. Ricœur later further specifies this paradox by adopting Weil’s definition of the state and streamlining the paradox as the asymmetry between form and force.¹⁴⁹ As mentioned above, Ricœur will come to adopt Weil’s conception of the state: “The State is the organization of a historic community; organized as State, the community is capable of making decisions.”¹⁵⁰ The form of the state is explicitly tied here to the historic community, with the state being the necessary apparatus by which the community is able to make a decision and enact it. The state is an essential organ of action.

As with his initial introduction of the political paradox, Ricœur maintains, that it is in the passage from the formal to the concrete that we have the introduction of force and violence. We are not seeing, as I stated, so much of a new version of the paradox as a streamlining. This is so entangled with the state, Ricœur posits, that Weber had no qualms with incorporating this violence within his understanding of the state, with it being the only arbiter of “legitimate violence.”

Within Ricœur’s treatment of violence and the state, we see two instantiations of it. The first is a historic violence which is found at the origins of the state, whose mark nevertheless remains on the state and the historical community. This appeal to origins seems to point towards the inescapability of violence. Even in a well-functioning society, there is always some prior violence which gave birth itself to the state.¹⁵¹ This is not a state of violence (à la Hobbes), but

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Paul Ricœur, “Morale, Éthique et Politique,” *Pouvoirs. Revue Française d’études Constitutionnelles et Politiques*. 65 (1993): 5–17.

¹⁵⁰ “L’État est l’organisation d’une communauté historique ; organisée en État, la communauté est capable de prendre des décisions.” Ricœur, *Lecture I*, 96.

¹⁵¹ Cf. “État et Violence” in Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 278–93. One might wonder why the need to point to origins. I think that the appeal to an original violence is also strategic. As captured in

instead the violence through which power is seized at the birth of a nation: revolutions; displacement, land grabs, and genocide; the public hanging of a dictator, the enslavement of a conquered people, and so on.

Violence is not simply in the past. The second instantiation is the violence that undergirds the state. Ricœur writes, "Under its most elementary and at the same time most irreducible form, the violence of the state is the violence of a *penal* character. The state punishes; in the last analysis, it is that which has a monopoly of physical constraint."¹⁵² This punitive function of the state might lead one to assume that the violence of the state is safely quartered and reserved to the offices that prevent, detect and maintain public order, and that exert punishment when people fail to do so. But according to Ricœur, even the most basic functions of the state are backed by the violence of the state. Ricœur writes, "In approaching the violence of the state by its penal, punitive side, we go straight to the central problem; for the multiple functions of the state: its power of legislation, power to decide and to execute, its administrative function, its economic function, or its educative function, all these functions are sanctioned finally by the power of constraint in the last instance."¹⁵³ What renders the state unique with regards to any other institution is not its capacity to actualize our freedom, but instead the fact that backing each and every decision made through it is the capacity to enforce it with violence.

the *Symbolism of Evil*, origin narrative is also prospective. Any future efforts to initiate transformation also points towards force and violence.

¹⁵² "Sous sa forme la plus élémentaire et en même temps la plus irréductible, la violence de l'État, c'est la violence de caractère *pénal*. L'État punit ; en dernière analyse, c'est lui qui a le monopole de la contrainte physique [...]" Ricœur, 278.

¹⁵³ "En abordant la violence de l'État par son côté pénal, punitif, nous sommes allés droit au problème central ; car les multiples fonctions de l'État, son pouvoir de légiférer, sa pouvoir de décider et d'exécuter, sa fonction administrative, sa fonction économique ou sa fonction éducative, toutes ces fonctions sont finalement sanctionnées par le pouvoir de contraindre en dernière instance." Ricœur, 278–79.

The penal character appears to run through politics. The shifting position on punishments reserved for drugs over the past 40 years in America is a great example. The well documented intensification of sentencing for crimes of possession of drugs during the “war on drugs” has led to a situation of mass incarceration of people of color in our nation and a disenfranchisement of millions of Americans.¹⁵⁴ New policies have now led to a decriminalization of the possession of marijuana, and in states like Oregon and Colorado where the drug has become legalized, the state now takes on the role of tax collector rather than police enforcer. Yet, force is also used to achieve justice, such as the constraining force that enabled desegregation in the south. Force and violence undergird the actions of the state.

The political paradox serves as an initial tempering of an optimism that runs through Ricœur’s work. The political sphere plays an exalted and even necessary role in our life. But it is fraught with the perils of violence that are used to enforce the decisions of the general will. Ricœur’s subsequent development of the political paradox will not focus merely on the benefits the state brings, but the very undergirding of the political within the people who have the power to act in concert, faced likewise with the inescapable and irreducible domination present in the organizing and structuring of political under the hue of domination.

4.2: The Political Paradox 2, Power and Domination

The ambiguity of institutions takes on a new and distinct form in Ricœur’s second articulation of the political paradox. This comes about in *Oneself as Another*, through an engagement with the thought of Arendt and Weber, and is used to describe a fundamental disjoint between the central source of legitimation of the political institution in the collective power it

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010).

makes possible and the concrete form that the institution takes in terms of authority and domination.

The paradox rests on a distinction between power and domination. As already discussed above, Ricœur draws his understanding of power from Arendt, linking it with that fundamental desire undergirding institutions, the desire to live-together. Power is essentially tied to this desire and will, as the power-in-common to act in concert to express this will to live-together. In so far as we continue to desire to co-exist, this power persists.¹⁵⁵

Ricœur describes this power as horizontal. It is the consent of each which gives institutions their power and which enables the ordered structure of our shared life together. The individual is not absent, but likewise, no longer pre-social. Instead, they find a power that is “nonhierarchical and non-instrumental.”¹⁵⁶ This power is a reminder that our institutions do not rule by fiat but by the consent of the people. Ricœur cites Arendt’s *Crises of the Republic*, writing, “It is [...] the people’s support that lends power to the institutions of a country, and this support is but the continuation of the consent that brought the laws into existence to begin with.”¹⁵⁷ Power might be made manifest in the uniting of people in protests marches, reiterated as protesters chant, “This is what democracy looks like.” Likewise, This collective power of the people is likewise present in the continuous functioning of our institutions and organizations, only made possible by each consenting to their social roles as well as the general consent of the people.

¹⁵⁵ Ricœur notes that we often only become aware of this basic, but unspoken desire to live-together when it is unraveled and destroyed, such as through the ravages of war. See Ricœur, Azouvi, and Launay, *Critique and Conviction*, 99.

¹⁵⁶ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 195, fn. 36.

¹⁵⁷ Ricœur, 195, fn. 36.

There is also an inherent fragility in power which remains obscured and forgotten. Ricœur links the exercise of this power-in-common to Aristotle's articulation of praxis. The aim of the action is itself, not some further product, leading it to exhaust itself in the activity. As we shall see, this lack of duration leads to the effort to extend the duration of power through the concept of authority. Yet, for Ricœur, this power has the status of the forgotten. It is not forgotten, he is quick to point out, as some item in the past, which would result in nostalgia. Instead, it is "the unrecognized political present."¹⁵⁸ This power undergirds all institutional structures, legitimating them. But it is obscured from vision.

Ricœur explores this forgetting that is not nostalgia through two concepts: trace and veil. With trace, Ricœur highlights that there are moments when this power-in-common comes more closely to the surface, in revolutions and revolts. In the Christian tradition, the manner in which the Church in serves as a touchstone for thinking of Christian community might be seen as a model of this. For Ricœur, the trace of power means that there are times when we might more evocatively experience this power. Power is present but forgotten, because it is veiled behind the practices of domination.

The second core concept Ricœur uses to describe institutions is that of domination. The term evokes other concepts like subordination and violence and for many already carries a moral pejorative.¹⁵⁹ This concept was present in Ricœur's writings well before his encounter with Arendt, dating back to his engagement with Weber in 1959.¹⁶⁰ For Weber, the political is

¹⁵⁸ Paul Ricœur, "Power and Violence," trans. Lisa Jones, *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 5 (September 1, 2010): 26.

¹⁵⁹ See for example Stout, *Blessed Are the Organized*, 194. For Stout, domination is not just power-over (which is not in and of itself bad), but is used normatively to describe an *arbitrary* exercise of power-over others. Ricœur's position in the first political paradox captures well the potential arbitrariness of the political.

¹⁶⁰ Ricœur, "PAUL RICŒUR."

understood according to domination, where it expresses the relation between those who govern and those who are governed, based on the likelihood that the latter will obey the orders of the former. Domination becomes manifest in the hierarchy and rules that structure institutions.

Domination is further connected to the concept of violence.¹⁶¹ The state, according to Weber, is understood as the institution that has a legitimate monopoly on violence. It is to the state that we give the power to constrain and to enforce laws, to punish, sometimes even up to the point of death.

The paradox of this second form of the political paradox lies precisely in the fact that these two relations captured in power and domination are irreducible to each other and inextricable from institutions. While forgotten, the collective power that enables us to enact our will to live-together is, nevertheless, the ultimate source of legitimation of the political institution, and indeed, all institutions. Domination is likewise present in every institution in the form of hierarchy and in the “asymmetrical distribution of the distinct roles that [hierarchy] implies.”¹⁶² It is inextricable from not only the state, but from every instance of authority and hierarchy.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ For Ricœur, the link between domination and violence for Ricœur is not accidental. Ricœur draws from Weber’s essay “The profession and vocation of politics,” to identify the state as that which “lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence*.” Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 310–11. It is the state which has the power to constrain.

¹⁶² Ricœur, Azouvi, and Launay, *Critique and Conviction*, 39.

¹⁶³ If one attends only to the Weberian roots of domination and Ricœur’s treatment of it in *Oneself as Another*, then it would appear (once more) that the political paradox only speaks to the political in the strictest sense, namely the state. Archival work has allowed me to indicate its capaciousness for other instances where power is exercised. The state then is not the unique instance of domination and power, even as it is the case *par excellence* of it. This is important (though not necessary) for my work on crafting a general ethic of institutions. I use all three instances of the political paradox to reveal fault lines that run through our institutional life, rendering them ambiguous, even as I affirm a basic good they allow us to pursue: the good of living-together. These three articulations of the political paradox should not be taken to exhaust

In the state, domination is at its apogee, including not only distinct hierarchical relations, but also this power to constrain and to punish, enacting “legitimate violence.” Yet, domination will find itself expressed in all institutions. Order, hierarchy, and the distribution of roles are each inescapable.

The second form of Ricœur’s political paradox represents a fundamental ambiguity in all institutions. While institutions gain their legitimacy through the collective power to live-together, institutions take their form in systems of domination. These relations—both vital to the institution—are nonetheless irreducible to one another. No common consent can serve as a full proof legitimation of domination, and yet domination, even its most banal form, is inextricable from institutions.

Need we take Ricœur for his word when he suggests that the relation of power-in-common and the relation of domination are irreducible to each other? This is clearly implied rhetorically by setting them at 90-degree angles from one another, identifying the former as a horizontal relation and the latter as a vertical relation. But such conceptual framing is not itself a warrant. An appeal to time might be more appropriate. Part of the fragility of power, according to Ricœur is that, like activity in Aristotle, it exhausts itself in the very activity of political life. Power-in-common does not last, but instead is repeated. Systems of domination are set up to endure.

This gives rise to the very problem of legitimation. Political systems of domination will attempt to locate their enduring legitimacy in fixed or enduring points: a constitution as a

our institutional ambiguities, but instead to be illustrative of how deep-seated the ambiguities are. Just as living-together takes on particular forms in distinct institutions, so too each of the political paradoxes that I address will have concrete and discrete articulations. Further, I would also expect that we uncover new ambiguities, new political paradoxes, and new paradoxes distinct to particular domains and fields.

historical event, a divine and eternal conferral of authority, an abstract, historical social contract lost in time, or a fictionalized social contract, as one finds in Rawls. Yet even in our own country, with its historic founding in a constitution, it is only the consent of the people which gives continued legitimacy to government. As Ricœur notes from Madison, “All Government rest on opinion.”¹⁶⁴

When a politics of domination oversteps itself, grounding its legitimacy on its own construct rather than the consent of the people, it opens up a floodgate for the abuse of the already precarious asymmetry of domination and invites forms of violence that well exceed the mandate of its legitimate monopoly. The scandal of cover-ups by bishops related to wide spread sex abuse of children by Catholic Church leaders for the sake of preserving the church’s reputation serve as an instance of the most vicious expression of this paradox.

I hold that this second form of the political paradox exemplifies an inherent ambiguity present in political institutions that can be extended to all institutions. If institutions broadly speaking are the means by which we express our desire to live-together, and each institution likewise expresses itself in forms of hierarchy through the distribution of roles, then every institution is prey to this paradox. In forgetting the very source of legitimacy of each institution, locating their source of legitimacy elsewhere distorts the aims and the limits of institutions.¹⁶⁵

As with the first political paradox, this ambiguity marks the institution as a moral reality. It is a subject of moral concern precisely because of the precarious paradoxes internal to institutions that render them as vital forms of collective decision-making and collective action,

¹⁶⁴ Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 32.

¹⁶⁵ For the corporation, this distortion may come in the form of the bending of all aims in the institution towards the maximization of profits for shareholders at the expense of the other stakeholders whose consent and whose collective action ensures the continued existence of this institutions. For a church, it could be a form of clericalism that confuses the distribution of roles with a divine mandate to subjugate lay people.

enabling us to govern our shared lives together, while also marking them in their actualization as sites for arbitrariness, domination, and violence. Institutions teeter on the edge of being beneficial and being oppressive. Indeed, as well represented in our own society, it can appear as both to different members of the same community.

Further, these ambiguities are intrinsic to each institution. The work of vigilance, correction, and reformation is constant. No secure legitimation can be found in a historic event, a founding document, or even a divine mandate. Much like the legitimating activity of power, the enactment of collective power to renew our institutions must be repeated again and again and again.

Conclusion

Across this chapter, I have engaged in a genealogical approach to reconstruct from Ricœur's corpus a schematic understanding of institutions that is both faithful to the dynamism of his work, while also recognizing core continuities. I first used his late-career definition of institutions as structures of living-together as a broad umbrella category that highlights a fundamental good underlying each institutions: the good of living-together. Then, to better reconstruct a model of institutions, I crafted three concepts as hermeneutical keys that illustrate the dynamics and continuity of his understanding of institutions across his career: Institutions as mediatory, necessary, and ambiguous. These keys serve not only as a basis for describing institutions, but for also tracing their normative texture.

It has been my contention throughout this chapter that Ricœur's description of institutions across his career allows one to detail central features of institutions and simultaneously to identify them as ambiguous moral realities, in contrast to an amoral, ethical exception; an immoral, necessary evil; or an unambiguous ethical good. Institutions are moral realities because

they are means of achieving a basic good, the good of living-together. They are moral realities because they mediate our relations to the distant other, a unique and distinct relationship irreducible to interpersonal relations. They are moral realities because they are necessary for human action, giving shape to our expressions of freedom and providing sites for the actualization of our capacities. Institutions are moral realities because, not only are vital to both other-regard and self-regard, enabling our communal living, but they are also fundamentally ambiguous, always teetering towards irrationality, arbitrariness, domination, and violence.

Institutions are not essentially immoral—obstacles to our true authentic relations with one another. Nor are institutions amoral—moral exceptions to the good. Nor are they essentially morally good. Instead, they are distinctly moral but ambiguous realities, subject to the possibilities of living to their full potential of enabling us to pursue the basic good of living-together while also exhibiting the capacity for domination and violence.

If, as Chapter 2 argued, we are responsible for institutions because they mediate our relations to fragile others, this chapter has deepened our moral concern for institutions, not simply as vehicles for collective action, but also as structures which shape our action and values, are prone to ambiguity, and are vital in the pursuit of the good and just life. The call to vigilance is not simply other-regarding. These forces, often obscured by pervasive atomistic delusions, hold both promise and threat to our well-being, physical and moral. Yet, we have not treated here how one might reform institutions. It is to this we turn in our next chapter, raising the possibility of aiming together towards “just institutions,” while also raising the specter of the plurality of concepts of justice with a proliferation of institutions.

Chapter 4: Towards Just Institutions among Institutions

As I indicated in the last chapter, Ricœur has maintained a normative orientation towards institutions throughout his career. This is not simply because institutions can be used towards violence, necessitating the setting of certain limits. They are not “neutral tools” wielded somehow towards good or bad. Nor are they ethical exceptions, as is said of war or even politics. In contrast to amoral tools, I have argued that in Ricœur’s work, institutions are moral realities. They mediate relations to the distant other, they are necessary to the formation of the self (both of oneself and another), they are ambiguous, and they are mediums by which we fulfill a basic desire to live-together.

These features give us a sense of the scope and problem of institutions. Further, several of these characteristics have served at different points in Ricœur’s career as entry points into a normative account for reforming institutions. The *socius* was introduced by and embedded into a modern account of the Good Samaritan, in which the *socius* or distant other encountered through institutions is figured as the new neighbor that we need to encounter today. The necessity of institutions as articulations of human freedom through Hegel is followed by an appeal to consider ways in which institutions can enhance or inhibit freedom in actuality today. An appeal to the inherent paradoxes in political and other institutions gives rise to a need for vigilance, as Ricœur disabuses of the notion that any institution is preserved from the possibilities of violence.

With Ricœur’s Gifford lectures, later published as *Oneself as Another*, we see a new pivot in how one addresses institutions as he adopts justice as the ethical norm governing and reforming institutions. As I have indicated above, many elements of institutions are preserved from his writings from across his career. But they are set in a new constellation as Ricœur embraces this normative aim embedded within institutions on the teleological plane and opens up

a new space for critique on a moral or deontological plane. Finally, still aware of the ambiguities born of a formal critique, he moves to the tragic or practical plane, and by making recourse to practical wisdom, he proposes both resolving inevitable conflict, and moving from principles to concrete circumstances. This new ethical constellation is captured under the basic desire for just institutions.

By engaging with John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*, "just institutions" take on a distinctive meaning in Ricœur's work. As already addressed in Chapter 3, Ricœur adopts a distributionist account of society from Rawls, seeing institutions as systems for the distribution of material and non-material goods (which for Ricœur includes roles, responsibilities and recognition). The institution is not simply a space for adjudicating between multiple freedoms, but a site for justice as one critiques the very systems which serve to distribute goods. Rawls's more significant contribution to Ricœur's work is as a deontic sieve for the social sphere (just as Kant served for the interpersonal sphere). While the original position is an analogue to Kant's universalizing categorical imperative, Ricœur's subsequent adoption of Walzer regionalizes this reduction, leading to plural spheres of justice.

This opens a new, evolving frontier in the reformation of institutions. Ricœur will adapt and incorporate Rawls's account of just institutions and the procedural method for defining the principles of justice within his own ethic as the moral, deontological moment. This move also leads Ricœur to engage with the subsequent critiques of Rawls's univocal understanding of justice that are seemingly extended from the state to every domain. In response, Ricœur considers and incorporates the claim that there are, in fact, multiple conceptions of justice embedded in different domains. Ricœur holds, in fact, both conceptions of justice in hand, nonetheless subordinating one to the other in a third political paradox. Here the political

institution is seen as one institution among many and yet also the institution par excellence which encompasses the others by making possible the encounter between them through the public space.

While Ricœur's political paradox appears to hold these forms of justice in asymmetrical tension, it does not resolve the play of institutions in our personal lives (for we remain nonetheless shaped by each institution) nor in our broader communal lives except at the highest level of tension. Following Ricœur's three-fold movement of ethics (teleology), morals (deontology), and practical wisdom, but amplifying it further, I argue at the end of this chapter that practical wisdom has a vital role to play in arbitrating the play of institutions in our individual lives and on the ethico-political plane. Here, we enter the realm of an inter-institutional ethic.

In this chapter, I argue that Ricœur's complex treatment of "just institutions" not only provides a central component of an ethic of institutions, but when read against the trajectory of his adoption of pluralistic accounts of justice, it provides the resources for an inter-institutional ethic. I will explicate the role of justice within his project. Through his adoption of Rawls and his eschewal of a singular conception of justice, I point towards Ricœur's identification of a new paradox found in the relation of the state to other institutions. In Ricœur's appeal to *phronesis* to address these conflicts, I argue that he provides resources for an inter-institutional ethic. Such a framework will prove vital for Chapter 8, when I sketch an ethic of institutions for environmental ethics.

First, I will revisit the ethical framework of *Oneself as Another*. Next, I will outline Rawls's theory of justice and Ricœur's adoption of Rawls's framework, providing a grasp of the framework he uses to articulate the norms of justice. Subsequently, I will turn to the question of

plural institutions and plural forms of justice raised by Ricœur's engagement with Michael Walzer, Jean-Marc Ferry, as well as Laurence Thévenot and Luc Boltanski. Then, I will discuss Ricœur's framing of this conflict of institutions according to the tragic and the political paradox. Finally, I will turn to his solution in practical wisdom, arguing we find in it resources for an inter-institutional ethic.

Section 1: A Sense of Justice

In this chapter, I am arguing that the specific treatment of “just institutions” within *Oneself as Another* and later texts provides a framework not merely for reforming institutions on their own, but also for an inter-institutional ethic, treating ethics at the intersection of multiple institutions. Ricœur's normative vision takes on a distinct form within *Oneself as Another* with his ethical aim: to pursue the good life, with and for others, in just institutions. This ethical aim introduces three distinct and irreducible moral relations and moral concerns: a care of the self, a care for the other known face-to-face, and a care for institutions through which we meet the distant other. Ricœur writes, “Justice, for this reading, is an integral part of the wish to live well. In other words, the wish to live in just institutions arises from the same level of morality as do the desire for personal fulfillment and the reciprocity of friendship.”¹ Isolating these as distinct and irreducible relations, while also placing each on equal footing means that Ricœur treats each relation according to their own distinct constellation of moral terms: autonomy and self-esteem; solicitude for the other; and justice. These three relations are not only of equal concern, but the moral categories by which one approaches these relations are distinct. This allows us, then, to treat “just institutions” as a stand-alone category.

¹ Ricœur, *The Just*, xv.

Through three studies, Ricœur treats the distinct elements of the ethical aim on three different “planes” or according to three distinct modes of inquiry. In the 7th study, Ricœur’s inquiry takes place on the “ethical” or teleological plane, posing questions about what is good and desirable. In the 8th study, Ricœur draws from the conclusions of the previous study to address these three distinct relations on the “moral” or deontological plane, first relying on Kant to pose questions of respect, and then on Rawls when addressing just institutions. Finally, in the 9th study, Ricœur poses conflicts born out from the previous studies to address the practical plane. Here, Ricœur introduces the concept of practical wisdom as a means of addressing conflict and applying norms to concrete circumstances. In later writings, Ricœur will name the teleological and the deontological “anterior ethics,” while the practical as posterior ethics, signaling that practical wisdom is ethics in action.

The flow of these three studies correspond to three theses: “(1) the primacy of ethics over morality, (2) the necessity for the ethical aim to pass through the sieve of the norm, and (3) the legitimacy of recourse by the norm to the aim whenever the norm leads to impasses in practice—impasses recalling at this new stage of our meditation the various aporetic situations which our reflection on selfhood has had to face.”² Thus, the teleological is the sphere that provides an initial content to each of the subject inquires. The moral brings the content of the teleological analysis to a formal level, accounting not simply for the good, but also the autonomy of the other. Finally, the practical sphere serves to return back to the convictions first uncovered in the teleological sphere to resolve conflicts in the application of ethics.

Institutions take up a central, third place in Ricœur’s ethic. In Chapter 3, I described institutions as moral fields in accord with three characteristics: institutions as mediatory,

² Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 170.

necessary, and ambiguous. Along the way, I drew upon Ricœur's treatment of institutions across his career, including the description of institutions as structures of living-together that is found in *Oneself as Another*. Indeed, most of Ricœur's treatment of institutions in his seventh study is dedicated to describing institutions, relying on categories introduced in the last chapter: the fundamental aim of living-together, Arendt's notion of plurality, the *chacun* or each, and institutions as sites of distribution.

I established three broad concepts to serve as hermeneutical keys to understanding institutions that cohere with Ricœur's thought as developed across his career: institutions as mediatory, necessary, and ambiguous. I argued in Chapter 3 that in addition to describing institutions, these concepts mark institutions as moral in contrast to amoral. Yet, these characteristics do not provide a substantive and complete answer as to how to normatively evaluate institutions. It is with the modifier "just" that Ricœur marks out the path towards starting, reforming, and dismantling institutions.

Entering into Ricœur's discussion of just institutions with teleology serves two purposes: defining institutions and sketching a "sense of justice." First, it allows him to treat and describe institutions according to basic aims. Much of this was already covered in the last chapter under the terms of living-together, plurality and *chacun* or "the each" of to each their own. As I discussed, through institutions we enact a basic desire, a desire to live-together. Institutions enable us to act in concert, expressing a basic power within the community to act together, which both pursues and fulfills our desire to live-together. As structures of living-together, institutions are means of achieving this end and sites for its enactment.

While Ricœur uses general terms to describe institutions, it is clear that a teleological approach could also help parse the distinct aims of particular institutions. A hospital is distinct

from a university in part based on the common aim around which they are organized. A family, similarly, has different aims from a church, even as people might be members of both. A teleological analysis reveals a plurality of institutions within our society as basic aims proliferate, enabling on the ground practices (caught up in a pursuit of the good) to make explicit the unique aims of distinct institutions. Whereas a top down approach that begins with rules or laws would limit this field, prioritizing the good (teleological) enables his ethical model to capture the diversity fueled by human creativity and contingency.

Here, I propose that the principle of living-together can serve as an umbrella category. It provides a point of reference, the good of society and community, to which all other institutions and their aims are to refer. Thus, when Ricœur will later discuss our “considered convictions” informing our judgment of institutional conflict, it would seem any discussion that does not affirm this initial good of living-together fails to account for this overarching aspect of institutions.

Second, a teleological approach allows Ricœur to parse justice according to an orientation to the good. Ricœur adopts here justice as distributive justice, using the term broadly. It serves, he notes, as a means of distinction and just distance in a social unit first defined according to action in concert.³ Before the dense articulation that he draws on from John Rawls, justice affirms the importance of the parts who make up the wholes. These parts are the “each” to whom each is due that we addressed in the last chapter, signifying not the anonymous, but real,

³ Ricœur writes, “We have to maintain the greatest flexibility for the term “distributive,” namely its contribution of the element of distinction lacking in the notion of wanting to act together.” Ricœur, 200. By distinction, Ricœur is underlining here the importance of maintaining a sense of parts, while nevertheless affirming the reality of a whole that is the institution. Justice in this first instance works against the disintegration of a part into a whole by affirming what is owed to each. A just distance ensures impartiality, with the institution once more serving as a third-party between competing parties.

albeit distant others, with whom we enter into relation not through face-to-face contact, but institutional mediation. Thus, we desire just institutions in part because they preserve us from the fusion which could be implied by Ricœur's definition of institutions.

Before being parsed according to a rule of justice, however, distributive justice is known according to Ricœur as a sense of justice. We cultivate such a sense not from living in a just society, but rather from our own experiences of injustice. Ricœur identifies this indignation as not only poignant, but also "perspicacious," for, "justice more often is lacking" and "people have a clearer vision of what is missing in human relations than of the right way to organize them."⁴ This concept of want or lack echoes the ambiguities of institutions addressed in Chapter 3. There is an arbitrariness that enters into the activity of institutions expressed in Ricœur's first formulation of the political paradox. The experience of injustice in its more refined form is not simply a complaint about isolated, unequal treatment, but far more pervasive and insidious structural harms: segregation, voter disenfranchisement, massive economic inequity, and so on.

Turning to Aristotle, Ricœur links distributive justice to equality. The unjust person is the one who consumes too much, who takes more than their fair share of goods. Yet, the concept of equality introduced by Aristotle is not egalitarian. Here, we see justice as tied to a proportional equality, as opposed to a strict equality, in which shares are distributed according to merit. Thus, a just division of honors does not mean that the runners who finish first, second, and third in a race are each given either a participation prize or even all three first prize. Instead, the division of honors is given according to merit. Not simply limited to sports, this would extend over all of society: "persons have unequal shares according to unequal merits."⁵ Thus, for Aristotle, a just division of shares between persons measured by merit leads to an inequality that is not deemed

⁴ Ricœur, 198.

⁵ Ricœur, 201.

as inequity. While no longer measured by merit, a just but unequal distribution will be a central part that Ricœur maintains from Rawls.

A teleological approach provides one final core insight: we do not simply need just institutions, but we desire them. Why might we desire just institutions? Already, the characteristics treated in the last chapter identify several of the reasons why we would be concerned about our institutions. Institutions are means of mediating relationships to distant others. It is not an I-thou relation, but a relation of “each.” Just institutions ensure that I will be treated fairly as an “each,” just like another. We desire just institutions because they are necessary to us. Institutions play a vital role in our becoming capable selves. Ricœur holds that “Without institutional mediation, individuals are only the initial drafts of human persons.”⁶ We desire just institutions out of self-regard to ensure that our own expression and recognition is possible. We also desire just institutions precisely because of the threats posed by the ambiguities of institutions. If the ambiguities of the arbitrary and violent will of the political paradox call for vigilance, it is justice that serves as the barometer of our concern. Justice is a safeguard against the arbitrary.

Ricœur’s initial treatment of just institutions on the plane of the teleological brings together a basic orientation of institutions as structures of living-together and a sense of justice, which brings distance, distinction, and a sense of proportional equality to our structured, shared life together. Further, a teleological approach maintains that just institutions are not simply obligations, but also objects of desire. We desire just institutions not only as the means by which they secure our own development (as discussed in the last chapter), but also out of our own

⁶ Ricœur, *The Just*, 10.

experience of lack, our sense of injustice.⁷ Turning now to Ricœur's treatment of John Rawls, we move from a sense of justice to the rule of justice. Ironically, it is the adoption of this rule of justice that will set up the conflict and paradox that fuels our inter-institutional ethic.

Section 2: The Rule of Justice

Ricœur's ethical framework presupposes a relation between the ethical and the moral, between the good and the right, the teleological and the deontological. On my reading of Ricœur, the base understanding of institutions is as "structures of wanting to live-together." This is the fundamental good orienting institutions, even as this takes discrete forms. Yet, the presence of violence and caprice in our social life even as we grasp for the good leads Ricœur to turn to a "moral framework." It is in the move from the sense of justice to the rule of justice, from a teleological engagement with justice to a deontological engagement with justice that Ricœur shifts from the desire or wish for just institutions to the obligation to foster just institutions. Ricœur takes John Rawls's *Theory of Justice* as his point of departure for considering institutions from a deontological perspective. I will first summarize the major task of Rawls's project and the key areas with which Ricœur engages (allowing them stand alone) and then present and analyze

⁷ Michael Sandel uses the encumbered self—a self that is constituted by attachments—to question whether the first norm of institutions should be justice. See Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 172. Ricœur does not adopt the unencumbered self that Sandel attributes to Rawls. In fact, my treatment of responsibility precisely points to an even more "encumbered self" than Sandel accounts for, as uses friendship (in contrast to the neighbor) as the paradigmatic relation. I draw on Ricœur to point to the obligations born out of our relationship to others through institutions. Further, the necessity of institutions to the self serves as further warrant for not simply justice as a corrective (as one might assume from a model of responsibility for the fragile victim), but also warranting a broader desire for basic justice within institutions for myself and others. Maintaining the steps of teleology, procedural justice, and practical wisdom approach allows for the inclusion of the insights of an encumbered self, while maintaining the purifying abstraction born from the hypothetical veil of ignorance, and the recognition of the necessity of judgment when facing conflicts born from hard cases. Such a judgment is not made in abstraction or simply from the rules, but returns to those basic convictions. But as we shall see below, it is a fragile reconciliation.

Ricœur's evaluation and circumscribed adoption of Rawls's original position and principles of justice.

2.1: John Rawls's Theory of Justice

Rawls's project in *Theory of Justice* is to revitalize social contract theory over and against utilitarianism both in its theoretical forms and in its practical embodiment in political structures. He articulates a model of "justice as fairness," which can serve as a foundation for modern democratic societies. "Justice is," Rawls writes, "the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought."⁸ This serves as a first principle for Rawls's social theory, leading Rawls to suggest that if social institutions or laws within a society are meant to promote the interest of the few (or even the many) in a manner that is unjust, then this serves as grounds to reform or abolish them. He holds that society can be conceived as a "scheme of cooperation" in which rights and goods are distributed in accord with principles of justice.⁹ A well-ordered society is one where people adhere to the same principles of justice.

Rawls's work concerns itself not with particular institutions (governmental or private), but with "the basic structure of society" in which there is a distribution of primary goods. By basic structure, he means the major institutions of society, here understood as "the political constitution and the principal economic and social arrangements."¹⁰ Further, in contrast to the picture of institutions reconstructed above, he holds a rule-based understanding of institutions. He writes, "Now by an institution I shall understand a public system of rules which defines offices and positions with their rights and duties, powers and immunities, and the like."¹¹ Here, we see already a key difference between Rawls and Ricœur. While Ricœur also understands

⁸ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 3.

⁹ Rawls, 6.

¹⁰ Rawls, 6.

¹¹ Rawls, 47.

institutions as rule-based, this is but one aspect of his understanding of institutions. This multifaceted aspect of institutions is already captured in the distinction between the ethical and the moral in Ricœur's work, which allows for a teleological and a deontological description of institutions.

Rawls principle of justice is described by two basic principles, a first concerning the equal distribution of basic rights, and the second concerning the unequal distribution of certain goods, including the goods of roles and responsibilities. According to the first, "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others."¹² This first principle is a fundamental affirmation of a "basic equality" of each, equality here understood according to a set of rights or liberties extended to all who form a society, liberties like political liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, etc.¹³

The second principle of justice deals with inevitable inequalities in society. For Rawls, as with Aristotle, a strict understanding of equality is neither achievable nor even ideal. He writes, "social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all."¹⁴ The first part of this principle, "the difference principle," appears to ensure that any inequalities that exist, exist for the benefit of the whole of society. Rawls later qualifies this, using not some

¹² Rawls, 53.

¹³ Rawls identifies likely candidates in this scheme of liberties when he writes, "Important among these are political liberty (the right to vote and to hold public office) and freedom of speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; freedom of the person, which includes freedom from psychological oppression and physical assault and dismemberment (integrity of the person); the right to hold personal property and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law. These liberties are to be equal by the first principle." Rawls, 53.

¹⁴ Rawls, 60.

net total welfare to serve as the standard, but instead to sure that economic inequalities are “to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged.”¹⁵ It is a position that seeks to maximize the minimum position.

The second part of this second, basic principle of justice is to ensure fair opportunity in the unequal distribution of roles and responsibilities. The issue of inequality does not simply rest with the question of economic holdings but also with the proper distribution of positions of authority. There will be an inevitable inequality with individuals holding greater power and authority than their fellow citizens. This principle aims to ensure that any division is fair by the standard of equal opportunity.

With these principles enunciated, Rawls affirms that there is a serial or lexical order to them. The first principle takes priority, ensuring a basic equality of each before any question of inequalities can be addressed. Likewise, within the second principle, a lexical order is also held, affirming that a proper balance of economic and social inequality must be addressed before an unequal, but fair distribution of roles and responsibilities may occur.

In his revised preface, Rawls states that these two principles create the necessary social conditions for individuals to develop and exercise two basic moral powers: 1.) the capacity for a sense of justice and 2.) the capacity for the conception of the good.¹⁶ The linking of the first principle and the first power reveals a cyclical element. For an individual to be able to develop the capacity for a conception of justice, they must already have the social conditions expressed

¹⁵ Rawls, 72. This principle of Rawls aligns closely to the CST traditions commitment to a preferential option for the poor. What remains unclear is how one measures this and whether a broad understanding of what might be “maximized,” or rather, whether an integral development is presumed.

¹⁶ Rawls, xii.

by the first principle which exemplify justice, namely the social institution of equality before the law.

Rawls's pedagogy of justice stands in contrast to Ricœur's thought, where it is precisely our encounter with injustice which provides our first "sense of justice." He writes, "Sense of Justice and injustice, it would be better to say; for it is first of injustice that we are aware: 'Injustice! What injustice!'"¹⁷ Developmentally, then, our sense of injustice long predates the type of institutionalized justice captured in Rawls's text. The "moral sentiments" are not first established in our overarching social institutions, but more likely in intimate institutions like the family, and fleeting organizational forms like playground friendships and rivalries. Rather than "What injustice!," it might be more accurate to say that a sense of "That's not fair!" is elicited when we are not being given our fair share.¹⁸

¹⁷Ricœur says elsewhere, "There is morality because there is violence." Paul Ricœur, "The Teleological and Deontological Structures of Action: Aristotle and/or Kant?," in *Contemporary French Philosophy*, ed. A. Phillips Griffiths, vol. 21, Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series ; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 106. As Ricœur notes in this same lecture, one cannot rest simply with the task of describing ethical systems (be they philosophical or be they cultural). Violence (a true evil Ricœur notes) requires the restless response, of prescriptive judgement.

¹⁸ While Ricœur relies on the experience of injustice for forming our sense of injustice, as we shall see in the subsequent section, he is heavily reliant on Rawls's procedural justice for developing a theory of justice. Karen Lebacqz also identifies the experience of injustice as a vital starting point. In contrast to Rawls (and Ricœur), this runs all the way through her account, privileging the experience of the oppressed and presenting a restorative vision of justice. See Karen Lebacqz, *Justice in an Unjust World: Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1987). There is much that is laudatory about such an approach, particularly given the attention to groups rendered vulnerable now. But could this be a sufficient starting point for every institution? How would this inflect on the "each" encountered through institutions? Given the role of the fragile in his supplementary theory of responsibility, Ricœur's theory could use a healthier injection of the perspective of the oppressed other in his theory of justice. Yet, providing an epistemic privilege to the oppressed precisely destroys the just distance between different members of society.

Rawls's second principle supports our moral capacity for developing a conception of the good by ensuring the fair conditions for the pursuit of the goods that we rationally outline.¹⁹ Here, the pursuit of goods is already set within a social framework in which there is a competition of goods. The second principle, lexically ordered, affirms first that any arrangement of goods will in the long haul be better off for the whole and that a fairness of opportunity will ensure that meritocracy prevails in positions of responsibility and power. Effectively, this principle ensures a "fair" pursuit of goods.

How does this principle secure the development of an individual's capacity to form a conception of the good? It does not do so by considering the distinct goods of a life or even a practice as one finds in Ricœur,²⁰ but instead by creating the parameters for the pluralistic pursuit of goods by each. It does not so much support the development of the moral capacity for a conception of the good as help refine and reform existing capacities so that they can endure in institutions governed by justice.

A final central aspect of Rawls's theory of justice with which Ricœur engages is the "Original Position." This is a conceptual tool, a heuristic or thought experiment, which enables the legitimation of the two principles above. The basic concept is that one imagines a scenario in which individuals from all paths and walks of a society come together and place themselves behind a "veil of ignorance." Behind this veil, they do not know any of the core features or characteristics of their identity beyond citizenship that would lead an individual to select a biased principle of justice in favor of their interest. They leave behind in this instance their job, their racial identity, their ethnic and cultural identity, their class, their religion, their gender, and any

¹⁹ For Rawls, goods are the products of means-end reasoning.

²⁰ See Chapter 7 of *Oneself as Another*.

other determining factors.²¹ They are also unaware of their own aptitudes and capacities as distributed by fortune, such as intelligence, health, physical well-being, and so forth. Behind the veil, they know such combinations of identities exist, but do not know which role they would inhabit once the veil is lifted.

From this “original position,” individuals would, according to Rawls, select the two principles already outlined above to undergird the basic structure of society. That is to say, without any particular awareness of their distinct interests arising out of their own conception of the good—yet knowing that such conceptions of the good do exist and are closely held—these individuals would opt for a conception of justice as fairness. That is to say, a conception of justice which secures the basic rights of each and would ensure that any equalities that exist would be set up in such a way that they would benefit the whole of society (and in particular maximize the minimum position) while ensuring that there is equal opportunity regarding positions of authority.

Like its predecessor, the social contract, the heuristic fiction of the original position is not presumed to actually exist; instead, it is a hypothetical that serves to legitimate the principles of justice laid out above. How does it legitimate these principles? Rawls analogizes the equality of individuals behind the veil of ignorance in the original position with the “state of nature” concept of social contract theory. It serves as a hypothetical starting point. But as a tool for the legitimation of the principles of justice, it far more resembles Kant’s test of universalization. Here, this hypothetical case serves as a heuristic that allows for one to consider generalizable principles held by all that would be able to account for the interest of every citizen in a fair

²¹ Rawls did not include other core features of identity which are now common place considerations such as sexual orientation and gender identification.

manner and indeed.²² As a hypothetical case, it does not serve to actually create the principles of justice (hence the book is ordered to present the principles of justice before the original position), but instead to legitimate them vis-à-vis the reader.

²² I stress citizens here, because Rawls's *Theory of Justice* is not establishing a general ethic but instead a political framework, circumscribed by the scope of the field of concern to those who would full participants of the basic structure of society. It is to these citizens that basic rights are granted. Does this mean his theory would not include children and residents without citizenship (including both those on the path to citizenship, those here on a temporary basis, and those long-term residents without the legal authorization to live here). Rawls accounts for children and asserts that as "future citizens," they would also be accorded basic rights. See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 446. What about the non-citizen resident who may or may not have legal entry such as immigrants, political or economic refugees, asylum seekers, or migrant workers? Apart from the "future citizen" of the naturalizing immigrant, most of these fall outside the scope of Rawls theory, though as I indicate below in this same note, a basic observance of human rights is expected in Rawls's liberal state. Why are they not considered in his political framework? To answer this question, it is important to recall the distinction between ideal theory and non-ideal theory. Ideal theory, also termed a strict compliance theory, brackets non-ideal conditions (violations of the law, injustice, war, inequitable economic inequality, etc.) and presumes a realistic utopian world in which the principles of justice are followed. As a result, "It develops the conception of a perfectly just basic structure and the corresponding duties and obligations of persons under the fixed constraints of human life." Rawls, 216. This allows for the articulation of principles of justice that would be chosen in ideal conditions. Plato's republic is likewise a form of ideal theory. In his *Laws of Peoples*, Rawls works out a theory of justice for international relations. This diverges from a dominating trend of international relations (or IR) political realists who may grant just relations to citizens but advance agendas of national self-interest for relations between nations. Once more he engages in ideal theory. He names several causes of immigration that fall outside ideal-theory: religious persecution, political oppression, famine (aptly identified as typically a problem of distribution), and population pressure (named an issue of inequality and the subjection of women). He holds as a consequence that "The problem of immigration is not, then, simply left aside, but is eliminated as a serious problem in a realistic Utopia." John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples; with, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited"* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 9. Given that Rawls justifies border control as a means of ensuring sufficient capacity to care for citizens under the responsibility of the state and "environmental integrity," he likely would place anthropogenic environmental degradation (including climate change) and climate refugees as another issue of non-ideal theory. As a matter of method, Rawls work does not address the basic political rights of non-citizens. Nonetheless, he places "honoring human rights" (presumably in other nations) as among the principles of a free and democratic peoples and identifies that even non-liberal states (such as his fictional Muslim nation "Kazanistan") can honor human rights. These include "the right to life (to the means of subsistence and security); to liberty (to freedom from slavery, serfdom, and forced occupation, and to a sufficient measure of liberty of conscience to ensure freedom of religion and thought); to property (personal property); and to formal equality as expressed by the rules of

Rawls's first articulation of his theory of justice is comprehensive and ambitious.²³ He treats not only a moral theory of justice, but also a moral psychology which can warrant and support this theory. It is both non-utopian and ideal. As Ricœur would later comment regarding the problem of justice in Rawls and other thinkers, "Do we not observe on the juridico-political level that the true problems of justice are not those of equal distribution but those posed by inegalitarian distributions? And the question finally amounts to determining what are the least unjust inequalities. Inegalitarian distributions are the daily bread of the governing of institutions of all sorts. This is the problem I find again today in Rawls and in the various theories of justice."²⁴ Rawls work is non-utopian precisely because it disavows the possibility of a perfect social mechanism in which all inequalities disappear. As we shall see, the very privileging of basic individual rights over collective needs as found in his "lexical ordering" of the two principles of justice ensures the persistence of inequality. Yet, it is ideal because it proposes more than a mere "conception of justice," but also a social ideal that can actually serve as a foundation for democratic society to choose the "least unjust inequalities," as Ricœur notes above.

2.2: Ricœur on Rawls

Ricœur draws on Rawls in several key ways. First, Ricœur adopts Rawls's conviction that "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought."²⁵ This is to say

natural justice (that is, that similar case treated similarly)". Rawls, 65. To bring Rawls into a non-ideal world, one could start with a baseline of affirming that any liberal nation (and even non-liberal nations like Kazanistan) should extend basic human rights to all, including the non-citizen. These are not, however, the full range of rights articulated in the basic rights of a political society.

²³ Rawls continues to revise and publish on this theme, first with the 2nd edition of *Theory of Justice*, then with *Political Liberalism*. See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*. As Ricœur primarily focuses on *A Theory of Justice*, I am limiting my engagement and comments here to that initial articulation.

²⁴ Ricœur, Azouvi, and Launay, *Critique and Conviction*, 39–40.

²⁵ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 3.

that justice takes a priority before one considers other basic goods that institutions may pursue or embody: security, education, health, happiness, charity, etc. This may seem like an uncontroversial claim at the outset when one considers public institutions like courts, schools and hospitals. Today, there is an intuitive sense that we should not racially segregate schools and that hospitals should not restrict care, for example, on the basis of a person's sexuality and lifestyle choices. But justice applied broadly is more controversial as one considers other institutions, generally considered private but that are nonetheless social, such as the family²⁶ or, to a lesser degree, religious institutions.

Ricœur likewise incorporates Rawls's understanding of society as a system of distribution of goods. This includes the distribution material goods, as well as the distribution of non-material goods, such as roles, burdens, responsibilities. In the last chapter, I identified how Ricœur adopts and adapts this understanding of institutions to indicate how institutions play a vital role in the formation of the self, through the distribution of roles by which we are members of society.

The identification of society as a system of distribution is directly linked to the attribution of justice as its first virtue. In so far as goods are distributed, there must be a means to ensure the just distribution of goods. Thus, while a hospital should indeed provide excellent care, it is justice which is concerned with ensuring that the goods of health services is extended to those in need of care.

Most importantly, Rawls provides for Ricœur a formalism that is analogous but not synonymous with Kant's own formalism. As Ricœur notes, Rawls is not in pursuit of universality, but instead a procedural means of distributing goods. The principles of distribution

²⁶ Susan Okin exemplifies one attempt at arguing that the family could not be characterized as just and that it perpetuates norms of gender which reproduce injustice within our society. Drawing and extending Rawls theory, she proposes that justice needs to pervade Rawls theory. See Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

are determined in the hypothetical, ahistorical situation of the original position. This parallels the deontic screen used in two other ethical relations captured in Ricœur's ethical aim: relations to the self (in our pursuit of the good life) and relations to others.

One area of contrast with Ricœur is that Rawls holds a conception of institutions that is based around rules. He writes, "An institution exists at a certain time and place when the actions specified by it are regularly carried out in accordance with a public understanding that the system of rules defining the institution is to be followed."²⁷ While *la règle* (the rule) is a component of Ricœur's understanding of institutions, Ricœur's understanding of institutions is not limited to obligations, but is also set in a teleological framework, by which it serves as a structure of living-together with others.

How does Ricœur isolate aspects of Rawls and incorporate him into his framework without doing violence to the theory itself? Ricœur's first published article on Rawls—"La cercle de la démonstration"²⁸—does not yet incorporate Rawls into his own work. While remaining largely exegetical, when it is read against the trajectory of Ricœur's later treatment of Rawls, I

²⁷ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 48.

²⁸ First published in *Esprit* in 1998, it was later incorporated into the collection *Lectures 1*. Ricœur also treats Rawls briefly in his earlier contribution to the UNESCO volume *Main Trends of Research in the Social and Human Science*, where he writes, "This is an exceptionally wide-ranging essay in what may be called a neo-contractualist mode of thought, in which a systematic attempt is made to see what principles for the running of society might be agreed on by all rational agents were they placed behind a complete 'veil of ignorance' as to what their own positions in society were to be—an ignorance which is supposed to extend even to their own tastes and desires" in Ricœur, "Philosophy," 1295. While listed as a solo author, Ricœur in fact directed a team of authors who contributed distinct sections, as seen in acknowledgements and the footnotes. Ricœur does not treat Rawls further, and does not substantially work on him until a proliferation of essays beginning in the late 80's.

argue that this expository document, which only seeks to “better understand this enterprise,”²⁹ functions to clear the space for his later incorporation of Rawls into his ethical framework.

As the title of the essay indicates, Ricœur notes circularity in Rawls philosophical work. Far from being a point of critique, Ricœur identifies his own presupposition of a necessary circularity in all moral reasoning and, thus, criticizes Rawls precisely at the points where the text departs from the grand circular logic of his theory of justice as fairness. This interpretation of circularity enables the adoption of Rawls as one plane within Ricœur’s three-fold critique.

What circularity does Ricœur identify in this text? Ricœur identifies three circles: 1.) Rawls’s attribution of justice to institutions rather than interpersonal relations, while relying nonetheless on the rational capacities of individuals to form contracts; 2.) Rawls depiction of the two principles of justice in relation to the institution; and finally, 3.) the relation between Rawls’s “considered convictions” regarding justice and the articulation and adoption within the original position of the two principles of justice. Ricœur identifies the first two forms of circularity as “apparent,” meaning both obvious and not terribly important.³⁰ They also are not vital to his later adoption of Rawls, so I will focus solely on the third.

In the third attribution of circularity, Ricœur hones in on what he finds to be the most radical: a relationship between considered convictions that we each hold regarding justice and the principles of born form the original position that nevertheless cohere with our considered convictions. Rawls calls the result of this adjudication of selected principles and convictions a

²⁹ “My primary intention is not to formulate a critique of Rawls’s *Theory of Justice*, but to better understand this enterprise.” “Mon intention majeure n’est pas de formuler une critique de *Théorie de la Justice* de Rawls, mais de mieux comprendre cette entreprise.” Ricœur, *Lecture 1*, 217.

³⁰ Ricœur, 218.

“reflective equilibrium.”³¹ Considered convictions (or considered judgements) is a term that Rawls uses in *Theory of Justice* to represent views that we already intuitively hold regarding a just society. The artifice of the original position is to develop principles within brackets (behind a veil of ignorance) that might clarify, critique, or extend these convictions. On Ricœur’s reading, such convictions serve not only as an initial starting point, but also as fixed end points, against which the principles articulated in the original position can be measured.

This circularity, according to Ricœur, saves Rawls from a non-circular logic, by which I take Ricœur to mean some sort of linear foundationalism, captured in narratives that take the fictional social contract literally. It presumes a starting point for our more methodical reflections on justice and institutions. In this text, Ricœur identifies the history of Jewish and Christian thought captured in the golden rule, as well as the reflections of the Greeks as a basis for our contemporary considered convictions. These play the role of providing initial content which can, in the *epoche*, or bracketing, of the original position, give rise to two principles of justice that can undergird justice in the liberal state. One can debate Ricœur’s claim to circularity and the content of the starting point (which seem less fixed for Rawls).³² With regards to circularity, Rawls clearly does not present a closed account, as considered convictions are open to clarification and even revision. There is, then, a form of spiraling logic that recognizes preconceived notions

³¹ See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 42–44.

³² My own reading of Rawls is that he constructs the original position such that (as if a matter of game theory) people would select within it these basic principles of “fairness.” I think Ricœur rightly questions whether these convictions are present all along (perhaps even in the construction of the model itself). For Ricœur, this does not lead to an unfair model (as if the original position is rigged) but leads one to recognize instead that the original position serves to help distance ourselves from our convictions and creates a tool for evaluating them (captured in the process of working towards a reflective equilibrium). It can help illustrate how often we fail to meet our own convictions by reducing them to principles that can extend to all members of society (and not just the privileged).

which inform judicial principles, even as they are refined. Such a process, I maintain, proves vital to Ricœur's own adoption of Rawls.

Read against the trajectory of Ricœur's own work with Rawls, I argue that this interpretation of circularity proves to be a linchpin for his own adoption of Rawls. Even if one takes issue with Ricœur's attribution of circularity to Rawls, it proves to be the conceptual warrant for the introduction of a new starting point, namely the teleological reflection on just institutions articulated in study seven of *Oneself as Another*. Ricœur deploys Rawls as the "moral" plane in his march through his reflections on just institutions, serving as the analogue to the formalism introduced from Kant. First and foremost, this allows for the "sense of justice" to become formalized through the sieve of procedural justice. I would also suggest that this allows basic goods to enter into a theory of justice which prioritizes the right over the good. Considered convictions enable the core content born from Ricœur's teleological analysis of institutions—first and foremost their basic desire to live-together—to inform ethical inquiry, even as they must pass through the sieve of the moral (deontic). Further, through the myriad of activities, practices, professions, and symbolic networks which form them, they already give rise to certain considered convictions on human goods. For Ricœur, the original position serves as the sieve, producing the two principles of justice that flow from it. The role of considered convictions will also later be a vital bridge in my engagement of Ricœur with Catholic Social Thought in Chapters 7 and 8. This is particularly pressing because, as I argue in Chapter 7, the considered convictions offered by Ricœur while critical (evidence by my reconstruction), remain nonetheless thin.³³ While a thin account is perhaps necessary for the pluralistic sphere

³³ I do not mean "thin" here as an outright condemnation. Rawls's own work (particularly *Political Liberalism* is necessarily thin in terms of convictions in so far as he works to develop a political model of justice attentive to the conflicts arising from pluralism. He thus acknowledges,

encompassed by the political in Rawls's work, it is inadequate for the thick world of associations where institutional ethics must take place.

Ricœur adopts the position described above as a means of providing a sieve through which the institution is considered. Thus, even as institutions may be understood as structures of living-together, as was emphasized in the last chapter, Rawls's procedural justice serves as a means for Ricœur of ensuring that living well does not mean trumping the basic rights of others. Yet, he does more than just adopt Rawls's procedure, Ricœur also incorporates Rawls's understanding of society and institutions as systems of distribution of material and non-material goods as his own. The addition of this aspect of institutions allows for Ricœur to incorporate Rawls's procedural formalism. Here, Rawls's ahistorical original position no longer serves as the foundation of legitimacy of governmental life but, I would say, as an important procedure of "hermeneutical distancing and appropriation" enabling the articulation and clarification of norms, which are subsequently taken back up as action guiding principles.³⁴

But a thread is laid in *Oneself as Another*, which when pulled by Ricœur over several works begins to unravel a neat adoption of Rawls. This thread is the question of plural institutions and plural conceptions of justice. From the outset, we can see that he acknowledges

but leaves out comprehensive worldviews from his analysis. While Ricœur does incorporate substantially more convictions than Rawls (including an extended engagement around the golden rule), his move to the abstract and his bracketing of actual institutions (apart from touching upon the political) cuts him off from the thick symbolic networks in which convictions are formed.³⁴ "Distancing" comes from the field of hermeneutics is a process of achieving a second order distance from an object (such as a cultural estrangement from a text). For Ricœur, in order to escape alienation and estrangement, it must be rendered productive and set in dialect with appropriation. See Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*. Ricœur identifies that both phenomenology and hermeneutics (including this dialectic) inform the structure of *Oneself as Another*. He writes concerning method, "I could take into account the rhythmic constitution of the whole field, combining descriptive phenomenology on the one hand, and hermeneutical interpretation on the other hand: objectivity and reflexivity, distancing and appropriation. That would be the main feature of the methodology governing the structure of *Oneself as Another*." Ricœur, "Ethics and Human Capability: A Response," 282.

plural institutions and even pluralism within institutional forms. This is already conceptually warranted through Ricœur's teleological plane. After all, not only will different goods be articulated by different institutions (church, family, university, the state, etc.) but even within those institutions there will be different goods articulated.

But Ricœur's use of the metaphor of the "sieve of the moral" provides an initial sense that the formalism introduced through Rawls can serve to winnow down possible expressions, enabling a non-universal, but nonetheless broadly functional procedural metric for the distribution of all social goods.³⁵ Justice becomes the norm for assessing and validating different modes of distribution, ensuring that each are given their just due. What happens, though, when there are claims to plural forms of justice? In this next section, I trace through Ricœur's treatment of plural institutions through his engagement with three texts: Michael Walzer's *Spheres of Justice*, Jean-Marc Ferry's *Les Ordres de Reconnaissance*, and Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot's *Economies of Grandeur*.

³⁵ Ricœur's adoption of Rawls's conception of justice is almost formulaic as he seeks to bring together teleological and deontological modes of inquiry. But I see underlying this marriage of modes of inquiry a fundamental humanistic impulse found in Ricœur that runs from his earliest treatment of symbols all the way through his thought: nothing human is foreign to me. Such an insight would buck against positions like those found in Alasdair MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*, in which the question of justice is dependent on a form of rationality which itself is tradition dependent. See MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Ricœur's work does stand in a tradition: that of political liberalism. Albeit, it is a non-individualistic liberalism that nevertheless seeks to maximize opportunities within life for persons to pursue their life plans but sees institutions as a vital part of this process. (See Ricœur, *The Just*, 10.) On my reading, Ricœur's account of political liberalism allows for the type of convictions to enter into moral inquiry which might be excised from Rawls's *Theory of Justice*. This is on the condition, however, that they pass through the sieve of procedural justice. Nonetheless, in times of conflict, that is to say, facing the hard cases, one can return to these convictions as a foundation of practical wisdom. Rawls's "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," does allow a form of religious reasoning to enter into public discourse, but only so long as later more "public" reasons could be found. See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 425.

Section 3: Justice and Plural Institutions

In my reconstruction, Ricœur draws on Rawls to locate justice as the central norm of social institutions and to use the original position as a procedure to help specify and clarify the norms governing justice. Yet, the problem of plural institutions arises. The Hegelian and cultural image of institutions discussed in Chapter 3 provides the foundation for a plural account of the good of institutions and institutional goods. In Ricœur's eighth study of *Oneself as Another*, Rawls's procedural formalism serves as the sieve to the teleological account of institutions articulated in the seventh study. But is there only one sieve?

Ricœur fractures a singular conception of justice as presented in Rawls through his incorporation of multiple authors who propose plural accounts of institutions, justice, and justification. Ricœur engages with Michael Walzer, who develops an account of multiple spheres of justice, divided by goods, framed by shared symbols and distributed according to logic internal to those spheres. With Jean-Marc Ferry, Ricœur adopts the Hegelian insight that among the non-material goods being distributed is recognition. Finally, engaging with Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, Ricœur incorporates a plural understanding not simply of logics of distribution, but also diverse modes of justification. This instability presented by these three texts pushes towards one of the central nodes of this dissertation: a recognition of the multiple institutional spheres which lay claim upon us that intersect at some of our most critical moral issues. I have treated Ricœur's engagement with each of them, as they serve to fracture a unitary account of justice, leading Ricœur, as we shall see in the next section, to articulate a new, third political paradox. This political paradox will open up the space for an inter-institutional ethic. I shall treat them each in turn.

3.1: Ricœur and Michael Walzer's Spheres of Justice

Michael Walzer published his seminal text *Spheres of Justice* in 1983, and while the text does not critically dissect Rawls's *Theory of Justice*, it provides an alternative mode of conceiving of the society and the distribution of goods and so stands in sharp relief to Rawls. Like Rawls, Walzer focuses on the distributive justice as it relates to material and non-material goods within society. In contrast to Rawls, however, Walzer holds that heterogeneous goods give rise to distinct domains or spheres of shared meaning about those goods that develop internal logics regarding the distribution of goods. Thus, the good of education gives rise to the university and the conferral of this good according to the logic of academic merit. Social domination, according to Walzer, arises when one uses the logic of one sphere/constellation of goods (e.g. markets and money) to dictate the distribution of goods within another sphere (e.g. political power or education). Walzer argues for internal critique within and vigilance of the boundaries of these spheres so as to prevent an erosion of the internal logic of the spheres or the creeping domination by other spheres.

Ricœur positions Walzer as a critique of the singularity of justice that is presumed within Rawls's work in favor of a plural conceptions of justice. The presence of multiple spheres that each have distinct logics of distribution and, thus, distinct conceptions of distributive justice poses a challenge to the unique and univocal presentation of justice in Rawls. Rawls does not provide a "universal" account of justice as one might find in a true Kantian framework. Instead, Rawls's work stands also in the contractualist tradition and advocates for a procedural understanding of justice in which the proposed circumstances of the procedure of the original position provide for a formal critique of justice. Despite aiming lower than a universal account of justice, Rawls work is nonetheless universalizing and monistic as he presents a singular account

that would run across every social institution. After all, justice is the first virtue of social institutions.

Walzer, in contrast, identifies himself as “radically particularist,”³⁶ evidenced in the very disciplines he names as foundational for his inquiry: “history and anthropology rather than economics and psychology.”³⁷ Justice is pluralized in Walzer by being differentiated across the distinct spheres which have developed both shared and latent meanings. Thus, principles of distribution are heterogeneous and internal to each sphere.

Ricœur first makes use of Walzer in the 9th study of *Oneself as Another*. As detailed above, Ricœur traces his ethical aim (including the desire for just institutions) through three distinct planes: an ethical/teleological plane (the seventh study), a moral/deontological plane (the eighth study), and a practical/tragic plane (the ninth study). A central thesis governing the move from the teleological study (the ethical) to the deontological study (the moral) is that the ethical must pass through the sieve of the moral. There is a primacy to the ethical, in so far as the desire for, articulation of, and pursuit of the good give rise and content to the ethical aim: the pursuit of the good life, with and for others, in just institutions. Subsequently, Ricœur passes this ethical aim, through a deontological sieve, bringing each element of the ethical aim a degree of formalism as he first engages with Kant’s universalizing ethic, and then Rawls’s procedural ethic.

On the practical plane of ethics, Ricœur proposes that there are conflicts that arise within formalism that are irresolvable by deontology. One of the specific conflicts he illustrates is between institutional understandings of justice. While Ricœur affirms the necessity of Rawls’s procedural justice as a means of reforming institutions, Rawls is not given the last word.

³⁶ Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, xiv.

³⁷ Walzer, xviii.

For Ricœur, Walzer serves as the first foil to Rawls.³⁸ Ricœur accepts Rawls's understanding of society as a system of cooperation for the distribution of goods (material and non-material), and even incorporates Rawls's formal proceduralism on the deontological plane. But a plurality of goods raises the question as to whether there are heterogeneous goods that include their own logics of distribution. Walzer's *Spheres of Justice* makes precisely this argument and allows for Ricœur to introduce what is seemingly an intransigent conflict.

The conflict born of Walzer's analysis is not simply a dispute over how shares might be allocated. It is not simply subject to a methodological rubric or negotiation. Instead, it is a conflict between competing systems of justice born in discrete social contexts. Are the principles of justice that govern distribution the same between public universities, hospitals, and court systems? What about as one moves beyond the distinctly "governmental sphere" to institutions

³⁸ On what grounds might Ricœur have chosen Walzer? Ricœur sees Walzer as providing a key rebuttal to Rawls and standing in as a representative of communitarianism. But insofar as Ricœur looks to Thévenot, Boltanski, and others to raise this question of pluralism, this illustrates a certain lack of satisfaction by Ricœur with Walzer's account. We can also, however, trace further background features that warrant this initial pivot to Walzer. The concept of sphere sovereignty is deeply rooted in the reformed tradition in which Ricœur stood. In his *Institutes*, Calvin distinguishes between two forms of government, a civil and an ecclesiastic. In Book III, Ch, 19, he writes, "there is a twofold government in man: one aspect is spiritual, whereby the conscience is instructed in piety and reverencing God; the second is political, whereby man is educated for the duties of humanity and citizenship that must be maintained among men. These are usually called the 'spiritual' and the 'temporal' jurisdiction." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 20:847. Calvin identifies within the institutes the proper authorities for each. What is of interest to me is that in accord with these different spheres, Calvin recognizes different forms of understanding or domains of inquiry. See Book 2, Ch 2, sec. 13 where he writes, "there is one kind of understanding of earthly things; another of heavenly... The first class includes government, household management, all mechanical skills, and the liberal arts. In the second are the knowledge of God and of his will, and the rule by which we conform our lives to it." Calvin, 20:272. While Walzer stands in the Jewish tradition (and not the Christian reformed tradition), he wrote on the reformers and undoubtedly is aware of these different ways in which they parsed human existence, not only by authority, but by modes of understanding. See Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints; a Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*. (New York: Atheneum, 1969). Such an account would perhaps cohere with Ricœur, the contemporary French Huguenot philosopher.

that are non-governmental but, nonetheless, public and social. How does one understand the principles of justice of a business, a mosque, a church, a synagogue, a private school, etc. Where do these private institutions overlap with the values of their public equivalents? Following Walzer, Ricœur holds that “the result is the veritable dismemberment of the unitary principle of justice to the benefit of the idea of ‘spheres of justice.’”³⁹ Ricœur seems to maintain the possibility of procedural justice, but now within each sphere.

While a conflict would appear between institutions at the practical level, how might one adjudicate the distribution of goods at sites which overlap institutional domains, it is irresolvable with appeal simply to normative principles. What Walzer’s spheres of justice illustrates is that already within a society, plural institutions give rise (even with procedural formalism) to plural principles of justice.

3.2: Jean-Marc Ferry and The Orders of Recognition

Yet, the pluralization of institutions cuts deeper than the goods distributed by them. Ricœur’s understanding of the plural nature of institutions is further enhanced through his engagement with the French philosopher Jean-Marc Ferry’s two volume work, *Les puissances de l’expérience*.⁴⁰ Ricœur adopts and incorporates Ferry’s concept of “les order de la reconnaissance” or “the orders of recognition,” from volume 2 of Ferry’s work, as the various places in which we construct our identity.

Ferry’s category appears to serve a few purposes as it is adopted into Ricœur’s work. First, as addressed in Chapter 3, it modifies once more our understanding of the nature and function of institutions. Following Rawls, Ricœur maintains a distributionist account of society and institutions. Society distributes particular goods and thus principles of distributive justice can

³⁹ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 252.

⁴⁰ Ferry, *Les puissances de l’expérience*.

help reform institutions.⁴¹ These goods are both traditional material goods, such as wealth, education, and structural resources, as well as non-material goods, such as roles and responsibilities. But the introduction of the concept of recognition presses back against this distributionist account. While Ricœur holds that recognition is mediated through institutions, is it in the same category or genre as the other goods? Even taking into account non-material goods, such as power, roles, and responsibilities, can we list recognition among them?

According to my analysis, I suggest not. Instead, recognition seems far closer to the concept of the public space of appearance found in Arendt (and adopted by Ricœur). There, the public space provides a locus where one can act and where one's actions can be seen by others, rendering them a part of history. Arendt's concept emphasizes the vital role that public institutions play in giving a space and medium for human action, allowing the unfinished products of humans to appear before others. According to my reconstruction, this is one further way (coherent with Ricœur's thought) to warrant the necessary role institutions play for persons.

Yet, there does appear to be a strong tie between recognition and distribution. It is in being recognized as a citizen that one can make claims for the rights and goods associated with that role. Even outside the bounds of citizenship, being recognized as a human nonetheless allows one to make claims against modern states, for human rights that are violated. Recognition, I would maintain, is a precondition for a system of distribution.

Recognition is explicitly tied to the process by which one's identity is seen and acknowledged by others. Recognition in Ferry and in Ricœur's later study *Le Parcours de la reconnaissance* can be traced back to Hegel.⁴² Much like Arendt's concept of the public space of

⁴¹ Ricœur, Azouvi, and Launay, *Critique and Conviction*, 96.

⁴² Ricœur makes explicit this connection to Hegel's use of recognition or *Anerkennung*, drawing particularly from his early writings when at Jena. In Hegel, recognition is not simply bestowed,

appearance, recognition uses the visual metaphor of being seen and being known. Whereas, the public space of appearance works at the basic level of human becoming, recognition extends from a fundamental recognition of the self as part of the social community to higher levels of human accomplishment. One is recognized not simply as a member, but as a capable and even exemplary member. Recognition is a seeing of a person and an acknowledgement of their capacity.

A second key contribution that Ferry makes to Ricœur's work is the pluralization of the mediums of recognition through his concept of the "orders of recognition." These orders include the various systems of which we form a part and which comprise our society: technical systems, monetary systems, financial systems, juridical systems, bureaucratic systems, media systems, pedagogical systems, and scientific systems. These are various orders to which we belong, sites in which we are seen.

Third, this is not simply a one-way apprehension. Drawing on Ferry, Ricœur further identifies that these various orders are sites of allegiance and belonging.⁴³ Recognition is a means by which we come to belong to a group. Institutional recognition here is tied to self-recognition. As one is recognized as a part of a group there is a simultaneous process by which a group becomes incorporated into our own narrative identities. Thus, with multiple sites for recognition, we are also introduced to the problem of multiple allegiances at a distinctly personal level. Strictly being concerned with a pluralization of the principles of justice as distribution

there is struggle for recognition, that is to say, a demand for recognition. Paul Ricœur, *Parcours de La Reconnaissance: Trois Études, Essais* (Stock (Firm)) (Paris: Stock, 2004). For a thorough treatment of Ricœur on recognition, see Michael Sohn, *The Good of Recognition: Phenomenology, Ethics, and Religion in the Thought of Levinas and Ricoeur* (Waco: Baylor, 2014).

⁴³ Ricœur, Azouvi, and Launay, *Critique and Conviction*, 60.

might limit our concern for the multi-institutional sphere to those who are in a position of authority with regards to distribution: a legislator, a manager, a principle.

One implication of tying the orders of recognition to sites of belonging and allegiance is to personalize this pluralization: we each are bearers of multiple allegiances, and we each, in our small way, feel the pull of these different allegiances upon us. This is a point underscored all the more when we recall that institutions are sites for the sedimentation of norms and values. Not only do we bear multiple allegiances, but those allegiances make claims upon how we see, value, and experience obligation in the world.

Finally, I further hold that the modes of recognition are concrete, plural, and irreducible. That is to say, when a person is recognized within a particular sphere, it is not simply as a unique individual, but one is seen through the lens of that particular sphere. Within a university, one is recognized as fitting within that order as a professor, a student, an adjunct, a dean, etc. This is even more apparent as we consider the various capacities which are recognized by others within a sphere. Thus, a math educator is recognized within a university for their teaching capacities and not typically for their athletic abilities. This recognition could be given in a formal manner, say with an excellence in teaching award. But it is far more common for this recognition to take place in less formal and more quotidian manners: a teacher's contract is renewed, her classes are filled with students who have heard about her pedagogical adroitness, she is given tenure, she is sought out to play a role on a committee for hiring other individuals, or she is invited to speak on a panel on pedagogy. As the saying goes, the medium is the message.

Why might this pluralization of recognition itself be important? It underlines the irresolvable conflict that Ricœur first signals with Walzer. A new synthesis of recognition within a unified institution such as the state impoverishes our social life as the relevant relation of

recognition is reduced to the citizen and the state. In extreme instances, when combined with the compulsive power of the state, this creates a new fascism where all other obligations are subordinate to the state. More likely, however, a singular focus on political recognition unjustly renders other spheres of recognition inconsequential or obsolete, allowing them to exist or fade with the markets of individual interest. A myopic focus on political recognition warrants neglect for these other various spheres. In the process, whether by intent or neglect, political forces eliminate these other means by which institutions contribute to human flourishing, for the very nature of recognition is rendered plural through the mediation of these distinct systems and orders. Political recognition is not a replacement for the recognition of familial, financial, pedagogical, or bureaucratic systems.⁴⁴

With Ferry, Ricœur inserts a plural institutional dimension into the concept of recognition. While the public space of appearance can be limited to the public sphere, and even more narrowly (though incorrectly) to the state, Ferry's concept of the orders of recognition pluralizes the mediums of recognition at the institutional plane. Ricœur's introduction of Ferry does not, per se, contribute towards his discussion of the pluralization of justice. But it does raise the stakes, as each of these institutions are no longer simply sites for the distribution of goods which could be subsumed under an overarching sphere of justice, but they also are sites in which persons express themselves and are recognized as capable within that domain. They are sites where our capabilities can flourish and be recognized, and in turn, be self-recognized.

⁴⁴ One can find an analogous concern raised in the CST tradition with the principle of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity privileges local decision making and capacity building. I will define and trace the development of this concept over Chapters 5 and 6.

3.3: Boltanski and Thévenot and the Economies of Worth

Ricœur's understanding of plural institutions is further modified by his engagement with Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot in their book *On Justification: Economies of Worth*,⁴⁵ who use different logics of recognition and esteem to accord merit and worth. For Ricœur, these authors present a different take on justice and recognition through their economic and sociological analysis of the different means by which moral worth is justified in different spheres. They analyze worth (or standing) within distinct “cities” and “worlds,”⁴⁶ broken down—not according to heterogeneous goods and logics of distribution—but rather the logics of justification by which standing or worth is attributed to individuals. These are the inspired world, the domestic world, the world of fame, the civic world, the market world, and the industrial world. Within the world of fame, worth is bestowed upon an individual by virtue of public opinion, while in the inspired world, according to an ability to break with convention. Thus, a Kardashian can be famous for being famous, while Gerald Manley Hopkins can still be quoted in certain circles for his religiously charged poetry.

Justification refers to the ways in which one measures or weighs the particular standing or worth of persons within these distinct cities. Their pluralism is affected by the contingent ways in which worth is in fact divided according by different “grammars.” While a step removed from “distributive justice,” justification for Ricœur signals the different ways in which due is determined in different spheres.

⁴⁵ Boltanski and Thévenot, *On Justification*.

⁴⁶ Cities in their work indicate distinct spheres of justification. Worlds underline the material form that this justification takes as it is encoded in objects and ordered within these different spheres of justification. These objects could include handbooks or user manuals.

In his *Course of Recognition*, Ricœur links Ferry's concept of recognition to Boltanski and Thévenot's concept of worth to his earlier notion of esteem.⁴⁷ This concept of esteem more properly links to Ricœur's teleological study, in which an institutionally mediated esteem is absent from a study already concerned with self-esteem and mutual esteem. Their work underscores a point I made while discussing Ferry, namely that it presents not simply a plural account of social spheres, but also a plural account of merit that is mediated through institutions. Esteem for one's artistry is simply not the same as esteem for one's fame. These non-convertible modes of esteem highlight the inherent diversity of the social sphere.

In my estimation, Ricœur's treatment of these three authors as I have reconstructed them does not rise to the level of a coherent picture of the effects of the diversity of institutions nor does it exhaust them. Instead, these represent diversity in three distinct but non-exclusive aspects. These figures illustrate a pluralism at the level of logics of distribution, modes and types of recognition, a pluralism of allegiances, and a diversity of the means by which we justify worth and esteem in different spheres. In Chapter 8, I will suggest that such a pluralism is amplified in environmental ethics by the plural symbols of nature across institutions. What is apparent, in all this, is a pluralism which cannot simply be contained by the single umbrella of a Rawlsian understanding of justice. Yet, Ricœur nonetheless holds a privileged place for Rawls. Holding a Rawlsian account alongside these pluralistic accounts highlights and escalates the conflicts born of pluralism. Ricœur captures this conflict in his treatment of the tragic and a new articulation of the political paradox.

⁴⁷ Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, 204.

Section 4: Tragic Conflict and the Political Paradox

The plural account of institutions that informs Ricœur's thought above sets the stage for an inevitable conflict. This is signaled by Ricœur even before his articulation of plural institutions with the introduction of a "tragic interlude" in his 9th study of *Oneself as Another*. Antigone and Creon serve as the main protagonists of this interlude, illustrating themselves a form of institutional conflict as each adhere stubbornly to the duties and obligations of distinct institutions: the family and the state.

In this last installment of the Theban tragedies, Antigone returns to Thebes after the death of her father, Oedipus, and after her two brothers kill each other in civil war over the city. Creon, Antigone's uncle, assumes control as King and decrees that Eteocles be buried with honors as past king and that Polyneices be treated as rebel, left for carrion. In disobedience to Creon's order, Antigone gives her rebellious brother what she deems to be demanded by the Gods: funeral rites and a simulated burial. The intransigence leads Creon to bury Antigone alive, but regrets it too late, after his own son and Antigone's admirer, takes his own life.

This tragedy illustrates well the claims made throughout this dissertation. Institutions shape and form us. The conflicts that arise are not merely between corporate bodies or abstract spheres, but between the actual people that embody these institutions. Part of the force of this is the confluence of claims upon persons: Antigone faces demands born from both family relations and her role as political subject.

At the extremes, for Ricœur, the tragic serves to illustrate truths about the ordinary. It illustrates inescapable conflict in the moral life. Conflict cannot be theorized or organized away. In each aspect of his ethical aim, Ricœur identifies the possibility of conflict. At the institutional level, Ricœur identifies three basic levels of conflict: at the level of legislation, regarding the

very ends of government, and even about the basis for legitimizing conflict. In relations to others, Ricœur argues there is disjuncture between the claims made by a formal deontological ethic and the demands of the other that I encounter face-to-face. In the pursuit of the good life, Ricœur identifies how even our autonomy presupposes a certain heteronomy of the Other.

While inescapable, the tragic does not lead to irresolvable conflict nor does it, on Ricœur's account, lead to a new synthesis, demanding a new agency as he attributes to *Geist* and the state in Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*. Even as the tragedy of Antigone can seem extraordinary, the conflict of values lifted out in Antigone between the family and the state are anything but. The multiplication of spheres of value today only amplifies a potential for conflict. While most are not buried alive, the result of a conflict of values is often violence. Ethics is the search for another way besides violence to adjudicate conflict. Ricœur's ethical aim points to a basic a desire to live with others that motivates us to strive for enduring resolutions and, when faced anew with conflict, to try again. We must assume that conflict need not be destructive, but that it can also be productive. As such, we can live productively with these tensions, but as I discuss with the political paradox below, they never fully disappear. To find temporary resolutions conflict, we return to the agent, now guided by practical wisdom. But before turning to *phronesis*, I want to introduce one final aspect of institutional relation. Ricœur's treatment of plural institutions reveals what he takes to be an ordinary fixture of our political life, a third articulation of the political paradox which relates the state to all other institutions.

4.1: The Political Paradox 3—The Institution among Institutions

For Ricœur, tragedies are extreme cases that highlight what is present in everyday experience, but obscured in the ordinary.⁴⁸ Ricœur develops a third articulation of the political

⁴⁸ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 243.

paradox to name these hidden tensions.⁴⁹ With this political paradox, Ricœur describes the relations between the state and the other institutional forms. In contrast to the CST tradition, he describes the paradox without eliminating the conflict, either through a hierarchical ordering of institutions or by other means. As such, he paradoxically binds together the unitary conception of justice presented through Rawls and the plural and irreducible conceptions of justice and esteem in institutions presented in our other figures. This leads Ricœur to privilege the state. Set against the prior two articulations of the political paradox, and the plural articulations of justice and institutions that set the stage for its articulation, this privilege is not totalizing, but a prudent call for vigilance.

This third political paradox addresses the relation of the state to other institutions. Ricœur uses a few different formulations, but at its base, it articulates that the state is both an institution among others, while also being an institution which envelops others. He writes, “We touch here on one of the political paradoxes, to know that it seems today to constitute at the same time a sphere of justice among the others, in so far as political power is also itself a good to distribute, and it envelopes all the other spheres, in so far as it is the guardian of the public space within which the social goods which constitute the sphere of justice clash.”⁵⁰ What is captured in Ricœur’s description of the political paradox is that the political is not simply one institution among many. It does not just stand among the other institutions as having equal goods and an

⁴⁹ I treated the two previous articulations of the political paradox in Chapter 3. The first political paradox treats the union of form and force in political contexts and the second treats the coincidence of domination and power to act together in institutions.

⁵⁰ “ Nous touchons là à un des paradoxes du politique, à savoir qu’il paraît aujourd’hui constituer à la fois une sphère de la justice parmi les autres, en tant que le pouvoir politique est lui aussi un bien à distribuer, et l’enveloppe de toutes les sphères, en tant qu’il est le gardien de l’espace public à l’intérieur duquel s’affrontent les biens sociaux constitutifs des sphères de justice.” Paul Ricœur, “La place du politique dans une conception pluraliste des principes de justice,” in *Pluralisme et équité la justice sociale dans les démocraties*, ed. Joëlle Affichard, Jean-Baptiste de Foucauld, and Maryse Aoudaï (Paris: Éd. "Esprit, 1995), 79.

equal stake. It is an institution among many, and is at the same time the institution which secures the space in which all other institutions, spheres of justice, orders of recognition, economies of grandeur meet.

The effect of this paradox is to secure against social fragmentation at the theoretical level. By binding together a pluralist account of justice and institutions with a statist account, Ricœur sets these in a tighter relation than is articulated by the pluralist accounts, while maintaining a looser, but nonetheless privileged relation for the state. While avoiding a totalizing statism, the political is privileged. Besides the political, no other institution is charged with the responsibility of securing the public square. Apart from the political, no other institution envelops the others.⁵¹ No other institution has such a weighty task as creating the conditions for a healthy, but inevitable clash between competing goods and spheres. It is the political sphere which plays a primary role in policing the borders of the spheres of justice, serving the primary role in restricting the domination (as Walzer describes it) of one logic of distribution over others.⁵²

⁵¹ Is Ricœur functioning according to an ideal theory or is he working descriptively? A teleological analysis as found in Ricœur's adoption of Walzer (it is goods, after all, that determine the logics of the distribution of goods) or in a tradition like Catholic Social Thought can make it difficult to discern the difference between is and ought. Is there, as Aristotle and Aquinas would argue, a preeminent role to the political because other arts, crafts, and domains are subsidiary to it? See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., 1985); Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Complete English ed. (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1981). How, then, might the historian or ethnographer approach this question? Instances like Iran, where the political is subsumed by the religious or even modern "corporate" and nepotistic presidencies where the business interests of the family of the president supplant the goods of the nation in a leader's day to day governance. Ricœur's privileging of modern liberal democracies appears to set the locus of his reflections and to restrict his gaze to these contingent, but nonetheless important spheres. The eschewal of universalizing social structures is one advantage to the approach I have reconstructed from Ricœur that privileges from the outset the self without diminishing the associational life in which we find ourselves.

⁵² In Walzer's account, however, there is a need for vigilance in every sphere. Policing the borders of the spheres of justice cannot be limited to politics. This means that within each sphere

We can further extrapolate that the type of esteem or recognition found within the public space of politics is not one recognition among others. The public space of appearance still holds as vital to our development, even as other institutions enable other forms of esteem and recognition. It serves as a vital base, even if our lives are consumed not by gaining recognition through political means, but instead in our various other modes of life.

By privileging the state, Ricœur denies a radical equality between institutions, particularly as they relate to the state. This account admits a unique role for the state, and thus special privileges that can be associated in adjudicating between institutions. By affirming the political as a sphere of justice among many, Ricœur also acknowledges and affirms the distinctive logics found within institutions.

This leaves an unresolvable paradox, a practical aporia. While the state has a privileged role, it nonetheless envelops plural institutions and is an institution among institutions. This paradox affirms the plural role of institutions in society, denying their harmony under a single political ideal of justice while reserving a unique role nonetheless to the political conception of justice. No perfect ordering of institutions will resolve this paradox and the possibilities of domination of one sphere over another. This can be direct abuses of authority⁵³ or more insidious migrations of values and distinct logics of distribution.⁵⁴

On its own, this might look like a rosy picture of the state. But Ricœur's privileging of the political sphere in this pluralistic account of justice and institutions is not naive. He maintains a clear-eyed vision of the dangers inherent in the political sphere. This third political paradox

there needs to be a perpetual education so as to better understand the goods of that sphere and to prevent the invasion of other logics.

⁵³ As we shall see, in the early CST tradition, Leo XIII and Pius XI, are particularly concerned about this.

⁵⁴ Higher education, for example, is rife today with market logics that go beyond bringing useful outside critiques and analyses, to supplanting basic governing norms.

does not replace the two earlier articulations of the political paradox. Instead, it joins and informs them.

As I addressed in the last chapter, the first two political paradoxes address unresolvable ambiguities in the political sphere. By unresolvable, I do not mean inevitable, but instead mean that there is no perfect ordering of institutions, no perfect legislation which can eliminate these ambiguities. Ricœur describes the first political paradox as the joining of form and force. Over his career, it captures the rationality of the state and the arbitrariness (and execution) of decisions by actors in the state; the mutual recognition embodied in a constitution and the inescapable violence of a state's birth that combine in the articulation of the state having a monopoly on violence. The paradox embodies the idealistic vision of a state and the inescapable possibility of violence that cannot be simply theorized or organized out of the state.

The second political paradox treats the obscuring and covering over of the foundation of institutions in a *vouloir vivre-ensemble*, a will or desire to live-together, by the actualization of institutions in hierarchy and domination, where the governed are subordinate to the governing. This foundation of the public political institution as an expression and achievement of a good, and its forgetting under the chains of domination capture not only our forgetfulness, but also the inescapability of hierarchy and domination.

To read the political paradox of plural institutions against this backdrop raises a new cautions and new needs for vigilance. The state does indeed envelop other institutions, but what are the possible costs in its guardianship, in its policing of borders? Where does its protection of one sphere come with the swift execution of violence against another? In light of these paradoxes, the asymmetry of the state to other institutions is not an unimpeachable, sacred hierarchy, but a necessary relation that verges towards violence. Setting this third political

paradox in tandem with the two other aporias of political life present a new privileged position for the state. We must stand vigilant not simply against incursions from the state, but also in the heavy exercise of its power in carrying out its chartered duty.

If the tragic names the extreme, this constellation of political paradoxes names the ordinary of our existence and the locus of practical wisdom. It is within this asymmetrical relation between state and institutions from which agents call for reform within and among institutions, make claims on behalf of their institutions, and adjudicate between the inevitable conflict. My constructive claim is that on this terrain and from the font of practical wisdom an inter-institutional ethic is born.

Section 5: Phronesis and Practical Wisdom

In the last section, I argued that conflict is inescapable, but not destined to violence. Ricœur uses the tragic as a means of illustrating such a conflict and a tragic wisdom or a practical wisdom as a means of addressing it. The tragic has an exceptional quality. This would seem to imply that practical wisdom is not needed in ordinary every day ethics.

For Ricœur, while the tragic of the Greeks is indeed rare, it actually illustrates a more ordinary quotidian conflict. This is apparent in the area of institutional ethics that this chapter focuses on. There are conflicts that occur within institutions, such as over the basic ends of institutions and what emphasis or priority one should place on those ends. Thus, one might argue over whether a particular institution should emphasize security over welfare, gross productivity over job security, etc. There are also conflicts that occur within a multi-institutional context. This is illustrated in Ricœur's work by appeals to Walzer, Boltanski, Thévenot, and Ferry. Not only can the logics of one sphere dominate another, as Walzer illustrates, but there can be ethical issues, like those tied to environmental degradation, where multiple institutions exert different

claims of propriety and symbolic value. But the question persists: need this conflict be destructive, or is it possible that it can be productive? *Phronesis* plays a vital role in adjudicating conflict, finding fragile reconciliations.

One implication, then, is that practical wisdom is not reserved to tragic exceptional cases, but that it has a far more pervasive role. This in fact is illustrated in Ricœur's later treatment of practical wisdom. Ricœur states, "The prudential component is ethics itself at work."⁵⁵ While Ricœur's section on practical wisdom is located last in his ethical system, it is not an afterthought, but the very site of application and judgment. It is *phronesis* which not only adjudicates ethical conflict into fragile reconciliations, but that does the hard work of ethics in daily life.

Ricœur discusses the Greek concept of *phronesis* under two headings: Practical reason and practical wisdom. While the former term precedes Ricœur's developed ethics, it captures nonetheless the extent to which our practical capacities operate in ethics. Practical reasoning describes the type of social and institutional reasoning that enables actions to make sense. It also illustrates the type of standing apart that is necessary for any critical engagement with institutions. The latter concept, which encompasses "tragic wisdom" reflects the type of judgment made by agents in order to find a fragile reconciliation of the conflicts that are borne out within ethical thought. We will treat them each in part.

5.1: Practical Reason

Ricœur's most substantial treatment of *phronesis* as practical reason is in an essay under the same title published in *From Text to Action*. First published in 1986, "Practical Reason" is written before Ricœur's more developed ethic in *Oneself as Another*, where practical wisdom is

⁵⁵ Ricœur, "Ethics and Human Capability: A Response," 288.

positioned as the final piece of his ethic. Practical reason, nonetheless, usefully maps onto elements already discussed above.

Practical reason is not, for Ricœur, scientific knowledge. Ricœur develops a concept of *phronesis* as practical reason that “both dignifies the term ‘reason,’ but that is not reduced to ‘scientific-ethical rationality.’”⁵⁶ In this essay, abandoning efforts to reframe a Kantian account of practical reason, Ricœur works through contemporary theories of action, interpretive sociology, and the category of meaningful action in order to present a picture of practical reason that accounts for the deliberative reasoning of an agent. It results in a social agent who is aware of others and able to take into account their action. Such deliberative reasoning also discerns how meaningful action itself is bound up in larger ideological narratives.

Ricœur’s engagement with these different aspects of action helps map onto our description of institutions above, as they illustrate an agent who can think socially and institutionally. He writes, “Human action is neither ‘dumb’ nor incommunicable.”⁵⁷ By engaging with the semantics of action, Ricœur tries to make explicit those elements of an action that make it readable and intelligible. Thus, one discerns within an action motivation, one interprets action in a general manner, and one is able to apply causality. Further, we can understand why an agent may act in a particular way: I write a check in order to pay my rent. Practical reason grasps the different semantics of action in order to unpack the meaning of an action.

Beyond mere communicability, action governed by practical reason is also oriented toward others, enabling our anticipation of resistance and collaboration. Thus, Ricœur introduces the concepts of “rules of action” and “social relationships” Here, Ricœur draws on a Weberian

⁵⁶Ricœur, *From Text to Action Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, 188.

⁵⁷ Ricœur, 189.

understanding of action, where each accounts for the actions of the other. This further gives rise to public rules, which enable a more general basis for action.

Practical reason also encompasses interpreting and deploying symbols in our action. These introduce the fabric of social meaning of which institutions form a part. Actions become meaningful within a network of symbols, as I noted in Chapter 3. These networks themselves cohere inside of ideologies. Thus, our actions become readable, meaningful, and contestable not simply on the grounds of prudence, determining the best means to achieve an end, but also at another level of significance, where the very ends themselves are subject to debate. Practical reason enables, for Ricœur, the reading of action and the distanciation that enables ideological critiques.

This is not yet Ricœur's fully developed position on practical wisdom, since he has yet to locate it in relation to what he later deems the "anterior ethic,"⁵⁸ teleology and deontology. None the less, he already is marking out the implications for practical wisdom in an ethical framework where the final step of the Hegelian dialectic of right is rejected. Hegel remains a strong temptation for Ricœur, for Hegel recognizes well with his concept of *Sittlichkeit* (concrete ethical life) that we each are already born into a morally textured life. Ricœur writes, "No one begins ethical life; each of us finds it already there, in a state of mores in which the fundamental traditions of the community have been sedimented."⁵⁹ As we already discussed above, this sedimentation of value is partially constituted within institutions.

Ricœur first explores, but then recognizes as insufficient a Kantian understanding of practical reasoning. While Kant provides for Ricœur a key moment of internalization and

⁵⁸ Paul Ricœur, *Reflections on the Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 44.

⁵⁹ Ricœur, *From Text to Action Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, 200.

detachment in this process of practical reasoning, Ricœur identifies that it cannot survive the lifting of the brackets, leaving Hegel a more enticing option. A Kantian understanding of practical reason provides for Ricœur a distanciation from this context. In the Kantian moment, one sees oneself as a free agent, capable of choice, undetermined by these external moral and, dare I say, spiritual, forces of sedimented tradition. Whereas Kant distances practical reason from the concrete, Hegel's will is embedded within it. Ricœur writes regarding Hegel's concept of will that "it invests itself in a work that casts it into particularity; but it does not lose itself to the point of no longer being able to recover reflectively, that is to say, universally, the very sense of its movement toward particularity."⁶⁰ Here, there is a maintenance of both particularity and universality, allowing the distanciation necessary for a critical choice.

But Hegel remains a temptation, on Ricœur's account, that must be resisted precisely in the turn towards political philosophy. Hegel is attractive in so far as he links the will to concrete morality as found in the family, the economic and the political order. It is, for Ricœur, a harkening back to the *polis* of Aristotle, where the political provides an overarching framework under which the various goods can be united.⁶¹ Ricœur finds a parallel in Hegel's conception of the state. In this further step, Hegel divorces the subjective mind of the individual and the objective mind, which is a hypostasis of mind above the individual and intersubjectivity. This hypostasis allows for the fulfillment of mind in the state.

Ricœur rejects the Hegelian synthesis that leads to an objectification of *Geist* or mind either in the concrete life of the community, or in the apotheosis of the dialectic, in the state. I see two key implications. One implication of this rejection of Hegel, as we saw above, is the rejection of a strong synthesis for subsuming and ordering the various goods of society.

⁶⁰ Ricœur, 203.

⁶¹ See Ricœur, 203.

According to my reading, Ricœur's later adoption of tragic conflict as well as the political paradox represent the fruits of this rejection. Another implication is a firm anchoring of ethics in selves, capable both individually and as groups of responding to the claims of obligation found in institutions, as well as distancing themselves from these institutions. We are not mere automatons within institutions or wider symbolic networks.

Practical reason, then, is treated almost as a form of modern *synderesis*, the medieval term for the faculty by which human's grasped the natural law, i.e. the conscience. Through practical reason, humans are able to grasp the norms of a particular sphere (political, ecclesial, commercial, familial, etc.) and place oneself under this norm. While Ricœur describes this concept before the writing of *Oneself as Another*, this same capacity is highlighted as vital to a person's moral capacities in his later work.⁶²

If, as I discussed in Chapter 3, institutions are a mode of sedimenting value, then practical reason is also the key to institutional thinking. It is the means by which we grasp the various norms and values that are encoded within an institutional sphere and act capably within an institution. On this account, practical reason already illustrates the various modes by which *phronesis* is a central means of ethical living within institutions.

In sum, practical reason serves as an important bridge concept between the work done in Chapter 3 and above, mediating between the work of institutions and the work of agents, who both are formed by institutions and who maintain a capacity to critique them. The basic workings of ethics, then, is the work of practical reason. On this account, though, we are not yet given a clear picture of how one deals with the conflict inherent in institutions. Practical wisdom is not so much a distinct faculty from practical reasoning as a distinct aspect of this moral capacity.

⁶² See Ricœur, *Écrits et Conference 3: Anthropologie Philosophique*, 418.

5.2: Practical Wisdom

While Ricœur's practical reasoning demonstrates a capable social agent, free to separate herself from the norms of institutions, under this name, Ricœur has not yet developed a model of reasoning capable of resolving the conflicts in the ethical life. Practical reason in Ricœur's work is more than simply a disembodied capacity for moral reasoning. As I sought to show above, it reflects a form of institutional thinking that is capable of grasping the meaning and norms relevant to an action in a particular field and is able to create some distance from it. It encompasses, then, the work of teleology and deontology that Ricœur maps out in studies seven and eight. Relevant to our work here, practical reason captures a capacity for institutional thinking, as people grasp the goods and norms of institutions of which they form a part. In terms of the subject of this dissertation, practical reasoning illustrates critical institutional thinking, but falls short of an inter-institutional ethic.

For Ricœur's ethical system, however, the judgment that responds to conflicts, both ordinary and extraordinary, is neither arbitrary nor free from the prior considerations. In fact, it exhibits the very circularity which is characteristic of Ricœur's hermeneutical method. In instances of conflict, whether it be about ends of institutions or relations between institutions, Ricœur proposes a return to those convictions first uncovered in the work of teleology, now winnowed through the sieve of the moral. Our moral judgment is anchored in these convictions and our argumentation, as we reach a judgment as groups, uses these convictions as their lodestone.

Thus, Ricœur describes his ethic as a “double entry matrix.”⁶³ We twice return to our convictions. Once, as we articulate aims and desires; and a second time, having passed already through the sieve of deontology. Practical wisdom is the work of isolating and uncovering those convictions which serve as the foundations of the ethic. We do not confront them naively, as first articulated in a teleological ethic, but now as a “critical phronesis,” fully aware of the violence potentially inherent in them.

This movement maps on to the three theses that Ricœur presents in *Oneself as Another*. He identifies as his third thesis, “the legitimacy of recourse by the norm to the aim whenever the norm leads to impasses in practice — impasses recalling at this new stage of our meditation the various aporetic situations which our reflection on selfhood has had to face.”⁶⁴ This thesis reflects precisely this return to the convictions that are found within the teleological plane. The aims that are carved out—whether related to the pursuit of the good life, the solicitude of the other, or the basic aim of institutions—serve to inform *phronesis*.⁶⁵

⁶³ “Une sorte de matrice à double entrée.” Paul Ricœur, “Entretien Avec Paul Ricœur. Le Débat Éthique Aujourd’hui,” *Libresens*, March 1991, 205.

⁶⁴ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 170. Martha Nussbaum brings up the important point that one must take Hegel’s insight that society can be arranged to have fewer conflicts between spheres. She writes, “Tragic dilemmas may have a natural element, but they usually also have an element of human greed or neglect or lack of imagination. We should not treat the greed as a given; we should exercise imagination in a free Hegelian spirit, asking what steps might be taken to produce a world that is free of some life-crushing contradictions.” Martha Nussbaum, “Ricœur on Tragedy: Teleology, Deontology, and Phronesis,” in *Paul Ricoeur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, ed. John Wall, William Schweiker, and W. David Hall (New York: Routledge, 2002), 274. Her emphasis on imagining more just circumstances is well taken and a logical extension of Ricœur’s own work. After all, responsibility for institutions is born out of the recognition that something can in fact be done and the prospective account found throughout his career presupposes just such a form of planning. Nevertheless, in his treatment of practical wisdom, he fails to highlight these points.

⁶⁵ While Ricœur incorporates a deontological framework into his ethics (passing teleology through the sieve of deontology), the turn to practical wisdom to resolve conflicts reflects a rejection of Kant’s account of practical reason as sufficient (or even a watered down form in Rawls’s procedural justice). Kant’s account relies on the adoption of a maxim that can be held

It might seem that practical wisdom is only necessitated when there is aporia. In *The Just*, however, Ricœur describes the “application of the norms” as the work of practical wisdom.⁶⁶ From the standpoint of institutional ethics being developed in this dissertation, practical wisdom has a far more pervasive role than just the hard cases, particularly in light of Ricœur’s claims regarding the plurality of justice. We are always moving between different symbolic orders that place different claims upon us in terms of values, norms, and obligations. Wisdom enables the personal adjudication of these worlds, even allowing the values of one to migrate and transform another.

Who are the agents of this practical wisdom? Ricœur opts for the self over and against a Hegelian synthesis. In *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur, somewhat cryptically, identifies that this third plane is not a move to a “third agency.”⁶⁷ This is a reference to a demurring from Hegel’s move in the *Philosophy of Right* to identify that the deficiencies of a deontological critique require a turn to *Sittlichkeit* or ethical life, where these issues become resolved in the lived ethical culture of a people. According to Ricœur’s reading, this becomes objectified as the *Geist* or spirit of a people that is embodied in the state. The term “agency” captures not simply a third ethical system, but also an actual agent, the objectified mind. In contrast, in Ricœur’s work, the self remains the locus of ethical reflection and judgment. While we are receivers of norms and values

universally. In other words, in the realm of pure practical reason, there can be no genuine states of irresolvable conflict. See Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*. Ricœur holds that conflict is not resolvable by a simple appeal to rules, laws, or duties, and thus returns to the Greek concept of practical wisdom. Yet, he here appeals to the tragedians and not Aristotle, whose teleological framework already informs his teleological study.

⁶⁶ Ricœur, *The Just*, xxii.

⁶⁷ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 240.

from institutions, agency is not relocated to them or even to “the spirit” of a people. Here is where we see Ricœur as a “post-Hegelian Kantian.”⁶⁸

And yet, the recourse to the self does not mean a return to an individual ethic and Ricœur directly addresses the possibility of a communal *phronesis*. As we discern the proper ends of an institution or deal with ethical issues at the convergence of multiple institutions, we are rarely judging alone. For many ethical issues, it is in conversation that we confront conviction and come to resolution. Ricœur writes, “This practical wisdom is no longer a personal affair; it is, if one can say, a *phronesis* of many, public, like debate itself. It is here that equity proves to be superior to abstract justice.”⁶⁹ This *phronesis* of many, then, is the hard work of engaging together to discern the aims that bring us and bind us together in our institutions.

This *phronesis* of many reflects that the hard work of judgment does not eschew conflict, but takes place in the middle of it. Ricœur writes, “in my work, I show that conflict is a structure of human action. One must not dream of a naturally pacified life. Society is not Eden.”⁷⁰ Conflict is not only inevitable, but necessary to the group work of practical wisdom, for if conflict is not

⁶⁸ Ricœur adopts this trope from Eric Weil and uses it at various points in his career to describe his engagement with and distance from Hegel. While his use of the term appears to take on different senses according to the context of the philosophical themes he is treating, Ricœur provides a helpful gloss in his essay “La liberté selon l’espérance,” in Paul Ricœur, *Le Conflit Des Interprétations; Essais d’herméneutique.*, L’ordre Philosophique (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), 393–415. The key take away is that Hegel cannot be read as having surpassed Kant in every respect, nor can one simply ignore Hegel, but that they are best read together.

⁶⁹ “Cette sagesse pratique n’est plus une affaire personnelle ; c’est, si t’on peut dire, une *phronesis* à plusieurs, publique, comme le débat lui-même. C’est ici que l’équité s’avère être supérieur à la justice abstrait.” Ricœur, “Éthique et Morale,” 17.

⁷⁰ “Dans mon ouvrage, je montre que le conflit est une structure de l’action humaine. Il ne faut pas rêver d’une vie naturellement pacifiée. La société n’est pas un Eden. Nous avons à prendre en charge nos conflits, comme nous l’enseigne la tragédie grecque, où nous voyons surgir des conflits entre les hommes et les dieux, entre les enfants et les vieillards, entre les frères et les soeurs... Dans la tragédie grecque, c’est à la sagesse pratique que fait appel le spectacle du désastre.” Paul Ricœur, J.M. Muller, and F. Vaillant, “Pour Une Éthique Du Compromis. Interview de Paul Ricœur,” *Alternatives Non-Violentes*, no. 80 (October 1991): 2–7.

recognized by the parties, not held as relevant, then there is no foundation for debate and discussion. But from the vantage of practical wisdom, conflict need not lead to destruction. It need not result in Antigone, dead in the cave, and Creon chastened too late. Instead, conflict can be productive, leading to fragile reconciliations.

5.3: Practical Wisdom and an Inter-institutional Ethic

Yet, even as practical wisdom becomes a case of the *phronesis* of many, the circularity of Ricœur's ethics demonstrates that an inter-institutional ethic as practical wisdom that I have called for is a capacity that each hold, and not a capacity simply limited to those in power. Just as Chapter 2 identified a form of social responsibility by which we are rendered responsible for institutions, this fourth chapter identifies practical wisdom as the means by which we each can adjudicate and judge within our daily lives the various allegiances we hold. This is all the more pressing as the pluralization of institutions is itself a site of political fragility, necessitating responsibility. If, as Ferry holds, we each hold multiple allegiances, then we each already engage in conflicts on a micro-scale as we seek to navigate across institutional demands of family, state, church, and corporation, to name a few. It is a capacity that we need to exercise and hone further in groups. It is a capacity particularly demanded of those in positions of practical judgment: the judge, the legislator, the doctor, but it remains nonetheless shared by all.

Practical reason and practical wisdom are increasingly important in an age of proliferating institutions. It is not simply legislators and managers who need to sort out the conflicts of the ethical life. As institutions ranging from corporate, to ecclesial, to the political overlap in new and unexpected ways, it is important that each is able to better adjudicate. We each are to grasp at those convictions to help inform our judgments.

But it is important that we get these convictions right. Imagine, for example, if one were to rely solely on a Hobbesian vision of the state, where the Leviathan represents it is totality our ceded interests and freedom for the betterment of all. It or any similar statist vision would lead to circumstances where in the conflict of institutions, the state's interests always triumph. In a less totalizing model, one may nonetheless imagine a concessionary vision of the state, where other entities, be they family, civil society, or religious entities exists solely by the concession of the state. There, the conflict of institutions is not one of paradox, for the state no longer is one among many, but the paternalistic benefactor of all.

When we recall, however, that for Ricœur undergirding institutions is not a desire to dominate or even a desire for security against the other, but instead a basic *vouloir vivre-ensemble*, a desire to live-together, a different discussion needs to be had. In the conflict of institutions, the state does indeed hold an asymmetrical power of force over other institutions. The conviction one appeals to is not force, but this basic aim resulting from a seminal question: how can we better live together. Practical wisdom, which takes place both on an individual level and through argumentation, is the solution to a world of institutional overlap and conflict. It is through this means that Ricœur suggests that we adjudicate institutional conflict.

While at face value, this appears a thin solution, it nonetheless provides a path forward in practical wisdom and key convictions. To the large solution of institutional conflict, we are given an appeal to practical wisdom. It is true that much is left to individuals and groups in resolving particular dilemmas. Holding together the conviction of the good of living-together undergirding our most basic institutions, refracted through the various goods at the bottom of each—education, health, security, happiness—along with the recognition of the state's asymmetrical force, its capability of violence, and its role both as institution and as gainsayer, we are given a

future direction for the conversation. The appeal is made to the conviction that itself is expressed in the solution: argument, civic discussion, and compromise that is one expression of the political desire to live-together.

Conclusion

Ricœur's treatment of just institutions bears within it the seeds of the inter-institutional ethic that I outline throughout this dissertation. As we have seen, Ricœur's adoption of Rawls's framework and his rejection of a unitary notion of justice gives rise to a conflict not simply at the practical level as institutions overlap, but at the normative level. Rather than establishing a clear hierarchy by which institutional relations are mediated, Ricœur instead marks out a third political paradox, which maintains asymmetrical relations of the political institution to other institutions, while also the freedom to resolve institutional conflicts. As I have argued, his use of the moniker the political paradox inspires vigilance.

It is with practical wisdom that we see the marking out of not merely institutional thinking (as one finds with practical reasoning), but the ability for individuals or groups to reflexively work back to basic convictions that fund (and are purified) in the theory of justice, and from these, build fragile reconciliations. Such convictions point to that initial aim of institutions: a desire to live-together.

While Ricœur's own work integrates the care for institutions into the ethical aim on equal footing with care for self and care for the other, it also serves as a foundation for an inter-institutional ethic. Not only do we have a capacity to think institutionally, but we have a facility for thinking across institutions. Such a facility is not unmoored and arbitrary, instead it is anchored in those basic convictions born from the teleological plane. We desire to live-together. This desire is structured through various institutions and goods: health, welfare, development,

education. It is holding onto this basic conviction, alongside a vigilance born out of a sense of injustice amidst asymmetries of power, that one is able to render productive the basic institutional conflicts that are becoming more and more prevalent, and if not make them productive, at least achieve some fragile reconciliation that enables us to continue to live together.

Ricœur's treatment of institutions remains nevertheless light on details and thin on convictions. Yet, as argued above, institutions themselves can embody robust traditions of inquiry bearing on institutional ethics. These can present robust considered convictions that can inform our public reasoning. We find just such a tradition in the Catholic Church. With Catholic Social Thought, I look now at a tradition that came to birth as the church came to understand itself as an institution among other institutions. Still scarred by the revolutions which diminished its stature and social position, drawing on a renewal of Thomistic thought, the modern Catholic Social Teaching tradition developed a new institutional ethic for the church and for the world.

Part III: The Modern Catholic Social Teaching Tradition: An Institution's Institutional Ethic

In part I and II of this dissertation, I have focused on one thinker, Paul Ricœur, and his corpus to develop an ethic of institutions. I have traced different understandings of responsibility and carved out space for a more expanded sense of guilt and responsibility from within Ricœur's work. I have done so with purpose of theorizing a model of responsibility that can extend over the vast domains where we often each play only a small role. I have also reconstructed an understanding of institutions from within Ricœur's work, capturing the multifaceted ways in which we are caught up in institutions, arguing as such that institutions are explicitly moral phenomena (as opposed to amoral). I have also discussed how an inter-institutional ethic is nascent within Ricœur's work, as a move towards just institutions becomes pluralized not only in terms of institutions, but also in terms of justice, requiring a move to practical wisdom in order to adjudicate moments of conflict.

Ricœur's model is nonetheless incomplete (perhaps necessarily so). Ricœur's work treats institutions formally (even addressing the state as a particularly institution among others), but it largely brackets the history of effects of institutions. Yet, institutions do not stay within easy confines. More often than not, they make demands both descriptively and normatively on other institutions. Religious institutions in particular, which claim to reorient our lives, push in every direction within one's personal and social life. Rather than seeing this as anathema to public, inter-institutional discourse, religious thought can exhibit its own creative engagement with institutions and institutional relations. This incompleteness in Ricœur leads to a relatively anemic depiction of the considered convictions which inform practical wisdom when conflict arises. It is precisely in the thick of institutions I maintain, where these convictions are found.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I remove those brackets from my own analysis and turn to the Modern Catholic Social Teaching (CST) tradition, taking it as an exemplar of the type of thinking that can take place within institutions. This tradition presents core aspects of what I have identified are vital for an ethic of institutions: a subjective obligation for institutions and tools for reforming them (comprising together a care for institutions), and frameworks for ordering the play of institutions (a concern for institutional relations). The CST tradition as an established documentary tradition dates from the papacy of Leo XIII (1878-1903) until today. *Laudato Si*, Francis’s social encyclical on the environment, is the most recent example. While the roots of Catholic social ethics date back to the gospels and the prophets, and even modern papal social teaching precedes the Leonine era,¹ the tradition itself has canonized Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* as the institutional starting point of this social teaching tradition.² In these chapters, I take a distinctive reading of the CST tradition, arguing that across the documents one finds a stable but dynamic institutional ethic that is at the heart of the tradition.³

¹ For a detailed engagement with the encyclical tradition that precedes Leo XIII, see Michael Joseph Schuck, *That They Be One: The Social Teaching of the Papal Encyclicals, 1740-1989* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991).

² The process of canonization of the CST tradition begins with Pius XI, who is the first one to speak of Leo’s teachings as a “doctrine” that has been handed down in Pius XI, “Quadragesimo Anno,” Vatican Website, May 15, 1931, 15, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html. I do not use the term “canonized” here lightly. Canon, which etymologically means rule or measure, is a way of describing different standards in the church, including exemplars of holiness, like saints who are canonized. Scripture, according the Catholic tradition, is also part of a canon. We see in the formation of the canon of CST many of the same qualities that biblical scholars apply to understanding canon: a privileged conversation that includes an implicit sense of who is in and out of a conversation, the impression of wholeness, such that pieces appear incomplete on their own, a tendency to read intertextually, and the impression of harmonization. Such a process is exemplified in the fact that the majority of modern citations in the CST tradition until only very recently largely cited other papal and conciliar documents.

³ One implication of my work is that the sex abuse scandals dating back to the 80’s are not merely horrendous in the breach of trust and endangerment of the church’s most vulnerable members by bishops and their staff who wittingly moved predatory priests around and, for the

Over two chapters, I build a model of this institutional ethic. In Chapter 5, with recourse to the writings of Leo XIII and Pius XI (1922-1939), I argue that one can locate a care for institutions and institutional relations at the center of the CST tradition as it articulates moral norms for the institutions of which we form a part, defines our obligation to support and reform institutions, and delineates a principle for adjudicating institutional relations. As Chapter 6 argues, this has not been a static ethic, but instead has evolved over time, particularly in light of a turn to the person, in which this institutional ethics becomes transformed according to the rule and measure of the human person. Acknowledging this robust legacy will help us to draw a comparison in in Chapter 7, and then to integrate this institutional ethic with Ricœur’s ethics of institutions, and apply it to the contemporary issue of environmental degradation in Chapter 8.

The argument will take place in two parts, covering distinct historical periods of the CST tradition. In Chapter 5, as with my treatment of Ricœur, I employ a genealogical method that is attentive to the construction and development of core concepts that help construct and hold together this tradition. I will trace through principles developed in Leo XIII and Pius XI’s writings that serve as an important backbone to an ethic of institutions. I will mark out an understanding of institutions, dubbed “societies” in this earlier period, as founded in the basic sociality of persons and argue that a pluralistic concept of institutions is a vital backdrop for understanding an ethic of institutions in this work.⁴ I will then explore the principles of the

sake of preventing scandal, encouraged victims and their families to remain silent on the matter. The bishops not only acted counter to common morality and the long ethical tradition of the church, they failed to uphold the basic institutional ethic espoused by popes for over the last century. For a good overview of the (now) four stages of the sex abuse crisis in the Catholic Church in the U.S., see Kim Daniels, “The Four Waves of the U.S. Catholic Abuse Crisis,” *Church Life Journal*, December 17, 2018, <http://churchlife.nd.edu/2018/12/17/the-four-waves-of-the-u-s-catholic-abuse-crisis/>.

⁴ By equating societies and institutions here, I am adopting a specifically peopled understanding of institutions (already captured in my treatment of institutions in Paul Ricœur). This allows for a

common good, social justice, and subsidiarity, arguing that these form a constellation for understanding a care for institutions and institutional relations within the CST tradition. Chapter 6 employs the same genealogical method, but to explore the later tradition of CST from pope Pius XII (1939-1958) to the present, arguing that the new emphasis on the person inaugurated in Pius's work renders the care for institutions as a subspecies of the care for persons and, through the reflections of subsequent popes, transforms the central elements of the institutional ethic developed in this chapter: the common good, subsidiarity, and social justice. Thus, even within a single tradition, I highlight pivotal developments and change.

What do I mean when I say tradition? Alasdair MacIntyre has described tradition as a sustained argument around a shared understanding of the common good.⁵ The CST tradition reflects well the notion of a sustained conversation. Not only is a shared vocabulary developed across over a century of explicit conversation, but popes have published new encyclicals on important anniversaries and often directly cite one another, thus giving the impression of an ongoing dialogue that spans almost 150 years. I would suggest that much of the formation of the CST tradition follows the logic of canonization. For example, the popes establish privileged conversation partners, captured well in the narrow use of sources cited (particularly before Benedict XVI and Francis). This leads to a sense of unity and wholeness and a sense of incompleteness of any part separate from the whole. This narrow canon encourages harmonistic

robust engagement with the concepts developed in CST like the common good, social justice, and subsidiarity. It does, however, have the effect of limiting the scope of institutions. I am not, for example, treating institutions like "language." I am also limiting the scope of collectives. CST does not treat aggregations of people like queues. Instead, it largely focuses on social bodies that are formed in pursuit of some common goal (even if this goal is only implicit). This lends institutions from a CST perspective to a teleological analysis, as they are born from human action, which is, according the classical Thomistic and Aristotelian accounts adopted, always goal oriented.

⁵ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*; MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*.

readings that have the effect of conveying a sense of authority that purports to speak across historical contexts. The claims implicit within the documents to a shared authority as *magister* or teacher, held equally among popes across time can lend towards a smoothed-over harmony that makes obscures explicit the points of disagreement and development. Indeed, a discourse of continuity reigns among the documents, even in instances where there is direct departure from the previous positions of a pope (as one finds with the new articulation of an “external right” to religious freedom).⁶ Indeed, for these reasons among many, Ricœur is more likely as an individual person to publicly admit retractions and changes than a pope (though as I have identified, in areas of collective guilt, he did not).

The nature of this tradition presents methodological challenges. One wants to avoid simple appeals to authority, particularly as those appeals can ignore the claims related to natural goods present within texts that are intended to speak beyond the communal circle of the Roman Catholic Church to wider Christian, non-Christian, and even secular publics. In addition, the nature of the texts – occasional teaching on specific social issues that shift across time – should caution the interpreter against assuming a facile harmony. They are incredibly diverse and at times incredible rhetorical work is done to preserve a sense of harmony (a proactive hermeneutic of continuity) even when there is difference. At other times, articulations may in fact be quite new without attention or appeal to disruption in this apparent harmony.

Even though I bracket appeals to harmony here, I also recognize that these texts do establish some type of stable vocabulary and grammar of social ethics around principles of the nature of the person, the common good, the option for the poor, human dignity, and so on, that

⁶ The right to religious freedom in terms of freedom of conscience has long been held in the Catholic Church. As I discuss extensively below, the recognition of the freedom of religion to public worship is new with the CST tradition and stands in direct contradiction to claims made by Leo XIII.

influences practices on the ground and is transmigrated through the tradition, quite apart from the texts and historical occasions that gave rise to them. The more formal CST tradition stands alongside a less institutionally-bound tradition of Catholic Social Thought, embodied in secondary reflection (such as this dissertation) and application which ranges from policy statements, to sermons, to study circles, to gestures and actions like Dorothy Day's houses of hospitality. Without assuming the authority of the popes, one can see that this canon plays a role in shaping and forming the grammar of Catholic social ethics from the pulpits, to formal Catholic institutions from hospitals, to schools, to the soup kitchens, to individual Catholic citizens speaking and acting in a wider public.

In addition, without succumbing to the smoothed-over harmony of that results from a self-inaugurating tradition ("as we teach and as we have always taught") the thoughtful interpreter may find deeper continuities in this tradition which may not be immediately apparent. Engaging in a historical and genealogical analysis akin to the approach I took with Ricœur, but more plodding given the diverse contributing authors over time, I will trace the thread of institutions as one key continuity across the history of the CST tradition (though they are first construed as societies). This enables me to identify consistent ethical principles attached to institutions that persist through significant developments. A concern for institutions is endemic to the CST tradition for it into existence as the church came to understand itself as an institution among other institutions such as the modern nation state and the family. Understanding these institutions on their own and as they relate to the Catholic Church preoccupies early CST. Tracking concepts like the common good, social justice, solidarity, and subsidiarity, I argue that this tradition has continued to reflect over time and in distinct ways consistent understandings about the obligations that persons have towards institutions, society, and each other, as well as

holding a particular concern for the distinct integrity of institutions and the persons who form a part of them.

The CST tradition might seem an odd bedfellow with this French Calvinist, who policed the boundaries of theology and philosophy for most of his life. But Ricœur was no stranger to Rome, participating frequently in the Castelli conferences that took place there from their inception in 1961.⁷ Ricœur, who was even friends with John Paul II, famously joined him often at the Castle Gondolfo for conversation. Levinas frequently participated in these conversations. Upon the receipt of the Paul VI prize, Ricœur recounted to John Paul II how touched he was at his last meeting with the pope at Castle Gondolfo in 1994 to carry the greetings of the pope to Emmanuel Levinas who was at that time too ill to attend.⁸

Yet, while Ricœur's own words betray a familiarity with at least John Paul II's contribution to the CST tradition,⁹ he never published on John Paul II nor on the wider CST tradition. In turn, until recently, encyclicals by and large avoided attributing authority to contemporary philosophers or theologians by citing them. It is quite exceptional, in fact, that Ricœur is cited in Francis's most recent encyclical, *Laudato Si*.¹⁰ Yet, even this reference to *Fallible Man* appears to be dropped in without contextualization or broader engagement.

Nevertheless, there are core resonances between these two bodies of work, which make the dialogue all the more fruitful. Both privilege the importance of the person in institutions

⁷ François Dosse, *Paul Ricœur: les sens d'une vie (1913-2005): Chapitres Annexés* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001), 65.

⁸ See Paul Ricœur, "Discours Du Professeur Paul Ricœur Lors de l'audience Pontificale," *Notre Prochain*, 2003; Salomon Malka, *Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 2006).

⁹ Ricœur speaks of being "called to task" by John Paul II's moral and spiritual convictions, and by the anthropological vision undergirding these convictions in Ricœur, "Discours Du Professeur Paul Ricœur Lors de l'audience Pontificale," 8.

¹⁰ Francis, "Laudato Si'", 85, n. 59.

without reducing institutions to either methodological individualism or substantive entities that exist apart from the persons who comprise them. Both hold institutions to be vital to the formation and flourishing of the individual, rejecting atomistic conceptions of the person. Both share a concern for the potential dangers of political institutions in relation to institutions and persons. In Chapter 7, I will compare Ricœur and CST and argue that while Ricœur provides an essential structure, self-imposed brackets leave his work nonetheless thin. I will conclude by inviting CST to help amend him. This will pave the way for Chapter 8, where I draw on both Ricœur and CST to propose an institutional environmental ethic.

In order, to bring these two traditions of work into dialogue, I must set them on certain equal terms. In Chapters 5, I present an alternative approach to Ricœur's ethic of institutions by arguing that at the heart of the CST tradition is a care for institutions that incorporates a concern for institutional relations. It is to this we now turn.

Chapter 5: An Ethic of Institutions in the Modern Catholic Social Teaching Tradition

How might one best come to understand institutions? In the model of an ethic of institutions that I reconstructed from Ricœur's work, we largely get a view from outside. The account appears formal for want of a treatment of specific institutions.¹ A turn to one robust institutional body, the Catholic Church, reveals not only a depth of thought regarding the nature of its own institution, but also with regards to the role of other key institutions that comprise our social life, as well as the norms used to reform them and to guide their interrelations. The Catholic Church provides the possibility of an insider's view of institutions that wades into the thickness of history eschewed in Ricœur.

While Ricœur's turn to Rawls would seem to complicate matters for engaging with the Catholic Church, the critique found in Rawls is not so alien to the claims made against the Catholic Church since the CST tradition's inception. Rawls adopts a division of the private and the public that runs along the lines of comprehensive doctrines. Such doctrines can certainly play a role in forming the individual, but they should play a limited role in informing our public life together. Such claims are not so far off from similar critiques Leo faced over a century ago as he argued on behalf of worker's rights in *Rerum Novarum*. The "spirit of revolutionary change" that the pope responded to was far more extensive than the industrial revolution and the flight to cities for which this document is remembered. The church was still responding to dramatic

¹ While in Ricœur's early occasional pieces he does address certain specific institutions like the church, these do not appear to play a role in his more developed institutional ethic. See, for example, Ricœur, Abel, and Romele, *Plaidoyer pour l'utopie ecclésiale*; Ricœur, "État, Nation, École." While beyond the scope of this dissertation, one possible project arising from my work would be to engage in a more thorough treatment of the instances where Ricœur does treat specific institutions such as schools, the state, and the church and assess how these interface with the formal institutional ethic that I developed.

changes inaugurated by the French revolution, characterized not simply by a seizure of church properties, but also a wresting of domains from church influence and control seen in the suppressing of religious orders, the outlawing of monastic vows, the adoption of no-fault divorce into civil laws, and the taking on new mantles of secularism by formerly Catholic nations. These all effectively circumscribed the social terrain of the Catholic Church.

These were tumultuous times with dramatic shifts in fundamental institutions of social life. For the Vatican, the shrinking power of the church took on a material dimension, with Leo XIII marking the first papacy without the papal states since the donation of Pepin in 786. As a result, the leader of the Catholic Church was a “prisoner of the Vatican,” sovereign over the smallest country in the world, but without political protections just beyond its walls. The Vatican remained in abnormal relations with Italy until a concordat is established with Mussolini by Pius XI. “Modernity” appeared on the offensive. Pius IX (1846-1878) who witnessed these great changes, including the seizure of the papal states, responded in kind, issuing the documents that would later be gathered as the syllabus of errors.

Rather than a mere defensive posture or a resigned quietism, Leo XIII took on a creative and critical engagement with modernity in epistolary form, as he issued letter after letter on issues that ranged from the State, to the family, to the rights of workers. He did not abdicate the role of the church in the world, but rearticulated and reaffirmed it. The church, he claims, needs to take up the issues of modernity for “by keeping silence we would seem to neglect the duty incumbent on us.”² With the scepter of sovereign no longer available, the pope wore the mantle

² Leo XIII, “*Rerum Novarum*,” 16.

of *magistra*, advocating the Catholic Church's role as a conveyor of truth and a former of hearts,³ and taking up in a particular way, the temporal welfare of all.⁴

Through these encyclicals, the pope inaugurated what is to later become known as the CST tradition as he claimed that the Catholic Church had a rightful role and responsibility in addressing contemporary social issues. This will later lead to John Paul II identifying *Rerum Novarum* as giving "the Church 'citizenship status.'"⁵ The church is not an institution apart from others, confined to its own nation. Yet, according to the popes, neither does the church stand on equal ground with all others, claiming a distinct insight for itself into the human condition and (more importantly) a vital role in human destiny. Just as it is posing "the social question," situating the church in these paradoxical vantages as citizen of the "earthly city" and guide to the "heavenly city," changing relations to the political order and social upheaval renders the church *as* institution a question to itself. This defiance of a facile division of church and state that consign religious reflections to the private sphere necessitates robust reflection on the nature and relation of institutions that extend well beyond the particular "social questions," being posed in each epoch.

Section 1: Societies and Social Need: Leo XIII

In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I traced the semantic ambiguities hidden under the term "institution" within Ricœur's work, identifying key markers in order to define this term as it is used across his career. CST presents an altogether different challenge. Here, we have a tradition

³ Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum", 26.

⁴ Leo XIII, 28.

⁵ John Paul II, "Centesimus Annus," Vatican Website, May 1, 1991, 5, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.

that has developed over more than a hundred years, with contributions made by multiple pontiffs, writing in radically different historical, social, and ecclesial contexts.

Even the term institution was not used in earlier writings to describe social structures and social bodies, with Leo XIII and Pius XI preferring the term “societies” to describe the various social bodies that are part of our social life. This fits within a much longer history of understanding the church as parallel to civic structures, evidenced in classic Christian works like Augustine’s *City of God* and Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*. This also marks a definitive difference between social bodies and other possible collectives. A society is distinct from a queue or a mere aggregation of peoples. As we shall see in the next section, they are delineated according to ends, authority, and distinct origins.

The use of the category of societies by the pontiffs also reflects their own juridical training. Leo was trained as a Roman lawyer and diplomat, eventually working as a bureaucrat within Latium (which were in the papal states). With significant territories under its control, and an extensive hierarchical structure, including its own laws and codes, even when in other nations, it was not difficult to imagine the church as a distinct “society,” and this was for a time the model for understanding the vast array of social bodies that pervade our lives. Despite the various semantic divergences, I am arguing here that one can locate a care for institutions and institutional relations at the heart of CST tradition.

A first question to ask, then, is precisely what are institutions in CST? A look at early writings by Leo and Pius on these societies reveals a plural social landscape that roots societies in basic human sociality. Distinct societies play vital and necessary roles in the achievement of collective goods and human happiness.

A first central component to understanding our relations to the social bodies that comprise institutions in Catholic Social Thought is that they are born out of human necessity, both materially and developmentally. For Leo, our entry into societies is written into human nature as we seek to meet natural needs and to develop ourselves. We are not isolated monads but require societies to fulfill our needs. Humans are irreducibly social. Thus, he writes in *Immortale Dei*, “Man's natural instinct moves him to live in civil society, for he cannot, if dwelling apart, provide himself with the necessary requirements of life, nor procure the means of developing his mental and moral faculties. Hence, it is divinely ordained that he should lead his life—be it family, or civil—with his fellow men, amongst whom alone his several wants can be adequately supplied.”⁶ Captured in this citation is a complex understanding of the way that society provides for us. We do not enter society so as to avoid evil, as one finds in the Hobbesian tradition. Our need for society runs deeper. We enter societies in pursuit of common goods. First and most obviously, these societies are necessary for fulfilling basic necessities: food, shelter, protection from the elements, basic security, as well as the whole host of extrinsic needs that we cannot accomplish on our own. This captures a basic recognition of material needs that runs through CST.⁷ Second, they play a critical role in our development.

⁶ Leo XIII, “Immortale Dei,” Vatican Website, November 1, 1885, 3, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_01111885_immortale-dei.html. Like much of Leo’s writings, this fits against a Thomistic philosophical framework. A basic understanding of society (even in prelapsarian a state of “innocence”) is a coordinated common pursuit of a common good (as seen in Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q 96, a 4.). I discuss below more explicit Thomistic frameworks, but we should presume throughout that Leo is engaging in his own creative retrieval of Thomas Aquinas, even when he is not citing him. I am grateful to Elisabeth Kincaid for highlighting this specific connection.

⁷ But, as I shall discuss below, institutions also provide basic goods of human relationality: friendship, companionship, the good of living-together.

These basic needs are apparent. Families, for example, are understood throughout the CST tradition as a basic society, central to our wider political society and to the church. They are central to the individual as the first place where we are nourished, supported and grow. We need families to provide basic sustenance, shelter, care, and education for children. The social polity, or the state, helps secure the basic needs of its citizens. This comes in the form of tangible benefits such as security within and without, regulating just relations between citizens, providing in instances of need. The state provides roads, schools, and prisons. It provides care in instances of need, such as food aid, housing, health care, and even taking on wards of the state. As I shall discuss with below, with the concept of the common good, CST identifies that the state exists first and foremost for the sake of the citizens who form it. The State is born out of a basic human sociality, captured in the fact of language and the many needs which can only be fulfilled in common action.⁸

According to Leo's anthropology, the Catholic Church also fills a fundamental need: an instrument for the fulfilment of our desire for union with God. Here, a Thomistic vision of the ends of humans undergirds Leo's social philosophy.⁹ He sees the natural end of humans to be fulfilled within the family and civil society. Humans also hold, according to Thomas, a natural desire for God that is only amplified and then fulfilled by our revealed supernatural end in God.¹⁰ This both incorporates and supersedes our natural end. It follows (in this account) that in order, to achieve our supernatural end—union with God—one needs the church, which is the

⁸ Leo XIII, "Diuturnum," 11.

⁹ Early CST is heavily reliant on Thomistic philosophy. In one of the earliest encyclicals of his papacy *Aeterni Patris*, Leo commends the work of Thomas Aquinas to the Catholic Church, exhorting ecclesiastic leaders to "Let carefully selected teachers endeavor to implant the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas in the minds of students, and set forth clearly his solidity and excellence over others. Let the universities already founded or to be founded by you illustrate and defend this doctrine, and use it for the refutation of prevailing errors." Leo XIII, "Aeterni Patris", 31.

¹⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q 12.

communion of the saints and the site of sacramental grace.¹¹ Thus, even the church as institution is created in response to this distinct human need.¹²

Institutions do more than just provide for the extrinsic needs of persons. They also contribute to our formation development as persons (including our malformations). As signaled above, institutions in this tradition are vital for developing a person's "mental and moral faculties."¹³ In the range of institutions that we partake in, we have a chance to develop as persons. This often happens in the first society of which we form a part, our families, and thus this particular institution has been the continuing subject of philosophical, theological, and empirical study.¹⁴ Important as it may be, our development is not limited to or even exhausted by the family. In political society, we learn to be citizens. In ecclesial society, one learns to be a disciple of Christ. These three institutions form a central backdrop of CST. We should not

¹¹ This model of two societies to meet the two ends is reflected directly in Leo's description of the Church and the State. He writes, "For, as there are on earth two principal societies, the one civil, the proximate end of which is the temporal and worldly good of the human race; the other religious, whose office it is to lead mankind to that true, heavenly, and everlasting happiness for which we are created; so these are twin powers, both subordinate to the eternal law of nature, and each working for its own ends in matters concerning its own order and domain." Leo XIII, "Nobilissima Gallorum Gens," Vatican Website, February 8, 1884, 4, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_08021884_nobilissima-gallorum-gens.html.

¹² This focus on need reflects a natural law reasoning that works from the premise that one can discern purposiveness in nature. That we have needs which cannot be fulfilled on our own illustrates our social nature and the need for collective organizations to fulfill them. But our needs are not all equal, leading to the identification of certain "societies" as necessary, in so far as they meet our true ends as humans (as identified in this tradition) of natural and supernatural happiness.

¹³ Leo XIII, "Immortale Dei," 3.

¹⁴ In the realm of theology and religious studies, Don S. Browning has done important work integrating psychology, sociology, and theology in light of a vision of the generative person. See Don S. Browning, *Generative Man: Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973). His years long research project on culture, family, and religion reflects the type of multi-dimension account of human flourishing that can attend to wider social institutions and discrete personal development. For one published example from this period, see Don S. Browning et al., *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).

presume to limit development to these institutions alone, however. In each institution of which we form a part, from the university to the bowling club, there is an occasion to express and develop our moral and mental facilities. Our inherent sociability means that we become *human* in and through institutions.

This is not just a historic argument for Leo, identifying some distant past in which people entered into “society” and were henceforth for ever there. Humanity’s inherent sociability, rather, serves as a continual ground for forming new societies. Thus, in arguing on behalf of the right to form associations in *Rerum Novarum*, he grounds this in a basic right to enter society.¹⁵ Such a right, we can infer, is not exhausted in the State. Thus new, “private” societies can be formed that are subordinate to the state, but that nonetheless help individuals to continue to achieve what they cannot on their own. We will return below to this theme but under the term introduced by Pius XI: “subsidiarity.”

Section 2: Social Pluralism in the Leonine Era: Leo XIII and Pius XI

Thus far, I have discussed that institutions are understood in CST as an outgrowth of a basic principle of sociality. This could lead to a flat conception of institutions, where any one institution could be comprehensive, capable of fulfilling the entirety of our basic needs. In this flattened model, institutional diversity would be a completely contingent, non-necessary feature of human existence, and social order could easily be arranged towards efficiency, locating the generation and formation of humans in the state, for example, as one finds among the guardians in Plato’s *Republic*.¹⁶ But as I have already begun to illustrate above, a basic backdrop of Leo’s

¹⁵ Leo XIII, “*Rerum Novarum*,” 51.

¹⁶ See Book 5 where Socrates describes a (secret) arranged mating system (including proscribing mating outside of one’s prime) and an organized societal child rearing system in which the family is subsumed by the state with brothers and sisters reduced to those of the same birth cohort. See Plato, *Republic*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2004), 459d–

social thought is his adherence to a vision of social pluralism¹⁷ that holds a role for distinct and separate institutions. Contra critics, the Catholic Church is also marked by the modern differentiation of societies, though one born from a Catholic vision of the social.¹⁸ Leo returns again and again in his writing to three basic, interrelated but irreducible societies: the domestic society or family, the ecclesial society or the church, and the civil society or the state. While later sections will treat the norms within and between these societies, in this section, I will identify how Leo distinguishes between these societies according to three markers: their ends and their capacity to reach those ends; their distinct structures of authority; and their origins in theological history.

2.1: Necessary and (Im)perfect societies

Early CST holds to a teleological vision of institutions that leads to a demarcation of societies according to the distinct ends that they are pursuing and their capacity to reach those ends. Thus, we see from the outset broad but nonetheless specific goals for each distinct society.

61. Note, I am not saying that there is no contingency in either the particular institutions we form a part of or even the forms these institutions take. As I discuss below, I am identifying that within the CST tradition, the pluralism of institutions is necessary because no one human institution meets the variety of needs that exist.

¹⁷ Again, I am using social pluralism to refer to a differentiation of institutions within society, not religious pluralism.

¹⁸ Dutch Sociologist Leonardus Laeyendecker appears to identify that social differentiation and an integrated soteriology are inimical. He writes, “We are seeing the rise of social segmentation and a plurality of societies. This makes it impossible, and inevitably so, to maintain one particular definition of reality as the exclusive vehicle of salvation.” Cited in William T. Cavanaugh, “Return of the Golden Calf: Economy, Idolatry, and Secularization since *Gaudium et Spes*,” *Theological Studies* 76, no. 4 (December 1, 2015): 708–9. Critiques of this differentiation can also be found in the anti-modern Catholic movement intergrism (or integralism). According to Mary Elsbernd, the term dates back to an 1890’s Spanish political party that was based on “the principles of the Syllabus of Errors.” Mary Elsbernd, “Papal Statements on Rights: A Historical Contextual Study of Encyclical Teaching from Pius VI - Pius XI (1791-1939)” (Ph.D. Diss., Catholic University of Louvain, 1985), 387, n. 2. According to Elsbernd, it expanded during the papacy of Pius X. In response to secularism, this has had a bit of a modern revival today. For example, see Thomas Pink, “In Defence of Catholic Integralism,” *Public Discourse* (blog), August 12, 2018, <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2018/08/39362/>.

This is particularly true of the triad that will come to be designated by Pius XI as necessary societies: the family, civil society, and the church. Leo and Pius rely upon a theologically informed teleological framework to identify the purposes of these societies. The end or goal of the family is the “generation and formation of offspring.”¹⁹ The end of the civil society is “the temporal well-being of the community,”²⁰ often understood as the common good of the community. The end of the church, as identified above, is communion with God. These three societies serve as an initial basis for understanding social pluralism in early CST.

Why a focus on these societies? Pius XI describes these as “necessary” societies. He writes, “Now there are three necessary societies, distinct from one another and yet harmoniously combined by God, into which man is born: two, namely the family and civil society, belong to the natural order; the third, the Church, to the supernatural order.”²¹ In what way might these be necessary? History would certainly rebut the claim that one cannot have a state in which there is no church. According to Russell Hittinger, these are not necessary in the sense that a polity could not exist without one of the three. Instead, these are necessary in so far as they are necessary for human existence, or rather, for the end of human existence: human happiness.²² In this citation from Pius, we see the imprint of a Thomistic metaphysical framework of the two ends of human existence, one natural end of happiness and another supernatural end. This natural flourishing is not an individual project, but requires the family and the state. According to this Thomistic framework, supernatural happiness, or union with God in Christ, is only possible through the

¹⁹ Pius XI, “Divini Illius Magistri,” Vatican Website, December 31, 1929, 12, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html.

²⁰ Pius XI, “Divini Illus”, 12.

²¹ Pius XI, 11.

²² Russell Hittinger, “The Three Necessary Societies,” *First Things*, June 2017, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/06/the-three-necessary-societies#print>.

church: *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*. Just as with Thomas's two ends, grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it; so too, these institutions coordinate, assist, and even depend upon one another, even as they retain their respective autonomy.²³

It is worth reminding the reader that while Leo and Pius addresses a form of social pluralism, this does not reflect the far greater diversity born from religious pluralism. It is the Catholic Church and not "religion" which ranks among the necessary societies. There appears to be little space for other religions within Leo's schema, except, perhaps, as private societies. Leo goes as far to reject the "liberty of worship."²⁴ While a concern for institutional relations is present from the beginning of the tradition, at this early stage it is limited by its own reliance on a natural law framework²⁵ that does not recognize a place of other religious institutions in society.

Why are there three necessary societies and not just one? Part of this relates back to the anti-monistic framework which Leo is relying upon. According to my reading of the Leonine period (Leo XIII and Pius XI), societies are pluralistic, delineated by 1.) an end, 2.) internal

²³ I explore the nature of this autonomy below as when I focus on Pius's use of the term "perfect" and "imperfect" to describe these societies' abilities to achieve their respective end. It is worth considering now, however, how the dependence of the natural and supernatural ends nonetheless set these institutions in relation. Our supernatural happiness is not somehow apart from natural happiness. In fact, the salutary aspects of grace ensure that there is both a healing and elevating of the natural person. Can one read this backwards as a means of affirming not simply the coexistence, but also the co-dependence of ecclesiastic institutions on other institutions?

²⁴ C.f. Leo XIII, "Libertas," Vatican Website, June 20, 1888, 19–22, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_20061888_libertas.html. Just such a right is later proposed by John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris* and detailed further in *Dignitas Humanae*. I will discuss in Chapter 6 how this turn to the person serves as a warrant for John XXIII's new articulation of this right.

²⁵ Here, we might also recall that natural law in Catholic Thought is never a secular mode of reasoning. Instead, as Jean Porter brings out well in her book on the subject, the concept of nature and the natural givens implied therein is understood theologically. See Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999).

structure, and 3.) historical origins (understood here in terms of theological history). Addressing each of these aspects can help us better understand the implicit understanding of societies (or institutions according to my framework) in his writings.

2.2: Achieving the Ends of Societies

The end of a society is its common good. But a first mistake would be to assume that there is but *one* common good. When referring to *the* common good, Leo is often speaking about the common good of civil or political society. This is a common good which encompasses all within it, which according to a Thomistic framework, can, within limits, override the common good of individuals or particular institutions found therein, who relative to the state, pursue private goods.²⁶ For the sake of the common good, the state may even interfere in the inner workings of a distinct society like the family to ensure the preservation of the rights and dignity of the members therein.²⁷ Nonetheless, it is possible to consider the common good more relatively.

The common good of distinct societies can be better understood according to the metaphor of social body which runs through CST. One strand of Catholic Social Thought sets Catholic conceptions of institutions into a much longer history of understanding social bodies as analogous to organic bodies. Ad Leys calls this an “organological” vision of social bodies.²⁸ For these models, the common good is not some principle that comes from on high, but is endemic to

²⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-I, q 18, a 10. Thomas here discusses the judge executing the father of a family who is also a thief. Leo actively works, however, to preserve the dignity and autonomy of the family and the church from what now seems like a more hostile modern secular state.

²⁷ Leo XIII, “*Rerum Novarum*,” 14.

²⁸ See Ad Leys, *Ecclesiological Impacts of the Principle of Subsidiarity* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 1995).

all collective bodies as a relation of parts to wholes that persist long past the parts and as a relation of wholes to parts.

This organic vision of social bodies helps clarify two central points regarding the nature of the common good. According to Cardinal Joseph Höffner, noted theorist of CST, “The common good is not a sum, but a new value specifically different from the individual good and the sum of individual goods. Every social entity, such as a city or a university, has its particular common good.”²⁹ The first item to note in Höffner’s analysis is that the common good is identified here as distinct from individual goods either on their own or in aggregate. Rather, it offers some new additional value. The common good appears to be an emergent property born only from our social life together. We might suggest here that the common good is actually best understood as a “social good” that is distinct and indivisible from the social bodies within which it is sought. This distinction might enable us to avoid confusing treating the institution as a metonym for the common good it enables (the intrinsic common good) and pursues (the extrinsic common good). After all, collapsing the *actual* common good of an institution into the *apparent* good of a social body (good reputation, accrual of power, etc.) serves to frustrate a pursuit of the former, particularly when this involves institutional accountability and reform. This is most recently seen in the false logic of Catholic bishops who inadequately attended to the concerns of existing and future victims for the sake of preserving the reputation of the church from scandal. Here, as well, an apparent concern for supernatural ends (which would be potentially obstructed by scandal) led to a (criminal) negligence of the temporal ends of members of this perfect society. As we shall see, Leo provides resources for considering these two ends as distinct, but integrally related.

²⁹ Joseph Höffner, *Christian Social Teaching* (Köln: Ordo Socialis, 1997), 30.

Second, the common good as a concept is present in every social entity. Each organization that come together is created for some good or purpose. Both the family and the church each have their own distinct ends, which is the aim of those societies, and only attainable by the collective action of those who make up that society. While the CST tradition claims a shared role of the church and the state in raising and forming children (making education one of the most interesting and challenging overlaps³⁰), it does not share in the end of the propagation of children (which forms a part of the common good of the family), even as both the church and state depend upon it. Thus, a state may encourage the creation of stable families to ensure its continued existence (through tax benefits, family leave policies, subsidized day care, etc.) it does not partake in the intrinsic good of the joint activity that brings about children: copulation. Thus, a central feature of the social plurality of CST is an understanding of distinct, but nested and interrelated common goods.

For some, achieving a common good may seem like a bonus, but not intrinsic to a society, akin to a football team winning a championship. But according to the CST tradition, the common good, whether of a family, the church, or political society is not a mere added benefit to a society. Instead, the common good is a society's very purpose. The teleological cause of a society is its common good. This is brought into strong relief in Leo's letter *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes* (On the Church and State in France) in a portion of the letter where he speaks of the mutability of government, the possibility of the creation of new governments, and the link of human authority to divine authority. Reflecting on the aftermath of the upturning of society and government that flow from violent upheavals, leading possibly to anarchy, Leo identifies a

³⁰ Ricœur also treats education, though granting a far less esteemed role to the Church within it. See Ricœur, "État, Nation, École."

“social need” which “obtrudes itself upon the nation.”³¹ This need is for the most basic form of common good, peace as *tranquilitas ordinis*, the tranquility of order. According to Leo, “This social need justifies the creation and the existence of new governments, whatever form they take; since, in the hypothesis wherein we reason, these new governments are a requisite to public order, all public order being impossible without a government.”³² Our need for order is not simply lost in abstract history, but even here is indicated as resurfacing in the tumultuous times of revolutions. It follows that part of what undergirds social pluralism in early the CST tradition is an understanding of distinct, but related teleological ends.

Were these ends simply to exist as separate spheres, then it would seem a principle of non-interference would govern them. But in the early CST tradition there are relations of dependence, that is to say, a society’s ability to achieve its ends independently, that delineate and subordinate societies. Within these three necessary societies, Pius introduces a second distinction—perfect and imperfect societies—to identify their relative autonomy and ability to accomplish their own ends. This distinction is noted in Pius XI’s letter on Christian Education, *Divini Illus Magistri*, when he distinguishes between the imperfect society of the family and the perfect society of the state. He writes, “the family is an imperfect society, since it has not in itself all the means for its own complete development; whereas civil society is a perfect society, having in itself all the means for its peculiar end, which is the temporal well-being of the community.”³³ While the family is still designated as a society, harkening back to Leo’s appellation of the

³¹ Leo XIII, “Au Milieu Des Sollicitudes,” Vatican Website, February 16, 1892, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_16021892_aumilieu-des-sollicitudes.html, 18.

³² Leo XIII, 18.

³³ Pius XI, “Divini Illus,” 12.

family as a “true society,”³⁴ it is imperfect as a result of its dependence on other societies to achieve its unique end of the “generation and formation of offspring.”³⁵ As seen in Leo’s arguments on behalf of private property, the civil society provides the context in which the family is able to secure the necessities in order to support a family across generations. The state takes on the concern as well for the formation of children if the family fails. Likewise, according to Pius, the church has a distinct role in assisting the family’s aim of formation of children through its magisterial role in teaching. While distinct, these institutions interlock, for neither the state nor the church can produce children, that is to say, citizens (of either the heavenly or the earthly city) without the family.

In contrast to the family, both civil society (the polity) and the church are deemed perfect societies, because they are, in principle, self-sufficient, capable of achieving their ends on their own.³⁶ The civil society is a perfect society not due lacking in defect as if it were morally perfect,

³⁴ Leo XIII, “Rerum Novarum,” 13.

³⁵ Pius XI, “Divini Illus,” 12.

³⁶ What is the origin of the idea of “perfect society?” While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to trace history of effects that led to the incorporation of the term “perfect society” into papal teaching, it would seem that key component parts can already be found in a Thomistic understanding of Aristotle that attributes self-sufficiency to the perfect. Aquinas writes, “It must, however, be observed that what is solitary should be self-sufficing by itself. Now such a thing is one “that lacks nothing,” and this belongs to the idea of a perfect thing.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q 188, a 8. Elsewhere, Thomas also links our natural end, happiness or felicity, with self-sufficiency. See Aquinas II-II, q 118, a 7. It would seem appropriate that readers of Thomas would apply similar principles of self-sufficiency to social bodies. Despite this link to individual perfection, it would appear that the attribution of perfect society to the Church or the State does not indicate moral perfection (or lacking in defect). It is instead a species level distinction (perfect/imperfect) among the genus of societies. When we see Leo affirming that the family is a “true society” he seems to be implying it is remains in the genus of society even as it is imperfect.

The particular distinction of three necessary societies does not appear to come directly from Thomas. In order to trace this term, one would want to look at the background sources of the papal encyclicals in the German and Italian tradition, looking at the writings of the Fribourg Union (Leo’s think tank), the writings of Bishop Von Kettler, and the writings of Luigi Taparelli D’Azeglio. It is good to recall here that my work is focused on the Modern Catholic Social

but because it need not look to some other institution beyond those included within it to achieve its aim of the common good of its citizens. Pius XI adds that the church is likewise a perfect society because it also has the means of achieving its own end, which is eternal salvation. These are established then as self-sustaining institutions. As evidenced by the very existence of the CST tradition, this does not mean that other societies cannot impede or furnish help. *Rerum Novarum* powerfully speaks out on behalf of workers, wedding material and spiritual concerns, calling for public authorities to take action when a host of dangers arise, including, “if religion were found to suffer through the workers not having time and opportunity afforded them to practice its duties.”³⁷ As evidenced here, for Leo, our pursuit of our supernatural ends are caught up with our temporal ends. This possibility of help between institutions is what gives rise to questions of institutional relations and the principle of subsidiarity, a topic I will return to below.

2.3: Authority as Demarcating Societies

Institutions in early CST are also distinguished by distinct structures of authority. For Leo, while each society has an end, it is only an authority which can give structure and order to the multitude present in a society to direct it towards a common end. He writes, “In every association and community of men, necessity itself compels that some should hold pre-eminence, lest society, deprived of a prince or head by which it is ruled should come to dissolution and be prevented from attaining the end for which it was created and instituted.”³⁸ In this framework, every society, and not just the state, requires some sort of authority to direct the aims of the many towards the common aim of society, its common end. Such a coordination could be, as discussed above, towards some external end such as economic prosperity or security. Additionally, this

Teaching Tradition, meaning the papal encyclical tradition, and not the broader sphere of Catholic Social Ethics.

³⁷ Leo XIII, “*Rerum Novarum*,” 36.

³⁸ Leo XIII, “*Diuturnum*,” 4.c.f. Leo XIII, “*Immortale Dei*,” 3; Leo XIII, “*Diuturnum*,” 11.

coordination involves the directing of each towards the basic intrinsic end that makes society itself possible: the tranquility of order that enables a united action.³⁹

One implication that we can infer from this more fundamental view of institutions is that authority is not a necessary evil. Such a position might be associated with those who identify that either the fall or vicious human nature requires the firm hand of governance. Instead, Leo's work appears to follow closely the position of Thomas Aquinas, who held in the *Summa Theologica* that even in a state of innocence there would be some sort of "mastery over men." He writes, "Now a social life cannot exist among a number of people unless under the presidency of one to look after the common good; for many, as such, seek many things, whereas one attends only to one."⁴⁰ Identifying a prelapsarian role for authority cements its role as a basic function of sociality. A society cannot do without authority.

The basic role of authority across societies helps clarify Leo's strong affirmation of the rooting of civil authority in divine authority. Divine legitimation of authority is not rooted in a particular form of government or a particular type of sovereign, such as a monarchical king. Yet, Leo also rejects the affirmation that civil power is conferred by the people.⁴¹ Even if an individual is democratically elected to a position, on Leo's account, divine authority is still required to understand both the legitimacy of political authority and the moral requirements of it.

³⁹ The concept of tranquility of order is at the base of the understanding of the peace that all desire and that can be achieved within the earthly city in Augustine's political writings. See Saint Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q 96, a 4.

⁴¹ Leo XIII, "Diuturnum," 8. This serves as a major distinction between early CST and Ricœur, for whom institutions find their legitimation in the collective power to act in concert. While later CST maintains the moral realism undergirded in Leo's principles, there is a strong pivot starting with Pius XII towards an embrace of democracy. Political authority still remains set against a backdrop of divine order and moral obligation, without emphasizing the stronger claims of divine legitimation of authority.

The pope does not hold that each individual ruler is somehow divinely selected. Instead, the argument is more nuanced. The very nature of governance, he suggests, implies a power which goes beyond human authority or human consent. The divine origin of power is used by Leo to describe the exceptional nature of governance in constraining others. He writes, “no man has in himself or of himself the power of constraining the free will of others by fetters of authority [to compel citizens to obedience]. This power resides solely in God, the Creator and Legislator of all things; and it is necessary that those who exercise it should do it as having received it from God.”⁴² In the exercises of authority, persons do not simply harmonize wills towards a common end, but also maintain the capacity to restrain and coerce others. It is the nature of authority, not the person of the sovereign that receives divine sanction, such that disobeying legitimate authority, according to Leo, is even a sin.⁴³

While Leo predominantly discusses authority as it relates to civil society, it is a general feature of all societies in his work, and thus extends to the family and the church. Leo roots the authority of the family in the father who governs over the family. He likewise roots the authority

⁴² Leo XIII, 11.

⁴³ See Leo XIII, “Immortale Dei,” 5; Leo XIII, “Diuturnum,” 11.. The long history of Christian thought on the relation of divine authority to civil authority goes back to the ambiguous phrase of Mark’s Jesus to render unto Caesar unto what is Caesar’s. As Jean Elshtain documents well in her Gifford Lectures, within this long history, the image of civil power is refracted through a changing picture of divine sovereignty. It is a history marked by the restraint of civil power in the Thomistic account of a God who represents the unity of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, the migration of divine voluntaristic power into the sovereign after the nominalists, and the total power of the leviathan found in Hobbes. See Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self*, Gifford Lectures (New York: Basic Books, 2008). Leo’s work largely reflects a Thomistic variant on the understanding of legitimate authority, binding the state and its leaders to the common good of the political polity, which is the state’s prime purpose. A thorough engagement with the history of divine authority goes well beyond the scope of this dissertation.

of the church in its priests. Leo presents an anti-monistic account of authority that serves as a basic bedrock for his account of social pluralism.⁴⁴

Most importantly, in each of these instances, divine authority is not simply a source of legitimating power, it also serves as a critical a measure for morally limiting authority. The civil servant is to act “as having received it from God,”⁴⁵ suggesting that human civil authority must be limited by divine will and law. The warrant for the moral obligations of civil authority is far stronger than what is found Ricœur’s thought, resulting in part from a link to a vision of theological authority (unlikely in Ricœur’s more politically liberal system) and a comprehensive moral framework. Similarly, according to Leo, the institution of marriage serves to “temper the authority of the father by the example of the divine authority.”⁴⁶ In each instance, by setting authority in divine relief, Leo places it in a normative framework judged according to a divine framework.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ This fits into a much longer history of anti-monistic conceptions of authority in Catholic political theory. For instance, Augustine held that the temporal and ecclesiastic had distinct ends. This is later codified by Gelasius, who was pope from 492-496, into the trope of the two swords, which becomes a dominant mode understanding the relation between the political and the ecclesial spheres, setting the stage for a much longer history around the two dominions. Jean Elshtain traces both monistic and anti-monistic understandings of divine and human authority in *Sovereignty*. Leo’s articulation of distinct and separate spheres is not an ahistorical treaties in a long history of thought, but needs to be read against the trauma of the previous century in which church property is confiscated, religious vows are outlawed, the papal states are reduced to the Vatican City, no-fault divorce is ratified, Catholic marriages not being recognized by the state, and so on. Encyclicals that incorporate arguments for this anti-monistic pluralism are perhaps sole lines of defense for these distinct institutions for Leo XIII as a “prisoner in the Vatican.”

⁴⁵ Leo XIII, “Diuturnum,” 8.

⁴⁶ Leo XIII, “Arcanum,” 26.

⁴⁷ Leo’s understanding of authority is far from novel. Backgrounding Leo’s thought are basic Thomistic understandings around role of the state and the common good. In Leo’s framework, the purpose of the state is to promote the common good. This follows Thomas, for whom law is directed towards the common good. Violation of this not only can render a law illegitimate, but even a ruler. A tyrant, according to Thomas, is one who pursues a private good over a public good. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II, q 42, a 2, ad. 3.. Yet, Leo is trying to adapt Thomistic thought to the changing circumstances of his century. Affirming the continued

Leo's broad vision of divinely rooted authority is problematic.⁴⁸ While placing authority against the backdrop of the divine can anchor positions of authority in a moral framework, it also unambiguously grants a divine legitimation to seemingly natural structures. Ambiguity, it seems, is only present at the exercise of authority, say as one pursues one's private good rather than the common good of the family or the state. It does not extend to the structures themselves. Thus, in an effort to preserve the family from the indigency of the market and the interference of the state, Leo also grants a patriarchal model of the family divine legitimation, without mentioning alternative, similarly divinely sanctioned frameworks.⁴⁹ This would rightly fall under the scrutiny of a feminist critique that would rightly indicate the ways in which women are rendered intrinsically subordinate to men in this authority structure. Catholic Ethicist Christine Firer Hinze has also pointed out that even the seemingly progressive benefits that come from this focus on the family, such as the appeal to a family wage, has lasting negative material implications on women, for it helps perpetuate the devaluing of female labor in the workplace and at home.⁵⁰ Here, we see the flaws of a natural law framework as understood by Leo. It can easily lack

relevance of a divine understanding of authority, even in light of the rise of the secular state, serves in these instances as efforts to anchor the political in the moral, while also identifying the continued relevance of the Catholic Church, who is able to secure the loyalty of Catholic citizens to the state.

⁴⁸ There are also issues with his treatment of political frameworks. Charles Curran notes that "he held an authoritarian or at best paternalistic view of political society that was structured from the top down." Roger Aubert and David A. Boileau, *Catholic Social Teaching: An Historical Perspective*, 1st ed., vol. no. 40, Marquette Studies in Theology ; (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003), 19. This stands in contrast to later developments in the tradition that specifically adopt a democratic understanding of political society.

⁴⁹ Lisa Cahill presents a vision of Christian families that is not based on family structure (whether nuclear or patriarchal) but instead by their function, thus incorporating key elements of Catholic (and more broadly Christian) thought, while also allowing feminist critiques to have their effect. See Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Family: A Christian Social Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

⁵⁰ See Christine Firer Hinze, "Bridge Discourse on Wage Justice: Roman Catholic and Feminist Perspectives on the Family Living Wage," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 11 (1991): 109–32.

historical consciousness of the social frameworks that it legitimates through appeals to divine purposiveness. I would wonder whether it would pass through Ricœur's deontological sieve (designed precisely in response to the violence made possible in the pursuit of goods). A subsequent emphasis in the CST tradition on the person, openness to democracy, and turn to human rights provides alternative accounts of grounding social structures in moral order for modern social bodies that does not rely upon as imminent a conception of divine legitimation in human authority.

But what is interesting for our study is that Leo's model of social plurality is partly grounded even in this description of anti-monistic authority. Authority in the family, the state, and the church are distinct, such that one form cannot simply replace the other. This necessitates principles for adjudicating authority when institutions relate, later giving rise to the principle of subsidiarity. The fear that drives the development of the doctrine of subsidiarity is not simply an absorption of a smaller body into a larger body, but a dissolution of distinct understandings of authority that bear their own divinely sanctioned integrity and a replacement by the single authority of the state.

2.4: Divine Origins and Distinct Societies

A final piece used to mark off distinct societies is history, or more accurately, an institution's origins within theological history. Early CST is usually bereft of a rich engagement with history, relying instead on abstract principles born out of natural law reasoning. Nonetheless, there are appeals to a theological history in order to delineate and preserve the integrity of the institution of the family (or more specifically marriage) and the church.

For Leo to delineate the origins and distinct integrity of these institutions is a response to "concession theory." This is a political theory in which certain institutions (perhaps all

institutions) exist by virtue of the concession of the state. Leo directly identifies this as the framework informing the treatment of the church as one among many institutions of society. He writes, “they hold that she differs in no respect from other societies in the state, and for this reason possesses no right nor any legal power of action, save that which she holds by the concession and favor of the government.”⁵¹ If the Roman Catholic Church only exists by concession of the state, then it exists and is defined according to the boundaries, rights, and privileges conceded to it by the state.

In response to this concern, Leo defends the distinct integrity of the Catholic Church vis-à-vis the state with appeal to its distinct ends and distinct origins. The church, according to Leo, does not have its origins in the state, nor does it exist by the concession of the state. Instead is founded and directed by Jesus Christ. The church for Leo is a “perfect society” that is founded by Jesus Christ. As a “perfect society” it is not dependent on the state or any other institution for the accomplishment of its primary end: salvation and union with God. This, for Leo, sets it apart from the state as being part of a distinct order.⁵²

Leo holds a similar concern regarding the state and marriage, sparked by the permitting of no-fault divorce, but touching on broader questions of the relation of the church to the state. Not so much a concession, the model that Leo critiques holds marriage to be a product of the state, and thus its dissolution is at the will and discretion of the state. In response, Leo posits the historical origin of marriage as before the state, setting it instead in creation history on the 6th day.⁵³ Pointing to the wedding feast of Cana, he also sets it in sacral history, elevating marriage

⁵¹ Leo XIII, “Immortale Dei,” 27.

⁵² Leo XIII, “Libertas,” 28. We see a similar concern raised regarding marriage.

⁵³ Leo XIII, 28.

from a natural order to a sacrament.⁵⁴ Rather than marriage being a concession of the state, the mark of history instead pinions the power of the state between this natural order and this sacral order. Marriage both precedes the state, but is, as a natural order, nonetheless below it as concerns the common good. But it is also above the state as a sacral order, and thus above being tampered with.

Each of the above claims by Leo can be subject to various forms of critique. Is his literalist read of Genesis adequate for today? Does his argument for the distinct authority of the family remain valid in a time where patriarchal models of authority are roundly criticized? Does the diversity of family structures give lie to his identification of the ends of the family in generation and formation of children? Similar critiques can be brought of his treatment of the state or the church.

My point is not to adopt or elevate Leo's claims on these institutions, but instead to highlight from them a model of social pluralism that is basic to early CST. Any account of social pluralism, however, gives rise to inherent problems as one treats their relations, whether amicable or inimical. Already, one needs to consider the ethical norm and obligation of a single institution. It follows that a plural framework illustrates that already these singular accounts need to consider inter-institutional relations. In Leo and Pius XI's work, the concepts of the common good, social justice, and subsidiarity provide content to an ethic of institutions in the CST tradition. It is to these principles that we now turn.

Section 3: Leo XIII on Common Goods and Necessary Societies

Thus far, I have identified that Leo holds sociality to be an inherent feature of human existence, giving rise to distinct societies or institutions ranging from core institutions like

⁵⁴ Leo XIII, "Arcanum", 30.

political society to more recent institutions like worker's associations. I have also identified that social pluralism serves as a backdrop to human sociality, captured in (but not limited to) the three necessary societies. These three societies serve as a window into understanding institutions in early CST, with each being distinguished from the other by the ends that it pursues, its distinct forms of authority and structure, and its distinct origins. As of yet, I have only given a depiction of what institutions are within early CST. I have not yet noted how a care for institutions is present within CST. For this, we turn to two central principles: the common good and social justice. My aim is to show that while both concepts primarily refer to the civil polity, they can also be extended to address each institution.

As I have already discussed institutions in early CST can be partially differentiated according to their ends. Joseph Höffner argues that each social body has its own common good.⁵⁵ This is the end which unites any organization and orients collective action, whether it be a university, a hospital, a family, a church, or the polity.

A first way in which a care for institutions would be expressed in CST is through attention to the good of each organization. There are both intrinsic and extrinsic goods for each of these associations.⁵⁶ An extrinsic good would be some objective aim that is sought. For

⁵⁵ Höffner, *Christian Social Teaching*, 30.

⁵⁶ I rely on Russell Hittinger for this distinction. C.f. Russell Hittinger, "The Coherence of the Four Basic Principles of Catholic Social Doctrine: An Interpretation," in *Pursuing the Common Good*, ed. Margaret Scotford Archer and Pierpalo Donati, vol. Acta, 14 vols. (Città Del Vaticano: Academy of Social Sciences, 2008). The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic goods also illustrates well the point made by David Hollenbach in his book *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* that the common good does more than just meet a need—as could be interpreted from my discussion of the origin of society in Leo—but that there is also an inherent good in human relations. He writes, "the common good of public life is a realization of the human capacity for intrinsically valuable relationships, not only a fulfillment of the needs and deficiencies of individuals. [...] Human beings are vulnerable and needy. But it is also true that eating with others, sharing a home with others, and benefiting from education, intellectual exchange, and friendship are all aspects of a life of positive social interaction and

example, a university seeks to educate, a polity seeks development, a family to generate and form children. These are generally the goods that come to mind when we consider the goal or aim of an organization.

The intrinsic good of a society is the means by which it can achieve any particular external good. This includes the various modes of collective action, only made possible by virtue of the social organization that gives rise to a society that enables one to achieve distinct ends. Thus, in order for a polity to achieve the common good, it incorporates a range of activities, including in a constitutional democracy, voting. A university, in pursuit of an educated student body, engages in the activity of teaching, A couple, in pursuit of children, engages in sexual activity. Each of these coordinated activities are only made possible through collective forms of action. By identifying these activities as goods of a community, I am affirming a basic principle that I identified in Ricœur's corpus: that there is a basic good found in "living-together" here expressed through the distinct activities that help a group to achieve their ends.⁵⁷

A first step towards the care of institutions in CST is this articulation of the distinct intrinsic and extrinsic goods. Having an appreciation of the goods of an institution allows one to act in prophetic witness in the service of institutional reform when a distinct institution veers

communication with others." David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 81. He goes on to describe the common good as "*the good of being community at all* – the good realized in the mutual relationships in and through which human beings achieve their well-being." Hollenbach, 82. This definition of the common good runs very close to my reading of Ricœur's treatment of the desire to live-together and illustrates a key point of contact between CST and Ricœur's thought.

⁵⁷ In distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic goods, I am also affirming that a healthy organization can still maintain itself, despite the failure to achieve an extrinsic good. Thus, A polity may fail to achieve a designated unemployment rate, and yet still exist as a healthy democracy. A football team may fail to win a game, and yet still enjoy the good of playing together as a team. A couple may fail to have children, yet still exist as a healthy and thriving family in their care and concern for each other. I am grateful to Russell Hittinger for making this point.

from its external purpose. As well evidenced in America of late, if a for-profit prison prioritizes profit over safe detention and rehabilitation, it can place those within it in jeopardy, failing to provide adequate health care for those detained.⁵⁸ If a hospital prioritizes celebrity over need, then it can fail to adequately distribute resources, trumping triage with fancy, providing beds to less critical patients and placing in danger those in need.

This points towards the further question. What in fact are the distinct goods of an institution? Early CST appears quite confident in articulating the goods of the three necessary societies, relying upon a natural law framework. This natural law framework depends upon teleological reasoning. A society (or institution) is defined in part according to that common goal which brings it together and unites it. A couple unites both in marriage and in marital action for a set of related, but distinct ends: the end of generating and forming children (perpetuating the human race and the church) and the end of mutual love and support.⁵⁹ The church's end is to be a community united in pilgrimage towards eternal salvation. These are distinct common goods which each of these institutions seek. The political community exists for the sole purpose of advancing the common good of the polity as a whole, finding its intrinsic common good in the very activities of collective human action that helps achieve its external common good of human flourishing.

The specificity of some of these goals raises the question for us as to whether we still might define these institutions as such. Take for example the family. Are the goals of mutual love and support and generation and formation of children capacious enough to capture the range of families found across the tradition or even today? How does one understand the wide range of

⁵⁸ Melvin Delgado and Denise Humm-Delgado, *Health and Health Care in the Nation's Prisons : Issues, Challenges, and Policies* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008).

⁵⁹ See Leo XIII, "Arcanum," 10–11.

families who don't have children (either by choice or by inability)? Deficient? Is there a way to understand fruitfulness that is not limited to generation?

Other ends are sufficiently vague to demand further specification as well. While the end of the Christian life is eternal salvation, what subordinate goals along the way assist in achieving this? Does this include the church's obligation to work for justice in this world? Likewise, the common good of the polity, while clearly being more than the sum total of the aggregate goods of the individuals who form a part of it, nonetheless remains a vague category, even when it gains greater specification in the documents of Vatican II.

Notwithstanding the need for a more specific designation of the goods of a distinct institution, the presence of multiple common goods already pushes the question of a care for institutional to institutional relations. If we take for granted that there are multiple societal goods, how do we understand them as being related one to the other?

A first point to raise is that of distinction and differentiation. To identify that each institution has its own distinct good is to imply that other institutions do not (at least primarily) share that good. Thus, the good of the state is not first and foremost to adopt as its common good the good of one family in particular or even all families. It has its own distinct common good, distinguished from the domestic society. Likewise, the church does not take as its central good the good of the nation, even if, as I would suggest, a concern for the nation's good may play some part in the achievement of its own aim.

This raises a second question. If there are distinct goods to a variety of irreducible institutions, how do we understand them as relating? The background of much of early CST is a Thomistic understanding of a hierarchically ordered world in which there is a prioritization of the wider and more universal good over less universal goods. In the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas

discusses the case of a judge willing a thief justly be put to death and a child or wife of the thief wishing that he not be put to death. Both wills here can be good wills in some respect, for the judge makes a just judgment, and nevertheless, killing is a natural evil that impacts the common good of the family. It is the judge, however, whose will is directed to the more universal common good, while the family is willing the particular good of the family.⁶⁰ In the Thomistic frame, that which wills the more universal good, more closely apprehends God's will, who wills the common good of all.

A simplistic reading of this background would seem to indicate that one would similarly find in CST an ever-present prioritization of the more universal over the more local. It is true, where there are positions of true conflict, as found in the case of the judge, the common good of the polity would override that of the domestic. But as illustrated below by principle of subsidiarity, there is a nonetheless a commitment to the preservation of distinct lower institutions in the CST tradition.

Section 4: Pius XI and the New Social Justice

With the common good, however, we only have the beginnings of a care for institutions. The common good usefully articulates the distinct telos of organizations and identifies them in such a way that touches upon all who form an organization without falling prey to the conception that such goods are mere aggregations of the distinct goods of individual persons. It does not touch upon the obligation of a person to exert care for institutions, meaning as above, to take the institution itself as the object of ethical concern. Here, we turn to Pius XI, who introduces the concept of social justice into the CST tradition.

⁶⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q 19, a 10.

Social justice plays an important role in articulating a care for institutions in Pius's work. While social justice has become an amorphous term in contemporary ethics and activism, meaning everything attention to social structures, to distributive justice, its entry into CST was on far more narrow terms. Social Justice first can be seen as a form of justice which takes the common good as its norm, and second, to describe the obligation of each towards the common good.

Social justice is not to be found among the classic appellations of justice but is a renaming of the Thomistic understanding of legal justice. Thomas Aquinas drew and transformed Aristotle's three different forms of justice: commutative justice, distributive justice, and legal justice. The first form of justice concerns the "mutual giving and receiving,"⁶¹ and is found most notably in the early CST tradition in the concern with the relations between labor and capital. The second form of justice, distributive justice, concerns the distribution of goods. These two are forms of "special justice" treating particular relations between persons. The third form of justice, legal justice, is not a "particular" form of justice, but is a general form of justice, directing to the common good.⁶² In a Thomistic system, law is neither positive law, nor even reducible to the law of the state, but construed essentially as governances of reason that are ordained to the common good (including especially god's governance).⁶³ An Aristotelian conception of justice would teleologically orient to the common good of the polity. Thomas radically transforms Aristotle in so far as legal justice (as a general virtue) directs all virtues (including special forms of justice) to a common good that exists within and beyond the particular polity to ever wider communities, ultimately directing to God as ultimate lawgiver and common good of all of creation. Set against

⁶¹ Aquinas, I, q 21, a 1, co.

⁶² Aquinas, II-II, q 58, a 5-6.

⁶³ Aquinas, II-I, q 90, a 1-2.

a divine backdrop, general justice can never be subsumed simply into a narrow vision of the good of the state.

Across Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, we see a link between social justice and the common good that would suggest that social justice is a new mode of describing what earlier was named "legal justice."⁶⁴ Pius identifies a principle from Leo XIII that "common good of all society be kept inviolate" as a "law of social justice."⁶⁵ He identifies that the distribution of goods should be "brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, that is, social justice."⁶⁶ He identifies it as a violation of social justice when personal advantage is sought in the raising and lowering of wages without regard to the common good.⁶⁷ He even names the common good as the very norm of social justice.⁶⁸

What comes from this brief survey is that social justice is not simply a concern for justice in general as a concern for some formal articulation that will only find itself applied in the particular in the same way we might describe racism in general in distinction from particular instances of racism. As with the special instances of justice which take as their objects of concern

⁶⁴ According to Christine Firer Hinze, "The term was introduced into Catholic Social Ethics by Italian theologian Luigi Taparelli D'Azeglio in the mid-1800's, ostensibly to replace Thomas Aquinas's terms *legal justice* and *general justice*, which were in danger of being misconstrued in the modern context." Christine Firer Hinze, "Commentary on *Quadragesimo Anno*," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth Himes (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 167. Given our typical restriction of the law to a positive understanding of law, this is a fitting move. Some of our greatest institutional injustices of the last 200 years have used law as a means of rationalizing harm: land grabs through treaties with American Indians in the U.S., the Nuremberg laws, legalized segregation, and apartheid. Given the rise of the secular nation state, the need to distinguish this general form of justice from an crass misunderstanding in which legal justice means following the law (in a positive sense) is obvious.

⁶⁵ Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno," 57.

⁶⁶ Pius XI, 58.

⁶⁷ Pius XI, 74.

⁶⁸ Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno," 110.

particular relations between persons, this is too is a concrete form of justice, but which takes the common good as its object, directing the actions of individuals and structuring institutions.

What makes this a general form of justice, however, is that in addition to directing persons to their obligations to society, it also governs the other forms of justice towards the common good.⁶⁹ Captured in here is the fact that social justice stands in a unique relation over the other two forms of justice. Accordingly, it allows us to ensure both particular instances of distribution and contracts are not isolated, but instead set against the common good. He identifies two cases which would classically represent distributive and commutative justice: the distribution of created goods and the setting of wages (which falls under contracts). In each instance, Pius calls for the creation of conditions that would fall in conformity with the common good, that is, conformity to social justice.⁷⁰

We see, then, a resolution to a problem that is lurking within the social pluralism that I identified above. If institutions each have a distinct common good that gives form to them as a social body, how are we to understand the relation between these institutions, particularly in times of conflict? The principle of social justice would identify that it is always to *the* common good, here understood as that expansive good of the whole society, to which each distinct society must conform. Thus, while it may be fulfilling the unifying good of a family to expand its reach

⁶⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q 58, a 6.

⁷⁰ What might it mean for distributive justice or commutative justice to be ordered to the common good? We live in an era of dramatic income inequality in society and in corporations. According to an article in Forbes, “Last year, CEO pay at an S&P 500 Index firm soared to an average of 361 times more than the average rank-and-file worker, or pay of \$13,940,000 a year, according to an AFL-CIO’s Executive Paywatch news release today.” Diana Hembree, “CEO Pay Skyrockets To 361 Times That Of The Average Worker,” *Forbes*, May 22, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dianahembree/2018/05/22/ceo-pay-skyrockets-to-361-times-that-of-the-average-worker/#7f242755776d>. Such salaries might be considered just when seen only in light of commutative justice. Social justice creates a framework for being able to ask if such salaries are just in light of the common good.

over various industries, such a monopoly could stand in violation of the common good of the polity, inviting the legal blocking of such an expansion.

Who does social justice oblige? It is not just those in positions of power and authority in a social body. Contrary to a model of responsibility solely governed by position, social justice bears on each individual who are a part of a society. In *Divini Redemptoris*, Pius XI writes, “Now it is of the very essence of social justice to demand for each individual all that is necessary for the common good.”⁷¹ If the common good is the united aim of the collective action of a group, social justice is the moral obligation that touches upon each member to work towards this aim.

There is a strong distinction from distributive and commutative justice. The former obliges those who are in a position of authority to distribute. The latter holds on those who find themselves in a contract or otherwise in direct relations with a fellow member of society. True to their appellation as particular forms of justice, these obtain according to particular circumstances. Social justice is general in so far as it obliges all who are in a social body towards the general good of that body, though of course, the particular actions demanded will vary according to circumstances. Social justice thus serves to extend the obligation for a care for institutions to all within society.

How might we give content to this understanding of a general obligation to the common good that bears upon each person? Here, we might recall that general justice as described by Aquinas as the obligation that we each have towards the common good is also named legal justice.⁷² Law (eternal, natural, human, and divine) according to Aquinas is made for the

⁷¹ Pius XI, “Divini Redemptoris,” Vatican Website, March 19, 1937, 51, https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19370319_divini-redemptoris.html.

⁷² Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q 58, a 5.

common good.⁷³ Thus, it is our obligation to the common good and not the fear or coercion of law that should motivate us to follow the law. Insofar as we follow the law (understood as just laws within the state and broader laws captured in natural and divine law), we are obeying the obligation of social justice.

But these two modes of social justice are not unrelated in Pius XI's work. The citation regarding the responsibility of each continues, identifying that some measure of the common good already needs to be obtained in order to enable individuals to do their part to contribute to it. He writes,

But just as in the living organism it is impossible to provide for the good of the whole unless each single part and each individual member is given what it needs for the exercise of its proper functions, so it is impossible to care for the social organism and the good of society as a unit unless each single part and each individual member - that is to say, each individual man in the dignity of his human personality - is supplied with all that is necessary for the exercise of his social functions.⁷⁴

The obligation imposed upon members of the social polity are not without context, but already presuppose a relation to the whole. One measure of the health of the social body and its work towards achieving the common good is precisely in measuring how it enables the contribution of its members to the common good. What is present here is a dynamic understanding between the whole and the part, where in order for the part to make its just contribution to the whole, the whole needs to have achieved some modicum of healthy form in which there is a proper distribution to the parts.

First, we might consider this from the case of taxation. One of the ways in which most members of society contribute to the whole is through taxation. By virtue of taxes, society is able to provide shared goods like roads, public schools, bridges, and other public institutions that

⁷³ Aquinas, I-II, q 90, a 2.

⁷⁴ Aquinas, I-II, q 90, a 2.

would not be possible otherwise. If society is not set up such that people have a surplus in which they can contribute to the whole, perhaps because of a poor distribution of goods, then it would be unreasonable to demand these taxes. Our obligation to the civil polity is fulfilled through our support of it, whether it be material, as with taxes, or even bodily as in the case of the armed services.

An additional way in which we might carry out social justice, I argue, is in the very process of working to bring our institutions into conformity with the common good. Thus, the civil rights movement serves as a great example for the work for social justice. In so far as there was a maldistribution of public goods, including education, public transportation, and political recognition, these institutions failed to conform to the common good. Here, people from all races and creeds came together, not for the sake of some private good: the good of the African American community over whites, but instead for the sake of the common good of all. As King states in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”⁷⁵ Equal justice under the law, etched in stone before the US Supreme court, becomes not simply the province of justices, but an obligation of each in the polity. It is our commitment to social justice that presses us to reform laws (and not simply conform to them, as may be naively presumed with the title “legal justice”), for laws pertain not simply to some, but to all, and ought be directed to the common good.

As we move from the instantiation of social justice as the giving of material goods to the state to social justice as obliging the members of society to work for its reform, the question of the reciprocal relation between whole and parts becomes more complicated. It makes a certain degree of sense in terms of material goods that if social circumstances are not set up such that an

⁷⁵ King, *Why We Can't Wait*, 65.

individual receives through social conditions surrounding their labor sufficient wealth to support themselves or their family, then one would not expect them to carry out their social function in giving to the polity what it is owed through taxes. Such a failure would be a judgment against society rather than the individual. But at what point is there such a social breakdown that an individual is no longer obliged to work for the reform of institutions? I would suggest that being a victim of a poor distribution does not immediately remove the responsibility to work towards the reform of social institutions. Identifying such limits nonetheless goes beyond the scope of these documents. Do we draw the lines at political recognition, such that black citizens (as well as white citizens) in the 1950's bore a responsibility to work towards civil reform, but slaves in the 1850's did not? However one determines such a line, what is clear from Pius is that the subject under judgment is the social polity and not the individuals unable to carry out their social function.

A second question arises. I have argued above that, in the CST tradition, the common good is plural though hierarchically ordered. Each social body, ranging from the family, to a neighborhood block club, to a university, to a city, to a state, to a nation has a common good. If one follows a Thomistic line of reasoning in which the more "common" or the more "universal" the good aimed at, the more closely it aligns with the divine good, and thus incorporates or trumps lower goods. Nevertheless, how one understands this hierarchical ordering is not entirely apparent. On their own, some of these goods might exist parallel to others, a corporation to a university, for example. The mere addition of more individuals to one does not make it "more common." Indeed, some institutions, by virtue of the necessary role they play to human happiness, such as a family, may lead to it trumping a good of a larger, though less necessary

entity, like a hospital.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the goods of each are hierarchically ordered as one considers broader more common goods. As already seen in Thomas with the case of the judge and the thief/father condemned to death, the good of the polity can in severe instances trump the private good of a family when directed towards the universal good.⁷⁷ The good of the church, however, points to a universal common good, the salvation of all creation, and it plays a necessary role for human supernatural happiness, leading Leo and Pius to articulate the freedom of religion, here meaning the “true religion” of the Catholic church.

Given this, then, how do we understand the relation of social justice to the various institutions of which we form a part? Does social justice only pertain to the common good of the polity, disregarding the good of other institutions, except in so far as they must be brought into conformity with this broader good? Does, for example, social justice lead to concern for the good of the family? Does it lead to concern for the good of the hospital where we might work?

Does social justice reside in the full range of institutions of our associational life? If “social justice” is only concerned with “society,” here restricted to the state or the civil polity, the answer would be no, except in so far as the interests of smaller institutions touch upon this broader interest. From this, one could nonetheless make the argument that there can be a call for reform of institution in so far as they relate to the broader goal of civil society, the common good. For example, members of a family might call for a reform away from patriarchal structures that would prohibit women within that family from attending school. This could be a matter touching on all three forms of justice. Distributive justice would be concerned with how parents allocate resources to their children. Commutative justice would be concerned with how they each relate to the other as members of a society and the rights that obtain within it as well as the rights

⁷⁶ “Necessary” here meaning necessary for human happiness.

⁷⁷ Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q 19, a 10.

of a person as a member of the human family. Social justice is the overarching form of justice that calls conformity of the enactment of other forms of justice with the norm of the common good. Such a model means that neither distributive nor commutative justice can take place in a vacuum. Social justice could be used, for example, to reform corporate organizations to root out forms of discrimination, such as racist hiring practices or the wage gap. Likewise, it could inform the distribution of resources like education, ensuring that communities who are historically marginalized, such as people with developmental disabilities, are ensured access. An appeal to a wider common good, which might include the recognition of the violence of such practices of discrimination, would serve to bring lower organizations into conformity with this higher principle. Thus, while a model of social justice only oriented to the common good of the polity is limited, it can nonetheless be effective.

But if we return to the general nature of the model of justice that undergirds general or legal justice, there seems to be no particularly good reason to limit social justice to “society.” As a general virtue, this concern for more common goods could proliferate, pushing one to work for the good of any social body that one is a part of, in addition to the higher good comprehended within the common good. This would require us to depart from an overly legislative understanding of justice and work within moral realms not strictly enforced by the state.

Such a model would require that we rethink certain social relations of which we are a part. My obligation to a company would not be limited simply by what is entailed in a contract. It would also include an obligation to the good of that company, and further, to the good of society, ever working to both fulfill the former and to bring it in conformity with the latter. Thus, this leads one to not only pursue profits within a company, but for the sake of the good of the company and the society, to do so in such a way that does not contribute to environmental harm

to the local community. Similarly, my obligation to my familial piety would always be informed and shaped by the rubric of social justice.

One implication of this general model of social justice is that it heightens the responsibility and obligation of members who are parts of institutions. This responsibility is not limited simply to those in power or authority. We find here a corollary to Ricœur's model of responsibility for the fragile, though figured instead through the language of justice. Each individual has a role to play towards the good of an institutional body and to the good of a community. Even if we only accept that social justice is concerned with the common good, including bringing other institutions in conformity with it, such an ethical responsibility for each individual within a society and within each institution persists, though limited somewhat in scope.

A further implication of this expanded model of social justice is that institutions can be the subject of evaluation according to whether they create the conditions in which persons are able to fulfill their "social function." Does a company create the conditions for persons within it to help fulfill the goal of a company? Does it build in the capacities that allow workers to succeed according to the company's aims? If a company sets unrealistic expectations, it creates conditions in which, against the long-term interests of a company, employees may choose unethical means to achieve the short-term goods of a company.⁷⁸ The recent Wells Fargo case⁷⁹ exemplifies this negative behavior in which unrealistic targets led to widespread practice of

⁷⁸ The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace's document "The Vocation of the Business Leader" does a great job of setting the corporation in the context of our obligation to the common good. See Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2014).

⁷⁹ Stacy Cowley, "Wells Fargo Review Finds 1.4 Million More Suspect Accounts," *The New York Times*, August 31, 2017, sec. DealBook, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/31/business/dealbook/wells-fargo-accounts.html>.

employees fraudulently creating fake new accounts on behalf of existing customers. In this instance, one doesn't necessarily need new rules and regulations (as the activity was already illegal), but instead, one needs to foster a culture oriented around ethical norms and virtues directed towards the common good of the company and the broader society.

Does a company create the conditions in which individuals are able to call for reform if there are violations of the common good? Are there avenues for an employee to raise ethical concerns regarding company practices? Is there an ombudsperson? Are their whistleblower protections within a company? Does a culture of self-criticism exist within the corporation or does it instead foster authoritarianism that does not permit ethical considerations? Even if we adopt the first model of social justice in which an individual is only concerned with the common good, we still would be able to evaluate an institution and the wider society according to its ability to enable individuals to carry out their obligation to social justice.

A corporation provides too easy a case to consider this insofar as one can ask how certain practices and cultures are formalized that foster the fulfillment of the obligation to social justice. One must translate this same critique to other institutions. Does a family create a space in which individuals are able to communicate concern or is it run according to a spirit of authoritarianism? Does a church educate to the responsibility of the lay people and build in the capacities for ecclesial institutional-critique or does it restrict the obligations of care and concern to those within ecclesiastic positions of power? Does it foster a healthy empowerment of individuals corresponding to this general obligation towards the common good? In the church, I would add, that if one follows the understanding of Catholic Social Thought, this obligation is all the more pressing, given that the common good not only includes society, but extends further, to include

the salvation of all people and in an ultimate sense, according to Thomas, God as the common good of all.⁸⁰

Social justice, as I have depicted it, serves as an essential vehicle for a care for institutions in the CST tradition. I have argued that it identifies a care that extends to each individual within a social body to have care for the common good of that social body, including families, universities, corporations, churches, and political polities. This leads towards their distinct contribution to the common good of these institutions, given through their time and talents, as well as from their material welfare. I have also argued that social justice serves as a mode of practical reasoning, leading individuals to work towards reform of the range of social bodies of which they form a part in accord with the norm of the common good. The care for institutions in the CST tradition is not isolated from wider ethical concerns, only to be locked into the particular norms of an institution. Instead, while attendant to goals of an institution and the norms that a part of them, it also links to the broader concerns of the common good, allowing for norms like human dignity, equal opportunity, and non-discrimination to impact institutions at all levels.

This model, however, gives an incomplete picture of the care for institutions in early CST. Such a hierarchical model of the various norms of the common good could give the impression that this would always lead to a hierarchical privileging of larger organizations as well. This would lead to a concern for institutional relations that would always favor the larger more inclusive institution, and end up, one would presume, having a bias towards the state. As we shall see in the next section, just as Pius introduces this ascending care for institutions

⁸⁰ Hence, we see that one of the dangerous specters haunting CST's efforts to speak to a secular society are the "illiberal" theological underpinnings that privileges the Catholic Church in light of its distinct role in helping people achieve beatitude. I treat the development in the CST tradition on religious liberty in the next chapter.

through the principle of social justice, he also introduces a prudential principle that promotes the integrity of organizations, with a bias towards smaller associations. This is captured in the principle of subsidiarity.

Section 5: Leo XIII and Pius XI on Institutional Relation and Subsidiarity

Thus far, I have traced the formation and development of what I have called an ethic of a “care for institutions” that is present within the CST tradition. This is exemplified in concepts like the common good and social justice. Present in this care for institutions is a care for the good of each institution on its own and a normative privileging of the higher more common good of the polity. This could lead one to assume that, as one moves from normative systems to institutional relations, there would be a corresponding privileging of higher institutions such as the state. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Since Leo, there has in fact been a concern for the overreach of the state and the integrity of other institutions. This is later codified by Pius XI into the principle of subsidiarity, which privileges lower institutions over higher institutions. First, I shall describe the concern for institutional relations found in Leo’s work, and then turn to the more formal principle of subsidiarity developed by Pius.

5.1: Leo XIII and Institutional Relations

Even before the principle of subsidiarity is introduced into the CST tradition by Pius XI, there is a concern for inter-institutional relations in Leo XIII’s writings. This is primarily expressed as a concern for the overreach of the state, affecting either the family or the church. As identified above, Leo argues that the family, the state, and the church are distinct and true societies. This logic undergirds Leo’s own concerns. He is worried about an overreaching civil state which would supplant the authority of the father. In *Rerum Novarum*, he writes, “The contention, then, that the civil government should at its option intrude into and exercise intimate

control over the family and the household is a great and pernicious error.”⁸¹ The family, as discussed above, is considered by Leo to be a “true society” with its own distinct authority. He argues, “Paternal authority can be neither abolished nor absorbed by the State; for it has the same source as human life itself.”⁸² For Leo, natural law supports the basic integrity of the family, for it has an authority that is grounded in an institution that, while reliant on the state, nevertheless precedes it.

But he identifies two cases in which the state might intervene. In the first case, the family appears in dire need, incapable of caring for itself. He writes, “if a family finds itself in exceeding distress, utterly deprived of the counsel of friends, and without any prospect of extricating itself, it is right that extreme necessity be met by public aid, since each family is a part of the commonwealth.”⁸³ In this extreme case, the family would fail on its own to achieve its own common good of the flourishing of its members. Thus, for example, if a family out of its extreme poverty were unable to provide for their children, this would appear to be an instance where the state might intervene by providing for these means.

A second instance where the state can intervene is when there is some basic violation of commutative justice, as members within a family violate the rights of another. He writes, “In like manner, if within the precincts of the household there occur grave disturbance of mutual rights, public authority should intervene to force each party to yield to the other its proper due; for this

⁸¹ Leo XIII, “*Rerum Novarum*,” 14.

⁸² Leo XIII, 14.

⁸³ Leo XIII, 14. While in this instance, I am emphasizing the conditions under which the boundaries of the family might be transgressed, I would also note that the family has a right to these goods of the state under the Thomistic logic of the “universal destination of goods.” See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 66, a. 2. This concept also plays an important role in qualifying the right to private property throughout the CST tradition. See, for example, John Paul II, “*Laborem Exercens*,” Vatican Website, September 14, 1981, 14, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html.

is not to deprive citizens of their rights, but justly and properly to safeguard and strengthen them.”⁸⁴ In this instance, the state is concerned not with the family as a unit per se, but as a collection of citizens who hold certain obligations to each other. We can imagine a range of violations that would fall in this category. For example, a parent may deny and actively prevent their adult child from being able to enter a religious order. Despite the apparent authority of the parent, this would appear to violate a basic freedom of their adult child. Worse, we might imagine situations of violations of abuse, where a father inflicts gross physical harm on his wife and children. Here, the state ought to intervene to prevent the violation of their natural rights to life and bodily integrity.

Apart from these two extreme cases, the family appears sacrosanct in Leo’s work. It is a separate institution. It bears its own end, which, while contributing to the common good, nonetheless has its own integrity. It has its own natural origin quite apart from the state. It has its own authority grounded in natural law. Any effort to supplant the authority of parents by the state would on Leo’s account violate natural justice.

Leo bears similar concerns for overreach with regards to the church, though filtered again through a concern for the family. Whereas the family appears as a distinct, but nonetheless subordinate part of the state, the church is described as a “perfect society” that stands both besides and above the state. Leo explicitly rejects concession theory, in which the church only holds power and legal authority as it is granted by concession of the state.⁸⁵

What these brief instances illustrate is that a concern for institutional relations is present since the beginning of the tradition. But I have yet to introduce an overarching principle for

⁸⁴ Leo XIII, “Rerum Novarum,” 14.

⁸⁵ Cf. Leo XIII, “Immortale Dei,” 27.

governing inter-institutional relations. With the turn to Pius and the principle of subsidiarity, we get just such a norm.

5.2: Pius XI and the Principle of Subsidiarity

Our foray above into Leo's treatment of the family, church, and state illustrate an early concern for institutional relations in CST. Even as there were distinct concerns regarding the integrity of the distinct societies of family, church, and polity within Leo's work, he does yet not establish a guiding principle to regulate inter-institutional relations. With Pius XI, the principle of subsidiarity is introduced as a normative principle for regulating relations between institutions.

The principle of subsidiarity is first developed within Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*. Published 40 years after *Rerum Novarum* in 1931, this document recovers Leo's contributions and lays out a comprehensive social vision. Written after the great world war and in a world in the midst of the great depression, as captured in the subtitle, "On Reconstructing the Social Order and Perfecting it Conformably to the Precepts of the Gospel," the pope responded to a prevailing cynicism with a new model for society. After an introduction that addresses the historical context that gave rise to *Rerum*, Pius then discusses the various historical benefits of *Rerum Novarum* and defends Leo's moral program. Finally, he evaluates contemporary economics, and presents an alternative moral order transformed by Christian morals.

The principle of subsidiarity is laid out over paragraphs 78-80 in which he treats the broad theme of the "reform of institutions," concerning primarily the relation between the state and other social bodies. The principle of subsidiarity is used to adjudicate between hierarchically ordered relationships, privileging always lower organizations according to their capacity. He writes,

Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at

the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help [*subsidium*] to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.

The supreme authority of the State ought, therefore, to let subordinate groups handle matters and concerns of lesser importance, which would otherwise dissipate its efforts greatly.⁸⁶

The analogy of the individual in the citation illustrates a certain loss when a person's capabilities are not exercised in favor of a community. So too, he notes, that when larger social bodies take on the occasions for capable agency from smaller social bodies, there is an unjust diminishment of this group. What can be derived is the principle that decision-making and actions should take place at the lowest capable level. To do otherwise, risks destroying or absorbing lower social bodies.

In this first articulation of what will become the principle of subsidiarity, several pieces stand out. First, the principle of subsidiarity does not in this first instance address all institutional relations nor does it exclusively prioritize a specific social scale as it relates to the common good. It does not pertain to situations of obvious conflict or explicit antagonism. Instead, as the name implies, it delineates a moral principle to guide how institutions may “furnish help” or *subsidium* to one another. The basis of the principle is a relationship of giving support of some form. Nor does the model of subsidiarity presented here somehow privilege the common good of a smaller social body over and against the wider, more inclusive common good of the social polity. Here, the language of “greater,” “higher,” “lesser,” and “subordinate” introduces a scale of organizations that exist already in some sort of relation. Against these relations, we can overlay the schema of the common good already articulated above. A state, according to the CST tradition, has the common good as its first and primary purpose. This good, as I have discussed,

⁸⁶ Pius XI, “*Quadragesimo Anno*,” 79–80.

is a greater good than the distinct goods of corporations, universities, and even families in so far as they fail to align with the common good. Subsidiarity needs to be understood against this backdrop.

A second aspect of Pius's articulation of this principle is his concern with organizational hierarchies. His concern for the reform for institutions in this section is primarily concerned with the state, not because it is the only institution that mediates our social life, but because of the "evil" of "individualism" by which the social is figured and formed to a unique and exclusive relationship between the individual and the state, excluding all other associations.⁸⁷ Instead, as Hollenbach notes, "According to this principle [of subsidiarity], civil society is the soil in which the seeds of human sociality grow."⁸⁸ It is the disappearance and absorption of the intermediary institutions between the person and the state that worry Pius. This is a concern shared by Ricœur and a central feature of this dissertation. Not only are institutions undertheorized in our moral life (as I will demonstrate with attention to environmental issues in Chapter 8), but their dissolution can be to the detriment of those who form a part of them and to society as whole.

But this should not be taken to mean that only the state should be reformed and governed according to the principle of subsidiarity. While Pius quickly applies this principle to the state, he seems to introduce a general principle that can be applied more broadly. This is confirmed even by the subsequent pope, Pius XII, who in a speech on the occasion of the elevation of 32 new cardinals, identified that the principle of subsidiarity not only touched upon all of social life, but even touches upon the life of the church.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Pius XI, 78.

⁸⁸ Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 102.

⁸⁹ See Pius XII, "Address L'Elevatezza to the New Cardinals on the Supranationality of the Catholic Church," Vatican Website, February 20, 1946, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius->

Nevertheless, an ambiguity is introduced with Pius's language of higher and lower. Ad Leys argues that undergirding Pius's understanding of subsidiarity is an organological vision of society.⁹⁰ This means that Pius treats society as a social body comprised of parts with their own distinct social organizations. Here, each part supports the whole, and each whole supports the part. This is evidenced not simply in how Pius describes the relations of persons to social whole under the principle of social justice, but also in his principle of subsidiarity. Such a model, however, preserves a unique relationship between the state, represented here as the whole, and the parts, captured by all the other social bodies. On Ley's account, following the initial drafter of *Quadragesimo Annos*, Oswald Von Nell-Breuning, the principle of subsidiarity in Pius's work is a unidirectional digressive principle, solely being concerned with how the "whole" relates to the parts, and does not govern how these parts relate to the whole or how the parts relate to each other.⁹¹

Leys does correctly identify this organological vision within CST. The conception of parts to whole certainly is exhibited in Pius and fits in a much broader history of Catholic reflection on the social (as demonstrated in his work). But are subsidiarity and its antecedents unidirectional? Does this adequately respond to the multi-tiered social plurality exhibited in both Leo and Pius? How does one apply the scale "higher" and "lower" when treating institutions like church, family, and state?

On what scale can organizations be measured, particularly in light of the social pluralism introduced above? Does the state necessarily represent the "whole" as a cohesive social body? Where does the church fit in? A concessionary model of the state identifies that all organizations

[xii/it/speeches/1946/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19460220_la-elevatezza.html](https://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pope_francis/speeches/hf_p-xii_spe_19460220_la-elevatezza.html). I am grateful to Russell Hittinger for indicating this point.

⁹⁰ Leys, *Ecclesiological Impacts of the Principle of Subsidiarity*.

⁹¹ Leys, 81.

exist by concession of the state. Leo firmly rejects the church as existing only by the concession of the state within *Immortale Dei*.⁹² Instead, Leo consistently argues that the church has a mission that is parallel to the state, concerned with sacred and, at times, civil matters. In contrast, the state's province is largely limited to civil matters. Insofar as the object of the church's consideration are divine matters, the church is also "higher" than the state. The ambiguity persists as well with the other "necessary society," the domestic society. Are families considered lower and subordinate to the state? In *Arcanum*, Leo identifies not only that the family precedes the state (as argued in *Rerum Novarum*), but that it is "raised to the dignity of a sacrament,"⁹³ and thus, according to its alignment with the church, elevated above the state.⁹⁴ This same point is reiterated by Pius XI in his own encyclical on the family, *Casti Connubii*⁹⁵, and he goes the further step of identifying the family as the nursery of the church.⁹⁶

If one incorporates the vision of social plurality established by Leo and later taken up and developed by Pius, then one might ask if it is not simply the "lowest" capable level that must be considered or whether Leo's pluralism implies as well distinct roles.. Russell Hittinger identifies such a position with the economic principle of "devolution," which signals both a deficiency with higher social bodies in being capable of governing lower bodies, and a principle of efficiency that governs this move to lower organizations. He suggests that this runs counter to the

⁹² Leo XIII, "Immortale Dei," 27.

⁹³ Leo XIII, "Arcanum," 9.

⁹⁴ Russell Hittinger identifies this as a "scissors-like approach" where "in effect, the secular state, which publicly claimed to be desacralized, was pinioned by two facets of a sacramental system," understanding the sacramental broadly to include natural orders instituted by god. Russell Hittinger, "Toward an Adequate Anthropology: Social Aspects of Imago Dei in Catholic Theology," in *Imago Dei: Human Dignity in Ecumenical Perspective*, ed. Thomas A. Howard (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 41.

⁹⁵ Pius XI, "Casti Connubii," Vatican Website, December 31, 1930, 4, https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-connubii.html.

⁹⁶ Pius XI, 13.

actual principle of subsidiarity.⁹⁷ Instead, linking subsidiarity to social justice, Hittinger argues that rather than aiming for the “lowest level,” the principle of subsidiarity locates agency to the “proper level,” suggesting that proper is tied to the distinct social function of each social body.⁹⁸ Working with a conception of *munera* or social function, Hittinger argues that precisely what is not to be absorbed or destroyed is not simply the agential capacity of institutions, but their distinct roles. The advantage to Hittinger’s interpretation is that it allows a greater balance between subsidiarity, social pluralism, and hierarchy.

One of the merits of Hittinger’s position is that it makes possible a reciprocal understanding of subsidiarity. Traditionally, as evidenced by Leys and Nell-Breuning, the concept can be interpreted as governing single direction assistance. The higher organization provides help to the lower organization, and in the process, should abstain from destroying or absorbing the lower organization. Should we instead consider each institution according to its proper function, then we can likewise be concerned with relations running the other way. For example, as a family furnishes “help” to the state, it will also avoid absorbing or destroying the state. This is likely not a problem when one treats ordinary means of furnishing help, such as engaging in military service or paying taxes. But if a leader of a family with vast family-owned corporate interests takes up the reins of a nation, is there not a danger of the state being bent to serve the family's private interests rather than the common good?⁹⁹ Likewise, as a church provides assistance to the family, it will not overtake or absorb the family. Too often clericalism

⁹⁷ See Hittinger, “The Coherence of the Four Basic Principles of Catholic Social Doctrine: An Interpretation.”

⁹⁸ See Russell Hittinger, “Social Pluralism and Subsidiarity in Catholic Social Doctrine,” *Annales Theologici* 16 (2002): 396. This also functions well with the distinct understandings of authority of disparate institutions in Leo’s writings.

⁹⁹ The current political regime under Donald Trump in America is only the most recent representative of this danger.

can excessively elevate the role of the pastor, allowing his direction to influence and even supplant the role of parents. Such clericalism enabled the parents to ignore the protestations and accusations of victims of predatory priests over the last sixty years. One might even expand beyond these necessary societies to any social body differentiated by a social function. As the corporation, for instance, supports a university, one must critically investigate whether these benefits might impinge on the university's function, perhaps by overly influencing the research agenda and results of a laboratory.

The drawback of adopting and applying Hittinger's model is that it requires a robust understanding of the social function of distinct institutions. As I discussed above, such an account is found in early CST, which relies upon theologically informed natural law in order to discern these purposes as they relate to the state, the family, and the church. The purpose of the state is the common good. The purpose of the family is the generation and formation of children. The purpose of the church is the salvation of all humanity.

Yet is this clearly demarcated social vision adequate for today? First, one would ask how one considers and understands the social function of the full range of institutions not covered by the CST tradition. This would include the full range of associations that make up what political theorists call "civil society," which include, on David Hollenbach's account "the many forms of community and association that are not political in form: families, neighborhoods, voluntary associations of innumerable kinds, labor unions, small businesses, giant corporations, and religious communities."¹⁰⁰ These are full range of associations and networks that, according to Elshtain, are not political in so far as they lie outside the formal structure and networks of power

¹⁰⁰ David Hollenbach, "Liberalism, Communitarianism, and the Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Economy," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 7 (1987): 30.

of the state.¹⁰¹ Second, granting that early CST has a particular concern for these institutions given their distinct role with regards to human happiness, if one is to translate CST beyond the bounds of confessional inquiry (a concern built into Leo's encyclicals from the beginning with his appeals to natural law), we have to ask if the various institutions found in CST are even adequately described? Is the family more than just the generation and formation of children? How does the extensive role of the church in institutions ranging from hospitals, to refugee services, to universities complicate or nuance the picture of the church given here? Perhaps a teleological framework, while instructive, is insufficient to describe totally the institutions as we find them on the ground.

As the CST tradition progresses, one theme which will become further emphasized in the personal grounding of subsidiarity, first with attention to human freedom, and then later, (paralleling Ricœur) with attention to the development of the human person through empowerment and the actualization of capacities.¹⁰² Each of these, as we shall see, are reflective of a turn to the person in CST which will refigure the care for institutions and institutional relations as a subspecies of the care for the person.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ See Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Catholic Social Thought, the City, and Liberal America," in *Catholicism and Liberalism: Contributions to American Public Philosophy*, ed. R. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁰² I treated Ricœur's capabilities approach in Chapter 1 and its interface with his understanding of the necessary role of institutions in Chapter 3. As I will detail in Chapter 7, here is one place where I see a strong point of coincidence between Ricœur and CST.

¹⁰³ One could make the much stronger argument that the turn to the person reflects the beginning of the erosion of a form of natural law thinking in Catholic Social Thought, which might require a jettisoning of the earlier tradition. While I think there are radically new insights born out of the personalist turn, the very nature of the construction of this tradition as the CST tradition (a project begun by Pius XI, which now is quite explicitly contributed to as a tradition by the popes) leads to a continual taking up and refinement of key concepts and trips. This is best reflected in the principles that I lift out: the common good, subsidiarity and social justice and solidarity.

Conclusion

Over this first part of Chapter 5, I have identified that what I call a care for institutions and institutional relations runs through the heart of the early CST tradition. In looking at the work of Leo, we see an institutional focus, reflected in his understanding of the necessary role institutions play for humans, the distinct "societies" that comprise our social existence, and a pervasive concern for the common good. This is codified into a care for institutions and institutional relations in the work of Pius XI, who introduces the concept of social justice and subsidiarity.

In Chapter 6, I move away from the Leonine period to attend to a vital development in CST, found in the "turn to the person." First starting with Pius XII, there is a growing emphasis on the person as the normative measure of social life. This has a decisive impact on the care for institutions and institutional relations in CST, impacting every principle addressed above.

Chapter 6: The Modern Catholic Social Teaching Tradition and a New Humanism of Institutions

How do traditions change? The relatively short tradition of the CST allows for an analysis of both the formation of a tradition with the coalescing of inherited concepts under new constellations to deal with contemporaneous problems. In the last chapter, focusing on the papacies of Leo XIII (1878-1903) and Pius XI (1922-1939), I argued a care for institutions and inter-institutional relations is at the center of the CST tradition and unpacked core concepts such as the nature of societies and the relation to the person, the common good, social justice, and subsidiarity. In this chapter, I argue that there is a critical development in the institutional ethic of the CST tradition marked by a new emphasis on the person inaugurated with Pius XII that in turn renders the care for institutions as a subspecies of the care for persons and reverberates and develops in subsequent papal teachings on all the core principles previously mentioned. This establishes the person and their flourishing within groups as the rule and measure of institutions.¹

I will once more proceed genealogically as a means of tracing key developments in the papal tradition that bear on the institutional ethics of the CST tradition. First, I will identify where I see a critical introduction of a new emphasis on the person within the CST tradition by Pius XII. Then, with an emphasis on the key principles outlined in Chapter 5 (the common good, social justice, and subsidiarity) I will identify how popes and conciliar documents transformed these principles in light of this new emphasis on the person. This gives rise to new definitions, as

¹ This turn to the person can serve as an analogue to Ricœur's sieve of the moral (and indeed, personalism as one finds in John Paul II is deeply influenced by Kant). Analogously, the analysis I laid out in the last chapter would be akin to the teleological. Importantly, this would mean that the person is not the "starting point" of CST, as if one could take the person (even understood as relational) as the beginning point apart from the histories and communities that give rise to it. Instead, the CST tradition addresses the structures, communities, and institutions that help give rise to human subjectivity and personhood.

we find with the common good, or the introduction of new concepts the parallel previous ones, as found with Pius XI's principle of social justice and John Paul II's new concept of solidarity. Rather than diminishing the care for institutions, this new trajectory helps integrate and render more cohesive this ethic of institutions. With this tradition of CST institutional ethics in hand, we will be well situated for a new line of dialogue with Paul Ricœur's institutional ethics. In Chapter 7, I will turn to a more direct comparison of Ricœur and CST on the topic of inter-institutional ethics, and in Chapter 8, I will work constructively, productively recasting the CST as a religiously formed phronesis of institutional relations, that can integrate and give substance to Ricœur's inter-institutional ethical framework.

Section 1: Pius XII and the Turn to the Human Person

Following the leonine period, significant shifts occur within CST.² With Vatican II, there is a slow move away from the stricter natural law tradition found in Leo XIII and Pius XI towards a more historicist account that is open to the human sciences. With Vatican II, there is also a greater reliance on explicitly biblical themes in social thought. Vatican II also signals a new evaluation of religious pluralism. As I discuss in a note below, the contrast could not be more striking than between Leo XIII's *Libertas*, which denies the liberty of worship,³ and John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris*, which explicitly affirms the right to be "able to worship God in accordance with the right dictates of his own conscience, and to profess his religion both in

² For a thorough analysis in transitions in theological, ethical, and political methodologies in Catholic Social Thought see Charles E Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002).

³ See Leo XIII, "Libertas," 19–22.

private and in public.”⁴ This affirmation later gave rise to the Vatican II document on religious liberty *Dignitas Humanae*.⁵

But my focus on institutions brings us to an earlier pivot in the tradition: a new emphasis on the person that renders what I have called the care of institutions into a subspecies of the care of the person. While anthropology clearly already plays a central role in early CST (as evidenced by my treatment of institutions and sociality in Leo’s thought), there is a significant shift that occurs in Pius XII’s writings as he anchors society and its institutions in the human person

Pius XII’s social thought has not been distilled into encyclicals. Writing during WWII, he did not take the time to craft lengthy statements on Catholic Church teaching. Instead, Pius XII wrote to a global audience a number of “Christmas messages” that directly addressed issues of the time.

Following the death of Pius XI and months before the outbreak of WWII, Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli was elected to the papacy on March 2, 1939, and took the name Pius XII. Prior to that, he served as Vatican secretary of state (1930-1939) and nuncio to Germany (1917-1929). He served as pope throughout the war years and died in 1958. While his cause for sanctity advanced under Paul VI (1963-1978) and John Paul II, his legacy remains tarnished as a result of his role in securing the *Reichskonkordat* with Germany as Vatican Secretary of State in

⁴ John XXIII, “Pacem in Terris,” Vatican Website, April 11, 1963, 14, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

⁵ Second Vatican Council, “Dignitatis Humanae,” Vatican Website, December 7, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html.

1933 and his apparent silence as pope on the confinement and extermination of the Jews during World War II.⁶

Yet his wartime Christmas radio messages show a pope implicitly wrestling with the Catholic Church's entry into modernity while also anticipating the eventual conclusion of the great world war. Many of the themes he lays out become core features of subsequent encyclicals by later popes. He emphasizes the relationship between peace and justice, arguing for a well-ordered society⁷ in a manner that seems to later echo in John XXIII's multiple spheres of order *Pacem in Terris*. This includes the identification of core points for ordering a post-war society, including human dignity, the integrity of social unity, the dignity of labor, the rehabilitation of the judiciary, and a Christian conception of the state. He identifies an obligation, of each, a vow

⁶ This criticism was made public and captured well in Rolf Hochhuth's 1963 *The Deputy*, in which the figure of the pope is present, but silent throughout the entire play. See Rolf Hochhuth, Richard Winston, and Clara Winston, *The Deputy*, Johns Hopkins paperbacks ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). It is not the aim of this section to evaluate Pius XII's response to the Shoah, but instead to name a pivot point in CST first signaled in his Christmas messages. John Langan describes well the larger task set before scholars assessing Pius XII, when he writes: "The assessment of Pius XII as an agent and leader in a time of grave crisis is a topic that calls for: (1) the sifting of vast amounts of archival information and controversial exchanges; (2) the articulation and defense of an appropriate standpoint for making judgments; and (3) the overcoming of suspicion and secrecy, of feelings and practices that stand in the way of a clear reading of the case." John P. Langan, S.J., "The Christmas Messages of Pius XII (1939-1945): Catholic Social Teaching in a Time of Extreme Crisis," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M. (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 175. One of the most critical scholarly voices of Pius XII comes from the historian David Kertzer, whose significant archival work in recently opened Vatican archives enables us each to avoid the worst tendencies of what has become a revisionist history in both pro and anti Pius XII camps. His work is able to set Pius XII's papacy in a larger context of antisemitism within papacy of Pius XI and the curia. See David I. Kertzer, *The Pope and Mussolini: The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); David I. Kertzer, *The Popes against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001). While a Vatican decision in March of 2019 to open the archives on World War II and Pius XII may never put the question of whether Pius XII could have done more, it will ensure transparency on the Vatican's documents on this question.

⁷ See "The Internal Order of States and Peoples" in Pius XII, *Major Addresses of Pope Pius XII*, ed. Vincent Arthur Yzermans, vol. 1, 2 vols. (St. Paul: North Central Pub.Co., 1961).

said on behalf of the dead to bring “back society to its center of gravity, which is the law of God, aspire to the service of the human person and of his common life ennobled in God.”⁸ This is a vow owed to those who die on the battlefield and to work towards this society for all who were killed: to those who died in battle; “to the hundreds of thousands of persons who, without any fault on their part, sometimes only because of their nationality or race, have been consigned to death or to a slow decline” (a perhaps veiled and grossly underestimated reference to the Jews and other victims in the Nazi concentration camps) and to those non-combatants killed by indiscriminate airstrikes. In a later letter, he wrestles with the “problem of democracy,” a social political form that was accepted but never fully endorsed by earlier popes. The pope, reframing democracy in light of central Catholic principles, argues that democracy is not based on the “masses” but instead works to help organize the people, whose condition here serve as the barometer of democracy’s success.⁹

Pius XII’s significance might best be seen in his subsequent impact. Pius is cited over 33 times in John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris*, with 22 of those citations coming from his Christmas messages. We see a range of rights that are culled from Pius and collated into John XXIII’s collection of rights, including the right to emigrate, the right to choose one’s vocation, the right to participate in public life, the right to be cared for in old age and ill health, and the fundamental inalienability of rights. For all his controversy, his Christmas messages remain an important part of the CST tradition. For the purpose of this chapter, I want to focus on one significant shift inaugurated in his work: a turn to the human person that echoes through the documents of Vatican II and all subsequent papal encyclicals.

⁸ Pius XII, 1:80.

⁹ See “True and False Democracy” in Pius XII, *Major Addresses*.

Pius places a new emphasis on the human person in his articulation of the grounds and purpose of our social life. In his Christmas Message of 1942, “The internal Order of States and Peoples,” Pius XII writes, “The origin and the primary scope of social life is the conservation, development and perfection of the human person, helping him to realize accurately the demands and values of religion and culture set by the Creator for every man and for all mankind, both as a whole and in its natural ramifications.”¹⁰ Whereas previous encyclicals emphasized the common good as the unifying goal of persons and the purpose and aim of our political life, here Pius XII places a dynamic understanding of the person at the center of social life. In light of past articulations and the fervor of nationalism that underscored fascism in Germany and Italy, Pius could be seen as saying that the aim of social life cannot trump the dignity of the person.

The purpose of social institutions is further inflected by a developmental model of the person. It is not simply the human person at the center of institutions as if we entered our social life fully formed. Instead, Pius emphasizes social life’s role in “the conservation, development, and perfection of the human person.”¹¹ This dynamic understanding reflects backwards on institutions. Their role is not, as some might argue, simply the distribution of goods or the

¹⁰Pius XII, 1:54. Pius XII reiterates this message in his 1944 message, when he writes in “True and False Democracy” that regarding the person and the social order that the individual, “far from being the object and, as it were, a merely passive element in the social order, is in fact, and must be and continues to be, its subject, its foundation and its end.” Pius XII, 1:80. What is the origin of this new emphasis on the person in the papal tradition. There is a long history of concern for the person that runs throughout Catholic ethics (for example, as seen in the writings of Bartolomé de las Casa (1484-1566)) and one could look to developments around more formal texts like Canon Law. This particular understanding of the relation between the State and the person, however, seems to closely align with the personalism of Jacques Maritain which was in the air at the time. In fact, Maritain late cites this same passage in Chapter 2 of his 1947 “The Person and the Common Good.” Jacques Maritain, “The Person and the Common Good,” trans. John J. Fitzgerald, Jacques Maritain Center, 1947, <https://www3.nd.edu/%7Emaritain/jmc/etext/cg.htm>. Further research would be necessary to ascertain whether there are more direct influences.

¹¹ Pius XII, *Major Addresses*, 1:80.

securing of property rights. Paralleling my treatment of the necessary role of institutions in Ricœur's thought, in the CST tradition, our social life, which includes a myriad of institutions, exists for the sake of the development and perfection of humans. Society is the nursery of our humanity.

While there is a turn to the person, Pius XII is still reliant on a religiously informed natural law tradition. The particular norms by which we understand the development of the person do not arise out of the social sciences. Instead, development is here understood according to the wisdom of the church. Pius XII writes, "the scope of every social life remains identical, sacred, obligatory; it is the development of the personal values of man as the image of God; and the obligation remains with every member of the human family to realize his unchangeable destiny, whosoever be the legislator and the authority whom he obeys."¹² Here the mark and measure of human development is not the achievement of literacy or the development of capacities, but instead the religious norm of the image of God, which locates humanity's end in the divine. Such a norm obliges each person, regardless of culture, political regime, or time period. The measures by which this development is understood are found in religion and culture, placed there by the Creator.

With Pius XII, there is a new shift in emphasis, turning to the person and their development and perfection as the measure of institutions and society. This norm, however, remains nonetheless encoded in a natural law perspective, oriented towards the human as image of God, as found in religion and culture.¹³ The development of the human person is fluid but nonetheless abstract. The pope is not concerned here about metrics of development but instead

¹² Pius XII, 1:80.

¹³ Pius XII reflects here a transitional period. While still reliant on natural law reasoning, this emphasis on the human person will persist even as natural law reasoning that characterizes the leonine period fades.

about our conformity to the image of god. The diminishment of a natural law framework as the CST tradition progresses does not eliminate the concepts developed that form the backbone of the care for institutions. Instead, each of these are transformed or replaced in light of this new emphasis on the person. This turn to the person and to human development will also combine with a more inductive methodology following from John XXIII's adoption of the Cardijn method "Observe, Judge, Act"¹⁴ (or more popularly known as See, Judge, Act) in *Mater et Magistra*¹⁵ that enables a more thoroughgoing incorporation of the social sciences into CST. This provides an openness in CST which was previously only formal and provides a solid grounds for comparison with Ricœur, for whom a focus on the person is consistent in his treatment of institutions.

Section 2: John XXII and Vatican II on The Common Good and the Human Person

The turn to the person has a dramatic shift on all of the major themes that comprise the care for institutions within the CST tradition. This is nowhere more explicit than in the central theme of the common good. As I have already argued above, the common good is a core feature of a care for institutions in early CST, which enables us to talk about both the extrinsic and intrinsic goods of distinct institutions, and, by placing them in ever larger concentric circles, working towards the common good of society. Thus, while this common good is the prime purpose of the state, each institution can nonetheless work towards it, adjusting among the various goods they may pursue for these disparate institutions in light of the common good.

¹⁴ Kenneth R Himes, O.F.M., "Commentary on *Justitia in Mundo* (Justice in the World)," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R Himes, O.F.M. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 359, fn. 28.

¹⁵ John XXIII, "Mater et Magistra," Vatican Website, May 15, 1961, 236, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html.

Yet, as I described in Chapter 5, in early CST the common good remains nonetheless vaguely defined. The turn to the person provides a new rule for considering the common good. We see this reflected in Vatican II's pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* ("the Church in the Modern World"), where the council fathers identify the common good as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race."¹⁶ At the outset, one might note a certain ambiguity in this new definition. Language like "sum total" could give the impression of aggregate goods that I identified as anathema to CST above. Instead, the common good here can be more accurately understood by this major development in the turn to the person. The common good is concerned with the full range of conditions which contribute to this flourishing. It necessitates the widest possible circle to engage in an analysis of the common good.

Yet this bending of the concern for the whole towards the person does not resurrect the reduction of society to state and person that is denounced so forcefully throughout the leonine

¹⁶Second Vatican Council, "Gaudium et Spes," Vatican Website, December 7, 1965, 26, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. We find a similar definition in John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra*, where he states that those in public authority with care for the common good "must take account of all those social conditions which favor the full development of human personality." John XXIII, "Mater et Magistra," 65. Here, John XXIII underlines the point already made by Pius XII that society exists for the sake of the person, now connecting it to the common good. The definition from *Gaudium et Spes*, however, has had a more lasting impact in the tradition. There is also a similar definition found in *Dignitatis Humanae* which references in the footnote *Mater et Magistra*, but, appropriate to a document on religious liberty, emphasizes human rights. There the council fathers write, "Since the common welfare of society consists in the entirety of those conditions of social life under which men enjoy the possibility of achieving their own perfection in a certain fullness of measure and also with some relative ease, it chiefly consists in the protection of the rights, and in the performance of the duties, of the human person." Second Vatican Council, "Dignitatis Humanae," 6.

period of CST in relation to its depiction of socialism. In the above definition, it first speaks of social groups and then the persons who form a part of them. While the common good casts a wide circle, it is centered on the person as a social person, encountered not alone, but through distinct groups: families, churches, neighborhood associations, and so on.

Similarly, this new definition does not erode the vision of concentric circles interrelated as parts to the whole. Underlining the normative role of the common good for each institution, the council fathers continue, stating, “Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family.”¹⁷ Built into the common good under the species of a care for persons is that obligation for each group (and each member of a group) to be concerned with the flourishing of other groups and with the whole.

The significance of this new emphasis on persons and groups in the common good cannot be overstated. Against a potentially monolithic understanding of society, this definition of the common good incorporates more fully the pluralistic vision of society found in early CST while also expanding the groups that are subject of concern beyond the triad of the necessary societies of family, state, and church to include the full range of institutions in social life.¹⁸ This new definition also more fully incorporates the eudaemonistic vision captured by the very category of “necessary” into a broader understanding of the flourishing of groups and persons in and through institutions.

John XXIII, who called the Second Vatican Council, also made a lasting contribution into considering how the common good is achieved in *Pacem in Terris*, published in the early months of the council. This document gathers a host of rights articulated in in previous papal documents,

¹⁷ Second Vatican Council, “Gaudium et Spes,” 26.

¹⁸ This triad never actually disappears from the CST tradition.

and articulates them anew, effectively ensuring that human rights are set into the grammar of CST. Among the 25 discrete rights mentioned in this document, John XXIII also introduces two new rights: a right to public worship and a recognition of the rights of women to full participation in social and political life. The former had a significant impact on Vatican II, giving rise to the document *Dignitatis Humanae*, the declaration on Religious Freedom.¹⁹ He also

¹⁹ As mentioned briefly at the outset of this chapter, one of the most significant developments in this period are rights surrounding freedom of religion and worship and it overlaps in an interesting way with the shift to the emphasis of the person that I am drawing out through this chapter. The council fathers at Vatican II speak of an “external freedom of religion” to refer to a public freedom of religion. See Vatican Council, William K. Leahy, and Anthony T. Massimini, *Third Session Council Speeches of Vatican II.*, Deuss Books (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1966.) External freedom of religion (in contrast to freedom of conscience) enters into CST with John XXIII, who pronounced such a right while Vatican II was in process in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. He writes, “Also among man's rights is that of being able to worship God in accordance with the right dictates of his own conscience, and to profess his religion both in private and in public.” John XXIII, “Pacem in Terris,” 14. A freedom of conscience in matters of faith is a classic theme that is articulated throughout the history of Christian thought. Justin Martyr serves as the paradigmatic case. See Justin and Thomas B. Falls, *Saint Justin Martyr: The First Apology, the Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation to the Greeks, Discourse to the Greeks, the Monarchy, or the Rule of God*, vol. v. 6, The Fathers of the Church, a New Translation ; (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1965). While a public liberty for religion may seem antiquated today, this is a unique contribution to the CST tradition by John XXIII and leads to the landmark document of Vatican II, *Dignitas Humanae*. Previous popes have explicitly rejected this freedom.

John XXIII cites Leo as he makes his argument, writing, “true freedom, freedom worthy of the sons of God, is that freedom which most truly safeguards the dignity of the human person. It is stronger than any violence or injustice. Such is the freedom which has always been desired by the Church, and which she holds most dear. It is the sort of freedom which the Apostles resolutely claimed for themselves. The apologists defended it in their writings; thousands of martyrs consecrated it with their blood.” John XXIII, “Pacem in Terris,” 14. While Leo XIII’s words here resonate, it is ironic that John XXIII draws on him to support “external religious freedom” for Leo explicitly rejects just such a rights to public worship (See Leo XIII, “*Libertas*,” 19–22.). In *Libertas*, Leo writes, “Wherefore, civil society must acknowledge God as its Founder and Parent, and must obey and reverence His power and authority. Justice therefore forbids, and reason itself forbids, the State to be godless; or to adopt a line of action which would end in godlessness—namely, to treat the various religions (as they call them) alike, and to bestow upon them promiscuously equal rights and privileges. Since, then, the profession of one religion is necessary in the State, that religion must be professed which alone is true, and which can be recognized without difficulty, especially in Catholic States, because the marks of truth are, as it were, engravings upon it. This religion, therefore, the rulers of the State must preserve and protect,

if they would provide - as they should do - with prudence and usefulness for the good of the community. For public authority exists for the welfare of those whom it governs; and, although its proximate end is to lead men to the prosperity found in this life, yet, in so doing, it ought not to diminish, but rather to increase, man's capability of attaining to the supreme good in which his everlasting happiness consists: which never can be attained if religion be disregarded." Leo XIII, 21. While one finds a concern for the person present here—this follows an articulation of a person's duties to God and contains a concern for the moral formation of persons—there is a focus on institutions that in this instance trumps a liberal understanding of liberty (and indeed, that relativizing of liberty appears to be the point of the document). While internal liberty is recognized, external liberty is a liberty towards the proper and true worship of God. Thus, it is a freedom from the State prohibiting all worship, but mostly a freedom for "true worship." Is the move made by John XXII just a matter of shifting times? Yes, times have shifted and there is a new orientation towards democracy in the Catholic Church that otherwise was previously only tolerated. This shift is detailed in Emile Perreau-Saussine's posthumous work *Catholicism and Democracy*. See Emile Perreau-Saussine, *Catholicisme et démocratie: une histoire de la pensée politique*, La nuit surveillée (Paris: Cerf, 2011). This right fits within this new emphasis on the person that I am outlining as it serves as one of a few key intellectual warrants behind this move. John XXIII's emphasis on the human person takes on the language of rights in John's work. Of course, the language of rights was not new to CST (after all Leo's defense of private property and workers' rights uses the same language). But John XXIII's encyclical ensured that it would become a central dialect of CST. As I have indicated, though, the person becomes the measure of society and its institutions. This allows for a reordering of priorities which means that respecting the rights of persons can even mean trumping what might appear to be the "ideal order of society," exemplified by the popes of a previous era of the prioritizing of the legal privilege Catholicism over all other doctrines. Vatican II was influenced by the intellectual grappling with the American experience of pluralism captured in the work of John Courtney Murray. See John Courtney Murray, Walter J Burghardt, and Peter Lawler, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005). Vatican II concretized this right to public worship in the document *Dignitas Humanae*. There, the council father's write, "This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits." Second Vatican Council, "Dignitatis Humanae," 2. This marks the beginning of a new relationship to other religions for the Catholic Church and for the CST tradition. The nature of the role of other religions remains a shifting and developing position. John Paul II advanced the dialogue of religions in a performative fashion (in contrast to declarative) at an interfaith summit he called in Assisi in 1986 (and again in 1993 and 2002) where he joined in prayer with all other religions. While I see possibilities already in Benedict XVI for a reconsideration of the role of religions as institutions in Benedict XVI *Caritas in Veritate*, it is with Francis's *Laudato Si* where there is a dramatic shift as to how religions are discussed. He identifies a role for all religions (especially indigenous religions/communities), not just Catholicism, to play in the dialogues of our global and local societies around issues of environmental degradation. While his second chapter ("The Gospel of Creation") delves into a Christian account of environmental care, on my reading, it is not done to the exclusion of other

asserts that rights are a basic means of achieving the common good, writing, “It is generally accepted today that the common good is best safeguarded when personal rights and duties are guaranteed.”²⁰ If the human person is the rule of measuring the common good, human rights become the baseline conditions for assuring their achievement.²¹

The turn to the person as a measure of the common good has also opened up a more robust engagement with the human sciences that seek to measure and understand the dynamics and conditions of human flourishing. This has given rise to any number of publications, conferences, and institutes that treat CST alongside a host of academic disciplines, including sociology, economics, law, politics, international relations, and so on. This is reflected as well in the composition of the Pontifical Academy of the Social Sciences, which includes an international, interdisciplinary, and even interreligious cohort of sociologists, economists, legal scholars, philosophers, demographers, political scientists, historians, and even judges. Such a trend in CST was already well established, given that many of the major influences to CST came

traditions. This is particularly evident as he makes general claims like “If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it.” Francis, “Laudato Si’,” 63.

²⁰ John XXIII, “Pacem in Terris,” 60.

²¹ John XXIII also represents a transition in Catholic Social Thought. He remains reliant on a natural law framework where rights are grounded in being made in the image of God, understood as bearing intelligence and freedom. Nevertheless, the injection throughout the document of a concern for attending contemporary circumstances reflects a shift in methodology towards a more historical method. While this is perhaps most notable with the use of the terms “signs of the times,” which becomes so central to the Vatican II documents, as Hittinger has notes, this is not in the original text (though it is used in other papal bulls by John XXIII). See Russell Hittinger, “Quinquagesimo ante: Reflections on Pacem in Terris Fifty Years Later,” in *The Global Quest for Tranquillitas Ordinis. Pacem in Terris, Fifty Years Later (27 April-1st May 2012)*, ed. Mary Ann Glendon, Russell Hittinger, and Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo (Vatican City: Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 2013), 54. But one can find this focus on the contemporary reflected in the document. For example, his articulation of the rights of women is born not from an analysis of rights in a deductive manner, but arises out of attention to women claiming their dignity. See John XXIII, “Pacem in Terris,” 41.

already from these disciplines. Furthermore, the turn towards the flourishing of persons and groups within the central norm of social ethics makes possible an even more rigorous dialogue and engagement across these discourse.

Section 3: John Paul II on Structures of Sin and Solidarity as the New Social Justice

The care for institutions in CST is not simply expressed as a concern for the common good and the integrity of institutions but also articulated in the obligation that each bear to advance the common good. In the first part of this chapter, I identified that the concept of social justice served a twofold role of both critiquing social structures according to their fulfillment of the common good and marking an obligation for each within a social body to advance the common good. This second use of social justice, however, does not continue in the tradition. Instead, later uses of this concept focus on the first meaning. While the popes continue to speak of person's working for the common good and interest in the common good, there is not a corresponding principle to express this obligation²². With John Paul II's new articulation of the concept of solidarity in his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the individual and corporate care for the common good is renewed and expanded.

Sollicitudo was written in commemoration of Paul VI's 1967 encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*. John Paul II draws upon one of the major themes of the earlier encyclical, the idea of a "full" or an "authentic human development." As John Paul II notes, Paul VI adopts the term development from the language of economics, but demands a more expansive, authentic development. Paul VI writes, "The development We speak of here cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development

²² See John XXIII, "Pacem in Terris," 48; Second Vatican Council, "Gaudium et Spes," 74; Paul VI, "Populorum Progressio," Vatican Website, March 26, 1967, 21, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html.

of each man and of the whole man.”²³ From the vantage of twenty passing years, John Paul II identifies that the problems of underdevelopment have only increased. Like Paul, he calls for an “authentic human development,” that accounts for economic, social, political, cultural, and even spiritual development. Solidarity is presented in Chapter 5, “A Theological Reading of Modern Problems,” as a solution to certain obstacles to the common good and human development called “structures of sin,” and as a path to human development. I will treat first the theme of structures of sin, which is established as the problem to which solidarity responds.

3.1: Structures of Sin

The concept of structures of sin is a significant contribution by John Paul II into the CST documentary tradition. The focus on institutions has a long history in CST, and as with liberation theology, there was a renewed focus on the particular forms of oppression born from unjust social structures. In the Medellin documents from the second general meeting of the Latin American Bishops Conference (the Consejo Episcopal Latino American or CELAM) in 1968, the bishops called the structural deficiencies of Latin America a form of “institutionalized violence.”²⁴ John Paul II adopts this structural focus, but adapts it, drawing an explicit connection between individuals and unjust structures, maintaining, thus, a focus on responsible persons, though at the cost of liberation theologies focus on institutions as agents.

Structures of sin in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* have three distinct features. First, as “sins” these structures are tied to responsible agents and result from their personal sin. John Paul II writes that structures of sin “are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete

²³Paul VI, “Populorum Progressio,” 14. Here we see a firm move away from natural law as the means of assessing the development of the person to an expansive approach which includes, but is not limited to the human sciences.

²⁴ David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, *Renewing the Earth: Catholic Documents on Peace, Justice, and Liberation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1977), 567.

acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove.”²⁵ It is a personal sin of greed, racism, or even idolatry of technology which gives occasion to structures of sin. For John Paul II, the structure itself is not a “moral agent,” and thus, it is incapable of being a responsible agent of sin. Instead, he focuses on the myriad of actors who help give rise to structures of sin by virtue of their acts.²⁶

A second feature of structures of sin is that they beget more sin by influencing the behavior of others. Here, again, John Paul II emphasizes personal responsibility as it is related to society. Structures of sin not only arise out of concrete personal sins, but they give rise to more personal sin by affecting the behavior of other people.²⁷ Take for example the recent case of Wells Fargo and customer fraud.²⁸ A drive for profits leads to the creation of unrealistic and seemingly impossible standards for lower level employees. These lower level employees in turn defrauded customers by creating fake accounts on their behalf so as to give the impression of success and productivity. This “structure of sin” operated on a massive scale, leading to the creation of possibly 3.5 million unauthorized accounts. On this account the structural sin is not

²⁵ John Paul II, “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,” Vatican Website, December 30, 1987, 36, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html.

²⁶ Analogously, as evidenced by his treatment of social responsibility, Ricœur holds that selves (not institutions) are the sites of action and responsibility. Still, this can verge on a form of methodological individualism. Ricœur tries to strike a middle path between Weber’s methodological individualism and the reification of society into social entities by Durkheim by identifying institutions (and society) as structures of distribution. While John Paul II’s incorporation of structures of sin is an important development in CST, nonetheless, I hold this account impoverished in its treatment of how persons are shaped by institutions and prioritize in my constructive account in Chapter 8 Ricœur’s treatment of institutions as fitting among the assemblage of structures that shape our action.

²⁷ John Paul II, “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,” 36.

²⁸ Cowley, “Wells Fargo Review Finds 1.4 Million More Suspect Accounts.”

simply that an institution defrauded customers, but that structures which privilege profit at all cost in turn placed pressure on employees leading to over 5000 of them to defraud customers.²⁹

A final feature of structures of sin is that there are real victims. Structures of sin give rise to distinct types of oppression and violence against the neighbor. These structural sins reflect our relationship to the neighbor, sins of commission and omission captured in the second tablet of the Ten Commandments. John Paul II writes, “Not to observe these is to offend God and hurt one's neighbor, and to introduce into the world influences and obstacles which go far beyond the actions and brief life span of an individual. This also involves interference in the process of the development of peoples, the delay or slowness of which must be judged also in this light.”³⁰ To steal, to kill, to covet, to bear false witness, each of these sins have real victims. As with my earlier treatment of a responsibility for the fragile, structural sins introduce the extension of time and space, allowing for the diagnosis of sins that can have an impact on victims over generations and across the globe.³¹

While structural sin can have impacts on a massive scale, it, nonetheless, is for John Paul II a personal phenomenon. His proposed response to structural sin is not social revolution (as one

²⁹ Matt Egan, “5,300 Wells Fargo Employees Fired over 2 Million Phony Accounts,” CNNMoney, September 8, 2016, <http://money.cnn.com/2016/09/08/investing/wells-fargo-created-phony-accounts-bank-fees/index.html>.

³⁰ John Paul II, “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,” 36.

³¹ This links to my discussion of a responsibility for the fragile other in Chapter 2 and my discussion of the socius, the distant other encountered through institutions in Chapter 3. John Paul II simply takes for granted that our obligation to be “neighbor” extends further as globalization compresses our world (to use a phrase by William Schweiker in William Schweiker, *Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics: In the Time of Many Worlds* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 6–9.). It would be interesting to compare John Paul II and Peter Singer on this account, particularly given the penchant of Christian traditions to maintain differing responsibilities according to the particular roles one holds (captured in the previous chapter according to the different authorities and responsibilities of the father, the civic leader, and the priest) and in the contemporary work of Eric Gregory. See Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”; Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love*.

hears called for in liberation theology) because in his work the structures themselves are not moral agents.³² Instead, he looks for a personal response that can nonetheless have impacts on the personal, social, and even international level. This then leads for him to develop a personal response to the sinful attitudes absolutized in social sin, by cultivating a new attitude in response: solidarity.

3.2: *Solidarity*

Just as John Paul II locates personal responsibility at the heart of structures of sin, so too his response to structures of sin takes place at the level of the personal. He presents as a response to structural sin a robust vision of solidarity. More than a mere emotion—“a feeling of vague compassion shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people”³³—solidarity is a social virtue rooted in the person that takes for granted our global and local interdependence and pushes us to acknowledge this interdependence and act to the common good.³⁴ He defines solidarity as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”³⁵ Solidarity, one might say, jointly expresses a care for the institution and a care for the other.

³² While John Paul II adopts a personalized understanding of social structures, my own view is that structures are more stubborn than he lets on here. As I detail in my work on Ricœur, structures sediment norms and values in ways that long outlast the initial persons who may introduce them into institutions.

³³ John Paul II, “*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,” 38.

³⁴ Solidarity demands more than an emotion. Here, the turn to the classical Christian language of solidarity as a virtue is instructive. Thomas Aquinas described virtue as a habit or disposition to act towards the good. While internal to the soul, virtues are not to be equated with emotional states, but instead are tied specifically to types of action, as Gerald Manley Hopkins captures so well when he writes, “the just man justices.” Gerard Manley Hopkins, “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” text/html, Poetry Foundation, February 20, 2019, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44389/as-kingfishers-catch-fire>. Virtue pushes beyond mere empathy. For John Paul II, solidarity is an explicitly social virtue, born out of the moral implications of interdependence.

³⁵ John Paul II, “*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,” 38.

In many respects, solidarity echoes the earlier description of social justice given by Pius XI. There, social justice was an obligation that each had for the common good. This obligation, we saw, necessitated that society made possible the means by which a person could give to the common good. Similarly, John Paul II's understanding of solidarity is directly tied to a commitment to the common good. The attitude of solidarity could even be understood as tied to the authentic development of a nation, not simply a path to development, but also part of its product.

Yet, while the common good is explicitly linked to societal institutions within the leonine period, John Paul II's focus on the common good privileges the people to whom we are connected through various institutions, structures, and systems. Here, we might see a continuation of a basic emphasis that runs through the post-leonine church: institutions exist for people. Thus, in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, it is written, "For the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life."³⁶ Solidarity is expressly concerned with the persons to whom we are connected through a variety of structures and institutions that make possible our interdependence.

One feature of solidarity is that in it we become better aware of those others to whom we are connected in an interdependent world. He writes, "Solidarity helps us to see the 'other'—whether a person, people or nation—not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our "neighbor," a "helper" (see Gen 2:18-20), to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the

³⁶ Second Vatican Council, "Gaudium et Spes," 25.

banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God.”³⁷ Structures of sin like greed or racism are various means by which our vision of the other is occluded through instrumentalization and dehumanization.³⁸ Solidarity is a means of seeing the other in their concrete reality and in their dignity. There is an implicit Kantian refrain of the categorical imperative echoing in John Paul II’s words. We do not see the other as a means to our own ends. Instead, we see them as their own ends. Or, as John Paul II says, we see them as neighbor and as helper, evoking here (as Ricœur did many years earlier) the narrative of the Good Samaritan.³⁹ It is easy to forget in this narrative that the big revelation is not that the man found by the side of the road is in need, but that it is the Samaritan, an ethnic other within Israel, who is neighbor to him. Solidarity does not replace the other as instrument with the other as the passive object of care. Instead, the other is seen like the Good Samaritan, as neighbor, as one who too has a capacity to contribute and help, that is to say, one who is capable.⁴⁰

Yet, the other is not necessarily the other encountered through interpersonal relations.

First, it is worth noting that John Paul II incorporates persons, peoples, and nations into the other

³⁷ John Paul II, “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,” 39.

³⁸ While not explicit, we could also add “misogyny” to this list of structural sins. John Paul II does not actually cite the Lukan parable of the Good Samaritan, but he does include a reference to genesis to this notion of the “helper.” Here, the biblical reference is to woman, who is created because man needed a helper. We might recall then all the ways in which a gender is figured as instrumental to male need within patriarchal society. The human other here is not diminished here by being seen as a helper, but instead identified as a capable agent.

³⁹ As I discussed in Chapter 3, Ricœur likewise explores the meaning of the Good Samaritan for ethics in his essay “Le socius et la prochaine.” See Ricœur, *Histoire et Vérité*, 113–27. Both use this narrative to extend our concern beyond the inter-personal to the social. In Chapter 7, I argue that solidarity is the closest analogue in this tradition to Ricœur’s responsibility for the fragile.

⁴⁰ This understanding of solidarity only more closely binds it to subsidiarity. Just as solidarity helps to see the other as capable, as a helper, as neighbor, Subsidiarity tries to institutionally protect this capacity to help by setting moral limits on the “help” given by other organizations (like the state) that might absorb or destroy a group by diminishing their capacity. This also links to Ricœur’s understanding of the capable self, now providing a moral virtue linked to seeing the other as capable.

seen through solidarity. The other is not atomized. Nor are they limited to those encountered in I-Thou relations. The other seen through solidarity could be whole swaths of communities, collectives, or aggregations.

Beyond the interpersonal or even regional, solidarity encompasses global interdependence. Even as Pius XI took into consideration global realities, social justice could be limited to the social polity of a nation state. Far more so than Pius's formulation of social justice, solidarity fits within the globalized world. The type of interdependence that he discusses is not limited to the boundaries of a nation but are operative even on an international scale. He is writing in a period where globalization is descriptive of our world. It is a call to see the other who works in the sweatshop who makes your shoes. It is a call to see the fellow Americans in Puerto Rico, suffering from a lack of clean water, scarce food, and electricity in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. It is a call to see the other of the Rohingya, suffering from massive human rights violations and ethnic cleansing across the globe.⁴¹ Solidarity is expressed as a care for institutions that is first and foremost a care for the persons to whom we are connected to us through institutions. In Chapter 8, I will propose that from the resources presented in *Laudato Si*, one can even extend solidarity to non-humans and even to the earth.

This dual presentation of care for persons and care for institutions is also seen in solidarity as a response to structures of evil. Structures of sin appear in this text as obstacles to the achievement of the common good, fostering a pervasive desire for profit or lust for action. In contrast to personal vices, however, structures of sin are maintained at the collective level and can become embedded within institutions. Solidarity is, according to the John Paul II, "diametrically opposed attitude: a commitment to the good of one's neighbor with the readiness,

⁴¹ "Rohingya Crisis," Human Rights Watch, accessed February 25, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/tag/rohingya-crisis>.

in the gospel sense, to ‘lose oneself’ for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to ‘serve him’ instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage.”⁴² Solidarity, parallels the commitment to the common good that one finds in Pius XI’s social justice, but now it is anchored specifically in the human other.

Thus far, I have largely remained with the humanist virtue of solidarity. Like in Thomistic ethics, John Paul II also suggests that the Christian life and God’s grace make possible additional virtues. Here, he identifies solidarity is not simply a humanistic virtue; it also has a theological form. The Christian virtue of solidarity calls the Christian to see other not merely as a human, but as the image of God, demanding more than self-enlightened reciprocity. He writes,

In the light of faith, solidarity seeks to go beyond itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimension of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. One's neighbor is then not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit. One's neighbor must therefore be loved, even if an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her; and for that person's sake one must be ready for sacrifice, even the ultimate one: to lay down one's life for the brethren.⁴³

Here, solidarity as a Christian virtue goes beyond the secular humanistic virtue, demanding more than interdependence. Akin to Pius XI’s “social charity,” Christian solidarity goes beyond the obligations of justice by requiring love of enemy and even self-sacrifice. Such solidarity is not modeled after natural interdependence but “the brotherhood of all in Christ” and even the intimate life of God as trinity.⁴⁴ Thus, John Paul II crafts a Christian humanism in which the church, identified as a communion of solidarity serves as a sacrament to the world, both making present God’s presence of solidarity, but also giving a forecast of what is to come.⁴⁵

⁴² John Paul II, “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,” 38.

⁴³ John Paul II, 40.

⁴⁴ John Paul II, 40.

⁴⁵ John Paul II, 40.

With social sin and solidarity, two new concepts are introduced to the CST tradition that significantly advance the ethic of institutions found therein. Both bear upon the institutions that mediate our lives. Social sin only resides in collective bodies. Solidarity, while present in interpersonal relations, extends in and through institutions. Solidarity thus parallels the earlier concept of social justice. Yet, both social sin and solidarity stand in the wake of the emphasis on the person. Social sin obscures the human other encountered through institutions. In contrast, solidarity transforms these relations, renewing our vision of this other as neighbor. Thus, an ethic of institutions is infused with the care for persons. This same care for persons also transforms the concern for institutional relations as subsidiarity is transformed to advance personalization and attend to the development of capacities of groups and persons.

Section 4: John Paull II on Subsidiarity as Personalization amidst Networks of Solidarity

Just as new concepts like solidarity are introduced to address a responsibility for institutions, now figured through the prism of the person, so too does the care for institutional relations become redefined in light of a turn to the person. A first way in which the principle of subsidiarity is reflected in the work of John Paul II, where the limits placed on the state can help contribute to the "personalization" of institutions and the increased solidarity of citizens. How is this reflected?

In his 1991 *Centessimus Annus*, John Paul II expresses similar concerns to Pius and Leo regarding intermediary social bodies such as the family or church being absorbed by the state. He calls attention to two contemporary political forms that affect this. The first is the totalitarian State, which in its communist form, he had spent the better part of his adult life combatting. He writes "[...] the totalitarian State tends to absorb within itself the nation, society, the family,

religious groups and individuals themselves.”⁴⁶ Such an absorption leads to the destruction of “spheres of autonomy and sovereignty.”

John Paul II is also critical of what he considers a less direct form of absorption found within the certain abuses of the modern welfare state, or what he calls the “Social Assistance State.” He writes, “By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the Social Assistance State leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending.”⁴⁷ A focus on this latter diagnosis could lead to the impression that John Paul II is primarily concerned with big government, overburdened and wasteful. Pairing this with his earlier call for “free exercise of economic activity,” one could easily bend his words to mark him out as solely concerned with “free markets.” One might also then read him as giving a blanket condemnation of all forms of the welfare state. Such an approach, however, misreads John Paul II. Far more illuminating to understanding his critique is the ambiguous phrase of “human energies,” a concept further illuminated through John Paul II’s notion of the subjectivity of society.

John Paul II held to a principle of increasing the “subjectivity of society.” Here, we should not simply identify society with the state but instead include within it the whole range of institutions from the family to different religious communities,⁴⁸ to the host of intermediary bodies that stand between the person and the state.⁴⁹ This myriad of institutions enables participation and shared responsibility by individuals and each of these institutions bear their

⁴⁶ John Paul II, “Centesimus Annus,” 44.

⁴⁷ John Paul II, 48.

⁴⁸ John Paul II, “Ut Unum Sint,” Vatican Website, May 25, 1995, 28, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html.

⁴⁹ John Paul II, “Centesimus Annus,” 13.

own distinct autonomy and integrity.⁵⁰ This pluralistic view of society maintains a respect for the distinct autonomy and integrity of the full range of institutions in civic life, including those that serve to support persons within the state. Increasing the subjectivity of societies can be taken as shorthand for respecting the integrity of the myriad of intermediary institutions and increasing participation and ownership by persons within them. To destroy the subjectivity of society is to render individuals and persons as mere objects,⁵¹ in part through the absorption and destruction of the myriad of groups in which a person realizes their social nature.⁵² John Paul II's concern then with the Social Assistance State is that it would absorb other intermediary associations that serve the role of supporting persons, including the church, depriving sites of solidarity and participation by replacing them with the state. The state, on his view, should not be the sole agent supporting individuals, but nevertheless should be an instrument towards solidarity all the same.⁵³ One can raise critiques of his treatment of the welfare state, both in the accuracy of his depiction of it and the fittingness of his critique,⁵⁴ but for my purposes, I am more keen to understand how this concept of the subjectivity of the state inflects on solidarity.

⁵⁰ Daniel Finn distinguishes between a libertarian economist like Friedrich Hayek, who holds to a methodological individualism in which groups are simply characterized by the actions and responses of persons and John Paul II, who would hold to the distinct, organic unity of social bodies, which bear their own histories, purposes, and lives. See Dan Finn, "Commentary on *Centesimus Annus*," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth Himes (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 450.

⁵¹ John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis," 15.

⁵² John Paul II, "Centesimus Annus," 13.

⁵³ Quoting Hittinger, Finn writes "the state is an instrument of, rather than the substance of, human solidarity." Finn, "Commentary on *Centesimus Annus*," 451.

⁵⁴ With this more nuanced critique in hand, it is worth asking whether it in fact accurately condemns the modern welfare state. To take just one instance, in France, there is subsidized day care provided to families. Rather than simply being provided for by the state at the national level, there is an arrangement made between the national government, regional government, and local government to finance these operations. Administration of these day cares do not take place at the national level, but instead are operated locally (albeit, in accord with national guidelines). Here, it is not apparent to me that a government supported day care system eliminates the

What we can derive from this is that subsidiarity is not first and foremost an economic principle of freedom or a political principle of efficiency. Instead, it is concerned with the human dimension of communities. John Paul II writes, “Here again *the principle of subsidiarity* must be respected: a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.”⁵⁵ Here, we should note certain similarities to Pius’s initial definition.

Subsidiarity is initially named from *subsidium*, or assistance, as it describes how an institution might provide assistance to other organizations. In this citation, we see a similar emphasis, though coordinated with an eye towards the common good. The autonomy of spheres does not mean that communities are not beholden to one another, nor to the commonwealth. If anything, the state can help direct and orient to this common good.

Whereas Pius XI simply talks about the destruction or absorption of a community, John Paul II discusses interference an internal order and the depriving of a community’s function. This

subjectivity of society, and if anything, by financing what can otherwise be infrequently available services, creates more opportunities for these types of institutions. Even more, such institutions could even be governed by a principle of subsidiarity, empowering local leadership and decision-making. Perhaps instead the critique might be one of a homogenization of social forms as the state becomes the sole provider of different forms. This is, I would suggest, a more accurate treatment of John Paul’s critique, which is precisely concerned with the integrity of these lower organizations. Would, for example, the creation of government run soup kitchens necessarily destroy the distinct character and community formed by a place like the Catholic Social Worker. Here, I would doubt that a welfare state would necessarily lead to the closing down of such houses of hospitality, yet one would not fault the disappearance of soup kitchens as a result of there being no more hunger. Many charities, after all, try to work themselves out of business. But we might find a model for preserving such distinctiveness in a place like the U.S. (which is not a welfare state) where the government, through grants, helps support and finance non-profits like Catholic Charities or “Su Casa,” a catholic worker house devoted to supporting at risk women without absorbing them. Nonetheless, it is beyond the scope of this project to engage in an in-depth analysis of the modern welfare state in its many iterations.

⁵⁵John Paul II, “Centesimus Annus,” 48.

too modifies and expands how we might understand what it is to destroy or absorb. This need not mean the extreme case, already identified with totalitarian regimes, where the state absorbs into itself all other associations, including the family. A violation of the principle of subsidiary could allow communities to exist, but nonetheless interfere with/assist them in such a way that they are unable to function as they ought. For example, a state could “help” in the selection of religious leaders or censor their sermons. Similarly, it could render parental authority subordinate to state authority, encouraging children to report on their parents. That these examples can already be found in totalitarian regimes in recent history illustrates the challenge is discerning these more insidious examples of assistance.

What constitutes interference versus assistance is not explored here. Discerning this line might simply be a matter of prudence. For example, Gardens for Health is a nonprofit that hires and trains local mothers to give workshops for families in Rwanda on healthy nutrition. In many respects, this could be considered an interference with the proper role of the family. But given the widespread and long-lasting damages of malnutrition and the breakdown of the transmission of culinary knowledge by the genocide of and destruction of a generation, such assistance seems not only needed, but incredibly helpful.

Jean Bethke Elshtain reports of a similar turn to experts in her own experience at home-economics, but reaches quite the opposite conclusion. She reports of a professional expert being brought in to explain to convey to all the mothers of the children in this home-economics class that new science of child-rearing. Upon asking and learning that this expert had no children of her own, Elshtain’s mother left the room. Elshtain surmises that this was not simply a matter of privileging first-person experience. Instead, that her mom “would not countenance was the presumption of the managers, the engineers, the promulgators of programs, convinced always

that they knew better than the undereducated actually involved in doing such things as child-rearing, farming, sewing, preparing food—the presumption that led the "experts" to attempt to eviscerate local knowledge in the name of progress."⁵⁶ Here, the expert does not appear to support but instead displace. These two cases seem to indicate that perhaps one cannot simply deduce what constitutes interference or support. Perhaps instead, a more prudential evaluation is necessary.

One of the most significant changes that we see is the adoption of the language of community. John Paul II still employs the language of higher and lower, now modifying "order." Rather than using the language of associations or organizations, however, he uses the language of communities. This might lead one to think that he is restricting subsidiarity to associations which might be understood classically as communities: churches, neighborhoods, cities, families. Instead, I would suggest that he is dramatically expanding how we think about communities. Each institution and organization, ranging from the corporation to the family is a community.

This interpretation of subsidiarity in John Paul II's work as being concerned with the subjective nature of a vast array of communities is warranted through looking at the concept of personalization and solidarity. Whereas the welfare state would absorb the role of intermediary groups, leading to a centralization and bureaucratization of care, John Paul II stresses that this precludes a certain human dimension of care that is vital alongside the material care that can be provided. He writes,

It would appear that needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbours to those in need. It should be added that certain kinds of demands often call for a response which is not simply material but which is capable of perceiving the deeper human need. One thinks of the condition of refugees, immigrants, the elderly, the sick, and all those in circumstances which call for assistance, such as drug

⁵⁶ Jean Bethke Elshtain, "My Mother, the Expert," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life*, no. 16 (October 1991): 12.

abusers: all these people can be helped effectively only by those who offer them genuine fraternal support, in addition to the necessary care.⁵⁷

Captured in John Paul II's diagnosis is the common-sense claim that people close to the matter at hand can see people in need as more than just a statistic or number but as actual humans. If, for example, loneliness is determined to be a health epidemic, as recently captured in Britain's turn to appoint a "minister of loneliness,"⁵⁸ there is something counterfactual about solely locating the responsibility for addressing this within the hands of a national government. One can object to a certain depiction of the welfare state here. It might seem that John Paul II's analysis is far closer to a twentieth-century depiction of "socialism" than a twenty-first-century description of actuality.

But the specifics are far less important to me than the broad principles which become articulated in response. John Paul II's understanding of the importance of institutions as communities leads to a principled claim about their importance in fostering personalization and solidarity. He argues, "Apart from the family, other intermediate communities exercise primary functions and give life to specific networks of solidarity. These develop as real communities of persons and strengthen the social fabric, preventing society from becoming an anonymous and impersonal mass, as unfortunately often happens today. It is in interrelationships on many levels that a person lives, and that society becomes more 'personalized.'"⁵⁹ Intermediary institutions, ranging from non-profits to corporations, to religious communities serve not only as sites where our social needs can be fulfilled as members of them, but also as those who might interact with them, we can be seen not as objects or numbers, but as humans. Even institutions held commonly

⁵⁷ John Paul II, "Centesimus Annus," 48.

⁵⁸ Ceylan Yeginsu, "U.K. Appoints a Minister for Loneliness," *The New York Times*, January 17, 2018, sec. Europe, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/17/world/europe/uk-britain-loneliness.html>.

⁵⁹ John Paul II, "Centesimus Annus," 48.

as problematic, like check cashing stores and payday loan services can serve as sites for recognition and encounter in a culture in an age where traditional financial institutions like banks are leading towards greater impersonalization and anonymity through the disappearance of the personal teller with conveniences like online banking, mobile phone check deposits, and ATMs.

⁶⁰ Intermediary institutions serve as vital sites for not only becoming human, but also being recognized as a human by another.

If, as I have argued, within the CST tradition the care for institutions becomes a subspecies of the care for persons, in John Paul II's contributions to CST, I see this extended as well to the care for institutional relations. Subsidiarity is not simply a defense of free markets and small government, though writing in the wake of the fall of the communism in Europe, he does indeed seem to resonate with arguments for economic creativity.⁶¹ Instead, according to my interpretation of him, subsidiarity protects the possibility of personalization and networks of solidarity within various spheres and at the various levels of institutional relations. Subsidiarity, then, is not just the protection of autonomous and sovereign spheres, but instead, a preservation of networks of solidarity with their own proper function. This link to solidarity is one key way in which an emphasis on the person is preserved and developed in CST. A final critical development that unfolds from this emphasis on the person in subsidiarity is a focus on its role in promoting the development of human capacities of groups and persons.

⁶⁰ Lisa Servon, *The Unbanking of America: How the New Middle Class Survives*, 1 edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

⁶¹ Cf. John Paul II, "Centesimus Annus," 15.

Section 5: Benedict XVI and Francis on Subsidiarity as the Development of Human Capacities

While this traditional understanding of subsidiarity persists in Benedict XVI's first social encyclical, a second strand of the principle of subsidiarity in the post-leonine era is fashioned by Benedict XVI around a concept of development of persons and groups and is later taken up by Francis. In Benedict's first social encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, he largely employs an understanding of subsidiarity that parallels John Paul II's understanding. Benedict reiterates a concern regarding the all-encompassing state that dates all the way back to Leo and Pius. He asserts that a government which "would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern."⁶² Instead, Benedict suggest that the principle of subsidiarity leads a state to "generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces and combines spontaneity with closeness to those in need."⁶³ Subsidiarity follows a concern for personalization already raised by John Paul II. Indeed, this facet of subsidiarity is reinforced in *Caritas in Veritate*, where Benedict stresses a reciprocal relationship between solidarity and subsidiarity.⁶⁴

In *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict also picks up and develops another thread, present in the tradition—freedom—transforming it, however, "through the principle of development." Subsidiarity as freedom is implicit in an early understanding of subsidiarity and is reinforced by

⁶² Benedict XVI, "Deus Caritas Est," Vatican Website, December 25, 2005, 28, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html.

⁶³ Benedict XVI, 28.

⁶⁴ Benedict XVI, "Caritas in Veritate," 58.

various popes over time. Paul VI warns against collectivization threatening “human liberty,”⁶⁵ and John Paul II calls for “intermediary bodies” to experience their own autonomy.⁶⁶ What is unique in Benedict’s adoption of freedom is the further step that he takes in linking freedom to a principle of development. To put it another way, subsidiary ensures the possibility of the development of capacities of groups and the persons who form them.

Benedict develops this theme around the reciprocal relationship established by the *subsidium* or “assistance” that is at the root of subsidiarity. He writes, “Subsidiarity is first and foremost a form of assistance to the human person via the autonomy of intermediate bodies. Such assistance is offered when individuals or groups are unable to accomplish something on their own, and it is always designed to achieve their emancipation, because it fosters freedom and participation through assumption of responsibility. Subsidiarity respects personal dignity by recognizing in the person a subject who is always capable of giving something to others.”⁶⁷ Subsidiarity, then, establishes a positive principle, by ensuring that help is provided in such a way to ensure “emancipation,” by enabling groups and persons to participate in the help that is being provided. Rather than treating organizations as hierarchies of passivity, with only higher organizations working actively to support lower organizations, subsidiarity as reciprocity holds groups to be both passive and acting bodies, receiving help, but within limits, so as to also give help themselves, and in the process participate in activity and responsibility.

Now, the theme of development dates back to Paul VI’s 1967 social encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* where, as I mentioned above, Paul adopts the category of development from economics, but transforms it, calling for an “authentic development” that “[fosters] the

⁶⁵ Paul VI, “*Populorum Progressio*,” 33.

⁶⁶ John Paul II, “*Laborem Exercens*,” 14.

⁶⁷ Benedict XVI, “*Caritas in Veritate*,” 57.

development of each man and of the whole man.”⁶⁸ Here, we see this same humanistic emphasis on the person inaugurated with Pius XII, now set in the more active picture of development that helps guarantee man’s “transition from less than human conditions to truly human one’s.”⁶⁹ Not only, then, does the human become the barometer of the common good in one’s own country, but it is the measure of success of campaigns, both at home and abroad to “develop countries.”

This encyclical was poorly received in its own time, particularly by liberation theologians like Gustavo Gutiérrez. These theologians question the scope of this category. Gutiérrez writes, “We think that the word ‘development’ does not well express those profound aspirations. ‘Liberation’ seems more exact and richer in overtones; besides, it opens up a more fertile field for theological reflection.”⁷⁰ Gutiérrez identifies that this very category was poorly viewed in Latin America. One result of this round rejection here and with *Humanae Vita* is that after this latter encyclical, Paul VI never published another encyclical. Even his 80th commemoration of *Rerum Novarum* was written as an apostolic letter.

While Paul VI’s encyclical was poorly received in its own time, it nonetheless influenced different strands in the tradition. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, already discussed above, is written on the 20th anniversary of *Populorum Progressio* and is concerned with relations across nations and introduces the category of integral development. Authentic development is also taken up by Benedict XVI, who, as we shall see, draws it fruitfully into the orbit and understanding of the principle of subsidiarity.

Benedict’s *Caritas in Veritate* sets development into constellation with principle of subsidiarity, identifying the latter as suited to direct towards the former. Benedict takes here an

⁶⁸ Paul VI, “Populorum Progressio,” 14.

⁶⁹ Paul VI, 20.

⁷⁰ Gutiérrez M. Gustavo, “Notes for a Theology of Liberation,” *Theological Studies* 31, no. 2 (May 1, 1970): 243, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056397003100201>.

external understanding of globalization and development, identifying that subsidiarity is fit for this task because “It is able to take account both of the manifold articulation of plans — and therefore of the plurality of subjects — as well as the coordination of those plans.”⁷¹ Because subsidiarity works against monolithic depictions of institutional relations, it is able to help actors achieve the extrinsic goal of development in complex, globalized, and pluralistic contexts.

Yet, one can also note an implicit link between the principle of subsidiarity and an intrinsic achievement of authentic development. While Benedict frames subsidiarity in terms of freedom, he does not draw upon a negative model of freedom. Instead, he deploys a more positive concept of freedom, writing, “Such assistance is offered when individuals or groups are unable to accomplish something on their own, and it is always designed to achieve their emancipation, because it fosters freedom and participation through assumption of responsibility. Subsidiarity respects personal dignity by recognizing in the person a subject who is always capable of giving something to others.”⁷² While subsidiarity is set in relations of assistance, the language of emancipation and the recognition of the capabilities of other signals an important trend in subsidiarity and development. Subsidiarity does not just coordinate development externally but located internal to the dynamics of subsidiarity is a concern for the liberation and development of persons.

This folding of development into subsidiarity is made explicit within Francis’s *Laudato Si*. Whereas Benedict speaks of responsibility and development, Francis makes even more explicit the connection between the subsidiarity and the development of groups and persons as he links subsidiary to the development of capabilities. He writes, “Let us keep in mind the principle of subsidiarity, which grants freedom to develop the capabilities present at every level of society,

⁷¹ Benedict XVI, “Caritas in Veritate,” 57.

⁷² Benedict XVI, 57.

while also demanding a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power.”⁷³ Here, subsidiarity is geared towards the integral development of society by ensuring the enhancement of the capacities of intermediate groups and, in turn, the persons who form these groups.

Why might this new emphasis on development of capacities be important and relevant? First, they reiterate once more the folding of care for institutions and institutional relations under a broader theme of the care for persons, thus contributing to a more integral account of institutions. As I identified above, the role of institutions developing capacities is present across the tradition and is found even in Leo’s earliest documents.⁷⁴ Incorporating this concern into subsidiarity more fully integrates the care for persons, institutions, and institutional relations, and allows for metrics beyond the mere preservation of institutions to measure their health.

Moreover, in Benedict and Francis, we can also see the benefit of this new articulation of subsidiarity to the issues that they are focusing on. Benedict’s *Caritas in Veritate* is concerned with global integral development, looking at the growth and enhancement of the common good on a global scale. A myopic vision of subsidiarity and development can focus simply on material matters, ensuring that support devolves to the lowest level. A turn towards a model of subsidiarity informed by integral development identifies that the very principle of subsidiarity contributes towards development by ensuring the growth of agency and responsibility at multiple levels. This can enable not simply local distribution and local decision-making, but it also promotes local creative resourcefulness.

This is all the more pronounced as one looks to the issue of the environment raised by Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si*. While human action is currently causing environmental

⁷³ Francis, “Laudato Si’,” 196.

⁷⁴ Cf. Leo XIII, “Immortale Dei,” 8.

harm on a global scale, contributing towards climate change and other broader environmental issues, most manifestations environmental issues are local. It is not rivers that are polluted, but the Willamette river, not all forest are clear-cut, but the Tillamook State Forest. Yet, individual action alone is often insufficient. Rather than an exclusive appeal to national efforts like the Environmental Protection Agency (the EPA) or even international efforts like the Paris Climate Accords or a naive appeal to individual action like recycling, an integrated approach needs to acknowledge the importance of the full range of intermediary bodies which range from the condo board that governs your small community, to local communities, to even broader non-governmental state and international efforts that exist. Building capacity at each of these levels is essential to treating issues that have local and global impacts.

Not only is subsidiarity as development of capability instructive for better understanding the merit and metrics of subsidiarity and institutional relations, but it is particularly suited to addressing some of the major problems of our time. Further, this does not fall into a myopic vision of focusing solely on local efforts or international efforts but calls for the increase of capacity at every level.

Conclusion

Across the past two chapters I have traced the development of a care for institutions and institutional relations across the history of the CST tradition. In Chapter 5, I argued that such an ethic of institutions exists from the very beginnings of CST, refined in the early tradition through a constellation of concepts developed in the CST tradition: A social picture of the human person that interfaces with “necessary societies” by which we achieve happiness. A care for institutions is expressed through a constellation of concepts in early CST: the common good, social justice, and subsidiarity. In this chapter, I argued that this ethic of institutions undergoes a significant

shift resulting from a turn to the human person inaugurated with Pius XII's Christmas messages during WWII, but that is extended through subsequent popes to address each of these concepts or to develop new, parallel concepts, such as solidarity. This study reveals a consistent but dynamic concern for institutions within the CST tradition and an intellectual apparatus to treat their ends, their adjudication, and the motivating obligations we each have to work for their betterment.

With these chapters, I have established an ethic of institutions found implicit within the CST tradition that is on par with the ethic that I reconstructed over the first four chapters of this dissertation from Ricœur's work. While I have not treated each of parallels to the concepts reconstructed from Ricœur, I have nonetheless highlighted central themes that resonate across these two traditions of thought. This includes a picture of the person as inherently social who only becomes human through institutions, a teleological vision of institutions, norms for adjudicating institutional conflict, an emphasis on persons as central to the analysis and evaluation of institutions, and a recognition of the role institutions play in the flourishing of capacities of institutions and their members.

These resonances enable the further work of identifying substantive disagreement. While both acknowledge a substantive teleological understanding of institutions, Ricœur's work takes the further step through Rawls of passing these teleological goods through the deontological sieve of justice. The CST tradition develops a more robust account of the common good, which operates at large scale levels to coordinate the whole, while also using the flourishing human person as a rule or measure of this good. Both develop accounts of care for institutions which respond to the fragilities of others.

Such profound accord and rich disagreement makes possible the final steps of this dissertation. In the Chapter 7, I draw Ricœur and CST into contrast, arguing that while Ricœur

provides a powerful framework, it remains thin in ways that fail to illustrate the productivity of thinking from within an institutional frame. I propose the possibility of amendment by the CST tradition precisely at the level of considered convictions. In the Chapter 8, I draw both of these together in order to consider the pressing issue of environmental degradation.

Part IV: Towards an inter-institutional ethic for our global world

Over the past six chapters, I have reconstructed two different forms of institutional ethics, a Ricœurian model that draws on phenomenology, dialectic, and hermeneutics and a CST model, rooted in a traditional natural law approach but that later develops through a turn to personalism. Throughout, I have stressed that my work is a reconstruction by drawing together synthetically from across the career of Ricœur and from across the span of popes from the CST tradition. This tactic of reading has been necessary given the developments across each body of work. Even as Ricœur's treatment of institutions spans his career, he never provides a monograph of his account, thus leading me to devote significant portions of my argument to developing a subjective moral concern for institutions and a robust account of institutions and inter-institutional relations. I have tried to think with but beyond Ricœur about an ethics for institutions. The CST tradition is a social ethic that has been concerned from the outset with the good of the polity and inter-institutional relations (largely in response to worries about encroachment from the state across the realms of family, education, and church). Yet, even with a focus on institutions, developments over time also require reconstructive work to synthetically draw them together. Thus, over two chapters, I reconstructed this ethic of CST, first establishing the ethic of institutions as found in the leonine period, and then tracing the unfolding developments resulting from a new emphasis on the human person.

But to what end does one bring these in conversation? Certainly, it is vital to argue for our personal obligation for the broad assortment of institutions that we form a part is essential in a society where we become increasingly numb to institutional injustice. Comparison, though, is not necessary for this point, and simply to populate the field with more theories of social responsibility and institutional ethics presses without proving its importance.

Comparison can illustrate the respective strengths and weaknesses of these two reconstructed institutional ethics. By lifting out how great thinkers have dealt with issues differently, one can weigh and assess the respective powers and limits of each in a way that can be more illustrative than the internal comparison that has already been achieved through each of these chapters or through a mere analysis.

But in both Chapters 7 and 8, I hold out, for a more constructive possibility. There are ways in which these traditions respective powers and limits complement each other in order to make possible something more than each provides on its own. From them both, I argue, it is possible to develop an “inter-institutional ethic,” that can take the best of Ricœur’s framework, while nourishing it with the rich convictions born from the reflections of the CST tradition. In Chapter 7, I will compare Ricœur and CST, arguing that Ricœur provides a valuable structure that remains nonetheless overly abstract, lacking a more substantive concrete engagement with institutions. This, invites CST to correct and amend him. This will pave the way for Chapter 8, where I draw on both Ricœur and CST to propose an inter-institutional environmental ethic that can show the fecundity of the care for institutions and the concern for institutional relations.

Chapter 7: Ricœur and CST on Institutional Ethics—Inimical or Complimentary?

The past six chapters have demonstrated a robustness of institutional thinking in both Ricœur and the CST tradition. Along the way, I have named some of the rich overlaps. Nonetheless, these two bodies of work are born from different contexts, histories, modes of argumentation, religious backgrounds, and even different commitments. This even leads to different ways of warranting argument and understanding fundamental concepts like justice. If we were to follow Alasdair MacIntyre, this might even mean that they represent different traditions all together. How might an ethic of institutions designed for a politically liberal environment speak to traditions of inquiry born from the ongoing conversations internal communities, even as they are directed beyond them? Does this lead, as MacIntyre might suggest, to incoherence and intractability at the level of dialogue? I argue that rather than inimical, these differences (and similarities) can be rendered productive, even constructive.

In this brief chapter, I will summarize core portions of the models that I have reconstructed, focusing on (1) subjective care for institutions (responsibility/obligation), (2) institutions as moral forms, and (3) inter-institutional relations. This summary will lift out the most salient elements for comparison from Chapters 1-6, and help illustrate both resonances, but key differences in the institutional ethics that I have reconstructed. On the whole, my comparison will suggest differences at the level of specificity, but nonetheless, key resonances that make a comparison fruitful.

Ricœur's work is powerful, but found wanting. My deep admiration for Ricœur is demonstrated by four chapters resulting from the thoroughgoing archival work that led me through a career worth of social and political writings. I have sought to show coherence across his thought and illustrate the productive capacity of his work on responsibility and institutions.

But it is an institutional ethic that begs for an institution which can give it flesh. Such institutions cannot simply be inserted without accounting for the ways the moral concepts inherent in them press against the understanding of the person, of the nature of the institution (and the relation of the person to it), of the role and interrelation of other institutions.

I argue that, because of the flexibility and suppleness built into his work, the CST tradition can support and even correct Ricœur's work. While Ricœur presents an impressive framework that exemplifies well the ways in which we are caught up in institutions and illustrates the challenges posed by institutional pluralism, his appeal to practical wisdom without a clearer sense of the convictions that guide one leaves a serious open question. It leaves Ricœur with a thin account, capable of functioning in multiple institutional spheres, but wanting for specific institutional contexts. What my work with CST has illustrated is that occasional writings born in response to the very particular challenges of social living can not only generate principles, but also dynamically reform them over time. CST also represents the possibility of a sharper critique of culture than might be allowed by the robust but nonetheless limited resources that Ricœur recovers from Rawls. Yet, we find a thicker account that is rendered almost at times almost glacial. While I illustrate over this chapter the respective powers and limits of these traditions when read against each other, ultimately, I seek to show that they are not inimical, but that this Ricœur's thin account (flexible enough for a politically liberal society) can be nourished by the thick convictions forged in the occasional writings of the CST tradition. Their points of resonance make disagreement possible and their points of conflict can be rendered productive. In synthesizing Ricœur and CST at the stage of inter-institutional relations, one not only can help fill in something wanting in Ricœur, but provide the possibility of a sharper correction of our broader culture.

Section 1: The Care of Institutions

In this dissertation, I have argued for the importance of a care for institutions. I chose this term not because it is endemic to either tradition of inquiry (though Ricœur does mention the term in one essay),¹ but because it captures a key component, perhaps taken for granted in communitarian systems but found wanting in an a more atomistic age. We need to cultivate, in theory and practice, a subjective concern for the institutions of which we form a part as moral social bodies. Before turning to institutions qua institutions, this dissertation started with the pressing subjective question, why do we care about institutions.

Rather than starting from more self-interested accounts, a care for the institution as that which benefits me, I took up and argued for an other-regarding care for institutions. This began by looking at the account of responsibility within Ricœur's work. Across his career, responsibility plays a central role in his thought, identified early as an achievement of the person and later as a central capability in the developing capable self. While there certainly is a robust literature for exploring a positional responsibility, the responsibility that one holds according to the role one holds in an institution, my own worry is that this invites an incremental care that leaves the majority washing their hands, while the minority in positions of power with the most responsibility, but also the least impetus to change.

Yet, one cannot simply do away with agential modeled responsibility. It is, as Ricœur notes, a moral achievement, linking agent to action. Further, it legitimates any actual legal accountability that can be demanded of institutional actors, be they persons within organizations (CEOs, bishops, principles, managers) or the legal person of the institutional bodies themselves (corporations, archdioceses, universities).

¹ See Ricœur, "L'éthique, la morale et la règle."

In Ricœur, I found and argued for a twofold model of responsibility: 1.) an agential account, rooted in a person's action, largely retrospective in scope, and exhausted by the limits of capacity; and 2.) a social responsibility, prospective in scope, anchored and evoked in the fragile other, demanding greater expansion of personal and collective capacity, and extended in due course over institutions. The former fits our traditional understanding of how responsibility is attributed to others and imputed to oneself. The latter, developed from multiple sources, presses us to consider the broader ways in which we experience the call to take responsibility.

As I have already argued, I am not setting up two distinct domains, with institutions being anathema to agential responsibility. This would be a regression. Yet, institutions do press the limits of our capacity to connect to these social bodies as agents. As vast bodies of organized collective action, my own contribution can seem tiny. This leads one to ask, am I only responsible for the small actions I take and omit? In the face of institutional injustices, it might seem that the easiest way of unloading the burden of shame is voluntary disengagement, not reformation.

I have identified that in Ricœur, we are also called by the other to take responsibility for the fragile other. I take responsibility for the child born into my life, not simply because I beget it, but because of its very vulnerability. This iconic image is extended not only to the politician, who also takes responsibility for the fragile others in their midst, but in fact to all persons. In turn, this responsibility for the fragile other extends also to the domains that amplify human fragility, including the whole host of institutions that mediate our shared life together.

One of the strengths of this model of care for institutions is the very reliance on the language of responsibility. While we often rely upon the more limited account of agential responsibility to identify those who should be held accountable and the limits of one's own

responsibility, this does not exhaust our experience of responsibility. Responsibility can also be expansive, pushing each to work with others to better our world for the sake of the vulnerable, not merely out of altruism or supererogatory acts of good, but out of a real sense of obligation.

In this reconstructed model, however, responsibility does not tell us what to do. In contrast to thinkers like H. Richard Niebuhr with more substantive understandings of responsibility, Ricœur provides a thin account of responsibility as that which impresses a subjective sense of obligation, without actually detailing what one ought to do. One experiences obligation without knowing how one ought act. On my account, this requires a turn to institutions as moral bodies in which one reflects on justice. Yet, this also presses further questions. Does responsibility run all the way down? If this is a social model of responsibility, it would seem to extend to all persons who experience this call. Does this mean that the fragile are also responsible? The victims? There is a common-sense rejection of extending responsibility to the victims, as it seems heaping insult to injury and misplaces attention.

Such a sentiment confuses the two accounts of responsibility. No, we do not hold victims “accountable.” Nevertheless, we still must also make sense of the experience of responsibility that lead victims to speak up, not only for themselves, but in the interest of preventing future victims. We must also make sense of the historic victims who work to reform institutions as in the civil rights movement. These are not simply acts of self-interest, but a rising to the call of responsibility for all rendered vulnerable by unjust institutions. One might say that many do not feel this responsibility. Here, we might also recall that responsibility is not deemed automatic in either the history of humans or the history of individual lives but instead an achievement. The failure of people to hear and attend to the cry of the vulnerable might speak more to our social system than to the absence or presence of responsibility.

How does this compare to the CST tradition? I will present Ricœur as developing a thin account and CST a thick account but ultimately identify that they do not appear intrinsically anathema. In Chapters 5 and 6, I highlighted two ways in which this subjective care for institutions is expressed. First, I looked to Pius XI's introduction of the concept of "social justice" into the CST tradition. Adapted from Aquinas's concept of general justice, this concept both speaks to the obligation that each have to the social polity, measured according to the common good, in its maintenance and its reform, as well as the obligation of the social body to ensure the capacity of each to contribute.²

I argued that not only does this extend to the broader polity of which we form a part, but that the common good and social justice could be analogously be applied to each of the institutions of which we form a part. This enables not simply the good of the family to be understood according to the larger common good within which it is nested, but also according to the distinct goods of the family. One's obligation to these social bodies does not simply arise as well as an extension of political responsibility as citizen, but also as a distinct responsibility to each of these social bodies.

² One possible issue with engaging with the CST tradition is that it is a theological tradition, leading some to presume it cannot speak to or dialogue with citizens of other religious traditions or those of no religion. It treats the common good as we find it within the family or the polity as well as ever wider common goods, including the human species, the earth, and even all of creation. At each level there is a relation to God, who is the ultimate common good of all. Does this render a conversation people of other religions or even no-religions impossible? Far from it. While a robust engagement with the CST tradition is enriched by shared theological convictions, it operates at multiple levels, enabling an inclusive engagement with non-religious spheres, while offering thicker accounts to bolster catholic contexts and to enable robust dialogue in interreligious contexts. A commitment, however, to a shared human condition runs through the tradition from its early reliance on natural law and its later incorporation of the social sciences. Even contestable guiding principles such as a relational anthropology and a substantive common good (distinct from the aggregate of individual goods) are drawn out of the dialogue with non-Catholic sources (most notably Aristotle). They do not require theistic accounts to be enacted in society, even as theistic claims serve to relativize and circumscribe the domain and authority of the political.

Three initial differences stand out between a care for institutions understood through social justice and Ricœur. First, most obviously, the theme under which falls this care is not responsibility but instead the obligation to justice. For people operating solely according to a legal or even distributive sense of justice, this would seem to mark off a larger difference than it is, for justice is typically the province of particular actors like judges and particular institutions. After all, justice is a matter of the courts and of the political polity. But the CST Tradition roots itself in a Thomistic account of justice, that itself is reliant on Aristotle. While distributive justice does tend to concern itself with those in positions of authority, be it a parent or be it a politician, commutative justice can be between any two legal persons within a society. Already then, classic models of justice are not confined to legal institutions. This finds its warrant in the fact that justice, according to this tradition, is a virtue which resides within the giver. Thus, while falling under different names, both responsibility and social justice can be extended to each within an institution.

Second, in contrast to Ricœur's model of responsibility, CST already incorporates the moral norms to guide one's action into the very concept of obligation. The person is not obliged to the particular justice found between interpersonal relations, but instead to the common good itself of a social body. Even as the common good requires further description, this social justice sets the moral norm. For Ricœur, responsibility is but a threshold to a more complex moral adjudication of institutions.

A final distinct feature of social justice in CST is that the object which anchors obligation is not to the distant, fragile other, as one finds in Ricœur's most mature account of social responsibility, but instead to the social polity as a whole. As we shall see, there is a later shift

with the introduction of solidarity to a similar focus on persons. First, though, we may ask, what are the powers and limits of such an account?

By focusing on social bodies, the obligation to social justice conforms much more closely to the very moral norm which guides it. After all, social bodies in the early CST tradition do not just exist on their own, but are understood teleologically and, thus, exist for purpose of particular goals or aims that unite and draw people together. Before anything else, a common good is to be understood as just that, the goal which unites a people to act in common. When one adds the further layer of the intrinsic good of the mode of acting together, then one can assess not only the goods being achieved, but also the means by which one acts to achieve them.

But this concept is limited in so far as it restricts itself to well recognized social bodies and presumes a relatively narrow usage of natural law. In a global age the effects of institutions often extend well past clearly defined polities, and the public interest of a polity can collide and steamroll over the interests of the vulnerable outside of that polity. Thus, while social justice usefully recalls the obligation of each for the social body, it flounders in an age of looser bonds and longer chains of action.

In CST, we find an additional resource that parallels social justice and more closely resonates with Ricœur's responsibility for the fragile with John Paul II's introduction of the concept of solidarity. In Chapter 6, I detail how solidarity is not bound and circumscribed to any one people or any one nation, but is a global phenomenon, recognizing the myriad of ways in which we fail to see the other as neighbor. Like with Ricœur's responsibility, solidarity is not first and foremost concerned with the institution. Instead, solidarity takes the neighbor as its departure point. Subsequently, solidarity extends care and concern over institutions, particularly

as they become sites of structural sin. Informed by personalism, solidarity brings in a person-centered engagement with institutions.

In contrast to Ricœur's position, solidarity has substantive moral content. Against the common misconception that solidarity is simply an emotion, John Paul II maintains that solidarity expresses a firm commitment to the common good of another. We have, then, a wedding of both the particular concern found in personalism and the concern of social justice for the common good. This enables solidarity to attend to particular persons without reducing solidarity to the advancement of personal goods. Yet, as with social justice, this moral obligation does not find its moral norm within itself, in solidarity qua solidarity, but instead by reference to an extrinsic but shared reference, the common good.

With solidarity, we also have a final, vital distinction from Ricœur's responsibility: the possibility of a theologically laden understanding of solidarity that can supplement (without replacing or diminishing) a secular account. Ricœur's subjective account of responsibility remains wholly secular. It stays at the level of the phenomenon of being called without introducing religious modes by which this call may be experienced.³ For John Paul II, solidarity operates at two distinct levels: 1.) as a universal human phenomenon in which we recognize the other as bearing equal human dignity, and 2.) at a religious level in which, for the Christian, solidarity enables one to not simply see the other as human, but also as Christ present. The former is open to all persons. The latter is sustained by Christian beliefs and practices (such as the corporal works of mercy) and makes possible dialogue amidst difference with articulations of

³ Essays like "Le soi mandaté. À l'école des récits de vocation prophétique" however, indicate spaces where Ricœur does think more theologically about these issues. This essay, along with "Le soi dans le miroir des Écritures" were initially a part of his Gifford Lectures, but were not included in *Oneself as Another*, presumably because of their religious content. They can be found in Paul Ricœur, *Amour et Justice*, Points . Essais (Paris: Éditions Points, 2008).

the other in different religious traditions. While more laden than Ricœur's responsibility, the versatility of this concept allows for a public, secular discourse, while connecting to the various communities that can make such a practice tenable.

One of the potential weaknesses of Ricœur's own account of responsibility is a deferral of the moral norms that help direct one's action. As I argued above, he does not provide a substantive account of responsibility (where norms are built into the concept/phenomenon) but locates the norms elsewhere (in symbolic structures that must then pass through the sieve of the deontic). While the concern for the fragile other appears to be fundamental, one can read his work as indicating that the specific norms that guide one to action arise in part from institutions, conventions, and beliefs. This is an apt description, but it becomes problematic as one seeks guiding principles to adjudicate between different institutions. In contrast, the CST tradition directly incorporates its moral norm with the concept of the common good in both social justice and solidarity. This moral norm both addresses and cuts across distinct institutions.

By way of synthesis, solidarity proves closest as a concept to the strengths of Ricœur's account and the strengths of the account of social justice. It not only functions with attention to actual persons, as in Ricœur's responsibility for the fragile other, but it is able to move beyond the distinct confines set by social bodies, enabling one to consider the distant effects of institutions. Yet, like social justice, its account of the common good already builds into this moral disposition the type of concerns for justice that eventually inform Ricœur's own position. If one were to adopt a more circular account for Ricœur's own theory of responsibility, I find that it would be unlikely that this phenomenon would not be informed by the ethical systems born in and through ethics, even if it is not strictly speaking determined. This said, it would seem that even on this account they remain far closer. If responsibility as a sentiment is informed by later

norms of just institutions under which one sets oneself, one would also enable an accounting for the theological moves made within solidarity as the phenomenon takes life in the rich theological framework of Christianity where the neighbor is not merely another human but a revelation of God. Thus, while a thin and thick account are presented here, they do not appear intrinsically anathema.

To conclude this section, we find in both Ricœur and CST a subjective concern for institutions that runs through them, reaching those at the highest levels to those who are simply participate in them. This subjective care is vital for an agent-based ethic of institutions. Differences certainly arise. Early CST seemed more concerned of a relationship between a member of an institution (a society) and the common good of the social body. Concerns for the distinct others who comprised that social body are only indirectly addressed through social justice. But this is later modified with the introduction of the category of solidarity, which functions first and foremost to better see the other who becomes obscured by structural evils, and thus respond with a commitment to the common good that would include them. Nonetheless, the development of a subjective care for institutions found in both Ricœur and the CST tradition, whether more or less tightly bound with the norms that inform how one ought act, is itself a vital development towards an ethic of institutions.

Section 2: Institutions as Moral Realities

Having now treated the subjective care of institutions, I look at institutions as moral realities. In my turn to institutions, in both Ricœur and the CST tradition, I began with the fundamental level. What are institutions? What role do they play in human life? How do they fit within our picture of the moral? Part of the reason for this fundamental approach is that the very

category is polyvalent, differing across authors and disciplines.⁴ Institutions are imminent in our lives and yet theoretically contentious. In treating Ricœur, a central argument of my chapter was that his treatment of institutions enabled us to articulate institutions as morality realities, not simply as bearer of social values, but oriented to the good, necessary for human action and development, and ambiguous. This enabled a grasp of institutions as ethical phenomena subject to moral critique. The CST tradition includes similar forms, but written with specific institutions and conflicts in mind, it ultimately takes a far more specific approach than Ricœur for each of these categories.

In Chapter 3, I argued that for Ricœur, institutions are not neutral bodies, but are squarely set into the realm of moral inquiry, according to four tropes: their orientation to the good, their mediatory nature, that they are necessary for human action and development, and that they are ambiguous. While the moral nature of institutions is already implicit in my treatment of responsibility in so far as institutions mediate relations to distant others, in Chapter 3, I sought to identify that this is more complex and intricate than this initial care for responsibility. This was in part necessitated by the fact that for Ricœur, responsibility is not substantive, meaning that it does not include within it the moral norms that help one know how to act. This question enabled a consideration of aspects drawn from across Ricœur's career, in order to fill out his understanding of institutions. Institutions are oriented to the good, mediatory, necessary, and inescapably ambiguous. These same concepts enable a comparison with the CST tradition.

2.1: Institutions Oriented to the Good

A fundamental point to compare both Ricœur and Catholic Social Thought on their understanding of institutions is their inextricable orientation to the good. At the heart of Ricœur's

⁴ Richard Scott presents a robust survey of these different approaches. See Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*.

definition of institutions is a basic good, sought and desired in all institutions. I argued in Chapter 3 that if one pairs Ricœur's definition of institutions from *Oneself as Another* as "structures of *living-together*"⁵ with his understanding of horizontal power as the actualization of a *vouloir-vivre-ensemble*, a will or desire to live-together, then one sees that living-together is not a mere description, but that it points to a teleological orientation undergirding all institutions. In addition to the extrinsic goods sought through them, they are means through which we pursue the fundamental good of living-together.

Identifying this desire to live-together as at the heart of institutional life sets institutions within the domain of moral inquiry, enabling the critical evaluation of each institution according to this concept, general and polyvalent as it may be. Corporations, universities, hospitals, cities, churches, and so on, each human institution is an expression of this basic desire to live-together. In so far as institutions subvert this basic desire, even in the pursuit of core extrinsic goods such as health or education, they fail at a basic ethical impulse that legitimates all institutions.

The CST tradition likewise understands institutions according to the good. Whereas, Ricœur's understanding of institutions is first set according to one general good, the CST tradition identifies institutions as rising up in response to the desire for a plurality of goods. Each discrete institution as a social body is born from a desire to achieve certain goods which are unattainable alone. These are common goods in the sense of the good pursued by the whole of a distinct social body. We can first identify these common goods according to some basic extrinsic or external good, such as gaining profit, securing the health of a community, or even winning a soccer game. There are also in each institution intrinsic goods, the form of the action which enables the pursuit of these goods: the team that works together, the constitutional democracy

⁵ Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 227.

that transfers power through political participation like voting, the activity of discussion of a seminar.

Yet, this plurality of goods is not born from fleeting desires, according to early CST, but from stable, enduring, differentiated desires that inhere in humans. Thus, the natural law tradition plays a vital role in cataloguing and understanding these broad desires that give rise to distinct institutions. The pope presents a theological interpretation of social forms. This leads CST to put forward various claims drawn from teleological reasoning. The purpose of family is its perpetuation through the production and raising of children. The purpose of the state is the achievement of the common good of society. The purpose of the church is union with God among the communion of saints.

As there is no single general good intrinsic to each institution, this plurality of common goods found among institution are measured against a hierarchy of ever larger nested goods, captured in the concept, *the* common good. With the definite article, this is classically understood to be the good of a self-sufficient social body, namely the polis. Yet, throughout history, this has been set in ever larger circles than the self-sufficient polity of a city or even a nation state, including the universal good that incorporates other nations and cultures. Theologically, this can even be extended to the universal common good, that is God's providence. Later developments, I noted, gave more content to this common good, using the person within society as a measure of its achievement.

While I would argue that the good is a category for understanding institutions in both Ricœur and CST, thus identifying institutions as “moral” rather than amoral or neutral, the distinction between the general good of Ricœur (which can be subsequently diversified in context) and the plural but nested goods of CST illustrate in some respects a thinness to Ricœur's

account, which allows it to be supple in its application, but that also defers the identification of core norms.⁶ This thin account in Ricœur has relative strengths and weaknesses. Rather than working from a tradition of specifically outlined goods, which could prove contentious, this general framework instead enables the organic articulation of distinct goods, while nonetheless linking each institution. Thus, it is out of the actual workings of people that one can understand the various articulations of the *good of living-together* as found in the actual practices of institutions. Each institution, be it a corporation, hospital, or even police force, is an actualization of “living-together.” This general account of a good undergirding institutions sets all institutions in the realm of the moral, warranting later concerns for each to be just.

Yet, such a thin account raises the question of functionality of this general good. Even prior to passing this normative view through the sift of Rawls's procedural justice, is it possible to evaluate institutions according to the desire-to-live-together. Can one, for example, use this general good to critique the tyrant, who makes the public interests his private interest? Can one criticize structures of racism that privilege one community over another? It would seem that there are resources from this broad account to argue that these weigh against a structure of living-together, but even this becomes a stretch. As one gets into even more complicated ethical issues that incorporate institutions, such as wages, the elimination of jobs, the question of border security, it seems out of its depth. But this is no surprise since Ricœur backloads more rigorous moral inquiry into a Rawlsian consideration of just institutions and reduction of a teleological good into principles of justice.

⁶ Note that I am not saying that Ricœur denies the plurality of goods, only that he does not enunciate them. His account seems unfinished (in the best of ways) because it invites the reader to complete the text by thinking through this reconstructed institutional ethic in specific institutional contexts.

The CST tradition, born in a natural law framework, holds a more definitive understanding of the human person, their respective needs, and the social bodies that help achieve them. One strength of this tradition is the incorporation of specific moral content to help evaluate each institution. While Ricœur's good of living-together casts an ethical hue on institutions, he defers the principles of evaluation to a publicly understood conception of justice, and considered convictions that help adjudicate conflict. The CST tradition, instead, uses the concept of the common good as a means of measuring each private good of society. Here, we have the advantage of moral norms built into the very understanding of distinct institutions, and then further checked against a broader understanding of the common good.

Two distinct issues arise. First, when the common good is insufficiently articulated, there is the danger of it either being understood in a utilitarian fashion according majoritarian concerns or too closely defined with a reified vision of an organized form of an institution such as "the church" or "the state." In both instances this can lead to the trampling of the well-being of persons and smaller groups in favor of "the common good."

This is addressed, according to my interpretation, by a key development first initiated with Pius XII and cemented in Vatican II with a turn to the person. Here, the common good is measured according to the flourishing of persons and groups, preserving a respect for individual human dignity, particularly with the inclusion of rights language and the principle of subsidiarity. Whereas Ricœur looks to Rawls and publicly reasoned justice as his moral sieve of institutions (albeit in the context of an embedded capable self), CST deploys a substantive conception of the person as the moral measure of institutions

A second clear issue plaguing CST results from our pluralistic age. When there is neither a common cultural consensus or even shared grounds for understanding there is bound to be

disagreement over either the distinct goods of institutions or the larger common good of society. This disagreement not only can frustrate broader social action, but some also contend that disagreement over these goods can lead to social disintegration itself. Thus, in his *Political Liberalism*, Rawls avoids appeals to substantive comprehensive visions of the good in favor of political ideals born out of a consensus devoid of such commitments.⁷ To take one contested institution of our day, the family, there has been frequent controversy over the monolithic articulation of its goods. Is the good of marriage and the family always the generating and rearing of children? Does this denigrate families and couples who opt not to have kids? Can we find a monolithic or even complex, but comprehensive understanding of the good of the family or does it always fall apart in the face of pluralistic understandings of this institution?

Nevertheless, critics must be reminded that rather than simply being “posited,” the CST tradition embodies nonetheless sustained arguments and appeals of persuasion. Even before addressing their open letters to “all people of good will,” the early methodology adoption of natural law presumed a form of public discourse insofar as it claims to rely on principles that any reasoning person could grasp.⁸ Since Vatican II, there has been a more substantial incorporation of other modes of reasoning, incorporating middle axioms (like human rights), social scientific

⁷ Though in the essay “The Idea Public Reason Revisited,” Rawls allows for the use of compressive doctrines in discourse (such as used by Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr.) should it be capable of being later substantiated by public reason. See John Rawls, “The Idea Public Reason Revisited,” in *Political Liberalism*, Expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 437–90. Thus, while an activist might make appeals to workers being made in the image of God to call for just wages, later justification should make appeals to values that can be publicly held.

⁸ David Hollenbach, however, notes that natural law likely fits in a defensive posture, in so far as anyone who did not share in the convictions of natural law could be discounted as failing to see reason. See David Hollenbach, “Commentary on Gaudium et Spes,” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth Himes (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 276.

insights, and appeals to history. Disagreement, it would seem, could be the beginning of the conversation, rather than the end of it.

The CST tradition demonstrates to us is that while some institutions may be content to remain confined to considering what is good within their own sphere, others reject the notion that an institutional sphere delimits as well spheres of concern. I have demonstrated that the modern CST tradition has since its beginning argued for its own authority in speaking out on issues that take place within politics, industry, education, and the family. Likewise, today, the sphere of markets and economics spreads over and even dominates educational and political spheres. Already at the level of considering institutions as pursuing some good in their specificity, we are pushed towards inter-institutional ethics.

With both traditions, this appeal to the good, disputed as those goods may be, firmly sets all institutions within the realm moral consideration for their own sake and not simply as a result of some external harmful effect on others. This framing, I would suggest, allows for the type of argument that reacts to the clear definition of goods of distinct institutions evinced by the CST tradition.

2.2: Institutions as Necessary

A treatment of the good of institutions in Catholic Social Thought leads directly into understanding how they are necessary. For early CST, there is a focus on three specific institutions as necessary to humans because of the role they play in human happiness: the family, the church, and the polity. Drawn from Thomas's eudaimonistic, teleological ethics, these institutions are fundamental to achievement of our ends as humans, natural happiness on this earth and our supernatural happiness in eternity.

While set in a natural law framework, this does not exclude a certain developmental framework. These institutions are necessary precisely because they serve as incubators for becoming a certain type of person: a coupling person, a political person, and a saint. Consequently, they play key roles in helping develop certain capacities, including moral and intellectual capacities, that are vital to the achievement of our happiness.

This developmental approach to the achievement of happiness is reinforced with a key shift that I excavated in Chapter 5 in the turn to the person inaugurated by Pius XII and taken up in Vatican II and subsequent encyclical letters. In *Gaudium et Spes*, the common good is keyed specifically to providing for all that is necessary for the flourishing of individuals and groups. This emphasis helps dismiss what could be an ever-greater appeal to larger societies at the expense of those people and smaller groups who make up these societies.

A further subsequent development that I highlighted in Chapter 5 is the folding of subsidiarity into this developmental frame. From my readings of *Caritas in Veritate* and *Laudato Si*, I would suggest that subsidiarity can now play the further role of identifying the merits and values of different institutions at various levels not simply because of the domain that they cover (as the case in early CST), but also because of the specific role they can play in enhancing and developing the capacities of smaller groups and the persons who form them. Thus, it is not in “the polity” that intellectual formation takes place, but in specific schools spread throughout cities and rural places. Attention needs to be given to increasing the capacity of schools on the ground to respond to the distinct challenges born in their contexts, and not simply passed on to higher administrative bodies. This localization of responsibility is also an occasion for the development of capacity.

So, while an early tradition identified three specific institutions as necessary to personal and communal happiness (meeting, according to Ricœur's framework, our pursuit of the good life and fulfilling our desire to live-together), subsequent reflections in CST have begun to expand and fill out portions of this picture, utilizing a developmental approach centered on the person, and incorporating subsidiarity to incorporate smaller groups. In turn, this developmental approach can be applied more broadly, drawing in other institutions, such as the workplace or the university, are arguing for their distinct role in the flourishing of persons.

One strength of the CST tradition is its specificity in its treatment of institutions. All institutions are not on par. Instead, distinct institutions bear greater importance because of their role in human flourishing, understood comprehensively to include one's material and social well-being, as well as one's spiritual well-being. This does not lead so much to the discounting of any group, for each bear their own integrity. But, they are each relativized according to those which most contribute to human flourishing. Traditionally, these are understood to be the family, the church and polity, which fulfill, on CST's account, particular needs and purposes (understood from theological and objective perspectives). This both establishes a privileged position to these social units, but also a normative task, as each are called to help advance and contribute to their own sphere, but also across society.⁹ To look at just one of these, such a position means a consistent focus on issues like the position of vulnerable families in the face of changing markets, and gives a handhold for ethicists to raise striking questions about how this smallest

⁹ The privileged place of the church is one of the key shifting points in CST. This is best seen in the relation to the state. Early CST advocated for a privileged role vis-à-vis the state, arguing that the state should not treat all religions as equal. See *Libertas*, 19-22. Subsequent developments in the recognition of the rights of other religions complicates this picture. Nevertheless, from a theological perspective, the Catholic Church is maintained as nevertheless having a privileged role vis-à-vis human flourishing, since CST accounts for more than material welfare being one's object of concern.

social unit is impacted. It serves as a basis of critique for the separation of families at the border and by our criminal justice system. It raises questions as to how our most vulnerable families are supported by public education systems, particularly when these families are minorities or even lacking full legal status. Because of the families' role in human flourishing, concerns for families are not simply dismissed or deferred by the question of citizenship.¹⁰

Likewise, with the turn to the person, the incorporation of a developmental frame, and the folding in of subsidiarity, CST creates an important apparatus for measuring and developing the health of institutions. While the tradition does not provide policy proposals, there is clear moral weight given to advance the concerns of persons, particularly the poorest. This provides a material basis for measuring baseline flourishing. Specificity, we see, has its strengths.

Above, however, I identified that normative specificity raises new problems within a pluralistic political context. Just as the distinct goods of institutions would fall under critique, so would the relative weight that one gives to distinct institutions. In an age where one can divorce from one's family, why argue for its relative importance? In the absence of mediating institutions, is it the well-functioning state one must support? Why this church over any other church or mosque or synagogue? Such positions cannot simply be posited, but must be argued.

Ricœur's treatment of the necessity of institutions remains again more general, but in some instances, more penetrating. While CST posits very specific institutions as essential, Ricœur takes a broad approach in his earliest works. He does not name a specific institution, for example, when he draws on a Hegelian synthesis to identify that they enable a meaningful freedom, in contrast to a solipsistic arbitrary freedom. Perhaps the state serves as the

¹⁰ Too often, a specific form of the family can be assumed when one discusses this. For example, one might privilege a nuclear family at the expense of extended networks, or a two-parent family, ignoring single parent families.

paradigmatic case, but his work remains nonetheless open. This is also true as he relies on Geertz to speak of institutions as playing a role as a part of the interpretive framework, enabling “meaningful action” that can be interpreted by others. Similarly, when he draws on Arendt, while the state seems paradigmatic, his use of the public space of appearance as vital to human development seems nonetheless extendable to other institutional domains. This is confirmed by his later use of Walzer’s *Spheres of Justice* and Thévenot and Boltanski’s work, where recognition of persons can take place in a range of domains.

In contrast to CST, Ricœur’s work illustrates more clearly the penetrating nature of institutions. Human action and human self-interpretation are caught up in institutions. Norms, values, and symbols are sedimented in institutions, providing the necessary context for making sense of different actions. This can be as innocuous as interpreting the difference between ablutions before prayer and washing hands before entering a patient’s room at a hospital or as insidious as the difference between the everyday use of tiki torches in one’s home and their suddenly menacing manifestation at a white supremacist rally. Our actions lean on a symbolic framework of which institutions form a part in order to be understood.

Likewise, institutions play a role in our self-understanding and actualization. As spheres of recognition, distributing roles and esteem, various institutions can be sites in which we manifest ourselves before others and have our capacities recognized. Likewise, they can play the insidious role in misrecognition, given unequal or even a lack of status to other persons within groups. Thus, deploying ideology, institutions can identify non-citizens as criminals, less than humans. Religious institutions can use insider/outsider rhetoric to similarly misrecognize the other, failing to appreciate their worth and value. Ricœur provides a compelling account of how deep institutions penetrate our lives without falling into some form of institutional determinism.

His work points to the ways in which institutions pervade our human social existence, not merely as regulatory bodies, but also as shapers of action and distributors of recognition.

While Ricœur's teleological framework allows the consideration of a proliferation of institutions that help manifest our desire to live-together, in his teleological section, he defers norms, and instead relies upon on-the-ground practices and pursuits of the good to evaluate and judge institutions. This does not enable us, however, to discern the relative worth amongst institutions. Does the small corporation, the family, the book club, the local government, the bank, and the university all bear our concern equally? Is it just a matter of their relative power? Barring the identification of the paradoxical role that the state plays in securing the sphere that enables the interaction of institutions (while also being one among them), it seems to me that Ricœur eschews the elevation of one over the other, leaving off the weighing and balancing of relative merits to the practical wisdom that arises in conflict.

2.3: Institutions as Ambiguous

While I made the case that both Ricœur and CST hold institutions to be moral realities, in so far as they are oriented towards the good and they are necessary for human development and flourishing, it is also true that they are deeply ambiguous. They have great capacity towards alienation, towards injustice, and towards perpetuating oppression. This is all the more dangerous, I would argue drawing on Ricœur, because of how deeply they penetrate our lives.

Ricœur's articulation of the ambiguities of institutions is first developed through his understanding of the political paradox. Here, far less optimistic than CST, he identifies how there are inherent ambiguities that appear as an ever-present threat to our political life together. We need institutions within our lives. We even craft constitutions that appear to provide order and

form to our political institutions. Yet, the inevitable introduction of force and the arbitrariness tied to personality introduce the irrationality, coercion, and violence.

While the political paradox in its first form refers simply to politics, it points to an ambiguity present wherever force and power is at play in institutions. Institutions always are legitimated, according to Ricœur in his second formulation of the political paradox, by the power which enables people to act together. It is this power that allows for a desire to live-together to become an actuality. Yet, whenever institutions organize, invariably domination arises, distinguishing those who order from those who follow. This can even obscure the basic power that underscores and legitimates institutions. Thus, for Ricœur, institutions bear distinct ambiguities that cannot simply be organized out of existence, but that always call for vigilance.

The CST tradition likewise bears a visceral awareness of the ambiguities of institutions. Crafted as occasional texts, Leo's writings bear the mark of a papacy all too aware of the creeping domination of the state. Likewise, it stood witness to the ever-increasing poverty and desperation generated by flight to the cities and the industrial revolution. His writings try to carve out the distinct integrity of the church and the family marking out distinct spaces that ought to be free from the creeping domination of the state. Nonetheless, early CST is often accused of being overly optimistic.¹¹ It is construed as not having a sufficient grasp on how sin and a fallen world impact our social life. Thus, while Leo has a clear sense of the problems of his own day, they appear resolvable with a proper reorientation of society.

While a concern for the totalitarian state persists throughout the CST tradition, John Paul II incorporates from liberation an important insight in the acknowledgement of structures of sin. With this concept, he identifies how personal sins can enter into structures, perpetuating the sin

¹¹ Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present*, 128.

among others, and amplifying their impact on real victims. Similarly, John Paul II criticizes the utopic designs of the political community that would create a perfect society on earth, leading to the use of vicious means to achieve it.¹² Benedict XVI also underlines “the presence of original sin in social conditions and in the structure of society,” calling attention to how even the economy, with its vision of self-sufficient person, leads to an elusive effort to eliminate all evil from the social life that can “trample personal and even social freedom.”¹³ While this does not match the pessimism one finds in other Christian thinkers of institutions like Reinhold Niebuhr,¹⁴ it nonetheless provides new tools for considering pervasive harm through sinful institutions.

Ricœur’s work benefits from a clearer articulation of the paradoxical elements of institutions. It is not simply that there is potential for evil within institutions, but that these ambiguities seem written into the very make up of institutions. He does so, however, in a manner that nonetheless preserves the basic goodness of institutions. In Ricœur’s articulation of the distinction between power and domination, one can find the seeds of a fundamental distrust of hierarchies that would run counter to the CST tradition, particularly as exemplified in early teachings on authority in early CST. CST is far more prone to name specific harms committed through institutions and to name structures that can fundamentally obstruct human flourishing. Industries fail to recognize the dignity of the person. The state encroaches on the health of the family. Capitalistic societies diminish the inherent dignity of persons. Technocratic paradigms lead to a domineering manipulation of the natural world. Such an approach can make Ricœur’s own critique appear anemic.

¹² John Paul II, “Centesimus Annus,” 25.

¹³ Benedict XVI, “Caritas in Veritate,” 34.

¹⁴ See Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* / Reinhold Niebuhr ; Introduction by Langdon B. Gilkey, Library of Theological Ethics (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

But I find real possibilities of synthesis if one brings the more intimate account of the shaping of action by institutions found in Ricœur with the concept of structures of sin. While fueled by the basic power to act in concert, institutions can nonetheless pervert the very norms and symbols of action, as well as the basic identity that is recognized by institutions. Structures of sin, then, have their impact not simply as some sort of contagion among the willing, but can also catch up all within institutions, witting or unwittingly.

Similarly, pairing Ricœur's paradoxical account of the ambiguities of institutions with later articulations of the role of sin in the social life can temper CST's optimism without falling prey to a pessimistic account that denounces institutions as intrinsically evil, even necessary as they may be for society. Such an account can foster a spirit of institutional humility and moral vigilance by those who care for institutions.

Section 3: Inter-institutional Ethics

An institutional ethic is incomplete unless it can treat the play of institutions. This is not only necessarily philosophically, as one sees from Ricœur's work, but also because contemporary ethical issues often cross multiple institutional boundaries, as attested by CST itself. This is all the more important when we take into account the various means by which we are shaped by institutions. Given that our lives cross frequently multiple institutional domains, how does one make sense of this plurality and the eventual conflict that ensues. Above I have marked out various differences, resonances, and places for possible synthesis between Ricœur and CST. The most fruitful site for a productive synthesis between these traditions, though, is with inter-institutional relation. I argue that adopting Ricœur's framework of inescapable conflict can temper CST's optimism, but that his adjudicating practical wisdom stands to benefit from the convictions forged and developed in the CST tradition.

For Ricœur, the recognition of the deep problem of plural institutions only comes late in his career through engagement with figures like Walzer, Honneth, Boltanski, and Thévenot. Ricœur identifies not simply the possibility of a plurality of goods among institutional domains, but also a plural articulations of justice and plural modes of legitimation. The challenge posed by these competing domains gives rise to Ricœur's third articulation of the political paradox, that the political is both one institution among many, and also the institution which secures the possibility of encounter between the others.

While initially reliant on Rawls, whose treatment of justice would set one standard across all public institutions, Ricœur's incorporation of pluralistic thinkers leads to the possibility of tragic conflict not just within a system of justice (as found in *Oneself as Another*), but between institutions which bear their own modes of legitimation and argumentation. Different domains bear competing convictions which appears to result in unresolvable conflict at the procedural level.

Rather than procedure, Ricœur turns to practical wisdom to adjudicate this conflict. This is not a departure from the prior work done through his teleological and deontological moves, but instead, a return to these. Thus, he describes his ethic as a "double entry matrix," a sort of ethical "second naiveté," in which, having passed through the practices of universalization exemplified in procedural justice and nonetheless encountering conflict, especially in the play of institutions, one must return to those now "well-considered convictions." It is the moral deliberation of practical wisdom that sees a path past the tragic conflict born from the competing logic of distinct institutions.

CST has had distinct practical concerns with regards to plural institutions. The press against domination by one domain persists throughout the tradition. Early documents are

precisely concerned with the relation of the state to other necessary institutions found in the church and the family. Later documents worry about economic regimes as failing to attend to the inherent dignity of persons, allowing a market logic to quantify human worth. Even Pope Francis's latest encyclical exemplifies this worry as the technocratic paradigm dominates our relationship to other humans and the natural world, rendering each as objects to be manipulated.

In response to these practical concerns, the church has crafted a series of conceptual resources. Early natural law sought to justify the distinct domains of institutions. Subsidiarity is introduced to guide institutional relations to ensure that even in circumstances of assistance, not only would the integrity of distinct institutional domains would be protected, but that also the flourishing and development of persons and smaller groups are accounted for. Francis's own call for an integral ecology sets the stage for a dialogue between the sciences, business and economics, and the religions.

Once more, however, CST is perhaps too overconfident in the capacity for each of these institutional forms to simply hang together. While a strict ordering of institutions might be able to resolve the most egregious forms of domination, it would seem from Ricœur that the nature of institutions will always lead to further institutional conflict. Other than creating a perfect order where such a conflict will not exist, one needs instead to develop the tools for identifying and adjudicating conflict when it does arise.

Yet Ricœur's solution in practical wisdom appears too as a thin concept, backloading adjudication to some later point, pointing to convictions that can inform *phronesis* without enumerating them. Here, again, I find a synthesis between CST and Ricœur to be fruitful. If we acknowledge inevitable conflict between institutions, what convictions can help adjudicate this conflict. I would posit that CST can help provide some of the considered convictions that moral

deliberators might lean upon when making decisions. Principles like subsidiarity, the common good, and integral ecology can serve as tools to help ensure dialogue and adjudicate conflict when it arises.

Conclusion

A comparison of the models of institutional ethics that I reconstructed from Ricœur and CST illustrate that the Ricœurian model remains far more general than the CST tradition in its specification of care for institutions, how we understand institutions as good, necessary, and ambiguous, and how we adjudicate between institutions. Ricœur's hermeneutic phenomenology both carves out a moral domain without populating it with clear norms. In contrast, CST's framework is far more specific, incorporating clear norms from the outset, identifying basic goods as uniting human groups, and drawing on human flourishing as a measure of social well-being.

As I have noted, there are both strengths and weaknesses to these levels of specificity, leading to the value of a synthetic approach. Staying at a general level, one can draw out of Ricœur's institutional ethics a model that should apply to all institutional forms. His care for institutions extends in principle to everyone within them. His treatment of the necessity of institutions illustrate how deeply they penetrate our lives. Their ambiguity point to inescapable paradoxes that call for moral vigilance. Finally, his identification of their inevitable conflict, calls for adjudication that can only come through wisdom and dialogue. Yet, this model leaves one unsatisfied, desiring a clearer sense as to which norms one might use to adjudicate conflict and a clearer sense of how one might evaluate institutions in our midst. While he does not acknowledge it, given his hermeneutical approach, his theory almost asks to be brought closer to the ground and be enfolded within specific traditions.

The CST tradition incorporates norms throughout its treatment of various institutions. It is the pursuit common goods which give rise to institutions that are themselves evaluated according to their contribution to the more capacious common good. This concept is later fine-tuned to the flourishing of persons and groups within society. The very notion of a care for institutions, expressed as social justice and then later as solidarity, is infused with the common good. While Ricœur appears in constant deferral of ethical norms, for CST, it is found from the outset.

The clarity of this moral vision, however, raises precisely the concerns about how this vision can function in a political realm. Incorporating CST into Ricœur's framework would suggest that it too must pass through the sieve of the moral. It too must be articulated as an argument that could be taken up by all. Unlike Rawls account, the preservation of "considered convictions" found in the turn to practical wisdom would mean that the richness of these positions would not need to be diluted to mere political values, as one finds in Rawls,¹⁵ but could be recovered in states of conflict.

Through the past six chapters, I have constructed and carved out a place from the corpus of Ricœur and the CST tradition for an institutional ethics. In this chapter, I have suggested that rather than inimical to one another, a creative synthesis is possible. I have stayed at a general level in treating institutional ethics in this dissertation. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I explore the benefits that this account of institutional ethics can provide to one of the most challenging ethical issues of our day, environmental degradation.

¹⁵ See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 452.

Chapter 8: Towards an Inter-Institutional Environmental Ethic

We live amidst unprecedented challenges to human morality and survival. Human power has extended to affect not only on our immediate surroundings but the whole globe. The term “the Anthropocene¹, first coined by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in 2000, provides a metaphor for this power, a term designating a new geological age ushered in by an increased impact by humans upon the globe. Crutzen, who coined the term, lists a litany of environmental issues that have impacts on a global scale: increases in human population, methane-producing cattle, the use of surface land by humans, the scale of fishing, the use of nitrogen fertilizer, and greenhouse gases from fossil fuel usage.² Climate change ranks as the most apparent and threatening manifestation of this new expression of human power as *geological agents*.³

¹ Now popularly adopted, this term was introduced by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in Paul J Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, “The Anthropocene,” *IGBP [International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme] Newsletter*, no. 41 (May 2000). Crutzen later published a very similar article in *Nature*, helping launch the theme more widely: Paul J Crutzen, “Geology of Mankind,” *Nature* 415, no. 6867 (January 3, 2002): 23.

² Crutzen, “Geology of Mankind,” 23.

³ Dipesh Chakrabarty uses this term to describe our new, collective, capacity to impact our globe in Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009). There are many, however, who criticize the very term the Anthropocene. If untethered from the climate harms that have given rise to it, it is possible to view this as celebration of human power. Others, acknowledge the harm, but nonetheless propose a “good Anthropocene.” The seduction of a progressive account of humans as the pinnacle of creation is so great that many theologians and scholars of religions have also seemed to fall prey to it. See Lisa H. Sideris, *Consecrating Science: Wonder, Knowledge, and the Natural World* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017), 116–45. Another line of critique, however, raises questions about what’s obscured in adoption of *Anthropos* to title a geological era. Is captured in this title not simply a new human impact, but in fact “The human” as agent? This would then seem to incorporate all humans as agents of anthropogenic harms like climate change, from subsistence farmers in Kenya to oil executives. Here, we face again the challenge posed by Arendt: “Where all are guilty, nobody in the last instance can be judged.” Arendt, “Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility,” 278. Others identify that the term itself is not specific enough. In the book *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us*, the authors provide a range of other possible titles that capture the activities that give rise to this new human moment, these include the “Thermocene” (focusing on CO₂ production), the Thanatocene (focusing on humans as merchants of death), and my personal favorite, Phagocene, a term that emphasizes our literal

Yet, despite ubiquitous scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change, political responses have been inadequate or even counterproductive. How do we understand this failure to act? Stephen Gardiner looks at “the global environmental tragedy” of climate change and seeks to explain the factors that contribute to inefficient action through the metaphor of the perfect moral storm.⁴ For Gardiner, a perfect storm involves “the unusual intersection of a number of serious, and mutually reinforcing, problems, which creates an unusual and perhaps unprecedented challenge.”⁵ As a perfect moral storm, this is the interaction of multiple ethical problems, challenging already on their own, but intersecting to create new, unprecedented circumstances. Some call these “wicked problems”—problems that are difficult to define and locate. Wicked problems are already themselves symptoms themselves of other problems, for in resolving problem, one creates others.⁶

consumption through eating, as it highlights an everyday action that connects us to unsustainable and carbon heavy food production, particularly given U.S. affinity for beef. Jason Moore, a green Marxist, takes a different approach with his various works on “the Capitalcene.” He focuses on a specific form of human organization that is capitalism and how for two hundred years capitalism has “cooked the books,” by construing nature as “cheap,” thus failing to account for the inimitable natural processes that give rise to things like fossil fuels, and, as many environmental economists also point out, failing to account for the true costs of the human impact on the environment. See especially Jason Moore, “The Rise of Cheap Nature,” *Sociology Faculty Scholarship* 2 (January 1, 2016), https://orb.binghamton.edu/sociology_fac/2; Jason W Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015). While I acknowledge the merits of these critiques, I have adopted the Anthropocene precisely because of its wide currency. There are also ways in which the general nature of the Anthropocene coheres with the model of the “stain of association” that I have articulated. Even as I hold also to a differentiated accountability, environmental injustices call us each (including those harmed) to responsibility to work collectively to bring about greater justice.

⁴ Stephen Mark. Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*, Environmental Ethics and Science Policy Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵ Gardiner, 7.

⁶ Wicked should not be taken here (at least initially) as a moral designator. Instead, Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber, who first introduce the term to describe the work of planning, governance and societal problems generally, contrast “wicked problems” with “benign problems,” signaling with the distinction the “malignant” nature of wicked problems. They represent intractable problems that are difficult to define, unique but perduring and recurring, resulting themselves

Gardiner identifies three ethical problems or “storms” that pose distinct challenges to moral reasoning. There is the global storm, captured by the fragmentation of agents from their effects over space, overlaid with the asymmetries of power between affluent nations over distant, poorer nations. This converges with the related but distinct intergenerational storm, in which the lengthy persistence of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere leads human action on the environment to be backloaded onto later generations.⁷ This current generation (from baby boomers to Gen Y) is both patient and agent to this storm: we are inheritors of a carbon debt which is increased and then bequeathed to future generations. Both of these storms identify new, unprecedented circumstances in which we find ourselves today. Finally, there is the theoretical storm; our theoretical moral tools to treat these new problems are underdeveloped and lacking. We are inept, or, as Willis Jenkins argues, morally incompetent in the face of unprecedented atmospheric powers.⁸

from other problems and breeding new, unintended consequences that are the seedbed for new wicked problems. One does not find a solution to wicked problems, even if one finds a temporary resolution. Whereas the sciences or engineering lend themselves to “benign problems” that while challenging nonetheless hold clear solutions, there are no solutions to the problems of governance, collective action, and the social science, only temporary resolutions. See Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,” *Policy Sciences*, no. 2 (1973): 155–69. Since then, the term has been widely adopted, especially in environmental ethics. Environmental degradation and climate change are wicked problems par excellence. While “wicked” Simply to assume that these wicked problems are “benign,” thus subject to technocratic solutions is in fact a moral wrong. According to Rittel and Webber, one of the very challenges of wicked problems is locating the problem itself. Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, 159. My work in this chapter helps to relocate environmental problems into a space that incorporates the full range of our institutional life. This is why, I later contend, Francis’s concept of integral ecology is not a “solution” per se, but a new platform for finding temporary resolutions.

⁷ To use the language of previous chapters, later generations become the new faceless, distant other.

⁸ Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice, and Religious Creativity* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013).

In the Anthropocene, we are not only facing a technical failure and a lack of theoretical tools. We also face a moral failure. These three storms, Gardiner argues, help “to exacerbate and obscure a lurking problem of moral corruption that may be of greater practical importance than any one of them.”⁹ We “pass the buck” to poorer nations and future generations.¹⁰ This is not simply incompetence, but a moral failing, in that we refuse to face the issue head on.

From a host of wicked problems is born multiple layers of moral complicity, including a failure of nerve to face them. Implicit in these storms is a problem of collective action that operates at multiple levels. Philosopher Dale Jamieson writes, “Climate change has the structure of the world’s largest collective action problem. Each of us acting on our own desires contributes to outcomes that we neither desire nor intend.”¹¹ It is precisely in the context of studying collective action that policy experts developed the idea of wicked problems. Climate change is a wicked problem *par excellence*, not only because of the scale of collectivities and the abundance of unintended effects, but also because of the challenge of locating the problem itself. Whereas Jamieson here addresses individual action in the aggregate, this is only part of the story. More than a single collective action problem, we have a host of them. We have individuals whose aggregate actions—such as driving, heating and cooling one’s home, or eating meat—contribute to the creation of greenhouse gases. But, as Gardiner points out with his “global storm,” we also

⁹ Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm*, 23.

¹⁰ Gardiner, 35.

¹¹ Dale Jamieson lists this as an obstacle to taking meaningful action. Alongside a lack of understanding among scientists and politicians and basic limits to human psychological capacity: “We also face psychological obstacles in responding to climate change. Evolution built us to respond to rapid movements of middle-sized objects, not to the slow buildup of insensible gases in the atmosphere. Most of us respond dramatically to what we sense, not to what we think. As a result, even those of us who are concerned about climate change find it difficult to feel its urgency and to act decisively.” Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle against Climate Change Failed-- and What It Means for Our Future* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.

have the problem of nation states, with their own histories of carbon consumption and current asymmetries of power.¹² I would also suggest that there are the myriad of other institutions of which we form a part, from local cities, to religious communities, to corporations, which each mediate not only human action, contributing to and sustaining carbon intensive economies, but that also shape and form us as persons and how we relate to the human and non-human other. Following Jamieson, in each of these institutions, we still have persons, themselves sites of actions and change, who neither will nor intend the effects of climate change in their individual or institutional action. Our individual impact may only be a small piece when aggregated. When we account, though, for the institutions of which we form a part, we are stained by the harms committed against the natural world and other humans through environmental harms. This is a stain we are often loathe to impute to ourselves, precisely because it points to responsibilities that cannot be fulfilled by individual action alone.¹³

Behind the whole discussion of environmental problems is another issue, amplified by the global nature of environmental problems of the Anthropocene: the challenge posed by the polyvalent symbol of Nature. Nature is not an unambiguous, objective concept, but instead a

¹² Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm*, 31.

¹³ Kari Marie Norgaard argues through ethnographic analysis that a failure to respond to climate change is not simply born from a lack of care for others, but that there are threats posed by climate change to one's sense of identity and empowerment that lead to socially organized practices of denial. See Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011). While I do not treat this denial here, we can see in it one further instance of how institutions serve to mediate our relationship to others and hinder our responses. Her conclusion provides a solid warrant for motivating us to better understand how we are shaped by institutions and it underlines the need for creative collective responses. While my work does not touch upon the affective dimension of institutions, her work helps illustrate the need for further research in this domain. My work helps us answer her call to reimagine our situation. I hold that an institutional framework allows us to imaginatively locate ourselves in the dynamics of environmental degradation in the Anthropocene.

symbol, rooted in both *bios* (life) and *logos* (word).¹⁴ While scientific inquiry is vital to understanding our natural environment, it does not exhaust our relation to it. Our attention to *bios* expands our understanding of the complexity and diversity of the natural world. Ignoring the diversity of *logos* leads to a I or even domineering use of one symbol over others. Nature is a contested terrain, figured by distinct actors and institutions as resource, sovereign terrain, creation, place of leisure, site of biological research, trove of hidden pharmaceutical treasures, sacred site, etc. These thick symbols bear on how we categorize and understand nature, how we value it, and what authorities we look to in order to understand it.

The force of the symbolic has led many Christian ethicists to argue for new or revised cosmological visions to confront the contemporary challenge of environmental degradation.¹⁵ Jenkins identifies this as a “cosmological temptation,” and argues for a pluralistic account that works pragmatically from existing visions. The global nature of the problem presses this issue forward both within and across cultures necessitating new solutions that account for difference. Institutions and communities bear symbols of nature that impact their action in the world. If we are to work towards collective action on a global level, we must either accede to the dominance of one narrative or take the more challenging path of working together across institutions and cultures. This latter option requires a dialogical approach, capable of seeing the confluence and conflict of multiple embedded articulations of nature, and capable of adjudicating, even prophetically, these different positions towards solutions.

¹⁴ Ricœur describe symbols as a combination of *bios* and *logos* in *Interpretation Theory*. Here, I am adapting it to describe nature as a polyvalent symbol.

¹⁵ See for example, Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997). Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God : The Gifford Lectures 1984-1985* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). Charles Birch, John B Cobb, and International Society for Science and Religion, *The Liberation of Life: From the Cell to the Community*, 2007.

Throughout this dissertation, I have worked to reconstruct institutional ethics within the work of Paul Ricœur and Catholic Social Thought. In the previous chapter, I compared Ricœur and the CST tradition, illustrating their respective strengths and weaknesses. I proposed that a synthesis is possible, in which the more specific principles articulated in CST can help fund Ricœur's more general institutional ethic. This position renders productive, rather than destructive, the tension between and among the CST tradition and Ricœur's work.

In this chapter, I argue that an institutional ethic can substantively contribute to environmental ethics by incorporating expanded models of responsibility, robust understandings of the mediation of moral relationships through institutions, and a keener sense of how institutions shape our engagement with the environment and our subjectivity as persons. As such, an institutional environmental ethic can temper the "theoretical storm" of environmental degradation in the Anthropocene by providing new intellectual frameworks for approaching this moral problem. Rather than being incidental to the problem of climate change, "locating the problem" is an essential step to finding (temporary) resolutions to wicked problems.¹⁶ While other approaches, such as the pragmatic turn, do account for on-the-ground "practices,"¹⁷ my work helps avoid the vagaries of a general focus on practices by regionalizing our action through calling attention to the institutions that form our thick and diverse associational life. Likewise, my position also enables us to escape the idea that if we just change the symbols within our religious domains, that societal level changes in action will follow.¹⁸ I further hold that an inter-

¹⁶ See Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," 159.

¹⁷ Willis Jenkins exemplifies this turn within environmental ethics. See Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics*.

¹⁸ Lynn White's problematic field-shaping 1967 essay, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," has resulted in a cottage industry of academics reframing Christian theology according to Academic Principles. This is in part because of White's claims that "What people do about their

institutional ethic is necessary to treat environmental issues today, because a legion of institutions shape our understanding of the natural world and mediate this relationship asymmetrically in manners that conflict with each other.

In order to address the complex social problem that confronts us in environmental degradation in the Anthropocene, we must become more capable of acknowledging these different institutional forces within our own broader cultural framework and within other cultures. Then we can more clearly identify inter-institutional conflict around the environment and more prudently adjudicate these conflicts.

Both Ricœur and the CST tradition are valuable resources for this project because they make it possible to account for these distinct areas and offer complementary understandings of conflict adjudication. The current chapter will build upon previous chapters in this dissertation by introducing a new intellectual resource from the CST tradition: the papal encyclical *Laudato Si*. *Laudato Si* is the most recent papal social encyclical and the only one to treat the environment exclusively. As I will argue, Francis reorients many of the previously mentioned principles of the CST tradition in light of environmental concerns and lays a platform for an inter-institutional ethic with the new concept of an integral ecology.

ecology' depends on what 'they think' about themselves in relation to things around them" and that Christianity's foundational narratives of creation present a vision of the human set apart from the rest of creation, with it created to serve humanity's needs. Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1205. This has led to authors over the past 50 years working constructively to recover, reframe, or create new Christian symbols grounded in ecological principles. This is captured in authors like Sallie McFague and Mary Evelyn Tucker. See McFague, *Super, Natural Christians*; Brian Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Journey of the Universe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). Jenkins traces well the genesis of this cosmological approach. See Willis Jenkins, "After Lynn White: Religious Ethics and Environmental Problems," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 37, no. 2 (June 2009): 283–309.

In order to move towards an inter-institutional environmental ethic, I will first explore how a twofold model of responsibility can capture both the traditional “polluter pays frameworks” and expand our model of responsibility to account for the dispersion of causality across space and time in Section 1. In Section 2, I describe how institutions intermix with natural systems under the categories of mediation, symbol transmission, environmental systems as inherent in institutions, and ambiguity. Finally, in Section 3, I sketch an “inter-institutional environmental ethic” that incorporates both Ricœur and the CST tradition. I combine Ricœur’s general framework with vital understandings of the human person, our relations to the natural environment, and normative principles of our social life together from the teleological model of CST. From *Laudato Si’* and the longer CST tradition, I excavate candidates for the well-considered convictions lacking in Ricœur’s own account. I also draw on the CST tradition to critique and correct Ricœur’s more narrow moral imagination that limits our approach to environmental ethics and narrow approach to social ethics through his emphasis on the political.

The full effect of this chapter is to argue for a model of environmental ethics that at its heart is a social ethic¹⁹ while sufficiently regionalizing it in contrast to other global environmental ethics in order to render it tractable²⁰. That is to say, the most basic question an inter-institutional environmental ethic poses is this: How do we want to live together with the human other and with all other creatures on this common home? By constructing an

¹⁹ While it is rare in academic discourses to find positions that focus predominantly on the individual, this emphasis on the social necessitates an engagement with pluralism that would mean narrowly religious accounts such as Michael Northcott’s *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, except in so far as they inform one position among many. See Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁰ Singer infamously argues that distance does not matter, writing, “It makes no moral difference whether the person I can help is a neighbor’s child ten yards from me or a Bengali whose name I shall never know, ten thousand miles away.” Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” 231–32.

environmental ethic as social ethic, this chapter points towards new avenues in environmental ethics while also substantiating the fecundity of institutional ethics as a model with ethics.

Section I: Responsibility in the Anthropocene

A question that plagues environmental ethics is how to attribute responsibility. Certain instances of environmental degradation, such as the polluting of local streams and rivers by factories or mines, have clear legal actors who can be held accountable. But the “fragmentation of agency”²¹ across space and time in Anthropocene environmental issues like climate change poses a challenge to responsibility. In some instances, there are no clear legal persons to hold accountable: carbon emissions are the result of aggregate action. In other instances, emissions are the result of historic actors, long since dead. Does a traditional model of responsibility as accountability exhaust our resources to address responsibility in the Anthropocene?

Responsibility has been a central concept for this dissertation. In part I, I presented two complementary models of responsibility born from within Ricœur’s work: “responsibility-as-imputation” and a responsibility for the fragile. The former, an agential account, connects to a capabilities approach and grounds accountability (moral, legal, and so on), even scaled up corporate levels. The latter grounds social responsibility that enables a claim by ordinary persons to responsibility over institutions. This model of responsibility, I’ve contended, is not exhausted by our individual capacity to action, and pushes us to collective action.

On their own, these respective accounts of responsibility are insufficient in environmental ethics. Responsibility as imputation is vital to holding polluters responsible, but it fails to account for our historical inheritance and its narrow treatment can serve to excuse personal expiation for addressing broader models. A social model of responsibility only functions well

²¹ This is at the heart of Stephen Gardiner’s first two storms. I adopt the phrase from him. See Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm*, 24.

when accountability is in place. Yet it presses each to look beyond their small spheres of individual agency to the wider structure that they help sustain and that shape and form them, including their orientation to natural environments.

I have further argued that this responsibility has its negative correlate when we belong to institutions that do harm to others. Our sense of implication is not exhausted by whatever material culpability may be accrued by our participation or even benefit from structural harms. Beyond belonging to the Catholic Church, I am not materially culpable in the sex abuse scandals that continue to rock the Church. Yet, my own moral response is not simply one of outrage, I feel impinged and ashamed as well. I proposed that we can recover from Ricœur's archeology of the symbols of evil the language of stain, which is both indiscriminate and defiling to capture our life in unjust institutions. Distinct from a guilt which is explicitly tied to our commission and omission, this stain serves as an acknowledgement of the presence of injustice in the very institutions that express our desire to live-together. Stain joins a host of other moral sentiments, including outrage and indignation, to awaken us to our collective moral responsibility. Similarly, even as we personally might not be cutting down rainforests to grow the beans that make my coffee as Norman Myers says, "we all have our hands on the chainsaw, and we are wielding it with ever greater energy."²² We each are caught up through institutions in long chains of action leading to grave environmental injustices.

Given the dramatic expansion of our field of concern, it might be easy to conclude Ricœur's account of social responsibility is an outlier. But in Chapter 5, I argued that this social responsibility has analogues in the CST tradition in the concepts of social justice and solidarity. Social Justice expresses what we each owe to a society, with our obligation governed by the

²² Cited in Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 20.

common good, providing not only the grounds for our ordinary obligations to a polity (like taxes), but also the warrant for the obligation of each to reform institutions and a turn to the person ensures that common good is not conflated simply with the “good” of an institution.²³ Solidarity takes the place of social justice in the CST tradition and shifts the focus to agents (persons, groups, nations, etc.) who are linked by bonds of global interdependence to persons across the world. From a secular account of this virtue, we are each called to see the human other as human, acknowledge their equal dignity and make a firm commitment, expressed in action, to a common good that includes them. A Christian account goes further, seeing Christ in the other. Not only does this represent a key analogue to Ricœur’s work, but, as I argue below, to its existing differentiation (secular/Christian), one can add another distinct layer: solidarity with creation.

Responsibility will bring us to the threshold of an institutional ethic. We do not only bear accountability within institutions for what we have or could (in a limited manner) do within institutions according to a model of positional responsibility. We also bear burdens of responsibility borne out by membership whether that membership is voluntary or not. While these domains are far-reaching, attention to the object that amplifies fragility clarifies the ethical terrain in which we are acting. Then the question become how our environmental relations are shaped and mediated by institutions and how an inter-institutional ethic can help us adjudicate

²³ This obligation bears on each, including those who are disadvantaged by institutions. The particular demands of this responsibility must, of course, be mitigated by circumstances. It would be an affront to the dignity of persons of color to say that only whites had an obligation to reform segregated cities. We can say this while recognizing that other forms of obligation will press differently on those who enact or benefit from racism (measured according the metrics of accountability and culpability). The abuses of an institution (be it a family or a state), however, can have a traumatic impact on persons, curtailing and dampening basic capacities. Identifying, as I do that the care for the person takes a central role in a Catholic institutional ethic, one needs to take a therapeutic account in these more extreme cases. It might be that separation from “societies” like a family are necessary for the sake of a person.

these conflicts. Subsequent sections will treat this. But first, I address how a twofold model of responsibility interface with environmental ethics.

1.1: Imputing Responsibility and Environmental Ethics

An account of responsibility-as-imputation is vital to the project of linking agent to action, and thus holding certain actors accountable. Within environmental thought, this is expressed in the generic “Polluter Pays Principle” (PPP).²⁴ As captured in the name, according to this principle, the parties who should be held accountable for the harmful effects of environmental degradation are those who undertook the actions that gave rise to them. Thus, a company, city, or nation-state should take responsibility for environmental injustices, particularly as they impact other humans. This accountability typically takes the form of some monetary exchange. While one can turn to the courts to hold one accountable, built into imputation is the presumption of the capacity of agents claiming responsibility for their actions. Philosophers have worked to expand a prospective PPP account of responsibility to extended beyond agents to include beneficiaries and even those who have the capacity to act.

First, one might ask, why would we need an account of the self-imputation of responsibility when we might instead turn to different forms of responsibility such as attribution and accountability through the public and civil court. After all, is a third-party accountability framework insufficient when courts can assess proper blame and damages for environmental harms? Will it not always be in the interests of companies to avoid imputing responsibility? Does self-interest not make imputation simply an uphill battle? Why privilege a model in which the agent “stands in solidarity” with one’s action?

²⁴ As Simon Caney illustrates, this principle of responsibility has been instituted through legal agreements. See Simon Caney, “Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change,” *Leiden Journal of International Law* 18, no. 4 (December 2005): 752–54, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0922156505002992>.

While imputation and accountability are distinct, with the former privileging the reflexive act of claiming responsibility and the latter emphasizing the third-party nature of responsibility, they are not in conflict. Even without a self-acknowledgement of responsibility as found in imputation, it is still possible to hold one accountable. To privilege imputation does not deny the possibility and importance of accountability. While “guilt” does signal a subjective component, it is not reduced to the sentiment. Even barring the sentiment of guilt, a polluter is still objectively guilty. Further, the mirror of the third-party can lead to imputation. While the pathologically unrepentant may always reject guilt, the mirror of justice can set offending agents on a path towards full acknowledgement of guilt and imputation of responsibility. Thus, we hear of offenders who years later come to acknowledge the harm and devastation inflicted on victims and their families, seeking forgiveness even as their social debt is already exacted and paid. Similarly, as studies in the sciences have helped us over time realize the harmful effects of human action on our global environment, individuals and groups have sought to repair their actions, bringing back animals from the brink of extinction, and course correct, closing coal burning power plants, developing recycling programs, setting urban growth boundaries, and so on. Any robust understanding of judicial guilt presupposes a capacity for the imputation of responsibility. We are only beginning to develop our capacity for responsibility as “geological agents.”

On the social level, we want to create a culture that promotes the development of a refined sense of imputation for ecological harm. If, in the long history of the articulation of evil, guilt is indeed a moral achievement, then it is also quite clear that moral regression is also possible. No law-like force ensures moral progress. While guilt may be hard to escape, today the more fine-tuned expression of it can fluctuate. We have gained a greater appreciation of the far

reach of individual action today, even to the point of measuring our personal carbon footprint, yet, in many ways our capacity to recognize our collective responsibility appears to have diminished.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, responsibility-as-imputation also has the potential for a more prospective orientations, while remaining anchored in agency. All action is inherently prospective, already presuming a goal. Thus, one can already begin to incorporate responsibility not simply the effects of one's past action, but also for the intended and even unintended effects of one's future actions. This model of prospective responsibility also can be adapted for a PPP framework. Thus, philosophers Espen Stabel and Daniel Steel argue for an adapted model of the PPP now applied to a precautionary principle. Rather than speak of a "polluter" who should pay for a harm done, instead, they write of "risk initiators" who should pay for the potential risks that they are placing on others.²⁵ In a more ordinary circumstance, we might consider this as the obligation for insurance to pay for the risk involved in, for example, transporting oil by cargo ship. Applied to climate change, one would ask industries that increase a total risk to pay towards the precautionary measures that communities must undertake in order to survive the eventual effects of climate change.

But the precautionary principle applied to a polluters pay framework allows Stabel and Steel to discuss a range of other parties who, in instances where the risk taker is unable to, should pay. They include those who benefit from the risks taken on by polluters, such as citizens enjoying electricity from oil burning plants. They include those who benefit from the precaution taken, such as those living in wealthy coastal towns impacted by rising ocean levels. Finally, they

²⁵ See Espen Dyrnes Stabell and Daniel Steel, "Precaution and Fairness: A Framework for Distributing Costs of Protection from Environmental Risks," *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 31, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): 55–71, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-018-9709-8>.

also include others who simply may have the capacity to pay if requiring the previous parties would pose an unjust burden.²⁶ In each of these circumstances, however, it might be impossible for risk takers, beneficiaries of risks, or beneficiaries of precautions to pay. After all, there are many circumstances where it is those with little capital who must rely on inefficient technologies that would contribute to environmental degradation. Worse, it is often the poor who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In these most dire circumstances, the authors suggest it is simply those who *can* pay who should pay.²⁷ We see here, then, an expansion of the understanding of responsibility from a prospective PPP to a broader vision of responsibility that extends from beneficiaries to simply those who have the capacity to act.

There are, as one might imagine, many benefits to responsibility-as-imputation as seen in a “polluter pays” framework. When scaled up, it allows for one to name groups, corporations, peoples, and even nations who should bear greater accountability for existing actions that lead to harm or even potential harm. On an individual scale, it can encourage people to work to mitigate their own carbon footprint. Linking agent to action can make environmental harms manageable. As already evidenced in Stabel and Steele’s research though, necessity pushes beyond the mere polluter, requiring other models of responsibility. How might a responsibility for the fragile contribute to this conversation?

1.2: Responsibility for the fragile in an increasingly threatened world.

One is able to accomplish much with a polluter pays framework. But it falters in the face of the dispersion of agency and effect across time and space that I characterized at the outset as reflective of environmental degradation of the Anthropocene. By supplementing imputation with

²⁶ There are clear analogies to Iris Marion Young’s social connection model. See Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 95–122.

²⁷ Stabell and Steel, “Precaution and Fairness,” 57.

a model of responsibility for the fragile, we can speak to a broader responsibility not restricted by retrospective accountability, taking instead a prospective account into view. As I argued in Chapter 2, our responsibility for the fragile other extends to the domains which contribute to that fragility, including those institutions which help contribute to their vulnerability.

The subject summoned to responsibility for the fragile other is not dictated either by chains of action or by chains of command of particular organizations and institutions, but instead is expanded to include all who experience the call of responsibility by the fragile other. While the experience of the call to responsibility is unlikely to be pervasive, it can awaken actors willing to move others to recognize our responsibility and to move us to collective action.²⁸ We can claim responsibility over spheres suffused with structural evil without having to anchor our claim to responsibility in our particular role, our participation, our membership, or the benefits we have received. The effect is not an increase in responsibility through a greater accusation of others. Instead, there is an increased capacity for self-ascription of responsibility through the recognition of alternative means by which we experience ourselves summoned to care for others. My responsibility is not exhausted by my carbon footprint. If anything, I am further stained by the environmental harms born out of the institutions of which I form a part. The experience of stain can awaken us to our collective responsibility. Yet, without even passing through guilt, we can be awakened to our responsibility through the call of the fragile other. Either way, we can take responsibility for climate change and the structures that help fuel it.

²⁸ The fluidity of this call is one of the drawbacks of Ricœur's framework. An advantage of models of social justice and solidarity as found in the CST tradition are more specific designations. For social justice, it is members of a social body who are obliged. With solidarity, each human is called to adopt this virtue. These more specific designations can obscure the fact that one needs to be formed to recognize these calls and that one needs to exercise prudence in weighing our various obligations.

With so vast a problem as climate change, such a burden would seem paralyzing to the individual, adding obligation to our existing incompetence before the problem. After all, if responsibility is neither tied to our agency, nor our perceived capacities. This call to responsibility might demand more of us than we seem capable of doing, leading to a heroic, but nonetheless tragic endeavor.

The problem of moral paralysis can even be compounded by my claims in Chapter 2 that we are in fact stained by association. As I demonstrated there, guilt can be dangerous if divorced from responsibility. Feelings of guilt for the environmental situation in which we find ourselves, however, are not simply fabrications that should be dealt with on the therapist couch rather than the confessional. Stain can capture well the distinction between individual guilt and this collective negative response. It can also serve to awaken us to our collective moral capacities. We should not seek expiation for collective harms in individual actions like recycling or buying a more fuel-efficient car (even as these are themselves good actions). We need to be able to imaginatively place ourselves within the dynamics of environmental degradation in the Anthropocene. Stain helps us to move away from assuaging our conscience by pointing to individual incapacity. We must turn to collective responses, we must turn to the institutions that structure our shared lives together.

Institutions are not only, as I discuss below, means by which we are mediated to injustices like environmental degradation, they also are means for us to act collectively to respond to the fragile other. If responsibility extends over institutions as one of the domains that enhances fragility, it also beckons us to collective action. Institutions ultimately are undergirded by the power to act in concert. Before being distributors of roles, goods, and recognition, before shaping and structuring our norms, before their paradoxical ambiguity, institutions make possible

the activities that out of our desire to live-together. To take responsibility for our institutional life is to be called to act with others to create, reform, renew, and even dismantle our institutions. It is from this summoning to responsibility that we can discover new capacities to act in concert in and through our institutions.

One danger in Ricœur's work is the limitation of responsibility to the fragile *human* other. This renders any concern for the environment as subsidiary to the human other and restricts concerns to the natural world to when it impacts humans. This could also implicitly suggest that the natural world only has utility value. While I think one can easily extend a care for creation through other means in Ricœur, this nonetheless limits his actual effectiveness within environmental ethics.

Here, Catholic Social Thought corrects Ricœur's model of social responsibility by Francis's extension of the circle of concern to include all of creation.²⁹ Below, I argue that there are even resources in Francis to transform the concept of solidarity to extend it to every living being and even the earth. As already mentioned in Chapter 6, our closest analogue to Ricœur's model of responsibility for the fragile is John Paul II's concept of solidarity. Solidarity too is concerned for the distant other, regardless of action or agency. It too extends its concern over institutions, which bear structures of evil, impeding our ability to see the other as fully human. Further, it can be scaled up, with persons, groups, peoples, and nations exercising solidarity.

In *Laudato Si*, the CST tradition provides an important corrective to Ricœur. Francis draws and expands the category of the poor to include the earth. The consequence of this move is that the human is decentered but not dismissed. Throughout Francis' encyclical, he weds together

²⁹ Creation, we should recall is a theological symbol. While distinct from nature, it nonetheless can shape how people from religious traditions that bear this symbol approach natural environments.

a concern for the poor and for the earth, who “is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor.”³⁰ Embedded in this citation is not simply the well-warranted claim that it is the poor who suffer most when the earth is mistreated, but also an extension of the category of the poor to the earth and the rest of non-human creation. Francis does not explicitly warrant this hermeneutical inclusion. Backgrounding this, though, I see the influence of a conceptual expansion of the category of poverty and a rhetorical emphasis on the normative category of the poor that fits well within a liberationist tradition, now set against Francis’s ecological vision of creation.³¹ It is precisely human action in mistreating and marginalizing the world that sets it in integral apposition to the human poor.

³⁰ Francis, “Laudato Si’,” 2.

³¹As Gustavo Gutierrez emphasized that the category of the poor is not limited to material poverty, but “is the one who is oppressed, who is kept marginal to society Gustavo, “Notes for a Theology of Liberation,” 261. Francis’s writings also appear to directly echo Leonardo Boff who also proposes these twin in his book *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. See Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997). Francis’s incorporation of the earth as among the poor presupposes already a philosophical and theological warrant captured in *among*. I see this resulting from a basic ecological impulse in Francis that leads him to proclaim throughout the encyclical that everything is connected. See Francis, “Laudato Si’,” 16, 42, and 117. This subsequently leads him to propose an integral ecology as a normative framework to respond to this ecological reality. To describe the earth as among the poor, however, requires more than mere objective description. I contend it is precisely the concept of creation that warrants this move, because it sets humans and non-human creation on a share normative plane. I also hold that it is possible for this appellation of the poor to the earth can migrate into other secular domains without necessarily doing harm. Yet, in my estimation, it is important that Francis is able to use the powerful normative trope of the poor to describe the earth without subsuming either the poor into the earth and non-human creation or subsuming the earth into the human. The former can simply seem like a red herring raised by economists, but is a real concern when misanthropic biocentrism is a real philosophical possibility. This is captured in popular groups like the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement (complete with its own swag) whose byline is “May we live long and die out,” and who assert “Phasing out the human race by voluntarily ceasing to breed will allow Earth’s biosphere to return to good health.” “VHEMT,” Voluntary Human Extinction Movement, accessed April 3, 2019, <http://www.vhemt.org/>. This has more robust philosophical backers, however, such as Todd May, who considers the untold damage humans have inflicted on other animals and seeks to weigh the relative gains if humans weren’t (representing the latest version of utilitarian calculus) and Arthur Schopenhauer, whose reading of the Vedas led him to see everywhere that life was consuming life. See Todd May,

Binding of the poor and the mistreated earth effectively extends solidarity well beyond the bounds of the human. This is reinforced as Francis invites the reader to consider the earth as a mother or sister by drawing on the imagery of Saint Francis. From this imaginary of the earth as kin, as common home, and as the most maltreated of the poor, Francis calls for “a new and universal solidarity” in which “all of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.”³² Later I will critique Francis for not sufficiently developing a solidarity with the non-human. But we already see here an inchoate obligation that, like Ricœur, bears on all people but that now expresses itself as a concern for all creation. It is not simply other humans that are rendered fragile; the treatment of our common home renders all of creation fragile.³³

“Opinion | Would Human Extinction Be a Tragedy?,” *The New York Times*, January 17, 2019, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/17/opinion/human-extinction-climate-change.html>; Schopenhauer and Berman, *The World as Will and Idea*. The latter danger of the absorption of the earth into the human while having insidious advocates among technologists who propose salvation for humans in new planets, can find more well intentioned adherents among environmentalists, particularly among the cosmologists. Even Boff adopts from Thomas Berry Teilhard de Chardin’s noosphere, asserting that “Men and women are earth that thinks, hopes, loves and has entered into the no longer instinctive but conscious phase of decision-making.” Leonardo Boff, Virgilio P. Elizondo, and Leonardo Boff, eds., “Liberation Theology and Ecology: Alternative, Confrontation or Complementarity?,” in *Ecology and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, vol. 1995/5, Concilium (London: SCM Press, 1995), 69. While Boff doesn’t advance a position where humans as apogee of evolution can neglect the earth (the noosphere functions in his argument to the opposite effect), as Sideris has argued regarding the new cosmologists, this nonetheless becomes a new mode of anthropocentrism, in so far as it is precisely the human who has now unique access to the universe speaking. Even if this doesn’t fall into an axiological anthropocentrism, it advances and privileges an epistemic anthropocentrism. Sideris, *Consecrating Science*. I hold that Francis’ theocentric account of creation, including asserting its unique value, discrete ends, and joint activity of praise serves as a useful corrective to this (without suggesting a theocentric account is the only means to).

³² Francis, “Laudato Si’,” 14.

³³ My research leads me to believe that the only time Ricœur addresses a more expansive model that includes natural environments as spheres of concern in their own right is in an interview *Le Monde*. Ricœur states, “Prenons l'exemple de l'environnement. Pendant des siècles nous avons vécu, en quelque sorte, à l'abri de la nature. Or, nous savons aujourd'hui combien cette nature est vulnérable aux influences cumulées des hommes et des technologies. Il y a un degré de nuisance

If we continue to rely solely on traditional models of responsibility, the convenience of causal dispersal across space, time, and peoples, enables us to simply wash our hands of responsibility. A responsibility for the fragile vastly extends our sphere of concern. Injecting a Catholic symbolic framework into Ricœur's model of responsibility makes clear that we must care for institutions and the environment for both the sake of the fragile human other and because creation bears its own distinct worth and value.³⁴ Such a responsibility can almost seem too much. But this responsibility for the fragile also enables an important subsequent step for addressing environmental degradation in the Anthropocene: taking responsibility for the institutions that mediate our relationship to natural environments. This not only specifies vehicles of harm, but it also points to institutions as means of collective action through which this responsibility can be exercised. It is to institutions and their relation to our natural environments that we turn to next.

à l'échelle cosmique qui est tel qu'aujourd'hui on peut dire que la terre est une réalité périssable confiée à notre garde." ("Take the example of the environment. For centuries, we have lived, so to speak, sheltered from nature. Well, we know today this nature is vulnerably to the cumulative influences of humans and technologies. There is a degree of nuisance on the cosmic scale such that today one can that the earth is a perishable reality confided to our guard.") Manigne, "Paul Ricœur. Nous Sommes Responsable Du Périssable," 42. Apart from this interview (where he works from a stewardship model) Ricœur's more developed published materials tend to treat this care for institutions and the environment as anchored in the concern for the fragile human other. Ricœur is able to give us a solid framework for dealing solely with the effects on the human through the medium natural environments and he also has a certain undeveloped openness to considering our responsibility for the fragile earth. But I would argue that he falls far short of a care for the environment either at the personal level or as a system among other institutions.

³⁴ What do I mean by injecting a symbolic framework? In Chapter 3, I parsed the mediatory nature of institutions that is already implicit in his responsibility for the fragile according to the different articulations of the distant other. What became clear is that while the distant other is known through institutions and is an actual person, it is also encountered according to roles, including that basic shared role of the *chacun* or the each of the *suum cuique* or to each their due. Yet, this also implies that the distant other and the *chacun* itself are symbols. As we shall see below, an integral ecology includes the ecosystem into the community of concern, enabling responsibility to be extended to the non-human other.

Section 2: Institutions and Environmental Ethics

While an expanded responsibility enables us to claim responsibility for the institutions that help spur on climate change, it can only get us to the threshold of an institutional environmental ethic. Institutions are not mere neutral passive mediums for our moral relationships, but impact and shape our actions and form us as agents. They help actualize basic goods of human life, the good of living-together. Further, institutions are ambiguous. They invite moral critique and vigilance. In this section, I want to explore how a more robust understanding of institutions can contribute to an environmental ethics by making explicit their mediatory role to the natural environment and, in turn, to fragile human others. This requires that I show how institutions shape and structure human action and value with regards to the natural environment, how institutions are also distinctly ambiguous as they relate to the natural world. Each of these helps illustrate how human relations to the environment are caught up in our institutional life. In the subsequent section, I will propose an inter-institutional environmental ethic as an ethical response to this situation.

2.1: Institutions Mediate Our Relations to the Natural World

An essential feature of understanding institutions in Chapter 3 was the recognition that they mediate our relationship to the distant other. To develop an institutional environmental ethic, this must be further modified. Institutions mediate our relationships to distant others. But they also mediate our relationship to natural environments, and through them, to human others both near and far who we may never encounter face-to-face.

This is most apparent in the material means by which institutions mediate our relations to the natural world. We exist as a part of long chains of action that connects us to local and global environments. Simply imagine the range of institutions and organizations of which we form a

part. We work in offices whose heating and cooling contribute to carbon emissions. We live in cities that take responsibility for waste management, recycling, and sewage. We rely on regional electric companies to provide us power, often without us knowing the means of generation or even the option of a more ethical provider. Our state and federal governments designate the boundaries and management of our parks. These same governments make decisions on the policies that impact each of our individual action, such as fuel regulations and carbon emissions. We make purchases from transnational corporations that mine rare metals for iPhones in the Congo, that produce plastics in China, that raze rain forests for palm tree plantations in Latin America, depleting habitats and destroying biodiversity, and so on. Our environmental relations, for good and ill, are inextricably caught up in our institutional lives.

As is also apparent, environmental degradation has its impact on humans, particularly the most vulnerable. Climate change, for example, renders weather patterns more unpredictable and thus contributes to issues of food security. It also has significant effects on the movement of human populations. Sea-level rise effects coastlands whereby flooding causing displacement and whole islands have also disappeared.³⁵ Droughts lead to water shortages. Climate change is far from the only environmental issue with which we should be concerned. Water contamination, such as lead, if ingested, can have a lifelong impact on a person's developmental capacities. Aggressive commercial fishing has depleted local fishing markets. Subsidized coal usage in China for heating homes, for example, has been shown to reduce the lifespan of individuals by 3-4 years. Researchers have indicated that bringing China into compliance with air pollution

³⁵ For a nuanced study of the various aspects of environmental migrants, see Jane McAdam, *Climate Change and Displacement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (Oxford: Hart Pub., 2010).

standards would save 3.7 billion life years.³⁶ In the U.S., a death toll of 7,500 a year has been tied to pollution from power plants,³⁷ with asymmetrical impacts on Latino, Native American, and rural communities.³⁸ Worldwide, the health toll is estimated at “210,000 deaths, almost 2 million serious illnesses, and over 151 million minor illnesses per year.”³⁹ In each instance, environmental degradation and pollution has a disproportionate impact on the poor or vulnerable, including minority communities, who lack fiscal capital to adapt, political access to demand change, and who suffer under the limitations of historic and current environmental racism.

As discrete organized structures of action, institutions also mediate our natural relations in more diffuse ways. They set of up the frameworks of laws that identify who has a claim when a river is polluted. They institute structures of action that make it more likely for a person to recycle fastidiously in one part of the U.S. and hardly at all in another. They direct everyday habitual actions. They even, as we shall see below, shape and form our very understanding of non-human natural environments. As organized social forms they help comprise society (without

³⁶Avraham Ebenstein et al., “New Evidence on the Impact of Sustained Exposure to Air Pollution on Life Expectancy from China’s Huai River Policy,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, September 6, 2017, 201616784, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1616784114>.

³⁷ See “Death and Disease from Power Plants - Clean Air Task Force (CATF),” accessed July 26, 2018, http://www.catf.us/fossil/problems/power_plants/. These 2014 numbers are actually an improvement from a 2004 study that estimated over 24,000 deaths from pollution resulting from power plants.

³⁸ See Lesley Fleischman and Molly Dunton, “Country Living, Dirty Air: Oil and Gas Pollution in Rural America.” (Boston: Clean Air Task Force, July 2018), http://catf.us/resources/publications/files/Country_Living_Dirty_Air.pdf; Lesley Fleischman et al., “Latino Communities at Risk: The Impact of Air Pollution from the Oil and Gas Industry” (Boston: Clean Air Task Force, September 2015), <http://www.catf.us/resources/publications/view/230>.

³⁹Susan Buchanan, Erica Burt, and Peter Orris, “Beyond Black Lung: Scientific Evidence of Health Effects from Coal Use in Electricity Generation,” *Journal of Public Health Policy* 35, no. 3 (August 1, 2014): 266–77, <https://doi.org/10.1057/jphp.2014.16>.

it being reduced to them, just as it is likewise not reduced to the individuals for form it).⁴⁰

Institutions are not the sum total of our social life, but attention to them gives us a handhold on discrete ways our relations are mediated and clear avenues for societal critique and transformation.⁴¹ This mediatory nature of institutions helps us realize that our attention to the dual cry of the earth and of the poor cannot be limited to our proximate surroundings. Instead, it must take into full account our institutional lives, which link us to distant environs and distant others.

In Chapter 3, I argued that the mediatory role of institutions illustrates their moral (in contrast to amoral) character. The same now must be said regarding institutions in an environmental context. We cannot simply treat the harms of institutions, but must recognize that in a myriad of ways institutions are the means through which we relate to distant natural environments and distant others.⁴² Indeed, it is often more the rule than the exception. Yet, a material impact is just scratching the surface of how institutions shape our relations to natural environments. As we shall see in the next section, they also shape the non-material means by which we relate to those environments.

⁴⁰ Ricœur's work has a slippage between society and the institution, calling both systems of distribution. My emphasis on the plurality of institutions and my privilege of organized forms renders that slippage problematic. Just as, however, symbols only make partial reference back to institutions, society would appear to include the wider more amorphous trends including conventions and beliefs that inform our social life as well as distinct individual contributions (even if amplified through institutions).

⁴¹ It is precisely the shortfalls of institutions, such in the inertia that characterizes them, that makes Francis's more radical call for an "ecological conversion" (not to be confused with a religious conversion) appealing. The dramatic changes demanded to bring carbon levels down require a transformation of life at all levels. My dissertation shines a light on one key area that is often neglected.

⁴² There is a way in which the institutional frame parallels Ricœur's deontic screen—that is, our aims and intentions have to pass through the demands and possibilities of institutions. In this respect they are moral institutions. Our task, then is to reform institutions so that this screen presents norms, values, and rules that can be judged as morally sound..

2.2: *Institutions Shape and Structure our Symbols of Nature*

Institutions do more than just mediate our relationships to the natural world and in turn to people through natural environments in a material manner. They also shape and structure our own engagement with the natural world. In Chapter 3, I argued that one aspect under which institutions have been understood in Ricœur's work is that they are necessary to human freedom, action, and development. Ricœur draws on anthropologist Clifford Geertz to argue that in order for action to be meaningful, an agent relies upon a symbolic web that includes institutions, cultural frameworks, and more. Thus, a raised hand can be interpreted as voting or as hailing a taxi as a result of relying on this symbolic web. This connects to a more longstanding claim in Ricœur's work dating back to his philosophy of the will that cultural influences in the form of inherited values are part of the "involuntariness" against which our voluntary action makes sense. Both of these claims indicate that we rely upon broader (involuntary) cultural frameworks over which we do not have total control in order for our free and voluntary action to have meaning before others.

By grappling with the fusion of materiality and word, Ricœur's work on symbol can provide a handhold for making sense of the polyphony of nature. He writes, "Metaphor occurs in the already purified universe of the *logos*, while the symbol hesitates on the dividing line between *bios* and *logos*."⁴³ *Bios* is broadly construed here to mean life in its full range. *Logos* reflects language and rationality. While metaphor is already caught up in the world of words, symbol always is rooted in human encounter. The pairing is apt for considering nature as a symbol. It is not reducible to *bios*, despite the sentiment that direct encounters with biota

⁴³ Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 58.

encapsulates nature.⁴⁴ Each encounter always includes a range of symbols that help us to interpret it. Likewise, nature, whether in its most general form or in its concrete instantiations as organisms and ecosystems is never purely *logos*, a metaphor simply subject to the wordsmith's will. The stubbornness of the particularity of materiality is always present in our symbols of nature.

Rather than presenting a unified picture of this symbolic web (as one finds in Ricœur's appropriation of Geertz), I maintain that institutions help to reveal more implicit fractures in this symbolic web, even as the human mind seeks coherence. We rely upon a host of symbolic regimes to make sense of our natural environment according to different institutional frameworks. While the whole may hang together in a pragmatic sense, they do not form a cohesive and coherent whole. Yet this fragmentation exists alongside human drives for coherence that take place at individual and communal levels. As Iris Murdoch notes, "Intellect is naturally one-making. To evaluate, understand, classify, place in order of merit, implies a wider unified system, the questing mind abhors vacuums. We fear plurality diffusion, senseless accident, chaos, we want to transform what we cannot dominate or understand into something reassuring and familiar, into ordinary being, into history, art, religion, science."⁴⁵ The tendency

⁴⁴ What would a "direct relationship with nature" look like apart from "symbols of nature?" I see the great dialogical thinker Martin Buber exemplifying this as he maintains the possibility of I-Thou relationships with nature in his book *I and Thou*. See Martin Buber, *I And Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, 1st Touchstone Ed edition (Touchstone, 1971), 55–56. He seemed to hold that a true encounter with the deep particularity of the environment required a bracketing of not only our sense data, but even forms and concepts. The very symbol of nature, it seems, would be included as that which is bracketed. See Martin Buber and Maurice S. Friedman, *The Knowledge of Man* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965), 156. I do agree with Buber that such direct, phenomenal encounters with nature are possible. This does not, clarify our full understanding of nature (which I maintain is always born of both *bios* and *logos*) nor do I believe that it can it serve as a comprehensive environmental ethic, even as I do believe that direct I-thou encounters with the natural can inform and even leaven an environmental ethic.

⁴⁵ Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide for Morals* (London: Penguin, 1992), 1–2.

Murdoch names is natural, but not necessarily benign. With regards to my work, forcing a singular symbol of nature is a form of domination. My subsequent claim that we need phronesis to adjudicate these difference recognizes this drive for coherence, and insists on temporary resolutions. Unity is required for action, but it should not stifle diversity.

One result of this marriage of *bios* and *logos* as symbol is a greater recognition of the plurality of both categories. If *bios* is born in part from the encounter with the deep particularity of each organism, then we would see a radical pluralization of *bios* across landscapes and environments. Similarly, *logos* is not one, but legion, born from contingent human history. While often taken as monolithic, the symbol of nature is many and varied according to the deep particularity of materiality and the vast plurality of human words.

My adaptation of Ricœur’s understanding of the symbol as it relates to nature can be productively set alongside the anti-essentialist vision of nature found in the essay “After Nature” by political ecologist Arturo Escobar.⁴⁶ Here, he rejects an essentialist view of nature that would solely anchor nature in a biophysical reality, apart from human discourse and society.⁴⁷ Instead,

⁴⁶ Arturo Escobar, “After Nature: Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology,” *Current Anthropology* 40, no. 1 (1999): 1–30.

⁴⁷ One challenge I face in engaging Escobar is that his anti-essentialist approach seems antithetical to the natural law tradition that sustains much of the CST tradition and Catholic environmental ethics. It is true that it denies finding some Archimedean point which anchors our ethics outside of discourse. A natural law account, however, is not an essentialist account of nature. As I discussed in Chapter 5 (drawing on Jean Porter), natural law is always already a theological account of the world, and thus is already a fusion of world and word. This is true even in Francis’s work, where the articulation of the inherent value of creatures and their distinct ends are not scientific facts to be discovered, but theological truths to be discerned. Their promulgation is not compulsion, but persuasion. Francis does not offer a biocentric perspective, but a theocentric perspective. This theocentric perspective comes out clearest as Francis relativizes an axiological anthropocentrism that accords value solely according to the human. He writes “We are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God’s eyes: ‘by their mere existence they bless him and give him glory’, and indeed, ‘the Lord rejoices in all his works’ (Ps 104:31).” Francis, “Laudato Si’,” 69. How do we make sense of this? In my schema, natural law and other schema sit among a host of other discourses and must advance by

Escobar stresses that our concept of nature is always constructed in the fusion of discourse and biophysical realities in contingent, but non-arbitrary ways.⁴⁸ It is, in the words of Ricœur, a dynamic and diverse fusion of polyvalent *bios* and polyphonic *logos*.

As a contingent and varied phenomenon, within and across cultures, one finds different and even competing articulations of nature. Escobar notes different types of nature, dubbed “nature regimes,” which compete and overlap. Thus, there are “capitalist” regimes of nature, reliant on sharp distinctions between humans and the natural that enable nature’s objectification and technological advancement. An “organic” nature regime is characterized by “the fact that nature and society are not separated ontologically.”⁴⁹ This regime serves as an umbrella term to cover the multiple indigenous articulations of history and biology. Today, new developments in science have signaled new ways of relating to biological realities and subsequently to different articulations of nature that Escobar identifies as falling under the techno” nature regime. Thus, new access to biological realities at the fundamental level (gene splicing, molecular

persuasion and not compulsion. Does engaging Escobar’s anti-essential political ecology fall into relativism? I do not think so, instead. Instead, I argue for a deferral of ethical judgement. There will be no silver bullet. Rather than isolating some essential biophysical reality, ignoring the polyphony of regimes, or worse, elevating one regime (the scientific) and pretending it is not itself a discourse, my framework acknowledges the normative frameworks already in these regimes (including the theological) proposes that already within these there is a capacity for reform and holds to the possibility of adjudicating through phronesis when conflict arises.

⁴⁸ Nature is not simply a construct as if it is purely a matter of discourse. Instead, it is always a fusion. Escobar writes, “It means, on the one hand, that for us humans (and this includes life scientists and ecologists) nature is always constructed by our meaning-giving and discursive processes, so that what we perceive as natural is also cultural and social; said differently, nature is simultaneously real, collective, and discursive—fact, power, and discourse—and needs to be naturalized, sociologized, and deconstructed accordingly.” Escobar, “After Nature,” 2. Escobar, 2. One could read this as implying that the biophysical has no weight. Quite the contrary, it is always stubbornly present, but in different ways in different symbols of nature. Drawing on Escobar, I am pushing against the idea that there is some essential nature, which if acquired and conformed to would resolve our environmental issues. We need to both better understand biophysical realities and better perceive the host of configurations as to how nature is unified as a symbol.

⁴⁹ Escobar, “After Nature,” 7.

resequencing) have pushed the question of the integrity of nature. Instead, the biological in this new technical regime is, at its fundamental level, open to human manipulation. Escobar's three regimes serves as an umbrella for various other articulations of nature that draw together in contingent, but non-arbitrary ways the domains of *bios* and *logos*.⁵⁰

Escobar's three regimes interact and overlap with each other. Notably, they do not represent a mere progression in time; this too would be falling prey to a form of essentialism. As part of regimes overlap, a person negotiates multiple natures within themselves at different times and places. Escobar gives the example of an indigenous biomedical researcher, who negotiates the biotechnical nature regime and the organic nature regime when she returns to the forest. Escobar even suggests that in our globalized age there might be an inevitable hybridization of these regimes both between and also within the articulations internal to these regimes.

What does this mean? After all, the tree outside one's window seems rather uncomplicated. A botanist could tell you its variety. An evolutionary biologist could catalogue its phylogeny. An ecologist could identify the role it plays within its local system. These answers do not arrive immediately, and yet for most, they represent a certain obvious facticity about the natural world. Under the scrutiny of the scientific disciplines, it reveals itself. Yet, such a perspective only illuminates one aspect of this natural object: nature according to a scientific regime.

⁵⁰ One could read Escobar as presenting an overly rationalistic account by staying at the level of discourse and articulations. I would maintain that a turn to symbols of nature, rather than regimes of nature, opens up a more explicit space for the affective. Ricœur writes, "Symbols, in contrast [to the inevitably trite and dead metaphor], because they plunge their roots into the durable constellations of life, feeling, and the universe, and because they have such an incredible stability, leads us to thinking that a symbol never dies, it is only transformed." Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 64. Feeling, then, is both present, but also irreducible to merely the individual.

I propose that institutions play an important role in developing, sedimenting, and transmitting regimes or what I call “symbols of nature.”⁵¹ Institutions are not the sole vehicle of these symbols of nature, as symbols can be held by individual persons and transmitted in less formal manners. Nonetheless, institutions bear symbols of nature in their activities, in their narratives, in their rules and regulations, in their means of assessing value, and even in their material expressions.

I gained a visceral sense for these different symbols of nature while I lived for a year alongside the Panama Canal while my wife conducted behavioral research on bats with the Smithsonian. The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute on Barro Colorado Island (BCI), Panama captures well just such a “nature symbol bearing” institution. On BCI, scientists from all over the world gather to study one of the longest continually recorded natural systems. Ongoing research maps every square foot of the island, studying every organism, from the lianas that hang from the trees, to the poisonous frogs that populate their streams, to the bats that roost in the trees, to the leaf cutter ants, who produce food using fungus that thrives upon the various clippings that they harvest. Here a myriad of scientific disciplines gather under one roof to describe, study, and uncover the mysteries of nature. For many, this might be taken as the true approach because it claims to provide the thickest and most comprehensive engagement with the material natural world.

But such a view only captures one part of our relation with the natural world. Along the Panama Canal near BCI, there are myriad modes of engaging with the natural environment of this region including economic, political, scientific, pharmaceutical entrepreneurial, and

⁵¹ As noted in Chapter 3, I’ve adopted the term “sedimenting” symbols from Ricoeur who speaks of inertia, innovation, and sedimentation. One advantage to the metaphor of sedimentation is that it gives the impression of layers that build up over time as a lasting trace of past activity.

religious. The diversity of *bios* is evident from organism, to system, to region. But the diversity of *logos* is not so apparent.

If one looks at those institutions that surround and even interact with BCI, a far more diverse picture emerges. BCI came into existence as a discrete island for scientific study following the creation of Lake Gatun by the construction of the Panama Canal. To the Panama Canal Authority, this water way that created BCI is a source of trade and income of national importance. To the Gamboa Rainforest Resort and other tour companies, this lake and the surrounding forests are sites for leisure and tourism. For the Government, this canal and the land surrounding it is not only of economic value, but also newly regained sovereign territory. Previously, the Canal Zone had been held by the United States since the building of the canal and only returned to Panama under the Carter administration. Before the zone was returned, this same jungle was a training ground for the type of tropical warfare the U.S. military engaged in throughout the Vietnam war. Indeed, one of the main reasons that such a large swath of land is preserved and accessible now as a national park is due to security concerns surrounding the canal since its creation. For the historian, these natural lands bear the vestiges of the Camino de Cruces, the pre-modern path by which goods and gold were moved from one end of Panama to the other. For the Emberà Wounaan, a tribe indigenous to the area, this natural space is at once sacred and profane. It is a source of food and site of mystic encounter where “the forest is a familiar extension of a human house, and in it, they engage in ritual exchanges of energy with animals and with the spirits that rule there.”⁵² Here, nature is both domestic and a site for the encounter with the sacred. This stretch of undeveloped natural land is marked by a surplus of meaning.

⁵² Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 26.

BCI and the surrounding terrain demonstrates something more than impermeable and separate spheres. These spheres represent institutions that incorporate overlapping regimes of value, norms, and affect, with emphasis given to these institutions own distinct purposes. A constellation is formed in each of these regimes that rely on similar elements, which constructs them differently in the process of human meaning-making. Furthermore, we are not fixed into one way of relating to our natural environments. People move between these different institutions and, in turn, creatively adapt to different symbols of nature. If, as I proposed in Chapter 5, part of practical reasoning involves being adept at “institutional thinking,” then as persons shift between different institutions, they also adapt to different symbols of nature. This might happen in explicit or implicit ways. Escobar highlights the example of an indigenous woman who is also a pharmaceutical researcher who moves between these different nature regimes. Our examples could proliferate and move closer to home. There is the environmental economist, trained to measure the dollar value of the cost and benefits of natural systems, who might also be a birder who can see inherent value in the non-human world as well. The logger who relies on lumber for his living could also be an avid fisherman, enjoying natural spaces of leisure. The field biologist could also, apart from the confines of her discipline, approach the forest as sacred, seen through the theological lens of creation. Our institutions sediment and transmit certain symbols of nature which simultaneously structure our actions and shape us, albeit incompletely. To adjudicate symbols of nature in our personal lives is already a work of practical wisdom.

An anti-essentialist account can help us to move away from anchoring moral norms in some essential account, such as “pristine nature,” and to recognize the many valuations present in institutions that are shaping our moral worlds. For some, this would appear to rob us of ethical

resources such as natural law or the authority of science. Both of these concepts, however, are already couched in culture and history and any appeals to getting to essential nature apart from human mediation rings false. In the Christian tradition in particular the former is already a marriage of bios and logos, by making appeals to Logos. This come through explicitly in Francis's theocentric ethic. But a polyphony of natures does not mean that better or worse symbols of nature do not exist. Clearly these can be evaluated on all sorts of grounds. One can ask whether a symbol is inherently contradictory, relying upon a dim or even inaccurate grasp of natural environments. Such accounts may serve the poets; however, to the extent that the most important question of ethics, at least according to H. Richard Niebuhr, is, "What's going on?," biologically incoherent symbols of nature fail to serve ethicist. While not to be confused with the essence of nature, the stubborn materiality of the *bios* of nature serves as a critical check on these proliferating symbols.

The implication of a symbolic approach to nature is that our world is populated with many competing symbols of nature. Our institutions serve as sites of innovation, inertia, sedimentation, and promulgation of these symbols. At times these symbols are revealing aspects of biophysical realities not captured in other symbols. In other instances, however, they also illustrate hidden aspects of human relationality and meaning-making. This approach avoids simply focusing on the former at the expense of the latter. Such symbols impact how we understand and value natural environments. Yet, to actually adjudicate between these different symbols (including rejecting some), we have to move to an inter-institutional approach. Before turning to the inter-institutional, this polyvalent symbol of nature helps us ask to what degree natural environments can be construed as a part of institutions.

2.3: *Environments as Integral to Institutions*

Thus far, I have largely presumed a conception of natural environments as mediated, but nonetheless outside of our understanding of institutions. Such an account could fall under the critique of simply treating the environment as a background to human action. Could we also consider nature as a part of institutions?

We find a model for the incorporation of natural environments into our institutional life in Francis's call for an "integral ecology" in *Laudato Si*. First, Francis discards a nature-human binary setting both human and non-human relations squarely in the center of environmental thought, leading to a new frame for thinking about the environmental crisis. He writes that "When we speak of the 'environment', what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it."⁵³ This is a vital step to incorporating natural environments into our picture of institutions. After all, institutions might be seen as the quintessential expression of culture, representing not only the heights of human organization, but also serving as sites for the creation, sedimentation, and transmission of human symbols and values. If nature is construed as the non-human, or even more specifically, the non-cultural (allowing a small place for humans within nature insofar as they accord with it), then it would be a non-starter to consider the place of natural environments within institutions. By identifying that environment is a "relation" between humans and nature and not a mere background, Francis adopts a dynamic understanding of natural worlds that includes humans and also incorporates all other natural spheres.⁵⁴

⁵³ Francis, "Laudato Si'," 139.

⁵⁴ I am maintaining here that it is possible to hold a more dynamic understanding of the symbol of nature without sacrificing moral realism. Our norms will not be grounded in some ahistorical

If we begin to incorporate natural environments into our institutional lives, we must ask, beyond mediation and beyond the symbolic framing of natural environments, how they too fit within the teleological aim of institutions. For both Ricœur and the CST tradition, institutions are bound up with the good and, thus, are not amoral spheres but moral domains. For Ricœur, the desire for the general good of “living-together” undergirds and legitimates all institutions. For CST, distinct goods unite each institution and are nestled into common goods. Beyond simply mediating goods and harms to other humans, an institutional environmental ethic must also ask to what degree an institution is considering the good of natural environments.

Previously the unitive good of society as theorized in the CST tradition would have excluded natural environments except insofar as they impact humans. But Francis argues that ecological problem and social problem are not distinct and separate, but unified. This unity requires an integral solution that draws into conversation environmental, economic, and social ecology. In the process, he relativizes the “use-value” of natural environments in light of the theological claim of the inherent worth of all non-human life as creatures of God.⁵⁵ Here, it is

perspective of pristine nature. Instead, they will arrive out of the range of human relations to the natural environment (including religious frameworks).

⁵⁵ The theological symbol of creation adds a new dimension to the symbol of nature. For a reconstruction of Francis’s theology see William Schweiker’s “The Destiny of Creation: Theological Ethical Reflections on *Laudato Si’*.” I particularly appreciate Schweiker’s clear reduction of Francis’s sprawling concept of the technocratic paradigm to seven key points. These are: “1. The lack of a concept of ‘creation’ distinct from ‘nature.’ 2. The denial of intrinsic value. 3. The valorization of speed and expanding human power. 4. The logic of means/ends in which utility is the sole form of value. 5. The denial of objective moral norms and thus a form of moral relativism. 6. The assumption that human freedom is and should be limitless. 7. The consumerist conception of happiness that requires exploitation of both the earth and human beings.” William Schweiker, “The Destiny of Creation: Theological Ethical Reflections on *Laudato Si’*,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 46, no. 3 (September 2018): 487. Schweiker then parses Francis’s theological alternative grounded in a robust understanding of a creation that values the dignity humans, while setting them alongside (rather than separate) from the rest of creation. Schweiker lifts out the sacramental nature of Francis’s work, in which other created beings are the “letter” of a “precious book” of revelation. Schweiker, 490.. Where I take issue with Schweiker’s account is

worth underlining that creation is a theological concept, which itself inflects onto a variety of symbols of nature. This leads Francis to argue that the good of natural environments have their own distinct place in an integral vision. An integral vision links multiple spheres, inviting mutual dialogue and refinement. Institutions informed by an integral ecology, then, incorporate environmental concerns into their basic teleological aims.⁵⁶ As one might imagine, though, including the good of our environment into our understanding of institutions does not lessen the moral ambiguities that plague institutions. If anything, it amplifies them.

2.4: Ambiguous Institutions and Competing Symbols of Nature

In many respects, the ambiguity of our institutions with regards to natural environments seems obvious. We live in a world that is permeated with environmental institutional injustices. For example, Dale Jamieson identified climate change as the largest collective action problem.⁵⁷ It is not simply humans in aggregate, as if a mob was the best symbol for human relations to the environment. Such an account would flatten our associational life. A myriad of institutions

his overemphasis of the perspectival nature (insofar as it calls for a transformed vision) of Francis's work with regards to the respective audience. I see the text operating with multiple audiences in mind. If we take the rhetoric of his opening paragraphs at face value, this includes (à la *Pacem in Terris*) Catholic leaders, catholic faithful, and all people of good will, as well an expanded audience of "every person living on this planet." Francis, "Laudato Si'," 3. A bald reading of the text would seem to indicate Francis includes even people of "bad will" or persons solely driven by self-interest. I agree with Schweiker that an integral ecology is Francis's core response (and one appealing to all people), but hold that Francis's more theological accounts captured in his second chapter, "The Gospel of Creation," is written for the Catholic community and invites (as with Schweiker's own project of Theological Humanism) other traditions to develop their own theological accounts of the environment. On my reading of the whole, Francis's Gospel of creation funds a Christian theological environmental imagination and serves to shape the space occupied by Christian voices at the table that is being framed by an integral ecology. The platform created by the concept of integral ecology brings together multiple cultures and communities, including indigenous, scientific, business, and political communities, as well as, in so far as it is possible, a consideration of eco-systems.

⁵⁶ Francis call for a cultural ecology in which a greater consideration is given to indigenous communities also illustrates how his integral ecology also pushes towards an inter-cultural environmental ethic.

⁵⁷ Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 4.

mediate our relations. Institutional ambiguity related to the environment is evidenced by all the ways in which institutions already contribute to it. Yet, in treating institutions as ambiguous in this dissertation, I am doing more than simply identifying them as possible agents of evil. The paradoxical element of these ambiguities illustrates that institutions bear vulnerabilities to caprice, to violence, and to domination that cannot simply be organized away, calling for vigilance and wisdom.

A turn to an institutional environmental ethic invites us to consider how institutional ambiguities add to the challenges of addressing modern day environmental degradation. First, we might look to Ricœur's treatment of the ambiguities of institutions through the three articulations of the "political paradox" that I parsed in Chapters 3 and 4. While none of Ricœur's articulations of the political paradox treat the environment, in his thought, they are a primary means of addressing ambiguities in politics and, by analogy, in all institutions. As such, they can inform our institutional analysis of environmental issues.

The first articulation expressed the paradox of form and force, identifying that a political ideal, as captured in a constitution and judicial institutions, will nonetheless always have to move to the concrete, thus inviting caprice, irrationality, and violence. This does not treat environmental issues, but it can nonetheless be instructive for developing potential solutions to our institutional environmental crisis. Ricœur's first paradox illustrates the dangers faced within institutions of moving from the ideal to the concrete. This paradox is inescapable even as any particular violence is not inevitable. In terms of facing environmental issues, such a paradox cautions against the presumption that one can simply organize one's way into perfect arrangements or institutions that would eliminate capriciousness and arbitrariness. Attention to

the political paradox further injects a sense of vigilance in any utopian ideals of a quick or simple fix.

The various technical challenges posed by the solutions to carbon emissions exemplify Ricœur’s observation. One could mitigate emissions through the regulation of cars, but this invites caprice in the designation of relative allowances according to sizes, failing to be both effective and transparent. Similarly, even when one can find bipartisan agreements for things like a carbon tax, one faces the caprice of executive leaders who maintain “veto power.”⁵⁸ The first political paradox presents the dilemma that no matter how perfect the ideal of an institution may be, the movement into the concrete invites myriad means of introducing the arbitrary that can subvert this ideal. As such, it beckons us to vigilance.

Jamieson in particular is attuned to the political challenges posed by climate change. Drawing on classical political philosophy, he and Marcello Di Paola identify perduring vulnerabilities of democratic institutions, such as a lack of governmental expertise, voter ignorance, and instability. These vulnerabilities are amplified in the Anthropocene. For example, the authors highlight an apparent dilemma that rises between the need to address the challenge of the Anthropocene in order to fulfill the “public utility” of governance, while also being responsive to the “expressed preference” of citizens, who might not desire the necessary constraints placed by international treaty agreements.⁵⁹

This last example captures well the challenge posed by Ricœur’s second political paradox, now in light of the Anthropocene. With this paradox, Ricœur identifies within political institutions two competing but irreducible axes of governance: Weber’s domination of the

⁵⁸ Jamieson identifies this as the problem of veto players in Marcello Di Paola and Dale Jamieson, “Climate Change and the Challenges to Democracy,” *University of Miami Law Review* 72, no. 2 (Winter 2018): 410–13.

⁵⁹ Di Paola and Jamieson, 401–4.

governed obeying those who govern and the collective power to act in concert which legitimates political institutions and fuels our desire to live-together. Facing climate change, we see the insidious dilemma of political institutions that for the sake of the good of the life of the collective body, it seems necessary to act against a people's expressed preference. Some have even suggested in the absence of clearer solutions the need for a stronger, authoritarian regime to address the problem, thus supplanting the very legitimacy of political institutions found in citizens acting in concert (which one might also identify as an intrinsic common good of institutions.)⁶⁰

Yet, the prior two paradoxes predominantly focus on political institutions, and while it is possible to extend these to other institutions that make use of force and power, they do not outright help us to treat this issue. It is with Ricœur's third political paradox where we see the full entry of institutions that proves most instructive in approaching environmental issues. The third political paradox presents the dilemma of competing institutions, particularly at the level of justice. Here, the political institution is both one institution among many, but also the institution that secures the space in which all others react. It poses the challenge of institutions bearing their distinct modes of reasoning, and even justice, yet needing to sit among other institutions. Above, I proposed that the symbol of nature itself is polyvalent, giving rise to distinct embodiments within different institutions. Escobar called these different "nature regimes." Uniting this with the third political paradox, we can see that different concepts of natures will bear differently on

⁶⁰ Hans Jonas suggests the possible need for authoritarian regimes. But he identifies, that this route would only be necessary if "nothing else worked," and that a true effort hasn't yet been tried. See: Harvey Scodel, "An Interview with Professor Hans Jonas," *Social Research* 70, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 365.

our understanding of justice.⁶¹ If, for example, nature is mere resource to be used, then very quickly one's conception of justice is solely tied to the just distribution of resources. If one incorporates broader conceptions of nature, including it bearing its own intrinsic value, then conflict will ensue.

Yet, my account of institutional ethics takes cues from Catholic Social Thought. I am not setting institutions simply in the scope of the political (though I recognize, nonetheless, the vital role of the political), but I set the political within the wider sphere of the social (which includes without being reduced to the full range of our institutional life). While an anti-monistic account of society runs through the CST tradition, we see it inflected in Francis's diagnosis of the problem. Francis, highlights the dangers of the domination by a single framework in *Laudato Si*. His concern is not on a domineering state, but instead a domineering paradigm that plays out in our political, social, economic, and ecological life. He argues that the technocratic paradigm is at the root of the environmental crisis. According to Francis, "This paradigm exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external subject. This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, which in itself is already a technique of possession, mastery and transformation. It is as if the subject were to find itself in the presence of something formless, completely open to manipulation."⁶² This paradigm is encapsulated in the human who is treats

⁶¹ Jamieson also points out that there are different typological frames with which one approaches scientific issues, such as social progress; economic development and competitiveness; morality and ethics; scientific and technical uncertainty; public accountability, etc. See Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 98. Each of these frames lead to different valuations. Drawing on Ricœur, my account suggests that even when within the frame of justice, there are nevertheless different accounts of justice based on the symbolic nature regime one adopts.

⁶² Francis, "Laudato Si'," 106. I am presenting a slice of this paradigm. For a clear treatment of this sprawling topic, consult Schweiker, "The Destiny of Creation: Theological Ethical Reflections on Laudato Si'," 487.

every problem as having a technological solution. This is not simply a personal value, but an institutional paradigm, originally rooted in science and technology, now dominating other institutional spheres, such as economics and political life. Just as the problem of warming oceans has a technological solution, so too hunger has a market solution. At its base, this paradigm allows the tools to dictate the ends of human action. According to Francis, these tools are not neutral, but shape the very society we want to live in.⁶³ By identifying the natural world as a fully malleable system, the technocratic paradigm dismisses it as a true matter of concern.

How might one respond to this last ambiguity? In the next section, I propose an “inter-institutional ethic” governed by *phronesis* as the way of adjudicating these claims. My work already follows the CST tradition outlined in Chapter 5 to move beyond the more limited sphere of the political to the social. We see that even Francis’s call for an integral ecology to respond to the technocratic paradigm brings together multiple domains, including scientific and religious inquiry. In doing so, his contribution sets the stage for an inter-institutional ethic. Yet, *phronesis* must be funded by “well-considered convictions,” which in Ricœur’s own work is alluded to but found wanting. In Chapter 7, I already doubted the sufficiency of the Rawlsian convictions crafted behind the veil and even the sufficiency of the powerful “desire to live-together” that I have isolated in Ricœur’s work. The CST tradition can help to identify and name other key convictions. This is particularly pertinent for the question of Environmental Degradation as *Laudato Si’* extends many of the same convictions that undergirded earlier CST, now transformed by being brought into dialogue with environmental concerns. These, I propose, can help fund practical wisdom in an age open to dialogue with all people living on this common home.

⁶³ Francis, “*Laudato Si’*,” 107.

Section 3: Inter-institutional Environmental Ethics

Once we have identified institutions as forming and mediating our relations to the natural environment and as bearing their own ambiguities, we are still only part of the way towards an institutional ethic. Without addressing the relation between institutions in which natural environments are at the forefront, we can fall into a naive politics, effective for individual organizations and communities but inarticulate at the level of plural institutions that comprise our civil polity.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, an institutional ethic must eventually address inter-institutional conflicts. Both Ricœur and the CST tradition give us resources to develop an such an ethic that can aid us in adjudicating conflicts that arise from the play of institutions. Ricœur helps establish a formal account of inter-institutional ethics that can help us to understand the dynamic inter-institutional relations. But to supplement this thin account, I incorporate a thick understanding of institutions and institutional relations present in the CST tradition that aim to speak persuasively to “all people of good will,” or, even more expansively in the case of Francis, to “every person living on this planet.”⁶⁴ Thus, while born from a particular faith tradition, this ethical tradition promotes a dialogical account. As I shall argue below, CST can interface with Ricœur to provide some of the thick principles that can inform the prudential judgments of adjudicating at the site of conflict.

In Chapter 4, I presented an inter-institutional ethic born from Ricœur’s philosophy. A conflict of institutions seemed an inevitability with distinct and discrete institutional spheres not only embodying their own accounts of the good, but also their own accounts of justice. Indeed, a certain account of practical reasoning would include the know-how of maneuvering in different

⁶⁴ Francis, 3.

institutional spaces. But such institutional knowledge alone does not resolve the conflict between institutions. For Ricœur, it is to practical wisdom that we must turn as enabling the adjudication of these institutional spheres in spaces of conflict.

If my take on institutionalized nature is accurate, this prior account of institutional conflict is only amplified further. I have rendered more explicit what has always been implicit: natural environments, while not pure construct, are neither essentially *bios* nor essentially *logos*, but born of both, and institutions receive and relate to them as symbols in radically different ways. This plurality is not only at the obvious level of *logos*, where humans will interpret *bios*, but also at the level of *bios*, given the vast diversity of our natural world and the distinctiveness of the particular aspects of *bios* attended to within different institutional contexts.

To the question of plural spheres of justice, Ricœur appeals to *phronesis* or practical wisdom, but leaves us light in convictions to nourish *phronesis*. Practical wisdom assays the conflict and recognizes its intractability. Practical wisdom is able to make the fragile reconciliations that prevent conflict from wandering into the destructive.⁶⁵ Instead, conflict is rendered productive, by appeal to convictions that can mend resolution out of conflict. Yet, what does Ricœur offer us by way of convictions? I have already suggested in Chapter 4 that he provides some thin pieces to which we can appeal. First, the conviction that there is in fact a

⁶⁵ Can we hope for more than “fragile reconciliations?” Here, the wicked problem discourse is useful. Rittel and Webber, who coined the term, explain: “As distinguished from problems in the natural sciences, which are definable and separable and may have solutions that are findable, the problems of governmental planning—and especially those of social or policy planning—are ill-defined; and they rely upon elusive political judgment for resolution. (Not “solution.” Social problems are never solved. At best they are only re-solved—over and over again.)” Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,” 160. They identify all human societal problems as only temporarily resolved. The nature of human history is that we do encounter recurrence under new contingencies and configurations. Given the diversity in our own culture around nature and the global nature of this problem, we can find productive temporary resolutions. Claims to “solutions” typically rely on the presumption of domination by a single frame.

good of living-together captured in the *voulouir vivre-ensemble* or desire to live-together that undergirds institutions in Ricœur's later thought. Second, one could lean on Rawls's two principles of justice. The first principle ensures that a person is to have equal rights with regards to the most basic liberties. The second principle, dealing with inevitable social and economic inequalities, ensures that inequalities should be to everyone's advantage (particularly maximizing the minimum position) and that they should be tied to positions and offices open to all.⁶⁶ We not only desire to live with others, but our desire is for just institutions, grounded in a fundamental political equality, that tolerates social and economic inequalities only in so far as they are beneficial to the least of these and are fair.

One of the challenges posed by an institutional environmental ethics is that there are numerous "convictions" regarding the natural environment which impact our understanding of what justice might mean. Many organizations rely upon distinct symbols regarding nature which carry their own convictions regarding our engagement with them. This includes "nature" as material resources, sacred spaces, territory, sites of inquiry into natural truths, sites for leisure, untapped pharmaceutical resources, bearer of intrinsic value, earth as common home, and so on. What would a "considered conviction" of nature look like?

Environmental concerns have become so pressing that they threaten our fundamental associational life, yet the pluralism of symbols of nature challenge simple arbitration. Should they be considered along other fundamental issues in Rawls's original position behind the veil of ignorance?⁶⁷ After all, the thin conception of justice born behind the veil is a core means by

⁶⁶ See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 53 and 72.

⁶⁷ As I discussed in Chapter 4, the original position is a thought experiment to try and get at shared principles of justice that could hold in a pluralistic society. The veil presumes that we would not know who we are or how we would stand to benefit. Such an activity could help us to see how closely we hold to these symbols of nature. Are they mere lenses through which a

which he argues for a model of political liberalism that can exist in a pluralistic society. Rawls does not touch on environmental issues, but I would speculate that behind the veil it is “a political concept of nature” that would dominate, meaning, formally, that it would be limited in scope, freestanding of comprehensive ideologies, and based on shared convictions already found in society.⁶⁸ Yet, Rawls's veil essentially relies on self-interest and hypothetical human vulnerabilities to motivate the articulation of convictions and principles. A political concept of nature established behind the veil would effectively be concerned with the means by which natural environments mediate harm to other humans.⁶⁹ But on my reading, one could not speak of any intrinsic worth of nature, for it would, in Rawls terms, be part of a comprehensive ideology and not a political concept. This leaves an incorrigibly anthropocentric concept of nature, further intensified by procedurally myopic view of the *anthropos*. While such an account might be effective in mitigating harm, it would require every course of action to have a further justification in some utility of nature, both in terms of costs and benefits. One could not from within it speak of the many ways that nature is valued, including the divinely bestowed value of the non-human captured in the theological symbol of nature in creation (which is a fusion of *bios* and the *Logos*). It follows that a political symbol of nature is just one symbol of nature among many (and a not very capacious one).⁷⁰

company operates, such as the fiscal value attributed to lumber by a logging company, or are they deeply held, difficult to imagine separating oneself from, even more difficult to trace the full impact on a person, such as the distinct theological views of creation across distinct religions and cultures?

⁶⁸ These are the three features of a political conception of justice. See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 11–15.

⁶⁹ Other scholars have worked to explore the implications of Rawls to the environment. See for example, Hendrik Philip Visser 't Hooft, *Justice to Future Generations and the Environment* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999).

⁷⁰ What becomes clear here are that there are limits to an anti-essentialist account in so far as it is not readily apparent, amidst the proliferation of natures, how one adjudicates between them. I am

The tools that I have drawn upon from Ricœur to adjudicate our engagement with the natural world remain largely at the level of the human, treating nature only insofar as it is a medium to other human beings. But it would be a mistake to think that one cannot make great traction with this. After all, as fragile creatures before intractable climates and stubborn terrains, humans are impacted—and impacted unequally—by environmental degradation

In so far as natural environments mediate our relationship to others within our community and beyond, these principles can directly inform prudence for an anthropocentric inter-institutional environmental ethic. Environmental racism has become a critical outlook for identifying how environmental degradation disproportionately effects marginalized communities of color. Emily Townes compares the presence of toxic waste dumps in African American communities to “lynching of a whole people.”⁷¹ In Chicago, the Fritz coal-powered plant in Pilsen had a long-term impact on the health of the children living there, first Eastern European and then Latinx. Not only would people with more resources be able to move, but other communities would be able to use political clout to get policies changed.

Ricœur is decidedly unhelpful with regard to our ethical obligations to the non-human. Nevertheless, his work on institutions frames how we might approach such an ethic. While we want to incorporate natural systems into our inter-institutional ethic as substantive domains of concern, we cannot presume some sort of “direct” access apart from the symbolic frameworks which comprise human meaning making. Instead, an incorporation of natural environments into an inter-institutional ethic will involve “institutional” understandings of nature. Yet, as I argued

largely relying on this theory as a means of waking us up from our dogmatic slumbers to consider the various ways different regimes shape our basic approach to natural realities and how too easily a reliance on a “naturalistic” essentialist account can obscure forms of domination (à la Walzer) of symbols of nature over others.

⁷¹ Emilie Maureen Townes, *In a Blaze of Glory: Womanist Spirituality as Social Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 55.

above, none of these are “pure constructions,” but instead represent both the stubborn materiality of the living world and the contingent, supple, but persistent meaning making of the human world sedimented in our institutions. Throughout this chapter, I have sketched out how Ricœur and the CST tradition can help form an institutional environmental ethic. Now, I turn to the CST tradition to illustrate how a new set of “considered convictions” could directly inform phronesis without solely referring back to human interests.

3.1: Francis and an Integral Ecology

In *Laudato Si*, we find a bridge from the CST tradition to environmental ethics. Francis offers a rich and pivotal engagement with environmental degradation that draws on the resources and principles from the CST tradition. Here, I want to focus on one aspect of this work, arguing that he maintains CST’s heritage of concern for institutional relations, but now sets it into the new problem of environmental degradation. I have already posited that this is reflected in Francis’s diagnosis of the problem in the domination of the technocratic paradigm across institutional spheres. The institutional character of environmental degradation is also expressed in Francis’s binding of human and environmental problems, identifying both as deteriorating together.⁷² Environmental problems like climate change and social problems like poverty and income inequality are not two separate problems, but one problem. It requires, on my reading, an integrated multi-institutional response. I also noted above resources within his articulation of an “integral ecology” that enable him to incorporate the goods of the environment within the teleological aims of institutions.⁷³ Now I adapt integral ecology to the end of developing an

⁷² Francis writes, “The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation.” Francis, “*Laudato Si*,” 48.

⁷³ This is most centrally evident with the civic polity. In so far as this polity would serve as a reference point by way of its role in pursuing the common good for most other institutions, even

institutional environmental ethic. Then, setting Francis in apposition to Ricœur’s work, I can critique aspects of Francis’s environmental encyclical, questioning whether a properly ordered natural and human ecology alone offers a solution, while nonetheless pointing towards conceptual resources drawn through the CST tradition and developed with an environmental slant in *Laudato Si’* that can fund a religiously informed *phronesis*.

I maintain that we find resources in Francis for an apparent institutional solution to environmental degradation through the concept of an integral ecology. He asserts this scientific metaphor, proclaiming throughout that “everything is connected,”⁷⁴ stressing the need to account for a whole system of interdependent parts. He uses this metaphor to bind together a natural ecology and a human ecology, arguing that decisions today need to account for each of these various subsystems—the natural, economic political, and cultural. As such no field is completely independent and decisions and judgments must account for the effects on the whole. Such an ecology ought to affect the highest decisions at the international level and run all the way down to local decisions about how we ought to live.

At first, this might appear to be simply a descriptive claim that corrects existing myopic depictions of nature. The reigning model of the technocratic paradigm presents a monolithic perspective where natural systems, subject to human domination, appear as mere extensions of human action and technological solutions can resolve any unexpected problems. A vision grounded in an integral ecology would dispel a narrow vision and instead call for closer attention to the range of interrelated systems, situating the human as a part of nature. This corrective vision would then enable a more accurate ethic to develop.

an antique car club could be tangentially connected to the good of the environment, particularly if it violates this good.

⁷⁴ See Francis, “*Laudato Si’*,” 16, 42, and 117.

Moreover, Francis's integral ecology does not simply stay within the single frame of material, sociological, economic, and scientific interrelation from a western perspective, but incorporates specific normative frameworks. An integral ecology includes a cultural ecology, attendant to the resources born out in particular from indigenous communities. It includes a transcendent dimension as it incorporates religious perspectives, including the theological claim that all of nature is creation, with each creature (from fungi to giraffes) praising God and bearing their own divine purpose. Francis even includes an immanent dimension, as he calls for a greater awareness of the effects of environment on humans as natural landscapes (urban or rural) are polluted or even rendered inaccessible. Each of these added dimensions illustrate that an integral ecology is not a neutral description, but includes the full range of normative human descriptions as Francis calls "for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human."⁷⁵

On my reading, then, an integral ecology lays the groundwork for a broad inter-cultural and inter-institutional environmental ethic. It moves past the limits of the political (as one finds in Ricœur's political paradox) and beyond the codified understanding of the social in the CST tradition, anchored to the church, family, and polity. An integral ecology is global, both in terms of many institutions, societies, and polities and in terms of one of its prime objects of concern—the earth as common home—and it is local, guided by the norm of subsidiarity. We do not see the linking of disparate systems that exist in the same broader nature regime. Instead, an integral ecology brings together distinct, yet overlapping systems such as scientific, religious, political, and cultural institutions that mediate our relations to distant humans and non-human natural

⁷⁵ Francis, 11.

systems and make discrete claims on the value and status of the non-human natural world and the humans who form a part of it.

Does this new ordering and conceptual establishment of relations resolve the conflict? Following Ricœur, I would hold that incorporating and connecting even more spheres that are neglected or obscured in the technocratic paradigm into an integral ecology framework would, if anything, proliferate potential strife and conflict at the intersection of many institutional worlds. An integral ecology is not a *fait accompli*, but, in adopting it, it requires the harder work of dialogue so as to integrate multiple systems. Much like Ricœur's articulation of plural domains of justice in his third political paradox, an integral ecology sets up the terrain in which inter-institutional practical judgments must take place. We cannot simply rely on a "proper ordering" or a new dialogue of institutions to resolve their conflict around environmental issues. This new dialogue creates more occasions to make explicit what conflict might already be implicit, or make even new conflicts as previously sequestered domains interact. Institutional conflict is particularly amplified around natural ecosystems, which have different symbolic figurations according to different institutional spheres, as already exemplified in the technocratic paradigm, but underlined even in the church, who views land as creation, or in the State, who views land as territory.

Recasting Francis's work in light of Ricœur's discussion of institutional relations, I propose that such a conflict does not defeat the call for an integral ecology, but suggests also the need for practical wisdom to resolve conflict. As we saw in my reconstruction of Ricœur, practical wisdom is not an abstract, ahistorical activity, but relies upon the very convictions that are born out his initial ethical analysis. It would follow that we would expect from Francis, then, a religiously informed *phronesis*. Reframing *Laudato Si'* in terms of *phronesis*, Christian

convictions are at the base. His second chapter on the “gospel of creation” substantiates this, as he lays out a Christian vision of ecological commitment that “can offer Christians, and some other believers as well, ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters.”⁷⁶ For instance, Francis uses a scriptural conviction that all of creation is owned by God to declare a universal communion, a universal family in which all humans are linked to each other and to all of creation. Such a conviction serves as a theological warrant for his integral ecology.

One might expect that the theological roots of Francis’s position would necessarily close off conversation. But even in his turn to Christian convictions, Francis acknowledges that these can play a role in dialogue. He writes, “science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both [an integral ecology and the full development of humanity.]”⁷⁷ It is precisely an undifferentiated, uniform paradigm that Francis works against, and in so far as his text makes use of the natural sciences, he already affirms the need for a multi-institutional dialogue. Much as in Ricœur, then, conflict need not be destructive, but can be productive, and thus in turn, convictions need not be left at the door for an individual *phronesis* or even a communal *phronesis*.

Francis does not rely on exclusively Christian convictions, nor speak solely to Christians. Francis makes explicit appeals to dialogue. He notes that while earlier encyclicals addressed bishops, all Catholic faithful, and all people of good will, he addresses his letter to “every person living on this planet.”⁷⁸ Thus, Francis draws upon a set of middle axioms classic to the CST

⁷⁶ Francis, 64.

⁷⁷ Francis, 62.

⁷⁸ Francis, 3.

tradition. He names climate and the natural environment as collective goods.⁷⁹ He identifies that the choices made within an integral ecology framework need to be governed by the common good, informed by subsidiarity, oriented towards solidarity, and suffused with a “preferential option for the poor.” Each of these concepts, richly strewn and developed in the CST tradition, are part of the effort to be in dialogue with others. They can likewise serve as convictions that inform judgment at the point of conflict.

3.2: The Common Good and Common Goods

The moral norm of the pursuit of the common good can serve as a vital conviction for informing *phronesis* as it relates to environmental ethics. I have already presented in Chapter 5 a history of the development of this concept as it relates to an ethic of institutions. Within the early Leonine period, the prime purpose of the state is understood to be the common good. But, as I have argued above, *the* common good, while inclusive, does not capture entirely the various goods. In fact, we can speak of common goods related to discrete social bodies according to extrinsic goods that are sought and intrinsic goods found in the coordinated pursuit of these external goods—differentiated accounts of our living-together. This, I maintained, helps give grounds for thinking about how institutions might be reformed. We do not just appeal to the good of the whole (which remains a central reference), but also to more local understandings of the good according to distinct and discrete organizations. Even as institutions bear their own integrity, all are nested within the wider, more inclusive common good of the community to which they are subordinate. I have also identified that with the turn to the person, the person becomes the new measure of social institutions. The common good is not simply a concern for the health and well-being of institutions for their own sake, but also keyed into a concern for the

⁷⁹ Francis, 95.

persons and groups found within institutions. It thus provides a vital norm for thinking of the good within and among institutions.

With Francis, we also have a more robust vision of the good as including the good of creation.⁸⁰ We see certain features, like clean air, described as common goods. In the terminology introduced above, these are extrinsic goods sought and secured for all. But Francis's work goes beyond treating the environment as merely a shared good. As I discussed already, an integral ecology does not pit environmental goods against human goods, but identifies these as wrapped up together. While a figure such as Aquinas discusses a universal common good, governed by divine providence, the CST tradition largely aims lower, discussing the common good as it relates to the polity. The advancements of the boundaries of the common good have (by and large) reflected a changed set of social circumstances rather than theological circumstances. A globalized world is paired with, in John Paul II, a concern for the common good of all of humanity. In *Laudato Si*, we move from a kinship of common humanity to a kinship of creation.

This move to a kinship of creation is exemplified not only as Francis adopts the metaphoric language of Brother Sun and Sister Earth of Saint Francis, but also in a more discursive claim to a community of creation. He writes, "all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect."⁸¹ Such a claim implies not only that "everything is connected," but that there is an even greater common good than that of the polity or even that of humanity: a common good of creation in which we participate. The destruction of habitats like the great barrier reef, both living creation and home to creation, is of common concern. Likewise, the

⁸⁰ For a robust account of how the common good can be linked to the cosmic common good across the tradition see Daniel P Scheid, *The Cosmic Common Good: Religious Grounds for Ecological Ethics*, 2016.

⁸¹ Francis, "Laudato Si'," 89.

poisoning of our oceans with plastic, the destruction of streams by mining operations, and the elimination of biodiversity by palm oil plantations all too is subject to critique according to measure of the common good. An integral ecology mapped onto the classic distinction of extrinsic and intrinsic goods invites us likewise to not simply ask how we reduce environmental degradation (extrinsic good), but also how we stand in relation to the natural world, working in conjunction with it towards greater flourishing (intrinsic good).⁸²

3.3: *Subsidiarity*

Environmental issues do not occur on a single plane. They are as global as our climate and oceans, as national as our contested national parks and inundated borders, as regional as topsoil depletion and statewide drought, and as local as our polluted river ways, air quality index, and littered roadways. This only captures a small sample of the multiple levels of effects. Human efforts to contain and reduce environmental degradation also take place at multiple levels, from international accords, to transnational companies, to bilateral agreements, to national regulations, to state protection agencies, to local interest groups, to personal action. This does not include the multiple stakeholders at each of these levels.

Subsidiarity takes into account that an inter-institutional ethic does not just work with multiple domains (political, scientific, religious, industry, etc.) but also multiple levels of work. Relations will not solely be cast by “situations of conflict,” requiring phronesis. They also will operate according to dynamics of assistance or *subsidium*, requiring a firm appreciation for how multiple actors can work together. In Chapter 5, I discussed multiple aspects of subsidiarity. I

⁸² The notion of natural flourishing raises the challenge posed to religious environmental ethicists by the disvalues found in nature such as predation and parasitism. This is captured well by Holmes Rolston’s classic account of disvalues and by Lisa Sideris’s critique that theological ethicists have not adequately accounted for the challenges posed by evolutionary theory. See Holmes Rolston, “DISVALUES IN NATURE,” *The Monist* 75, no. 2 (1992): 250–78; Sideris, *Environmental Ethics, Ecological Theology, and Natural Selection*.

drew from Hittinger to identify that subsidiarity does not first and foremost mean for decisions to be made at the “lowest” level, but at their most proper domain. Thus, it is not for the family to determine the common good of the nation, nor for the church to infringe on the common good of the family, and so on. So too in environmental ethics, it is important to recognize that certain decisions *should* be made according to particular domains.

An inter-institutional ethic means that all parties are invited to contribute to the discussion, not necessarily that equal weight given to various opinions. Expertise is increasingly important in assessing far reaching and long-term effects of actions. Scientific frameworks are vital for identifying just what the health of an eco-system is. Similarly, economists can usefully identify which means might be most effective to reach particular aims. With his appeal to cultural ecology, Francis also carves out a privileged space for indigenous communities affected by environmental degradation. A simple account of subsidiarity as “devolution,” particularly when treating decision-making, can actually frustrate efforts to address environmental harms, because it uncritically identifies the “lowest level possible” as the normative ideal.

I also argued that with the turn to the person in the CST tradition, two additional aspects are added to subsidiarity. First, through John Paul II, subsidiarity becomes one of the means of humanizing problems, allowing for a more local action to take a fuller account, for example, of the opiate addict qua person and not just as a statistic. Similarly, environmental problems need just such a local view to understand the various actors involved. Here, we do see a return to looking to “lower levels,” but with a different ideal in mind. The ideal is not devolution, but fuller grasp of the situation, both human and environmental.

Finally, I claimed subsidiarity is also concerned with the increased development or capacity of persons. This is particularly important with environmental problems. It is not just that

we need good regulations, but that the scale, scope, and global/local nature of the problems means that we need an increased capacity at all levels to think through and address environmental issues. If persons simply take their cues from regional actors, recycling according to baseline metrics, we effectively allow folks to wash their hands of persistent and prevailing problems that are a result of broader scale cultural practices. Our consumption culture is a significant contributor to environmental degradation, particularly when treated in the aggregate. Subsidiarity as capacity building can identify the importance of people at all levels developing the skills for critical analysis, decision-making, and appropriate action. As a “considered conviction,” subsidiarity can help inform situations of conflict and help adjudicate institutional relations in relations of assistance.

3.4: Solidarity and the Option for the Poor

The principles of solidarity and the option for the poor are vital principles for informing an inter-institutional environmental ethic. Solidarity serves as a response to structures of sin, piercing the veil, enabling one to see the other, near or far, as neighbor, and thus delineate and expand spheres of concern. The option for the poor ensures the special concern for those most vulnerable to the effects of environmental degradation. As such, they can help as orienting principles that ensure that an inter-institutional ethic remains firmly rooted in a concern for real and vulnerable persons.

Both of these are essential for an inter-institutional environmental ethic. Francis draws upon solidarity to express our concern for the geographic and temporal distant other. One of the challenges of modern environmental degradation like climate change is that human action, mediated through natural environments, can have impacts on persons. Like the distant other of institutions, it can be hard to articulate any immediate responsibility a person may have for them.

John Paul II introduces solidarity precisely to respond to this problem, enabling a firm commitment to the common good of the neighbor, whether they be near or far. There is a natural extension, then, of solidarity to all affected by environmental degradation, whether we be indirect agents of that harm or not.

Francis makes an important contribution to the CST tradition by integrating intergenerational justice with the virtue of solidarity. Intergenerational justice has long been a part of environmental ethics, underlining the far-reaching and intransigent effects of human action on the earth. Both John Paul II and Benedict make mention of the importance of responsibility for the environment with an eye towards the present and future generations.⁸³ For Francis, an integral ecology necessitates a vision of the common good that includes intragenerational and intergenerational solidarity. Francis writes, “Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have *received* also belongs to those who will *follow* us.”⁸⁴ Just as recognizing our global relations and dependence can give rise to a global solidarity in John Paul II,⁸⁵ recognizing our own inheritance of this earth establishes generational relations. Reading Francis’s appeal to intergenerational solidarity against the treatment of John Paul II’s understanding of the relation of solidarity to structures of sin I offered

⁸³ See John Paul II, “Evangelium Vitae,” Vatican Website, March 25, 1995, 42, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html; Benedict XVI, “Caritas in Veritate,” 48.

⁸⁴ Francis, “Laudato Si’,” 159. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁵ Solidarity, as John Paul II characterizes it, takes as its departure point from our interdependence in a globalized world. Despite the distance between myself and someone working in a cobalt mine in the Congo, a chain of actions and an iPhone connects us. These webs of relations point towards the necessity of the virtue of solidarity, without reducing solidarity to a concern solely for those who exist in these webs of relations. My care for the human other is not exhausted by my tenuous relation to them.

in Chapter 6 allows us to also infer that structures of sin such as greed and lust for power likewise impede seeing the distant other of time, obscuring the rights and dignity of those who follow us.

While unacknowledged, intergenerational solidarity might appear to stretch the limits of the concept of solidarity. After all, earlier accounts of solidarity appear limited to existing persons. Does intergenerational solidarity bring us into a treacherous philosophical space? Can I really have solidarity with a non-existent future grandchild or great grandchild? Does this raise other problems regarding the potential identity of future individuals? Any choice made on an individual or collective level are variables for what actual concrete humans will come into existence in the future. A child arising from a union only made possible by climate migration is distinct from a child who would be born should the effects of climate change be mitigated. If intergenerational solidarity is tied to particular persons, it invites a wealth of philosophical quandaries.⁸⁶ Francis similarly uses the existing relationship between generations to illustrate the necessity for an intergenerational solidarity. As the citation above illustrates, we are beholden to the past for the inheritance of the earth that we received, and thus, we also are responsible for the inheritance that we pass on. It would appear that while a particular effect of global solidarity is to better see the human other, intergenerational solidarity need not be anchored in a future other, if it fosters care for this hypothetical other.

Yet, despite calls for a universal solidarity, an appeal to care for our common home, and a recognition of the distinct non-anthropocentric value of non-human creation, Francis's rhetoric largely confines his discussion of solidarity to the human other. It is not apparent whether we would feel solidarity to non-human creation. Taking the human as the subject and object of

⁸⁶ Parfit discusses this philosophical issue as the "non-identity problem." See Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford [Oxfordshire]: Clarendon Press, 1984), 351-381.

solidarity would be in line with John Paul II's original description of solidarity as a recognition of the humanity of the other. John Paul II distinguishes between a generic (largely Kantian) virtue of solidarity and a Christian virtue of solidarity (where we see the human other as made in the image of God). As I discussed in Chapter 5, in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II identifies the equivalent of a secular virtue of solidarity that enables us to see others as humans with equal rights. A Christian virtue of solidarity, however, enables us to see the other not merely as human, or even as neighbor, but as "the living image of God the Father."⁸⁷ The theological wellspring of Christian thought transforms the vision of the Christian. This distinction could govern appropriations from Francis's *Laudato Si'* to consider other Christian (and secular) forms of solidarity with non-human creation who Francis calls brother and sister. Such a distinction enables solidarity with creation without confusing it with or diminishing solidarity with the human other. Rather than a comprehensive solidarity with everything, differentiated solidarity allows a more textured account of our moral life.

I see resources in Francis for both theological and secular accounts of a solidarity with the non-human world. While Francis does not adopt the language of solidarity with non-human creation, we see all the necessary component parts present in his account for the theological virtue. He appeals to a transformation of vision in his text that parallels John Paul II's account of solidarity. While one does not view non-human creation as *imago dei*,⁸⁸ a theological category reserved for humans, he nonetheless asks us to view non-humans as fellow creatures of God, who in their own way give praise to God. Such a vision of God's natural creation is pervasive *Laudato Si'*. He opens by calling "our common home" a sister and a "beautiful mother," adapting

⁸⁷ John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis," 40.

⁸⁸ Even as the Catholic tradition has a long history of identifying the vestiges of God within creation, only humans are identified as made in the image of God.

Saint Francis of Assisi's language from the "Canticle of Creatures."⁸⁹ Analogously, we can imagine developing a secular form of solidarity with the non-human. In contrast to simply basing an account on what we share, which can fall prey to a classic anthropocentric chain-of-being model, a secular solidarity might take note of Francis's appeals to the differentiation of creation to recognize non-human creation's distinct ways of "knowing" and "being" in the world. The merits of this differentiated account of solidarity is that it preserves the differentiation of institutions that has driven this dissertation. We need not expect a secular scientist to convert to Christian faith and a theologically informed solidarity in order to make moral claims to our ethical engagement with the natural world. Our global situation as it is though, threatens our ability to live in such a way that the earth is able to sustain the variety of organisms upon it, the conditions of human responsibility,⁹⁰ and even human life as we know it. We are likely going to need an "ecological conversion," as Francis puts it, that can turn us away from anthropocentric inversion, and radically reorient our personal lives, our interpersonal relations, our institutions, and our global society.

An appeal to a change of vision alone is insufficient either for a secular or a Christian environmental ethic. But it can be put to work in light of the larger framework of the CST tradition. This transformed vision of seeing the non-human other in light of the fraternity of creation in Saint Francis provides an important practical model for undoing structures of sin as depicted in John Paul II's work. When Saint Francis calls the non-human natural other "brother" and "sister," contrary to its appearance, this is not a simple case of naive romanticism, because it

⁸⁹ Francis, "Laudato Si'," 1.

⁹⁰ Jonas identifies this as a key condition of environmental ethics. The aim isn't to simply preserve human life, but to preserve the responsible human, which includes the conditions that make possible this capability, including our natural ecosystem. See Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*.

has a direct impact on action. Pope Francis writes, “If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously.”⁹¹ Francis’s language of intimate unity with all that is verges on a mystical account of creation. But we need not look to the cosmos; awe and wonder can begin even in one’s backyard with a flashlight.⁹² Paired with the realization we are made from the same *humus*, or earth, such an experience of wonder and unity can leaven our action and outlook.⁹³ While an appeal to the spontaneous is inadequate for an institutional ethic, the function of this transformed vision fits with a model of solidarity informed by John Paul II. Just as we see the human other as neighbor and not just an end in solidarity, through a transformed vision born of experiences of wonder, we no longer see nature as an object simply to be manipulated. It helps to undo the structures of sin born of the technological paradigm.

⁹¹ Francis, “Laudato Si’,” 11.

⁹² I am grateful to Lisa Sideris for this example and her underlining of the ordinary phenomenal experiences of wonder with nature in a dialogue around her book at the University of Chicago. Her book does an excellent job of exploring the many facets of wonder, including those which she would charge with being immoral in so far as they succumb to anthropocentrism, an almost modern form of Augustinian inversion. Ultimately, her account presses for a democratic sense of wonder rooted in sensory perceptions we each have. See Sideris, *Consecrating Science*. Why one’s backyard? Too often nature is confused with “wilderness” in such a manner that we neglect the everyday encounters with our natural environment. That these are more humanized spaces does not mean they are devoid of nature, for humans are a part of nature. That humans exert governance over these spaces (incompletely, as any urban ecologist can attest to) raises the need for greater reflection over what encounters are being fostered.

⁹³ I borrow this phrase from Schweiker, who looks to this etymological root of the human in *humus* or earth to describe us as “dust that breathes.” See Schweiker, *Dust That Breathes*, 1. I also don’t use the term “realization” lightly here. There are many things we may “know” but fail to realize in a visceral, action guiding sense.

We also see in his work a commitment in action to the common good, another necessary component to the virtue of solidarity. This is the whole point of an integral ecology. The interests of non-human creation are bound up with the full range of human concerns, leading to a dialectic that seeks a larger, more inclusive good.

Each of these three pieces help illustrate that while Francis limits the language of solidarity to the human other, there are parallels in his discussion of non-human creation that enable both a secular and a theological understanding of solidarity with non-human life. Open to all, the secular account would press for the type of collective action called for in Chapter 2. The theological account helps the Christian press further, and sustain a spirituality coherent with a care for the planet. In the eyes of faith, all of creation exists in fraternal relations, enabling us to say brother sun, sister moon, Mother Earth, brother wolf, and to not simply speak poetically, but practically. This appellation signals a deeper transformed vision. What becomes apparent is that despite a long history of identifying humans as the focal point of creation, the non-human natural world has its own ends and own means of knowing, each of which are incompletely known to us, especially when seen in the eye of faith. Here, as an ethical posture, ecological solidarity not only sees the natural other as kin in a communion of creation, but also holds a firm and persevering commitment to its common good. This theological solidarity can trail blaze models of ecological living that may seem impossible in our carbon heavy economy.

Even more than the egalitarian virtue of solidarity, the option for the poor is an integral hermeneutic key for Francis's integral ecology. Captured within the concept of the preferential option for the poor is the biblical witness of God's special concern for those who are disenfranchised and marginalized. While Francis only once mentions the option for the poor, the special concern for the poor and for the vulnerable planet runs through the encyclical. This is

elicited most evocatively with the recurrence throughout the text of the trope of the dual cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Such a cry is muted in the technocratic paradigm, which not only sees the earth as a resource to be manipulated, but also sees social problems like poverty as addressed through “market solutions.” The true instantiation of the option for the poor is not a new metric for measuring the conditions of the poor, but instead, an active unblocking of our ears. Thus, it is fitting that Francis incorporates this cry even in his last prayer, inviting at its mention a transformation of human action.

What the full range of these robust concepts offer are the type of thick “well-considered convictions” that Ricœur’s model of phronesis calls for, but does not provide. Yet here we see these concepts also adapted for environmental ethics, enabling us not just to develop an institutional ethic, but an inter-institutional environmental ethic. Such an ethic is vital for addressing the conflict of interpretations and interests that are at the center of environmental injustices.

3.5: #NODAPL

We needn’t look beyond our nation’s borders to find such contested terrains. The Dakota Access Pipeline Protests (#NODAPL) began in early 2016 as a prayer camp started by a youth group responding to the call of citizens from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe concerned by the inaction of their tribal council.⁹⁴ After the Army Corps of Engineers rejected a plan in 2016 for the pipeline to run by Bismarck, it was rerouted in an action permitted by the Army Corps of Engineers to run near the Sioux reservation and underneath the Mississippi River. It is slated to

⁹⁴Saul Elbein, “The Youth Group That Launched a Movement at Standing Rock,” *The New York Times*, January 31, 2017, sec. Magazine, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/magazine/the-youth-group-that-launched-a-movement-at-standing-rock.html>.

carry 470,000 barrels of oil underneath the Mississippi river every day, with a capacity for even more.⁹⁵ At its heights, the prayer camp swelled to 10,000 people.

The protest at Standing Rock represents precisely the type of institutional and cultural conflict that this model seeks to highlight. To Energy Transfer Partners, this is a 3.7-billion-dollar project representing jobs and future profits. For the Army Corps of Engineers, this is a game of risk and acceptable technological limits. For the tribe, the phrase *Mni Wiconi* or water is life echoes to remind that water is not mere background or resource. The protesters at Standing Rock won an initial, but short-lived victory under President Obama. In November of 2016, the Army Corps of Engineers delaying construction for more discussion “in light of the history of the Great Sioux Nation’s dispossessions of lands, the importance of Lake Oahe to the Tribe, our government-to-government relationship, and the statute governing easements through government property.”⁹⁶ In January of 2017, however, President Trump issued a memorandum intended to expedite the review process of both the Keystone Pipeline and the Dakota Access Pipeline.⁹⁷ This unilateral decision made in favor of “national interests,” but without regard to the people directly impacted and placed at risk by the construction of the pipeline represents a failure to consider subsidiarity and the principles of an integral ecology.

What resources could this inter-institutional environmental ethic provide in such a case?

It would seem that seeing this case from the perspective of institutions might simply result in a

⁹⁵ Jack Healy, “North Dakota Oil Pipeline Battle: Who’s Fighting and Why,” *The New York Times*, August 26, 2016, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/02/us/north-dakota-oil-pipeline-battle-whos-fighting-and-why.html>.

⁹⁶ “Statement Regarding the Dakota Access Pipeline,” Headquarters U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, accessed August 18, 2018, <http://www.usace.army.mil/Media/News-Releases/News-Release-Article-View/Article/1003593/statement-regarding-the-dakota-access-pipeline/>.

⁹⁷ “Presidential Memorandum Regarding Construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline,” The White House, accessed August 18, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-memorandum-regarding-construction-keystone-xl-pipeline/>.

conflict. After all, it would seem apparent that the oil companies and the elements of the Sioux tribe protesting the move would have incompatible worldviews and conceptions of nature. For the former, a pipeline under the Mississippi is a liability that can be weighed against the costs of rerouting and the eventual benefits of profits. For the tribe, not only is the risk untenable for their community, but it threatens an understanding of the river itself as sacred, threatened by this project. But we do not stay simply at the level of the play of institutions. An inter-institutional environmental ethic at its heart asks the question: How do we want to live together? Conflict seems almost inevitable. But such conflict need not be destructive; rather, it can be rendered productive. Practical wisdom must help adjudicate.

Yet, for the above case, Ricœur's ethic alone would prove to be insufficient. While his framework is strong, its content remains thin, perhaps necessarily so given the brackets he employs. It requires a turn to institutions themselves in which convictions are forged. Otherwise, if one were to jump too quickly to the moral sieve, and rely solely on models of nature developed behind the veil of ignorance, comprehensive worldviews like those embodied in the CST tradition or in the Sioux tribe would be excluded. Sacred land and sacred water would be immaterial to establishing justice. Instead, a political conception of nature would weigh the relative risks to humans, trying to assess what threshold is acceptable. Yet considered convictions, forged in life before the hypothetical original position and used to evaluate its conclusions could provide key means for funding phronesis amidst institutional environmental conflict.

In Pope Francis's work, we find a fruitful conviction that can serve as a foundation for phronesis: everything is connected. Relying on the convictions forged in an integral vision, one has a host of resources. First and foremost, Francis's commitment to cultural ecology would

press towards a dialogue that would ensure that the perspectives of Native American communities affected by the pipeline are brought to the table. The principle of subsidiarity would ensure that decisions are not only made at the appropriate level, allowing for local governance to play its role, but with an eye towards building capacities at all levels. Solidarity and the option for the poor ensures that it is not simply the most powerful who take priority, but we ask how these affect the most vulnerable, thus taking into account a whole history of environmental violations against native American tribes. Finally, this is all considered in light of the common good. National interests are insufficient. We must ask how our actions help advance the flourishing of groups, persons, and our ecological communities? A unilateral political decision to advance the pipeline fails on each of these accounts rendering the conflict destructive. An inter-institutional ethic would instead demand a return to basic well-considered convictions in order to adjudicate the conflict of communities, companies, the state, and other institutions.

Not only do we see here that Francis sets the stage for an inter-institutional environmental ethic with his concept of an integral ecology, but he also incorporates a range of resources from the CST tradition to help inform this ethic. These include appeals to the common good, the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, and the option for the poor. I have proposed that these principles provide even more intellectual resources than deployed in *Laudato Si*. Setting Ricœur and Francis in apposition helps illustrate the importance of inter-institutional conflict in ethics, but also the inadequacy of a mere ordering of institutional and natural spheres. Rather than avoiding conflict, or obscuring it to the point of neglect as achieved under the technocratic paradigm, an integral ecology calls for a wider recognition of the various systems and spheres of interaction and their possible conflicts. In turn, there can be a more productive use of conflict. *Phronesis* becomes the vehicle for a return to fundamental convictions which can be obscured in

the operation of institutional life. If part of Francis's call is for a radical conversion, it will only be found in those points of crisis where true conflict is recognized and conviction is uncovered.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have made a case for the possibility of an institutional ethic. In this past chapter, I have sought to show its fecundity beyond the sphere of organizations on their own, so as to consider how an institutional ethic might also contribute to environmental ethics. Thus, I have explored how an expanded model of responsibility could help us think about responsibility in the Anthropocene where causality is diffuse across space and time. I have also outlined how institutions already are caught up in our environmental relations, mediating our relationships to natural environments, forming and shaping our symbols of nature, and arguing that this means that institutional relations are plagued with ambiguities. This in turn led to a call for an inter-institutional environmental ethic. Yet, as I argued in the last chapter, Ricœur proposes practical wisdom as a means of adjudicating conflict, but fails to provide a robust catalogue of "well-considered convictions" to fund practical wisdom. Previously, I suggested the CST tradition represents the type of institutional thinking that gives rise to such convictions. In Francis's *Laudato Si*, we find just such a dynamic engagement with the convictions of the CST tradition now in the new context of environmental ethics. Thus, under the umbrella of an inter-institutional ethic based on integral ecology, one might turn to the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity to help address new conflicts. Throughout, then, this chapter has sought to help alleviate the "theoretical storm" of environmental ethics by proposing a new avenue to addressing what is the largest collective action problem of our time. What becomes clear is that environmental degradation and our responses to it cannot be divorced from our institutional life. If, as I argued, at the center of Ricœur's understanding of institutions is a desire to live-together,

a Catholic institutional environmental ethic poses a new question to us each: how do we want live together, not only with each other, but also with all of creation? It is from this question that we can begin to conceive of a more ecologically just society to live in.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have argued that we are more indebted to institutions than we know and we are more capable than we realize. Institutions mediate our relations to the other and shape and form our action and our development. Yet, our indebtedness also leads us to a form of debt to the other, a “schuld” or guilt, as we are stained by the injustices present within and committed through the institutions that we form a part of. At the same time, we need not be paralyzed by our involvement in actions and structure of injustice. Our stain can awaken us to a responsibility that only finds fulfillment in collective action. We can come to recognize that we are more capable than we realize. Our institutions only exist in and through collective action. They are the very means by which we live-together in society. Consequently, institutions are sites of injustice and vehicles of reform.

My argument in this dissertation proceeded in several steps. In Part I of this dissertation, I reconstructed a two-pronged model of responsibility. In Chapter 1, I took a genealogical approach to Paul Ricœur’s work, tracing developments in his primary model of responsibility: responsibility as imputation. While he is not known as a responsibility theorist, I demonstrate that it plays a central role in his philosophical anthropology from his earliest works to his more developed capabilities approach. In Chapter 2, I argue that even as Ricœur’s early work appears to disavow the possibility of any form of collective guilt, there is an unacknowledged reversal within his work that opens up to consider more expansive forms. I claim that his model of responsibility for the fragile enables a social model of responsibility in his work that extends not only to the fragile other who beckons us to responsibility but also serves as the means by which one might claim responsibility over institutions that render the other vulnerable. While this

model results from an exchange with Hans Jonas, through archival research I conducted surveying Ricœur's corpus, I show that many of the core characteristics of this model cohere with earlier positions held by Ricœur. As Ricœur's own work fails to re-envision negative moral sentiments in light of collective harm, I close the chapter by considering a "stain of association." I distinguish it from traditional models of guilt in the same way that a responsibility for the fragile is distinct from responsibility-as-imputation. Recognizing the inevitability of such sentiments (and the pathological danger of feeling nothing at all), I likewise propose a criterion for a healthy model of such a feeling.

Having arrived at the threshold of institutions through responsibility, I am faced with core questions: What are institutions and how might we evaluate and reform them? In Part II, I reconstruct a Ricœurian model of institutions that is consistent with his work and sketch out an institutional ethic native to his work that can reform institutions and adjudicate between them. In Chapter 3, I select a core set of characteristics under which one can trace key distinct strands of institutional thinking in Ricœur's work on institutions that nonetheless, when held together, can present a robust comprehensive picture of them. I first draw on Ricœur's mature work to argue that 1.) institutions are means by which we pursue a fundamental good of living-together. Then, I lift out central themes that span his career that illustrate schematic continuity amidst development and change. I propose that institutions are 2.) mediatory to distant social others, 3.) necessary to human action and development, and 4.) ambiguous. Contrary to those who would hold that institutions are at best neutral, moral exceptions, or worse, necessary evils, I use these four characteristics of institutions to argue that institutions are moral (as opposed to amoral) realities.

But identifying institutions as moral, in contrast to amoral, does not tell us what it means to construct or reform them. In Chapter 4, I sketch out Ricœur's institutional ethic, first contextualizing and explaining Ricœur's adoption of John Rawls, and then setting that in apposition to his acknowledgement of the possibility of multiple forms of justice. I argue from this we not only see tools for clarifying values and reforming institutions (through Rawls), but that one also finds here the seeds of inter-institutional ethics, governed by phronesis. Across these four chapters, I show that even as Ricœur's most evocative texts on pursuing just institutions remain vague about our obligation and institutions, engaging with his whole corpus reveals a depth and breadth in this domain. Nevertheless, his work is wanting for concrete institutions to consider.

In part III, I attend to the institutional ethic implicit in the Modern Catholic Social (CST) Tradition. In contrast to Ricœur's model, this account of institutional ethics is born over a century and half through occasional pieces responding to historical injustices of the day. In Chapter 5 I address the Leonine period, arguing that in the wake of the French revolution, the industrial revolution, and (later) global economic depression, Pope Leo XIII and Pius XI develop a care for institutions and concern for institutional relations that can be found at the core of the CST tradition. This is captured in concepts like the three societies necessary for human happiness (the family, the polity, and the church), the common good, social justice, and subsidiarity. Responsive to changing historical circumstances and philosophical trends, I claim in Chapter 6 that with Pius XII's Christmas letters in the midst of World War II a new emphasis on the human person enters into the horizon of the CST tradition and that is taken up by each subsequent popes, who transformed core principles in light of it. The common good comes to be understood according to the flourishing of groups and persons who form a part of it. Instead of social justice

articulating our need to work for the common good in institutions, solidarity anchors itself in the neighbor and transforms institutions as a result. Subsidiarity concerns itself not only with the integrity of institutions but also the capabilities and persons and groups. This turn to the person marks a revolution in CST, rendering the care for institutions a subspecies of the care for persons.

What can be come of a dialogue between an institutional ethic, designed for a politically liberal society by a French Huguenot philosopher, a tradition of Catholic Social inquiry written by popes and bishops over the better part of a century and a half? Would not the disparate worlds lead to inimical conflict? I argue no. Instead, with two distinct traditions of institutional ethics in hand, in Part IV, I compare and contrast these reconstructions and work constructively to illustrate their fecundity within the most critical institutional problem of our modern day: anthropogenic environmental degradation. In Chapter 7, I summarize core portions of the preceding institutional ethics around the categories of care for institutions, institutions as moral forms, and the concern for inter-institutional relations. While there are clear points of agreement, particularly in key elements of philosophical anthropology that enable a fruitful comparison, the intellectual location of these ethics lend themselves to dramatically different accounts. Rather than inimical, I maintain that the conflicts borne out from comparison can be rendered productive. Ricœur develops a robust framework that remains nonetheless oriented towards a form of liberalism that leaves it general. It is evocative in basic key desires such as the desire to live-together and the claim of the other and its appeal to considered convictions to resolve conflict can sound hollow in the absence of a thicker articulation of these convictions. Where Ricœur is thin and supple, the CST tradition is thick and seemingly glacial in its flexibility. Steeped in the *ressourcement* of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and responsive to the trends

of its day, the CST tradition recovers and develops in response to social upheavals and new ethical problems by deploying mediating principles that can appear to appeal to all people of good will. It remains forever burdened, however, by the very tradition that birthed it, and the suspicion regarding its ability to speak to a pluralistic sphere in an age of religious diversity and a rise of the "nones" is warranted. Yet, this tradition has sought since its inception to speak to the public square. I proposed that a form of synthesis of Ricœur and the CST tradition is possible drawing together the incisive framework that reconstructed from Ricœur's work and the principles forged in the fires of the occasional, now joining the considered convictions that help fund phronesis in adjudicating modern day conflict.

Yet an institutional ethic is not abstract. Indeed, now more than ever we are in need of more robust inquiry into the ethics of institutions. In Chapter 8, I argue that this model of institutional ethics can help shed light on environmental ethics, suggesting that anthropogenic environmental degradation is the institutional problem par excellence. Institutions raise the problem of collective action problems, inviting agential paralysis, the conflict of interest, and the inertia of history. Anthropogenic climate change is the largest collective action problem in history. It involves global communities and within those communities competing institutional and cultural interests. In it, we inherit the carbon load of our ancestors and pass it, and our increases, on to the next generation. I outlined an environmental ethic that extends an expanded understanding of responsibility to climate issues, sheds light on the contested terrain borne out by competing symbols of nature across institutions, and adjudicates conflict amidst institutions according to convictions born out in the CST tradition, now attuned to environmental concerns by Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'*. Our social ethic, governed by the question, how do we want to live together, now envelopes our ecological community.

This dissertation makes contributions to several fields of scholarship. To secondary scholarship on Ricœur, this dissertation not only highlights his expanded understanding of responsibility in his work, arguing it is essential to a full picture of his philosophical anthropology, but my work also showcases its development across his career, firmly rooting its place in Ricœur's thought and work. Ricœur's treatment of institutions remains vague in the most critical parts of his career. After surveying his corpus, I identified central characteristics that enable one to have a handle on institutions in his work and to think creatively beyond his career. In the process, I underline and excavate a central feature of his ethic, dimmed in light of the obscurity around his treatment of institutions: phronesis as the means of resolving inter-institutional conflict.

My research also contributes to scholarship on collective responsibility. Not only do I definitively add Ricœur to the pantheon of thinkers who have addressed this question, but by articulating a stain of association, I make my own constructive addition to scholarship on corporate guilt. Already not widely seen as a responsibility theorist, Ricœur's work on social responsibility is largely unknown and is at risk of being seen as a mere adoption from Hans Jonas, leading one to ask, why not simply go back to the original. Instead, by tracing the longer history of Ricœur's relation to corporate guilt and responsibility and illustrating how even core features of his responsibility for the fragile have precedents in his thought, I illustrate his originality without diminishing the developments arising from this academic encounter with Jonas. By articulating a stain of association, I pick up where Ricœur leaves off, and propose a new metaphor (rooted in ancient symbols) that can speak to real moral sentiments without reducing it into, and thus losing the nuance and force, of guilt as accountability. Recognizing the dangers of this sentiment, I also provide a criteria for considering what is a healthy account. As

such, our responsibility for the fragile and ensuing moral sentiments of stain can fit alongside Ricœur's capabilities discourse and can now invite further scholarship amongst responsibility theorists.

My work also represents a significant contribution to the field of Catholic Social Thought (the body of secondary research on the CST tradition). While the term institutional ethics is not native to the CST tradition, I demonstrate that it is not only at the heart of the tradition, but that when seen through this light, we can recognize key developments that are distinct from standard demarcations that pivot around Vatican II. My work indicates a continuity that is more than rhetorical, and illustrated how a pivot to the person, rather than doing violence to previous developments, enriches them. Likewise, I show the fruitfulness of setting this tradition in dialogue, indicating its capacity to those who may relegate it to the private realm.

Finally, this dissertation advances an important line of discourse by considering institutions in environmental ethics. The role of institutions as mediators of environmental harms is already easily made by the recent history of corporate pollution. My work identifies ways in which we can claim responsibility for this mediated relationship without sacrificing accountability. Likewise, through symbols of nature, I describe how insidiously institutions can shape and form our norms, values, and rules, impacting our action in ways that are far less obvious. This can in turn lead to conflicts without apparent resolution as the root of the issue, conflicts as fundamental to the differentiation of society, remains untouched. Yet, I do not stay with the paralysis of a cacophony of natures, but propose an individual and communal *phronesis*, informed by convictions formed in the CST tradition in response to the traumas of the last two centuries. As such, I outline one model for an institutional environmental ethic informed by Catholic inquiry, but that remains nonetheless open to dialogue. In turn, theorists from other

traditions could develop their own institutional ethics and, proper to the call for dialogue grounded in an integral ecology in Francis's work, bring their traditions to bear in the dialogue of cultures.

In all of this, I carve out a space to consider institutional ethics as a substantive and proper domain of inquiry. My own initial research into institutions as normative line of inquiry were frustrated by a fractured set of disciplines and few trails that explicitly led to ethics. In reconstructing an institutional ethic from Ricœur and from the CST tradition that cohere with these sources, I help to uncover resources that might otherwise be neglected. As such, I clearly show that philosophical and theological ethics have much to contribute to this increasingly important domain.

The fruitfulness of this work, however, is best inferred in the new directions of research that it spurs on. For example, my treatment of the CST tradition remained focused exclusively on papal and conciliar documents. Yet since its earliest days this tradition has been deeply informed (though unacknowledged) by Catholic social movements and by the work of lay thinkers such as the Fribourg union. A Catholic institutional ethic could be enriched by attention to movements and thinkers and their interplay with the papal tradition. It would provide a model for addressing contemporary Catholic movements (formal and informal) to look to creative ways people continue to think within and develop this tradition. Another clear area to advance this work is in its application. I illustrate at the outset of this dissertation that the world remains suffused with institutional injustices. My treatment of this topic, however, has largely remained theoretical. Yet in so many domains, institutional harms can provoke feelings of powerlessness. This could easily be applied to critical domains such as higher education, business ethics, or the sex abuse scandals and in the process help illuminate capacities for action that are otherwise obscured. Such work

will likewise involve greater specificity as to practices within institutions to help bring about reform. Finally, I present only a sketch of an inter-institutional environmental ethics. Future research can extend this project by attending more explicitly to concrete instances where institutions shape human values and actions towards the environment and lift out more explicitly the challenges that institutional inertia presents to radical calls for “ecological conversion” as found in *Laudato Si’*. While this dissertation is finished, the work of developing and applying an institutional ethics remains incomplete.

We live in times in need of a greater moral and institutional imagination, capable of helping us to creatively address the conflicts of institutions that perpetuate moral harms against each other and our environment. While we are given every good reason to slide into distrust of our institutions, we cannot afford disinterest. We may live together through them. We must take up the courage to ask how we want to live together, and work with others to better achieve it.

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