
ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE OTHER IN PAUL RICOEUR'S PHILOSOPHY: FROM SELFHOOD TO SOLICITUDE

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Abstract

This study discusses ethical *responsibility toward the Other* in Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, focusing on the dynamic movement *from selfhood to solicitude*. The aim is to critically examine how Ricoeur situates ethics within the context of human relationality, highlighting how responsibility to the Other emerges not in opposition to selfhood but as a deepening of it. The central problem addressed is the contemporary ethical deficit marked by individualism, depersonalization, and a weakening of interpersonal accountability in both private and public spheres. In a world increasingly driven by self-interest and instrumental rationality, Ricoeur's ethical framework offers a timely intervention that re-centers the moral subject in relation to others through narrative identity and mutual recognition. The significance of this study lies in its capacity to recover and apply a nuanced philosophical ethics to today's fractured social relationships, where the Other is too often reduced to anonymity or utility. The justification rests on Ricoeur's contribution to bridging phenomenology and hermeneutics with a practical ethical orientation one that connects the narrative construction of the self with a lived responsibility for others. Methodologically, this research adopts a critical-analytical approach, engaging primary texts such as *Oneself as Another* and *The Course of Recognition*, alongside secondary literature that situates Ricoeur within broader ethical and existential discourses. The study concludes that for Ricoeur, ethical responsibility is not an imposed duty but a response born of self-understanding and recognition of the Other's vulnerability. From this perspective, solicitude becomes the ethical culmination of selfhood in a shared human condition.

Keywords: Alterity, Ethics, Hermeneutics, Narrative Identity, Paul Ricoeur, Recognition, Responsibility, Selfhood, Solicitude, Vulnerability.

Introduction

Ethical Responsibility towards the Other in Paul Ricoeur's Philosophy: From Selfhood to Solicitude stems from the urgent need to rethink ethical relations in an age marked by moral fragmentation, depersonalization, and increasing disregard for the dignity of the Other. Contemporary societies face crises of empathy and moral accountability, evidenced by growing social alienation, political violence, and the commodification of human life. In such a context, the question of ethical responsibility *who am I in relation to the Other?* Demands renewed philosophical inquiry. Paul Ricoeur offers a compelling framework for addressing this question by grounding ethics in *narrative identity, recognition, and solicitude*. Unlike deontological or purely utilitarian ethics, Ricoeur's approach is phenomenological and hermeneutical: he begins

with the lived experience of the self and traces how selfhood matures into ethical responsiveness. His famous dictum from *Oneself as Another* “The selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought without the other expresses the core insight that self-understanding is inseparable from the presence of the Other.

Ricoeur further develops this insight through the triadic relationship between *self*, *Other* and *just institutions*, arguing that ethical life must move beyond mere legal obligation to a deeper solicitude rooted in mutual recognition and care. By analyzing this movement from selfhood to solicitude, the study seeks to reclaim the ethical dimensions of relationality and illuminate a path toward a more humane, dialogical, and responsible co-existence in the contemporary world.

The philosophical tradition has long grappled with the nature and scope of ethical responsibility—from the deontological imperatives of Kant, through the utilitarian calculus of Mill, to the existential emphasis on freedom and authenticity in Sartre and Heidegger. Yet, in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a new trajectory has emerged one that seeks to redefine the ethical subject not as a sovereign, autonomous will, but as a being-in-relation, constituted through narrative, language, and recognition. Among the foremost voices in this movement is Paul Ricoeur, whose integrative approach to phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ethics has yielded a compelling vision of moral life grounded in narrative identity and the call of the other.

Ricoeur's ethical thought represents both a continuation and a critique of previous paradigms. While he shares with Kant an interest in autonomy and obligation, and with Aristotle a focus on the good life and practical wisdom, Ricoeur diverges by situating moral agency within the hermeneutical interpretation of the self—a self that is always mediated by history, language, and interpersonal relations.¹ In his magnum opus, *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur articulates a philosophy of the self that is not closed and self-sufficient but open to the Other through the structures of narrative and recognition. He argues that to live ethically is to pursue the good life, with and for others, in just institutions. This triadic formulation underscores the relational, reciprocal, and institutional dimensions of ethical responsibility.

Crucially, Ricoeur's account of ethical responsibility unfolds from selfhood to solicitude—from the self's narrative construction of identity, through the affective recognition of the Other's vulnerability, to the establishment of justice as a condition of mutual recognition in pluralistic societies. In contrast to Emmanuel Levinas, whose ethics is premised on the radical asymmetry of the ethical relation where the self is infinitely responsible for the Other—Ricoeur advances a more reciprocal and dialogical model. He seeks to preserve the Levinasian insight into the

¹. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 169

priority of the Other, while also integrating it into a framework that values selfhood, mutuality, and institutional mediation.²

This article explores how ethical responsibility, in Ricoeur's philosophy, is not imposed externally as a law or maxim, but arises internally from the interpretive dynamics of narrative identity and the intersubjective structure of human experience. It analyzes the movement from self-concern to solicitude, investigates the role of recognition in ethical formation, and elucidates how justice functions as the institutional expression of care for the Other. These three components—narrative identity, solicitude, and justice—together form the ethical architecture of Ricoeur's thought.

In a world marked by cultural diversity, ethical relativism, and increasing social inequalities, Ricoeur's ethics offers a balanced, humanistic, and dialogical approach to responsibility—one that affirms both the singularity of the Other and the agency of the self, both affective care and procedural fairness. His emphasis on recognition and narrative interpretation makes his ethical philosophy particularly suitable for engaging moral questions in multicultural and post-conflict societies, where reconciliation and justice must be pursued without erasing difference.

The article proceeds in four parts. First, it elaborates Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity and its foundational role in the constitution of the ethical self. Second, it examines the emergence of solicitude as the affective and interpersonal core of moral life. Third, it explores the crucial role of recognition and justice as mediators of ethical responsibility in institutional and societal settings. Finally, it discusses the implications of Ricoeur's ethics for a pluralistic world, emphasizing the need for both moral attentiveness to the Other and commitment to structures of justice.

Narrative Identity and the Constitution of Selfhood

At the core of Paul Ricoeur's moral philosophy is a profound reevaluation of the self—not as a fixed, autonomous subject but as a hermeneutic self-constituted through narrative and temporality. In contrast to the Cartesian cogito, which understands the self as a self-transparent, thinking substance, Ricoeur develops the idea of narrative identity (*identité narrative*) to account for the dynamic, interpretive, and temporal structure of human subjectivity.³ Narrative identity, for Ricoeur, is both a response to and a reconfiguration of the modern problem of selfhood, integrating insights from phenomenology, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, and moral philosophy.

Narrative identity arises from the recognition that human life is inherently temporal—it unfolds across time, and its meaning is not immediately given but must be interpreted. Ricoeur draws on

². Dauenhauer, Bernard P. 2010. "Paul Ricoeur." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ricoeur/>.

³. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey pp. 114–140

Augustine's *Confessions* and Heidegger's *Being and Time* to assert that human beings are not simply *in* time but are temporal beings whose lives take the form of unfolding stories. The structure of narrative, with its capacity to link events across time through emplotment (*mise en intrigue*), becomes the key mechanism by which the self organizes its past, anticipates its future, and gives coherence to its present.

Ricoeur distinguishes between two poles of identity: idem-identity (sameness) and ipse-identity (selfhood or constancy). *Idem* refers to the continuity of characteristics over time—what remains the same—while *ipse* refers to the capacity of the self to remain faithful to its commitments and to respond ethically over time, even amidst change. It is in this latter sense that the ethical dimension of narrative identity comes to the fore. The self becomes a moral agent not simply by being the same, but by being responsible—able to give an account of itself and upholding the promises and obligations that shape its narrative.

Ethical responsibility is thus immanent to selfhood. Through narrative reflection, the self comes to understand itself as implicated in a web of relationships and responsibilities. Ricoeur writes: “The selfhood of oneself implies the presence of the other in the constitution of identity”.⁴ This insight marks a departure from individualistic notions of moral agency. Instead, Ricoeur conceives of the self as a relational being, constituted through encounters with others and embedded in historical, linguistic, and institutional contexts.

Narrative identity, then, is not a private autobiography but a dialogical construction, shaped by the stories others tell about us and the shared cultural narratives within which we live. Ricoeur's hermeneutics reveals that our self-understanding is always mediated by symbols, traditions, and texts. We inherit narrative frameworks from our communities, yet we interpret and revise them, exercising a limited but real narrative autonomy.⁵

The ethical implications of narrative identity are profound. Since the self is not an isolated atom but a storied being in relation, it is through narrative that we come to recognize our responsibility to others. The narratives we construct are evaluated not only for coherence and intelligibility but for their moral weight—for how they account for suffering, failure, fidelity, and justice.⁶ This process of self-interpretation, Ricoeur suggests, is also a process of moral formation, wherein the subject learns to respond to the demands of the other and to anticipate the judgments of a wider moral community.

4. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, p. 12.

5. Pellauer, David, and Bernard P. Dauenhauer. 2012. *Paul Ricoeur*. Revised edition. London: Routledge.

6. Carl G. Vaught, *Encounter with the Self: A Study in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001, p. 11.

Moreover, Ricoeur links narrative identity to the ethical notion of promise-keeping, a central element of *ipse*-identity. The capacity to make and keep promises signals a temporal and ethical consistency—one that forms the backbone of trust and relational stability..⁷ To be someone who can be counted on, even as one changes over time, is to live out an ethical narrative.

Importantly, Ricoeur does not posit a romantic unity of the self. He acknowledges the fragility and conflictual nature of identity. Human lives are marked by ambiguity, fragmentation, and reinterpretation. Nevertheless, narrative offers a way of holding these tensions together, of reconfiguring discordant elements into a meaningful ethical whole. The self is thus a “narrative quest,” oriented toward the good life but always provisional, incomplete, and open to the other.⁸

In sum, Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity lays the foundation for a deeply relational and interpretive account of ethical responsibility. By situating selfhood within the structures of , story, and recognition, he redefines moral agency as a form of self-understanding that is always already directed toward the other. The self becomes ethical not through abstract obligation but through the narrative interpretation of its own vulnerabilities, responsibilities, and promises in a shared world.

Solicitude and the Ethics of the Other

The transition from narrative identity to solicitude marks a critical ethical development in Paul Ricoeur's moral philosophy. Solicitude (*sollicitude*), for Ricoeur, is not merely a benevolent disposition or sentiment of compassion, but an ethically charged structure of relation in which the self acknowledges the other's suffering and responds to it in a spirit of shared humanity. In contrast to both utilitarian conceptions of obligation and the radical asymmetry of Levinasian ethics, Ricoeur presents solicitude as a relational, reciprocal, and dialogical engagement that forms the bedrock of ethical life.

Solicitude builds upon the prior development of narrative identity, but it redirects the focus from self-interpretation to intersubjective responsibility. It constitutes a moral posture of openness toward the other that is neither self-negating nor self-absorbed. In Ricoeur's words, it is the exchange of perspectives where self and other become mutually irreplaceable in their singularity. Thus, solicitude enables the self to live authentically by living with and for others in a world structured by both proximity and distance.

From Self-Concern to Solicitude

An essential point in Paul Ricoeur's philosophy of *solicitude* lies in its dialectical structure,

⁷. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, p. 12.

⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, p. 170.

characterized by two interrelated poles that together constitute the ethical dynamic of his moral thought. First, there is the summons of responsibility that comes from the *Other*. This summons is not imposed externally as a legal obligation but arises from the encounter with the face and vulnerability of the Other, who addresses the self in a manner that calls for a response. This summons is asymmetrical it places the self in a position of being ethically claimed by the Other even before any deliberation. It echoes the phenomenological tradition, especially Emmanuel Levinas, in its emphasis on the primacy of the Other in the constitution of ethical meaning.

Second, there is “sympathy for the suffering Other”, which arises from the self’s *capacity for affective responsiveness*. This is not merely a passive recognition but an active *movement of the heart*, born of what Ricoeur calls *self-esteem* a form of selfhood that is already disposed toward care, compassion, and recognition. This pole affirms that ethics is not reducible to duty but is sustained by the self’s *solicitude* a loving regard for the Other’s humanity, especially in conditions of suffering.

These two poles the Other’s call and the self’s loving response form the ethical plane of Ricoeur’s notion of “*the good life with and for others in just institutions*.” Solicitude, then, becomes the mediating force that integrates *responsibility* and *recognition*, *duty* and *affection*, into a unified ethical life grounded in mutuality and justice.

Ricoeur’s ethical framework begins with the idea of *self-concern*, which is not to be confused with selfishness but is rather the foundation of self-responsibility. However, Ricoeur moves beyond Aristotle by integrating a phenomenology of affectivity, where the moral life includes emotional responsiveness and recognition of vulnerability. The ethical life, therefore, is not grounded solely in rational deliberation but in a deeply affective responsiveness to the suffering of others. Solicitude emerges at the intersection of self-concern and the encounter with the other, where the other’s fragility calls the self beyond the confines of its own narrative to assume responsibility.⁹

This encounter is transformative: it interrupts the self’s autonomy and opens it to a relational identity rooted in care. Importantly, Ricoeur resists a reduction of solicitude to sentimentality or altruism. Instead, he frames it as an ethical orientation that reflects the self’s desire for a meaningful life that inherently includes others as ends in themselves.¹⁰ The other is not absorbed into the self’s narrative but stands as a unique being whose dignity calls for recognition. Solicitude thus implies a dialectic between the recognition of the other’s alterity and the affirmation of the self’s ethical capacity to respond.

⁹. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, p. 189..

¹⁰. John D. Caputo, *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.

Furthermore, the relational dynamic of solicitude is inherently reciprocal. Although the initial ethical gesture may be asymmetrical, the ideal of solicitude is mutual recognition a moral friendship in which each person's vulnerability and capacity are affirmed.

Recognition and the Call of the Other

Recognition (*reconnaissance*) is the cornerstone of Ricoeur's ethical theory, and it serves as the connective tissue between narrative identity, solicitude, and justice. In *The Course of Recognition*, Ricoeur identifies three levels of recognition: (1) recognizing something as familiar, (2) recognizing someone as a person, and (3) mutual recognition through esteem and respect. It is this third level that Ricoeur identifies as the ethical pinnacle—a space in which individuals come to recognize one another as moral subjects with inherent worth.¹¹ Recognition, in this sense, is not merely a cognitive acknowledgment but an existential affirmation of the other's dignity and uniqueness. It is through such recognition that the ethical call of the other is properly received. Ricoeur emphasizes that the self does not become ethical in isolation but only in relation to another who addresses the self from a position of vulnerability and demand. This is where his ethics engages in a profound dialogue with Levinas.

Levinas's insistence on the asymmetrical nature of the ethical relation in which the self is infinitely responsible for the other—offers a radical ethical challenge.¹² While Ricoeur deeply respects this insight, he expresses concern about its lack of reciprocity and its abstraction from social and institutional life. As he argues in *The Just*, an ethics that cannot transition into mutual recognition and institutional justice remains ethically rich but politically fragile.¹³ Ricoeur's corrective is a dialogical ethics of reciprocity, where the ethical relation must aim toward mutual recognition without erasing the asymmetrical dimension of the other's vulnerability. Ethical responsibility begins with the acknowledgment of the other's suffering but matures into an ongoing dialogue where both self and other contribute to a shared moral world.

This view is supported by Charles Taylor, who contends that recognition is not a luxury but a basic human need. Without recognition, individuals suffer harm in their identity. Ricoeur builds on this, but insists that true recognition entails a movement toward esteema positive valuation of the other's singularity and agency. It is only within this framework of mutual recognition that ethical responsibility can be sustained over time and translated into just social relations.

^{11.} Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 15–18, 248–250.

^{12.} Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

^{13.} Paul Ricoeur, *Reflections on the Just*, trans. David Pellauer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp 18–20

Justice as the Mediation of Solicitude

While solicitude forms the affective and interpersonal dimension of ethics, Ricoeur recognizes that in complex societies, ethical responsibility must be mediated through the norms and procedures of justice. Justice is what universalizes the particularity of solicitude and safeguards the rights of the anonymous other the one beyond our immediate circle of care.

Ricoeur's conception of justice builds on the work of John Rawls and others but diverges from strictly procedural theories. For Ricoeur, justice must be rooted in ethical aims and not only in fairness. Thus, he writes that “justice is solicitude extended to the anonymous other,” signaling the movement from personal concern to institutional structures that guarantee equal respect and dignity for all.¹⁴

Justice is required because interpersonal ethics alone is insufficient to govern the complexity of pluralistic societies. The moment we are faced with the third party the stranger or the collective affective responses must be translated into normative frameworks that can be applied impartially. In this sense, justice introduces distance into the ethical relation, but this distance is not alienating; rather, it is the necessary condition for equity and objectivity.¹⁵

However, Ricoeur insists that justice must remain connected to its ethical roots in solicitude. When detached, justice can become a cold mechanism that fails to recognize the humanity of the individuals it claims to protect. Hence, Ricoeur proposes a hermeneutics of mediation, wherein ethical aims and institutional justice inform and critique one another. Justice must be continually reinterpreted considering ethical life, and ethics must strive for institutional embodiment.

Moreover, the institutions of justice laws, rights, and political systems are not merely administrative. For Ricoeur, they are narrative spaces where collective memory, historical injuries, and aspirations for a common life are negotiated. In this way, justice is not just the regulation of social behavior but the cultivation of ethical citizenship and public responsibility.

In conclusion, Ricoeur's ethical framework shows that solicitude and justice are not oppositional but complementary. Solicitude provides the affective foundation for moral responsiveness, while justice ensures that such responsiveness is made effective and sustainable in social life. Together, they constitute the dual pillars of an ethical world in which both individual dignity and institutional fairness are affirmed.

^{14.} Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 240.

^{15.} David Pellauer, *Paul Ricoeur: Honoring and Continuing the Work*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2007, p. 37.

Ethical Responsibility in a Pluralistic World

At the heart of Paul Ricoeur's ethics lies a deeply relational and dialogical understanding of human identity and responsibility. His notion of *ethical responsibility toward the Other* which unfolds between *selfhood* and *solicitude* is not abstract moralism but a *practical, lived orientation* toward coexistence. In a pluralistic world marked by cultural, religious, and ideological diversity, Ricoeur's ethical framework offers a constructive pathway for engaging difference without collapsing into relativism or moral indifference.

Ricoeur's concept of *narrative identity* is foundational: the self is constituted over time through stories that integrate both sameness (*idem*) and selfhood (*ipse*). In a pluralistic context, this means that each person's identity is shaped through interaction with diverse cultural and moral narratives. Ethical responsibility thus demands openness *to the Other's story* a willingness to listen, understand, and interpret without assimilating or dominating. Practically, this translates into fostering dialogical encounters in intercultural education, conflict resolution, and policy-making. By recognizing that our own narratives are incomplete without the perspective of others, Ricoeur encourages *mutual recognition* rather than confrontation.

In Ricoeur's framework, *solicitude* the affective dimension of ethical life emerges from the interplay between self-esteem and the Other's vulnerability. In a pluralistic society, solicitude manifests as civic friendship: not mere tolerance, but a genuine care for the flourishing of others, even those whose worldviews differ from our own. This has practical implications for social cohesion: political structures, educational systems, and civil institutions must be shaped not only by justice (the distribution of rights) but also by care and relational attentiveness. For example, legal pluralism must not only ensure rights for minority groups but also foster environments where those groups feel heard, respected, and dignified.

Ricoeur's ethical aim is not simply individual virtue but *relational flourishing within institutional life*. In pluralistic democracies, this means cultivating institutions that embody both procedural justice and ethical responsiveness. Justice becomes more than distributive fairness it becomes *recognitive*, affirming the dignity of diverse identities. Practically, this involves integrating ethics into public discourse, promoting participatory democracy, and resisting technocratic or majoritarian models that silence minority voices. For example, public deliberation in policymaking must include mechanisms for testimony, interpretation, and narrative exchange, so that policy reflects a multiplicity of lived experiences.

Ricoeur moves us from a minimal ethic of toleration to a deeper ethic of *hospitality*. Influenced by Levinas but going further, Ricoeur holds that responsibility toward the Other includes a *welcoming stance* an openness that makes space for the Other's arrival without precondition. In pluralistic societies where migration, refugee crises, and interfaith tensions are prevalent, this

implies that political and social structures must practice ethical hospitality: not only accommodating difference but learning from it. This can take concrete form in inclusive policies, intercultural dialogue programs, and a redefinition of citizenship as relational rather than merely legal status.

In pluralism, disagreement is inevitable. Ricoeur acknowledges this and introduces a *hermeneutics of justice* a way of interpreting conflicting claims through mutual understanding and negotiated meanings. Rather than forcing consensus or retreating into relativism, this approach encourages ethical deliberation grounded in recognition, memory, and forgiveness. In practice, this supports the design of truth commissions, transitional justice systems, and reparative mechanisms that value moral testimony and narrative repair not just legal compensation. Ricoeur's philosophy of ethical responsibility, grounded in selfhood, solicitude, and recognition, offers not just a moral theory but a *framework for democratic life in pluralistic societies*. Its practical implications lie in the formation of institutions, civic relationships, and interpretive engagements that honor diversity not as a threat but as a condition for shared ethical life. In this light, pluralism is not a problem to be managed but a *moral horizon* within which the self discovers its fullest ethical vocation: to live “the good life with and for others in just institution.

The increasing pluralization of contemporary societies presents both a challenge and an opportunity for ethical thought. With the coexistence of diverse worldviews, religious traditions, cultural identities, and moral values, the demand for a robust framework of ethical responsibility has become more urgent than ever. In such a context, Paul Ricoeur's philosophy offers a compelling approach to rethinking responsibility—not as conformity to a universal moral code imposed from above, but as a dialogical engagement that affirms both difference and mutual recognition

At the heart of Ricoeur's ethical vision is the concept of narrative identity, which he develops to understand how individuals construct meaning over time through storytelling. In pluralistic contexts, this narrative framework becomes crucial because it allows for the interpretation of the self not in isolation, but in relation to others whose life stories differ, sometimes radically. The openness of narrative identity to reinterpretation enables individuals and communities to reconfigure their moral horizons considering new encounters, fostering a deeper responsiveness to cultural and ethical diversity.¹⁶

Ricoeur's emphasis on recognition (*reconnaissance*) is particularly significant in multicultural and postcolonial contexts, where identity politics and historical grievances often create tensions.

¹⁶ Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 23.

In *The Course of Recognition* he argues that recognition should evolve beyond mere identification or tolerance toward mutual esteem and respect for the singularity of the other. This shift enables moral agents to move from a static acknowledgment of otherness to a dynamic ethical engagement that seeks to understand and affirm the other's unique perspective.

In pluralistic societies, where conflicting norms and narratives vie for legitimacy, ethical responsibility must be more than a private virtue; it must also be a public practice mediated through institutions of justice. Ricoeur underscores this in his notion that ethical aims—such as living the good life with and for others must be realized “in just institutions” . This triadic formulation self, other, and institution provides a structure within which ethical responsibilities can be translated into political action and legal recognition. In this respect, Ricoeur's thought resonates with political theorists like Charles Taylor and Nancy Fraser, who stress the importance of recognition and redistribution in addressing systemic inequalities.

Moreover, Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology, with its emphasis on the fragility and vulnerability of human life, is deeply relevant in addressing the ethical consequences of displacement, poverty, racism, and ecological degradation—issues that disproportionately affect marginalized groups in pluralistic settings. His reflections in *Memory, History, and Forgetting* provide further insight into how societies can ethically confront historical injustices through the work of memory and forgiveness. Here, Ricoeur links ethical responsibility to the recognition of past wrongs, suggesting that ethical life in a pluralistic world involves not only intersubjective recognition but also historical and political accountability.¹⁷

Ricoeur's thought also contributes to the discourse on deliberative democracy. His hermeneutics of dialogue and recognition invites citizens to engage in interpretive processes that respect plural voices while striving for shared understanding. In this regard, ethical responsibility becomes a civic virtue one that demands not only respect for difference but also commitment to constructive engagement, humility, and openness to revision.

Finally, Ricoeur's ethics avoids the pitfalls of moral relativism by grounding pluralism in shared ethical orientation toward the good life. While he affirms that values are historically and culturally mediated, he insists on the possibility of cross-cultural moral communication, enabled by our shared capacities for suffering, action, language, and narrative. This ontological commonality allows for what Ricoeur calls a “poetics of the possible” an imaginative projection of ethical futures in which mutual recognition and institutional justice can coexist with cultural difference.

¹⁷. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, pp. 457–492

Conclusion

This paper has examined Paul Ricoeur's concept of ethical responsibility toward the Other, with a particular focus on its practical implications for a pluralistic world. It began by establishing the philosophical foundation of Ricoeur's ethics, rooted in narrative identity, solicitude, and the dialectic between selfhood and alterity. Through critical engagement with Ricoeur's key texts including *Oneself as Another* and *The Course of Recognition* the study demonstrated how ethical responsibility emerges from the interplay between the self's interpretation of its own narrative and its openness to the vulnerability of the Other.

A key finding is the identification of two poles of solicitude in Ricoeur's ethics: the summons of responsibility that comes from the Other and the sympathetic, affective response that arises from the self. This dynamic gives rise to an ethical model that is neither self-centered nor self-effacing but one in which the Other becomes the condition of ethical selfhood. This structure challenges both individualist moral frameworks and impersonal systems of obligation, offering instead a relational and dialogical approach to ethics. Crucially, the paper has argued that Ricoeur's ethics is not confined to interpersonal encounters but extends into the political and institutional realms. In a pluralistic world marked by diversity and fragmentation, the ethical imperative is to create just institutions that mediate recognition and protect the dignity of all. Thus, ethical responsibility entails more than personal virtue it requires active participation in shaping inclusive, democratic spaces where the stories and rights of diverse Others are respected.

In conclusion, the study finds that Ricoeur's ethical responsibility offers a philosophical framework capable of responding to the moral complexities of pluralism. By grounding ethics in both recognition and justice, he provides a model of responsibility that is emotionally resonant, socially responsive Ricoeur challenges us to reimagine ethics as a lived narrative—a story of becoming responsible for and with others, of engaging in practices of care that are sustained by justice, and of building communities rooted in mutual respect and shared meaning. In doing so, he reclaims the ethical as the space where identity, vulnerability, memory, and hope converge in a fragile but promising vision of human solidarity. His ethics reminds us that in the face of the other, we do not lose ourselves—we find the very meaning of being human.

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