A Companion to Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature*

EDITED BY
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Introduction

Freedom and Nature, *Then and Now*

Scott Davidson

Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) was one of the leading intellectual figures in French thought over the latter half of the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first. Having published more than thirty books and five hundred articles on a wide range of topics over the course of his lifetime, the scope of his thought is quite remarkable. It is no exaggeration to say that Ricoeur engaged in some way with most, if not all, of the major philosophical movements and leading figures of his time. Consequently, there are as many different points of entry to his thought as there are individual perspectives and interests. Nonetheless, the most common way of presenting his oeuvre has been to follow its development over the course of his career.[1] And this task usually commences with his book *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*,[2] which stands out as his first truly original contribution to philosophy.[3]

This *Companion to Freedom and Nature* is motivated by the realization that *Freedom and Nature* has been discussed, for the most part, merely as the starting point of a longer intellectual journey. As such, it is either treated as the first installment of the completion of a three-volume *Philosophy of the Will*[4] or more generally as the first step along the course of Ricoeur's distinguished career. Although each of those perspectives is justifiable, the unfortunate result is that this book has rarely been approached on its own terms, and consequently, many of the important details concerning its own content and contribution have been either overlooked or ignored. In fact, in the process of preparing this book, it has come as a great surprise for me personally to discover just how little secondary research has been devoted directly to *Freedom and Nature*. Up to this point, there are no other book-length studies devoted exclusively to this work, and there are only a handful of articles that have actually taken it up as a direct theme of reflection.[5]

Whatever may account for this neglect, it is clear that a distance has opened up now between *Freedom and Nature* and its readers. Written almost seventy years ago, readers today are far removed from the intellectual milieu in which the book was written. Many of the thinkers engaged by Ricoeur have been forgotten, and few, if any, of the scientific concepts that were in circulation at that time are familiar nowadays. Such a distance, as Ricoeur's later writings on hermeneutics serve to remind us, calls for the work of interpretation inasmuch as the hermeneutic aim is to overcome the distance that separates the reader from the author. And indeed, the chapters of this book seek, each in its own respective way, to overcome the historical and conceptual distance that separates *Freedom and Nature* from readers today.

But the fact of this historical distance does not only present an obstacle to understanding, it also poses a threat to the validity of Ricoeur's findings. To the extent that *Freedom and Nature* engages directly with the philosophical and scientific thought of its own time and to the extent that those ideas have been surpassed, does it not follow, in turn, that the time has passed as well for *Freedom and Nature*? Should it not be confined simply to the dustbin of intellectual history? This critical concern makes it clear that the hermeneutic task of leading the reader back to the author, albeit important, cannot be sufficient. In addition to taking the reader back to the world of the author, the work of interpretation should also point forward and follow the movement that brings the author to the world of the reader. In this respect, the interpretive task should be to help Ricoeur's work speak to today's world, so that the reader may rediscover and affirm the contemporary relevance of *Freedom and Nature*.

An "internal" motivation for returning to *Freedom and Nature* is explained in Jean Greisch's "Préface" to the 2009 French edition of the book (Greisch 2009). Greisch asserts that a careful reading of *Freedom and Nature* reveals an underlying continuity in Ricoeur's *Philosophical Anthropology*, to the extent that this early book introduces a number of themes and concerns that will resurface, "like an underground river," in Ricoeur's subsequent works (Greisch 2009: 8). Clear examples of this point would include the distinction between explanation and understanding, the mixed discourse of action, the concept of imputation, the role of history, character, and temporality, among others. The careful reader will thus find that many of the themes that emerge centrally in Ricoeur's subsequent writings are already introduced nascently in *Freedom and Nature*. This way of reading *Freedom and Nature* can indeed help readers to have a greater appreciation of the continuity in Ricoeur's philosophical work, but its drawback is that its significance is limited to the extent that remains internal to Ricoeur's oeuvre.

Yet, in my opinion, there is also a clear and compelling "external" motivation for readers to return to *Freedom and Nature* today. In light of recent

developments in phenomenology and the philosophy of mind, it could be argued that Ricoeur's book has at last found its audience. This is due in large part to the fact that Ricoeur engages seriously with the empirical sciences to inform his understanding of cognition and emphasizes the role of the body in shaping our engagement with the world. In this way, *Freedom and Nature* anticipates and resonates with a variety of recent attempts to link phenomenology with the natural sciences as well as to "embody" cognition. To build the case that *Freedom and Nature* speaks directly to these contemporary interests, I will connect the three major divisions of this book—Historical Influences, Key Themes, and New Trajectories—to the interests of researchers working at the intersections between phenomenology, psychology, and neuroscience.

NOTES ON THE COMPOSITION OF *FREEDOM AND NATURE*

Before exploring the historical influences on Ricoeur's thought, I first want to situate the publication of *Freedom and Nature* within the historical context of his own life and work. In his "Intellectual Autobiography," Ricoeur says that he already began his working notes for a three-volume book called a *Philosophy of the Will*, while he was a prisoner of war in a German camp in World War II. But in fact, some parts of *Freedom and Nature*—which was to serve as the first volume of this book—can be traced back even earlier. His treatment of attention, for instance, is based on research that was presented in 1939 under the title "*L'attention: Etude phénoménologique de l'attention Et de Ses Connexions Philosophiques*" ("Attention: A Phenomenological Study of Attention and its Philosophical Connections").[6] Ricoeur's philosophical career was interrupted by his call to serve in the French military later that year. In June of 1940, however, he became a prisoner of war and would remain there for almost five full years.[7] For Ricoeur, this became a period of forced leisure that was spent on the preparation of work that would be published later. He sketched outlines and sections of *Freedom and Nature* in his journals and on tiny scraps of paper. In 1943, he was able to procure a German copy of Husserl's *Ideas I* and then embarked on a careful study and French translation of that book. Due to the lack of paper, his translation was written in miniscule handwriting in the margins of the book. This was one of the few items that he carried back home in his knapsack following the war, and today it is held in the *Fonds Ricoeur* in Paris.

After returning from the war, Ricoeur resumed work on his doctorate, which in those days required candidates to submit two separate works: one a contribution to the history of philosophy and the other an original piece

of work. The complete translation and introduction to Husserl's *Ideas I* served as his minor thesis (Husserl 1950), while the second requirement—the "grand thesis"—was fulfilled by *Freedom and Nature* (*Le Volontaire et l'Involontaire*). Ricoeur completed his thesis on Easter day in 1948 and defended it in front of his doctoral committee, which was comprised of professors Jean Hyppolite, Jean Wahl, René Le Senne, Maurice Colleville, and Étienne Souriau, on April 29, 1950 (Greisch 2009: 7). His thesis was published as a book in the same year and received a prize from the Society of the Friends of Jean Cavaillès, a French philosopher who was killed as a member of the resistance during the Nazi Occupation.

Inspired by Karl Jaspers' grand trilogy *Philosophie*, Ricoeur conceived *Freedom and Nature* as the first installment of a projected trilogy, *The Philosophy of the Will*. As Ricoeur elaborates in a paper presented in 1951 (Ricoeur 2016), the three volumes of his *Philosophy of the Will* were designed to elaborate three different approaches to the will: an eidetics of the will, an empirics of the will, and lastly a poetics of the will. In the decade to follow, Ricoeur would continue to pursue work on his "empirics of the will" that would result ultimately in the 1960 publication of *Fallible Man* and *The Symbolism of Evil.* Whereas the "eidetic description" of the will in *Freedom and Nature* offered a purely conceptual analysis of the will that bracketed any consideration of an empirical will or a divine will, the empirics of the will removed those brackets and directly addressed the question of the bad will. But after the publication of his empirics of the will, Ricoeur subsequently abandoned his project, leaving his previously announced "poetics of the will" unfinished. In the decade to follow, he would often be asked about that work and why it was never completed, and his standard response was to say that it had been imprudent for a beginning philosopher to program the trajectory of his research in that way and that his interests had simply shifted to other topics (Ricoeur 1995). I will postpone further discussion of Ricoeur's poetics of the will to the end of this Introduction, where I will offer a few speculative remarks about what it might have included, based on what is already indicated in *Freedom and Nature*.

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

The first part of this *Companion to Freedom and Nature* sets out to uncover some of the major influences on Ricoeur's early work. One of the strongest influences on Ricoeur, as we have already noted, is the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). Inspired by his study of Husserl, Ricoeur wants to extend Husserl's phenomenology from the realm of perception to the practical sphere.[8] What Ricoeur borrows from Husserl is, first of all, what he

calls the eidetic method. Such a method is designed to uncover the essential features of subjective experience, meaning the formal or invariant structures that shape all possible experience. While Ricoeur explicitly acknowledges this methodological influence, there is another noteworthy aspect of Husserl's influence that guides his discussion but remains mostly implicit, that is, the rejection of naturalism. Naturalism, at least in its most restrictive formulation, would attempt to reduce subjective experience to causal explanations that are drawn from the natural world, such that thoughts or feelings or desires would be reducible to physical processes or events. In response to naturalism, Husserlian phenomenology aims to provide a methodological opening for a non-reductive approach to conscious life that studies it on its own terms. Likewise, the defence of a non-naturalistic aspect of willing is also a fundamental feature of Ricoeur's analysis of the will.

At the same time as Ricoeur readily acknowledges the influence of Husserl, his "Intellectual Autobiography" explains that the intention behind *Freedom and Nature* was to write something about practical life that could become the equivalent to what Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) had done with perception in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). Marc-Antoine Vallée traces this passage from a phenomenology centered on perception to a phenomenology oriented around the will and action. Following Merleau-Ponty's example, Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will and of action seeks to overcome the aporias resulting from a Cartesian dualism. Like Merleau-Ponty who focuses his attention on the ambiguity of the body as both a subject and object of perception, Ricoeur takes these two aspects of the lived body as the starting point of his analysis of the will. Under the influence of the voluntary as well as the involuntary, the body is at the same time an "I can" that enables projects to be carried out and an "I cannot" that imposes a set of constraints and limitations on such projects. What is perhaps most innovative and insightful about Ricoeur's study of the embodied will is his attempt to establish a "practical mediation" between the voluntary and the involuntary. This reconciliation is accomplished by going beyond the involuntary as a purely objective reality in order to place it at the "very core of the Cogito's integral experience" (Ricoeur 1966: 348). Instead of being placed outside of subjective experience as it would be in a "voluntarist" conception of consciousness, the experience of necessity imposed by the involuntary (for instance, by means of physical resistance, by circumstances, or by biological life) becomes a central feature of lived experience.

In addition to being inspired by the phenomenological method, Ricoeur is influenced at least to an equal degree by the dominant currents in French philosophy of the time. One of these influences, as Jean-Luc Amalric demonstrates, is the French reflexive tradition, and in particular, the work of Jean Nabert (1881–1960). Nabert, an early mentor of Ricoeur, was the author of

Elements of Ethics (1943) as well as an earlier book titled *The Inner Experience of Freedom* (1924). Nabert's influence actually extends beyond *Freedom and Nature* and shapes the architecture of the entire *Philosophy of the Will,* insofar as it establishes the fundamental relationship between freedom and the fault. This influence is most clear in Ricoeur's book *Fallible Man*, but Amalric shows that Nabert also has an impact within the specific context of *Freedom and Nature*. To be precise, Amalric argues that the reciprocity between the voluntary and the involuntary can only find its full coherence in light of Nabert's conception of the relation between the self's act of existing and the signs through which this existence comes to be objectified. The specific phenomenological style of *Freedom and Nature* therefore cannot be dissociated from a "semeiological" method or an "apprenticeship to signs" which provides an account of the objectification and the practical reappropriation of our freedom.

Another one of these influences, as Jakub Čapek shows, is the work of the nineteenth-century French spiritualist, Félix Ravaisson (1813–1900). Ravaisson's most enduring impact was his 1838 essay *Of Habit* in which he sought to demonstrate the unity of spirit and nature. Čapek suggests that this account of habit poses a fundamental challenge for any phenomenological description of habit that would utilize an eidetic method to bracket natural explanations of behavior. After pinpointing the precise significance of the Ravaissonian challenge, he shows that Ricoeur's own phenomenological description of habit is deeply inspired by Ravaisson but distances itself from the more speculative metaphysics that Ravaisson proposed.

The last of the contributions to this section calls attention to the influence of Thomism on early twentieth-century French thought. In his discussion of a thinker who is highly influential but rarely mentioned in Ricoeur's writings, namely, St. Thomas Aquinas, Michael Sohn is able to shed light on his subtle influence on the argument of *Freedom and Nature*. To be precise, Ricoeur challenges the harmonious relation established between Thomas's cosmology and psychology, even though he retrieves the latter and supplements it with modern insights. In this way, Ricoeur is able to establish a middle ground that stands between Thomas's *Philosophy of the Will* and contemporary developments in French existentialism.

There are, of course, countless other influences that enter into play in such an ambitious and wide-reaching book as *Freedom and Nature* that deserve attention in their own right. Others figures whose influence would have been equally worthy of extensive treatment include Augustine, Descartes, Kant, Bergson, James, Jaspers, Marcel, Sartre, and the list could go on. While many additional chapters could have unearthed the historical influences on this work, it is equally important to emphasize that Ricoeur's book is not simply derivative from the work of his predecessors. Ricoeur

develops his own original methodology in *Freedom and Nature*, which he calls a "diagnostics."

The diagnostic method embraces the view that philosophical reflection cannot and should not remain self-contained, instead, as Ricoeur continues to believe over the course of his career, it needs to be nourished by a robust engagement with discoveries in the sciences as well as with other ways of knowing. Ricoeur's diagnostic method rejects the alternatives of either a purely reflective approach that would study the will in a purely intellectual sense or a purely naturalistic approach that would reduce subjective experience to a causal explanation. Instead, when the subjective body (as experienced) and the objective body (as a thing) are put into a diagnostic relation, each of these aspects of bodily experience serves as an "indicator" pointing to the other aspect. "Any moment of the Cogito," as Ricoeur observes, "can serve as an indication of a moment of the object body—'movement,' 'secretion,' and so on—and each moment of the object body is an indication of a moment of the body belonging to a subject, whether of its overall affectivity or of some particular function." The key point here is that the diagnostic method challenges reductionism of any kind. Objective discourse about the physiology of the body can provide insight into subjective or "lived" experience, just as subjective discourse about the personal body allows us to discover something new about the objective body.

Ricoeur's diagnostic method could thus rightly be classified alongside other views that move away from the search for a "pure" phenomenology and instead seek to bring about a more robust dialogue with the sciences (Depraz 2014).[9] To be sure, one of the greatest challenges for philosophy, as Ricoeur would later say, is to remain in dialogue with the sciences, and *Freedom and Nature* is exemplary precisely with regard to its engagement with the empirical sciences of its time. Even when those scientific views have been surpassed today, this engagement itself can still retain significance for readers today. It contributes the valuable lesson that philosophy cannot and should not be a self-enclosed discourse but should proceed by way of an interdisciplinary engagement. The point, therefore, is not simply for readers to understand Ricoeur's actual use of the diagnostic method but to *practice* this method on their own, specifically by applying it to recent developments in the areas of cognitive science, neuroscience, and the life sciences that Ricoeur himself could not have anticipated.

KEY THEMES

The second part of this book addresses some of the central themes that are discussed in *Freedom and Nature*. In his eidetic description of the voluntary

will, Ricoeur divides every act of the will into the following three essential components: "I decide," "I move my body," and "I consent" (Ricoeur 1966: 6). Yet, Ricoeur recognizes that if a pure description of the will focused solely on its voluntary aspects, it would risk falling prey to the idealist tendencies of Husserl's thought.[10] Husserl's idealism is characterized by what Ricoeur calls the "threefold wish of absolute consciousness," which includes the following:

> The wish to be total, that is, without the finite perspective associated with a particular character; the wish to be transparent in the perfect correspondence of self-consciousness with intentional consciousness; the wish to be self-sufficient, without the necessity for being dependent on the nutritive and healing wisdom of the body which always precedes the will. (Ricoeur 1978: 9)

Ricoeur's passage to the body, then, signifies much more than an extension of transcendental phenomenology to the concrete, empirical world. It shows that meaning is not constituted solely in the realm of thought; there is also a bodily cogito that constitutes meaning through a physical interaction with the bodily kinestheses and perceptual systems. Through this passage to the concrete life of the bodily cogito, each of the three moments of voluntary action—deciding, moving, consenting—turns out to be accompanied by an involuntary dimension of receptivity and suffering (Ricoeur 1966: 483). The experience of the involuntary negates the desire of consciousness to be absolute by way of a bodily reality that contests this desire.

Michael A. Johnson examines how Ricoeur's "phenomenology of attention" in *Freedom and Nature* is shaped by the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary. Johnson carefully situates Ricoeur's account within two traditions of thought on attention: the Cartesian tradition and the Husserlian tradition. On the one hand, Ricoeur shows that the active shifting of attention points to the free spontaneity of the will, but on the other hand, the self's attention is summoned by an affectivity that attracts it. To conceptualize this interaction between activity and passivity, Ricoeur goes on to show that attention is a temporal process that brings about the formation of definite motives out of an initial, indefinite horizon of involuntary motivations.

Johann Michel uncovers what he calls "the decision paradox" in Ricoeur's phenomenology. As we have noted, Ricoeur describes "the voluntary" in terms of three essential features: deciding, moving, and consenting. Instead of being a temporal sequence of phases, they signify a phenomenological distinction between three levels of meaning. To say "I want" thus signifies at the same time "I decide," "I move my body," and "I consent." The decision paradox emerges as a result of this structure, insofar as decision contains not only the voluntary but also the involuntary. For example, I might decide to get a drink, but I do not choose to suffer from thirst. Every voluntary decision

thus points back to a background of involuntary motivations that I do not choose—my character, my unconscious, and my life. Motivation is thus not simply the product of my own free choice; instead it would seem that every "free" decision is faced with the fundamental paradox that it emerges from motives that are unchosen.

In evaluating Ricoeur's argument in favor of the purported reciprocity between the voluntary and involuntary, Eftichis Pirovolakis examines the second phase of the willing process—"moving"—and more precisely, the role of effort in making sense of bodily movement. Ricoeur develops his account of effort in response to the work of the nineteenth-century French philosopher, Maine de Biran (1766–1824). In the section "Limits of a Philosophy of Effort: Effort and Knowledge," Ricoeur expresses his own reservations with regard to Biran's philosophy of effort, and specifically its alleged voluntarism. Although subjective experience indicates that the effort to move is a voluntary act that I freely initiate, the act of moving, Ricoeur contends, also contains an involuntary aspect. Movement is only possible on the basis of a prior set of involuntary bodily capabilities that I do not choose, such as muscular coordination or the capacity to move. This leads Ricoeur to observe that the power to move "seems superimposed on a 'tacit' structure which assures the essential tasks of life before all reflection and effort" (Ricoeur 1966: 342). But by drawing from Derrida's discussion of Maine de Biran in *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, Pirovolakis suggests that Biran, contrary to what Ricoeur suggests, does not conceive effort as an efficient cause but as a phenomenal effect made possible by a prior interrelation between activity and passivity. As a result, Pirovolakis reopens the question as to whether it is Biran's or Ricoeur's account of effort which truly opens onto the reciprocal relation between the voluntary and the involuntary.

Grégori Jean contends that the twenty-five pages, situated in the middle of *Freedom and Nature*, on the question of habit are central to the argument of the work as a whole. The insights of Ravaisson's *On Habit*, as Ricoeur acknowledges, "are the source of many of the reflections in this book" (Ricoeur 1966: 286, note 93). For the phenomenon of habit constitutes a "crossroads" where "the most extreme poles of existence—willing and the body—existential possibility and natural reality—freedom and necessity—enter into communion" (Ricoeur 1966: 296). Habit marks a "return of freedom to nature," as Ravaisson says, and thus a return of the voluntary to the involuntary. And if habit is a mode of being for all acts, then it raises the question of the "naturalization of consciousness" that a philosophy of nature contributes to phenomenology. The unconscious aspect of bodily movement refers to certain automatic behaviors that are not transparent to the self. Over the course of time, for example, these habits become second nature to me to such an extent that I no longer even perceive them. After a long injury, for

instance, I am surprised that I have to relearn how to perform basic movements. Whereas Ricoeur's phenomenology of attention places a stronger emphasis on the active functioning of the ego, the involuntary dimension of the ego seems to prevail in the phenomenology of habit.

If Ricoeur's descriptions of the will throughout *Freedom and Nature* take great pains to show the interwovenness between the voluntary and the involuntary, it is nonetheless the case that Ricoeur acknowledges the existence of an "absolutely involuntary" that is comprised of three features: character, unconscious, and biological life. These three figures of the involuntary are examined in Part III of *Freedom and Nature* which is titled "Consenting: Consent and Necessity." They are arranged regressively such that each one points back to a deeper level of the involuntary and culminates with the unchosen circumstances of life. Scott Davidson provides an overview of Ricoeur's description of life as an ultimate dimension of the involuntary.

To live is to be alive (*Leben*) and also to have the lived experience of being alive (*Erleben*). The bodily cogito is one life but alive in both of these senses, as both a subject that experiences life and as a being that exists in life. To characterize this condition, Ricoeur borrows Maine de Biran's expression "homo simplex in vitalitate, duplex in humanitate," which suggests that the duality of the body, as both subject and object, is united in life. But the pathos of life emerges out of the failure to achieve unity between one's lived experiences and one's being in life; life is thus, according to Ricoeur, "a complex, unresolved situation, an unresolved problem whose terms are neither clear nor consistent" (Ricoeur 1966: 120). Yet, at the same time as life signifies an "unresolved problem," it is also presented as a task. The task of repairing this self-division of life and reunifying the self is perhaps what motivates Ricoeur's project of a "poetics of the will" that was designed as the third part of his proposed, but never completed, trilogy on the will.

NEW TRAJECTORIES

We have already noted that this engagement with *Freedom and Nature* seeks to "take the reader to the world of the author" as well as to "lead the author to the world of the reader." While the former task is accomplished by uncovering the historical influences and context that shape the work, the latter interpretive task must be carried out differently. Here it becomes a question of disclosing the interpretive possibilities that *Freedom and Nature* opens up. The third part of this book explores some of the ways in which Ricoeur's book speaks to the interests and concerns of readers today.

Natalie Depraz finds the resources in *Freedom and Nature* for an alternative route for phenomenological research, namely, an "experiential

phenomenology" of first person subjective experience. Her reflection is guided by three questions. The first raises a factual and historical question: Why did Ricoeur abandon his project of a descriptive phenomenology after publishing *Freedom and Nature* and why did his subsequent research move toward the problem of interpretation? The second is an epistemological and a methodological question: In what respect is Husserlian phenomenology a first person approach and how does Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will lead to an experiential phenomenology in the first person? The third question is heuristic: What criteria should be used in order to establish a phenomenological science that is descriptive and approaches experience in the first person? Drawing from the alliance of Ricoeur's descriptive phenomenology with empirical psychology, Depraz finds the resources to develop a new, first person methodology. In contrast with Husserl, here the expression "in the first person" is no longer general and nonspecific but is able to capture first person experience in its embodied singularity.

Geoffrey Dierckxsens proposes a new connection between Ricoeur's theory of cognition, as developed in *Freedom and Nature*, and recent discussions on the topic of embodied cognition, especially the variant known as enactivism. He claims that Ricoeur's conception of the mind-body relation fits within the theoretical framework of enactivism, inasmuch as Ricoeur understands this relation as an interaction and a "mixture" between the involuntary (bodily functions and needs) and the voluntary (creative adaption and consent). After establishing this parallel with the enactivist framework, Dierckxsens goes on to show that *Freedom and Nature*—and specifically its conception of the imagination—contributes something new to enactivism that invites a careful reconsideration of its framework. To be precise, Ricoeur's work suggests that the imagination plays a central role in the creative process by which one adapts oneself to the affordances of the physical world.

Adam J. Graves puts Ricoeur's account of freedom into dialogue with contemporary analytical accounts of free will, specifically with P. F. Strawson's account in *Freedom and Resentment*. Strawson and his followers seek to sidestep the metaphysical conundrums of freedom by explaining our ordinary practices of responsibility in light of *normative* rather than *metaphysical* facts about ourselves, facts about our ordinary interpersonal "reactive" attitudes, rather than the supposed properties of our wills. Between Ricoeur's eidetic analysis of the will in *Freedom and Nature* which is restricted to the description of *first person* subjectivity and the narrative analysis in *Oneself as Another* that situates the agent within a story "constructed in the *third person*" (Ricoeur 1992: 329), the Strawsonian moment emphasizes interpersonal attitudes expressed in the *second person*, as normative and "non-detached" evaluations of the actions of those with whom our lives are intimately connected. Yet, Graves argues that Ricoeur contributes to this normative

approach to agency by making explicit certain "narrative" assumptions that already operate within Strawson's core argument. By offering a hybrid "narrative-normative" theory, Ricoeur can help to circumvent the intractable metaphysical problems associated with freedom and responsibility, without forcing us to abandon entirely the pre-philosophical intuitions which seem to generate these problems in the first place.

Taken together, the studies that comprise this section on "New Trajectories" resonate with and amplify recent calls for the development of a "carnal hermeneutics" (Kearney and Treanor 2015). They highlight the fact that Ricoeur's approach to the will takes place from the perspective of the lived body. By establishing the lived body as the nodal point between subjectively oriented discourse and objectively oriented discourse, *Freedom and Nature* opens up a surplus of meaning within bodily experience. This means that a hermeneutic is needed that goes beyond the interpretation of texts and directly engages the overflowing meaning of bodily experience and agency. *Freedom and Nature* is, beyond any measure of doubt, a rich source of material for future explorations of a carnal hermeneutics.[11]

THE EXERGUE AS A POETICS OF THE WILL

Freedom and Nature was designed as the first installment of a three part study of the will, and we have already indicated that Ricoeur would ultimately abandon this book a decade later, leaving its third part unwritten. This "poetics of the will" promised to address the topic of transcendence and to examine the creative function of the will. Even though Ricoeur's poetics of the will was never completed, some clues about it can be found nonetheless in *Freedom and Nature.* These clues are discernible because Ricoeur himself is not always consistent in maintaining the brackets of his pure description of the will. These brackets, especially in his treatment of the topic of consent, are occasionally lifted, giving way to a much more poetic and speculative discourse about the will. In its closing pages, together with the opening exergue, *Freedom and Nature* draws from the poetic word rather than philosophical reason, and specifically, the words of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke.[12]

Building on a suggestion offered by Jean Greisch, I want to close this Introduction with a brief analysis of the book's exergue in order to show how it adds a speculative layer of meaning to the eidetic description that is practiced elsewhere in the book. The exergue cites Sonnet 11 from Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*. While Ricoeur does cite Rilke several times in the context of his discussion of consent, it is quite surprising and unfortunate that he never returns to discuss this particular sonnet. As a result, the question

remains open as to why Ricoeur mentions it here and what it signifies for the book as a whole.

Rilke's sonnet, I would suggest, can be interpreted as an image that represents Ricoeur's understanding of the relation between the voluntary and the involuntary. The poet looks to the heavenly skies above and invites us to imagine a constellation named "the rider." This figure actually turns out to be comprised of two parts in the sense that it includes the horseman as well as his horse. The duality of this figure, accordingly, could be taken as an indication of the duality of the human being who is comprised of a voluntary as well as an involuntary dimension.

Adding to this correlation, the second strophe of Rilke's poem depicts the human condition through an analogy with the rider who climbs into the saddle. To despair that the human being lacks freedom or an influence over the world would be to grant too little influence to the human will. The rider is not simply carried along by the horse but rather uses his body to guide the horse along the desired path. By exerting pressure through his legs in the stirrups and his hands on the reigns, the rider is able to produce a common accord that unites the two along their journey. This accord is indicated in Rilke's lines: "Track and turning. Yet at a touch, understanding. New open spaces. And the two are one."

But the reality of this harmonious unity can be called into question, as Rilke does at the beginning of the third strophe in asking, "But *are* they?" This question reminds us that any purported unity between the rider and horse is only a provisional unity that lasts during the journey. For, at its end, the two ultimately part ways and go down different paths: "Already table and pasture utterly divide them." The unity between the rider and the horse is broken up by their different ways of feeding: the table for the rider and the pasture for the horse. And this is why the starry constellation of the rider can be deceptive, if it is taken to depict an eternal and unchanging bond between the rider and the horse. Their unity is only temporary and fleeting, broken up by the differences between their lived experiences. And the same can be said, by analogy, about the human experience of the unity of the voluntary and the involuntary.

The human being, like the rider, is free but with a freedom that is "human, only human," as Ricoeur says in the "Conclusion" (Ricoeur 1966: 482; cf. Ricoeur 1974). Such a freedom cannot escape from its opposition and struggle with the involuntary. Bound to the involuntary, human freedom is not an absolute freedom from the involuntary, nor does it allow for any eternal unity between the voluntary and the involuntary. Instead, human freedom is "only human," which is to say that it is temporary and fleeting (Schweiker 2006). But we should not let unrealistic expectations, which stem from the desire to be more than human or perhaps also sometimes less than human, be a cause

of despair. For even if the unity of freedom and necessity is only provisional, this is already an accomplishment that we should be able, in Rilke's words, to "be glad a while to believe the figure. That's enough." This affirmation of life, in which the free will is able to embrace necessity, is the speculative message of *Freedom and Nature*, a halo of meaning surrounding the descriptive project that is the primary focus of the book. This affirmation of the goodness of human freedom and of the world is, I believe, what Ricoeur had envisioned for his poetics of the will.

NOTES

1. An excellent example of this approach is provided in fact by Ricoeur's own "Intellectual Autobiography" (Ricoeur 1995).

2. It is worth noting that Erazim Kohák's English translation of the work takes some liberty with regard to the original French title, which is *Philosophie de la volonté: Le Volontaire et le Involontaire* (*Philosophy of the Will: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*). Originally published by Aubier, the first French edition of the work appeared in 1950 and was later reprinted in 1988. In 2009, Editions Points published a French paperback edition of the work which includes an excellent preface written by Ricoeur's colleague and friend, Jean Greisch.

3. While *Freedom and Nature* is identified as his first "original" work, it is worth noting that Ricoeur did publish a couple of books beforehand. With Mikel Dufrenne, he published *Karl Jaspers et la philosophie de l'éxistence* (1947), and in 1948, he published *Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers: Philosophie du mystère et philosophie du paradoxe*.

4. As will be explained in more detail later, *Freedom and Nature* was followed a decade afterwards by the books *Fallible Man* and *The Symbolism of Evil.* These works would remove the neutralizing brackets under which *Freedom and Nature* operates and accordingly would allow for a discussion of the bad will.

5. Among them, several noteworthy contributions are Reagan (1968); Gerhart (1976); Rasmussen (2010); Fiasse (2014). In addition, there are several contributions included in Frey (2015).

6. An extended version of Ricoeur's presentation was published in *Studia Phaenomenologica* XIII (2013): 21–50.

7. The details of this period of Ricoeur's life are chronicled wonderfully in Reagan 1996.

8. In this respect, Ricoeur's approach stands in proximity with several of his lesser-known German predecessors (Pfänder 1967 [1900]; Schapp 1910).

9. It would require a separate and careful treatment to situate Ricoeur's own position within the context of recent attempts to "naturalize phenomenology" and to "phenomenologize nature." Although those discussions have mostly operated without reference to Ricoeur, my own sense is that Ricoeur could contribute a useful mediation of this dispute (for example, see Petito et al. 2000; Zahavi 2010).

10. For a detailed discussion of Ricoeur's critique of Husserl, see Davidson (2013).

11. In a recent essay, Kearney has drawn from the resources of Ricoeur's diagnostic method and has applied this method directly to an understanding of the various aspects of carnal experience (in Davidson and Vallée 2016).

12. To be precise, Ricoeur's bibliography alludes specifically to Rilke's "Sonnets to Orpheus" and *Duino Elegies*.

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Part I

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

Chapter 1

Ricoeur and Merleau-Ponty

From Perception to Action

Marc-Antoine Vallée

In his "Intellectual Autobiography," Ricoeur says that the intention behind *Freedom and Nature* was to write something about practical life that could be the equivalent of what Merleau-Ponty had done with perception in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). The aim of this chapter is to clarify the passage that Ricoeur makes from a phenomenology centered on perception to a phenomenology oriented around will and action. I want to show that this change in perspective requires a broadening of our primary understanding of intentionality in order to account adequately for the specific target of the action, where a will passes through the body in the effort to complete a project. The challenge of this task, from a phenomenological point of view, is to give an accurate description of nonrepresentative consciousness as a driving force trying to act organically in a world appearing as a field of action. On this path, Ricoeur crosses several central issues of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis of the body and of human behavior. I will emphasize three major points: (1) Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will extends Merleau-Ponty's effort to overcome the aporias of Cartesian dualism with the description of an incarnate cogito; (2) the passage from a phenomenology of perception to a phenomenology of the will forces Ricoeur to reconsider the notion of intentionality and our being-in-the-world from the perspective of an acting cogito; and (3) Ricoeur shares with Merleau-Ponty a refusal of Sartre's theory of absolute freedom and instead tries to describe a finite and situated freedom.

A COMMON PATH AND A COMMON GOAL

There is no doubt that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology left a strong impression on Ricoeur, but it would be a mistake to pretend that Merleau-Ponty was

the only influence on Ricoeur at the time of *Freedom and Nature*. As shown by the different contributions to this book, *Freedom and Nature* and, more generally, the project of a phenomenology of the will were developed at the crossroads of many philosophical influences, including Edmund Husserl, Gabriel Marcel, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean Nabert, Karl Jaspers, and others. To understand the importance of Merleau-Ponty in this constellation, we need to take into account the philosophical context in France during the 1940s. At the time, Sartre was clearly dominating the intellectual scene with his prolific work (novels, dramas, literary criticism, philosophical essays, etc.) and his political engagement in many debates. He was more specifically leading the philosophical discussion with his masterpiece *Being and Nothingness* (1943). But the fact is that Ricoeur, who was closely related to Gabriel Marcel, had no affinity with Sartre's phenomenological ontology. As he himself said, "Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* produced in me only a distant admiration, but no conviction" (1995: 11). By contrast, Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) was for him "a thrilling discovery" (1995: 11) in the years after the war. Ricoeur was fascinated to find at the same time in this book an unorthodox interpretation of the phenomenological reduction developed by Husserl, a well-informed philosophical dialogue with specific research in the human sciences and an original analysis of the lived body in consonance with Marcel's work. This is exactly the same path that Ricoeur followed in *Freedom and Nature*, which was dedicated to Marcel, based on an original use of Husserl's method of eidetic reduction and privileging a "method . . . most receptive with respect to scientific psychology" (1966: 13). As Ricoeur recalls it:

> While extending and enlarging Husserlian eidetic analysis, I also hoped, not without a certain naivety, to provide a counterpart in the practical sphere to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. (1995: 11)

Ricoeur shares Merleau-Ponty's objective to overcome the aporias of Cartesian dualism by beginning with an embodied cogito described from a phenomenological and existential point of view. This was already the stated goal of Merleau-Ponty's first book, *The Structure of Behavior* (1942), in which he showed the difficulties of all the classical solutions to the mind-body problem and thereby the necessity of another approach. The mind-body problem led Merleau-Ponty to raise the question of perception. As he put it:

> Every theory of perception tries to surmount a well-known contradiction; on the one hand, consciousness is a function of the body—thus it is an "internal" event dependent upon certain external events; on the other hand, these external events themselves are known only by consciousness. In another language, consciousness appears on the one hand to be part of the world and on the other to be co-extensive with the world. (1963: 215)

This opposition has inspired two opposed philosophical responses: the realist tries to explain our perception starting from causal chains in the outside world, while the idealist reduces perception to a proto-science of the world by our consciousness. According to Merleau-Ponty, it is only by changing our perspective, by adopting a phenomenological approach "to return to perception as to a type of original experience in which the real world is constituted in its specificity" (1963: 220) that we can overcome the realist-idealist debate and the contradiction at the root of it. But more fundamentally, this implies escaping from the aporias of Cartesian dualism and the mind-body problem.

The *Phenomenology of Perception* was precisely the development of this new approach beyond Descartes's dualism and the modern oppositions between materialism and spiritualism, empiricism and rationalism, or realism and idealism. The analysis of the phenomenon of perception and the critical discussion of several psychological experiments allowed Merleau-Ponty to shed light on the experience of the lived body and on the close relationship of this body with the world. Through this approach, Merleau-Ponty tries to break free from Descartes's solipsistic hypothesis of a pure acosmic consciousness contemplating mental representations. As he shows, this hypothesis rests on extremely problematic presuppositions regarding consciousness, perception, and the world. From a phenomenological point of view, the aim is not anymore to identify criteria ensuring that we truly have access to the world, but to describe how we perceive the world: "We must not, therefore, wonder whether we really perceive a world, we must instead say: the world is what we perceive" (1962: xvi). Against Cartesian assumptions, then, his phenomenological analyses demonstrate that any dissociation of our mind from our body, or of our body from the world, is a construction derived from the more original situation of being-in-the-world as an incarnate cogito:

> Insofar as, when I reflect on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity is merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world. The ontological world and body which we find at the core of the subject are not the world or body as idea, but on the one hand the world itself contracted into a comprehensive grasp, and on the other the body itself as a knowing-body. (1962: 408)

It is important to understand that, according to Merleau-Ponty, this close relationship between my body and the world remains prior to any realist interpretation of an already constituted world in itself and more fundamental than any empiricist theory of the causal interaction between my body and the physical world. The world is described first of all as a field of perception, prior to any

theoretical stance, that gradually takes shape through the reciprocal interactions between my body and the things I perceived.

To admit such a fundamental relationship implies a renunciation of the modern ideal of a perfect self-positing of subjectivity, which is still present in the transcendental ego of the Husserlian phenomenology. But this is the price to pay if we want to recover what Ricoeur calls the "Cogito's complete experience" (1966: 8), which means to retrieve an incarnate cogito, an embodied existence always already in touch with the world. As Ricoeur explains,

> In reality, the extension of the Cogito to include the personal body requires more than a change of method: more radically, the Ego must renounce the covert claim of all consciousness, must abandon its wish to posit itself, so that it can receive a nourishing and inspiring spontaneity which breaks the sterile circle that the self forms with itself. (1966: 14, tr. mod)

This incarnate cogito is neither a pure spontaneity nor a total passivity, but a subjectivity in tension between the voluntary and the involuntary, or, as we will see, a freedom that must always deal with necessity. The specificity of this incarnate cogito cannot be grasped by the Sartrean distinction (taken from Hegel) between a being-in-itself and a being-for-itself, because it is neither a pure being-for-itself, a pure consciousness, nor a pure being-in-itself, an object in the world; and the incarnate cogito is not the combination of these two forms of being, either.

Following Gabriel Marcel, rather than Sartre, Ricoeur goes back to the "mystery" of an embodied existence. This means digging below the subject-object opposition, or the opposition of being-for-itself to a being-in-itself, in order to reach a more fundamental level of experience where we discover ourselves as an incarnate existence prior to any theoretical explanation. As Ricoeur puts it:

> The bond which in fact joins willing to its body requires a type of attention other than an intellectual attention to structures. It requires that I participate actively in *my incarnation as a mystery*. I need to pass from objectivity to existence. (1966: 14, Ricoeur's emphasis)

In this perspective, my body is what I cannot put at a distance from myself and consider purely as an objet without affecting the understanding of my incarnate mode of existence and even losing sight of what needs to be described. And so, the main goal is less to solve the mind-body problem from a theoretical standpoint than to overcome the opposition between spiritualism and materialism in order to shed light on the ontological mystery of our embodied existence. This is exactly what Ricoeur has found in the phenomenological descriptions of Merleau-Ponty.

FROM PERCEPTION TO ACTION

Even if Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* was a major step in the endeavor to rediscover an integral cogito, further steps were still needed. As underscored by Ricoeur, with Merleau-Ponty "the description of perception became the touchstone for the true human condition" (Ricoeur 2009: 18) and "perception appeared as the model of all human operations" (Ricoeur 2009: 19). The human being is essentially described as an incarnate being immersed in a phenomenal field of perceptions. But can perception serve as the most important key to explore the human condition? The least we can say is that the embodied cogito does not only perceive the world but also acts in it. This is something that Merleau-Ponty himself developed in his political writings after World War II. But it is on a more fundamental level that Ricoeur centered his own reflection on the practical dimension of the incarnate subject. His project was to maintain a phenomenological method of description on a fundamental level, but to shift its focus from perception to the will and action.

But how can one proceed to achieve this shift of emphasis from perception to action? What is implied by focusing on the will instead of perception? It implies, above all, as we will see, a reconsideration of the phenomenological notion of intentionality in order to provide a more satisfying account of the intentionality at work in action. An incarnate cogito does not only have the capacity to perceive what is in the world, but also is able to make something happen or to react to what is going on. This capacity directly involves the body as well as a form of intentionality closely related to the aptitudes of our lived body. Our action is oriented by our will, by what we aim to realize, by the project we try to carry out. And our project is premeditated in accordance with our capacities. As Ricoeur explains:

> Moving and deciding can thus be distinguished only in abstraction: the project anticipates the action and the action tests the project. This means that the will actually decides about itself only when it changes its body and through it the world. If I have not done anything, then I have not yet fully willed. (Ricoeur 1966: 202)

This means that the complete cogito is engaged from the beginning in the elaboration of the project and not only afterwards in acting to achieve it. This is a crucial step, but strangely it is a step that is rarely highlighted by scholars of Ricoeur's phenomenology. According to Ricoeur himself, the "central idea," the "core of any meditation on the will" is the thesis that "*the genesis of our projects is only one moment in the unity of the soul and the body*" (Ricoeur 1966: 202; Ricoeur's emphasis). Just as Merleau-Ponty pointed

out that it was impossible to give a satisfying account of the phenomenon of perception by starting with a Cartesian cogito, a pure acosmic spirit, and that every perception always already presupposed an incarnated cogito immersed in the world, Ricoeur is showing that the same should be said about the phenomenon of the will. Working out a project always already presupposes an embodied agent *in medias res*, having a certain understanding of his or her own forces, capacities, and possibilities.

Ricoeur's discussion of our bodily spontaneity, which is analyzed closely in the Part II of *Freedom and Nature*, is of great importance for understanding Ricoeur's relation to Merleau-Ponty's work. Following what Merleau-Ponty had done in *The Structure of Behavior*, Ricoeur relies on some results of Gestalt psychology, especially on Weizsacker, Goldstein and Koffka and their critique of reflex theory. Like Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur emphasizes the impossibility of explaining human behavior by considering the reflex as the most basic form of human behavior. Instead, he tries to bring out a fundamental bodily spontaneity that is at the root of human behavior, by underlining the difference between reflexes and what he calls "preformed skills" or "preformed know-how" (*savoir-faire préformés*). Reflexes are conceived by Ricoeur as stereotypical gestures or movements, easily isolable and essentially incoercible, and so absolutely involuntary. Here Ricoeur has in mind, among other examples, contractions and secretions of the body, some forms of protection (e.g., eyes blinking), defense (e.g., reflexes related to pain), and appropriation (e.g., suction, salivation). By contrast, preformed skills designate primitive gestures or movements related to perceptions of things in the world and prior to any conscious learning. These are gestures that we typically encounter when we observe babies or very young children, for example in the coordination of the head, the eyes and the hand, or in the primitive forms of manipulation, locomotion, or exploration. We find here the most original connections between the incarnate agent and the world, that is to say the most primitive forms of our being-in-the-world: "As soon as the world presents itself to me, I know how to do something with my body, without knowing either my body or the world" (Ricoeur 1966: 233). One could also say, in turn, that as soon as I can do something with my body, the world presents itself to me in different aspects.

This fundamental relation of the human body with the world, which is evident in the behaviors based on these preformed skills, is of the utmost importance for our discussion since it allows a linkage of the phenomena of perception and action. When these skills are preformed, they are of the order of the involuntary but they are not absolutely involuntary like in an uncontrollable reflex. They are rather a relative involuntary because they are associated with a will which unfolds itself in action. As Ricoeur explains:

> The reflex is in me but apart from me. The skill (*savoir-faire*) for its part constitutes a figure of the involuntary in the very special sense that the most basic connections between perception and movement have never been willed or learned. … Here then, presented in the form of the instrumental or better the structural involuntary, we find the most primitive connection between the perceiving Cogito and the acting Cogito. (Ricoeur 1966: 242)

Indeed, the preformed skills constitute the junction of perception and action, because gestures are prompted by certain perceptions, and actions enable the perceptual exploration and discovery of the world. It is on the basis of this primitive relation that conscious and voluntary learning can take place:

> The fact that I know how to perform certain elementary gestures without having learned them is also the condition of all voluntary learning. I cannot learn everything; I cannot learn for the first time to connect a movement to my perception. This is the first given, the initial foundation granted by nature to the will; and already the union of the "I can" and the "I perceive" occurs systematically in these internal structures that the impulse of needs, passions, and voluntary intentions are able to set in motion. (Ricoeur 1966: 244)

It is through this structure that action in the world is inextricably linked to some apprehension or knowledge of this world and, conversely, that perception or knowledge of the world presupposes a certain bodily disposition or action. Or, as Ricoeur says, "It is on the level of these pre-formed skills (savoir-faire) that the action of the body is inserted (inviscérée) into the knowledge of the world" (Ricoeur 1966: 248, tr. mod.). But human behavior, relying on these preformed and involuntary skills, is nevertheless animated by a will with a specific intentionality that differs from a purely perceptual one.

THE INTENTIONALITY OF ACTING

Ricoeur's phenomenological analysis of the will aims to describe the specificity of the intentionality of acting that animates the incarnate cogito. If, from a phenomenological point of view, all consciousness is directed toward something, then what kind of intentionality is at work when the subject is acting? Clearly, it cannot be understood as a theoretical intentionality in which a subject is trying to shed light on an object of thought. It is, instead, a practical intentionality related to a subjectivity understood as a driving force in the world. As Ricoeur puts it:

> Thought as a whole, including bodily existence, is not only light but also force. The power of producing events in the world is a kind of intentional relation to things and to the world. (Ricoeur 1966: 207)

This intentional relation is not a form of representational thinking, nor even a form of practical representation implied in the conception of a project. It is a nonrepresentative consciousness of the action that is likely to complete the project: "It is a consciousness which is an action, a consciousness which presents itself as matter, a change in the world through a change in my body" (Ricoeur 1966: 209). As we have seen, this consciousness involves the lived body and its capacity to intervene in the world. However, it is important to note that in the effort to achieve an action or a project, consciousness is usually not focused on the movements of the body itself, but on the completion of the task. Instead of being what commands attention, the body, with his strength and abilities, is what is mobilized in order to achieve something.

Ricoeur's original contribution to this phenomenological discussion consists of thinking about this specific relation of the incarnate agent to the things in the world as a relation between "organ" and "pragma." As strength and a set of skills mobilized for the sake of an end, the body is described by Ricoeur as an "organ" that is guided by the will of the agent. The "pragma" designates the intentional correlate of the act, that is to say the transformation that the agent is trying to introduce in the world. The "pragma" is the complete answer to the question "what are you doing?" One cannot answer this question, in good faith, by simply describing the movements of one's body, or by talking about fragmentary aspects of one's action, but only by saying what one is essentially trying to achieve with his or her body through a series of actions. The "pragma" thus represents what gives a particular aim and a certain unity to our actions. For example, if someone ask me "what are you doing?" and my answer is only something like "I am stretching my arm" or "I am taking the flour to the pantry," my interlocutor will legitimately repeat the question until I finally tell him or her that I am preparing a birthday cake, or something like that. In other words, the pragma designates what my action is aiming at as the achievement of my project in the world. Thus the pragma is what is likely to put an end to my effort since the objective is completed. My interlocutor, who questions the meaning of my actions and ask me about it, seeks precisely to grasp the pragma that directs all my efforts and gives a meaning to all of my actions in a particular situation.

The consequence of this analysis is that a phenomenology of the will like that of Ricoeur reveals a very different dimension of the world from what was brought out by a phenomenology of perception like that of Merleau-Ponty. Indeed, by focusing the analysis on the specificity of the intentionality at work in acting, the world no longer appears simply as a perceptual field to explore, much less as a spectacle before our eyes, but as a field of action where we intervene to transform the course of things or solve problems. From this point of view, being-in-the-world means first and foremost to be immersed in different situations in which we encounter practical problems we

have to solve by our actions or opportunities to seize in order to introduce a change in the world. As Ricoeur explains:

> In this way action stretches between the "I" as willing and the world as a field of action. Action is an aspect of the world itself. A definite interpretation is already included implicitly in every project: I am in a world in which there is something to be done. I have embarked into it in order to act in it. It is the essence of all situations which affect me to pose a question to my activity. (Ricoeur 1966: 212)

The world is therefore the horizon in which my act unfolds; the world is both "problem and a task" (ibid.), it is a "matter to be worked out" (ibid.). Far from being a neutral space, the world is the place where we encounter challenges and difficulties, suffer from diseases, face resistances, or things that go against our will. It is also a place to work, play, create, and make commitments. In short, the world is the place where we exercise our freedom as an acting and suffering being, in the tension between the voluntary and involuntary.

FREEDOM AND FINITUDE

We have seen that the specificity of the incarnate cogito described by Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur cannot be grasped by the Sartrean distinction between a being-in-itself and a being-for-itself. An incarnate cogito is neither a pure being-for-itself, a pure consciousness, nor a pure being-in-itself, an object in the world; and it is not the combination of these two forms of being, either. Any attempt to understand this embodied consciousness with this abstract distinction is doomed to failure. This is especially true with respect to the attempt to understand human freedom. It leaves only two possibilities: (1) as a being-in-itself, a thing (a body) among other things, the human being has no liberty at all and (2) as a being-for-itself, a consciousness among other consciousnesses, the human being is absolutely free. But neither of these options really corresponds to the human condition. Thus, in order to say something truthful about human freedom, we need to go back to the phenomenon itself and describe it more accurately. As Ricoeur puts it, "Let us not oppose speculative objections to Sartre but, if possible, propose a better description. Later, we may have to come back to the question concerning the presuppositions which interfere with his description and prevent it from giving its true meaning" (Ricoeur 2007: 320–321). This is precisely what Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur will do. Both refusing Sartre's theory of absolute freedom, they depict a finite and situated freedom, "an only human freedom" (Ricoeur 1966: 482), relying on what has been established regarding the incarnate cogito.

Merleau-Ponty's rejection of Sartre's theory of absolute freedom and, more generally, his attempt to overcome the aporias of the classical theories of liberty leave no room for doubt. In the last pages of *The Phenomenology of Perception*, he writes:

> Our freedom, it is said, is either total or non-existent. This dilemma belongs to objective thought and its stable-companion, analytical reflection. If indeed we place ourselves in being, it must necessarily be the case that our actions must have their origin outside us, and if we revert to constituting consciousness, they must originate within. But we have learnt precisely to recognize the order of phenomena. We are involved in the world and with others in an inextricable tangle. The idea of situation rules out absolute freedom at the source of our commitments, and equally, indeed, at their terminus. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 454)

This means that our freedom is neither a pure beginning, an initiative presupposing absolutely nothing, nor a simple form of nothingness freeing ourselves from any determination. On the contrary, our freedom is always building on something already given. Our initiatives always take form in a concrete situation. Without being the result of inescapable determinism, our choices are motivated by different sources of meaning. The opportunities available to us are relative to our physiological, psychological, sociological, historical conditions. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

> What then is freedom? To be born is both to be born of the world and to be born into the world. The world is already constituted, but also never completely constituted; in the first case we are acted upon, in the second we are open to an infinite number of possibilities. But this analysis is still abstract, for we exist in both ways *at once.* There is, therefore, never determinism and never absolute choice, I am never a thing and never a bare consciousness. In fact, even our own pieces of initiative, even the situations which we have chosen, bear us on, once they have been entered upon by virtue of a state rather than an act. The generality of the "role" and of the situation comes to the aid of decision, and in this exchange between the situation and the person who takes it up, it is impossible to determine precisely the "share contributed by the situation" and the "share contributed by freedom. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 453)

It is only from this correlation between the embodied subject and the world, from this intertwining of particular choices and concrete situations, that we can expect to understand something about human freedom. It implies that our freedom never dominates everything that exists, as a pure consciousness observing the world, but is always already engaged in concrete situations in which different possibilities take form and make sense with respect to our objectives. It also means that we cannot, like Sartre, understand freedom

essentially as a form of nihilation (*néantisation*), isolating ourselves from the others and separating ourselves from our past. Fundamentally, freedom is neither "this possibility which human reality has to secrete a nothingness that isolates it" (Sartre 1956: 59), nor "the human being putting his past out of play by secreting his own nothingness" (Sartre 1956: 64). It is a capacity to take initiatives implying a particular form of reliance on our situation with others in a given context:

> Our freedom does not destroy our situation, but gears itself to it: as long as we are alive, our situation is open, which implies both that it calls up privileged modes of resolution and thereby also unable by itself to bring about any of them. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 442; tr. mod.)

There is, quite obviously, a significant continuity between Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis of our freedom and the concluding remarks of *Freedom and Nature*. Ricoeur's reflection on the tension between the voluntary and the involuntary, revealed by the previous analyses of the phenomena of deciding and acting, culminates in the tension between freedom and necessity in which the human being is confronted with his or her finitude. The desire for absolute freedom comes up against the involuntary limitations of our finite being, by first provoking a revolt against our condition. It takes the form of a refusal of the limitations imposed by our character, our unconscious, and our biological life. In the eyes of Ricoeur, modern idealism (especially Fichte) perfectly represents this unbounded desire to be a pure consciousness, embracing everything, transparent to itself and being-by-itself (see the section "Freedom's Response: Refusal" in Ricoeur 1966: 463–466). The inevitable failure of this ambition is, according to Ricoeur, the source of what he calls the "Black existentialism" of thinkers like Sartre and Camus:

> "Black existentialism" is perhaps only a disappointed idealism and the suffering of a consciousness which thought itself divine and which becomes aware of itself as fallen. Thus the irritated and in some sense maddened refusal assumes the posture of defiance and scorn. In the eyes of defiance, the human condition become absurd; in the eyes of scorn, it becomes vile and base. (Ricoeur 1966: 466)

Against the drift toward the thesis of the radical absurdity of existence, Ricoeur tries to open another path, by operating a movement from refusal to consent. Here he is mostly inspired once again by Gabriel Marcel but also rejoins Merleau-Ponty's description of a concrete and situated freedom. In order to do so, Ricoeur conceives a more dialectical articulation between the voluntary and the involuntary, in which we voluntarily consent (at least

partly) to the involuntary by assuming our condition as a finite being. To consent means to accept to go beyond our initial refusal of our condition and to assume, as best we can, our concrete existence. But this can't be done if we don't abandon our unachievable wish for an absolute freedom and if we stay imprisoned, like Sartre, in a false dilemma between existential freedom as nihilation (being-for-itself) and the serfdom of being fixed by a determinate essence (being-in-itself). As Ricoeur explains, "The reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary illustrates the specifically human modality of freedom. Human freedom is a dependent independence, a receptive initiative" (Ricoeur 1967: 228). And for this reason, "Freedom is not a pure act; it is, in each of its moments, activity and receptivity. It constitutes itself by receiving what it does not produce: values, capacities, and pure nature. In this respect, our freedom is *only* human" (Ricoeur 1966: 484). If the despair over the meaning of life is merely the counterpart of an aspiration for absolute freedom (i.e., the modern wish to be an absolute being after the "death of God"), then a third way can be found only by starting from this interlacing of the voluntary and the involuntary constitutive of our finite but nonetheless free being (i.e., by admitting and accepting not being God). But this is exactly the point where Ricoeur distances himself from Merleau-Ponty.

If the phenomenological description of this situated freedom can still rely on Merleau-Ponty's work, Ricoeur presents a different picture regarding the existential orientation of this reflection on human freedom. Indeed, from the moment when Ricoeur begins to remove the brackets of a purely phenomenological analysis in order to confront the question of evil, Merleau-Ponty is no longer his interlocutor. Instead his interlocutors become Gabriel Marcel and Karl Jaspers. Ricoeur's thesis is that the consent to the involuntary, as an inevitable counterpart of the voluntary, reaches an insurmountable limit in the face of unjustifiable evil and tragic suffering. As he observes, "Perhaps no one can follow consent to the end. Evil is the scandal which forever separates consent from cruel necessity" (Ricoeur 1966: 480, tr. mod.). In this sense, voluntary consent is not a perfect solution, and it can only go so far. Hope in a divine transcendence can venture beyond this limit. Only this hope can sustain voluntary consent by saying that "the world is not the final home (*la patrie definitive*) of freedom" (Ricoeur 1966: 480). In this there is the hope for a perfect reconciliation between the voluntary and the involuntary, between freedom and nature.

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Chapter 2

Act, Sign and Objectivity

Jean Nabert's Influence on the Ricoeurian Phenomenology of the Will

Jean-Luc Amalric

In reading Ricoeur's three-volume *Philosophy of the Will* for the first time, one might believe that it is essentially in *Fallible Man*—a work which is explicitly dedicated to Jean Nabert and follows the style of French reflexive philosophy—that Nabert's decisive influence on Ricoeur is discernible. Not only does Nabert's concept of the "originary affirmation" appear in the "Conclusion" of *Fallible Man*, which is an eloquent illustration of that influence, but also in the work's "Preface," Ricoeur insists on the proximity between his own reflection on evil and Nabert's *Essay on Evil* which was published in 1955 (i.e., five years after the original publication of *Freedom and Nature* and five years before the publication of *Fallible Man* and *The Symbolism of Evil*).

This chapter will aim to show that, in spite of the few explicit references in *Freedom and Nature* to Nabert's *Elements for an Ethics* and *The Inner Experience of Freedom*, Nabert's conception of the relationship between act and sign already plays a central role in the development of Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will. In my view, the main aim of *Freedom and Nature* is to pass from the abstract point of view of an eidetics of the will to the concrete point of view of the lived experience of our incarnate will, and this passage itself already falls within the scope of a reflexive philosophy of the act. As this chapter will show, the central thematic of *Freedom and Nature* as well as its method depend on this philosophy of the act.

In the first stage of this reflection, we will delineate the outlines of Nabert's influence on *Freedom and Nature*, by showing how Nabert's reflexive philosophy reveals the *fundamental relationship between freedom and the fault*, which Ricoeur takes over from the point of view of his conception of human

freedom as well as from the point of view of the methodological architecture of the whole of the *Philosophy of the Will*. Then, in the second stage, we will analyze the central idea of the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary which governs the whole development of Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will. Here the hypothesis is that this reciprocity finds its full coherence and its reflexive rigor only in light of Nabert's conception of the relation between the act of existing and the signs through which it is objectified, and of the original theory of motivation that this entails. In the third and final stage, we will demonstrate that the specific phenomenological style of *Freedom and Nature* cannot be dissociated from a method of reflexive re-appropriation of our lived freedom, which is irreducible to a theoretical process but instead implies a specifically practical aim. While Ricoeur does not directly mention Nabert in speaking about the "semeiological" method that is brought into play in his phenomenology of the will, it nevertheless seems that this method—which aims to establish a close correlation between the involuntary that is objectively known by the empirical sciences, and the voluntary that is recovered on the subjective and phenomenological level of the "I will"—presupposes an "apprenticeship to signs" which cannot be understood without a positive theory of the objectification and the practical re-appropriation of our freedom.

FREEDOM AND THE FAULT: NABERT'S INFLUENCE ON THE RICOEURIAN PHILOSOPHY OF THE WILL

When thinking about Nabert's influence on Ricoeur's three-volume *Philosophy of the Will*, one might think that it is essentially limited to *Fallible Man*, that is to say to the first work of volume II of the *Philosophy of the Will*, entitled *Finitude and Culpability*. The second work of that volume II—*The Symbolism of Evil*—does not make any reference to Nabert, while *Freedom and Nature*, on which our attention will be focused, only includes six references to Nabert. In fact, it is in the "Preface" of *Fallible Man* that Ricoeur is the most explicit about his essential debt to Nabert's philosophy.

The reading hypothesis of the first stage of our reflection is that the "Preface" of *Fallible Man* (1960) does indeed mark a decisive turning point in the development of the *Philosophy of the Will*. On the one hand, it marks a return of Ricoeur's reflection to the results of *Freedom and Nature* (1950) and therefore he reuses a series of references of the *Elements for an Ethics*, which, as we shall see, were already made in the 1950 work. On the other hand, he is led to confer a fundamental importance to the Nabertian conception of freedom and to his reflexive method which was not made explicit in *Freedom and Nature*. In my view, the simultaneously retrospective and prospective

character of this "Preface" sheds important light on Nabert's earlier influence on *Freedom and Nature*.

Let me begin by citing a long passage from this "Preface," as a starting point for this reflection. After referring to Kant's *Essay On Radical Evil* as a work which expresses the idea of an *ethical vision of the world*—that is, a reflexive attempt to understand freedom and evil in relation to one another—Ricoeur writes:

> But the grandeur of this ethical vision is complete only when, in return, we realize its benefit for the understanding of freedom itself. Freedom that assumes the responsibility for evil is freedom that comes to a self-understanding fraught with meaning. Before suggesting the richness of this meditation, correlative to the preceding one, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the work of Jean Nabert. I found in his work the model of a reflection that is not content with illuminating the problem of evil by means of the doctrine of freedom, but constantly enlarges and deepens the doctrine of freedom under the sting of the evil it has incorporated within itself. (Ricoeur 1986: xlvii)

The main interest of this quotation resides in the fact that it provides two essential keys concerning Ricoeur's "indebtedness" to Nabert. First, there is the specifically reflexive conception of freedom developed throughout Nabert's work, which Ricoeur adopts as early as *Freedom and Nature*. Second, there are the methodological consequences of this reflexive conception of freedom for the complex architecture of the *Philosophy of the Will*, which links together phenomenological description, the reflexive method, and a hermeneutics of symbols and myths.

From the Fault to Freedom

As the "Preface" of *Fallible Man* clearly shows, Ricoeur finds in Nabert a reflexive comprehension of freedom which is totally opposed to a direct or intuitive comprehension. In other words, he finds the fundamental idea that we always become aware of our freedom in an indirect, retrospective manner. This awareness of freedom cannot be achieved without an effort of reflexive re-appropriation which necessarily implies the *consciousness of the fault* and the *confession of the fault*. It is thus only through the mediation of a reflection on the fault that our freedom can be recovered. There is an indissoluble prospective and retrospective movement that unites the two temporal ecstasies of the past and the future. In Nabert's *The Elements for an Ethic*, the negative aspect of the fault is entirely oriented around becoming aware of the "originary affirmation" which constitutes all our choices and all our particular actions. This notion of the *originary affirmation* defined by Nabert in Book II, and corresponding to his personal interpretation of the "thetic

judgment," as it is understood by Fichte in the *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge* (1794–1795) plays an absolutely central role in the *Elements for an Ethic*. It leads, first of all, to an understanding of the very task of philosophy, which is defined precisely as the task of re-appropriating the originary affirmation through the signs of its activity in the world or in history. Moreover, it turns this philosophy into an *ethics* in the Spinozistic sense of the word, which is to say that it becomes an exemplar of our desire to be.

Given that Ricoeur will employ this definition of philosophy from *Freud and Philosophy* (1965) to *The Conflict of Interpretations* (1969), it is important to emphasize the fact that, as early as the "Conclusion" of *Fallible Man*, the Nabertian conception of the *originary affirmation* is a central concept in the theoretical, practical, and affective analyses of his philosophical anthropology. Contrary to the conception of freedom only as "negation"—which Sartre sketches in the "Conclusions" of *The Imaginary* (1940) and fully develops in *Being and Nothingness* (1943)—Ricoeur thus finds in Nabert a model of freedom which is not essentially defined by negation, but which, to the contrary, is an *affirmative power* incarnated in the world.[1]

Now, if we turn to *Freedom and Nature*, we can notice the striking omnipresence of Nabert's thesis that the experience of the fault constitutes the most basic revelation of the affirmative originary power of our freedom. In fact, three out of the six direct references to the French reflexive philosopher concern this central theme. As early as the "General Introduction" of *Freedom and Nature*, Ricoeur already mentions Nabert's *Elements for an Ethic* (1943):

> As Nabert has recently shown, the fault is a privileged occasion for a reflection on the self's initiative. One who will act or who is in the process of acting does not voluntarily reflect on one's fundamental self; it is in memory and in particular in the retrospection of remorse that there suddenly appears, both at the center and outside of one's act, a self that could and should be other. It is the fault that "unbinds" the self beyond its actions. Thus in passing through one's fault, consciousness goes to its fundamental freedom. It is experienced in some sense transparently. (Ricoeur 1966: 28)

A little further in the eidetic description of decision (see the First Part, chapter 1), Ricoeur analyzes the sense of "making a decision" and the problem of the imputation of the self. There again he returns to Nabert's conception of the fault and freedom, remarking:

> At this stage we shall neglect the minor undertones of this consciousness wounded by itself; we shall forget the sting in the consciousness of fall and of indebtedness. An assurance irrupts in the heart of my affliction: the self is in its acts. As Nabert

> masterfully analysed it, awareness of the fault opens the limits of my act and shows me an evil self at the roots of an evil act. (Ricoeur 1966: 58)

In the following chapter—chapter 2 entitled "Duration and Attention"—Ricoeur then develops a critique of Bergson's irrationalist conception of freedom under the title "Attention and Deliberation: The False Dilemma of Intellectualism and Irrationalism," where the main argument is again directly inspired by Nabert. He writes:

> The experience of the fault, as Nabert has shown, does not belong to explanation but to the most primitive revelation of ourselves to which Bergson, incidentally, appeals. Retrospection does not invent a power which did not exist at the time of the act; it discovers it because after the fact it is no longer possible to hide it and to lie to oneself. The wasted or lost possibility arises before me as a living reproach: attention, *no longer preoccupied*, accuses me. (Ricoeur 1966: 163)

Given these three quotations from Nabert in *Freedom and Nature*, it becomes possible to outline the principles of an overall interpretation of Nabert's central influence on Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will. When Ricoeur refers to *Elements for an Ethic*—as is the case in the three passages we quote above[2]—it is at the same time in order to adopt an affirmative conception of freedom resulting from a reflexive and retrospective meditation of the fault, *and* to justify the methodological choices required by this indirect revelation of our freedom through the experience of the fault. As we shall see in our second section, the other two references to Nabert in *Freedom and Nature* do not refer to *Elements for an Ethics* but to *The Inner Experience of Freedom*—Nabert's first work which was published in 1924. These references concern the question of the relation between freedom and motives.

QUESTIONS OF METHOD

Beyond those two essential references—which entail nothing less than Ricoeur's conception of the primordial relationship between the voluntary and the involuntary, and between freedom and nature—this emphasis on the question of method provides the second decisive key for interpreting Ricoeur's debt to Nabert in *Freedom and Nature*. In my view, the general methodological gesture of the *Philosophy of the Will* is governed by the Nabertian conception of a reflexive, indirect access to freedom. At first sight, however, nothing would seem to be farther apart than the respective starting points of Nabert's *Elements for an Ethic* and Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature*. Nabert starts from *moral experience*, favoring the revealing character of the *negative experiences* of the fault, of failure, and of solitude, whereas

Ricoeur's phenomenology begins with an *eidetic description* of the essential structure of the will that is set apart from any *empirical description* of the will. Indeed, for Ricoeur, everything happens as if a direct reflection on the empirical will—that is to say on concrete, historical freedom as falling prey to passions and evil—is impossible, because the fault is so opaque, incomprehensible, and tragic. That is why his phenomenology of the will brackets the fault and Transcendence. By contrast, there is no trace whatsoever of such an abstraction in *Elements for an Ethics*, and Nabert never speaks about the necessity of an "epoché" of the fault or Transcendence.

That said, how would it be possible at all to support the idea that the Nabertian conception of freedom influences the methodological structure of the *Philosophy of the Will* in any way? To answer this question, it is necessary to distinguish between the *methodological starting point of the work*—an eidetic of the will developed under the abstraction of the fault and Transcendence—and its central *motivation*—or, the *sources of the lived experience* which have provoked and stimulated the whole work. In some way, it is Ricoeur himself who draws our attention to his close proximity with Nabert. Questioning himself about the experience of the fault, he asks, "Have we bracketed what is most important?" (Ricoeur 1966: 22). And he adds a little further, "This anteriority in principle of the pure description of freedom over the empirical description of the fault does not exclude the fact that there are some characteristics of this empirical description which have given rise to this elaboration of freedom" (Ricoeur 1966: 27–28).

These passages suggest that it is precisely because Ricoeur, like Nabert, sees in the experience of the fault the path to a privileged awareness of our freedom that he acknowledges this experience as the nucleus of the overall project of the *Philosophy of the Will*. In our view, it is only in adding that the "empirics" of the fault cannot be developed without a "mythics of innocence" that Ricoeur moves in fact away from Nabert. For, in the "General Introduction" of *Freedom and Nature*, this myth of innocence is supposed to motivate the imaginary experience that supports the eidetic description of the voluntary and the involuntary, and it is attached to an affirmation of Transcendence that can only be apprehended in the planned framework of a "Poetics of the Will." But Nabert's *Elements for an Ethics* never refers to the idea of Transcendence, nor do they mention a "mythics of innocence." This is where the transformation of Nabert's reflexive method into a hermeneutics of symbols will occur, and where the "graft of hermeneutics on phenomenology" in *The Symbolism of Evil* will take shape. But on this side of that properly hermeneutical moment, the general methodical gesture of the *Philosophy of the Will* remains guided by the Nabertian idea of a reflexive re-appropriation of freedom that is mediated by the experience of evil.

To conclude this first stage of reflection, we can now account for the difference between the discreet but insistent references to Nabert in *Freedom and Nature* and the central reference to Nabert is the "Preface" to *Fallible Man*. Our interpretive hypothesis is that it is the reading of Nabert's *Essay on Evil*, published in 1955—that is five years after the publication of *Freedom and Nature*—which profoundly altered Ricoeur's perception of his own relation to Nabert. To put it briefly, one might say that, in *Freedom and Nature*, the reference to *Elements for an Ethics* sheds light, as it were, on the "*telos*" of the reflexive and methodical gesture brought into play by the book. As we have seen, the limit to this proximity with Nabert is to be found in Ricoeur's reference to the myth of innocence and Transcendence, beyond the mere experience of the fault. Because the *Essay on Evil* questions the limits of an ethical vision of evil which attempts to understand evil entirely through freedom, Ricoeur interprets this radicalization of the reflexive method as a philosophical gesture which reveals a close relationship with the passage from phenomenology to hermeneutics that he intends to carry out in volume II of the *Philosophy of the Will*. At the same time, he realizes that reflexive philosophy is the only approach capable of offering a properly philosophical foundation to the whole project of the *Philosophy of the Will*.

If phenomenology is only the "threshold of philosophy"—insofar as its neutral description of the appearing is unable to pose the critical question of the being of the appearing—and if hermeneutics plunges into a historicity and cultural contingency in which the reflexivity of the philosophical project may come to be dissolved, then a philosophical anthropology should be elaborated in the style of French reflexive philosophy, which will provide a reflexive structure to host, support, and link up those different methodological directions.

As a result, it can be said that Nabert's influence is decisive in the elaboration of the *Philosophy of the Will*, since it leads Ricoeur to develop a "philosophical anthropology" which was neither planned nor announced in the "General Introduction" of *Freedom and Nature*. Not only does this philosophical anthropology constitute the reflexive basis of the *Philosophy of the Will*, but the later developments in Ricoeur's work also correspond to a continuation and a deepening of this approach. On this account, if Ricoeur's *Freud and Philosophy* can be considered a partial realization of the plan of an "empirics of the will," as announced in the "Preface" of *Fallible Man*, it is striking to note that it is the reflexive philosophy inspired by Nabert which in fact constitutes the philosophical starting point for a reading of, and critical dialogue with, Freud. In the same way, while Nabert's influence may seem more distant in *Oneself as Another*, it is nevertheless a fact that the whole work remains largely dependent on Nabert's philosophy in developing a reflexive method of indirect re-appropriation of the position and capacities of the self.[3]

THE RECIPROCITY OF THE VOLUNTARY AND THE INVOLUNTARY IN LIGHT OF THE NABERTIAN CONCEPTION OF THE ACT AND SIGN

We have just seen that the influence of Nabert's *Elements for an Ethics* on *Freedom and Nature* is decisive not only because Ricoeur takes over the Nabertian conception of the affirmative power of freedom—insofar as it reveals itself indirectly in the experience of the fault as a "negative magnitude"—but also because the great methodological decisions of the *Philosophy of the Will* are guided by this reflexive conception of freedom. Now, what we want to show in this second section is the fact that the influence of Nabert is also to be found in Ricoeur's re-appropriation of the Nabertian theory of motivation that is developed in *The Inner Experience of Freedom* (1924).

Let us deal first with the guiding idea of a reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary which governs the whole Ricoeurian phenomenology of the will. What is the contribution of the Nabertian theory of motivation to thinking through this dynamic relationship between the voluntary and the involuntary? To begin, recall that Ricoeur first distinguishes between three different constitutive and complementary aspects of willing: deciding is "the act of the will which depends on motives"; moving is "the act of the will which set motives in motion"; consenting is "the act of the will which acquiesces to necessity" (Ricoeur 1966: 319). Once those three constitutive moments of willing are established, the aim of Ricoeur's noematic analysis of willing is to shed light on the practical mediation through which nature becomes freedom and freedom becomes nature. As the respective definitions of "deciding" and of "moving" attest, the whole Ricoeurian conception of an incarnate and affirmative freedom may be summed up in the idea of a primitive, constitutive connection between freedom and its motives and values. Indeed, if we want to try to recapture the lived experience of our incarnate willing, we must account for this primitive connection between freedom and objectivities—whether psychological or moral—and denounce the abstract and superficial character of any definition of freedom which would reduce it to a mere refusal or rupture of any nascent fidelity to a possible order of values.

As Ricoeur writes in his analysis devoted to choice:

> Kierkegaard, who has, in addition, given modern philosophy the anguished significance of individual existence, is in part responsible for this illusion that subjectivity can be posited on the fringes of objectivity in all forms and in particular in its axiological form. Thus his influence joins that of Nietzsche and his transvaluation of values. Their joint influence contributes to the perpetuation of serious confusion concerning the relations of freedom and some order of value

> in modern thought. The idea of value succumbs to critique together with the idea of dead law, as if freedom were incompatible with any order of values. (Ricoeur 1966: 179)

It is then striking to observe that the footnote which concludes this passage refers precisely to Nabert's *The Inner Experience of Freedom*. It is indeed in Nabert's first work that Ricoeur encounters a very innovative theory of motivation whose purpose is precisely to elaborate a profound relationship between subjectivity and objectivity through the idea of an objectivation of the act of existing in the signs which give it expression. On this account, the decisive contribution of section 6 of chapter 2 of *The Inner Experience of Freedom*, entitled "Motivation and Act," consists in elaborating a philosophy of the act that is able, at the same time, to affirm the irreducibility of the operations of the acting consciousness to knowledge and science, and to analyze the role of objectivity and truth in this acting consciousness. For Nabert—whose philosophy of the act always acknowledged its indebtedness to Biranian thought[4]—, the chief merit of Maine de Biran was to have understood that it was possible to free the analysis of the productivity of the acting consciousness from models borrowed from the representation and knowledge of the outside world. Even if, according to him, the Biranian analysis failed to develop from the primitive fact of effort a theory of knowledge and objectivity,[5] it nevertheless shows the irreducibility of practical and affective consciousness to theoretical consciousness, and thus bequeaths to us the problem of elaborating a dynamic solidarity between these two forms of consciousness.

From that perspective, it is no exaggeration to say that for Nabert the elaboration of a reflexive philosophy of the act corresponds with an attempt to find a satisfying solution to this problem of the relationship between the act and representation. Now, this immense problem—which concerns the relationship of the act through which a consciousness posits and produces itself with the signs in which it represents the meaning of its actions—is given a first solution by Nabert within the limited framework of a reflection on the role of motives in a psychology of volition. In our view, it is this original theory of motivation which directly influences the Ricoeurian phenomenology of the willing, as well as the reflexive method which brings the whole work into action.

For Nabert, what was always difficult in the analysis of volition was the fact that there exists a "double nature of motive." On the one hand, the motive originates in the act of consciousness—it participates in that act—but, on the other hand, it also belongs to the order of representation and becomes very quickly an element of psychological determinism. Now, if psychological observation can only apprehend what causes the motive to be subject to the

common laws of representation and determinism, the irreplaceable role of a reflexive analysis is precisely to show that the motive is first the result or the expression of an act. According to Nabert, "The discontinuity of the acts and the solidarity of the motives are the double consequence of the same fact: the causality of consciousness, in itself impossible to represent, and always beyond its expression, must insert itself, thanks to the motive, into the fabric of psychological life to reveal its content" (Nabert 1994: 99).

The selective re-appropriation to which Nabert invites us then consists in starting from the act in order to elaborate a genesis of representation in the act. When we refer to a psychological determinism, when we interpret motives as antecedent representations that produce the accomplished act of decision, we are in fact the victims of a retrospective illusion. Indeed, what exists before the accomplished act are sketches of acts, inchoate, incomplete acts, which correspond to the process of deliberation. It is only for a retrospective regard that these acts appear as a necessary connection of representations, and that an objectification of the full process of deliberation occurs. It would be misleading, nevertheless, to see in this law of expression of the act in the sign a mere law of occultation, and to consider the development of the act in the motive as a mere downfall fatal to any re-appropriation of our freedom. For Nabert, it is, on the contrary, the possibility of a reflexive re-appropriation which is at stake in this passage from act to the light of representation and of the word, that is to say, in this passage from the act to its sign, and from the signs to representation. As Ricoeur writes, when commenting on Nabert, "The possibility of reading the text of consciousness under the law of determinism exactly coincides with the effort of clarity and sincerity we need in order to know what we want. Moreover, if they were not enclosed in an uninterrupted narrative, our acts would be only momentary flashes and would not make a history or even a duration" (Ricoeur 1974: 215). If we do not want to succumb to the lure of determinism, which results from the forgetfulness of the act in the sign, we must constantly retrace our steps in the opposite direction from the representation to the act—going back from the psychological fact to the act of consciousness—in order ceaselessly to recapture in the act, even in the brink of an act, what exceeds its mere representation as a motive.

One can thus assert that this reflexive clarification of the "double nature of the motive"—insofar as it participates in both act and representation—is the main strength of the analysis of *The Inner Experience of Freedom*. For it offers an original conception of freedom which escapes at the same time from the Bergsonian opposition between duration and the "superficial ego" as well as the Kantian antinomy between noumenal freedom and empirical causality. Without exaggeration, one can thus say that Nabert's theory of motivation governs the essential part of the analysis devoted by Ricoeur to "The History of Decision" ("From Hesitation to Choice") in chapter 3 of the First

Part of *Freedom and Nature*. Within the limited scope of this study, we will not be able to retrace the full richness of the Ricoeurian theory of freedom as attention.[6] Instead, we will focus on what could be called the Ricoeurian re-appropriation of Nabert's theory of motivation.

We have mentioned above that *Freedom and Nature* is divided into three great parts, but we must also recall the fact each of these parts—"deciding," "moving," and "consenting"—adopts a ternary process which is supposed to lead from the abstraction of eidetic description to a certain comprehension of the lived experience of an incarnate will. In this ternary process, Ricoeur first examines the voluntary and reflexive aspect of each of the three acts, then he turns to the exploration of involuntary on which these acts rely in order to finally reach a comprehensive synthesis which attempts to recapture the experience of incarnate freedom. It is precisely this third step that corresponds to the Ricoeurian analysis of the history of decision, whose aim is to elaborate the dynamic relationship between duration and attention.

In this context, one of the essential contributions of *Freedom and Nature* doubtlessly lies in the elaboration of an original conception of the affirmative act of freedom as attention. Indeed, as Ricoeur shows, the fact of making a choice always consists in resolving a history, that is to say, in cutting off an inner debate that we carry on over time. "The working hypothesis which we will put to the test," he says, "is that the *power to stop the debate* is nothing different from *the power to conduct it* and that this *control over succession is attention*. Or to put it otherwise, the control over duration is attention in motion; choice in a sense is an attention that stops" (Ricoeur 1966: 149, tr. mod.). In this attempt to broaden a theory of attention to the practical and affective *cogito* which originates first in a reflection on perception, it seems to us that Ricoeur in fact pursues an objective which is very close to Nabert. On the one hand, he tries to express what accounts for the specificity of attention applied to active consciousness, and on the other hand, like Nabert again, he tries to escape from the standstill of the third Kantian antinomy by elaborating a more "immanent" theory of freedom, one which refuses to found freedom on the idea of a causality of the thing-in-itself. That is the reason why his theory of attention can be considered an innovative renewal of Nabert's theory that the causality of freedom must be conceived as an immanent causality at every stage of volition—that is to say, as entirely present in each of the discontinuous and unfinished acts of conscious deliberation.

From a temporal point of view, attention can, therefore, be defined as a control of duration and, in the development of its free vision, its main role is to produce a "clarification of our motives thanks to time." As Ricoeur explains, "clarification consists on the one hand of disentangling values tangled in affectivity, and on the other hand of bringing together the successive tentative values within a progressively self-affirming idea" (Ricoeur 1966: 157). If Nabert's

influence can be clearly detected in this definition of value or of the motive as the beginning sketch of an act, the originality of the Ricoeurian thesis lies in the recovery of the genesis of the motive in the act, through a theory of the "imaging attention." The clarification of motives, which is allowed by this passage from the act to the sign and to representation, is indeed elaborated by Ricoeur as a passage carried out by the productive imagination insofar as it is precisely capable of elevating the act to the word.

In *Freedom and Nature*, the Ricoeurian theory of attention thus fights against the illusion of interpreting a motive as a cause. In other words, it is what safeguards the irreducible difference between freedom and psychological determinism. Whereas the cause belongs to the naturalistic explanation of things—which means it can be known before its effects—, the specific character of the motive lies indeed in the fact that its sense, as a sign, always depends on the will which invokes and receives it. That is why the motive is not what causes a decision but what legitimates it.

In that sense, one could maintain that the Ricoeurian notion of imaging attention can only be understood in light of the Nabertian theory of the double nature of the motive. For Ricoeur, the human will as a "receptive initiative" can only exert itself insofar as it is "nourished by duration," thanks to the affirming spontaneity of the body, and even if desire does not sum up the whole involuntary, it is, no doubt, in desire that the essence of motivation can be discerned as a receptive relationship of the will to an intentional stream which "inclines it without compelling it."[7] Therefore, "The indetermination of attention and the determination by the self are two sides of the same freedom which must be understood as power and as act" (Ricoeur 1966: 186). The paradox of this freedom implies a "concomitance of power and of the act" which asserts in the same gesture the continuity of motivation and the discontinuity of choice.

THE SEMEIOLOGICAL METHOD OF FREEDOM AND NATURE: THE DIAGNOSTIC CORRELATION BETWEEN THE BODY-OBJECT AND THE "APPRENTICESHIP TO SIGNS"

It would be quite misleading to see only a formal solution to the third Kantian antinomy in this reflexive attempt to link the apparently deterministic causes of actions with the initiative of the consciousness in act which constitutes its true causality. For Nabert, as well for Ricoeur, what is at stake in this effort of re-appropriation of the act in the sign is nothing less

than the condition of the possibility of the experience and the exercise of an incarnate freedom. As Nabert strongly asserts in *The Inner Experience of Freedom*:

> Far from being fearsome for the causality of consciousness, determinism is on the contrary a requisite for an inner experience of freedom to happen without moving into the unreal. The experience of freedom can only happen when it leans on a determinism in which it can contemplate the law it gave itself and which provides the resistance intended to reveal new acts. Indeed freedom certainly runs the risk of giving way to getting caught in determinism it surrounds itself with. But it is for an idea a lesser danger to confront the risks of a test in which it confronts all the resistances of things, than to remain far from the real, in its splendid isolation. (Nabert 1994: 213)

For Nabert, as for Ricoeur, a consciousness can only know its freedom through the resistances it encounters. In their view, the psychological determinism, linked up with the representation of the act, is then not only a sign for the acting consciousness but at the same time an obstacle which, by limiting the affirmation of freedom also confers its incarnate consistency and reality. That is the reason why, in *Freedom and Nature*, attention is not reduced to a free shifting of the regard: because the link of willing with the affirmative spontaneity of the lived body is always polemical, it implies a continuous struggle against the resistances of the lived body, which makes attention a continued effort.

Now, in this search for a concrete incarnate freedom, it seems that one of the essential methodological inventions of *Freedom and Nature*—that is, a true "semeiology" brought into play by Ricoeur that aims to interpret the objectivities known by scientific psychology as signs of an activity of the cogito—again constitutes an original application of Nabert's reflexive method. Even if, in this context, the French reflexive philosopher is not directly quoted, we cannot but note that the ternary method of *Freedom and Nature*—eidetic description, the reflexive exploration of the corporal involuntary, and the passage from objectivity to the lived existence of willing—fits the phenomenological method of describing the essence of willing within the wider scope of reflection.

This "reflexive" originality of Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will does not escape Nabert, and this is precisely attested in his fundamental article devoted in 1957 to "Reflexive Philosophy" in *L'Encyclopédie Française* (Volume XIX). Barely seven years after the publication of *Freedom and Nature*, it is indeed striking to note that this article already refers to the *Philosophy of the Will* in laudatory terms, to stress both the full adherence of Ricoeurian philosophy to the spirit of the reflexive philosophy, and the

compatibility between the reflexive method and the phenomenological method. As Nabert writes:

> A contemporary philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, who combines with equal mastery the phenomenological method with the reflexive method, shows thanks to a patient and penetrating analyses, that what is voluntary in man, takes root in the involuntary; he unties one by one the links of the one and of the other; in so doing he proves that the reflexive investigation can wing its secrets out of a psychology called depth psychology, and it can discover in it the first indications of a causality which the self cannot refuse to assume. Thanks to such works, the complementarity of the reflexive analysis applied to the order of knowledge and of the reflexive analysis applied to the field of action. (Nabert 1994: 405–406)

In the above passage from Nabert, we may trace an implicit reference to the method of conversion of objectivities into signs, as practiced by Ricoeur in each of his analyses of the involuntary based on the results of empirical psychology. Our analyses of attention and of "the history of decision" have been essentially limited to an approach to "the existential synthesis of willing," that is to say, to the third moment of the analysis in *Freedom and Nature* in which Ricoeur endeavors to elaborate the experience, both active and passive, of willing as a history. Nevertheless, this final moment implies a passage from objectivity to existence, or from essence to concrete experience, which is made possible by the work of a reflexive re-appropriation of empirical objectivity. In this respect, the second moment of each of the great divisions of the work enters into an exploration of the corporal involuntary which takes a true detour through the objective thought of the empirical sciences. Here the main originality of Ricoeur's thought process consists in showing that it is possible to use the facts of scientific psychology as a diagnostic of phenomenological mental processes, by interpreting these facts as signs of the lived experience of willing.

As regards physiology as well as empirical psychology, it seems indeed that the sciences are in a better position than reflexive consciousness to acquire knowledge of the involuntary. But if it is impossible to equate the object-body known through the sciences and the lived body revealed by the phenomenological approach, the originality of Ricoeur's thesis consists of asserting that, since it is a question of the same body, it is possible to conceive a correlation between these two approaches to the body which is not "one of coincidence, but of a diagnostic" (Ricoeur 1966: 13). In other words, since each moment lived by the cogito is able to express itself through certain signs in the object-body, one can expect that a patient work of apprenticeship will allow for the deciphering of those signs. As Ricoeur emphasizes, "Such analysis of symptoms, which we are here using with respect to the Cogito,

is used by the doctor in service of empirical knowledge, an experience indicating a functioning or a functional disorder of the object body" (Ricoeur 1966: 13). Here it is not a question of connecting the subject consciousness with the object-body: this connection is already realized before any refection. Instead, it is a question of creating a relationship between two universes of discourse[8] which express two heterogeneous points of view on the same body. The diagnostic connection does not amount to linking together two realities: consciousness and the body—but two forms of discourse which refer respectively to objective knowledge and to the lived experience of the incarnate cogito.

Now, if the use of life and the urgency of action almost inevitably lead us to explain consciousness by means of the body, since acting on the body as a thing is enough to change the experience we have of it, the entire interest of the "semeiology" developed in *Freedom and Nature* resides in the fact that it allows us to reverse this connection. As Ricoeur writes, "The diagnostic relation which relates objective knowledge of the body to the apperception of the cogito carries out a truly Copernican relation. Consciousness is no longer the symptom of the object-body, instead the object-body is an indicator of the personal body (*corps-propre*) in which the cogito participates as its own existence" (Ricoeur 1966: 87–88, tr. mod.).

The "semeiological" process carried out in the Ricoeurian phenomenology of willing is therefore applied for the benefit of the cogito and for the recovery of our act of existing;[9] its aim is to retrieve the involuntary in the first person. In other terms, it opens the possibility for what is known as a cause on the empirical level of the sciences to be interpreted as a motive on the phenomenological and reflexive level. Nevertheless, the correlation between the object-body and lived body, as a diagnostic correlation, cannot be known a priori; and that is why the analogical way implied in the deciphering of the corporal involuntary as a sign of the voluntary presupposes a very progressive construction which must be nourished by the depth and richness of human experience. As Ricoeur constantly emphasizes, "This relation is not at all *a priori*, but is gradually formed in an apprenticeship to signs" (Ricoeur 1966: 13; tr. mod.).

It is then clear that the "semeiology" of *Freedom and Nature*, which is supported by a patient apprenticeship to signs, already has similarities with a form of hermeneutics.[10] It is an attempt to retrieve in an analogical and indirect way, an originary activity of the productive imagination, thanks to which our effort of existing is objectified in signs. Insofar as it is a question of interpreting the scientific results of biological and psychological knowledge of the human involuntary as signs of this originary activity, it is obvious that one passes here from phenomenological description to interpretation.

Without the mediation of this "hermeneutical" or "pre-hermeneutical" use of the empirical sciences as a diagnostic of a dynamism of the involuntary, susceptible of being retrieved as a motive for my will, an eidetics of the will would remain only on the threshold of ontology, that is, of the existential synthesis of willing. It is only when eidetics, thanks to the diagnostic method, apprehends the reciprocity of the voluntary and of the involuntary that it can escape from the idealist illusion of a constituting will and arrive at a dialectic of activity and passivity which characterizes an incarnate freedom.

From this perspective, it appears that the "semeiology" of *Freedom and Nature* does not only have a theoretical function but also reveals a practical effort to decipher, in the very determinism of the scientific knowledge of the object-body, the signs of the lived experience of our freedom. In Ricoeur's view then, the "apprenticeship to signs" is not a mere activity of theoretical deciphering; more fundamentally, it is equivalent to a true education of our freedom, whose formative character already constitutes the beginning of an ethics of the reflexive re-appropriation of our effort to exist in the Nabertian sense. To the unity of our freedom and our body, as it is confusedly felt in the mode of participation or action sensed by the heart, this apprenticeship adds the patient interpretation of the correlations that progressively confer consistency and concrete objectification to the experience of our freedom.

Through our analysis, first, of the methodological decision to apprehend the affirmative power of our freedom through the experience of the fault, then of the reflexive interpretation of the "double nature" of the motive—as an empirical fact submitted to the law of determinism and as an act referring to the initiative of the consciousness—and finally of the "semeiological" method used by Ricoeur to explore the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary in light of the dynamism of the involuntary brought into light by empirical psychology, we have thus shown that the influence of Nabertian philosophy is not limited to a few scattered references but rather plays a decisive role in the development and results of *Freedom and Nature*. The singularity of Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will is due essentially to the fact that it is clearly situated within the horizon of a philosophy of the act, aiming at the reflexive re-appropriation of our effort to exist.

NOTES

1. For a detailed analysis of the meaning of this Ricoeurian use of the Nabertian concept of originary affirmation in *Fallible Man*, see chapter 3 "Négativité et affirmation originaire" (see Amalric 2013: 225–280).

2. And with the exception of a fourth quotation, less central, which refers to the Nabertian analysis of failure: this last quotation appears on page 202, that is to say at

the beginning of chapter 1 "Pure Description of Acting and Moving" of the Second Part of *Freedom and Nature*, entitled "Voluntary Motion and Human Capabilities."

3. For a detailed analysis of this decisive continuity of Nabert's influence on the development of Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology, see Amalric (2011).

4. We may note here that the other capital influence on Nabert's thought is to be found in Kant, who provides, in the French philosopher's eyes, the most complete reflection on the function of objectivity and truth of consciousness. As he writes in a 1957 entry of *L'Encyclopédie française* devoted to "Reflexive Philosophy," "It was necessary that a critical theory of knowledge should have considered of primary importance, in the "I think," its function of objectivity and of truth to prevent the research immediately attentive to the concrete forms of inner experience from being complacent towards a sterile irrationalism" (Nabert 1992: 406).

5. On this account, the indebtedness to Nabert of the final paragraph of chapter 3 ("Moving and Effort") of the Second Part of *Freedom and Nature,* entitled "Limits of a Philosophy of Effort: Effort and Knowledge" (331–338), seems obvious to us. There Ricoeur indeed takes over Nabert's criticism of Biran's attempt to derive "seeing" from "doing" and reasserts the irreducibility of the intentionality of knowing to the intentionality of acting.

6. For a more detailed analysis of this question, refer to section 4 ("La Fonction imageante de l'attention volontaire") of Amalric (2013). Ricoeur's 1939 lecture entitled "L'Attention. Etude phénoménologique de l'attention et de ses connexions philosophiques" plays an important part as a source in the formation of the conception of the will developed in *Freedom and Nature*. It is the double influence of Husserlian phenomenology and Marcel's philosophy of the mystery which leads Ricoeur to elaborate this original philosophy of attention. From this viewpoint, the decisive contribution of Gabriel Marcel is to have noticed the relationship between *choice* and *vision*, while simultaneously refusing to consider the will as a force.

7. Let us note in passing that this formula which Ricoeur likes to use throughout *Freedom and Nature* has its origin in the Leibnizian conception of freedom, as expressed in particular in the *Essays on Theodicy*. To some extent, it corresponds to an attempt to reinterpret, from a phenomenological point of view, the Leibnizian metaphysical thesis that there always exists a prevailing reason which leads the will toward its choice: as Leibniz emphasized, to preserve one's freedom, it is sufficient that this reason should "incline without compelling."

8. The first two parts of *What Makes Us Think* ("A Necessary Encounter," 3–32 and "Body and Mind: in Search of a Common discourse," 33–69) will return to this problem of the relationship between two levels of heterogeneous discourse: on the one hand, that of the neuronal sciences bearing on the body and the brain, and on the other hand, that of reflexive philosophy, of phenomenology, and of hermeneutics, insofar as they are able to express the experience of the lived body. If the discussion with Changeux enables Ricoeur to have a deeper and more complex conception of an object-body susceptible to serve as an "index" of the lived experience of a subject, it nevertheless shows great continuity with the theses defended in *Freedom and Nature*.

9. Despite the fact that the Ricoeurian phenomenology of willing always claimed the inspiration of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, it is striking to

note that the use made by the two philosophers of empirical psychology is widely different. Whereas, as early as *The Structure of Behaviour* Merleau-Ponty seeks in the "objective thought" of these sciences nonreflexive modes of thematization of the unreflected that are able to deconstruct the "intellectualistic" presuppositions of reflexive philosophy (transcendental approach, constituting subjectivity, etc.), Ricoeur, following Nabert, uses those objectivities to develop reflexive philosophy anew in the sense of a re-appropriation, with a practical aim, of the effort of existing which constitutes us.

10. We fully subscribe to Patrick L. Bourgeois's interpretation in this respect. To the best of our knowledge, he is one of the first interpreters of Ricoeur's thought to have stressed the existence of an "implicit hermeneutics" as early as the eidetics of the will developed in *Freedom and Nature* (Cf. Bourgeois 1975).

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Chapter 3

Ravaisson and Ricoeur on Habit

Jakub Čapek

In the first volume of his *Philosophy of the Will*, Paul Ricoeur gives an extensive and detailed account of the articulation between the acts of our will and their involuntary counterpart. Habit is but one case of "the involuntary." Yet, it is an important case: a voluntary movement, once habitualized, requires less control of the will and starts to constitute a "second nature." It is precisely this phenomenon of transition between the will and the involuntary that makes habit a specific class of the involuntary. In his analysis of habit, Ricoeur draws on the work of Félix Ravaisson who presented profound and influential observations of the habitual transition between freedom and "nature." Even though Ricoeur refers to Ravaisson with a great admiration, he does not accept certain metaphysical or speculative conclusions drawn by Ravaisson. These conclusions constitute a real challenge for Ricoeur and his *Philosophy of the Will*.

Félix Ravaisson (1813–1900) belongs among the most important thinkers of the nineteenth-century French spiritualism. He wrote a remarkable two volume study on the *Metaphysics of Aristotle* and an influential *Rapport*—an overview of the French philosophy in nineteenth century. His most lasting impact, nevertheless, was the small and original 1838 essay *Of Habit* (*De l'habitude*). There Ravaisson expounds his analysis of habit into an ambitious attempt to show the intrinsic unity of spirit and nature. Philosophers as different as Henri Bergson and Merleau-Ponty were deeply influenced by Ravaisson.[1] The chapter on habit in Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature* constitutes a highly interesting encounter between a phenomenological and spiritualistic approach.

As already noted, Ravaisson's analysis of habit constitutes a fundamental challenge both for Ricoeur's project of *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* and for the underlying phenomenological idea of

subjectivity. Before delving into the detailed argument of both thinkers, let me briefly outline the reasons why it is so. Ricoeur organized his *Freedom and Nature* around the key idea of "the reciprocity of the involuntary and the voluntary" (Ricoeur 1966: 4). This idea has two important consequences. First, each act of will (decision, action, consent) is impossible without the corresponding involuntary counterpart (motive, bodily capacity, experienced necessity) and vice versa. Their relation is one of mutual dependence or circularity, as Ricoeur repeatedly affirms. To take but one example (the decision-motive relation), "every motive . . . is a motive of . . . and every decision . . . is a decision because . . ." (Ricoeur 1966: 77–78). Second, it is not decision itself, or the motive itself that can be understandable or intelligible, but their relation as such: "only the relation of the voluntary and the involuntary is intelligible" (Ricoeur 1966: 5). Nevertheless, Ricoeur expounds this second consequence in a way which de facto abandons the idea of reciprocity. This idea entitles him to say that "the involuntary has no meaning of its own," but not to affirm that "it is . . . the understanding of the voluntary which comes first" (ibid.). And yet, this is precisely the view upheld by Ricoeur throughout his book: "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" (Ricoeur 1966: 4–5). According to these initial statements, habit is (a) an involuntary, (b) which can be understandable only in relation to the will, which is to say that habit plays the role of the "more or less submissive ability" (Ricoeur 1966: 8), and (c) habit cannot be considered as an automatism or routine-like behavior. Ravaisson embraces (c), yet he contradicts (b), that is, the idea that the significance of habit is "determined by" the will. Habit is not an automatism, but a kind of spontaneity. Nevertheless, this spontaneity is not derived from its relation to the will or consciousness. This is why Ravaisson takes habit to be an "obscure" and "unreflective spontaneity." This is also the starting point of his metaphysical claim which affirms a deep unity between freedom and nature. To put it bluntly, Ravaisson would not have shared the idea of the "reciprocity" of freedom and nature (of the voluntary and the involuntary), while Ricoeur, for his part, could not accept the idea of their unity, if he wanted to maintain his philosophy of "the *cogito* grasped in the first person" (Ricoeur 1966: 9) in which habit has to be treated "as 'I have the habit of . . .'" (Ricoeur 1966: 8).

In the first part of this chapter, Ravaisson's account of habit will be presented in order to locate the precise meaning of the Ravaissonian challenge which calls into question not only the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary in Ricoeur, but also his idea of subjectivity. The second part will focus on the way Ricoeur responded to this challenge through his own phenomenological description of habit that is deeply inspired by, and yet fundamentally different from what Ravaisson proposed.

RAVAISSON ON HABIT

While a comprehensive account of Ravaisson's philosophical position cannot be undertaken here, the possible readings of Ravaisson are worth stating nonetheless. First, there is the Aristotelian reading of Ravaisson as the author of an extensive work on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (Ravaisson 2007) who attempts not only to reintroduce the Aristotelian distinctions (*dynamis—energeia, hyle—morphe*) into philosophical reflections of his time, but also to adopt an Aristotelian ethics and ontology.[2] There is another, quite opposed reading which affirms that Ravaisson embraces a kind of quietism. According to this reading, the term "being" is taken by Ravaisson to refer to divine activity, to the love which penetrates the universe, an activity in which an individual may participate. On this reading, the decisive move in *Of Habit* is the idea of a quiet knowledge or a feeling of belonging to this pure activity.[3] Third, there is a reading of Ravaisson as a precursor of the philosophy of life. Indeed, there are good reasons for the vitalistic reading of Ravaisson, as he not only takes nature to be irreducible to inanimate matter, but also adopts a teleological interpretation of all processes in nature. And since Raviasson explicitly embraces theism, his philosophy would consequently be—as Janicaud puts this—a theologically crowned vitalism (Janicaud 1997: 29).[4] Of course, Ravaisson is often classified as a spiritualist philosopher, but this designation seems to be too broad. Even if we accept the very general definition of spiritualism given by Ravaisson himself in his famous *Rapport*,[5] this definition leaves room for a considerable diversity of spiritualistic doctrines.

This non-exhaustive survey of some possible readings of Ravaisson shows the difficulty of providing a comprehensive interpretation of the philosophy presented in *De l'habitude*. This difficulty is also compounded by its eclectic character. So, instead of attempting to provide a complete account of Ravaisson's philosophy, in what follows I will limit myself to two questions: "What is the core of Ravaisson's argument concerning habit?" and "What is the precise meaning of the argument for Ricoeur's own description of habit?"

Definition: What is Habit?

In the introductory part of his famous essay, Ravaisson provides the following definition: "Habit is . . . a disposition relative to change, which is engendered in a being by the continuity or the repetition of this very same change" (Ravaisson 2008: 25). This definition has to be completed by the following "defining characteristic": the habit "remains for a change which either is no longer or is not yet; it remains for a possible change" (Ravaisson 2008: 25). Habit is thus: (1) a disposition, (2) resulting from a change, (3) which remains

for possible changes. Habit is an acquired ("engendered in a being") and durable (or "remaining") disposition. This definition adopts and supplements the Aristotelian concept of *hexis*.

Habit is thus, first, a *disposition.* Ravaisson takes this disposition in the active sense, that is, as a capacity to produce or anticipate the kind of changes which gave birth to this disposition. Habit is an acquired "internal virtue" or "internal capacity" ("*vertu intérieure*"). Habit is consequently something which may serve to characterize this individual being: the habit gives us nothing less than its "general and permanent way of being." This opening statement of the text shows the full scope of Ravaisson's treatise: it is not an analysis of a particular phenomenon—a habit—but an ontological reflection. The analysis of habit thus provides the constitutive feature of what it is to be a human being, a living being (an animal or a plant) or even an unanimated being. A being can be ontologically described by identifying its characteristic "disposition."

Second, habit is an *acquired* disposition. When describing the acquisition of habits, Ravaisson mentions both the continuity of the change and the repetition of the change. Talking about the continuity of change ("*la continuité de changement*"), Ravaisson intends to highlight the fact that certain changes occur "in time," that the passage from possibility to its actualization requires here a temporal interval (Ravaisson 2008: 25, 27). Only changes that are realized in time, where the passage from possibility to actualization is not immediate or instantaneous, can engender a habit. On the contrary, changes that do not occur in time do not engender any disposition. Ravaisson counts among changes of the latter kind generation and corruption ("change that brings something from nothing into existence or from existence to nothingness," 25),[6] as well as mechanical, physical, or chemical processes, because these are characterized by "an immediate passage from potentiality to actuality" (Ravaisson 2008: 27). Nevertheless, habit is engendered not only by continuity, but also by the repetition of change ("*la répétition du changement*"). Habit as a disposition to produce certain kind of acts is born and strengthened by the repetition of these acts. Ravaisson draws on the Aristotelian statement from the *Nicomachean Ethics*: "our moral dispositions are formed as a result of the corresponding activities."[7] Consequently, habit is a disposition acquired by the continuity and repetition of the respective change or activity.

Third, habit is a *durable* or *remaining* disposition; it "remains for a possible change." In other words, a being can have an acquired habit even when it does not make use of it. This means that a habit is a potentiality that—even if it has been actualized—does not disappear. A habit is a potentiality which is distinct from its particular actualization, a potentiality which, as Ravaisson puts it, "outlives" this actualization ("*qui y survive*," 27).

Ontology: What Kind of Being May Acquire a Habit?

Given this definition of habit, Ravaisson is able to go on and ask: What kind of being may acquire a habit? Possible candidates have to satisfy all three criteria set forth by the definition. They should thus be capable of the following: (1) of having an internal (their own) capacity, (2) of acquiring and losing this capacity, and (3) of having this capacity as distinct from its particular realization. Together these conditions imply that a being has not only a capacity to change—to acquire or lose a habit—but also a stability in the possession of a habit. Ravaisson recalls the famous Aristotelian example of the stone which does not acquire the capacity to move upward even after it has been thrown upward one hundred times. Ravaisson concludes that habit "supposes a change in the disposition, in the potential, in the internal virtue of that in which the change occurs, which itself does not change" (Ravaisson 2008: 25).

These three conditions are not met in the realm of inanimate nature, since there is nothing which "itself does not change" and no real unity—either in space or time. There is but a combination of elements—be it a mechanical, chemical, or physical union (Ravaisson 2008: 27). Consequently, there is nothing in inanimate nature which could acquire a habit. The unity capable of acquiring a habit, however, is to found in animate nature—in plants and animals—to a certain degree. Plants and animals do form a unity in space and in time. In space, they are not mere parts of homogeneous matter but constitute a structured, heterogeneous whole, an organism. In time, they constitute an individual temporal whole, a "successive unity in time": a life. Living organisms are—unlike inanimate matter—thus possible candidates for the acquisition of a habit. Still, according to Ravaisson, there are only scattered and external signs of habit acquisition in plants and animals. The sign of habit acquisition in plants is their susceptibility to be cultivated (Ravaisson quotes a passage from Virgil's *Georgics*). One sign of habit acquisition in animal life is recurrent illness: a fever which comes by chance in regular intervals "tends to convert itself into a periodic affection; the periodicity becomes essential to it" (Ravaisson 2008: 35). Still in both of these cases—the cultivated plant and the recurrent fever—we have only an external view of habit: we can grasp only the observable result, not the internal disposition. It is only on the level of the human being, in the sphere of consciousness, that we can fully access habit: "it is in consciousness alone that we can find the archetype of habit" (Ravaisson 2008: 39).

While it might seem, at this point, that a fully developed habit could be found *only* in human life, this is not the conclusion arrived at by Ravaisson. He only claims that habit is *best accessed* on the level of the human existence. In the second part of his work, Ravaisson turns to the analysis of consciousness and the result turns out to be precisely opposite from what has

just been suggested. His reflection on consciousness will show the deep affinity between different levels of nature. Ultimately, the difference between the human and the rest of nature will only be one of degree. To substantiate this point, Ravaisson has to further articulate his reflection on habit through the elaboration of a fundamental law which he calls "the double law of habit."

The Double Law of Habit

When establishing the law of habit, Ravaisson takes a new starting point and distinguishes between activity and passivity in habit acquisition. He draws on Maine de Biran's work (Maine de Biran 1987). A being can acquire a habit in the following ways: (1) by being exposed to an external action, in relation to which it is merely receptive; (2) by repeating activities of the same kind, that is, by actively shaping a disposition to behave in a certain way. It would seem that these two cases do not have much in common. In the first case, we passively become used to something that we cannot act upon; we slowly become less responsive or receptive, less sensible to something. In the second case, we actively and often purposively create or refine our capacity to *do* something.

In spite of these apparent differences, Ravaisson holds that these two cases are actually interconnected and this leads him to establish the "double law of habit":

> The general effect of the continuity and repetition of the change that the living being receives from something other than itself is that, if the change does not destroy it, it is always less and less altered by that change. Conversely, the more the living being has repeated or prolonged a change that it has originated, the more it produces the change and seems to tend to reproduce it. . . . Receptivity diminishes and spontaneity increases. (Ravaisson 2008: 31)

To put it in other terms, as long as a living being merely suffers an external continuity or repetition, its receptivity "gradually diminishes," as long as it "sets it off," its spontaneity increases (Ravaisson 2008: 35, 37, 49).

As this formulation clearly indicates, habit—according to Ravaisson—is far from being a routine, automatic, and dull behavior. On the contrary, in habit the passivity of a being—be it a plant, an animal, or a man—diminishes and its spontaneity increases. This view stands in stark contrast to a view embraced, for instance, by Kant who describes habit as being the opposite of spontaneous (and possibly moral) activity (Kant 1966: 35). For Ravaisson, habitual behavior is spontaneous; moreover, its spontaneity is characteristic not only of human activity, but it is to be found in different degrees on all levels of nature. If an activity can be habitual and

spontaneous at the same time, the concept of spontaneity obviously differs from the Kantian concept. The idea of spontaneity in Ravaisson does not imply that certain beings (humans at least) are able to start something without any previous cause, but that they are able to initiate something without any external cause:

> Spontaneity is the initiative of movement. Initiative seems evident when movement recommences after having ceased, and in the absence of any external cause. . . . Habit reveals itself as spontaneity in the regularity of the periods. (Ravaisson 2008: 35)

Spontaneity is understood by Ravaisson as the capacity to initiate a repeated movement, not a new one. Ravaisson's reflection on habit aims to show that the difference between (mechanical) nature and (free, human) activity is only one of degree. The notion of spontaneity will play a crucial role in this argument. Ravaisson aims at replacing any dualist ontology by a monistic view of the universe. The unifying phenomenon of his monist view of the universe is the "unreflective spontaneity" (Ravaisson 2008: 53).

Unreflective Spontaneity and the Unity of Nature

When analyzing habit, Ravaisson draws from Aristotle (the definition of habit) and Maine de Biran (the distinction of the passive and active habit).[8] Ravaisson's own contribution consists in the two following statements: (1) there is a fundamental unity of passive and active habit; (2) this unity enables us to explain the unity of nature.

The explanation of the unity of habit is based on the observation that both passive and active habit comprise a certain form of anticipation. The passive habit anticipates impressions of external objects, whereas the active habit anticipates will and action. This anticipation reveals that there is some sort of hidden or "obscure activity" ("*activité obscure*," 51).

The passive habit anticipates impressions and as such, it is a form of a need ("*le besoin*") for this impression, it is a desire ("*le désir*"). The decisive passage runs as follows:

> Such is the ordinary effect of a continual swinging or rocking, or of a monotonous noise, particularly in childhood. But if the movement or the noise ceases, sleep also comes to an end. Rest and silence awaken. Noise and movement, therefore, only induce sleep by developing in the sensory organs a sort of obscure activity which brings them up to the tone of the sensation. This destroys sensation, but at the same time creates a need for it. It is in this way, that is to

> say, by the progressive development of an internal activity, that the progressive weakening of passivity is to be explained. (Ravaisson 2008: 51, 53)

The argument is based on the observation that passive habit implies diminished receptivity and habitual anticipation. These phenomena can be explained, according to Ravaisson, only by presupposing some "obscure" or "internal" activity.

The active habit comprises also a certain kind of anticipation. That which is anticipated is not an external impression, however, but acts of will. Habitual actions often do not await the "commandments of the will" and some of them even completely escape "both will and consciousness" (Ravaisson 2008: 51). The activity set into motion by active habit is consequently not a conscious and voluntary activity:

> If movement, as it is repeated, becomes more and more involuntary, it is not in the will, but in the passive element of the movement itself that a secret activity gradually develops. To be precise, it is not action . . . it is a more obscure and unreflective tendency, which goes further down into the organism, increasingly concentrating itself there. (Ravaisson 2008: 53)

Thus the "common trait" (Ravaisson 2008: 51) of the two forms of habit is neither pure passivity, nor voluntary activity, but something in between the two: an internal, obscure activity, "unreflective," or even a "blind tendency" (Ravaisson 2008: 53), which does not develop itself on the personal level (of the will and consciousness), but in the organism. As already mentioned, Ravaisson calls this hidden activity "unreflective spontaneity."

Up to now, "unreflective spontaneity" has been characterized by its epistemological status: it is "obscure" or secret (hidden), which means that it is inaccessible to consciousness (to will and reflection). Apart from this, Ravaisson indicates that it is to be understood as a teleological structure: as an "inclination towards a goal" (Ravaisson 2008: 55). Nevertheless, it is not a conscious aiming at something. Voluntary and reflective activity represents a goal as something which is only possible or "ideal" ("a possibility to be realized," 55). In a habitual tendency, on the contrary, the difference between possibility and reality, between the real and the ideal, disappears; these terms are now "fused together." This "fusion" or even "identification of the ideal and the real" (Ravaisson 2008: 63) separates unreflective spontaneity from voluntary activity.

> The duration of movement gradually transforms the potentiality, the virtuality, into a tendency, and gradually the tendency is transformed into action. . . . as the end becomes fused with the movement, and the movement with the tendency, possibility, the ideal, is realized in it. The *idea* becomes *being*. (Ravaisson 2008: 55)[9]

Nevertheless, the question is how can we talk about a teleological structure—an inclination, tendency, or desire—without at least conceptually separating possibility from actualization, the ideal from the real? Ravaisson believes this to be conceivable. His teleology is not coined in terms of *possibility,* but in terms of *necessity*. The habitual movement is necessary, but not in the sense the "necessity of a constraint" (efficient cause). The habit comprises a different kind of necessity: a "necessity of attraction and desire," a necessity related to a final cause or—in theological terminology—to grace. (Ravaisson 2008: 57)[10]

The necessity of attraction constitutes not only the inner structure of habit (in its two types), but also—and this is the second step in Ravaisson's speculative reflection—of all movements in nature. Habit is now only a special case of a more fundamental structure. Everything in nature is to be understood on the basis of one and the same unreflective inclination, of one and the same desire or "force" (Ravaisson 2008: 57). Ravaisson obviously does not understand nature in the Cartesian sense as a set of extended bodies which change their position but as a becoming, as a sum of processes. Ravaisson puts forward a dynamic view of nature:

> Nature is . . . merely the immediation of the end and the principle, of the reality and ideality of movement or of change in general, in the spontaneity of desire. (Ravaisson 2008: 61, 75)

At this point, Ravaisson adopts a different style of thinking. What we face here is not only an analysis of habit that arrives at a unifying concept of "unreflective spontaneity," but something more and something different: a general philosophy of nature, habit being only a particular case of a more general structure of spontaneity.[11] Methodologically, Ravaisson makes use of analogical reasoning. He shows, *per analogiam*, that the differences between particular levels of nature are but differences of a degree. The analogical reasoning enables Ravaisson to overcome dualisms and to find a deep continuity, both in human life and in nature as such.

In human life, we have not only habitual activities, but also voluntary acts on the one hand and instinctive behavior on the other. A habitual activity was originally an intentional, reflective behavior which became a custom and which—once it encounters an obstacle—may pass to the level of reflective action again (Ravaisson 2008: 57). The passage from voluntary action to the habitual and vice versa is, according to Ravaisson, a continuous one. Instinct is for Ravaisson also a tendency, and it has a similar structure as habit, the former being only "more unreflective, more irresistible, more infaillible" (Ravaisson 2008: 57). Ravaisson does not mean to say that all types of human activity are habits, but that other levels of human activity are to be understood in analogy to habit. This is why he proclaims habit to be a method.[12]

There is continuity not only in human life and its different types of activities (will—habit—instinct), but also in nature as such. Ravaisson describes it in Neoplatonic terms as a unity of progression of the multiple from one and the same principle (a "single force, a single intelligence," 65, esp. 67) resulting in a hierarchically structured universe. This unity of nature, which includes even inanimate nature, cannot be strictly proven but is arrived at by analogy:

> The most elementary mode of existence . . . is like the final moment of habit, realized and substantiated in space in a physical form. The analogy of habit penetrates its secret and delivers its sense over to us. All the way down to the confused and multiple life of the zoophyte, down to plants, even down to crystals, it is thus possible to trace, in this light, the last rays of thought and activity as they are dispersed and dissolved without yet being extinguished, far from any possible reflection, in the vague desires and the most obscure instincts. (Ravaisson 2008: 67)

In the all-embracing view of nature based on the analogy of habit, even the process of crystallization is a form of a desire.

If the key part of Ravaisson's argument has the form of analogical reasoning, then the question is how are we to consider this use of analogy? Kant sums up the precise—and traditional—meaning of the notion "analogy" by saying: the analogy should not be understood in the vague sense of a similarity between two things, but in a strict sense as a "perfect similarity of relations between things that are completely unlike."[13] As already stated, Ravaisson applied the analogy of habit to two areas: human conduct and nature as such. In both cases, the analogy is supposed to prove the continuous character of differences (be it in human life or in nature in general).[14] Ravaisson's analogy of habit does not attribute a similarity to different things in nature (it is not a "similarity of two things"), but rather to the relations in which these things or beings stand. The analogy of relations can be reconstructed as follows: the voluntary act relates to its goal in a similar way to which a habit or an instinctive activity relates to what it is about to produce. This shows, according to Ravaisson, that habit and instinct are both goal oriented and that, more generally, teleological activity illuminates the way "natural" activities work. And reciprocally, the spontaneity characteristic of habitual (and instinctive) activity is present also in voluntary (rational) activity. This entitles us to say, more generally, that nature (spontaneity) illuminates freedom just as freedom illuminates nature.

Now, what precise value does this "illumination" have? Can it serve as an *explanation* or as a *substantiation* of general philosophical statements? The use of analogical reasoning can be limited, as with Kant in the quoted passage, to the way things present themselves "for us" (not as they are "in

themselves"). It is more or less in this restricted sense that we encounter analogy in phenomenological philosophy. Analogy is an inspiring procedure that suggests certain conceptual possibilities. These new insights (to understand the "intuition of essences" in Husserl as analogical to the intuition of facts, or to take, as Merleau-Ponty does, the body-world relation as analogical to the organ-organism relation) are to be investigated and substantiated also *independently* from analogical inference (Husserl 1992, §3; Merleau-Ponty 2014, 209). It seems nevertheless that Ravaisson uses the method of analogy in order to establish *per analogiam* the most general ontological law which crowns and concludes his treatise *Of Habit:* "the most general form of being" is "the tendency to persevere in the very actuality that constitutes being" (Ravaisson 2008: 77).[15] It is precisely the analogy of habit that enables Ravaisson to generalize the "perseverance in actuality," that is, to establish it as the most fundamental ontological feature of all beings.

Before dealing with Ricoeur and his reading of Ravaisson's *Of Habit*, it is important to indicate a certain conceptual drift in the treatise. In what constitutes more or less the first half of the text, Ravaisson takes habit as an acquired and durable disposition, or to put it in other terms, as a potentiality that "outlives" its particular actualizations. In the second half of the text, however, habit is analyzed as a habitual tendency in which the difference between the possible and the actualized, between the real and the ideal, disappears. Once Ravaisson denies the possibility of distinguishing between the possible and the actual, he de facto relinquishes the understanding of habit as a disposition. Even if it still holds true that habit constitutes the most fundamental ontological category, the ontology at play is not an ontology of *being as possibility* any longer; he embraces an ontology of *being as act.*[16]

RICOEUR'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF HABIT

In his own analysis of habit, Ricoeur embraces the idea of intentionality, according to which our experiences are essentially related to something. Particular kinds of our (intentional) relating to something—of our seeing or hearing something, of thinking or judging, and so on—can be described either by focusing on their object or on the way we relate to the object. The latter can be described in many different ways, for example, as more or less habitual. Approached thus, habit is the *degree of habituality* of intentional acts. Even though this definition is clearly circular, it is not futile: habit does not constitute a separate class of our acts; instead, it determines certain acts as frequent and habitual—as distinct from other acts that are new and unusual. This is precisely how Ricoeur approaches the topic of habit.

> [Habit] does not seem to designate any particular function, that is, any original intention in the world, since it is defined as an acquired and relatively stable *way* of sensing, perceiving, acting, and thinking. It affects all the intentions of consciousness without being itself an intention. . . . Without being a new class of "cogitata," the habitual is an *aspect* of the perceived, the imagined, the thought, etc., opposed to the new, the surprising. (Ricoeur 1966: 280)

This starting point of Ricoeur's own analysis of habit already indicates certain points of divergence from Ravaisson. First, habit is taken only as related to human acts, not to nature in general. The phenomenology of habit will not attempt to establish a philosophy of nature based on the analogy of habit. Second, habit does not constitute a separate class of acts, but an *aspect* that (probably) all acts may acquire. Habit is not an act in itself; it is not a separate type of intentional relation. Particular kinds of intentional acts—such as desire (*désir*) or need (*besoin*)—imply certain kinds of anticipation, but these modes of anticipation cannot be conflated with habitual tendencies. Ricoeur thus takes the assimilation of habit to need to be a category mistake, and he will resolutely refuse the idea that habit may create a need. Third, even though habit "affects all the intentions of consciousness," it is still from the point of view of consciousness that habit receives its intelligibility. Habit is a capacity acquired by somebody, by a self. The intelligibility of habit is thus dependent on the first-person view of habit or, as Ricoeur puts it, on the "use-value" ("valeur d'usage") of habit: "I *know how*, I *can*." Habit is always somebody's habit: "Habit which can be understood is a power, a capacity to resolve a certain type of problem according to an available schema: I can play the piano, I know how to swim" (Ricoeur 1966: 280, 283; Ricoeur 1988: 264, 267). Even though my actions are "affected" by habit, they are still my actions.

Ravaisson's *Of Habit* constitutes, as stated at the beginning, not only an inspiration for Ricoeur, but also, and more importantly, a challenge. It is especially the third point that is difficult to square with the Ravaissonian analysis. According to Ravaisson, the philosophical analysis of habit shows that a certain part of human activity is "hidden" and "unreflective." What is more, "unreflective spontaneity" is declared to be the most fundamental form of human activity, while "reflection" and the "express will" are but an interruption of this underlying "state of nature"(Ravaisson 2008: 73). *Of Habit* challenges the phenomenology of habit by suggesting that the analysis of consciousness is too narrow. Habitual activities are conceivable without our being aware of them. Thus we might be "affected by" habit in ways that escape our control. Consequently, the analysis of our consciousness (of habit) would be fundamentally insufficient. I believe that is it not only the phenomenology of habit but phenomenology understood as the analysis of

consciousness that is challenged by Ravaisson's *Of Habit.* In the remaining part of this chapter, I will briefly present the genealogy of habit according to Ricoeur, his emphasis on habit as capacity, and his analysis of the relation between habit and consciousness. This will enable us to assess more precisely how Ricoeur replies to the Ravaissonian challenge.

The Genealogy of Habit

Habit is not a particular class of intentionality, but a mode that certain intentions may acquire. Habit is acquired. Is there anything *before* habit? In something like a genealogical enquiry, Ricoeur assumes that there are some capacities that exist prior to habit. He calls them "preformed skills" (*savoir-faire preformés*). A preformed skill is defined as "an initial unlearned power of acting" (Ricoeur 1966: 266). These capacities are sensory motor units known from developmental psychology: following an object by moving one's eyes and head; stretching out one's hand (which we do not see) toward an object that attracts one's attention; avoiding an object that threatens to hit oneself by moving the whole of one's body; extending one's hands and arms before falling; and so on. Unlike reflexes, for example, protective reflexes (the blinking of the eyelids, the flowing of tears when the eyes are irritated, sneezing, coughing, and so forth), "preformed skills" are flexible complexes of behavior that are capable of variations. For instance, I can follow an object by turning either my head or my whole trunk. What is more, the preformed skills do not respond to simple stimuli but to meanings that we grasp in our surroundings (for example, a thing *means* an attraction or a threat). The corresponding movements are not elementary, but complex and articulated, both in time and in space. As Gestalt psychology has shown, these skills and the corresponding ways of behaving can be explained neither in mechanical nor in teleological terms. Since preformed skills have an intelligible and variable structure, they can become an object of further development, of learning, and can be turned into relatively stable acquired dispositions. A phenomenology of habit thus has to be preceded by an inquiry into preformed skills "we have to go back to the initial unlearned skills … the enigma of habit is preceded by and contained in that of the preformed gesture which is already an articulated totality governed by perception" (Ricoeur 1966: 328).

The "preformed gesture" is an "enigma" in a sense, because the gesture presents itself as an articulated and intelligible movement, without there being anybody to plan the movement prior to its execution. When a child stretches its hand, which it does not look at, in the direction of a desired object, we can observe a "liaison between hand and sight" which presents a particular form of "coordination of movement and thought" that is "prior to all concerted willing" (Ricoeur 1966: 233). Before we have learned or habitualized

anything, we already have certain—limited, but working—powers over our bodies and the world. Even on this level, Ricoeur tends to describe this unity of gestures in dualistic terms: "here the mental and physical Cogito, thought and movement, bring about an undecipherable unity, beyond effort" (Ricoeur 1966: 249).

Habits are built upon unacquired modes of behavior. Thanks to habit, our ways of behavior become easier and more refined. In addition, their performance may be assumed by the individual to a greater extent than "preformed skills." Through habit, we make capacities that have already been present in our body into our own capacities; we refine them and enlarge our sphere of action. On the one hand, habit refines our capacities and makes them *our own*. On the other hand, habitual ways of behavior can be autonomous, that is, largely independent from our will and conscious control. In Ricoeur's analysis of habit, there is a clear primacy of the aspect of habit understood as (our) capacity.

Habit as Capacity

Habit may *enlarge* the scope of our action, the array of our capacities. Ricoeur restates his definition of habit by saying, "everywhere, habit is an acquired, contracted way of being, which provides capabilities for willing" (Ricoeur 1966: 292, tr. mod.). Habit is primarily a power that we acquire, the capacity for a will. Consequently, Ricoeur does not consider the decrease of receptivity to be a form of habit. Better adaptation to given conditions is not habit (in sense of *disposition*). Even though Ricoeur accepts, generally speaking, the Ravaissonian primacy of movement (spontaneity) over mechanism in habit, he does not subscribe to the concept of a "passive habit." The phenomenon of sensitivity diminished due to a repeated exposure to the same external impulse is not to be taken as a habit at all.

For Ricoeur, habit is the transformation of our preformed skills into habitual capacities. The more our capacities become habitual, the more we appropriate them for ourselves, and the more we enlarge the sphere of our action. According to this analysis, habit ensures a higher level of acquisition of a certain capacity, and thus cannot be a phenomenon of passivity only. Even though habit—understood as a mode of capacity—is not reduced to a passive habituation to something, processes of "adaptation" or "habituation" (the "passive habit") remain related to habit and may constitute one dimension of it. Ricoeur studies and generalizes the case of muscular exercise, and says, "It is habit in all its forms which . . . diminishes body's susceptibility to wonder and shock." Adaptation to a new environment cannot be regarded as pure passivity only, but as a part of our disposition (Ricoeur 1966: 314). Consequently, habit is never the opposite of our freedom; it is its constitutive

part or, as Ricoeur puts it in terms borrowed from Husserl, it is the "organ of willing" (Ricoeur 1966: 8). And yet, habit is essentially defined also as "natural" or "autonomous" up to certain extent. The autonomy of habit is explicitly acknowledged by Ricoeur himself in the three following respects.

First, habitual movement or behavior is easier than an un-habitual movement. Ricoeur is talking about habit as a *facilitation*. It is this feature of habitual behavior—its easiness—that gives rise to the idea that habit is an independent tendency that invites us to do something, similar to a need. According to Ricoeur, habit does not cause us to do something, or, as he phrases it, habit is not a source of our activity; it is only its form (Ricoeur 1966: 291).[17] The alleged "force of habit" is not an independent and real tendency: "What we often call force of habit is no more than the tendency of a preexisting need to adopt a customary form which is easiest to satisfy" (Ricoeur 1966: 149). It is precisely when refusing to take literally the concept of the "force of habit" that Ricoeur comes to criticize the Ravassonian assimilation of habit and tendency: "Ravaisson compares habit with desire: it is 'the invasion of the domain of freedom by natural spontaneity.' However, it is not true that habit is not only skill, but also a tendency to act (ordinarily we speak of the 'force of habit')" (Ricoeur 1966: 289). From the fact that something is *easier* thanks to habit, there is no way to conclude that habit is a tendency, a need, an independent source of our activity.

Second, habitual movement or behavior entails complex internal coordination. When executing it, I cannot have in mind the details of my movement. Habitual movement happens "on its own," in a well-articulated manner, and it can even, with astounding easiness and rapidity, take into account changes in external circumstances. Ricoeur speaks, in this context, about the "automatization of structure" (Ricoeur 1966: 298 f.). At this level, the autonomy of a habit has to do with the kind of knowledge implied by that particular habit, but not with its independence from the will. The contrary may be true: "an act is that much more available to willing as it is more automatic in its sense" (Ricoeur 1966: 302).

Third, the relative autonomy of habit is not limited to the internal coordination of the respective movements, nevertheless. The way habitual behavior is released or launched may be autonomous in different manners. Some habits are not directly accessible. To activate them, we have to adopt a corresponding attitude or start some other activity. For instance, I cannot say where the letter "b" is on the keyboard, but I can write a word which contains the letter "b," and thus "find" the letter "b." This "automatization in release" of a habit can also take the form of the spontaneity of habitual movement, which is already independent from the will. Some habitual movements may start from themselves; they can be "activated spontaneously" (Ricoeur 1966: 303). Every driver accustomed to manual transmission had to experience this

spontaneity in the release of movements when driving a vehicle with automatic transmission.

Ricoeur eventually adopts a rather hostile attitude toward this kind of "automatization in release." It is a "desertion of consciousness," a "distraction," inertia as an "adopted attitude," that is, an attitude we accept, a "fall" (into automatism) (Ricoeur 1966: 304). There is no mechanism in human life without a voluntary option to abandon voluntary control. If a habitual movement ceased to be an expression of a will, habit would no longer be a capacity *of somebody*, but an expression of his or her *incapacity*.

In all these descriptions of habit as enlarging the sphere of our capacity, the autonomy of habit is but a relative one. This relative autonomy does not entitle us, according to Ricoeur, to take habit as a mere automatism. Both preformed skills and habitual capacities have their own kind of intelligibility: we *can act* in the respective way without explicitly being aware of it. Ricoeur admits that there is something like the Ravaissonian "immediate intelligence," that unreflective behavior—be it in the form of preformed or habitual skills—often precedes reflective behavior. And yet, habitual behavior is not "hidden," nor is it a prototype of all human activity. It is very important for Ricoeur to assign habit its proper place, that is to locate it in relation to the preformed skills on the one side, and in relation to the reflective, deliberate, or conscious behavior on the other side. The last and most binding determination of the habit is the one that habit receives from its relation to consciousness because, according to Ricoeur, it is ultimately the conscious being who acquires habits.

Habit and Consciousness

What kind of being may acquire a habit? Ravaisson provided a number of criteria. The "subject" of habit is a unique, real unity, a being which has its structure in space (it is an organism) and in time (its temporal structure constitutes a unique life). This unity, a unity of a living being, can acquire a habit; it can accommodate a lasting change in its own disposition. These statements seem to be modified by the second part of *Of habit*. Here habit descends and disperses into the organism. Not only the living organism as such but also its parts may "carry" habits, and sometimes it seems that even inorganic parts of matter are susceptible of acquiring (something like) a habit. Now, what is, according to Ricoeur, the being capable of a change in its own disposition (in its durable capacity to behave in certain manner)? What does it mean, for this being, to "have a disposition"?

Ricoeur conceives his *Philosophy of the Will* as a philosophy based on the idea of "cogito." In each form of our behavior (willing, deciding, acting, in being emotionally moved), there is always a "cogito" (an intentional

act) present. There is always somebody, a self that wants something, that decides to do something or is moved by an emotion. When executing some of the voluntary acts (decision, action, consent)—comprised under the heading of "the voluntary"—the self has to take into account conditions that it cannot change. Ricoeur calls them "the involuntary" and distinguishes two subclasses of the involuntary: the relative involuntary (such as motives for a decision) and the absolute involuntary (such as aging, death, character). Habit is a member of the "relative involuntary" which comprises also the complex structure of motivation, preformed skills, and the emotions. The involuntary is understandable only in relation to the respective "cogito": motives are not intelligible in themselves, but only as a part of a particular decision (in which they become reasons for an action). It follows that a habit is not understandable or intelligible in itself, but only in relation to a certain willing and acting or—as Ricoeur puts is—as an "organ of willing." The self, the subject figures here as somebody who relates to a multiplicity (of different motives and different possible courses of actions) and who establishes, through his or her own choice, the unity of an action that is to be undertaken. When reflecting on the idea that the "force of habit" (i.e., the simple, habitual patterns of conduct) could explain human behavior, Ricoeur understands this as a kind of disintegration, and he adds, "In the order of the subject it is not the simple but the one which gives meaning" (Ricoeur 1966: 298).

Consequently, the unity of the subject is a unity of a practical mastery over a multiplicity by integrating it into the unity of a resulting voluntary decision or action.[18] Conceived thus, the subject is defined by the capacity to unify the multiple, to master the manifold, to synthesize the diverse. It is of course exposed to that which it cannot master (death, aging) and is completely dependent on the involuntary, since the motivational sources of its activity are involuntary: the will "only moves if it is moved" (Ricoeur 1966: 251, cf. 276). And yet once the will "moves," it is *one*. Habit does not seem to belong to that which constitutes the unity of a human being (as in Aristotle or Ravaisson); it belongs to the manifold which is a counterpart of this unity. It is a part of the involuntary that is to be grasped by a unifying act of the cogito.

This is why habit is—for Ricoeur—always ambiguous: it can be the "organ" of willing, that is, it can have its "use value" for what we intend to do, but it can become an automatism that evades the control of our will. Yet, there is one thing a habit cannot be—or at least not in Ricoeur: it cannot be an internal characteristic of a subject. To put it conversely, habit is what a subject can *have*, but not something a subject can *be*. Habit is not a "way of being," as it is in Ravaisson; it is only a more or less useful "organ." Even though trying to show that the subject is dependent on the relative and the absolute involuntary, Ricoeur is guided by the "regulative" idea of a unified subject (Ricoeur 1951) which combines self-knowledge and self-determination.

This is also why he abruptly refuses to deal with the suggestion that habit is a kind of force.[19] After explicitly denying any autonomous "force of habit," Ricoeur goes on to say that if a habit appears as an autonomous force, it is because the distracted consciousness has yielded to an automatism, because it has deserted itself: "Inertia is itself an adopted attitude. It triumphs and comes to the fore when effort is held back" (Ricoeur 1966: 304). Ricoeur assumes that habit is essentially characterized by a possible "partial alienation of the subject from himself" (Ricoeur 1966: 294).[20] The habit thus becomes a potential thing within the consciousness, a potential object within the subject. Habit, especially the perfection of a habit, is always a threat: "Habit at the same time invents and yields to the fundamental inertia of matter. This resistance of matter at the very heart of organic structure is the ultimate principle of inertia" (Ricoeur 1966: 307).

These statements only confirm that habit is taken by Ricoeur in terms of its "use value" for a subject. In these final remarks on the inertia of habit, Ricoeur relates to the very final statement of Ravaisson's *Of Habit*. He reads it as a confirmation of his own view:

> It seems that through our body we participate in an obscure ground of inertia of the universe. In becoming natural, to use Ravaisson's terminology, freedom submits to "the primordial law and most general form of being, the tendency to persist in the act which constitutes being." By making use of the time of life, habit at the same time invents and yields to the fundamental inertia of matter. (Ricoeur 1966: 307)

In his reading of Ravaisson, Ricoeur makes a direct link between the "tendency to persevere in the very actuality that constitutes being" (or—in his rendering "to persist in the act") and the inertia of matter. I suggested above, in my own reading of Ravaisson that the "activity that constitutes being" is a spiritual, creative act. It is thanks to this "actuality that constitutes being" that the "rays of thought and activity" penetrate all forms of being. Consequently, the "tendency to persevere in the very actuality" cannot be assimilated to the "inertia of matter."

Ricoeur's reading which deviates from Ravaisson (or even misreads him) is, I believe, motivated by the large philosophical framework of *Freedom and Nature*, which is one of a philosophy of self-transparent subject (of the "cogito") and which can accommodate the phenomenon of habit only in the form of something that the subject "has." The other possibility—to take habit as something the subject *is*—is not embraced by Ricoeur. This latter option, nevertheless, is much closer to Ravaisson. And, what may appear surprising, it was or would have been much closer to Ricoeur himself. From the beginning of his pure description of the fundamental structures of the will, Ricoeur

announced that this description cannot grasp the "mystery of the incarnate existence" (Ricoeur 1966: 17). The bodily or "incarnate" existence is not to be understood as the multitude of capacities that are unified by the subject, but as the dramatic participation of consciousness in its body and its world. The very act of the "cogito" cannot be sufficiently grasped by the phenomenological description in which it appears to be a self-subsistent entity. In a different philosophy—which Ricoeur calls the "paradoxical ontology" ("*l'ontologie du paradoxe*")—"The act of the Cogito is not a pure act of self-positing: it lives on what it receives and in a dialogue with the conditions in which it is itself rooted. The act of myself is at the same time participation" (Ricoeur 1966: 18).

This leaves an open question: How should we understand the "cogito" both as unifying the multitude (bodily skills and habits), and as "participating" in this very body and world? In his pure description, Ricoeur conceives habit in terms of the activity of the subject: either as its self-expression or as its self-alienation. This may capture the role of the "cogito" in unifying the multitude, but it does not touch on the idea of our participation in our body and world. Perhaps it is the Ravaissonian notion of habit—not only as something we have, but also as something we are—that would allow him to incorporate the notion of habit in this idea of participation.[21]

NOTES

1. See Bergson (2011). In his analysis of habit in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty refers to Bergson's text. In his own description of habit, nevertheless, he comes closer to Ravaisson than Bergson does, see Merleau-Ponty 2014: 143–148.

2. Some authors (e.g., Carlisle 2010) believe that Ravaisson's ethics is one of cultivating our personal dispositions (habits) and that its theoretical background is, after all, Aristotelian virtue ethics (142). For important objections against the Aristotelian reading, see Billard (1999). According to Billard, Ravaisson is a Christian philosopher who professes the passive abandon to the love of God. See also Aubenque (1984). "*Ravaisson interprète d'Aristote*," *Les études philosophiques*, no. 4 (1984): 435–445.

3. See Billard (1999): 36–37. "*philosophie domme voie d'accès vers un sentiment d'appartenance à un tout qui donne sens*," (40, 96). The most important figure of this reading, quoted by Ravaisson himself, is the Augustinian, quietist theologian F. Fénélon. Ravaisson quotes his *Traité de l'existence de Dieu*.

4. Janicaud places "vitalisme" in quotation marks ("ce qu'on appelle le 'vitalisme' de Ravaisson: la 'puissance' fondamentale, c'est la vie elle-même." And he continues, "le couronnement de la philosophie biologique de *L'Habitude* est théologique").

5. Ravaisson (1984: 320): "que la matière n'est que le dernier degré et comme l'ombre de l'existence; que l'existence véritable, dont tout autre n'est qu'une imparfaite ébauche, est celle de l'âme . . . que l'infini et l'absolu, dont la nature ne nous présente que des limitations, consiste dans la liberté spirituelle."

6. Most likely, he is referring to the Aristotelian *Physics*, Book 6, Chapter 5.

7. See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103b22. Ravaisson's use of the term "change" is rather loose. When talking about the "repetition of change," he paraphrases Aristotle, who actually does not use the term "change" (only the concept *energeia*, activity). On the contrary, the "continuity of change" (unlike the "repetition of change") implies a clear concept of change in the passage from possibility to actualization. This constitutes a difficult challenge for every reading of *Of Habit* when talking about the "continuity of change" and the "repetition of change." Are there one or two different concepts of change? And further, do both conditions of habit acquisition (continuity and repetition) have to be met in order for a being to acquire a habit, or is it enough to meet only one of them? The example of plant cultivation (Ravaisson 2008: 33) suggests that—in the case of plants at least—it suffices to meet only one condition (the continuity of change). The examples of animals and humans always refer, on the contrary, to repetition, which is explicitly described, by Ravaisson, as an interrupted or intermittent movement (Ravaisson 2008: 35).

8. On habit in Maine de Biran and Ravaisson, see Carlisle (2010: 129ff.); and especially Janicaud (1997: 15–35).

9. Even though the habitual movement is not conscious, it does not fully escape any kind of knowledge. Ravaisson calls the implicit knowledge of habitual movement an "obscure intelligence" or "immediate intelligence." In this intelligence, the "real and the ideal, being and thought are fused together" (Ravaisson 2008: 55). The idea of an immediate (un-mediated) intelligence will become an important part of the French philosophy at least from Bergson on.

10. Ravaisson refers here to F. Fénélon and his "prevenient grace." He quotes with admiration his phrase: "La nature est la grâce prévenante."

11. In his attempt to establish a general philosophy of nature, Ravaission was certainly inspired by Schelling whose lectures he attended in Munich in 1834 or 1935. See the "Editor's Introduction" in (Ravaisson 2008: 2f.).

12. "Habit can be considered as a method—as the only real method—for the estimation, by a *convergent infinite* series, of the relation, real in itself but incommensurable in the understanding, of Nature and Will" (Ravaisson 2008: 59).

13. Kant 2001 (§58): "Such a cognition is one of analogy, and does not signify (as is commonly understood) an imperfect similarity of two things, but a perfect similarity of relations between two quite dissimilar things." The source of this understanding of analogy is Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1016b34–35.

14. For a detailed analysis of the analogical method in *Of Habit*, see Billard (1999: 41–59).

15. I relate "the very actuality that constitutes being" to the act "of love and grace" (Ravaisson 2008: 75). The "tendency to persevere in the very actuality" is, I believe, the unreflective spontaneity which has different forms at different levels of nature, but which is guided by the "necessity of attraction." As we will see, Ricoeur reads these

final passages in a very different way, when relating them to the "inertia of matter" (see Ricoeur 1966: 307).

16. For a remarkable study of this topic, see Marin (2001).

17. "Aptitude does not create taste." The English translation was modified, since it wrongly renders "aptitude" as "attitude." The original text goes as follows: "Si donc l'aptitude ne crée pas le goût, la spontanéité pratique de l'habitude implique seulement que le geste usuel ait le seuil d'éxecution le plus bas et que la volonté puisse l'ébranler avec une impulsion minime" (Ricoeur 1988: 275).

18. In these reflections, Ricoeur comes close to what has recently been presented as a "practical identity" claim. See Korsgaard (2003).

19. On the "force of habit" in Sartre and Ricoeur, see Cabestan (2004).

20. Cf. "also habit can hold the seed of a threat of falling into automatism. The drift towards the thing must in some way form a part of habit" (Ricoeur 1966: 285). And finally the nearly concluding words of the habit chapter: "Habit is the useful naturalization of consciousness. The possibility that all consciousness can become an object is contained in it" (Ricoeur 1966: 307).

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Chapter 4

The Influence of Aquinas's Psychology and Cosmology on Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature*

Michael Sohn

The theme of the voluntary and the involuntary, which was famously initiated by Aristotle's distinction between the Greek *hekousia* and *akousia* (Aristotle 1999: 52–68) and systematically elaborated in medieval thought through Thomas Aquinas's distinction between the Latin *voluntarium* and *involuntarium* (Aquinas 1945: 225–316), is taken up in contemporary thought by Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature*. For a thinker who later claimed conceptual asceticism between philosophy and religious convictions and whose bracketed religious convictions were Protestant Christian, it may be surprising that Aquinas plays such a crucial role in his work. Indeed, Aquinas's influence on contemporary continental French philosophy in general and the thought of Ricoeur in particular has gone largely unacknowledged in scholarship.[1] His work, however, clearly draws important themes and concepts from Aquinas's writings. His reflections on the voluntary and the involuntary, his examination of the nature of the will, and his elaboration of key concepts, such as choice, deliberation, habit, and consent are all taken up by Ricoeur. Furthermore, Ricoeur offers a lengthy critique of Aquinas's cosmology and an extended reconstruction of Aquinas's psychology at a crucial moment in his argument as he addresses the mystery of incarnate existence and the limits of human subjectivity. This chapter examines the influence of Thomas Aquinas on Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature* and, thereby, illuminates some of the most central aspects and deepest insights regarding his philosophy of the will. The chapter begins by historically situating his appropriation of Aquinas within a broader intellectual context of Thomism in pre- and postwar French thought. It proceeds to examine Ricoeur's particular interpretation of Aquinas's cosmology and psychology, and considers the reasons why he rejects the former and demonstrates the ways and reasons he retrieves the latter.

It concludes by arguing that *Freedom and Nature* can be read as an extended, critical, and appreciative reflection on Aquinas's philosophy of the will in light of contemporary intellectual developments, most notably the emergence of existentialism and phenomenology.

THOMISM IN MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY FRANCE

In order to understand and appreciate Aquinas's influence on Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature*, we must first historically situate his appropriation of Aquinas within a broader intellectual context of Thomism in France. For Ricoeur's appropriation of Aquinas's thought could only take the form that it did because of the widespread availability and use of his works, and the distinct direction of Thomistic studies at the time. In this section, I will briefly trace the development of Thomism from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century and discuss the ways in which Ricoeur drew from it. The mid- to late nineteenth century marked the rise of neo-Scholasticism and neo-Thomism in particular as it assumed a leading place in Catholic thought until the mid-twentieth century. Neo-Thomism can be seen as an outgrowth of the desire to restore unity, order, and authority in a church and culture that was increasingly divided, pluralistic, and individualistic. Earlier attempts for a post-Cartesian, post-Kantian, or romantic traditionalism were deemed overly concerned with the modern subject and, therefore, inadequate for addressing Catholic faith within the modern world. As Bernard Reardon has written, Thomism "began to acquire new prestige as the crowning intellectual glory of that distant medieval world in which Catholic faith and order were still untroubled by the subversive forces of Protestantism and its noxious offspring, the secular Enlightenment" (Reardon 1975: 175–176). The retrieval of Aquinas's works was not simply a return to a medieval past, however, but it was an effort to integrate his ideas within modern culture and thought. Neo-Thomism was perceived to offer a coherent and integrated system that was a historical recovery of Catholic roots and simultaneously met the intellectual and spiritual needs of the contemporary world.

The renewal of Aquinas's thought arguably culminated with the publication of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*, on August 4, 1879 (Leo XIII 1951). *Aeterni Patris* sought to restore medieval scholastic philosophy and specifically the Christian philosophy of Aquinas as the foundation for sound Catholic teaching. Initially, his writings were taught primarily within Church seminaries and universities and his influence was largely restricted to standardized Latin manuals for courses in dogmatic and fundamental theology for students who were entering into the priesthood. *Aeterni Patris* highlighted the Christian philosophy of Aquinas, for it offered a conceptual

framework that grounded, unified, and justified Church teachings based on Christian revelation, on the one hand, and it offered a rigorous autonomous philosophical system with its own methods, principles, and arguments accessible by human reason, on the other. Far from "corrupting" philosophy, it was believed that Aquinas's approach makes the Christian philosopher a better philosopher. As Pope Leo XIII writes in *Aeterni Patris*, "Those, therefore, who to the study of philosophy united obedience to the Christian faith are philosophers indeed; for the splendor of the divine truths, received into the mind, helps the understanding and not only detracts in nowise from its dignity, but adds greatly to its nobility, keenness, and stability" (Leo XIII 1951: 10). Christian faith, then, does not detract from the study of philosophy, but rather aids and ennobles it. Indeed, the exercise of reason independent of revelation, so went the argument, was viewed as precisely the reason for the "errors" and "corruptions" that were introduced into modern thought and culture.

By the mid-twentieth century, however, there were a number of developments within Thomism that fragmented the spirit of ecclesial unity into a plurality of opposing approaches and positions. Neo-Thomism, which was initially written by the clergy for the clergy, expanded in terms of both its authorship and readership. Jacques Maritain found in Aquinas's resources for thinking about the nature of philosophy and its relationship to broader culture and politics. Étienne Gilson, trained as a historian, sought to understand Aquinas in his historical context. Pierre Rousselot retrieved Thomism for the purposes of theology, but departed from largely intellectualist readings of Aquinas that emphasized abstract dimensions of the understanding toward a volitionist interpretation that emphasized the concrete aspects of the will. Indeed, Aquinas's writings, particularly on the relationship between philosophy and Christianity, ignited a decades-long debate that engaged the leading historians, philosophers, as well as theologians of the period. Historians such as Gilson and Émile Bréhier debated the question of whether historical Christianity in general and Thomism in particular substantially influenced and transformed the history of philosophy. Philosophers, such as Maritain, Léon Brunschvicg, and Maurice Blondel, were less concerned about the historical question of *whether* Christian philosophy exists and more interested in its precise nature by drawing from Aquinas's works. Aquinas was thus at the very epicenter of debates by historians, philosophers, and theologians alike in France during the period. Aquinas was read by theologians as well as historians and philosophers, he was studied by Catholic clergy and seminary students as well as Catholic laypersons and non-Catholics, he was understood as an intellectualist who emphasized a metaphysics of being as well as a volitionist who emphasized the will and human action.

Ricoeur's reception of Aquinas is situated within this historical context of the renewal and pluralistic retrieval of Thomism in mid-twentieth-century

France. Indeed, his first publication in 1936, entitled "Note sur les rapports de la philosophie et du christianisme" (Ricoeur 1936), reflects his own engagement with the ongoing debates over "Christian philosophy" and his initial encounter with Aquinas (Sohn 2013). In that article, Ricoeur uses Aquinas as representative of a form of natural theology and an apologetic approach that aims to understand Christian faith by human and natural means. He characterizes Aquinas and the apologetic approach as follows: "An apologetic would consist in descending to the level of unbelievers and, by the means that we have in common with them, to *incline* the soul to faith, *approach* the content of this faith, to *prepare* the decisive act through human foundations" (Ricoeur 1936: 551). In the published article, Ricoeur presents a basic understanding of Aquinas's thought regarding the preparatory role of philosophy and reason in relation to *sacra Doctrina* and Christian revelation. In his private notes (Ricoeur 1939), however, he reveals a more nuanced interpretation that finds its way into a footnote in the article.[2] Referring to the debates on "Christian philosophy" and citing specifically the works of Maritain and Gilson who initiated and developed those arguments, Ricoeur writes in that footnote:

> Important nuances must be made to this schematic thesis. Absolutely speaking, this philosophy of God is not a *Christian philosophy* since it is the perfect work of reason and only raised by rational criteria. But in fact, this philosophy requires a *Christian state* and would not be possible without Christianity. (J. Maritain: De la philosophie chrétienne, Desclée et Brouzer, 1933; Gilson, *Bul. de la Soc. franç de Phil.*, March 21, 1931.) The notion of Christian philosophy: faith regenerates reason itself and makes it sensitive to notions that were yet knowable to reason alone. In the words of Gilson, "revelation generates reason." Reason remains autonomous in its methods, its starting point and its criterion, but it is the *reason of a Christian.* (Ricoeur 1936: 553n1)

In the footnote as well as his private notes, Ricoeur suggests that philosophy is not merely preparatory for Christian faith, but is, in fact, presupposed by it. Whether reason or revelation ultimately "founds" the project of Christian philosophy, Ricoeur's early article clearly grapples with arguably the most pressing debate on arguably the most influential thinker of the day.

While Ricoeur's early reflections in the prewar period on the relationship between philosophy and Christianity are indebted to Gilson and Maritain's interpretations of Aquinas, his first major work in the postwar period, *Freedom and Nature*, is indebted to a psychological interpretation of Aquinas by the intellectual historian Jean Laporte. In an extensive article, entitled "Le libre arbitre et l'attention selon Saint Thomas" (Laporte 1931, 1932, 1934), which Ricoeur cites on numerous occasions in his own volume (Ricoeur 1966: 185n44, 192n51, 491), Laporte writes:

> The doctrine of Saint Thomas on freedom responds, it was rightly noted, to two distinct problems that Saint Thomas has the custom of treating separately. One, from the psychological order, considers human free will in itself and in its relations with reasons and motives on the level of second causes; the other, from the metaphysical-theological order, considers it in relation to the First Cause and as subjugated to the foreknowledge and divine governance. (Laporte 1931: 61)

For Laporte, the metaphysical-theological dimension of Aquinas's thought has already been treated and discussed by scholars at length, but the psychological dimension demands further examination and elicits further interest, particularly for contemporary philosophers. Ricoeur's *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* follows Laporte's suggestion by focusing on the psychological order and the concrete aspects of the will and human action in relation to "second causes" rather than the metaphysical-theological dimension and the abstract apprehension of the understanding in relation to the first cause. Both Ricoeur's approach and emphases in the volume, then, can be attributed, in part, to a broader historical context in mid-20th-century French thought in which Thomistic studies enjoyed a resurgence of interest by philosophers as well as historians and theologians and in which thinkers increasingly appreciated and considered the concrete psychological aspects of his philosophy of the will.

THOMAS AQUINAS IN *FREEDOM AND NATURE*

On Saturday November 25, 1950, during a session before the *Société Française de Philosophie* and in front of intellectual luminaries such as Émile Bréhier, Gabriel Marcel, and Jean Hyppolite, Paul Ricoeur presented the outlines of his recently published work, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*. In his words, it sought to renew the classical problem of the relationship between freedom and nature by arguing for the reciprocal relationship between the voluntary and the involuntary (Ricoeur 1952: 3). The classical problem of the voluntary and the involuntary, of course, was famously initiated in ancient thought by Aristotle's distinction between the Greek *hekousia* and *akousia* within his account of virtues in Book 3 of *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle begins with the celebrated passage:

> Virtue or excellence is, as we have seen, concerned with emotions and actions. When these are voluntary we receive praise and blame; when involuntary, we are pardoned and sometimes even pitied. Therefore, it is, I dare say, indispensable for a student of virtue to differentiate between voluntary and involuntary actions, and useful also for lawgivers, to help them in meting out honors and punishments. (Aristotle 1999: 52)

Aristotle, then, addresses the issue of the voluntary and the involuntary within the context of a broader discussion regarding the nature of virtue and vice as they relate to praiseworthy and blameworthy action. His analysis was elaborated and systematized in medieval thought by Aquinas's distinction between the Latin *voluntarium* and *involuntarium* in his extended reflections on Aristotle's *Ethics*, perhaps most notably in questions 6 to 17 of the Prima Secundae of the *Summa Theologiae*. Whereas Aristotle's discussion of virtue leads him to consider the nature of voluntary and involuntary action, however, Aquinas presents a general and systematic account of voluntary and involuntary action before turning to habit and virtue. It is only at question 18 that Aquinas turns from philosophical psychology to moral psychology and asks the question of what makes an action a good or evil action. In other words, he gives a general or essential account of action before turning to specifically moral action.[3]

Freedom and Nature, then, is a contemporary philosophy of the will that retrieves the classical problem of the voluntary and involuntary, particularly as it was elaborated by Aquinas. His references to Aquinas's *De Malo*, *De Veritate*, *De Potentia*, *Summa Theologiae*, and *Summa Contra Gentiles* indicate the breadth in familiarity with his works and the depth in influence of his thought. He follows Aquinas in terms of both method and content. Methodologically, *Freedom and Nature* is a pure description of the primary and essential eidetic structures of the will, which are abstracted from the empirics of human existence. The analysis of the will is restricted to the fundamental reciprocal relations between decision and motive, freedom and value. The ethics of the other, then, appears only in a secondary and nonessential role as simply one possible motive among many that are the basis for decision and one possible source of value among many that affects freedom (Ricoeur 1966: 31–32). The description and understanding of abstract possibilities of the will has distinct limitations and restrictions, for it calls forth and prepares ethics but does not permit a sustained consideration of it. In other words, like Aquinas, Ricoeur provides a general theory of human action before allowing any consideration of specifically moral action. In terms of content, Aquinas's reflections on the voluntary and the involuntary, his examination of the nature of the will, and his elaboration of important concepts are all taken up by Ricoeur. Furthermore, his sustained treatment of Aquinas appears at a pivotal point in his argument at the end of Part I in a section entitled "Possibility of a Definition of Freedom in the Margins of Cosmology" (Ricoeur 1966: 190–197), where he offers a phenomenology of decision within lived time as he wrestles with the issue regarding the limits of human subjectivity. In this key section, the classical problem of freedom and nature, the self and the world, psychology and cosmology are all taken up into a phenomenological description of the voluntary and the involuntary as he offers an extended critical appraisal of Aquinas's cosmology and an

extensive constructive retrieval of Aquinas's psychology. Ricoeur's critique of his cosmology and reconstruction of his psychology reveal the important ways in which his own account of the voluntary and the involuntary both renews the classical problem initiated by Aristotle and famously elaborated by Aquinas and presents a contemporary view on it given recent intellectual developments, most notably the emergence of phenomenology and existentialism. Before turning to this reconstruction of Aquinas's psychology, we will first consider his critique of Aquinas's cosmology and the reasons why he rejects it.

THE CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF AQUINAS'S COSMOLOGY

Ricoeur is critical of both medieval and modern cosmologies in which "nature" and the "world" are determinative of the self. His appropriation of Husserl's critique of modern cosmology and the modern sciences is well known, for they present what Ricoeur calls a "naturalistic, 'causalistic' view of man" (Ricoeur 1966: 395). Psychoanalysis is, for Ricoeur, one recent example and iteration that subsumes a modern psychology and a causal view of the self into a modern cosmology and a causal view of nature. "[The] psychoanalytic method," he states, "is inseparable from a mental physics in which aberrant images and representatives are treated not as intentions . . . but as 'facts', as 'things' to be explained causally" (Ricoeur 1966: 395). Husserl as well as Ricoeur turn to phenomenology as both a critique of modern cosmology and a constructive proposal for modern psychology. Perhaps less well known is Ricoeur's critique of medieval cosmologies, which, in their own way, repeat the problem of modern cosmologies by enfolding psychology into it and by subsuming the self into the world. This section will detail and analyze his extended critique of Aquinas's cosmology, which he enumerates into four distinct and interrelated points: (1) the will understood as a species of the genus of desire, (2) the will conceived as a function of the intellect, (3) the will viewed as a rational appetite for the universal good of God, and (4) the will understood as a desire for the ultimate end, at least implicitly, in every particular end. As we will see, each of these criticisms are undergirded by the common concern regarding the determination of cosmology within psychology and the impingement of objective nature on to human freedom.

The first criticism that Ricoeur raises against Aquinas's cosmology pertains to his claim that the will is a species of the genus desire. Ricoeur notes that in Aquinas's works,

> As all desire, it [the will] tends naturally towards its end, that is, toward the form or act which makes it perfect. This initial theme presupposes the general context

> of a cosmology, of a fundamental doctrine of nature which extends a common system of determinations to subjects and things, mixing the determination of things as a natural concept with the determinations of the subject conceived as appetite. (Ricoeur 1966: 190)

The will, in other words, is embedded within a broader cosmology, which is constituted by a natural order and hierarchy, where everything has its own proper power and where everything naturally tends toward its proper end for its perfection. Plants have a vegetative power, animals have a sensitive power, and rational animals or human beings have an intellective power, each which orients them toward their natural end (Aquinas 1954: 5). The human will, then, is understood by Aquinas as one appetite among other appetites that is circumscribed and determined within a larger cosmology and doctrine of nature. If the will, however, is tied to a cosmology where each thing naturally tends toward its proper end, as Aquinas suggests, then isn't the will determined? Isn't psychology, in other words, subsumed into cosmology and the will subsumed into a system of nature? As Ricoeur duly observes, "Thus an element of necessity is introduced into the will, considered, as a nature; the subject has lost the privilege of being a subject. It has become part of nature, an outcropping in the hierarchy of appetites which by themselves presuppose no freedom and are moved by their end" (Ricoeur 1966: 190). By turning the will as a species into the genus of desire, Aquinas's cosmology reduces the will into a hierarchy of appetites and hems the self within an objective nature. Instead, as we will see below, Ricoeur wants to recover the integrity of the self by retrieving insights from Aquinas's psychology disentangled from his cosmology.

Ricoeur's second criticism of Aquinas's cosmology refers to his claim that the degree of desire of the will is a function of the degree of knowledge of the understanding. Ricoeur writes that for Aquinas,

> This second theme dominates the general relation of will and understanding, conceived as distinct faculties. The will is said to "follow" from and "obey" understanding. In this doctrine we can easily recognize the fundamental relation of the project to motive, but it is transplanted into a cosmological context. On the one hand the will is a form of natural appetite, on the other hand the determinations of understanding are interpreted according to the general spirit of a cosmology of knowledge. Finally a causal relation is interpreted between the two faculties. (Ricoeur 1966: 191)

In a footnote, he elaborates on this point and directly cites Aquinas who represents the view regarding the causal relation between the understanding and the will: "It is rather difficult for us to retain the traditional terminology which relates different moments of decision to different faculties and institutes a

causal relation among faculties: '*Omnis electio et actualis voluntas in nobis immediate ex apprehensione intellectus causatur.*' '*Motus voluntatis … natus est semper sequi judicium rationis.*' (St. Thomas)" (Ricoeur 1966: 182n41). Aquinas, then, represents for Ricoeur a classical position in which knowledge and desire, understanding, and willing are two distinct faculties with two distinct, but causally related, functions. Understanding is the intellectual apprehension of universal being and truth and the will is the intellectual appetition of universal good, such that the will is "moved" by an object or being that is intellectually apprehended as good. To put the same point differently, understanding is the immediate cause of the will, which "follows" and "obeys" the understanding. On this account, then, Aquinas offers a psychology that privileges the understanding over the will, which is itself grounded in a cosmology that privileges the apprehension of being over the appetition of goodness. If the will, however, simply "follows" and "obeys" the understanding, then isn't the will determined in a certain causal relation? If the understanding or the apprehension of being is privileged over the will in the order of reasons for action, isn't psychology, again, subsumed into a broader cosmology and a metaphysics of being? As an alternative, Ricoeur will recover the concrete incarnational and temporal dynamics of hesitation, attention, and choice, which opens up the place for freedom, by retrieving insights from Aquinas's psychology disentangled from his cosmology.

Thirdly, Ricoeur notes that for Aquinas the will is a rational appetite, *capax omnium*. And in any desire for a particular good—the act of the sense appetites—there is, at least implicitly, a desire for a universal good—the act of the will or intellectual appetite. Ricoeur comments on Aquinas's thought:

> The will thus tends naturally towards the general good (*universale bonum*), invincible desire, implicit in all particular desire, results in that we do not will anything *nisi sub ratione boni*—unless we conceive of it as good. One object only then would then be adequate to the *voluntas ut natura*: this would be the object in which all forms of the good in all respects would be comprised. Only the intuitive vision of God perceived in himself, *per essentian*, would satisfy us. (Ricoeur 1966: 191)

The basis of indetermination of the will to a particular good is demonstrated from the premise of an objective cosmology in which all things, including the determination of the will, are directed to the universal good of God. For the will or rational appetite for the universal good is specified by the desire for the *summum bonum*—imperfect happiness in this life and perfect happiness in the next life in the beatific vision of God. "There are some things which have a necessary connection with happiness," Aquinas himself writes, "namely those by means of which man adheres to God, in Whom alone true

happiness consists" (Aquinas 1945: 779). Aquinas's psychology, then, is embedded within a broader cosmology where God, who wills what is good for creation, determines all things back to the goodness of God. If the will, however, desires for the universal good of God in every desire for a particular good, then isn't the will determined? How can Aquinas, argue for a psychology that affirms voluntary human action rooted in the intrinsic principles of the intellect and the will and, simultaneously, insist on a cosmology that argues every apprehension of being and every appetition of goodness is necessarily, at least implicitly, a knowledge and desire for God? If God necessarily moves the will of human beings, then how do human beings have free choice in their acts? While Ricoeur retrieves an account of Aquinas's psychology, particularly pertaining to freedom and the indetermination of the will with respect to particular goods, he rejects Aquinas's cosmology, which argues for the necessary determination of all things, including the will, toward the universal good of God.

Ricoeur's final criticism regarding Aquinas's cosmology refers to the problematic connection that he makes between the ultimate end and the particular end. Ricoeur notes that in Aquinas's works:

> The first movement of the will which determines *itself* appears alternately wrapped up in the received thrust towards the good in general or again as other than the first movement so that we should have to insist on including all *means*, within the supreme end. (Ricoeur 1966: 194)

Aquinas provides an inclusive cosmology where the indetermination of the will with respect to finite goods implies a determination of the will with respect to the infinite good. The appetition for particular, finite goods, then, is conceived simply as a means toward and determined by an infinite end. By subsuming the appetite for particular goods into a broader cosmology that implies the appetite for a universal good, it masks, according to Ricoeur, the "hiatus of different significance between Transcendence and terrestrial good" (Ricoeur 1966: 192).

In summary, Ricoeur's extended critical appraisal of Aquinas's cosmology revolves around four distinct and interrelated points: the will understood as a species of the genus of desire, the will conceived as a function of the intellect, the will construed as a rational appetite for the universal good of God, and the will as a desire for the ultimate end in every particular end. Each of these criticisms is connected by his common concern regarding the encroachment of cosmology within psychology and the subsumption of the will to an objective nature. Instead, he affirms the "possibility for a definition of freedom in the margins of cosmology" not by turning to modern thinkers and theories, but by considering resources and insights precisely within Aquinas's works.

THE CONSTRUCTIVE RETRIEVAL OF AQUINAS'S PSYCHOLOGY

Despite the many pointed criticisms of Aquinas's cosmology, Ricoeur notes that there are also real insights to be gained from his psychology. He writes:

> The fifth thesis concerns precisely the determination by the self of which Thomism is not unaware, even though it does not dominate its whole system … it is a fact that in many texts which affirm the control of the will over its acts we are struck by the positive nature of this power. St. Thomas here appears to be rather close to a psychology which really takes the "I" rather than nature as the root center of perspective. (Ricoeur 1966: 192, 193)

Whereas the emphasis in much of Aquinas's work is the subordination and determination of the self by a broader cosmology, there are places that highlight the indetermination of the self within a narrow psychology. Here Ricoeur is indebted, again, to Jean Laporte's series of articles, entitled "Le libre arbitre et l'attention selon Saint Thomas" (Laporte 1931, 1932, 1934), and his psychological interpretation of Aquinas's works, particularly his emphasis on Aquinas's notion of *potestas ad opposita*. Rather than to attribute a determination *ad unum* of the will, both Laporte and Ricoeur want to highlight the indetermination of the self that founds the freedom to judge and choose among apparent and opposing goods. As Laporte notes of Aquinas's psychology, "we are determined with regard to the good in general, but we are free with regard to everything else" (Laporte 1931: 67). It is based on this narrow examination of psychology in relation to particular goods, disentangled from a cosmology of natural ends and the universal good, that Ricoeur focuses his reconstructive efforts of Aquinas's works.

Thus, insofar as Aquinas emphasizes the will as the genus of desire within a broader cosmology of natural ends, the will is determined, but insofar as Aquinas focuses on the will as an appetite within a narrow psychology of means, it is undetermined. Aquinas, for instance, states, "The will, however, necessarily desires the last end in such a way that it is unable not to desire it, but it does not necessarily desire any of the means. In their regard, then, it is within the power of the will to desire this or that" (Aquinas 1954: 58). And again, "Consequently, man wills happiness of necessity, nor can he will not to be happy, or to be unhappy. Now since choice is not of the end, but of the means, as was stated above, it is not of the perfect good, which is happiness, but of other and particular goods. Therefore, man chooses, not of necessity, but freely" (Aquinas 1945: 285). While the will is necessarily determined with respect to the universal end or good of happiness, Aquinas allows that the will has freedom of choice with respect to the means regarding particular

goods. Ricoeur focuses on this latter reading of Aquinas that emphasizes not a unified and determined will with respect to natural ends in a hierarchy of being, but rather a hesitating and undetermined consciousness in a world-view where value is heterogeneous, relative, and conflictual. In so doing, he untangles the will from the genus of desire. Rather than tying the will to a broader cosmology that determines it to the good in general, Ricoeur focuses on a narrow psychology that uncovers the indetermination of the will with respect to finite particular goods.

Insofar as Aquinas begins from cosmology and an abstract metaphysics of being where the will is derivative and "follows" the apprehensions of the intellect, the will is determined, but insofar as he begins from psychology and the concrete experience of the will, the will is undetermined and free. Rather than a determination *ad unum* of the will from a cosmological perspective, he describes a hesitating undetermined will from a psychological perspective given the heterogeneity of value and the indefiniteness of motives. It is the act of attention that brings clarity to motives. Here, again, Ricoeur follows Laporte's recovery of the well-known Aristotelian-Thomistic category of deliberation—an inquiry of reason preparing the judgment for choice—and highlights the concept of attention, which he draws from Malebranche and Descartes, but also Aquinas himself (Laporte 1934: 54). "*Intentio*," Laporte states, "we already know that Saint Thomas understands by it often *attention* in the modern sense of the term" (Laporte 1934: 39). Attention is a type of vision that turns toward or turns away, sets an object in the foreground and other objects in the background and, over time, brings clarity to motives. On this account, there is a determination of freedom within the indetermination of a hesitating consciousness; it depends on me to turn my vision and attention toward one or another motive. Ricoeur, then, gives an account of motives that are inclining without compelling. By offering an account of hesitation, attention, and choice, Ricoeur not only attends to the incarnational and temporal dynamics of decision, but he also opens up greater space for freedom that goes beyond the causal account of Aquinas's psychology of the intellect "moving" the will. Again, he separates the will from a broader cosmology and metaphysics of being, and instead focuses on a narrow psychology, the indetermination of the will in hesitation, and the determination of the will in freedom through attention and choice.

Thirdly, on Ricoeur's reading of Aquinas's psychology, the will is not so much a rational appetite for the universal good, *capax omnium*, instead it is fundamentally the power to act that is grounded in the power to think other, *potestas ad opposita*. The indetermination of attention and the determination for acting implies the power for contradictories at the root of motivation. Choice, then, is paradoxically both the termination of attention and the eruption of a project, the resolution of anterior deliberation and hesitation and the

inauguration of novelty. The indetermination of attention and the determination of choice mutually imply one another. As Ricoeur stated in that important session before the *Société Française de Philosophie* in 1950 when he first presented the main outline of his new book:

> Now this double reading is written in the very structure of decision, which, on the one hand, is an invention of a project and, on the other hand, a home of values, an activity and a receptivity. And this is why there have always been two philosophies of freedom. According to one, choice is only the end of deliberation, the repose of attention. M. Laporte has interpreted the philosophies of Saint Thomas, Descartes, and Malebranche in this sense. According to the other, choice is an emergence, an eruption of existence. (Ricoeur 1952: 21)

On the one hand, choice can be seen as continuous with that which is anterior; it is the resolution of deliberation. Ricoeur associates this with a classical concern with an intellectualistic bent, particularly within Thomistic psychology. On these accounts, choice is the simplification of a hesitating consciousness. "To hesitate," Ricoeur writes, "is to have confused reasons, to deliberate is to disentangle and clarify these reasons, to choose is to bring out a preference among the reasons to choose is to resolve hesitation, to resolve attention on a group of motives" (Ricoeur 1966: 168). In other words, classical philosophy universalizes choice within a general structure of reason, thereby depicting life amid "calm situations" of noncontradictory and uncontested values (Ricoeur 1966: 168). It associates the complexity of daily life with a defect due to lack of reasons and diminishes the place of risk and anxiety within choice. On the other hand, choice can be seen as discontinuous with that which is anterior and viewed as the eruption of a project. Ricoeur associates this with the modern concern for man's actual condition found in voluntaristic and existential philosophies (Ricoeur 1966: 171). On these accounts, choice goes beyond the simplification of a hesitating consciousness and the clarification of motives. Instead, given human corporeal and historical conditions, and given the heterogeneity and conflict of values and motivations, a description of choice acknowledges the risk and anxiety associated with it. While voluntaristic and existential philosophy's emphasis on discontinuity gives insight into choice being made from a situation of risk and anxiety amid contradictory and conflicting values, it overlooks the continuity with simplified motivation through attention. It is not that motives are to be rejected wholesale, but that they are often contradicted; it is not that values are invented, but rather they are encountered. The paradox of choice, then, consists in both continuous motive and the resolution of attention, on the one hand, and discontinuous project and the eruption of choice, on the other hand. If classical philosophies do not adequately appreciate the discontinuity of choice and the concomitant

risk and anxiety, contemporary existential philosophies do not adequately appreciate the continuity of choice and the motives that constitute it. Thus, again, Ricoeur disentangles Aquinas's psychology from a broader cosmology wherein the will is determined to the universal good, and instead he focuses on a narrow psychology that uncovers the indetermination of the will with respect to finite particular goods, *potestas ad opposita*, and the resolution through the process of hesitation, attention, and choice.

Finally, insofar as the will is seen as the desire, at least implicitly, for the ultimate good of God within a broader cosmology, the will is determined, but insofar as the will is seen as the desire for particular goods within a narrow psychology, the will is undetermined. Ricoeur writes:

> If we stress the dependence of particular goods on the general good which binds them as *means to their end*, the will appears as if moved by the general good. Thus we can do without the determination of the self by the self. A moved will is not a "self" in the spirit of the cosmology. . . . [But] if we stress the hiatus which separates the infinite good from finite goods, we bring out the indetermination of the thrust towards such finite goods. (Ricoeur 1966: 193–194)

To put the same point differently, he again disentangles psychology in relation to particular goods from a broader cosmology of the universal good of God. The rejection of God within objective cosmology, however, is not a wholesale rejection, for he wishes to affirm God at the limits of human subjectivity within psychology. As Ricoeur argues:

> We believe that we must have the courage to strike this desire for God from objective cosmology in order to rediscover its true, uncharacterizable, unobjectifiable, metaproblematic dimension. . . . The "Poetics" of the will can hereafter rediscover the desire for God only thanks to a second revolution which breaks through the limits of subjectivity as the latter had broken through the limits of natural objectivity. The second revolution never takes place in Thomism because the first one has not, either. God, consciousness, things lend themselves to only one universe of discourse, to only one total cosmology, which abolishes the leaps between objectivity, Cogito, and transcendence and so avoids the mysteries which underlie these paradoxical transitions. (Ricoeur 1966: 191–192)

What he rejects, then, is a totalizing cosmology that engulfs God, self, and, the world within a system of natural ends and what he retrieves is their integrity by preserving the gap and hiatus between them.

Ricoeur, then, recovers insights from Aquinas's psychology even as he critiques his cosmology. While he denies Aquinas's cosmological premises regarding a natural hierarchy of ends, which culminates for humans in the *summum bonum* of the knowledge and desire for God, he affirms Aquinas's

psychological discussion of the heterogeneity and conflict of particular goods and the role of hesitation, deliberation, attention, and choice within human subjectivity. For methodological reasons, Ricoeur avoids deriving the indetermination with respect to finite goods from a fundamental determination with respect to the absolute good. It places a limit on the reach and scope of human understanding, thereby shifting away from a "metaphysical-theological" reading of Aquinas toward a psychological account. To exceed beyond the limits of *apparent* goods would be to betray the methodological commitment toward an eidetics and existential elucidation of the will. Based on this commitment, Ricoeur restores the determination of the self by the self with respect to human motion and action. For human action, according to Ricoeur, is not determined by the world as medieval and modern cosmologies posited, but rather human action changes it. "I am in a world in which there is something to be done," he writes, "the feeling of power, of being able, presents the world to me as horizon, as theater, and as matter of my actions" (Ricoeur 1966: 212). Whereas the medieval cosmology of natural ends and the modern cosmology of natural "facts" both, in their own way, privilege the causal determination of the world over the self, Ricoeur restores the priority of psychology and the determination of the self over the world. The consequence of disentangling Aquinas's psychology from his cosmology is the restoration of the self or the "I" as determinative of human action. While, on the one hand, Ricoeur may be read in line with a long line of modern philosophers from Descartes to Husserl, who restore the priority of the ego, he can also be read in line with a particular interpretation of the medieval philosophy of Aquinas who, he insists, employs an "eidetics of the subject without recognizing it" (Ricoeur 1966: 193).

CONCLUSION

Freedom and Nature can be read as an extended, critical, and appreciative reflection on Aquinas's psychology in light of contemporary developments in phenomenology and existentialism. His engagement with a range of primary sources by and secondary works on Aquinas, his extended critical reflections on Aquinas's cosmology, and his expansive constructive retrieval of Aquinas's psychology indicate the breadth and depth of his influence on Ricoeur. His indebtedness to and appropriation of Aquinas should not be surprising given both the historical context of Thomism in France in the mid-20th century as well as the important conceptual contribution Aquinas made in elaborating a philosophy of the will. Ricoeur's particular interpretation of Aquinas, which is indebted especially to the work of Jean Laporte, examines the psychological problem of free will grounded in experiences of "second

causes," rather than a metaphysical-theological reading based on the premise of God as first cause and Mover of human action. His reflections on the classical problem of freedom and nature, the voluntary and the involuntary are not simply a commentary on Aquinas's medieval psychology, however, but rather they engage his thought in light of insights within contemporary phenomenology. As Ricoeur stated before the *Société Française de Philosophie*, shortly after the publication of his book:

> Phenomenology seems to me to have the advantage of diversifying our concepts. If we only oppose freedom and necessity, we only have an opposition of two terms in which the second, necessity, is moreover borrowed from a cosmological analysis of nature. Phenomenology, instead, only moves on the level of subjectivity, and it is on this level that it attempts to multiply our concepts, our analytical tools … It is why the word necessity does not seem to be able to summarize all the involuntary. To give an account of all the diversity of the involuntary, it is not needed to invent words except in some extreme cases. Rather we must find the rich sense of the words of our everyday language such as the words "motive," "organ," "motion," etc. Phenomenology is to go to the things themselves, to respect all the very complex aspects of consciousness and to not simply play with the small number of notions which were forged by Aristotelian analysis. (Ricoeur 1952: 26)

Classical concepts such as choice, deliberation, and consent, first proposed in ancient thought by Aristotle within his analysis of the Greek *hekousia* and *akousia* and elaborated in medieval thought by Aquinas within his analysis of the Latin *voluntarium* and *involuntarium*, are taken up by Ricoeur within his analysis of *Freedom and Nature*. But that analysis is mediated by contemporary methods of phenomenology and existentialism, and so it is supplemented by contemporary concepts such as hesitation, attention, risk, and anxiety. The distinct contribution that phenomenology and existentialism make to the classical problem of the voluntary and the involuntary is not only a more diverse and expansive vocabulary, but also a more nuanced and sophisticated approach that attends to the incarnational and temporal realities of human existence and human freedom in its relationship with nature.

NOTES

1. The most well-known exception is John Caputo's work on Heidegger and Aquinas (Caputo 1982). To my knowledge, there is no sustained treatment on the relationship between Ricoeur and Aquinas.

2. Shortly after he prepared this article, he attended a debate between Étienne Gilson and Auguste Lecerf on "Christianity and philosophy" on April 25, 1936, at

the Faculté de théologie protestante in Paris. In that debate Gilson rejects Lecerf's characterization of Christian philosophy as a rational foundation for revealed Christian theology. Therefore, proofs for the existence of God, for example, are not mere deductions of human reason alone, but already presuppose Christian faith. The talk delivered by Gilson became the first chapter and the impetus for *Christianisme et philosophie* (Gilson 1936). Ricoeur seems to side with Gilson's claim that for both medieval Catholics and Protestant Reformers, Christian philosophy is "founded" on the Word of God.

3. Aquinas's *De Veritatem*, a text with which Ricoeur was familiar, follows the same structure and organization of the *Summa Theologiae* regarding the "pure" description of human action. In question 24 of *De Veritatem*, he first focuses on the nature and understanding of free choice in articles 1 to 7 before proceeding to consider the "empirics" of sin and the "poetics" of grace in articles 8 through 15.

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Part II

KEY THEMES

Chapter 5

The Paradox of Attention

The Action of the Self upon Itself

Michael A. Johnson

The phenomenology of attention is an important concern at every stage of Paul Ricoeur's philosophical thought. In 1940, near the beginning of his philosophical career, an article by Ricoeur entitled "L'attention: Étude phénoménologique de l'attention et de ses connexions philosophiques" was published in the *Bulletin du Cercle philosophique de l'Óuest* (Ricoeur 1940, 2013, 2015).[1] Sustained treatments of the phenomenology of attention reappear in *Freedom and Nature*, *Fallible Man,* and *Time and Narrative*, volume 1. In *Fallible Man*, Ricoeur ties a phenomenology of attention to his appropriation of the Kantian transcendental imagination within his account of human fallibility (Ricoeur 1986: 34–36). In *the first volume of Time and Narrative,* Ricoeur returns to attention, highlighting the important role played by *attentio* in Augustine's phenomenology of time as the threefold present (Ricoeur 1984: 18–20). One might argue, also, that a phenomenology of attention is present, at least implicitly, throughout Ricoeur's later hermeneutical theories of symbols, metaphor, and narrative, as well as the calling voice of conscience and the summoned self in the 1986 Gifford Lectures and *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur 1992: 341–355). In what follows, I will focus my discussion on Ricoeur's phenomenology of attention presented in chapter 3 of *Freedom and Nature* (Ricoeur 1966: 155–197).

ATTENTION IN *FREEDOM AND NATURE*

The capacity of the will to direct the attention of the mind in the process of making a decision plays an essential role in the argument of *Freedom and Nature*. In chapter 3, entitled "History of Decision: From Hesitation to Choice," Ricoeur undertakes a phenomenological investigation of the temporal process

of *deciding*. For Ricoeur, decision, or *choice*, is the endpoint of a process of deliberation that displays a unique kind of temporality. As the chapter unfolds, it becomes clear that the phenomenological analysis of *attention* initiated in section 2 forms the crux of the chapter's argument about the temporality of decision and, on my reading, provides the keystone of the overarching argument of Part I of *Freedom and Nature* ("Decision: Choice and Its Motives"). In Ricoeur's view, it is the self's *attention* to possible motives that *orients* and *directs* the temporal process of deliberation, guiding the maturation of decision from hesitation to choice. In my discussion of Ricoeur's phenomenology of attention, I will describe its crucial role in the overall argument (of Part I), identify its sources in the French philosophical tradition, and specify the distinctive contribution Ricoeur makes to this tradition.

Ricoeur's distinctive contribution to the phenomenology of attention is the fruit of a creative and original synthesis of two philosophical traditions on the topic of attention initiated, respectively, in the philosophical thought of René Descartes (1596–1650) and Edmund Husserl (1859–1938).[2] The *first philosophical tradition* about attention is a unique view about the relation between attention, will, and judgment in French philosophy that can be traced back to René Descartes, but actually stretches back to the Scholastic theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. In *Fallible Man*, Ricoeur identifies this line of thought about attention as "the tradition leading from St. Thomas to Descartes, and Malebranche" (Ricoeur 1986: 33). This tradition is concerned with the volitional moment in judgment—in Ricoeur's phrase, "'volition' in judgment" (33)—rooted in the will as a "power of contraries" (*potestas ad opposita*) (34), a term used by St. Thomas to refer to the power to deny or affirm the truth of an idea or proposition or to pursue or avoid actions with ends judged as good or evil, and the important role of attention in the operation of this power.[3] In *Freedom and Nature*, Ricoeur follows a new reading of this *Thomas-Descartes-Malebranche* tradition on attention advanced in the 1930s by the Sorbonne historian of philosophy Jean Laporte in a series of articles in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (Laporte 1931, 1932, 1934, 1937, 1938; see also 1950, 1951).

The *second philosophical tradition* Ricoeur draws upon in constructing his synthesis is the phenomenology of the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, newly influential in France in the 1930s. Ricoeur seeks to integrate Husserl's analyses of the phenomenological structures of intentionality, perception, signification, and judgment in the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I* into his own account of the intentionality of decision. In *Ideas I*, Husserl introduces a subtle phenomenology of attention, placing it at the center of his expanding account of the interrelation of intentionality, perception, and judgment. By drawing upon the Husserlian conceptual structure of intentionality to reframe the Cartesian attention tradition (as interpreted by Laporte), Ricoeur

can utilize insights from the Cartesian tradition about the relation of attention, judgment, and will, while avoiding some of its major weaknesses or apparent self-contradictions. In this way, Ricoeur joins together the analyses of the two traditions in a higher synthesis, as he states in a footnote: "Here Husserl's analysis in *Ideas*, §§35–37, 80–83, 114–15, and 122, joins that of St. Thomas, Descartes, and Malebranche" (Ricoeur 1966: 179, fn. 3). Before I turn to Ricoeur's unique synthesis of the two traditions, however, it will be useful to provide some additional historical background to Ricoeur's reception of the Cartesian attention tradition.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE CARTESIAN ATTENTION TRADITION (CAT)

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, prominent French historians of philosophy, such as Jules Lagneau and Léon Brunschvicg, came to read Descartes's *Meditations* and other works through the lens of Maine de Biran's account of effort at work in embodied willing. More specifically, Biran had developed a phenomenology of perception as an *effortful attention*, that is, attention as directed not only by external, or exogenous, stimuli, but from within, by the will. Though Biran's account of embodied willing was itself directed against Descartes's dualistic account of consciousness, it allowed these later French historians of philosophy to pay attention to the overlooked role of effortful attention in Descartes's account of the relation between the will and the understanding, and, more specifically, in his well-known explanation of the origin of epistemological error in judgment given in the "Fourth Meditation."

As a young scholar and professor, Ricoeur was trained in this reading of Descartes and therefore was highly receptive to Laporte's new reading of Descartes that foregrounded the role of effortful attention.[4] Laporte advanced this reading as a response to Etienne Gilson's attack on Cartesian philosophy as part of the so-called *Christian Philosophy* debate in Paris of the 1930s (Laporte 1937).[5] In Laporte's eyes, Gilson had profoundly misread Descartes's position on human liberty, and the epistemological relation of will, judgment, and understanding. In part, according to Laporte's critique, this misinterpretation was due to Gilson's overlooking the crucial role of effortful attention in the Cartesian account of judgment. This is a glaring oversight when one considers that Descartes constructed his famous epistemological method around rules for the direction of the mind in forming judgments, as set forth in his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, *Discourse on Method*, and the *Meditations*.

A major debate among recent scholars concerns Descartes's views of the mind's voluntary control over judgment. Many scholars, especially in

Anglo-American debates, have ascribed to Descartes the philosophical claim that the mind can freely decide which ideas or propositions to believe. This position is sometimes called doxastic voluntarism. Opposed to this reading is a view recently developed by some Anglo-American experts that Descartes's view is better characterized as a version of *attention voluntarism*, the claim that the mind has *indirect* voluntary control over judgment through exercising a free power of the mind to *direct its attention* to consider *different* ideas. Indeed, this free power to shift the mind's attention plays a crucial role in implementing the Cartesian method based in the principle that one should suspend judgment about ideas that are without certain evidence, defined as clear and distinct ideas. For example, in the "First Meditation," it is only by directing his attention toward a different idea, namely, the famous hypothesis of the evil genius, that Descartes is able to suspend judgment about the existence of external objects corresponding to the mind's ideas. On my reading, Laporte's interpretation of the volition in judgment tradition shares much in common with the attention voluntarism reading of Descartes.[6]

An important focus of Laporte's interpretation is the dialectic of passivity and activity in judgment, and how attention mediates this dialectic. In the "Fourth Meditation," Descartes seeks to give an account of the origin of error in judgment that does not ascribe the source of error to the nature of any specific "power" or "faculty" of the human being. For Descartes, error in judgment results from the *interaction* of the exercise of two powers, namely, the will and the understanding. Descartes conceives of the will as an "infinite" power, fully active and free in its scope (1984: 40). In Descartes's view, it is through this infinite aspect of the will that human beings exhibit the "image and likeness of God" (1984: 40). But there is also a difference between human and divine liberty. Like human liberty, divine liberty is absolutely free in its scope and amplitude. However, for God, there is no difference between willing and understanding. What God perceives (understands) to be true and good is not prior to God's willing it. In the case of the human being, judgment is dependent on what it receives from the understanding. For Descartes, the human power of understanding is "finite," and this can be understood in two senses. First, the understanding is entirely passive. Descartes conceives the power of the understanding, following a long medieval tradition, on the model of sensible perception, or seeing. Ideas, in the Cartesian framework, are received by the "mind's eye" (the understanding) with relative degrees of clarity (or opacity) and distinctness (or confusedness). The understanding is bound by what it perceives. Second, understanding is finite in scope, and must therefore take place over time. The understanding can attend fully to only one idea at a time; and considering an idea's relative evidence and certainty (whether it is clear and distinct) takes time; and it takes effort to maintain the necessary attention through time. Furthermore, it is only by shifting attention

away from one seemingly evident idea (e.g., the existence of bodies) toward another equally or more evident idea that the mind enables itself to suspend judgment about ideas that are not sufficiently clear and distinct, per the methodological principle that Descartes articulates at the outset of the *Meditations*. In sum, the will is infinite, absolutely free, and active; and the understanding, finite, bound, and passive.

In Descartes's account, error arises from the improper *use* of the two powers in their interaction, not from the powers in themselves. Human beings are culpable because we have the capability to use the two powers together responsibly. However, because the will is infinite, it can affirm or deny ideas that are not clear and distinct. The question is how it can do so. Descartes proceeds to offer a two-part definition of freedom of the will that precisely corresponds to how the two powers function in their interaction: "This is because the will simply consists in our ability to do or not do something (i.e., to affirm or deny, to pursue or avoid); or rather [*plutôt*], it consists simply in the fact that when the intellect puts something forward for affirmation or denial or for pursuit or avoidance, our inclinations are such that we do not feel we are determined by any external force" (1984: 40). The first clause, referring to a two-way power of the will to go both ways (*potestas ad opposita*), clearly corresponds to the infinite power of the will, a *libertarian* conception of freedom. The second clause is confusing, because it appears to contradict the first clause by introducing another conception of freedom, *spontaneity*, or self-determination free from external influence. Immediately following, Descartes adds a further qualification of the second clause that seemingly contradicts the first: "In order to be free, there is no need for me to be inclined both ways; on the contrary, the more I incline in one direction—either because I clearly understand that reasons of truth and goodness point that way, or because of a divinely produced disposition of my inmost thoughts—the freer is my choice" (1984: 40). On the one hand, the "highest degree of freedom" occurs when the will is completely determined by the clear evidence of intellective perception. On the other hand, "the indifference I feel when there is no reason pushing me in one direction rather than another is the lowest grade of freedom; it is evidence not of any perfection of freedom, but rather of a defect in knowledge or a kind of negation" (1984: 40). In the latter case, there is a *kind* of freedom, which Scholastic theologians called the "freedom of indifference," but this is the *lowest degree of freedom*.

How can this be? How does the judgment of the will being *more determined* by the understanding's perception, conceived as a passive and unfree power, make the exercise of the will a greater degree of freedom? Here I can only provide a summary of Laporte's attention voluntarism reading, which makes two essential points. First, the judgment of the will is not *causally* compelled to affirm or deny the truth of a proposition by the content it receives from

the understanding. Rather, the will is *inclined* (but not compelled) by the evidence it receives from the understanding's intellectual perception. Judgment is determined not causally but rather *normatively*: in other words, the will acts spontaneously, out of self- or inner-determination, to affirm what the understanding perceives to be true or good. Two senses of "determination" need to be distinguished to grasp Descartes's complex notion of freedom in judgment: a causal sense consisting in force or physical mechanism; and the normative meaning which involves the will deciding based on reasons. Secondly, it is in the direction of the mind, through the effort of attention, that the understanding can consider alternate ideas, and gain the ability to suspend judgment toward ideas that *appear* certain but in fact are not. Thus, effortful attention incorporates, as it were, the passive power of the understanding into the freedom of the will and judgment. The responsible *cogito* (i.e., the will) ought to keep shifting its attention until it has considered all possibilities; then it should cease its movement and rest attention on the evident idea, and spontaneously affirm it. In this way, the maxim that the infinite power of judgment should not overrun the finite power of understanding, in other words, that one can avoid error by suspending judgment in the absence of evident certainty, can be achieved through the proper exercise of effortful attention.

RICOEUR'S SYNTHESIS OF CAT WITH HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY

The task now is to explicate how Ricoeur integrates the Cartesian characterization of the relationship of understanding (i.e., intellectual perception), attention, and judgment into a Husserlian-style analysis of the relation of perception and judgment *as forms of intentionality*. The goal will be to elucidate how Ricoeur's account of this formation of motives relates, generally, to the more encompassing Husserlian conception of intentionality, and, specifically, to Ricoeur's conceptual innovation, the intentionality of decision. The intentionality of motives will be a kind of *perception* (more specifically, *imagination*), and the intentionality of decision a kind of *judgment*. Ricoeur's phenomenological account of attention and the decision process shares the emphasis found in CAT (on Laporte's reading) on the role that attention plays in the relation between the understanding's intellective perception of ideas and the will's active judgment. Ricoeur develops a parallel account of the process of decision that draws upon notions of intellective perception, attention, and judgment found in the phenomenological work of Husserl. We then need to see how Ricoeur incorporates (and transforms) these insights within his own account of the "intentionality of decision." At that point we shall be able to see exactly how Ricoeur derives his concept of attention.

Ricoeur's main concern in chapter 3 is to provide a phenomenological analysis of decision in its passage from deliberation about possible motives to an actual decision. This passage is essentially a *temporal* process (*la durée*) that begins with deliberation about possible motives, each tried out in a *conditional* mode of affirmation, hesitating and moving among *possible* motives, and, then, finally, terminates in a judgment in a *categorical* mode of affirmation—the maturation and birth of "choice." Ricoeur advances a phenomenology of attention as the core of his analysis of this unique temporality of decision. A major component of Ricoeur's innovation is a synthesis of CAT with the Husserlian phenomenology of intentionality. First, following the CAT model, he shows how the temporality of attention as a kind of active perception mediates between decision as a practical kind of *judgment* (chapter 1) and the exercise of imagination as a type of *perception* that forms motives out of the inchoate and unformed affectivity of the corporeal involuntary (chapter 2). Second, he incorporates the CAT analysis into a Husserlian phenomenological analysis of perception, judgment, and attention as distinct kinds of intentional acts. Just as in Descartes, Ricoeur will isolate a dialectic of passivity and activity in the temporal interplay between perception (imagination) and judgment (decision) that is mediated by attention.

Ricoeur's fundamental strategy in *Freedom and Nature* is to approach the question of decision initially through an eidetic phenomenological account of the will and decision. However, the temporality of decision (the history of the formation of choice) surpasses the "eidetics," or pure description, of the will and decision offered in chapter 1. There Ricoeur models the pure description of judgment on Husserl's analysis of judgment as a higher-order intentional act built up from, or "founded" upon, lower perceptual intentional acts. Now, however, the phenomenological analysis needs to go beyond the eidetic point of view to render "existence" intelligible. The basic thrust of the argument in chapter 3 is to show how the temporal process (*la durée*) of decision, the passage from indetermination (hesitation about motives and possible choices) to its resolution, or termination, in choice, is itself constituted as an interplay of activity and passivity, of the voluntary and the involuntary. While this activity-passivity, which reaches down into the opacity of "existence," exceeds the full transparency of the eidetics of decision, the eidetic reflection on deciding developed in chapter 1 (as an intentional act aiming at the project that depends on me and based on motives) sheds light on this interplay within the *durée* and renders it more lucid and intelligible. Eidetic phenomenology consists in pure description of the phenomenon considered in terms of its *static* structure. As an eidetics, the temporal and corporeal involuntary dimensions of decision are therefore necessarily initially placed within brackets, or "suspended" (i.e., utilizing Husserl's phenomenological *epoché*). Following

Descartes and Husserl, Ricoeur employs the metaphor of perception to describe the passive dimension of the intentionality of decision. The process of deciding involves a kind of receptivity. As an intentional act, however, this is incomplete. As it becomes clear that the phenomenon of decision remains unintelligible within the limits of eidetic description, Ricoeur then removes the brackets on the corporeal involuntary (chapter 2) and temporality of decision (chapter 3). Although involving passivity in one respect, the temporality of decision also involves an active process of attention or direction of the mind. In Ricoeur's account, the phenomenon of attention necessarily involves both the corporeal and temporal dimensions of human existence. Ricoeur shows how similar considerations about the activity of attention also illuminate the personal and voluntary aspects of the process of decision. The temporal process of imagination (the formation of motives out of unformed sea of affectivity) and deliberation (about those motives) is guided by *a continuous act of attention*. In the final analysis, it is attention which makes the "history of decision" as a whole and its termination in choice voluntary, a "personal venture" (Ricoeur 1966: 162). The bond of incarnation (the corporeal involuntary) and the temporal process (*durée*) of decision as the two sides of existence is itself made possible by a deeper bond realized through this unique temporality of attention.[7]

This pivotal moment of the argument in chapter 3 comes at the beginning of section 2 where Ricoeur announces the "working hypothesis" of the chapter:

> This quest which seems constantly to postpone the study of choice is actually the only possible introduction to the understanding of that terminal act: a choice completes something, it resolves a history. Furthermore, we are convinced that we shall implicitly resolve the problem of choice if we come to understand how we conduct the internal debate in that process. The working hypothesis which we shall put to the test is that the *power of stopping the debate* is no other than *the power of conducting it* and that this *control over the succession is attention.* Or to put it otherwise: *the control over process is attention in motion; choice in a sense is a fixing of attention.* What follows will show at least that this assimilation of choice to the fixing of attention constitutes only one aspect of what we shall call the paradox of choice. (Ricoeur 1966: 149; emphasis in original)

The above passage shows the incorporation of key elements of CAT into Ricoeur's "working hypothesis," namely, that "the power of stopping the debate [*le pouvoir d'ârreter le débat*]" is nothing other than "the power of conducting it [*le pouvoir de le conduire*]." These two elements appear phenomenologically in attention's role within the temporal process of decision: (1) "the control over process [*l'empire sur la durée*]" is "attention in motion";

(2) the resolution of the process in choice is "a fixing of attention [*l'attention qui s'ârrete*]" (1966: 149; 1950: 142).

Corporeal Involuntary and Temporality: Removing the Epoché of Temporality

Through a phenomenological account, Ricoeur attempts to show how the indetermination of decision arises from the opaque, formless affectivity of bodily existence (as the incarnation of the cogito, or the corporeal involuntary) that forms the basis for the "total field of motivation."

> It is because corporeal existence is a principle of disorder and of indetermination that I cannot, at the start, be a *determined* project, *self-determination,* apperception of *determinate* reasons. The project is confused and the self unformed *because* I am encumbered by the obscurity of my reasons, submerged in the essential passivity of existence which proceeds from the body. (Ricoeur 1966: 143)

Ricoeur elucidates the phenomenological experience of corporeal existence through the Husserlian notion of a "horizon." A "horizon" is the unthematized background against which objects of intentionality appear within consciousness. In the context of Husserlian intentional analysis, "to thematize" means to bring an object or aspect of experience into explicit, focal awareness under a category or concept. A "horizon" refers to a context of meaning intrinsic to the meaning of the object (or profile of the object) that appears in the foreground as directly given in the present momentary phase of consciousness. As such, the horizon both transcends the genuinely given in any momentary presentation of the object and contributes to the meaning of both the object and its context. This concept of horizon is essential to understanding Husserl's conception of attention as well as Ricoeur's appropriation of it. Consciousness is always a consciousness of. Intentionality aims at an intentional object, but consciousness is always also aware of an unthematized background that is not the object of consciousness, a whole that gives sense to the parts (objects) that appear in the foreground. In Ricoeur's analysis of the "history of decision," the unformed, indeterminate field of affectivity forms the horizonal background for the determination of motives.

This horizonal field of motivation appears first within the bodily experience of need. Phenomenologically such needs are experienced not as third-person objects (as in psychological analysis). Rather needs are "active affects" felt within a first-person experience of the feeling of the personal body (*le corps propre*) that mediates the relation of self and world. This horizonal realm of affectivity, the corporeal involuntary, is a strange activity-passivity, a passivity that becomes the basis for the activity of the self.

The field of corporeal affectivity presents itself as an "open totality" (144), a formless, disordered, multiplicity of affective needs and impulses that cannot be gathered into a logical whole of hierarchically ordered desires. In Ricoeur's analysis, there is no a priori order of need and value within the corporeal involuntary. Nevertheless, the light of the imagination, Ricoeur holds, *clarifies* affective need and bestows on it a quasi-intentionality aiming at a quasi-object of desire. Imagination (*Phantasie*, for Husserl) *presentiates* a sensuous image of an absent object in the external world that could satisfy need and awakens desire.[8] This awakened volitional desire invites a universalizing judgment of value that enters into the motives contributing to an overall decision about the project. In the resolution of the choice, the undetermined heterogeneity of affects, values, and motives ripens and matures into a determinate order.

However, the clarification and evaluation of individual possible motives always happens side by side with others, and this process is nested within larger and larger constellations of possible motives, desires, and values, and, finally, within the final context of the determination of choice in the concrete situation—horizons within horizons. Moving through these horizons is a deliberative process both of hesitation and determination that alternates back and forth between different contexts, sometimes in a continuous but often in a discontinuous way. This takes place over an interval of time, a duration (*durée*). Thus, the intersection of imagination, the corporeal involuntary, and deliberation has the form of a horizonal temporality. In short, as Ricoeur argues, incarnation and temporality "are one and the same human condition" (1966: 136).

In chapter 1, Ricoeur had bracketed both corporeality and temporality in the eidetic pure description of decision. Now, by reaching the temporality of decision, the concrete whole becomes (more) intelligible.[9] The eidetics, or pure description, of chapter 1 are now used to shed light on, or elucidate, the inarticulate opacity of existence in its corporeal affectivity and the temporal emergence of the determinate form of motivations, understood at this point to be two sides of the same coin. In return, the opaque "mystery"—serves to render the eidetic moment comprehensible. Completing the circle, the analysis of attention constitutes the final keystone of the entire argument of Part I. Ricoeur makes this clear in a pivotal passage concerning the analysis of motivation. In this passage, he asserts that imagination, temporal process, and attention are "intertwined" to such a degree as to be "incomprehensible" apart from the phenomenon of attention:

> This testing of values in imagination is here understood in terms of the universally imaginative character of attention. To pay attention is to see in a very broad, non-intellectualistic sense, that is, in a way to develop intuitively all the

> relations and all the values. Attention functions in the intuitive surroundings in which we try out most abstract values. In this way the three ideas of process, attention, and imagination become intertwined. But attention is what makes the others comprehensible. (Ricoeur 1966: 150)

Attention works through imagination—as an attentive, imaginative perception—within a temporal process.

In this way, the analysis of the intentionality of decision forms the bridge from the eidetic description in chapter 1 to the structural concepts of chapter 3. In chapter 1, Ricoeur analyzes decision within the context of the Husserlian notions of intentionality and judgment (as one form of intentionality). For Husserl, perception, imagination, and judgment are all forms of intentionality. Therefore, to reconstruct the rest of Ricoeur's reasoning in chapter 3, it will be helpful to understand in greater detail the relation of perception (imagination), judgment, and attention in Husserl. Through this overview, we can also see how Ricoeur transforms CAT in light of Husserlian insights about intentionality transferred to the practical sphere of decision.

The advantage in following Husserl's approach, in Ricoeur's view, is that it permits him to set aside the problematic "faculty psychology" of mind. The Cartesian account of the mind hypostatizes different mental powers into a set of real faculties divided into types that are receptive and passive (e.g., understanding and sensuous perception) and those that are active (i.e., the will as operative in judgment and attention). Instead, Husserl incorporates these aspects of the mind into a unified theory of intentionality. For Husserl, intentionality is conceptualized as always including two components, the real *intentional act* and the *intentional content*. The latter intentional content itself has two components, the *act-quality* and *the act-matter*, which can be separated in thought as abstract moments of the concrete act but never in reality.[10]

The *act-matter* is the ideal meaning (*Bedeutung*), or sense (*Sinn*), which determines the object that the intentional act is about, inasmuch as intentionality is the directedness of the mind as always being "about something." This "something" is the intentional object. This intentionality, or the directedness of the consciousness toward the intentional object, allows the mind to reach the object, but the object insofar as intended, or presented, within the intentional act. These components of intentionality themselves are not perceived but rather are "lived through" (*erlebt*), or experienced, in a non-thematic and non-reflective awareness. These "lived through" experiences (*Erlebnisse*) are not perceived as objects. Strictly speaking, only intentional objects can be perceived, or given, to consciousness as objects.[11]

Husserl also distinguishes among different ways in which the intentional object may be given to consciousness. However, contrary to the Cartesian account, this differentiation of *cogitationes* marks out different kinds of

intentional acts, and not different faculties of the mind (with some being active, some passive). Rather, the *act-quality* serves to differentiate between different kinds of intentional acts which may, in fact, share the same act-matter. The same act-matter, for example, "the apple on the apple tree outside my window," can be taken up into different kinds of intentional acts distinguished by different act-quality types: for example, *perceiving*, *wishing*, *hoping*, *desiring*, *asserting*. In language, the act-quality is expressed in the following form, "I perceive that. . . ." If we attach the act-matter example just used, we construct an expression of the intentional act of *perceiving that there is an apple on the apple tree outside my window*. In the case of perception, I really *intuitively* receive the apple as "given in the flesh" (*leibhaftig*) within the intentional act. Husserl calls this receptive intuition an "act of intuition." But I can also *imagine* the apple, in which case the apple is given, or "presentiated," not in the flesh, but in an image. Then again, I can also intend the object "emptily," for example, in "signitive acts" in which the object is presented only as thought, or as expressed in language, but without any intuitive "fulfillment." Building up from these simpler act-types, I can also combine a signifying act with a "fulfilling act," an intuitive act that fulfills the signifying act. But notice, both the signifying act and the fulfilling act taken individually are each kinds of intentional acts. The different modes of givenness—namely, perceptual, imaginative, signitive, and so on—are determined by the act-quality. With this account in mind, we can now explore what Ricoeur means in asserting that temporal process (*durée*), imagination, and attention are "intertwined."

Intertwinement of Imagination, Temporal Process, and Attention

In Ricoeur's account, imagination, the temporal process (*durée*) of decision, and attention are intertwined. Attention is a form of active perception, and all perception is intentional. For Husserl, every type of intentionality involves a mode of givenness, a content received passively, as it were; and similarly, all kinds of intentional acts have an active quality. Consciousness acts and in so doing reaches the world and receives a type of givenness (*Gegebenheit*). Nevertheless, attention, for Husserl, is conceived as an *active* type of perception, an "active perception." In this regard, recall that in the CAT, attention serves to mediate the relation between judgment (which involves free will) and understanding (passive perception of ideas).

To further analyze Ricoeur's understanding of choice as a kind of judgment within the intentionality of decision and in relation to attention, we now need to ask how this relation works in Husserl. Judgment, for Husserl, is another kind of intentional act, with a specific act-quality, namely, the

attitude corresponding to "I assert that …." In my perceptual act of seeing the apple, I have a merely passive belief, closer to an automatic presumption, that the apple exists. But the actual judgment that the apple exists ("I assert that the apple I see actually exists in my backyard") involves a higher-order act "founded on" the corresponding signifying and perceptual acts (as well as categorial acts). For Husserl, judgment of belief is a "thetic" act that "posits" the object, not just passively, as in perception, but firmly and actively. A judgment says, "S is p," and posits not only an appearance of a red-patch-appleish-side-in-the-present-now, but also the entire object as existing through a duration of time. Judgment is partially built up from concordant perceptions in a process Husserl calls "identification." On the other hand, in perception taken alone, my passive proto-belief can be quickly overturned by discordant perceptions of successive sides of the object which contravene my meaning anticipation. In a fashion approximately similar to Descartes's analysis, then, a judgment of existence is an active positing in relation to a passively held perceptual presentation of an "idea." The significant difference is that, for Husserl, both acts—perceptual and positing—involve a moment of activity and receptivity, but now as held together with a different intentional "how" determined by the specific act-quality of thetic judgment.

The foregoing analysis is important because, as noted earlier, Ricoeur defined the "intentionality of decision" (in Chapter 1) as a kind of judgment, and explicitly models this on Husserl's analyses of intentionality and judgment (in the *Logical Investigations*). This intentionality involves a triple determination—of the project, of the motives, and of the self. Decision is the act of judgment, and the project aimed at is the intentional object defined by *both* the act-quality (I decide that …) *and* the act-matter (the action to be done which depends on me and is within my power). But it should now be clear that this higher-order "positing" act must be "founded on" perceptual acts. Yet where does Ricoeur find parallel candidates for these perceptual acts within his intentional analysis of decision as a kind of judgment? He uncovers them in his analysis of acts of considering motivations as the receptivity to corporeal affectivity—and, specifically, in imagination as a quasi-perception (i.e., as discussed above). He also uses Husserl's analysis of perceptual acts of intentionality to argue that attention is not a secondary act of reflection on perceptual representations; rather, attention is an "active mode of perception." It is an "attentive reception" or a "perceptive attention."

In making this argument, Ricoeur calls for following Husserl in the "generalization of 'the look [regard]'" in the *Ideas I*: "Attention as it functions in perception is only the most striking example of attention in general which consists of turning towards or away from. The act of looking must be generalized, following the double demand of a philosophy of the subject and of reflection concerning the form of succession" (Ricoeur 1966: 156).

Elsewhere he writes, explicitly integrating the Laporte reading of CAT into Husserl's generalization of "the look": "Attention presents itself first as a mode of perception. By generalization we shall be able to extract from perceptive attention (or better, from attention as a mode of perceiving) the universal characteristics which make it a kind of production of permanence or change of thought in general, in the broad sense which Descartes gives to this word" (Ricoeur 1966: 153).

We are now in a position to gather up the results of our account and to use them to analyze a crucial passage in the chapter. Interweaving the logic of CAT with Husserl's analysis of the inner logic and structure of intentionality, Ricoeur writes, "Attention in perception is understood as free displacement of vision. Hence the analysis of attention suppresses its own object if it omits its fundamental temporal character. Static characteristics of attention, such as they appear in an instantaneous segment of consciousness, can only be understood with reference to a certain shift of vision" (Ricoeur 1966: 153). Attention is experienced as active because it can freely shift its "gaze" to attend to one content or another. The shifting of attention is partly motivated, or *inclined*, by the content, but attention is *never compelled* (or forced in a causal manner) to halt on one datum or to shift to another. Secondly, we experience the difference between active perception and passive perception, and this difference shows up in our linguistic communication. "Language notes the place of attention by distinguishing seeing and looking at, hearing and listening, etc., not as two different acts but as two aspects of the same perception: to see is to *receive* the qualities of the object, to look at is to extract them *actively* from the background" (153; emphasis in original). Following this line of thought, Ricoeur goes on to make two observations:

> Attention is thus in the first instance inseparable from the receptivity of the senses, or, to put it otherwise, from general intentionality which is the structure of all *cogitatio.* Attention is attention to . . .—not attention to the representation, as if it passed over perception once more in order to reflect on it. The intentionality of attention is initial, direct intentionality which goes beyond perceiving, and by which I become in some sense all things: I pay attention to the perceived thing itself. Attention is secondly the active character of perception itself. In effect the same receptivity of senses can be experienced in a passive mode of fascination, obsession, etc., or in the active mode of attention. (Ricoeur 1966: 153; emphasis in original)

As this passage makes evident, Ricoeur's account parallels Descartes's (following the Laporte reading) about the direction of attention, but transmutes it into a phenomenological (Husserlian-like) account of the intentionality of decision. "Seeing" and "looking at" are both acts of perception, but they are differentiated by the "how" of the act. To emphasize this inner logic, Ricoeur

makes two points: (1) Attention, like any act of perception, is a kind of intuitive reception, and not a second-order reflection on the content of perception; and (2) Attention is differentiated (from the generalized class of perceptual acts) by its active mode of perception. The phenomenological "how" of the active sense of this mode of perception is expressed in language by the phrase "I pay attention to . . . [*faire attention à . . .*]." Attention is both an active reception and an active perception.

At this point we enter into a deeply enigmatic aspect of Ricoeur's account of the temporal process (*durée*) of decision, an enigma to which he refers in several passages as the "paradox of choice" (149) or the "paradox of attention" (186). In one sense, all three parts of decision—motives, self, and project—are part of the same process of a "triple determination," wherein all three parts transition in tandem from indetermination to determination. However, the "history of decision" is a whole that is defined *by the choice that terminates the process*. In that sense, the choice defines (determines) all three. The enigma, then, is that the self that emerges in the resolution of deliberation in choice also in some significant sense determines the whole process, that is, how affectivity is given form and affects the self. The phenomenon of attention is at the heart of this *paradox of choice* and *self-affection*. The self originates from an "action of the self on itself."[12] It is in light of this enigmatic relation that Ricoeur claims that even decision in the conditional mode of deliberation (possibility as indetermination) is charged with another mode of possibility, the potency of the *personal* act of decision that results (determination).

Attention as Mastery of the Temporal Process: The Personal Subject in the Process

It is to this enigma that we now turn. Until now, we have focused more on the content (act-matter) and the how (act-quality) of the ray of attention. An important question remains: How does Ricoeur's analysis of the relation of the *durée* of decision and attention reveal something about the self underlying the act as personal and voluntary?

In section 2 ("The Process of Attention") of chapter 3, Ricoeur turns his attention to the duration of decision itself. Throughout the *durée* of decision the subject feels "charged" with the potency of decision in the double sense of the process of deliberation creating a possibility (choice) that will become actualized, but also of the triple indetermination—of motives, self, and project—on the way to becoming determined in the resolution of deliberation. There is an endeavor of deciding already at work in the indetermination; the deciding self is present even in the potency of indetermination. What is the mark of this activity? "The mark," Ricoeur writes, "of the activity of process

is attention; attention is succession carried out. In turn, attention can be understood only as a kind of change of object, as a shifting of view, briefly, as a function of process. Process and attention thus mutually imply each other" (Ricoeur 1966: 150). From a third-person perspective, the "progress of decision through detours, stagnations, leaps, and returns is a succession" (150). Yet what makes the form of the internal debate—which has the form of a mere succession—into something personal and voluntary? At this stage, we must examine the formal structure of the duration (*durée*) of decision itself.

For this formal structure, Ricoeur turns to Husserl's account of inner-time consciousness.[13] Through phenomenological reflection, Husserl argued, we can intuit not just the contents of the temporal flow, the flux of the contents of consciousness, but also its form. In the living present, the ego receives primal impressions in the "now phase" that flow past but are then retained in a primary memory (retention). Time is experienced not as an instant but rather as a "duration" in which we experience the flowing of present impressions slipping away into the past as retentions of the primal impression, and then as retentions of retentions, and so on. Similarly, moving through temporal horizons, we anticipate future impressions, and these anticipations (protentions) are retained along with the present impressions as fulfilled significations, and so on. Ricoeur describes this pure form of "inner-time consciousness" in this manner:

> Time is the form according to which the present changes constantly as to its content, that is, it is the order of succession of moments which are always present, and which we express in a metaphor: time is the *flux* of the present. Now each present has by its very nature a horizon of anticipation (or, as Husserl has it, of protention) and a horizon of memory or, better, in the broadest sense of the word, of retention. "The present is unceasingly *becoming* an other present," that means, "each anticipated future *becomes* present" and "the present *becomes* retained past." These three formulae contain the entire meaning of the words "to become." (Ricoeur 1966: 151; emphasis in original)

At this point, Ricoeur finds Husserl's description both compelling yet also incomplete. What accounts for the "act" part of this, except for a formal act that could be instantiated by an impersonal "anyone"? "This *a priori* condition constitutes a universal structure in which the personal marks of a venture do not appear," Ricoeur asserts (150). What then makes this form of succession *personal*? Can there be a voluntariness in this mere form of time? "But this triple formulation of becoming only expresses a form. The words, each future moment, each present moment, each past moment, do not in the least express the fact that this form is a subjectivity, that it is myself. On what condition would the form of becoming be the growth of a person, the development of a subject?" (150). At this point, Ricoeur introduces his major ontological claim about the freedom of the will. He bases this claim around an insight drawn from the CAT tradition:

"The noun *willing* designates the structure of the instantaneous act which we have analyzed eidetically [in chapter 1]. The adjective *free* indicates the mode of its birth in time; the word freedom is itself only a substantivized adjective. We can also make use of the adjective *voluntary* to characterize the temporal birth of *willing*. It is thus a synonym of *free*" (152; emphasis in original).[14]

Ricoeur argues (in a way that clearly echoes CAT) that the freedom evident in the abstract notion of the freedom to choose one way or another is not a groundless, motiveless, and irrational freedom. In fact, as we learned in our reading of CAT, the highest form of attention, and thus freedom, is the highest degree of receptivity. Yet, this freedom, and thereby the marks of subjectivity and voluntariness, only shows up as a phenomenological duality (the activity/passivity reciprocity) at the heart of the experience of the *durée* of practical consciousness itself. Ricoeur writes:

> Succession represents the fundamental bipolarity of human existence with which this work is concerned: it is undergone and carried out [*on elle est subie et conduite*]. If process is a personal venture [or adventure; Fre. *aventure*], it is because the preservation or the change of a perception, of a memory, of a desire, of a project, etc., in part depend on me, and in part do not depend on me. What radically does not depend on me is that time moves on: we have already alluded to this radically involuntary aspect of drifting from before to behind in relation to prevision and project. … But in turn the spontaneity of the Cogito and, more precisely, of the voluntary mode of internal debate consists in this, that we orient ourselves within the process, that we conduct the debate by calling forward witnesses. We are thus led to seek the voluntary marks of process as such and to confine the role of our *freedom* to a certain kind of maintaining or changing our motives and thus of maintaining or changing our projects. (Ricoeur 1966: 152; emphasis in original)

The freedom of the will is both a becoming of motives (thus receptive perception of content undergone) and a growth, or maturation of choice (thus active mastery and orientation) in a living, dramatic unity. Where does the voluntariness of this process show itself? "Attention," Ricoeur writes, "is this kind of mastering of the process whose flux itself is radically involuntary. In it arises the free or the voluntary; it is itself *attentive,* that is, not a distinct operation but the free mode of all *cogitationes*" (152). Succession in the duration of decision is both a succession undergone (perception, affection) but also a succession directed, or conducted (active attention).

Temporal Process and Attention: The Marks of Subjectivity

Ricoeur's next step is to ask, "What then are the marks of this active mode of attention?" (Ricoeur 1966: 153) Here he is clearly seeking the

phenomenological marks of the activity of attention, but we should also understand that he is talking about how decision determines not just the motives and the project *but also the self*. The *first mark* is "a very special manner of appearance of the object" (153). At this juncture he enlists Husserl's phenomenological analysis of a *thematized* object of intentionality against a background horizon. The object, Ricoeur writes, "becomes detached from the background with which I am not involved but which is involved as the context of the object noted, 'co-perceived'" (153). Ricoeur then cites a passage in *Ideas I* in which Husserl describes the phenomenon of attention: "The apprehension [*Erfassen*] is a singling out [*Herausfassen*], every object having a background in experience" (Ricoeur 1966: 153; Husserl 1981: 70).[15] This is attention, for Husserl, "attentive perceiving" (Husserl 1981: 70). Passive awareness becomes an active "seizing," a "free turning of 'regard'—not precisely nor merely of the physical, but rather of the 'mental regard' ['*geistigen Blickes*']"—toward an object singled out from the halo of conscious experience (Husserl 1981: 71). Attention is the mental regard "turning toward [*zuwenden*]" one object and a "turning away [*abwenden*]" from the background or other objects as now actively "unheeded" (Husserl 1981: 71). This free act "converts consciousness in the mode of actional [*aktueller*] advertence into consciousness in the mode of non-actionality [*Inaktualität*] and conversely" (Husserl 1981: 71). Consciousness is awakened, and becomes egoic, an actively aiming at. . . . In this attentive regard, Ricoeur writes, the "object stands out and acquires a special clarity" (Ricoeur 1966: 154).

Here Ricoeur notes, as *a second mark of attention*, that the clarity or opacity is a feature of the appearance of the object *for consciousness*, and not necessarily of the object *in itself*. "Herein lies the secret of attention: when an object becomes detached from the background of which it is a part, it remains the same as to its meaning" (154). Meaning cannot compel, or cause the free act of the ego, but rather *motivates*, or *inclines*, the ego. The object itself may have features recognized as salient or prominent, attracting attention; but these only incline, and cannot force regard. In the final analysis, though the object (or affect) guides me, it is my self in the active mode of attention that enacts the "turning toward. . . ." The degree of clarity of the appearance, therefore, is also a function of the degree, or rather, the duration, of attention. Ricoeur writes, "I do not know another object, but rather the same one more clearly." It is a "strange action, an action which accentuates . . ." an aspect of the object or context (154).

A *third mark of attention* is that this experience of free turning of the mental regard cannot appear phenomenologically except within a temporal process. The act of bringing one object into the foreground of attention implies shifting a previous one into the background. And this movement, this change,

has its own internal logic of meaningful motivation because it is the meaning of the object that guides, or motivates, this progression. Nevertheless, it is experienced as a temporal succession. *Another mark* of this active mode of attention is the paradoxical interaction between the degree of freedom and activity in attention and the degree of receptivity. The more available that I am, the more I receive. Preconceived notions, habits of perception, or prejudices lessen attention, thereby obscuring what we see. "This understanding suffices for a fundamental ontology of willing: it points out that the highest activity brings about greatest receptivity" (155).

Thus, the "essence of attention," for Ricoeur is the free mobility of attention evident in the "temporal shift of vision." I can always shift my perspective, my attentive regard, if something motivates me. But this is a matter of understanding and meaning motivating a "seeking the new," of *inclining* the shift of attention, rather than something external simply *causing* it. As should now be clear, the phenomenon of attention cannot appear without examining the *how* of the becoming of decision. "An instantaneous segment of my mental life does not permit me to distinguish the voluntary or passive character of observation. What either is or isn't voluntary is the *becoming* of its division" (156).[16]

JUDGMENT, THE EVENT OF CHOICE, AND THE EFFORT OF ATTENTION

Choice is judgment in the mode of practical intentionality. What differentiates judgment from deliberation? What distinguishes attention as an active mode of imaginative perception from choice as judgment? Like judgment in Husserl, choice transforms passive belief of perception (mere entertaining, or conditional belief) into a positing, a thetic act, or, in Ricoeur's term, a "categorical affirmation." Like Descartes, Ricoeur finds in judgment the work of the free will; and just as in Descartes, this freedom shows up in the duration of attention. But Ricoeur does add a "something more"—in a nod to the modern existentialist notion that decision is a creative, original act. The event of choice constitutes something more than merely being the resolution of deliberation, the last link in a chain of practical reasoning. However, this novelty shows up not as an irrational, groundless leap, but rather in and through the effort of attention. This effort of attention is a primordial form of self-affection—the effort against a resistance within oneself preventing the self from attending to a higher truth or good—a kind of self-binding of attentional freedom.

This radical self-affection comes to the fore in section 3, "Choice," in which Ricoeur is concerned with the originality of the *act* of choice (Ricoeur

1966: 163ff.). Is choice, which is the resolution of hesitation and deliberation in the *durée* of decision, an event that adds something more? Is the "instant" of choice an *event* in which the intentionality of decision changes from a conditional mode of affirmation of motives to a categorical mode of affirmation (which Ricoeur calls the *fiat*, "Make it so!"), as something more than simply the tail-end of the temporal process? What is the relation between the process (of deliberation) and the event (of choice) within the *durée* taken as a concrete whole? Is the relation one of complete continuity—the event of choice is simply the termination, or resolution, of deliberation? Or is it a relation of radical discontinuity—the event of choice is a radical break, an irruption of decision as a completely creative upsurge of the self's spontaneity opening up a new future and making a scission with the past? What role does Ricoeur assign to attention in the active mode, as attentive perception, in deciding between these two "readings" of the event of choice? In fact, Ricoeur constructs a mediating position between these two readings based in a phenomenology of the effort of attention drawn from the American pragmatist William James. In light of a certain reading of the effort of attention, the event of choice will be understood as both continuity and discontinuity, as both the termination of attention and the irruption of the project.

This discussion is important because the *event of choice* is the decision itself—now considered in relation to the history of decision. As noted earlier, the intentionality of decision is modeled on Husserl's notion of judgment as a higher-order intentional act founded on attention as an active mode of perception, which is also understood as an intentional act. The switching over from a conditional to a categorical mode of decision marks the shift from decision carried out as attentive perception of motives (in the decision process) to decision as a form of judgment (the *fiat*). Consequently, we need to inquire into the relation of attention and judgment in the event of choice in Ricoeur's mediation. In summary, in the event of choice the triple determination of motives, project, and self takes place in a reciprocal interplay of act (activity, voluntariness) and content (receptivity) that appears (phenomenologically) only in the *durée* as a concrete whole and the effort of attention that simultaneously originates, guides, and completes the duration. I will briefly summarize the two readings, and then turn to Ricoeur's constructive mediation.

The First Reading: Continuity

Ricoeur sets up the contrast between the two readings of the event of choice by raising two claims. The first claim is an "affirmative proposition": *To choose is nothing other than to cease deliberation* (Ricoeur 1966: 168). This proposition is affirmed by the first reading, which he ascribes to classical philosophies—by which he means the medieval scholastic tradition but

also including early modern philosophy (i.e., CAT). This classical tradition has an "intellectualist bend" (168) when it comes to conceptions of willing and deciding centered around an Aristotelian notion of practical reasoning. The first proposition is affirmed because to resolve on a course of action is to resolve motivation by being maximally receptive (attentive) to reasons. Choice is a process of rational deliberation that ends in a practical judgment to which the will consents.

The second claim has the form of a "negative proposition": *The act of choosing is nothing except the cessation of deliberation* (168). The classical reading affirms this claim, too. In this connection, Ricoeur has in mind something similar to Malebranche's position about choice that Laporte emphasizes: to stop (*s'ârreter*) deliberation by the fixation of attention and making a choice are the same thing (Laporte 1938; Malebranche 1997: 8; Ricoeur 1966: 156; Ricoeur 2016: 47). The fixation of attention is the same as choosing. The act of choice is nothing other than being maximally receptive to reasons, that is, to clear and distinct ideas, that incline the will. This perspective values the universal aspects of ways of life, such as the monastic or clerical, clearly defined in medieval society. This view finds particularity of circumstances irrational, defective, and confusing and denies conflict of duties. Novelty, differences, and otherness of situations are an irrational residue.[17] For this intellectualist tradition, the lowest degree of freedom, as we saw in the case of Descartes, is the so-called freedom of indifference, in which choice is completely undetermined because equally good, but only partially convincing, courses of action exist on both sides of the choice. On the other hand, the highest degree of reason is the complete determination of choice by reason. In summary, Ricoeur writes, the "formulae of intellectualism tend to *universalize* choice" (1966: 175). Stated otherwise, for the classical (intellectualist) tradition *essence precedes existence* in the philosophy of the will.

The Second Reading: Discontinuity

Ricoeur identifies the second reading with the radically "voluntaristic" and/or "existentialist" aspects of some modern philosophies such as those of Kierkegaard, Bergson, and Sartre (171). In the second reading, the emphasis is on the *discontinuity* between motives (and the process of deliberation) and the event of choice. Choice is an "original act," radically creative: it is an "irruption," "leap," an "upsurge" of the self's spontaneity, a "thrust into the future" (171). Ricoeur analyzes this position using the same two claims described in the first reading. Whereas the "classical" reading says "Yes" to both propositions (one affirmative and the other negative), the "modern" reading says "No" to both propositions (see Table 5.1). The second reading denies the affirmative proposition. To choose has nothing to do with receptivity to

reasons, motives, and values. Choice is a sovereign act of freedom determining itself, and radical groundless freedom is the self. Basing one's choice on motives or reasons is the mark of inauthenticity. The second reading also denies the negative proposition (viz., *The act of choosing is nothing except the cessation of deliberation*). Choice is a positive something, an event. It is a completely free *original act*; an upsurge of a spontaneous, sovereign freedom (being-for-self) that is undetermined, or motiveless. Ricoeur has in mind Sartre's idea of consciousness as a being-for-self that exists by nihilating past determinations of the self. In contrast to the first reading, this view valorizes the difference of creativity; duties and values are the freedom-denying inertia of encrusted habit and tradition (Bergson). The present situation is unique; the self determines both itself and the situation in a radical Act of freedom. The modern person—exemplified in protagonists of modern novels and dramas—sees the novelty of the changing circumstances not as the threat of irrationality (as in the intellectualist tradition) but as the source of new creative value. *Not to risk* is to deny the value of change, new beginnings, and the future. "Just as the formulae of intellectualism *universalize* choice in terms of its most clearly understood reasons, so those of voluntarism *individualize* it in terms of its fully sovereign daring" (175). The ideal posited here is "of an individual who would not be a secondary individuation of a form, a type, or

Table 5.1 The Two Readings of the Event of Choice

	First Reading: Continuity (Intellectualism)	*Second Reading: Discontinuity (Voluntarism; Existentialism)*
Affirmative proposition: To choose is nothing other than to cease deliberation.	YES. To resolve on an alternative is to resolve motivation. Choice is a process of rational deliberation that ends in a practical judgment. Attention is receptive to reasons.	NO. To choose (in the authentic sense) has nothing to do with receptivity to reasons and values.
Negative proposition: The act of choosing is nothing except the cessation of deliberation.	YES. The fixation of attention is the same as choosing. The act of choice is nothing other than becoming maximally receptive to reasons.	NO. Choice is a positive something, an event; a completely free *original act;* an upsurge of a spontaneous, sovereign freedom (being-for-self) that is undetermined, or motiveless; and exists by nihilating motives. (Sartre's being-in-itself)

a primary essence, but rather the individual who 'individualizes himself' by choosing his existence in every moment. As the contemporary formula puts it, existence precedes essence" (175).

Ricoeur's Constructive Mediation of the Two Readings: Continuity and Discontinuity

For Ricoeur, in contrast to the classical and modern readings, the event of choice involves *both* continuity *and* discontinuity, both termination of attentive deliberation and an eruption of the project. Ricoeur takes something from both readings, saying "Yes" to the first (affirmative) proposition and "No" to the second (negative) proposition. He endorses the first proposition insofar as the self chooses because of reasons (i.e., motives) that incline without compelling. He affirms the receptivity of attention as a critical ingredient in the process of choice. Availability to the contents of the *durée* of the decision contributes to the resolution of hesitation and deliberation.

But he denies the second proposition that the act of choosing is nothing except the cessation of deliberation. Choice, for Ricoeur, is a positive "something," an event made possible by an *effort of attention*. Through the effort of attention, choice is a *sursum* that interweaves universality and novelty (alterity) perceived (received) in the situation in a self-determination that is also based on determination of motives (in a reciprocal process). The something more of the event of choice involves sometimes a radical creativity in the determination of motives, sometimes even a reversal of values. The act of attention that guides the *durée* also determines "the how" of the way in which the contents are received. This "something more" is the *fiat* (categorical affirmation) that completes the whole of the duration. In the *fiat*, the self feels the effort of attention of the will in fixing attention on one set of motives but also simultaneously in actively ceasing to looking at other motives. At a deeper level, following Gabriel Marcel, the "act" of attention may be seen as opening the self to a radical availability to an encounter with the personal mode of being (including the alterity of the personal other), the generosity of "being-with" (Marcel), opened up by the potency-act of decision. Marcel called this mode of being "creative fidelity" (Marcel 1964). Such an availability is founded on a type of a unique form of judgment, a radical commitment (promise) to fidelity to the other in the future that also opens the self to its ownmost possibility-for-being.[18] One notes this deeper sense of attention as availability when Ricoeur's vocabulary shifts subtly from speaking of attention as attentive *looking* to attention as a "listening to . . . ," *hearing* the summons of the other person.

In any case, attention (attentive perception; availability) culminates in an event of choice (judgment; conviction; commitment) in a radical self-affection

in the becoming of the self: the endeavor (effort) of the self's becoming in the passage from a triple indetermination (of motives, self, and project) to a triple determination. As Ricoeur puts it:

> The novelty of choice has the appearance of categorical modality within the network of a consciousness which unfolds itself in a conditional mode. Thus discontinuity concerns a change of modality: through choice the three dimensions of decision—the triple relation to project, to self, and to motives—surge forward into a categorical mode. The project, for one, becomes a genuine imperative: I command the event in general. The indicator, "to be done by me," itself becomes categorical. . . . At the same time, while the project becomes categorical, I determine myself categorically. I choose *myself* in determining *what* I shall be in my doing. The projected myself gives consistency to my self, to the self which is at present projecting. Before the choice, I was only the unity of a wish to choose and the unity of painful consciousness of my intimate division. I create myself as an actual living unity in my act: in that moment of choice I come to myself, I come out of the internal shadows, I irrupt as myself, I ek-sist. Finally, in the choice the constellation of motives itself is fixed in its definitive order. Motivation itself becomes categorical: I choose because. . . . A preference becomes consecrated beyond return. All the "but's" disappear. (172)

This is the novelty of choice: "suddenly my project is *determinate,* my reasons become *determinate,* I become *determinate.* This triple determination—or resolution—is the irruption of choice" (172; emphasis in original).

Once again, Ricoeur seeks the marks of the event of choice in the phenomenology of attention. This time, however, he seeks it not in the movement of attention or a feeling of guiding it, but in a deeper, more corporeal sense, the feeling of effort against resistance. Against Malebranche, the fixation of attention involves more than the movement of attention merely coming to "rest" (*reposer*). Rather, there must be a resistance against countertendencies within oneself in the hierarchizing, or the ordering, of motives and values, and the staying open to the right contents. Here the distinction between "act" and "contents" in attention and decision becomes impossible to draw.

For this phenomenology of the effort of attention, Ricoeur turns to the description of the interplay of the effort of attention and the *fiat* in William James's 1890 classic, *The Principles of Psychology* (James 1983). While admitting that the Jamesian psychological terminology sometimes devolves into a "mental physics" (additions of quantities, of force, of effort, etc.), Ricoeur finds underlying the vocabulary a valuable phenomenological description of the effort of attention. Many forms of deliberate action require little effort to guide practical deliberation. But, for James, the *fiat* differs from these forms of deliberate action. In the *fiat*, "the subject is conscious that the decision is a personal and direct achievement of the will which intervenes in

order to tip the scales" (Ricoeur 1966: 176). In many cases of decision, the objects of organic, or instinctive motivations present themselves in a lively and inviting way. The *fiat* "appears 'wherever non-instinctive motives to behavior must be reinforced so as to rule the day'" (Ricoeur 1966: 176; James 1992: 405). Here the privileged situation is "the experience of victory over the self" as in the case, for example, of the idea of sobriety winning out over inebriety (Ricoeur 1966: 176). Here the resistance within the self in apprehending motives in the right way is highest: "There is victory where the will follows the line of greatest difficulty; the *fiat* is 'the action in the line of the greatest resistance'" (Ricoeur 1966: 77; James 1992: 412). In this connection, James writes, in the *Briefer Course*: "But what determines the amount of the effort when, by its aid, an ideal motive becomes victorious over a great sensual resistance? The very greatness of the resistance itself. If the sensual propensity is small, the effort is small. The latter is made great by the presence of a great antagonist to overcome" (James 1992: 412).

But what most interests Ricoeur is that James identifies the *fiat* with the *effort of attention*. Ricoeur quotes James:

> The essential achievement of the will, in short, when it is most "voluntary," is to attend to a difficult object and hold it fast before the mind. The so-doing *is* the *fiat*. . . . Effort of attention is thus the essential phenomenon of the will. . . . The strong-willed man, however, is the man who hears the still, small voice unflinchingly . . . If we let it go, [the idea] would slip away, but we will not let it go. Consent to the idea's undivided presence, this is effort's sole achievement. . . . To sustain a representation, to think, is, in short, the only moral act, for the impulsive and the obstructed, for the sane and lunatics alike. (Ricoeur 1966: 177; James 1992: 419–420; emphasis in original)

Effort of attention is required in "creating silence" in the resistance the self meets from itself in its own act of choice, the effort needed to "turn off" the din of the vivacious allure of sensuous motives to hear the less lively, but more ideal motive. The paradox of choice is that it depends on listening to the right motives, the right evidence, and this involves effort. Ricoeur summarizes James's view of the effort of attention this way: "Thus all effort is concerned with creating silence: the *fiat* which, in a manner of speaking, joins the motives consists of listening to higher motives" (Ricoeur 1966: 177). It takes effort to pay attention to motives of cool reason when more lively motives call out. If I am weak, tired, I can follow the path of least resistance, letting my attention slide to other distracting, more lively, or fascinating objects of attention. We know that effort is needed in attention by comparing it to occasions when this "added force" of attention is omitted. "The additional force [of effort] is the very control over our attention which can bear *or* not bear on this *or* that" (178). James rejects the associationist account originated by Hume in which the strength or vivacity of the ideas and their

habitual associations determines the mind (or will) through a kind of mental physics. Through the effort of attention, the mind allows itself to be filled by the presence of higher, ideal motives, or cooler reasons, and can also attend to other motives that support these, even when noisier sensuous motives call out to it with affective allure. The self is sovereign, therefore, not by being motiveless, but by *subordinating* motivation to its own act of attention, by determining which motives to listen to in the complex web of motivations. As Marcel argued in his *Metaphysical Journal* (1927; Eng. 1952), decision happens not only by attention to perceived motives but also by an effort of "detachment" from all the other possible "buts," no matter how vivacious, or attractive, they are to human consciousness.[19]

Let us end by listening to Ricoeur's own elegant statement of the dialectic among availability, attention, and encountering the good in the event of choice:

> Authentic choice assumes an authentic debate among values which are not invented but encountered. *The power of receiving and hearing the good* is what raises consciousness to the point of tension from which it is delivered by choice. Hence the leap of option has as its obverse the sudden appearance of a preference in the web of conflicting motives. To choose an alternative is to prefer the reasons for this alternative to the reasons for another. This is why the debate is not in vain: the chosen alternative has no value other than that which motivation brought to light. To risk is something quite other than to wager: we wager without reasons, take a chance when the reasons are not sufficient. The irruption of choice and the resolution of attention on a group of motives which give value to choice are paradoxically identical. (180)

This is the paradox of attention and choice.

NOTES

1. This 1940 journal article contains the early form of Ricoeur's phenomenology of attention. Much of the analyses of attention he deploys later in *Freedom and Nature* is already present in this earlier article.

2. A *third* philosophical tradition that profoundly influences the development of Ricoeur's phenomenology of attention stems from the French reflexive philosopher Pierre Maine de Biran (1766–1824). Biran (1988, 2001) develops a reflexive, proto-phenomenological account of the "primitive fact" (*fait primitif*) of an incarnated Cogito known through a kind of non-intentional, non-objectified awareness of embodied willing and the feeling of effort and movement. The influence of the Biranian tradition of French reflexive philosophy appears in the importance of the *effort of attention* in Ricoeur's argument in chapter 3.

3. For references to the "power of contraries" throughout chapter 3 (see 1966: 162, 181, 185–187). In *Fallible Man*, Ricoeur also refers to the volitional moment in judgment as the "volitional moment of affirmation" (1986: 35–36), a phrase which connects Cartesian tradition to the concept of "original affirmation" of Jean Nabert.

4. In the 1940 article on "Attention" (see footnote 1 above), which contains an early but remarkably complete form of Ricoeur's phenomenology of attention and choice subsequently laid out in *Freedom and Nature*, Ricoeur's reliance on Laporte's reading of the attention on tradition that he traces from St. Thomas through Descartes and to Malebranche is developed at length (Ricoeur 2016: 44–50; Laporte 1931, 1932, 1934, 1937, 1938, 1950, 1951).

5. Ricoeur's early concern with debates about the Cartesian understanding of attention is entangled with his involvement as a young scholar in the so-called Christian philosophy debate raging in Paris of the 1930s among important philosophers, theologians and historians of philosophy of the time, including Etienne Gilson, Emile Brehier, Maurice Blondel, and Gabriel Marcel (Sohn 2011; see also Sadler 2011).

6. On the debate surrounding doxastic voluntarism versus indirect doxastic voluntarism, see Williams (1970), Clarke (1986), Audi (2001). On attention voluntarism in Descartes, see Laporte (1937), Clarke (1986), Araujo (2003), Ragland (2016); note these last two works cite Laporte (1937, 1948, 1952), and both develop accounts that approximate Laporte's analysis of the role of attention.

7. In making this connection between embodiment and temporality, Ricoeur draws on the analogy advanced by Maine de Biran between the experience of both mastery and effort in the will's moving of thoughts (feelings, desires, judgments, etc.) and the experience of mastery and effort in the will's moving of the "subject body" (*le corps propre*). Both experiences exhibit phenomenologically a reciprocal link between a feeling of mastery in the moving of bodily organs and a feeling of effort of the will encountering the resistance of, and of being receptive and passive to, the flesh.

8. For Husserl, imagination (*Phantasie*) does not give a presentation (*Gegenwärtigung*) of the object in fleshly (*leibhaftig*) fullness, but rather gives a re-presentation, a "presentiation" (*Vergegenwärtigung*), that is nevertheless a quasi-perception of the object.

9. The objectifying consciousness of *retrospective* reflection effects a splitting of "existence" into mind and body in which the lived *moments* of decision are severed from the concrete *durée* of the living becoming of decision; as a result, it breaks the concrete, living whole into a series of dead "instantaneous time segments," to use Ricoeur's recurring phrase (for example, Ricoeur 1966: 154), and this short-circuits the primordial potency/act of decision.

10. In what follows, I provide a standard account of Husserl analysis of intentional acts in the *Logical Investigations* (see Husserl 2000). As a guide, I have followed Dan Zahavi's introduction to intentional analysis (Zahavi 2003).

11. Through phenomenological reflection, it is, of course, possible to make the *erlebnissen* into objects of second-order internal perception, but this misses the first-order non-reflective experience of the components of the intentional consciousness reaching the intentional object.

12. Ricoeur does not call this process "self-affection" in *Freedom and Nature*; rather, he speaks, for example, of the "action of the self on the self which is decision" (Ricoeur 1966: 56, 60, fn. 61, 67, 196). He writes, "The will, in a single movement, determines both itself and the definitive form of its affective as well as its rational arguments" (67). In his discussion of "prereflexive imputation" earlier in Chapter 1, Ricoeur writes of a non-reflexive, non-observational, and non-objectifying self-awareness of the self in relation to its acts that are projected in the project. This feeling is what makes the decision and action a "personal action" (59) and comes to awareness in and through the effort of attention in the *durée* of decision.

13. See Husserl (1964: §§10 ff.; 1981: §81); these sections are cited by Ricoeur (1966: 151, fn. 4).

14. "The concept *free* refers to temporal activity in which are engendered the act, the emission, and the advance of process which constitute the very *existence* of the act. It is an adjective which best expresses this temporal birth which is not an act but the character of an act—of a power, of a desire, of a willing" (Ricoeur 1966: 152).

15. The original German is "Erfassen ist ein Herausfassen, jedes Wahrgenommene hat einen Erfahrungshintergrund." (cited in Ricoeur 1966: 179, fn 3) In the Kersten translation, the passage reads: "The seizing-upon is a singling out and seizing; anything perceived has an experiential background" (Husserl 1981: 70).

16. For example, in the phenomenon of fascination, attention also becomes *fixated* on a single object or motive. However, without paying attention to the temporal "how" of the process of decision, there is no way to distinguish a passive fixation of attention (which is bound) from an active fixation of attention (which is free).

17. Ricoeur has in mind something like the Aristotelian notion that prime matter individuates form but is in itself irrational. Consequently, in the "classical" reading, the individuality of the circumstances, or situation, is not finally relevant for practical judgment and the practical syllogism.

18. This notion of self-constancy in promising to the other person also becomes the leitmotiv of *Oneself as Another* (1992), and the basis of his notion of ipse-identity there. We can see the germ of the idea here.

19. In his early 1939 article on "Attention," Ricoeur (2016: 49) enlists the notion of *detachment* (related to availability) developed by Marcel in his *Metaphysical Journal* in order to more fully explicate the relation of the event of choice and the effort of attention.

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Chapter 6

The Status of the Subject in Ricoeur's Phenomenology of Decision

Johann Michel

Paul Ricoeur's entire œuvre can be reconstructed by taking as its guiding thread the question of human action, that is to say of the human as an acting and—crucially—suffering being (Michel 2006). If one could say then that Ricoeur's writings converge toward the elaboration of a practical philosophy, the scope of this practical philosophy is by no means restricted to a form of morality. Ricoeur's practical philosophy is as much descriptive as normative. It is essentially with the tools of phenomenology (coupled sometimes with the social sciences, and sometimes with analytical philosophy) that the philosopher endeavors to describe a being that is not only in the world but also intends to transform the world.

This chapter focuses on a particular dimension of human action: decision, as conceptualized in *Freedom and Nature*. We should start by situating this phenomenology of decision within the overall architecture of the work. The most interesting aspect of *Freedom and Nature* is that it represents the first real synthesis of the threefold philosophical heritage that Ricoeur strives to rekindle: reflexive thinking, phenomenology, and existentialism. After some preliminary works, centering on the interpretation of Ricoeur's first masters (Husserl, Jaspers, Marcel), the corpus formed by the philosophy of the will marks the point where the thinker begins to break away from his contemporaries. Right from the introduction to the first volume, Ricoeur clearly follows in the footsteps of reflexive philosophy, while at the same time stripping it of its subjectivist and substantialist underpinnings. This movement of breaking the subject receives added impetus from existentialism, which proffers a fundamental "intuition": "the embodiment of the subject in existence." To flesh out this "intuition"—which lacks an "empirical treatment" and a "rigorous descriptive method," Ricoeur draws both on scientific approaches and on Husserlian phenomenology. In this respect, the aim is to validate the

hypothesis of the "embodied subject" by testing it against the empirical sciences and by using a purely descriptive method borrowed from phenomenology. It would therefore be wrong to see Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology simply as a variant of Christian existentialism which would lack the requirement of objectification. It would be more accurate to speak of an "existentialist inspiration" in describing a philosophy that seeks to establish dialogue at a more fundamental level with every methodical, rational, and experimental approach. But the originality doesn't stop there: in taking up Husserl's program, Ricoeur displays the same resistance toward its supposedly idealist foundation. The Ricoeurian wager, as he sees it, is to take the "descriptive method" from Husserl's phenomenology but to dispense with the primacy accorded to "the transcendental ego."

Ricoeur's phenomenological program strives, on a more basic level, to extend the eidetic analysis of the operations of consciousness to the affective and volitional domains. The privileging of this region of intentionality is symptomatic of Ricoeur's own intention to break away from the primacy of "representation" that has traditionally dominated the idealist legacy. Unpacking the meaning of "the voluntary" into its component parts, Ricoeur distinguishes between three levels of analysis that are linked together as follows: decision, voluntary motion, and consent. It would be a mistake, however, to see this linkage purely as a temporal sequence of phases. It is, in fact, a phenomenological distinction between different levels of meaning: saying "I want" signifies at the same time "I decide," "I move my body," and "I consent." This triadic schema provides the framework for the entire first volume of *The Philosophy of the Will*.

In what follows, my focus will be on what might be called the paradox of decision in Ricoeurian phenomenology. On the one hand, the existentialist inspiration behind this variant of phenomenology appears to short-circuit any subjectivist basis for decision. On the other hand, simply dispensing altogether with the "I," with the "subject," would wreck any possibility of attributing a decision to anyone, as if a decision could be made without a deciding subject.

THE PROJECT-TO-BE-DONE AND THE FORGETTING OF THE EGO-SUBJECT

Ricoeur's phenomenological program is expressed in a "pure description of deciding" which seeks to shed light on the essence of decision-making by applying a series of temporary abstractions: abstracting out, on the one hand, the multiple modes of the involuntary (needs, emotions, etc.) which impair or even inhibit the possibility of deciding something voluntarily, and on

the other hand, the actual fulfillment of the decision. These abstractions are gradually removed as the book unfolds, in order to make action fully concrete again. But the only way to extract what deciding means from this process is through an analysis that distinguishes between these different levels of meaning.

Ricoeur follows Descartes in assimilating decision to an act of thought, in the wider sense found in the "Second Metaphysical Meditation." But from the outset, he diverts the Cartesian project from its cardinal direction: where Descartes seeks to deduce the indisputable existence of a subjectum from a consciousness that withdraws into itself, Ricoeur, closer to Husserl, understands decision as a form of intentionality. That is to say that decision focuses more on the intended, wanted, projected object than on the one who decides. At the moment when I decide something, my attention is not turned toward myself, as a reflexive act, but toward what I project to do. Through decision, consciousness is thrown outside of itself. What is true of all thought is also true of decision. The subject is effaced, bracketed, turned from its own gaze, absorbed in what it is projecting when it decides to do something. The first teaching of a phenomenology of decision is not the discovery of a "transcendental ego" placed in the position of a spectator, but that of a shattered consciousness that is turned toward the objects it intends.

Among the acts of thought, decisions—like wishes, for example, or commands—belong to a specific category of intentionality that Ricoeur calls "judgments"; they are acts of thought, in the Husserlian sense, which function as "empty significations." If I want an event to happen, if I am given a command, if I decide to do something, nothing is actually present or "fulfilled": the completion of the action is therefore conceived "emptily." By contrast, when a thing or event is present, it fulfills the emptiness of the intentional anticipation. Which is not necessarily to say that it is a "real" presence: strange though the term may sound, it could be an "irreal" presence, a product of the role played by the imagination. When I imagine the effect of my decision on the course of the world, when I visualize myself in such-and-such a situation, adopting such-and-such an attitude, I am no longer signifying "emptily" (à vide): the project-to-be-done is embodied in images. The "fullness" of its signification in my imagination may sometimes be so powerful that it leads me to abstain from acting, as though the fulfillment of my decision had already been played out in the imagination: "Imagination functions as the trigger in the tension of willing, mimicking the presence of the unreal. In an extreme case, satisfaction with the image can charm me to such an extent that the imaginary becomes an alibi for the project and absolves me from the charge of carrying it out. It is true that the imaginary can also facilitate action: by painting the action for me in vivid colors, imagination carries me as on wings up to the pledge I make to myself" (Ricoeur 1966: 45).

THE EGO-SUBJECT'S INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION AND THE ISSUE OF RESPONSIBILITY

If the subject forgets itself in the empty signification of the project-to-be-done, can we then say that the subject has vanished? Not at all. Decision, for Ricoeur, is "a future action which depends on me and which is within my power" (Ricoeur 1966: 43). This double reference to the "ego" prevents us from simply dispensing with the deciding subject. The paradox of decision takes the following form: I remain present in the decision despite being "outside of myself," despite being absorbed in the project-to-be-done.

Among the "judgments" in the Ricoeurian sense—the acts of thought that function as "empty significations"—it is particularly the register of decision that gives a prominent place to the ego-subject. In the case of wishes, for example, the empty signification points to something which depends less on me than on the course of the world: the wish is not a project that I decide to accomplish, nor is it an action that can be attributed to my decision. In certain exceptional situations, however, as Ricoeur admits, one can see a quasi-decision in a wish: "For example, an emotion can deprive me of my self-control to such an extent that, in relation to myself, I become like a falling stone, an explosion, or a tempest. Then my decision to confront it expresses itself as a wish: 'Oh, if only I could master the event! If only I could hold out'" (Ricoeur 1966: 47). In the case of a command I am given, although it is I who act, the decision is someone else's; another person is deciding in my place. It is the Other who is projecting my action to be accomplished. Once again, by means of an abuse of language, by clouding the "purity" of the decision, a command can—under certain circumstances—be seen as a quasi-decision, such as when I split into two, dialoguing with myself and imposing rules of conduct on myself, as if a subject within me were commanding another me (without necessarily implying Kantian autonomy). Since it is the same subject that is doing the commanding and the obeying, it is difficult to speak of commanding as such, at best one might call it "commanding by analogy." It is not another who is projecting to do something, it is myself; the action to be done depends on the command I give myself, and not on someone else's command.

In wishes, the action to be accomplished depends on the anonymous course of things; in commands, the action to be done depends on the power of another; but when it comes to decisions, the action to be done depends on my project and on my ability to do it. There is no decision without an implied subject; it is precisely the degree of engagement of the subject that distinguishes a decision from a wish or a command: "This relation of the project to a personal action gives to decision an exceptional position among all practical judgments: decision posits me as the agent in my very intention of the action

to be done. Hence its existential import is considerable: it is I who projects and does in projecting or doing something" (Ricoeur 1966: 48). The subject's involvement in the decision is closely linked to what Ricoeur calls the "feeling of being able" (sentiment de pouvoir). When I plan (i.e., form a project) to do something, I include in my projection a "being able to do" (pouvoir-faire) that engages my being. I also include in my projection "the possible," which is both that which my action makes possible, and that which is made possible by the order of things, that is, all the obstacles and opportunities, the inhibitors and enablers, of an entire real order of events. Imagination, as well as understanding, can be of use to me here in envisaging a future situation where my feeling of being-able-to-do encounters the possible or "possibilities" offered by the real, and in constructing hypothetical and strategic arguments. (If I make this decision, if I take account of that obstacle, if we refer to such-and-such a rule of experience or habit, then my decision will have a chance of being successfully fulfilled.) The subject here cannot be outside of what it is projecting: "for in doing something, I make myself be, I am my own capacity for being" (Ricoeur 1966: 55). So, when I project an action, it is at the same time myself that I am projecting; there are not two subjects, but one: there is a subject projecting in the present, and the same subject projected into the future by means of an emptily designated action.

The subject's involvement in the decision culminates in the possibility of imputing a projected action to oneself: deciding is not just deciding something (*décider*), it is making up one's own mind (*se décider*). It is by virtue of this ability to self-impute that I can say "it is I who. . . ." The reflexive nature of the decision and the subject's explicit awareness of it are what make responsibility possible. Without this explicit self-relationship, it would be impossible to answer for one's actions and decisions. And it is usually to the Other that I identify myself as a deciding subject: "it was me that planned to do that," "I was the one who wanted to. . . ." "I take full responsibility for that decision." And it is through a kind of internalization of the Other—who is not necessarily a person—in the form of conscience, for example (regret, remorse, self-justification, etc.), that I reveal myself to myself as a deciding subject: "I shouldn't have acted in that way," "Ultimately, I made the right decision." Thanks to this splitting of consciousness, in which I reveal myself as a subject, decision has a face, a name, a signature: it is I who. . . . Through this reflexive relationship to myself, decision emerges from anonymity, from the impersonal pronoun "one," in the style of Heidegger: I alone—nobody else—take responsibility for the decision I made. I accept the fact that the person who made that decision yesterday is the same as the one who is answering for it today: "Sometimes, in serious circumstances, when everyone shrinks back, I step forward and say: I take charge of these men, of this job. Here, the feeling of responsibility, in the moment of commitment, crowns the

highest self-affirmation and most decided exercise of control over a zone of reality for which I make myself responsible. It carries the double emphasis of myself and of the project. He who is responsible is prepared to respond for his acts, because he posits an equation of the will: this action is myself" (Ricoeur 1966: 58).

And it is precisely this involvement of the subject in the decision which, according to Ricoeur, distinguishes voluntary action from involuntary action. An action can be described as involuntary when the subject cannot discern any prior decision. This does not mean that there necessarily has to be a delay between the projected decision and its fulfillment: the project can be simultaneous with its execution, so deeply implicit that it blends in with the actual action (such as when I shift gears in my car while thinking of something else or talking to someone). The essential criterion, for the subject to be involved in a decision, is that he or she should be able to recognize a project (implicit or explicit) after the event. It matters little whether the decision is the fruit of careful reflection; what matters, for there to be voluntary action and decision, is that the actions should be controlled, in the sense that the subject can indeed recognize an action as being the product of a project-to-be-done. This excludes the most automated actions, such as reflex actions, or "pathological" actions that cannot be controlled and cannot be described as being the fruit of any decision, even an implicit one. However, "to the extent to which an automatic action is even minimally observed—in a sense out of the corner of my eye—and an explicit will could recognize it after the fact and go back over it, it begins to correspond to the pattern which we are trying to disentangle" (Ricoeur 1966: 39). It becomes clear here why psychology, which reasons only in terms of phases (deliberation, decision, execution) is ineffective for thinking about the complexity of the relationship between decision and execution. Only a phenomenology that deals with levels of meaning can envisage the possibility of an authentic decision that coincides temporally with its execution. Phenomenology offers us the notion of the "implicit project" which can become explicit in the reflection of the thinking subject after the event, as though its execution had been theoretically deferred. When no such act of recognition by the subject is possible, we are outside the scope of voluntary action and of decision. Just as one can envisage a decision without deliberation (an implicit project), one can envisage an action without decision (no implicit or explicit project).

Can we really talk about an authentic decision, when it has not been carried through, due to a lack of willpower, an absence of opportunity, or insuperable resistance from reality? From a phenomenological viewpoint, actual completion is not a criterion for saying whether or not there is a decision. The phenomenological criterion always relates to the capacity to project an action to be done: a decision may never have been put into effect, or its execution may

keep being postponed, but is still, phenomenologically speaking, a decision. By contrast (and this is a crucial detail), a decision that is not intended to be carried out is a contradiction in terms: any project to do something, even if it is separated from its execution by an unlimited period, awaits a fulfillment. Even if, in practice, a project never saw the light of day, for whatever reason, it was nonetheless intended to be implemented. If this is not the case, we are beyond the realm of decision (e.g., in dream, delirium, or fantasy). At the same time, we should remember that the projected action must depend in one way or another on myself (which once again distinguishes decisions from wishes), that is, on my ability to act, however limited: "An intention is an authentic decision when the action it projects appears to be within the power of its author; this means that it could be executed without delay, if the conditions on which it depends were realized. Negatively: effective execution is not necessary for the existence of a decision" (Ricoeur 1966: 41). The field opened up by decision covers a wide range of concrete cases: at one end of the spectrum, we have a project that coincides with its execution, and at the other, a project whose execution is constantly deferred. Two criteria are phenomenologically relevant for determining a decision: one, it must be possible to discern an explicit or implicit project behind an action (which excludes from the spectrum of decision automated actions that defy all control), and two, the project must be accompanied by the capacity for movement that will bring the project into being.

REFLEXIVE AND PRE-REFLEXIVE IMPUTATION OF THE EGO-SUBJECT IN THE DECISION

At this stage of our inquiry, we might wonder about the consistency of Ricoeur's approach: How can we conceive, at the same time, of a subject that dissolves into the project-to-be-done, and of this over-involved subject that culminates in the "feeling of being-able-to-do" and in responsibility? How can a being that is absent to itself be posited as a moral subject? In fact, there is no contradiction in Ricoeur's reasoning: there are neither two different subjects, nor two antithetical philosophies of the subject, but rather two distinct moments in the course of the decision. At the point where I make a decision, where I project an action to be done, I am effectively absorbed in that projection. Not that self-awareness is absent, but it forgets itself as self-awareness. When I make a decision, I stop looking at myself; I stop presenting myself explicitly to myself. Someone is deciding, of course, someone is making a commitment; but consciousness is not focused on the one who is deciding, it is focused on that which is to be done. It is in this sense that Ricoeur speaks of "prereflexive self-imputation": the ego-subject is constantly present in its

actions, but only implicitly; it adheres entirely to what it is projecting to do. (There is therefore no need to postulate an ego-substance that might existent independently from the acts of thought.) Decision's relationship to itself is not one of knowledge or of a reflective regard; it is a mode of the intentionality of consciousness. At the moment of decision, I am part of what I project, or rather, I am what I project.

And yet, when I look back at the decision taken, and on its execution (if it was carried out), I become explicit as a deciding subject: the imputation of the ego-subject, which was only pre-reflexive at the moment of decision, becomes reflexive at the moment of retrospection. The subject that forgets itself in the empty designation of the project becomes aware that it is, indeed, the author of this decision. It is only after the decision that the subject appears explicitly before himself and can assert: "it is I who. . . ." The relationship to the decision is not the same from one moment to the other: from the project-to-be-done to the moment I decide, the decision is the object—retrospectively—of a reflexive judgment which may take the form of a moral evaluation (good or bad conscience, remorse, regret, etc.). If we are not in the presence of two different subjects, but of one and the same subject at two distinct moments in its history, then a reflexive imputation of the subject is possible on the sole condition that we can posit a preexisting pre-reflexive imputation: "this implication of the self must contain the germ of the possibility of reflection, contain the will that is ready for the judgment of responsibility: it is I who . . ." (Ricoeur 1966: 58, tr. mod.).

To say that the subject forgets itself in the decision does not at all imply that it is absent. By supposing that the subject is self-present, albeit implicitly, at the moment of decision, Ricoeur seems ultimately to be more Cartesian than he himself admits. Far from the splitting up of the subject that he announces at the start of the book, the plain fact is that the ego-subject—implicit or explicit—has never at any point disappeared from this phenomenology of decision. And unless we can posit a subject-pole, a being that is identical to itself from the decision all the way through to the retrospective regard at it, there can be no reflexive judgment, and no responsibility. Ricoeur's anti-Cartesian resolution, inspired by existentialism, seems here to have backfired. By his own admission, "Descartes had not the least doubt that self-consciousness was an inherent characteristic of thought. . . . In the last analysis, Descartes surely is not wrong: a certain presence to myself must covertly accompany all intentional consciousness" (Ricoeur 1966: 55).

But the undeniable contribution made by the Husserlian variety of phenomenology is precisely its ability to conceive of a pre-reflexive self-consciousness, a self-presence which is not explicit when a subject projects an action. Whereas the Cartesian tradition remains dominated by reflexivity, by a subject that regards itself, Ricoeurian phenomenology reveals a

pre-reflexive self-imputation which is the mode of action par excellence. While reflexive self-imputation is "specular" or "spectacular," pre-reflexive imputation is action-oriented. It is easier to see, here, what is so non-Cartesian about Ricoeur's approach: the more the subject observes itself, the more it seeks to loop back on itself, the less it is able to decide on something or do something. While never ceasing to be self-present, the subject must forget itself as a subject, must break away from self-observation, if it is going to decide on anything or commit to anything: "The more I determine myself in the accusative as the one who will do, the more I forget myself as the one who, here and now, in the nominative, issues the determination of the self projected as the agent who will realize the project" (Ricoeur 1966: 59, tr. mod.). The more the subject disappears behind the projection of its action, and the more it commits to it, the more it will be capable in retrospect of a reflexive recovery and of imputing the decision explicitly to itself. The greatest forgetting of the ego-subject at the moment of decision is the precondition for the greatest involvement of the subject at the moment of retrospection. The more the subject is implicit at the moment when it projects an action, the more it becomes explicit to itself afterward. Therein lies the paradox of decision. Forgetting oneself, without ceasing to be present to oneself, does not derive, in this case, from a moral injunction in which Ricoeur might be echoing the guidance of the Gospels or the ethics of Levinas. It is a purely phenomenological description of "deciding" as a form of intentional consciousness that operates through "empty signification."

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Chapter 7

Volo, ergo sum

Ricoeur Reading Maine de Biran on Effort and Resistance, the Voluntary and the Involuntary

Eftichis Pirovolakis

Paul Ricoeur's analyses in *Freedom and Nature* do not only identify and describe three distinct phases of human volition (decision, movement, and consent), but also affirm that the voluntary is closely intertwined with the involuntary aspects associated with each of the three phases. Those involuntary elements play a mediating or moderating role, thereby limiting any claim the subject may lay to sovereignty or to its ability to posit itself. Accordingly, Ricoeur raises a series of methodological objections vis-à-vis the tendency of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology to shun the mystery of incarnation and to underestimate the essential nature of the passage from objectivity to existence.

In the first section, I will focus on Ricoeur's stated intention in the "General Introduction: Question of Method" (Ricoeur 1966: 3–34) to adopt a way of proceeding that moves beyond the philosophical assumptions of Husserl by introducing and applying a quasi-hermeneutic methodology that would be further developed in his subsequent writings. In the second section, I will investigate the role of effort in movement and action. Ricoeur criticizes Maine de Biran's philosophy of effort and action for voluntarism and for privileging the sense of touch. Such a critique indicates, I will argue, that Ricoeur grants a certain priority to effort *qua* voluntary attention, and, therefore, undervalues as much the self's primordial corporeality and affection by the world as the motif of resistance involved in affection. In the final section, I will turn to *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, where Jacques Derrida provides a close reading of Maine de Biran and reveals in the latter's writings radical elements incongruous with Ricoeur's accusation of voluntarism. Ricoeur's philosophy, despite

its purported advancement on the phenomenological method, appears to be less bold than Biran's reflection on the intimate relation between effort and resistance. By retaining Husserl's basic methodological framework and even terminology, Ricoeur promotes a teleological continuity between the voluntary and the involuntary while downplaying the equally necessary value of a total heterogeneity between the two realms. The discussion of effort in *Freedom and Nature* reveals a tension between, on the one hand, Ricoeur's expressed wish to take into account embodied existence and the world as tokens of the involuntary, and, on the other, his actual descriptions in the early 1950s, which turn out to be too dutiful, perhaps, too indebted to the phenomenological project.

CONSCIOUS WILL AND EMBODIED EXISTENCE: DISJUNCTION AND RECONCILIATION

In the "General Introduction," Ricoeur indicates the ways in which his approach both depends on and differs from that of Husserlian phenomenology. His endeavor to describe and understand the voluntary and the involuntary in terms of the structures or fundamental possibilities of human beings involves a certain level of abstraction "akin to what Husserl calls eidetic reduction, that is, bracketing of the fact and elaborating the idea or meaning" (Ricoeur 1966: 3–4). Consequently, Ricoeur draws attention to the methodological distinction between description and explanation, and points out the analytical and somewhat reductive character of the latter, which prioritizes the move from the complex to the simple. Evidently and *à la* Husserl, his target here is the empirical and experimental sciences, psychology in particular, criticized for reducing "*acts* (with their intentionality and their reference to an Ego) to *facts*" (Ricoeur 1966: 10).

Nevertheless, right from the beginning, Ricoeur explicitly refrains from endorsing all of Husserl's philosophical hypotheses. He cautions, for instance, against the adoption of the transcendental reduction which he regards as "an obstacle to genuine understanding of personal body" (Ricoeur 1966: 4). Furthermore, he declares that his study will provide an eidetic analysis of "the willed" *qua* correlate of consciousness in the context of practical functions, in contrast with Husserl's studies, most of which concern, at least in *Ideas I* (Husserl 2012) and *Ideas II* (Husserl 1989), the theoretical modes of perception and the constitution of objects of knowledge. In light of those two assertions, it becomes clear that the eidetic reflection of *Freedom and Nature* is aimed to address two issues Husserl's philosophy allegedly leaves unresolved: that of the body and that of the practical correlates of consciousness. A significant part of the book is devoted to an examination of the various ways in which the body is involved in the willing process. I will

explore Ricoeur's expressed intentions with respect to the status of the body in his analysis and the binary opposition of fact and act that the philosopher himself postulates.

Ricoeur is keen to emphasize the extent to which his account of the voluntary and the involuntary takes into consideration the personal body. His line of thinking proceeds in a zigzag fashion. The second subsection of the "General Introduction," titled "Description of the Cogito and Scientific Objectivity," despite initially referring to a link between the body and the involuntary, is primarily intended to rectify the tendency of contemporary psychology to degrade the body into an empirical fact. Such degradation can be reversed only by pursuing a re-conquest of the cogito. Accordingly, Ricoeur maintains, "We can only discover the body and the involuntary which it sustains in the context of the Cogito itself. The Cogito's experience, taken as a whole, includes 'I desire,' 'I can,' 'I intend,' and, in a general way, my existence as a body. A common subjectivity is the basis for the *homogeneity* of voluntary and involuntary structures" (Ricoeur 1966: 9, my italics). One hardly needs to stress here the value of homogeneity or continuity between the voluntary and the involuntary, between conscious volition and the body, a homogeneity almost reminiscent of the one pertaining to a transcendental ego. I will reflect below on the consequences and implications of such homogeneity, as well as on whether there is a certain directionality within this relation which Ricoeur claims to construe strictly in terms of reciprocity: "The initial situation revealed by description is *the reciprocity of the involuntary and the voluntary*. . . . The involuntary has no meaning of its own. Only the relation of the voluntary and the involuntary is intelligible" (Ricoeur 1966: 4–5).

In the third subsection, "Pure (or Phenomenological) Description and Mystery," Ricoeur's exposition of his method takes a different turn insofar as it stresses the disjunctive relation between voluntary and involuntary structures, and, therefore, the mysterious character of that relation which exceeds his quasi-eidetic description. Description, he maintains, does not affirm the existence of a common subjective standard between willing and the body; rather, it leads to distinction and does not constitute a reuniting leap: "the Cogito is broken up within itself" (Ricoeur 1966: 13–14). As a consequence of the body's infringement on the cogito, "the Ego must . . . abandon its wish to posit itself, so that it can receive the nourishing and inspiring spontaneity which breaks the sterile circle of the self's constant return to itself" (Ricoeur 1966: 14). If one is to succeed in breaking the circle of the transcendental ego that a purely descriptive phenomenology favors, one is required to abandon the phenomenological claim to theoretical objectivity and to become involved in a certain type of existential participation: "The bond which in fact joins willing to its body requires a type of attention other than an intellectual

attention to structures. It requires that I participate actively in *my incarnation as a mystery*. I need to pass from objectivity to existence" (Ricoeur 1966: 14).

The rest of this subsection is devoted to a discussion of clarity and depth, to those "two requirements of philosophical thought" originating in the disjunctive relation between volition and embodied existence. On the one hand, Ricoeur defends the phenomenological claim to objectivity while clarifying that the latter is far removed from a merely naturalistic understanding of the body in terms of empirical facts. The objectivity to which his eidetic analysis appeals has to do with the discovery of intuitions that reveal diverse senses of the bodily as a source of motives, as a focus of abilities, and as a background of necessity (Ricoeur 1966: 16). On the other hand, he acknowledges that conceptual thought or theoretical analysis "always starts with a definite loss of being. I appropriate what I understand, I lay claim to it, I encompass it by a definite power of thought which sooner or later comes to regard itself as positing, forming, and constitutive with respect to objectivity . . . . I exile myself into the void as the nondimensional subject" (Ricoeur 1966: 16).

In the fourth subsection of this section on methodology, Ricoeur's thinking proceeds in the manner of a zigzag too. Initially, he speaks of the "internal rhythm of a *drama*," of a "*polemic*," of a "dualism of existence" whereby existence tends to break itself up. Two opposing and apparently incompatible forces, the voluntary and the involuntary, are said to "reveal themselves in a perspective of *conflict*," as a result of which the act of the cogito is no longer a pure act of self-positing (Ricoeur 1966: 18). The act of the willing self, far from being absolutely sovereign, is subject to the exigencies of an embodied existence that predates and conditions it. Ricoeur's proto-hermeneutic approach here appears to overcome Husserl's alleged theoreticism and transcendental subjectivism. It is precisely on this basis that scholars such as Richard Kearney tend to include Ricoeur, a little too hastily perhaps and with a certain amount of exaggeration, among a series of philosophers promoting a so-called "carnal hermeneutics" or a "hermeneutics of the flesh."[1]

Nevertheless, having acknowledged the drama of incarnate existence, Ricoeur declares that his intention is "to understand the mystery as reconciliation, that is, as restoration . . . the theory of the voluntary and involuntary not only describes and understands, but also restores" (Ricoeur 1966: 18). The reconciliation or restoration in question does not constitute a fact, a *fait accompli*; it is, rather, a demand. It appears to be the case that the affirmation of a polemic and of drama takes place on a factual and existential level whereas the demand for reconciliation results from the transcendental positing of an infinite future that appears in terms of hope alone. "The conflicts," maintains Ricoeur, "of the voluntary and the involuntary, and especially the conflict of freedom and inexorable necessity, can be reconciled only in hope and in another age" (Ricoeur 1966: 19).

Although the term "Kantian Idea," which will become a little later one of the philosophical mainstays of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, is not mentioned here, the way in which reconciliation is conceptualized arguably anticipates it. Reconciliation is apparently posited as an infinite *telos*, an infinite demand that one could risk designating as "ethico-philosophical" and that takes precedence over against the factuality of conflict. On the basis of Ricoeur's methodological claims in the "General Introduction," one may become skeptical about the relation between the voluntary and the involuntary in the final analysis. The motif of a certain reconciliation of those two dimensions downplays the possibility that the involuntary or, for instance, the body might be something radically other, something independent of and irreducible to the willing process. Moreover, one may suspect that, in the context of such a teleological relation between reconciliation and conflict, the purported reciprocity between the voluntary and the involuntary is undermined, and the former is prioritized to the extent that reconciliation is not actually a given state of affairs but a willed, intended, and anticipated one. I will now turn to the theme of effort with a view to exploring whether my hypothesis about the prioritization of the voluntary is upheld in Ricoeur's discussion of the significance of the body in movement and action.

RICOEUR READING MAINE DE BIRAN: ATTENTION, EFFORT, RESISTANCE

If one concentrates on the second part of the book devoted to voluntary motion and human capabilities, one would expect that embodied existence would play a more pivotal role than in the first part of the book, whose thematic axis is explicitly theoretical rather than practical. However, I will argue that Ricoeur's analysis of effort, with which the second part concludes, epitomizes his tendency to prioritize voluntary attention and the transcendental even when under discussion are practical categories such as action, movement, and effort.

In the last section of chapter 3 of this second part, Ricoeur undertakes a critique of Maine de Biran's so-called "philosophy of effort." Although Biran is not a particularly well-known thinker in the English-speaking world, he is a post-Cartesian French philosopher whose thought is acknowledged as crucial for the French intellectual scene for it anticipated several insights developed by twentieth-century philosophers. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for instance, credits Biran for having anticipated phenomenology in the sense that he went beyond Cartesian subjectivism and affirmed the primordial union of soul and body as a "primitive fact."[2] In addition, other major philosophers of the

twentieth century published book-length or shorter works on Maine de Biran, such as Léon Brunschvicg (1949), Michel Henry (1975), Jan Patocka (1988), and Jacques Derrida (2005), among others.

In the aforementioned section of *Freedom and Nature* titled "Limits of a Philosophy of Effort: Effort and Knowledge," Ricoeur claims that Maine de Biran distinguishes between effort and knowledge and assigns a certain priority to the former, which is said to found and orient the project of knowledge. The temptation that Maine de Biran did not resist, according to Ricoeur's presentation, was the belief that "he could derive an entire theory of perception from the 'primitive fact' of effort" (Ricoeur 1966: 331). One has the impression that Maine de Biran's central thesis is that "without effort I should know nothing, I would only become this or that impression, but I should not know it. . . . This attributes considerable dignity to effort which is seen as engendering self-consciousness and, by contrast with it, knowledge of the world which is not myself" (Ricoeur 1966: 332–333). Ricoeur is suspicious of effort insofar as it presupposes resistance—at least, the action-oriented effort associated with Maine de Biran—and resistance, in turn, entails the existence of a certain non-self.

Biran is said to draw a sharp distinction between effort and impression, appealing to the criterion of voluntary activity: on the one hand, there are impressions the subject experiences without producing them; on the other hand, there is perception proper which depends on a willed effort on the part of the self. Voluntary and active effort alone, which is indissociable from resistance and the existence of something other than the self, is capable of giving rise to knowledge, both in the sense of self-consciousness and in that of external knowledge.

Ricoeur proceeds to provide a few examples from the second section of Maine de Biran's *Mémoire sur la décomposition de la pensée*, published posthumously, whereby willed effort is detected in the various senses, albeit in different degrees. After a brief allusion to smell and hearing, Ricoeur diagnoses that active touch constitutes the epitome of voluntary effort. The difference between an auditory or an olfactory sensation and a tactile one is that in the former cases the effort on the part of the subject is either minimal or entirely absent. As a result, there is no perception proper and no knowledge of something existing outside the self. By contrast, it is with the active and voluntary effort of touching alone that a certain impression can be transformed to perception proper, which, in turn, gives rise as much to knowledge of personal existence as to that of the external world: "Biranian interpretation of external knowledge triumphs with active touch: without any properly representative element in touch, through the simple experience of resistance, active touching constitutes a direct relation, force against force, with a resisting outside" (Ricoeur 1966: 333).[3]

Ricoeur's main objection concerns the role of effort and its essential link to practical activity. He objects that Maine de Biran prioritizes effort *qua* practical action at the expense of effort *qua* representative or intellectual activity, that he construes the situation in question in terms of a simple relation of forces (subjective effort and objective resistance), and that he thereby introduces into the knowing process a non-self, an external and aleatory element that cannot possibly and securely be subordinated to or exhausted by subjective volition. Ricoeur maintains that, according to Maine de Biran,

> to exist is to act. This applies to me in terms of effort, to objects in terms of the resistance they offer me. . . . In this way a philosophy of perception is included in a philosophy of effort, positing the world is entailed in the "judgment or simple, primitive relation of personal existence" and the existence of the world is entailed in the perception of effort. (Ricoeur 1966: 334)

Ricoeur is arguably unhappy about such inclusion of the world in the "primitive relation of personal existence." To insist on this inclusion, he contends, is "[to] miss the essentials of knowledge." These essentials of perception and knowledge, he continues, "do not become manifest in the extension of effort but along an absolutely original and, we could say, adynamic line" (Ricoeur 1966: 334). Ricoeur further qualifies those essentials in terms of a mysterious "sense intuition which does not permit itself to be absorbed in that of effort" (Ricoeur 1966: 334). What could such a sense intuition be other than an intention directed toward a certain object but remaining, nonetheless, uncontaminated by the extension, exteriority, and contingency that actual, practical effort implies? What remains if one excludes practical effort and resistance, if one strips both self and object of their worldliness and existence? Apparently, Ricoeur comes dangerously close here to the transcendental idealism for which he reproached Husserl and from which he was mindful to keep a certain distance in the "General Introduction."

Ricoeur's reservations vis-à-vis Maine de Biran's philosophy of effort concern the absolute priority he allegedly grants to practical activity. Elements in Biran's theory which bear witness to such priority are the more practical and action-oriented type of effort and its corollary, namely, the preeminence of touch over against the rest of the senses, which are said to be rather receptive. Throughout the section "Limits of a Philosophy of Effort: Effort and Knowledge," Ricoeur keenly emphasizes the inadequacy of the binary opposition active-passive if one wishes to provide a reliable account of the processes of perceiving and knowing: "The intentional relation of knowledge does not essentially reduce to the pair action-passion, because to know is neither to act nor to be acted upon so that perception could be lived now in a passive, now in an active mode" (Ricoeur 1966: 334–335).

Ricoeur does not dismiss *tout court* the active-passive distinction. Rather, he criticizes what he takes to be Biran's construal of it exclusively in terms of an either/or relation as well as his subsequent one-dimensional valorization of active and forceful effort. Ricoeur does not propose to lose effort and activity altogether but to moderate them by introducing into them an element of receptivity. The category which is instrumental here and to which Ricoeur has recourse is attention. The latter constitutes a modality of consciousness whereby the broader intentionality involved is not that of acting but that of knowing: "Knowledge includes a definite action, and *attention* is, in this respect, a type of effort. . . . attention is not an act terminating in the organ. It is not aware of itself: the intent passes through it to the object: attention is attention to. . . . I am not at all concerned with myself but rather with the object" (Ricoeur 1966: 331–332). In other words, Ricoeur focuses on effort *qua* intentional attention, a transcendentalized effort, one might say, to be opposed to Biranian practical effort.

One of the two concluding remarks that Ricoeur explicitly makes, toward the end of the section, is that Biran's philosophy of effort ends up endorsing a certain voluntarism. He claims that this is ineluctably the case insofar as one chooses to derive a theory of knowledge from a theory of effort whose paramount feature is voluntary action. "A philosophy of the will," retorts Ricoeur, "has no right to become a voluntarism and to exercise a kind of imperialism over all the sectors of philosophical reflection. . . . There is also 'theory,' that is, a seeing and a knowing which the will does not produce" (Ricoeur 1966: 336). However, earlier in the section, while discussing the salient distinction between the effort of attention and the effort of action, Ricoeur expressly thematizes not a merely passive attention but a voluntary one: "My sole initiative [in attention] is one of exploring my universe, or orienting the process in which objects are progressively sketched. This initiative in exploration distinguishes voluntary attention from a passive attention in which I am absorbed by the object, occupied, captivated" (Ricoeur 1966: 332).

Throughout this section, Ricoeur purports to emphasize that the modality of voluntary attention is characterized by a perceptual and knowing receptivity and representation with respect to the object and the world as a whole, hence the self's openness toward what lies outside: "There comes a moment when action yields to knowledge and becomes its servant, when effort becomes receptive to the world as a questioning openness. Doing reinforces seeing, but in order to make it more docile, more available" (Ricoeur 1966: 332). Nevertheless, such receptivity and openness cannot be equated with Biranian practical effort where the degree of the object's resistance and, as a result, of the self's affection by the object are much greater. "Attention triumphs with sight," writes Ricoeur, prioritizing sight as the sense more akin to attention by virtue of the fact that in sight "objective perception reaches its

maximum purity when affection tends towards zero and when effort is almost nil" (Ricoeur 1966: 335). The functions of "pure receptivity" and "pure representation" (Ricoeur 1966: 336), which are germane to the effort of attention, are characteristic of sight too.

As a consequence, Ricoeur finds himself in a curious position as far as the motif of the voluntary is concerned. On the one hand, according to his declared intention, he wishes to prevent his phenomenology of the will from becoming a voluntaristic or subjectivist analysis. Accordingly, he wishes to take into account the role that the involuntary, embodiment, and worldliness play. On the other hand, insofar as he objects to Maine de Biran's approval of the effort-resistance schema and its implications, Ricoeur risks closing off the openness of the self to the universe and to the world which he had previously affirmed, thereby verging, dangerously close, on a certain transcendental subjectivism.

If one were to identify the features in terms of which Ricoeur characterizes the sphere of attentive effort *qua* origin of knowledge, one would discover attributes highly reminiscent of Husserl's conceptuality and terminology: the reader comes across the terms "essentials," "structures" and "fundamental possibilities," "intention" and "intentionality," "voluntary attention," "theory," "objective perception," "truth" and "initiative," "pure representation," all of which are affirmatively and positively deployed. Undoubtedly, this is in agreement with the first leg of Ricoeur's second concluding remark, namely, his intention to acknowledge the voluntary aspect of knowledge with a view to criticizing a "superficial sensualism which would make the self into a simple bundle of impressions, a 'polypary of images'" (Ricoeur 1966: 336). I believe, however, that there is a tension between such endorsement of phenomenological motifs and Ricoeur's claim, in the second leg of the second concluding remark, that his analysis frees us not only from sensualism but also from an intellectualism that pays attention to impersonal structures of knowledge.

DERRIDA ON MAINE DE BIRAN: RESISTANCE FIRST, THEN EFFORT

One is tempted here to interpolate that Maine de Biran was more successful than Ricoeur in keeping at bay the dangers of both intellectualism and voluntarism. Derrida argues as much in *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, a work whose scope is encyclopedic as far as the philosophy of touch and of the body is concerned. While providing profound and incisive readings of a series of philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to Jean-Louis Chrétien and, of course, Jean-Luc Nancy, Derrida undertakes a deconstruction of intuitionism as the

phenomenological principle *par excellence*.[4] The discussion of Maine de Biran is found in chapter 7 entitled "Tangent I: Hand of Man, Hand of God," and mostly concentrates on *Influence de l'habitude sur la faculté de penser*, originally published in 1803 and one of the very few works that appeared in Biran's lifetime. Derrida crucially reminds one that Biran did not "concern himself with essences or first causes, but only with 'effects' and 'phenomena.'"[5] In this sense, effort is not conceived of as an original cause in itself, as indicated by Ricoeur's construal and his expression "'primitive fact' of effort." Rather, effort is regarded as a phenomenal effect made possible, as will become clear, by a more originary differential relation between activity and passivity.

In principle, Derrida would not object to Ricoeur's insistence that Maine de Biran's philosophy of effort grants a certain priority to the willing and acting subject, to motor activity and, therefore, to the sense of touch. He writes, "Motor activity remains the distinguishing trait of touch, marking its excellence . . . . The faculty of moving is the one to which the ego is immediately attached, with its activity and its distinctiveness. Furthermore, this faculty of motion is a will, and the ego that moves and self-moves is a 'willing subject'" (Derrida 2005: 149). Nevertheless, providing a very close and rigorous reading of Biran, Derrida also identifies a trend in his text that affirms a peculiar twinning of two otherwise opposing faculties (perceiving and sensing) as the very condition of possibility for effort and action. The following passage by Maine de Biran is adduced by Derrida in order to support his argument about such a twinning:

> We can already begin to perceive that activity, as that which is distinctive of the ego and its ways of being, is directly attached to the faculty of *moving*, which ought to be distinguished from that of *feeling*, as a main branch is distinguished from the trunk of the tree, or rather as twin trees are distinguished which cling together and grow into one, with the same stem [*dans la même souche*]. (Quoted in Derrida 2005: 150; see also Biran 1922: 22–23)

Derrida makes the most of Biran's arboreal metaphorics here, as well as of the greater accuracy sought and achieved by means of the second of the metaphors deployed in the extract above. He draws attention to the duality of the twin trees, which only subsequently grow into one tree with one stem. Effort as the stem or the trunk, which is the stem of the ego too, becomes possible thanks to an anterior co-implication of activity and passivity that can be designated as the peculiar origin of the ego, as an "ego without ego, or ego before ego. This relation to oneself, this faculty to say I or to posit oneself, 'self-identical,' as I, can only institute itself, from the stem itself, in a memory, with persistence, in repeated efforts, and in self-retention" (Derrida

2005: 150). The motifs of "memory," "repetition," and "retention" Derrida deploys bear witness to an originary, disjunctive duality that predates the emergence of effort *qua* willed activity of a subject.

Derrida goes on to consolidate this argument about an originary twinning by pointing out that Maine de Biran has recourse to "memory" in order to link a thinking of effort to a thinking of the virtual. Biran portrays the motor determination as a tendency of the organ to repeat an action or a movement that has already somehow occurred: "When this tendency passes from the *virtual* to the *actual* [*effectif*], as a result of renewed external stimulation, the individual *wills* and executes the same movement. He is conscious of a *renewed effort*. . . . here are the elements of a relation, a subject which *wills*, always self-identical, and a variable term, *resistance*" (Quoted in Derrida 2005: 150; see also Biran 1922: 51). Derrida construes the expression "renewed effort" as pointing to an originary memory or an originary duality that complicates and disturbs not only the linear temporality of the passage from the virtual to the actual but also the identity of the two moments involved and, therefore, the indivisibility and alleged originality of "effort." Ricoeur, on the contrary, would approach such a phenomenon in a purely teleological manner, a manner comparable to the one determining the passage, in his own eidetics of the will, from a thinking to an acting subject. As a result, he criticizes Maine de Biran, a little too hastily, for declaring the active ego as the indivisible, simple, and stable origin of the willing process and effort.

Biran's arboreal metaphor, however, and his subsequent emphasis on renewed effort as a form of memory signal that the origin is far from simple, that the stem of the willing subject is far from indivisible and straightforwardly singular. Derrida speaks of the "intimate union of two heterogeneous elements," activity and passivity, perception and sensation, or effort and resistance.[6] It was precisely this originary complication that prevented Maine de Biran from seeking to reveal first causes or primordial essences grounded on highly conjectural abstract methods, and that led him to speak, rather, of effects. Such an originary complication, according to Derrida,

> constitutes the primitive fact of the effort in *mixed* fashion, and this primitive fact is anything but simple. . . . Maine de Biran has to speak of something "mingled" and of "first reflection" that "has discovered a compound." And there resides his faithful concern, but also and at the same time his first unfaithfulness with respect to the *Idéologues'* analytism and their craving for an ultimate, simple element or an originarity that will not break down. (Derrida 2005: 150–151)

Derrida identifies the same tendency to complicate the simplicity or unicity of the origin in Maine de Biran's first deployment of the term "effort." In the examples he provides, Biran distinguishes between three phases or three beats

leading gradually from passive sensation and resistance to effort and action proper, and notably to the genesis of the ego. The first beat concerns Biran's phrase "If one places on my hand an object whose surface is rough" (Derrida 2005: 151; see Biran 1922: 24), which points to an instance when there is a purely passive sensation insofar as the motor faculty is not yet activated and is, so to speak, still paralyzed. In the second instance or beat, "If the object is left *on my hand*, supposing it to have a certain weight . . . I sense my hand being pushed down and moved by a force opposed to mine" (Biran 1922: 25; see also Derrida 2005: 151). Still, maintains Derrida, I may feel an opposing force but there is no active ego yet, no action and no initiative on my part to raise or pull my hand back. It is only with the third beat that a distinct sense of an "I" emerges. This is thanks to the initiative taken by the willing motor subject to act, more precisely, to move one's own hand and fingers, a movement that presupposes both the resistance offered by the external object and the two previous stages of the passive sensations:

> If—the object still remaining on my hand—I wish to close the hand, and if, while my fingers are folding back upon themselves, their movement is suddenly stopped by an obstacle on which they press and [that] thwarts [*écarte*] them, a new judgment is necessary; *this is not I*. There is a very distinct impression of solidity, of resistance, which is composed of a thwarted movement, of an *effort* [that] I make, in which I am *active*. (Quoted in Derrida 2005: 151; see Biran 1922: 25–26)

Commenting on the extract, Derrida emphasizes, for the purposes of his own reflection on touch, the preeminent role assigned to manual touching and the human hand.[7] However, always attentive to the complexity and finesse of the texts he reads, Derrida discovers in the Biranian text elements that moderate or render problematic the very preeminence of touching and the human hand as the exemplary activity and organ of voluntary effort and action respectively. Derrida's argument has consequences for Ricoeur's objection to Maine de Biran, an objection which largely depends, it will be recalled, on the latter's prioritization of touching.

In the first place, with respect to the three beats of the human hand, Derrida points out that there is first "*resistance*, then *effort*" (Derrida 2005: 151). After citing and briefly discussing those three stages, he quotes the two following sentences by Maine de Biran: "Let us stop an instant on this impression of *effort* which comes from any thwarted [*contraint*] movement. We must learn to know it well" (Quoted in Derrida 2005: 151; see Biran 1922: 26). He draws attention to Biran's appeal to knowledge and to the crucial role that effort plays in the project of knowledge. Without effort, there would be no perception and, therefore, no knowledge at all. There is an undeniable hierarchy and a teleology in Biran's analysis as well as in the synthesis

between fact and act that his investigation entails: the will to know and the willing subject who takes initiative and acts are here at the top. Nevertheless, even if such teleology accords a certain priority to voluntary action, it also acknowledges the chronological priority and, as a consequence, the irreducibility of something external resisting the movement of my hand. This resistance may be designated as a fact. It is, however, an absolutely irreducible fact according to Maine de Biran's reflection and the three aforementioned phases of the emergence of effort. Hence "*resistance*, then *effort*," a certain alterity first, then voluntary effort, and manual touching.

In the second place, Derrida problematizes, in yet another way, the absolute priority that Maine de Biran supposedly assigns to touch. On the one hand, insofar as movement and action are determining factors with respect to effort, touch is privileged as the highest of the senses, a transcendental sense which grounds all other senses and puts the individual in contact with the external world thanks to the willed motor activity it entails. Simultaneously, on the other hand, precisely because touch transcends the other senses by virtue of its dynamic and active character, it is not, properly speaking, a sense. Movement and activity withdraw touch, claims Derrida, from the order of sensibility, from pure sensation, thereby making touch something other than a sense or, perhaps, something less than a sense. The paradox which Derrida identifies and which is somewhat implicit in Maine de Biran's discourse is that one finds more and less sense, at the same time, on both sides of the analogy: "Touch is more of a 'sense' than are the others. The latter are senses only by way of touch and are therefore less 'sensitive' than touch is. But for the same reason, because they are more passive, less active, less motor-driven, and therefore more 'sensitive' than touch, they are more legitimately entitled to being termed 'senses'" (Derrida 2005: 149).[8]

What this aporetic relation between touch and the rest of the senses indicates is that sensation and perception in Maine de Biran, passivity and activity are not as straightforwardly opposed to each other as Ricoeur would have it. By contrast, the peculiar transcendental exemplarity of touch bears witness to an originary co-implication of activity and passivity which renders problematic Ricoeur's critique that Maine de Biran accords to active touching and, therefore, to voluntary effort an exclusive priority in rigorous opposition to sensation and the other senses.

In light of Derrida's reading, Ricoeur's criticism appears a little one-dimensional. What it brings to the fore is Ricoeur's intention, at that early stage in his philosophical career, to affirm a certain distance from Husserl's intellectualism and theoreticism without, however, abandoning the epistemological demand of phenomenology to regard the transcendental thinking subject as the ultimate cornerstone of a theory of knowledge. Given Ricoeur's interpretation of Maine de Biran, I believe that his attitude is symptomatic of

a tension between, on the one hand, the acknowledgment of the limits and problems of phenomenology, and, on the other, Ricoeur's reticence, in his commentary on the philosophy of effort, to go too far and acknowledge the salience of something other than the ego, something involuntary and radically other that could disrupt the unity and certitude of the ego's transcendental sphere.

Ricoeur's methodological promise in the "General Introduction" was that he would provide a descriptive account that would demonstrate the reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary. I have argued that in his discussion of effort in Maine de Biran he does not quite deliver on that promise to the extent that resistance and the external world, as tokens of the involuntary, are demoted to a secondary position, subordinate and merely ancillary to the voluntary attention of the thinking self. Rather, it is Maine de Biran who, refusing to subscribe to the dualism of reflection and empiricism, seeks, according to Derrida and Merleau-Ponty too, to understand and account for an originary co-emergence of consciousness and motility, hence a certain irreducibility of the involuntary, of the body, of resistance, of exteriority. Ricoeur's observation that "Husserlian phenomenology . . . never takes my *existence* as a body really seriously" (Ricoeur 1966: 16) could be applicable to his own thinking in the early 1950s. It appears that Ricoeur subscribed at the time, perhaps a little more than he would have liked to admit, to the phenomenological distinction between fact and essence, granting a certain priority to the latter while underplaying the salience and necessity of the former, a necessity that would be more expressly acknowledged in his subsequent, properly hermeneutic writings from the mid-1960s onward.

NOTES

1. See Kearney (2015: 46–49): "Paul Ricoeur, the final figure I consider here, also developed a phenomenology of flesh inspired by Husserl in the 1950s. . . . his [Ricoeur's] initial sketch of corporal diagnostics offers what we might call a proto-hermeneutics of the flesh."

2. See Merleau-Ponty (2001: 64–68). For the phrase "primitive fact" in Biran, on whose salience Merleau-Ponty reflects, see Biran (1932: 29ff). See also the section titled "Analyse du fait primitif" in Pierre Tisserand's "Introduction de l'éditeur" to the same volume (Tisserand 1932: xxxiii–xlii).

3. Ricoeur cites the following relevant extract from Biran (1924: 102): "Active touch alone establishes a direct communication between the moving being and other existences, between the subject and the external term of effort, because it is the first organ with which moving force, being constituted in the first place in the direct and simple relation of action, can still be constituted in the same relation with strange existences" (see Ricoeur 1966: 334).

4. For an explication of how the deconstruction of intuitionism is carried out with respect, specifically, to Husserl's phenomenology of the lived body and of manual touching, see my "Derrida and Husserl's Phenomenology of Touch: 'Inter' as the Uncanny Condition of the Lived Body."

5. Derrida (2005: 140). See also Biran (1922: 15–16): "I have no other plan than to investigate and analyse the *effects* . . . . We do not know anything about the nature of *forces*. They do not present themselves to us but through their effects alone" (my translation).

6. Merleau-Ponty already put forward an argument—similar to Derrida's—about the impossibility, in Maine de Biran, of a rigorous distinction between motor subject and thinking subject in *The Incarnate Subject: Malebranche, Biran, and Bergson on the Union of Body and Soul*, a work Derrida cites. Merleau-Ponty maintains that Maine de Biran did not succeed in elaborating the third position he was aiming at between thought and motility, between reflection and empiricism. Nevertheless, he also acknowledges that Biran thematized a primitive duality, an equi-primordiality of interiority and exteriority not only in *Essai sur les fondements de la psychologie et sur ses rapports avec l'étude de la nature* but also, more significantly, in the very work on which Ricoeur focuses, *Mémoire sur la décomposition de la pensée*; see Merleau-Ponty (2001: 61–72).

7. Derrida coins the term "humanualism" [*humainisme*] to refer to the preeminence of the human hand (Derrida 2005: 152–154).

8. Derrida presents a similar argument and a similar aporia with respect to the human hand, which is at the top of the organs of touch, the touching organ *par excellence*. Paradoxically, the human hand has a transcendental status but simultaneously participates in a certain exemplarism (see Derrida 2005: 152–154).

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Chapter 8

On Habit

Grégori Jean

At the center of *Freedom and Nature*, the twenty-five dense pages that Paul Ricoeur devotes to habit offer one of the richest and most documented phenomenological reflections on this topic, and therefore have rightly caught the attention of his best commentators. But in my opinion, the primary interest of these analyses, on their own as well as for an understanding of Ricoeurian thought and its evolution, resides in the philosophical paradigm that underlies them and to which they testify. To begin, then, it is necessary to circumscribe this paradigm. In this regard, no text seems more significant than the first lines of the substantial review that Ricoeur provided in 1966 of Mikel Dufrenne's book *Poetics* that was published in 1963:

> The latest book by Mikel Dufrenne is not only the mature fruit of a work that grows like a plant—plant images are wonderfully suited to a philosophy which seeks to be faithful to the voice of Nature!—, it is also one of the signs of the metamorphosis of French philosophy: in many ways, it is rebelling against the philosophy of *consciousness,* just as it reacted after 1945 against the philosophy of *judgment*. It is towards a philosophy of *Nature*, related to the later Schelling, that Mikel Dufrenne leads us. Why this recourse to Nature, in a meditation applied to poetry, that is, in the province of human language? . . . Why establish a philosophy of language on the basis of a philosophy of Nature? (Ricoeur 1992: 335).

Everything takes place here as if in welcoming this "rebellion" against the philosophy of *consciousness*, Ricoeur nevertheless expresses his reservations with regard to the *direction* which such a "metamorphosis" in "French philosophy" in general and in the phenomenological tradition in particular, tries to move, namely, toward a "philosophy of Nature." More specifically, what indicates the doubts expressed here and what will later be confirmed by the

review that follows, is that between the surpassing of the paradigm of consciousness by a renewed attention to the issue of Nature, on the one hand, and by the adoption of the critical guiding thread of language, on the other hand, a strict alternative would render any attempt to lead from the latter to the former ambiguous. What allows Ricoeur to formulate this diagnosis is precisely, it seems to me, the philosophical path that he himself traveled between 1950 and the publication, in 1960, of the second volume of his *Philosophy of the Will*—such that the diagnosis in this review of Dufrenne's work might provide a key to understanding his own philosophical path.

Ricoeur, in fact, always worked to challenge the rights of the subject and to call into question the "philosophy of consciousness" that French thought, in the 1940s, put in place of a philosophy of "judgment" such as that of Brunschvicg. This challenge takes shape, already in some of the articles collected in *History and Truth* (Ricoeur 1965) but even more decidedly in the 1960s with a philosophy of *language* which, even if it does not accomplish "a hermeneutic *turn*" of phenomenology (Grondin 2003), is at least a "grafting" of the one onto the other (Ricoeur 1995: 36). This cannot and should not lead us to forget that this trajectory was initiated, with *Freedom and Nature*, in an atmosphere of thought that was much closer to the "philosophy of Nature" that he calls into question with Dufrenne than to any philosophy of symbols or of interpretation. To put it otherwise, what Ricoeur accuses Dufrenne of—but also, by implication, a phenomenology like that of the later Merleau-Ponty—, is, to spin his own metaphor, that it takes as the final result of a genuine *metamorphosis* what, in his own course, has only been an *exuvia*. Thus it has not understood that a critique of "consciousness" on behalf of "Nature" does not constitute progress in French philosophy but rather a "regression," a return to an earlier phase through which Ricoeur himself would have passed before going beyond it. For if *Freedom and Nature* does not call into question the "philosophy of consciousness" through a "hermeneutic" graft but through, according to a term that is obviously ambiguous, a "naturalistic" graft on phenomenology, such an approach, instead of being "outdated" as Ricoeur suggests here, might be an extremely current issue for contemporary French phenomenology. This is attested, for example, by the powerful work of Renaud Barbaras in addition to the renewed interest in the work of Mikel Dufrenne (Barbaras 2013; 2016: 174, 182–195; Jacquet 2014), and even by some new directions of research on the philosophy of Michel Henry (Jean 2015). As such, Ricoeur's early work could find renewed relevance. This is due to its specific contribution, of course, but also to the philosophical heritage that it utilizes in order to achieve this "naturalistic" graft and safeguard a third way between the "scientific objectivity" of positive psychology and the "loss of being" attributed to transcendental phenomenology (Ricoeur 1966: 8–13, 16). This is not the tradition of Schelling—even though it is not

historically foreign to that tradition—, but a French tradition that, from Maine de Biran to Bergson and passing of course through Ravaisson, would pave the way for a "philosophy of nature" rooted in a spiritualist and vitalist gesture.

My hypothesis is that the section of *Freedom and Nature* that is devoted to habit does not merely "illustrate" this fundamental phenomenological orientation and its historical roots, but in many ways founds it at the same time as revealing its ontological presuppositions and aims. This, at any rate, is what I propose to show here.

HABIT AND METHOD

The first impression that the reader takes from this section is, admittedly, that of a certain "classicism." First of all, it is a "thematic" classicism, because habit is not simply one topic among others in French philosophy but perhaps the central philosophical problem around which it has formed an identifiable tradition (Romano 2011: 187). There is also classicism in how Ricoeur treats habit, if it is the case that this tradition is preoccupied with articulating a dualism in principle. Habit, as Claude Romano demonstrates, has always been discussed according to a characteristic tension whose ontological foundations lead quite naturally to ethical issues:

> Since habit has the role of uniting the mind and the world, which are first separated, it will be thought of sometimes as a simple fall of the mind back into matter—and then it is its mechanistic or automatic dimension that will be privileged—and sometimes as an elevation of matter to the mind, a spiritualization of nature—and it is its creative spontaneity that will therefore be highlighted. On the one hand, habit is the "fossilized residue of a spiritual activity", in the words of Henri Bergson, and it will be necessary to insist on its repetitive and sclerotic character; on the other hand, it is this power of facilitation that makes our actions more sure, better suited to the situation where they fit, and its innovative character becomes its trademark. (Romano 2011: 188)

Inscribed explicitly within such a tradition, Ricoeur's analyses would not escape from this "ambiguity" and, indeed, attest to its structuring power. Turning to the layout of this section, one can see that it is organized according to three moments: (1) a moment that Ricoeur presents—not without ambiguity, as we will see later—as an *eidetic* analysis, but that also has an undeniable genetic dimension since it seeks to trace the constitution and the establishment of a capacity to act. "Learned" and then "acquired" habits are understood teleologically in light of the "use value" of acquired skills, which are forms of "power" in the service of action (Ricoeur 1966: 280–285), both in their "internal coordination" (285–288) and in their release (288–292);

(2) an intermediate and more *topical* moment where the analysis of habit is broadened from the body to the mind, from bodily habits to mental habits (292–296); (3) a final moment in which, after having been described as this potentiation of the body and mind in the service of a voluntary act that masters its natural means ("habit-spontaneity"), habit is envisaged as a "fall" into "automatism" (296–297), a return to an inert nature which tends to be autonomous and a movement where a fundamental ethical questioning is introduced and confiscates the body and mind by the will and its freedom (296–307). Thus, despite the insistence on certain aspects which have been, if not misunderstood, at least placed in the background, and through the integration of its analysis with a number of experimental results obtained by psychologists of the time (Lewin, Van der Veldt, Guillaume, Watson, Tolman, etc.) with whom he enters into a detailed critical discussion (Flajolet 2004), this section is indeed presented as a synthesis of what has been said about habit in the history of French philosophy, and in accordance with the ethical and ontological ambiguity constitutive of its duplicity. As "the reversion of freedom to nature," according to a formula that Ricoeur borrows precisely from Ravaisson (Ricoeur 1966: 286), habit would indeed be a "Janus head" whose two sides are distinguished by whether such a return is an appropriation and mastery or rather a "fall" and ultimately an "abolition."

In my opinion, it is impossible to understand the meaning of these analyses and, precisely, to identify their originality, without setting them within the general intention of the work, within the methodology that Ricoeur adopts, within the limits he assigns to it and especially within his metaphysical aim. It is a fact that if habit, in the extreme variety of its manifestations, is situated by Ricoeur at the crossroads of the voluntary and involuntary poles of existence, it could indeed constitute its secret "root," the a priori unity that the analysis covers over in the very same movement by which it would provide its eidetic intelligibility. In other words, if in the French tradition "habit usually has the task of uniting the mind and the world, which are initially separated" as Romano says, this separation is perhaps for Ricoeur more methodological than ontological, thus pointing to a unique ground that habit, insofar as it itself becomes method, would be able to show us.

In this regard, a detour through the "General Introduction" subtitled "Question of Method" seems necessary. Under the heading of a "descriptive method," Ricoeur intends first to take note of the phenomenological critique of positive psychology, and thus to abandon the empirical study of mental facts in favor of the eidetic description of the fundamental structures of the human will:

> Daily forms of human willing present themselves as ramifications, and more exactly, as a distortion of certain fundamental structures which alone can

> furnish a guiding thread to the human maze. Such ramifications and distortions ... indispensably require this particular abstraction capable of revealing man's structures or *fundamental possibilities.* (Ricoeur 1966: 3)

Whence the Husserlian project of providing an "eidetic theory of the voluntary and the involuntary," a non-inductive theory of the a priori essences of mental functions whose "direct" understanding, by way of eidetic variation, must necessarily precede any experimental apprehension (Ricoeur 1966: 4). But its interest here is to give rise to specific methodological precepts for which the analysis of habit is at first sight a perfect illustration. Any primacy granted to facts over essences amounts in effect, according to Ricoeur, to privileging explanation over description, if by "explanation" one understands the dual movement that consists of "reducing the complex to the simple" and then rebuilding from the simple to the complex. This is, generally speaking, how one ends up "building up a human like a house"—starting from its most simple elements that are considered to belong to its "foundation" up to the most complex which, as if they are somehow the roof, are no less founded—and, in this case, to "first laying down a foundation of a psychology of the involuntary, then topping these initial functional levels with a supplementary level called 'the will'" (Ricoeur 1966: 4). On the contrary, the virtue of description—as an "immediate" intuition of the essential traits of the different mental "functions" that surround these two poles—is to seize "the reciprocity of the involuntary and the voluntary," and it is in order to clarify this methodological trait that Ricoeur immediately evokes habit. Against a psychology which would confer the phenomenon of habit with *"a proper* meaning on to which is added that of the will, unless it is derived from it," it is argued that habits only take on "a complete meaning in relationship with a will that they solicit, incline, and in general affect, and which in return sets their meaning." As a result, it is not merely the case that habit *has no meaning in itself and outside of the will that is realized or not*. Moreover, the will has an indisputable primacy—"I understand myself in the first place as someone who says 'I will'" (Ricoeur 1966: 5)—and is therefore alone able to provide an "understanding" of habit.

These few remarks point to an initial ambiguity found in the idea of an "eidetic" analysis of habit, and they explain the reasons for Ricoeur's adoption of a genetic approach at the beginning of the section on habit. If there is indeed an "essence of habit," this is an essence of a *relation*, and an asymmetrical *relation* in which the will always retains a primacy. Hence there is a need to start from the fact that most of our habits are voluntary actions, which are learned by repetition and then incorporated by "contraction." They are converted into a multiplicity of "powers" that allow us to coordinate and release our actions without having to remobilize the will which they

somehow crystallize. If habit is "a singular form of the involuntary," it cannot therefore be understood in and of itself but only through the voluntary and as the "alienation" by which "the will and the activity which dominate 'nature' revert to a nature or better invent a quasi-nature" (Ricoeur 1966: 283). But as a result, the scare quotes are crucial here: the "nature" that the will dominates before reintegrating it is not that of "the natural sciences" and is not this "simple" entity on the basis of which scientific "naturalism" proposes all "explanations." Instead it is grasped, in this first moment, from the perspective of the will which, in habit, either dominates it or eventually ends up submitting to it. This "nature" is not understood *in itself*, but *via habit,* relatively to the will, and as its point of application, realization, or erasure. Whence Ricoeur's utter refusal to define habit as an "automatism" fully withdrawn from the will, to understand habitual actions as "mechanical acts" by which willing would "acquire the rigidity and the stereotyped procedure of a machine" (Ricoeur 1966: 284). It is an utter refusal to situate the "place" of habit in a causally closed nature or to make habit the way in which, as *pars naturalis,* we would take part in physical nature in the way that the body, for Descartes, takes part in the extended world.

HABIT AND MECHANISM

This refusal, truly speaking, runs through all of these analyses and allows Ricoeur to be situated in the space of the French tradition that is gathered and extended here—a space that is polarized by the Ravaissonian and Bergsonian conceptions of habit. Whereas Ravaisson sought to reveal its spiritual background and highlight the residual presence of a vital activity that is irreducible to the movements of inert matter, Bergson, in his famous "Note" on habit, tends to reduce it to "mechanical becoming" and thus to the "fossilized residue" of such activity (Bergson 1990: 267). To put it another way, whereas Ravaisson insists on the immanence of habit to the vital principle precisely in order to oppose them to the realm of automation, Bergson merges habit and the mechanism before contrasting them with the vital activity which gets lost there (Janicaud 1997: 50; Marin 2004: 164). Ricoeur is clearly on the side of Ravaisson, thus proposing a genealogy of this merger where methodological and ethical motivations intersect:

> A similar interpretation is supported by some curiously convergent prejudices. A certain superficial romanticism likes to see in habit a principle of sclerosis and oppose explosions of freedom to the banality of daily activity, as if we could conceive of consciousness entirely in terms of opposition to functions. But empirical psychology, for different reasons, also overestimates the facts of

> automatism. Here it is the method which does violence to the doctrine. (Ricoeur 1966: 284)[1]

The true interest of this passage is twofold. On the one hand, it protects, as we will see, against an interpretation of the last "line" followed by Ricoeur in his analysis of habit—that of a "loss of liberty," a fall from "habit-spontaneity" into "habit-automatism"—as a more or less ideological concession to "mechanism" (Romano 2011: 192). The questioning of the assimilation of the habit to a mechanism is inherently included in his methodological critique of "explanation," and in the ethical critique of "superficial romanticism." But on the other hand, this passage makes us attentive to the way in which this criticism of mechanism structures *all* of the analyses of habit, even before it is understood as a "fall."

And indeed, after the study of the "internal coordination of habitual action"—of how our habits optimize the sequence of different movements or, more generally, to integrate into an "organic" unity of the same gesture different sequences of action for which only the will initially allowed, but more awkwardly, their succession to be ensured—Ricoeur dissuades us from assimilating habit to a "reflex," as a "mechanical" response and thus an "unstoppable" response to a stimulus. Habit clearly extends, as a result of learning and its "contraction," what Ricoeur calls "*the unreflective* use of the body"—including, as we will see, the "body of the mind." But in accordance with what was already established in a previous section on "preformed knowledge," this "non-reflection" is not an "automatism," and this "instinctual" dimension of our action cannot be confused with the reaction of a body subjected to simple internal or external excitations. This is made evident by the possibility, through learning, of "complicating," "correcting," or even reversing them, in the way that practitioners of the martial arts *refine* the instinct which already pushes the young child to counter a blow by raising a hand to the face, even reversing it (Ricoeur 1966: 237). The same argument is utilized here. What allows us to distinguish "habit and chains of reflexes" is precisely this *variability* on which Merleau-Ponty already insisted in *The Structure of Behavior* (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Our habits have the ability, despite their repetitive and "stereotypical" appearance, *to adapt* to different objects in our environment. For example, I usually drive *my* car on *that* road that I'm used to taking, but the habit of driving and responding appropriately to the external solicitations that it implies do not prevent a change of vehicle or route. In this sense, "all habit is general," and it is this "generality"—this plasticity, this transferability, this "schematic" dimension—that makes habit different from the effect of a mechanism (Ricoeur 1966: 288).

That is to say that while habit does not belong to the order of the reflex, it does not belong either to the "unconscious" body that the Cartesian tradition

equated, quite rightly, with "mechanism." Without doubt, when I act out of habit, "I do not think the movement, I use it" and this is the precise meaning of the phrase "acquiring a habit." But "consciousness"—if it is not confused with a "second intention" that is properly "reflexive"—*crosses through* these two orders of thought and of use: "The improper expression 'unconsciously,' applied to habit, designates *practical, unreflective* use of an organ 'traversed' by an affective and volitional intention which alone is susceptible to being reflected. But such corporeal usage is still a moment of consciousness in the broad sense" (Ricoeur 1966: 286). Moreover, it is this refusal to reduce habit to corporeality which allows Ricoeur to expand his analysis of the mind: "So far we have assumed that habit is always a corporeal habit," but it "provides capabilities for willing" that concern knowledge no less than motor conduct (Ricoeur 1966: 292), and manifest elsewhere an identical structure: "What I know intellectually is present to me the same way as the bodily skills I have. What I learn, what is understood in the original act of thought, is constantly being left behind as an act and becomes a sort of body of my thought … a second nature in the very texture of thought" (Ricoeur 1966: 294). Here there is already a questioning of the cogito and the "Cartesian subject" and the abandonment of any "philosophy of consciousness." However, as we stated earlier, this is not the result of a philosophy of language but the "paradox" or enigma of a "self *who becomes nature*" (Ricoeur 1966: 295). There is therefore the seed of a decentering of the subject by that which, in the form of habit, reveals a naturalness in the subject that is not equivalent to the "mechanics" of the reflexes, the unconscious, and extended body. This is a distinction that calls for a more in-depth analysis.

If the "nature" at stake here is not the object of "the natural sciences" but the "naturalness" that habit reveals to us as a correlate of the will, then in what concrete form does it manifest itself? Ricoeur answers this question in very clear terms. The phenomenon of the "naturalization" of the will leads us to raise the question of "the general problem of habitual capacity," and correlatively, of this "nature within me" (Ricoeur 1966: 294). This nature that I am and that I have is identified with a *power to act*. This thesis is attained by Ricoeur's analysis of the "triggering" of action. Whereas the description of the "internal coordination of habitual action" was devoted to elucidating the essence of this action that was *in the process of being done*, the analysis of its "triggering" led him to separate habit as a "potential"—the potential that we are talking about, for example, when we talk about the "ability" to bike or play the piano—from its deployment in actual doing.

At first glance, Ricoeur's insistence on the need to clearly distinguish such "habits" from their actual implementation is not foreign to his earlier critique of mechanism, but can be considered its fulfillment. If this potential claimed, so to speak, to be actual—if, for example, habit resulted in the *need* to be

realized and could therefore be assimilated to a tendency—it would be difficult not to reintroduce something like an automatism that escaped from the essential contingency of any voluntary act. Ricoeur already insisted on this in the section of the book devoted to need and refers explicitly to it here again: "we have been led to contest categorically the assumption that a habit creates a need" (Ricoeur 1966: 288). At most, it transforms need by valorizing those desires that become, thanks to habit, easier to satisfy, but it is only this ease of execution that is credited to habit and not the choice of this or that object of satisfaction. The same criticism is repeated here on the topic of "tendencies," and then generalized to the supposedly intrinsic connection between all that, *affectively*, motivates our actions, and our habit of performing them:

> Habit does not have the power to create genuine sources of action. . . . Many "technical" habits are affectively neutral. A professional or personal motive not belong to the actual doing is needed in order to stimulate their execution. All habit can do is to provide an outlet for the sources of action by providing a form for the power which releases it. (Ricoeur 1966: 291)

Instead of only having a negative meaning, this thesis explains why we paradoxically are aware of our habits as a series of powers to act voluntarily in an involuntary way. It is not the habit of playing the piano which "pushes" me to play, but I am aware of the ability to play if I want to. That said, when I actually do play it, my action will be the "internal coordination of habitual action" and will be a case of unreflective use of the body from which my will, in varying proportions, will be absent and will have to be absent if I actually want to carry out this action as I want to carry it out. Between habit as a capacity and habit as a coordination of the action taking place, Ricoeur maintains therefore a *hiatus* that is necessary for his criticism of the mechanism, at the same time as he gives himself the means to account for the surprising and even miraculous character not only of the plasticity of our habits, but of this simple fact that we can actually do what we know ourselves to be able to do:

> When I say that I know how, for instance, to do a trick I not only mean that I *will certainly* do it if I wish—attesting a future act—but I indicate an obscure presence of a power with which I am in some sense charged. I anticipate a certain surprise which the releasing of all the complex, fragile habits also occasions, the surprise of the *ease* with which, given a sign, a wink, "it" responds to my invitation: the astonishment of seeing figures present themselves spontaneously when I count or words grouping themselves and acquiring a meaning when I speak a foreign language which I have mastered thoroughly, or the astonishment of feeling that "that" body responds to the rhythm of a waltz. To be sure, "it" only works right when I will it, but this willing is so *easy* that it seems no more than a permission granted to a pre-existing spontaneity which offers itself to the encounter with my impulsion. (Ricoeur 1966: 288–289)

Moreover, the "surprising" crossing of this gap between the powers and their implementation can and must be understood in the opposite sense if we really want to understand how we acquire our habits. The temptation is strong to consider the birth of habit as the simple result—a mechanical effect, once again—of the repetition of actions which would become normal as a result. But besides the fact that, as has often been pointed out, repetition only produces a habit if it is repeating an action which has been willed—I do not have the habit of being hungry on the pretext that my hunger is repeated cyclically, although I could have the habit of behaving in this or that way in response to my hunger—it is not even accurate to consider habit-power as the effect of the repetition of an actual voluntary action whose actualization it would then optimize and "facilitate." There are gestures that we analyze, break down, do and redo endlessly without leading us to acquire them as habits. And when we do succeed, this happens *all at once*, as if the gap between the actual repetition of an act and the establishment of the habit-power to do so were crossed instantly. In line with the work of Gestalt psychology on the sudden changes of form that affect the guiding perceptions and motor or mental structures, Ricoeur underlines this "wisdom" at length (Ricoeur 1966: 290). Without the creativity of habit in relation to repeated acts, habit would not make headway without this kind of germination, inventiveness it presents. "To acquire a habit, does not mean to repeat," but "to invent, to progress." And certainly "this invention is particularly obvious in the skills which must be acquired at one stroke, without breaking them down, like riding a bicycle, jumping rope or somersaults" (Ricoeur 1966: 289–290). But it is nonetheless the case that *every* habit, insofar as it is established only in a leap from an actual action to a power and does not happen "mechanically," presupposes this picking up from actuality to potentiality.

But precisely, this theory of "surplus value," of the excess of habit over the action that it makes possible—and vice versa—signals something besides a simple critique of mechanism. Or rather, it is only by paying attention to the hiatus which is revealed here between the power and the act that habit appears to us not only as a "wondrous" (289) or "surprising" (290) phenomenon, but even more as a "mystery" (285) or an "enigma" (294), terms which should be taken very seriously.

The Enigma of Habit

If the lexical field of the "enigmatic" and "mysterious" passes through the whole of this section, this is not due to a stylistic aim but is an echo of a specific thesis that is formulated in Introduction of the book. Despite its methodological, ethical, and ontological superiority over "explanation," the "descriptive method" encounters its own *limits*, such that the criticism of

scientific psychology must be replicated with a correlative distance from Husserlian phenomenology. If the project of revealing the "fundamental *possibilities* of the human" presupposes an "eidetic" perspective, "all our considerations drive us away," Ricoeur notes, "from the famous and obscure transcendental reduction which, we believe, is an obstacle to genuine understanding of the personal body" (Ricoeur 1966: 4). But the important thing for us is that this "irreducibility" of the personal body is not conceived by Ricoeur as a mere ontological fact, but as the manifestation of the limits of the reduction as a *methodological* process, as an indication of the fact that every description must, in its intelligibility apparently without rest, be led back to something like a "mystery." And the section of the Introduction entitled "Pure Description (or phenomenology) and Mystery" has the precise role of indicating to the reader the proper scope of the analyses proposed by the work. It offers an invitation not to confuse their eidetic clarity, "the atmosphere of intelligibility without mystery" in which they are developed, with the intrinsic rationality of the phenomena to which they relate. Quite the contrary, if "the triumph of description is distinction"—in this case, the distinction between the voluntary and the involuntary and the various connections that it is able to show—, it fails to grasp, in subjective life, what makes these distinctions and connections necessary, what, in *existence* itself, attests that all oppositions and finally all dualisms are derivative. It fails, therefore, to perform this "rediscovery of roots that is no longer mere understanding of structure" (Ricoeur 1966: 14). Ricoeur rightly warns his reader: the limits of description appear each time that it runs up against something, in the phenomena that it examines, that remains truly enigmatic. And it is the method that must then change. In place of the "intellectual attention to structures," writes Ricoeur in claiming explicitly that Gabriel Marcel's influence lies "at the basis of the analyses in this book," there must be active participation "in *my incarnation as mystery*" (Ricoeur 1966: 14). As a result, there is another key for understanding the book. What it is about, is not only a description of the "fundamental structures" of the human, but also a confrontation between "*a global sense* of the mystery of the incarnation" and the analytic treatment of certain specific problems of classical psychology in light of the eidetic method. For everything suggests that Ricoeur's extreme attention to the phenomenon of habit is due precisely, beyond the analytical clarity of his descriptions, to its enigmatic dimension. It is due to the fact that habit, in the way it resists, so to speak "naturally," the analytic scalpel of "intellectual attention," has the virtue of leading us into the very heart of the enigma. But then, what exactly does that mean?

To be sure, a tension emerges in Ricoeur's project that we will have to define more precisely. On the one hand, if it is a question of returning, beyond the description of the intelligible structures of the human being to the

"mystery" of incarnation, this mystery, insists Ricoeur, is the expression of a *paradox* that "culminates as a paradox of freedom and nature." Yet, this "paradox" is not a "root" that the deconstruction of the main oppositions imposed by "epistemic dualism" (Ricoeur 1966: 17) would rediscover as their hidden unity. In a Kierkegaardian anti-systematic sense that Ricoeur clearly adopts as his own, the originary difference is between terms that are irreducible and ultimately incommensurable: "There is no logical procedure by which nature could be derived from freedom (the involuntary from the voluntary), or freedom from nature. There is no *system* of nature and freedom" (Ricoeur 1966: 19). And yet, on the other hand, the entire problem for Ricoeur is obviously to go beyond the paradox without reducing it, to identify the primary unity of the paradox as such, the greatest identity of the terms held apart from one another by the largest and the most irreconcilable of distances:

> But then what prevents the paradox from being destructive? How can freedom help being annulled by its very excess if it does not succeed in recovering its connection with a situation which would in some sense sustain it? A paradoxical ontology is possible only if it is covertly reconciled. The juncture of being appears in a blind intuition reflected in paradoxes; it is never what I observe, but rather what serves as occasion for the articulation of the great contrasts of freedom and nature. (Ricoeur 1966: 19)

But that is to say that if there is a "mystery" of the incarnation, it is as an anti-paradoxical way of existing in the unity or the primal juncture of the distinctions of the understanding, and first of all, the one between freedom and nature:

> Finally, because this mystery is under constant threat of disruption, the living bond which reunites the voluntary and involuntary aspects of man must be constantly actively reconquered. In particular, the mystery of that living bond needs to be rediscovered beyond the *paradoxes* in which the descriptive structures seem to end and which remain the broken language of subjectivity. (Ricoeur 1966: 19–20)

> The myth of innocence and the assurance of unique creation beyond the rent of freedom and nature accompany, as hope, our search for a conciliation between the voluntary and the involuntary. (Ricoeur 1966: 34)

To say that habit belongs to this mystery is thus to say that, taken by itself and before being projected into the intelligible space of the mind, it has no structure or essence, at least if one means by that the "principles of intelligibility of the broad voluntary and involuntary functions" (Ricoeur 1966: 4). And this is why the opening lines of the section that *Freedom and Nature*

devotes to habit, under the guise of expressing an analytical difficulty, point to something essential:

> It is rather difficult to delimit the domain of habit: we have no impression at the beginning of the inquiry, in terms of some well-chosen example, of what habit means, as we do when we speak of perception, imagination, feeling, etc., prior to all empirical and experimental exploration. It does not seem to designate any particular function, that is, any original intention in the world, since it is defined as an acquired and relatively stable *way* of sensing, perceiving, acting, and thinking. It affects all the intentions of consciousness without being itself an intention. (Ricoeur 1966: 280)

The fact that habit is not an action or an intention, but a *way* of acting or intending, makes it impossible to identify its "*eidos*" through eidetic variation. These, so to speak, introductory remarks are therefore not intended to be surpassed by the analysis that follows afterward. On the contrary, they indicate its a priori methodological limits. As a result, they acquire a perfectly positive meaning. Concerning habit, everything which resists the descriptive method, is really a sign of the failure in principle of any description, and calls for another method of investigation. And this is important: habit would no longer be simply an illustration of the Ricoeurian descriptive method in its opposition to positive psychology and its "mechanistic" vision. It could well be this other method itself which, on the one hand, would allow subjectivity to escape the "hidden danger" which constantly threatens Husserl's eidetics, under the figure of a reduction of being to its intelligible structure, an annexation of "reality" and a disconnection of the subject from "presence" (Ricoeur 1966: 16). And, on the other hand, it allows us to access the mystery as this living bond between nature and freedom on which the understanding can only reflect afterward and in paradoxical terms. So, when Ricoeur recognizes, in a note, that Ravaisson's intuitions "are the source of many of the reflections in this book" (Ricoeur 1966: 286, note 93), this observation should be understood in its full magnitude: it is not only in the detail of its analyses of habit that Ricoeur draws from Ravaisson's theses, but in the ultimate architectonic status that it confers on habit. And when he locates it at the intersection of the major oppositions that structure the whole book, at the "crossroads" where "the polarities of existence—willing and body, existential possibility and natural reality, freedom and necessity—communicate," giving it back the virtue of revealing the artificiality of these oppositions and thus testifying to their original co-belong, for this "juncture of being" or "the *vital unity* of nature and the will" (Ricoeur 1966: 296). How could one not see an extreme fidelity to the Ravaissonian thesis that "habit can be considered as a method, as the only real method, by a *convergent succession* established,

for the approximation of the relation, real in itself but immeasurable in the understanding, between Nature and the Will?" (Ravaisson 1984: 23).

It is thus not a coincidence that every eidetic description of habit, despite its clarity or precisely *because of it*, ends by running up against the unintelligible—a series of hiatuses manifesting the paradox, the irreducibility of the voluntary and the involuntary as well as of freedom and nature. And what this last detour teaches us through the "questions of method" raised in the Introduction to the book is not to misinterpret these phenomena. Instead of being obstacles to our attempt to describe and understand habit, they are produced by this perpetual temptation to provide complete intelligibility of the mystery, of this "type of magic is suggested and imposed by habit itself" (Ricoeur 1950: 296). Another way of saying this is that it is not the paradox that surprises us, but the fact that we actually do, that we *can* actually do what we do by habit without surprise or being surprised—at least until we attempt to describe or understand its structure.

FROM HABIT TO NATURE AS A GROUND

But if, in its own magic, habit reconciles a priori the terms of the paradox of nature and freedom by allowing us to exist in their unity and thus by letting us participate in what we cannot understand, it nonetheless remains the case, as we stated, that it proves to be guided by one last duality. This duality is not produced by "the dividing understanding" but seems to belong to existence itself, the duality of its own unity according to how it unfolds:

> The *organic unity* of nature and willing to which the naturalization of the will testifies turns constantly to the *ethical duality* of spontaneity and effort. . . . This constantly attempted dissociation is carried out in the process of automation, which is the counterpart of the spirit of appropriateness, of inventiveness, and exuberance of habit. Habit is at the same time a living spontaneity *and* an imitation of the automaton, reversion to the thing. Already here there are two closely interrelated series of facts which support two types of understanding, in terms of life *and* in terms of the machine: in terms of spontaneity *and* in terms of inertia. Through this process, the opposition between the voluntary and the involuntary outweighs continuity. (Ricoeur 1966: 297)

To be sure, the final stage of the analysis—"Habit as a Fall into Automatism"—does not at all cancel out the previous findings: the "danger of the 'everyday' . . . will make us resemble vegetables or even minerals" (Ricoeur 1966: 300), "this imitation of the thing by the living, of inertia by spontaneity" (Ricoeur 1966: 301) is in no way an absorption in a "mechanical" order that would precede all willing. It is indeed on the basis of the voluntary

that, conforming to the first principle of the descriptive method, this form of the involuntary will be envisioned. That is the role of Ricoeur's distinction between the mechanical (*le mécanique*) and the machine (*le machinal*). While the former refers to an ontological order to which human actions do not belong—regardless of whether they are voluntary or involuntary—, the latter, just like habit of which it is a *mode* or a "border" (290), is "a constant risk in the very character of all skill" (Ricoeur 1966: 303) that is defined negatively or as a privation by a "loss of mastery," a "lack of control" (Ricoeur 1966: 306) or a defaulting of consciousness, as much in the "internal coordination of the action" as in its "release." Whence the apparently ethical meaning of a duality in which our effort is indeed implicated: not to default, not to lose control, not to defect and as a result be mastered by our habits, in order to avoid their "fall" into what threatens plasticity and inventiveness. Yet, as we have seen, Ricoeur himself condemns this "superficial Romanticism" that "sees a principle of sclerosis in habit" and "contrasts the banality of the everyday with explosions of freedom" and in numerous ways allows us to suspect that this duplicity is, in his eyes, ethical before being ontological.[2]

In fact, if we reread the long section in *Freedom and Nature* devoted to habit as "a fall into automatism," we find that it revolves entirely around a theory of possibility. Understood as "automatism," habit leads to a "fixation" and a "fundamental narrowing" of our field of view—a limitation of what "our needs, our tastes, our tendencies," and finally our "essential nature" or our "personal style" lead us to do. To think about it, this closing of "the range of possibilities" is not a "fall" that one should deplore and fight against, but it counts as the very condition for the constitution of a power. Between the increase of our "power" to act and the narrowing of the field of our actual action, there is not contrast but complementarity—there is not a *duplicity* but, at best, two inseparable sides of the same phenomenon. The one, as Ricoeur says, is the "counterpart" of the other. I can only learn to play the piano by giving up learning to play all instruments, such that with respect to our capacity to act, "all determination is negation" (Ricoeur 1966: 299). Or to put it otherwise, habit cannot be an *organ* of the will—in the form of a power-to-do which coordinates the action in the process of being done and in this sense extends our hold on the world—, without simultaneously setting its limits—without reducing as well the field on which we can want to deploy this hold. Thus, as *Fallible Man* will later emphasize, "there is no coincidence" if our habits lend themselves to "two opposing systems of interpretation, in terms of the life which 'learns' and the life which 'automatizes', in terms of spontaneity and inertia" (Ricoeur 1986: 57). Instead, this is due to the nature of habit and the moving system of extension/limitation of our power to act and of our field of action for which it is precisely the name. But that is the reason why it is ultimately incorrect to oppose, in the name of ethics, inertia, and

spontaneity: habit is just as perfect, as good at serving a spontaneous will which it confers its power, when it is "inert," even if the price to pay for this inertia is the renunciation of wanting something other than what it wants. If there is a danger in the habit, it is not in its failures, in its "falls," or its degradations but on the contrary, as Ricoeur emphasizes, in its successes or accomplishments: "this principle of inertia introduces the threat *at the very point of perfection of habit*" (Ricoeur 1966: 307). For, the will can only be realized in what limits it, the extension of its power necessarily goes hand in hand with the limitation of what it wants, there is a dynamic identity between power and the determination of being; inertia is not *the other* but the *way or the organ* of spontaneity. That is the ultimate revelation of habit and the "enigma" into which Ravaisson entered:

> It seems that through our body we participate in an obscure ground of inertia of the universe. In becoming natural, to use Ravaisson's terminology, freedom submits to the "primordial law and most general form of being, the tendency to persist in the act which constitutes being." (Ricoeur 1966: 307)

"Through our body," certainly, but also through our thinking inasmuch as it itself, as we have seen, has a body or, more precisely, a "Nature." But this Nature is not understood as an object or a sum of objects for consciousness, nor as "arch-soil" which, like Husserlian Earth, would be our stationary lap, nor as one great whole to which we would feel that we belong, but as the *bed-rock*, the *texture*, *the way in which we live and "can" live our life*, a Nature which is no longer the other of freedom but that, as this identity between power and limitation to which habit attests, understands it in the primordial unity of a nurturer and a nurtured. So to confirm our initial hypothesis: if "one finds here one of the rare points where Ricoeur confesses a kind of cosmology or implicit metaphysics" (Abel 2009), this metaphysics or this cosmology is the same one that he will describe similarly a decade later, but this time to reproach Dufrenne for reactivating it in the name of a critique of philosophies of the subject:

> If one must challenge the transcendentalism that makes things gravitate around thought or human existence, one must have the courage to say that Nature is not a foundation, but a ground. A foundation is a justification belonging to thought's system of gravitation; a ground is an absolute origin.
>
> *I* am not an origin, but Nature is an origin: it gives me being and meaning. . . .
>
> This is Spinoza; it is the philosophy of the later Schelling, that of the *Grund* and of "Powers". It is in any case not Heidegger. Nothing is more foreign to the Heideggerian idea of the "ontological difference" between being and beings than the idea of *natura naturans*, the indivisible unity of being and beings. (Ricoeur 1992: 341)

Between the recognition, in *Freedom and Nature* (1950), of our participation in "an obscure ground of inertia of the universe" and the denunciation, in 1966, of this recourse to Nature as a "ground," it seems that there has indeed been a rupture in Ricoeur, a rupture with this French "naturalism" that his analysis of habit and its "enigma" allowed him to join, a rupture that could equally be explained here by emphasizing what the hermeneutic perspective owes to this Heideggerian "ontological difference" which is "foreign" to it (Dastur 1991: 37–50), by emphasizing the concomitant rejection of the question of *the origin* as Ricoeur formulates it in *The Symbolism of Evil*:

> There is no philosophy without presuppositions. A meditation on symbols starts from speech that has already taken place, and in which everything has already been said in some fashion; it wishes to be thought with its presuppositions. For it, the first task is not to begin, but, from the midst of the word, to remember. (Ricoeur 1967: 348–349)

But in spite of this rupture, one could also follow the *persistence* and, specifically, the inertia, in Ricoeur's work, of such a "philosophy of nature"—of this "return ... from the human foundation to the original ground" and this call for an "unthinkable power from the depths" whose "expressive power" would be continued by humans (Ricoeur 1992: 341, 347)—and this is evident all the way from *Finitude and Guilt* to *Oneself as Another*.

Indeed, despite its change of perspective, the second volume of the *Philosophy of the Will* returns briefly to the analyses of habit undertaken in *Freedom and Nature*, and in a way that extends its basic intuitions:

> Every power has a reverse side of powerlessness. . . . Thus the body is . . . a node of powers, of motor and affective structures, of interchangeable methods whose spontaneity is at the disposal of the will. . . . Now it is the same practical spontaneity, mediator of all our volitions, which makes of my power my impotence. Indeed, every habit is the beginning of an alienation that is inscribed in the very structure of habit, in the relation between learning and acquiring. Habit is possible because the living person has this admirable power of change himself through his actions. But by learning, it affects himself; his subsequent power is no longer in the situation of beginning but of continuing; life goes on, and beginning is rare. Thus there arises, through this continued affecting of myself, a kind of human nature. (Ricoeur 1986: 56–57)

However, if Ricoeur insists on the positivity of habit—"this inertia is the converse of my power. No will without power, no power that is not a contracted form"—the fact remains that he no longer understands it, positively, as the result of the presence of an indivisible Nature in us, in its infinity as nurturing and nurtured. Instead, it is the sign of a "*practical finitude*" that is tied to the

fact that I only ever will from the perspective that is allowed by the powers I have acquired (Ricoeur 1986: 57). This perspective is no longer "perceptual" but "active," and Ricoeur then seeks meaning resolutely from the side of *character*, understood as "the *limited openness of our field of motivation taken as a whole*" (Ricoeur 1986: 60). Nature is no longer the essence of acting and its intrinsic power—but the name for this *anthropological limitation*, for this "human nature" whose "facticity" must be recognized and to which we should "consent."

This analysis also seems to be echoed in *Oneself as Another*, where Ricoeur reconnects with the Aristotelian link between *hethos* and *ethos* and approaches habit through the anthropological question of character. But he attaches habit, *via* the issue of personal identity and the difference between *ipse* and *idem*, to a problem which, curiously, the two volumes of the *Philosophy of the Will* set aside, namely, the question of time:

> By means of this stability, borrowed from the acquired habits and identifications—in other words, from dispositions—character ensures at once numerical identity, qualitative identity, the uninterrupted continuity across change, and finally, permanence in time which define sameness. . . . Character is truly the "what" of "who." (Ricoeur 1992: 122)

Yet, it is not clear whether the tenth study of *Oneself as Another*, entitled "What Ontology in View?", might provide Ricoeur the opportunity to reactivate—beyond these transformations of the problem of habit that was first, deeply Ravaissonian and beyond the tribute paid to Heideggerian hermeneutics—all of his own intuitions in 1950 that he ended up moving away from. A discussion of the Aristotelian categories of *energeia* and *dunamis* already leads him to a thesis that strangely resonates with some of our previous analyses:

> The central character of action and its decentering in the direction of a ground of actuality and of potentiality are two features that equally and conjointly constitute an ontology of selfhood in terms of actuality and potentiality. . . . If there is a being of the self—in other words if an ontology of selfhood is possible—this is in conjunction with a ground starting from which the self can be said to be *acting*. (Ricoeur 1992: 308)

For, after having emphasized the ultimately irreconcilable character of the Heideggerian analytic of *Dasein* with such an "ontology," Ricoeur ends with a statement with which I will conclude and which, at least in my view, is an invitation to no longer read *Freedom and Nature* as an initial and quickly surpassed moment of a philosophy that, in turning its back on Nature, would have paved the way for a critique of consciousness through the symbolic, but

perhaps as the exploration of a Nature which, from the outset, had sought to be the ground and the horizon for any "hermeneutics":

> What finally matters to me more than any other idea is the idea . . . , on the one hand, that it is in man that *conatus*, or power of being of all things, is most clearly readable, and on the other hand, that everything expresses to different degrees the power of life that Spinoza calls the life of God. . . . It is precisely the priority of the *conatus* in relation to consciousness . . . that imposes on adequate self-consciousness this very long detour, which is concluded only in Book 5 of *The Ethics*. . . . If Heidegger was able to join together the self and being-in-the-world, Spinoza . . . is the only one to have been able to articulate the *conatus* against the backdrop of being, at once actual and powerful, which he calls *essentia actuosa.* (Ricoeur 1992: 316–317)

Translated by Scott Davidson

NOTES

1. Note here that it is at the intersection between these methodological and ethical considerations that Ricoeur's original decision is situated—though being in the lineage of some theses of Pradines's *Traite de psychologie generale*—to reject the tendency, which is omnipresent in psychopathology, to explain the normal by the pathological. This point is explicitly stated in the introduction to the book: "The possibility of understanding the normal directly, without recourse to the pathological, will justify this corollary of our fundamental principle" (Ricoeur 1966: 6). This "corollary" is indeed utilized, though discreetly, in the critique that the section on habit offers in its assimilation to a mechanism, and this is to call into question the experimental study of habitual actions as much as to challenge the ontological decisions that they make possible. "Thus it is that such summary mechanisms as the association of ideas or stereotyped handling of laboratory apparatus came to serve as models for all study of habit. Here we can recognize the prejudice in favor of the simple, the elementary, in psychology . . . the facts of automatism have no intelligibility of their own and can only be understood as degradation. Rather than automatism, we shall take for our reference the flexible habit which can finally illustrate the original duality of plastic willing and ability. A degraded consciousness does not represent a return to a purported simple primitive consciousness" (Ricoeur 1966: 284). This decision, to be sure, will be used again by Ricoeur in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, in his desire to focus his analysis on "the happy memory" (Ricoeur 2004).

2. The possibility of envisioning this ultimate duality of habit in an ethical and ontological mode is very clearly highlighted by Olivier Abel in "The Ethical Paradox of Habit." In fact, it refers to the dual way in which Ricoeur, in his early years, was introduced to the question of habit: first by Roland Dalbiez, from whom he took classes in 1930–1933, and whose courses show that he organized the psychology of the involuntary on the "ethical" side of philosophy; second by Albert Burloud who,

at the University of Rennes, developed an analysis of habit that was very Spinozistic and thereby Ravaissonian, leading it back to *natura naturans* and the tendency of a being to preserve itself. That is why in the margins or the background of the ethical approach to habit—and specifically its ultimate duality—Olivier Abel indicates that it would be possible to examine "if there is not, implicitly in the development of habit in Ricoeur, a metaphysics of life that is indissociable from his ethics, in the wake of Spinoza and perhaps also of Bergson." That is the path that we are following here.

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Chapter 9

The Phenomenon of Life and Its Pathos

Scott Davidson

Life has been a central topic of discussion in contemporary Continental thought, ranging from phenomenology (Henry, Barbaras) to the philosophy of science (Jonas) to political theory (Foucault, Agamben). Yet, Paul Ricoeur's name is not associated with any of these contemporary discourses on life. If Ricoeur is not recognized to offer a philosophy of life, this is not due to something missing from his work as much as to a limitation of readers' awareness of his account of life. By returning to some key chapters in Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature*, this chapter will show that Ricoeur does indeed engage in a profound reflection on the concept of life that merits consideration alongside other contemporary thinkers whose treatments of life are more widely known. What is especially distinctive and important about Ricoeur's account of life, as this chapter will show, is his refusal to define life solely in terms of the subjective experience of conscious life (freedom) or the objective determination of life as a set of biological processes (nature). Instead of separating these two aspects of life, Ricoeur integrates them within a more comprehensive phenomenology of life.

To recover Ricoeur's phenomenology of life, this chapter will return to the final part of *Freedom and Nature*, Part III, which is entitled "Consenting: Consent and Necessity." The two previous parts of the book, to recall, are devoted to the study of two other forms of the will: Part I, "Decision," analyzes actions of the will based on motives and Part II, "Voluntary Motion and Human Capabilities" understands bodily movement as an action of the will that activates our bodily capabilities. The third part of the book, then, takes up the study of a third and final form of the will: consent. The term "consent" is not employed here in its common usage according to which it refers broadly to granting permission for something to be done, instead Ricoeur utilizes the term in a narrower and more technical sense that has to do with the will's

acquiescence to the involuntary. As a result, Ricoeur's analysis of consent resonates more closely with the Nietzschean theme of *amor fati*, the acceptance of one's fate, than with ethical debates over moral autonomy.[1]

I will postpone further discussion of Ricoeur's views on consent which are developed in Part III/Chapter 1 "The Problems of Consent" and Part III/Chapter 3 "The Way of Consent" to the end of this study. My primary focus, instead, will be on Ricoeur's analysis of the involuntary in Chapter 2, "Experienced Necessity." This chapter itself is divided into three sections: character, the unconscious, and life. Each of these sections describes a specific dimension of the "bodily involuntary" (Ricoeur 1966: 343) that holds sway over consciousness and the voluntary will. Moreover, these sections are organized in relation to one another such that each aspect of the bodily involuntary points to a deeper level of the involuntary, culminating with the absolute involuntary of the unchosen circumstance of life. This is why Ricoeur observes that "all power is immersed in life and seems superimposed on a 'tacit' structure which assures the essential tasks of life before all reflection and effort" (Ricoeur 1966: 342). Life thus emerges in this analysis as the ultimate horizon against which consent, in addition to all other voluntary forms of the will, is established.

The question that I will pursue, accordingly, concerns the significance of this priority that Ricoeur grants to involuntary life. If life forms the background of every subjective experience and activity, what does this entail for Ricoeur's conception of the life of the subject and how does it shape his understanding of consent? Developing some indications contained in Ricoeur's analysis, I will venture the following points: (1) that the involuntary undermines the idealist conception of an absolute ego by anchoring the self to a prior dimension of passivity; (2) that the suffering of this passivity gives rise to the pathos of life, a pathos which emerges from the experience of disproportion between the voluntary and involuntary aspects of life; (3) that the pathos of life leads us to the limits and limitations of a phenomenological description of consent. This reading of Ricoeur's phenomenology of life, if correct, suggests that the pathos of life is an impetus for Ricoeur's project of a "poetics of the will," which he envisioned but never completed.

THREE FIGURES OF THE INVOLUNTARY

The chapter "Experienced Necessity" is inspired by Husserlian phenomenology and sets out to provide an "eidetic description" of the formal, or invariant, structures of the involuntary. But there is a tension in this adoption of the Husserlian approach to the extent that Ricoeur distances himself, throughout his writings, from the idealistic tendencies in Husserl's thought. By this,

he has in mind some of Husserl's formulations which seem to establish the transcendental ego as the source of all meaning, such that the meaning of experience is defined by the activity of ego. Elsewhere Ricoeur insightfully describes idealism in terms of what he calls the "threefold wish of absolute consciousness," which includes the following features:

> The wish to be total, that is, without the finite perspective associated with a particular character; the wish to be transparent in the perfect correspondence of self-consciousness with intentional consciousness; the wish to be self-sufficient, without the necessity for being dependent on the nutritive and healing wisdom of the body which always precedes the will. (Ricoeur 1978: 9)

It is important to note that Ricoeur's formulation of this threefold desire of absolute consciousness—to be total, transparent, and self-sufficient—is articulated in direct counterpoint to his account of the bodily involuntary. Along each element of the desire to be an absolute consciousness, it is the bodily involuntary that thwarts this desire. Character imposes a finite perspective on the desire to be absolute; the unconscious undermines the ego's desire for self-transparency; life challenges the desire for self-sufficiency. The passage from consciousness to the body thus signifies more than an extension of transcendental phenomenology to the concrete world, as Husserl would have it. Instead, Ricoeur's phenomenology of the bodily involuntary challenges the idealist elements of Husserlian thought by exposing the limits and limitations of consciousness.

At its core, "Experienced Necessity" provides a phenomenological description of three figures of the bodily involuntary—character, the unconscious, and life. Each of these figures introduces a passive dimension into the cogito. Yet, this description of the involuntary does not simply abandon consciousness to the realm of the involuntary necessity and deny any role to subjective experience. Instead, Ricoeur's notion of "experienced necessity" leaves an active role for the cogito to play in the constitution of the meaning of experience, albeit a different one from that of an absolute consciousness. Here the active role of the ego emerges only in response to a prior set of conditions imposed by the involuntary. This interplay between activity and passivity that takes place in experienced necessity will be a focal point of the discussion of the three figures of the involuntary that follows.

Character

On initial consideration, our ordinary conceptions of character seem to be fraught with ambiguity: on the one hand, we think of character as something malleable that can be formed and later changed, but on the other hand, we also speak about it as a sort of personal destiny or fate. But what is it really? Is character

freely malleable or is it a determinate fate? While Ricoeur's account of character anticipates analyses that will be developed further in his later work (Ricoeur 1992), here Ricoeur's account focuses on psychological theories of character types. In providing an answer to the age-old question "What type of person am I?," personality tests deliver the individual's character over to the realm of objective necessity. The individual is classified and assigned to an objectifiable category or type, and these character types are designed to identify predictable tendencies in the behavior of persons of a given type. But, while Ricoeur would agree that individuals can display certain tendencies and predispositions to act in certain ways, the problem with theories of personality is that they cannot account adequately for the role of the concrete freedom of the individual.

To account for the interrelation between character and freedom, Ricoeur utilizes the tools of Husserlian phenomenology. Character cannot be understood adequately in terms of intentional consciousness, because it is not a content that can be thematized or modified by consciousness. My character is not something that I can identify as an object and then freely choose to accept or reject. "This is why," Ricoeur comments, "I would be greatly mistaken if I proposed to change my character: I cannot know it in order to modify it, but in order to consent to it" (Ricoeur 1966: 370). Instead of being something that I actively create, my character can be described phenomenologically as a *hyle,* that is, as a material given. But, even if ethology is correct in seeing character as a subterranean "condition" that precedes the will and cannot be freely modified, Ricoeur's phenomenology of character goes on to show that character does not identify the self as a general type but rather indicates the uniqueness of the self.

Borrowing from Merleau-Ponty's notion of a perceptual style, Ricoeur insists that character must always be understood in relation to a concrete situation. In abstraction, my possible motives for acting are unlimited: I could do anything and could do so for any reason. But it is my character leads me to encounter these possibilities in a determinate way, or so to speak, in my own style. My character thus does not refer to the content of what I think but to a particular way of approaching concrete situations (Ricoeur 1966: 370). It is, in other words, the lens through which I am able to see my options and choose them. Understood as a personal style of handling situations, character is not "a class, a collective type, but my unique self, inimitable . . . a singular essence" (Ricoeur 1966: 367). Consequently, my character is not a necessary fate that would determine what I do; it is an opening for my freedom.

The Unconscious

Whereas character exerts an involuntary influence of which I can become aware, the unconscious signifies a deeper layer of the involuntary that

remains hidden from consciousness. Ricoeur agrees with the psychoanalytic challenge to the transparency of thought but finds the concept of the unconscious deeply ambiguous: it can refer either to what is hidden from view through self-deception or to what is hidden from view without one even knowing that it is there. In sorting out this ambiguity, Ricoeur's discussion of the unconscious is a precursor to his later and much more extensive book on psychoanalysis, *Freud and Philosophy* (1970). Here, however, his main concern is to dispel the views of his contemporaries—including one of his former teachers, Roland Dalbiez—who would objectify the unconscious and ascribe thought to the unconscious. Thus the sections on this topic critique the "realist" interpretation of the unconscious, the "physics" of the unconscious, and Freud's "geneticism."

The realist interpretation of the unconscious, according to Ricoeur, is a temptation that results from psychoanalysis's displacement of the seat of the human being from consciousness and freedom to the unconscious and the involuntary (Ricoeur 1966: 385). It reifies the unconscious and turns it into a causal force that determines the contents of consciousness. The unconscious thereby comes to be the essence of the psyche while consciousness is reduced to its after-effect. But, Ricoeur rejects the notion that the discovery of the unconscious would force us to choose between either the absolute self-transparency of consciousness or the absolute obscurity of the unconscious. To escape these alternatives, Ricoeur draws from the insights of Husserlian phenomenology and claims that "psychoanalysis is only a hyletics of consciousness" (Ricoeur 1966: 405).[2] To explain what this claim means, we need to flesh it out in phenomenological terms.

Building on Husserl's observation in *Ideas I* that it is possible to separate the *hyle* from the corresponding apprehension (*Auffassung*), Ricoeur goes on to suggest that, in thinking about the unconscious, it is also possible to distinguish between the impressional matter (the *hyle*), and intentional consciousness (Ricoeur 1966: 394). By associating the unconscious with the hyletic material of consciousness, this implies that the unconscious is not another scene of thought; it is not a repressed set of representations that stand behind the scenes of conscious life and determine it. Instead, as a hyletic material, it can be associated with the pre-reflective dimension of conscious life that is passively given prior to any intentional act or apprehension of that material.[3] The unconscious, as simply the matter of lived experience, is thus qualitatively different from intentional consciousness that is guided by representations. It belongs to the realm of affectivity: needs, emotions and drives (Ricoeur 1966: 399). Without attributing thought to the unconscious, this affective realm makes it possible nonetheless for consciousness to be under the influence of the unconscious. Conscious life is exposed to another dynamism—the affective realm—that precedes it and remains outside of

its control. These affective contents are a source of the pathologies that are treated by the psychoanalytic cure.

Life

Deeper still than the affective influence of the unconscious, there stands an ultimate layer of necessity that is the principle behind all mental energy, including even the unconscious receptivity of affects (Ricoeur 1966: 349). This is the involuntary necessity of being "in life" (*en vie*). Life is a necessity like none other, because it stands at the core of my consciousness and is an absolute horizon of consciousness. All of my conscious acts, all of my values, and all of my acts of free volition are dependent on my being in life. But even though this absolute horizon is necessary, it is at the same time absolutely involuntary. I do not choose to exist in life; I simply find myself there. So, if it can be said that life is both fundamental and involuntary, does this imply that the self is ultimately determined by the necessity of its biological life? Against an objectifying interpretation of life that would make the self entirely dependent on its biology, Ricoeur's account of the "experienced necessity" of life describes an ambiguous situation in which life is "both willed and undergone" (Ricoeur 1966: 414).

To live is to be alive (*Leben*) but it is also to have the lived experience of being alive (*Erleben*). The bodily cogito is thus alive in two senses, as a being that is in life and as a subject that experiences life. Life, understood as an experienced necessity, includes both of these dimensions. But the relationship to life is different from the intentional relation of consciousness to its objects. Life is lived through (*erlebt*) rather than being an intentional object that is known. In Husserl's analysis of intentionality an object of perception, for example, is presented through a given profile or perspective; it has many different sides or aspects that can be adumbrated over the course of a series of perceptions of it. Together these constitute its meaning. But, according to Ricoeur, the intentional relation does not adequately account for my relation to life: "I can observe things but I do not observe my life" (Ricoeur 1966: 411). This claim is supported by a reservoir of metaphors that speak indirectly about life.

To be alive, as we have noted, is to be "*en vie*"—literally, to be "in life" (Ricoeur 1966: 413). This spatial metaphor suggests that I am wholly immersed in life. Instead of being a perceptual experience that unfolds gradually, then, I bathe in this experience of life. This is why life is "enjoyed rather than known" (Ricoeur 1966: 411). Life, unlike intentional consciousness, is primarily an affective experience that I go through. This affective experience of my own living indicates another metaphorical aspect of life: its indivisibility. The most elementary apperception of myself, Ricoeur contends, takes place "when I feel my breath raise my chest, my blood pulse in my temples,

I am so to speak in my breath, at the center of my pulse, co-present and co-extensive in the volume felt and the movement experienced" (Ricoeur 1966: 412). Here I experience myself as one indivisible being. Whereas my body can be divided into various parts and functions, my life is experienced as an indivisible whole. A third feature of life is indicated by the metaphor of support. I do not posit my life but rather am situated in it (Ricoeur 1966: 413). Life, then, is like the ground on which I stand. To the extent that all of my various acts and activities depend on life, it thus becomes a sine qua non of the will and of consciousness.

While this initial account of Ricoeur's phenomenology of life remains incomplete due to the fact that it has not yet examined the objectifications of life which will be the topic of the following section, it already enables us to identify some common features that are shared by all three figures of the involuntary. Ricoeur approaches each of these three figures in terms of what he calls "experienced necessity." This notion provides an alternative to either an entirely subjective account in which meaning would be determined entirely by the free activity of the ego or an entirely objective account in which it would be determined entirely by external forces. Instead, the experience of necessity challenges the spontaneity of consciousness and yet retains a role for conscious experience in response to necessity. This possibility is opened up, in each figure of the involuntary, by Ricoeur's reworking of Husserlian phenomenology.

Central to Ricoeur's account of the experience of necessity is the distinction between pre-reflective experience and intentionality. The experience of necessity is established as something that precedes and conditions experience. This becomes possible by way of what Husserl calls the hyletic data, or in other words, the impressional material that is initially given to conscious experience. Character, the unconscious, and life are each associated with this impressional material; this means that they are contents of experience that are not posited by the activity of the ego. As a result of this initial exposure and passivity in relation to the involuntary, the ego is no longer positioned as a source but as a response to something that is already there and already given. Yet, at the same time, this pre-given material does not causally determine consciousness. The ego retains the resources to respond to what is there and to shape its meaning. As a result, the experience of necessity is fundamentally ambiguous: both undergone and willed, both a source of our actions and something that we act upon, both a source of value and something that is valued.

THE EIDETIC DESCRIPTION OF LIFE

Up to this point, our account of Ricoeur's phenomenology of life has only established its continuity with the other figures of the involuntary, but it has

not yet described life on its own terms. To attain greater clarity about the eidetic structure of life as such, Ricoeur goes on to analyze life through three objectifications of it: (1) as a structure that regulates my body, (2) as a temporal development through the process of growth, (3) as the ultimate facticity of my birth. In dealing with each of these objectifications, Ricoeur observes that the temptation is to confine life to the realm of objective necessity in which "the will can appear as an effect of structure, as a product of evolution of the living, or even as a result of its heredity" (Ricoeur 1966: 415). But in keeping with his broader thesis, Ricoeur will maintain in each case that life is an "experienced necessity" in which the subjective experience of life and the involuntary dimension of life are interwoven.

Life as a structure marks the static component of Ricoeur's analysis. Living creatures are distinct from objects in the sense that they carry out biological functions. The structure of life creates a balance among the various functions of life, such as respiration, digestion, temperature regulation, and so on. These functions are necessary to sustain life but they happen automatically without my input; they are, as Ricoeur says, "a problem resolved as though by a greater wisdom than myself" (Ricoeur 1966: 418). That is to say that I do not need to do anything voluntarily to regulate them; they function, so to speak, in me but without me. They establish and maintain an equilibrium between myself and the surrounding environment.

Although animal life under the guide of instinct is a problem that is resolved entirely by life, he nonetheless regards life as an unresolved problem for the human being. Of course, life is a problem that has already been solved in the sense that I have nothing to do with the somatic processes of the body, but yet I do have an important role to play in caring for my body. For example, I do not have to be concerned with the beating of my heart, but I do have to care for the health of my heart. I do not have to be concerned with my digestion, but I do have to be mindful of what I eat. It is in this way that we can see then entanglement between those aspects of life which are inhuman and those aspects of life which await my humanity. This is what makes life at the same time "a task and a resolved problem" (Ricoeur 1966: 417).

Whereas the focus on life as a structure offers a static analysis of the involuntary functions of life, the dynamic movement of life is highlighted by Ricoeur's discussion of the process of growth. This temporal dimension of life presents a methodological challenge for the eidetic method practiced in *Freedom and Nature*. Eidetics describes essences, and essences are not temporal. This is why an eidetics of growth, as Ricoeur notes, grants a normative privilege to the study of *being* a mature adult, placed in between the process of *becoming* an adult and that of *becoming* old (Ricoeur 1966: 426). But Ricoeur insists that the temporal dimension of life and its becoming is important in its own right, and this is why a genetic phenomenology is also

necessary (Ricoeur 1966: 426). It works in the opposite direction from an eidetics. Instead of explaining the lower points of development in terms of the higher, a genetic approach explains growth historically; it explains the higher by way of the lower. Here we find that the self is subordinated to its history and the necessity of growth.

Ricoeur briefly engages what he calls "a psychology of ages" (Ricoeur 1966: 428) or what today we would call developmental psychology. He tries to strike a balance between the eidetic and genetic approaches. Each age, he contends, has its own perfection and is a peak in its own way. This makes it possible to respect the multiple aspects of humanity and avoid reducing the teleology of growth to a single paradigm at a single developmental point. It includes the developmental stages on the way to becoming an adult as well as those of aging. As a result of such a view, there is ultimately no opposition between a genetic and an eidetic approach. If it is paradoxical, it is only so in the same sense in which we speak of personal development, in which a person becomes him or herself.

Growth and aging are comparable to character. Aging has an element of fate in the sense that it takes place regardless of what I might happen to do or want. But there is also an attempt to objectify it and turn it into a typology. This occurs, for example, in the temptation to think about individuals as members of generations. It is, of course, the case that my age presents a specific style by which I am able to engage the world and interact with situations. But, even though I grow up and eventually grow old, age is not simply a matter of constraint and limitation. It is rather an orientation of freedom: "The field of an unlimited freedom opens only within these finite bounds" (Ricoeur 1966: 432). We thus find ourselves situated within a dialectic of the voluntary and the involuntary once again. The time of aging is both a resolved problem and a task. On the one hand, growth and aging take place regardless of what I do. But this organic involuntary, on the other hand, is shaped by the decisions that I make. I can choose, as we say, whether "to act my age" or not. Aging thus presents a situation and an opportunity to choose what I become and how I age.

The third essential involuntary feature of being "in life" is the fact of my birth. I am always already born, already in life, before I am even aware of it. Ricoeur's emphasis on the facticity of life stands in contrast with Heidegger's emphasis on the facticity of death. In looking back at the fact of my birth, this event points back to beings who were there before me. My birth, my beginning, was an event for others. This implies that "the explanation of my being will be alienation. I leave myself in order to place myself in a being outside my control, my ancestors, and follow out a chain of effects down to myself" (Ricoeur 1966: 435). Here I become acutely aware of the contingency of my own existence. To be myself, I had to be born in this particular place and at

this particular time, but at the same time the fact that I am myself is not necessary; it remains a purely contingent fact.

Taken together, these three features of life—structure, growth, and birth—define a fundamental life situation that provides the backdrop for all of our lived experiences. To be alive is to be an organized body, to grow according to a vital impetus, and to descend from ancestors. This life situation is given to me without my choosing. Although my life situation imposes a set of limitations and constraints on my possibilities, it does not destroy the possibility of my freedom. Life, according to Ricoeur, presents both "a task and a resolved problem" (Ricoeur 1966: 417). It is resolved in the sense that the involuntary takes care of certain functions independently from my will, and it is a task in the sense that the will has a role in shaping the meaning of the involuntary. In other words, it is only within a given life circumstance that I can become the particular individual who I am, that I can value what I value, or that I can accomplish what I accomplish.

THE PATHOS OF THE INVOLUNTARY

The experience of necessity has brought out the paradox or ambiguity of the human condition. We are at the same subjects who live "for the world" and objects who live "in the world." The life of the subject is thus both active and passive, bound and unbound, free and determined. The discovery of this ambiguity is not new to the extent that it has been noticed in many other phenomenological studies, but that it is not the stopping point for Ricoeur's analysis. While the "experience of necessity" introduces a dimension of passivity to the ego, Ricoeur's novelty consists in the fact that he goes on to add a layer of pathos to this passivity. To situate the self in relation to the involuntary is to put it into relation to something that remains external to the will, but this external reality does not simply leave the self unaffected or unmoved. Instead, it points to a wound in the human condition, or what Ricoeur elsewhere calls a "wounded cogito." To describe this condition, in what follows each of the three figures of the involuntary—character, the unconscious, and life—will be connected with its own modality of wounding and its corresponding pathos.

Character, as Ricoeur's analysis indicates, is the condition of my originality. My character emerges out of the gap that separates the infinite realm of possibilities from the finite reality of my actuality. If I were only a set of pure possibilities, I would be no one in particular and would thus be indistinguishable from anyone else. It is only because I have a character that I am something determinate. My character, in other words, is what makes me distinct from others. And yet this originality of my character at the same time creates

a wound in the self. This wound is a result of the tension between the particularity of my character and the aspiration to be absolute. The establishment of myself in my uniqueness means, at the same time, that I cannot be anything and everything. What I suffer from are all of the other missed possibilities that I cannot realize and that I cannot become. Uniqueness is at the same time solitude, and I suffer from the fact that I can only be myself and no one else. This is what Ricoeur calls "the sorrow of finitude." This pathos stems from the awareness of my limitations and the solitude that results from them.

The unconscious, as has been shown, is not a hidden drama that exists behind the scenes of consciousness. Instead, it enters into my experience but in a way that is concealed from intentional consciousness; it touches me affectively by shaping my needs, desires, and drives. This influence of the unconscious points to an obscure influence on my conscious life that stands outside of consciousness. But, the realization of this influence also creates a wound in the self that is due to the tension between the desire for self-mastery and self-transparency in contrast with the unconscious challenge to it. When I become aware of its influence over me, the unconscious plunges me into the abyss of the boundless, the *apeiron*. In so doing, my self is put at risk to the extent that its "power is my impotence, its spontaneity is my passivity, that is, my non-activity" (Ricoeur 1966: 449). The unconscious thus threatens me with the risk of a loss of myself, to the point that I would become "possessed" by the obscure drives of the unconscious. The depth of the unconscious gives rise to a pathos that Ricoeur calls "the sorrow of formlessness" (Ricoeur 1966: 448). It is a pathos that emerges from the loss of any established boundaries that would demarcate myself from what is not myself.

While Ricoeur only briefly touches on the two preceding sorrows stemming from experienced necessity, it is the third and final form of pathos—"the sorrow of contingency" (Ricoeur 1966: 450)—that receives his most detailed discussion and attention. Perhaps this is because it is the pathos that emerges from the deepest level of the involuntary. Life, as we have shown, is the ultimate figure of the involuntary because it "sums up all that I have not chosen and all that I cannot change" (Ricoeur 1966: 450). It marks the sheer facticity that precedes and situates my freedom. This realization produces a wound as a result of the tension between my desire for aseity, or to be self-sufficient, and my dependency on the involuntary dimension of life. This wound is what Ricoeur calls "the sorrow of contingency," and its pathos is elaborated with respect to each of the three objectifications of life that were studied in the previous section: life as structure, as growth, and as birth.

Life as structure points to the role of somatic processes in maintaining my life. These processes take place automatically without the influence of my will. But, at the same time, this means that their functioning is entirely contingent; without any warning, the various systems of my body could break down

or cease operating at any moment. The failure of the organization and regulation of my bodily systems leads to pain and illness. In the experience of pain, consciousness is negated in such a way that it is subjected to pain (Ricoeur 1966: 450). When I suffer from pain, my body is divided from myself; "it is non-self, non-thought, non-willed" (Ricoeur 1966: 451). This exteriority of the body, in the experience of suffering from pain and wounding, teaches me a lesson about my contingency. It forecasts that my body will one day break down and be reduced to dust. What Ricoeur calls "the sorrow of contingency" is the pathos that results from the announcement of this fact.

As for life as growth, human development entails a distention of the self over time. Bergson, according to Ricoeur, was overly optimistic in his praise of becoming as a source of creativity and growth. For, growth is not only the major key that follows the process of becoming an adult; it also includes the minor key that follows the process of becoming old, and the negative effects of aging are "the shadow which accompanies" growth (Ricoeur 1966: 452). It is by way of aging that we encounter the wound of becoming. In growing old, we experience the irreversibility and discontinuity of life that is "more often a cacophony than a melody" (Ricoeur 1966: 453), a distention more than unity. This wound, which is tied to the passage of time, is opened by the irreversibility of time; I cannot go back and undo the past. What has been done is done; it cannot be erased. But at the same time I cannot cling to the present either. Time marches on, even though I would want to cling to it. Aging produces the sorrow that results from the fact that time will move on without me and independently of my will.

And finally, life as birth points to the sheer contingency of my own bodily existence. My contingency is highlighted by the pure fact of my existence as well as the fact that I am not defined in terms of aseity, or, self-sufficiency. Birth means that I do not posit my own existence, instead I am first thrown into the world. This factual situation, the situation of my birth, itself has a contingent character. As I look back into my ancestry, I discover that I am not the product of any necessary chain of events but rather a chain of contingent relations that could have been otherwise. This makes me aware that my life situation might not have existed at all: "I am here, and that is not necessary" (Ricoeur 1966: 456). The wound that is experienced here is produced out of the tension between my desire to be a necessary being and my reality as a contingent one. In this form of sorrow, as with the preceding objectifications of life, I suffer from the realization of my contingency and the fact that life goes on without me.

In this section, we have connected each of the three layers of involuntary with a distinctive wound produced in the self that gives rise, in turn, to its own distinctive pathos. These wounds are the product of the involuntary's thwarting of the desire of consciousness to be absolute. It is in this clash between the voluntary and the involuntary, for Ricoeur, that "suffering acquires its

philosophical significance" (Ricoeur 1966: 17). What is suffered is not a physical wound or a physical pain, instead what is suffered is a rift in the self. This wound is produced by the discordance between the voluntary in the desire to become absolute and the conditioning and limiting role of the involuntary. To be a living self, then, is to be divided by "experienced necessity" and also to suffer from this self-division.

CONCLUSION: AN EIDETICS OF CONSENT AND ITS LIMITATIONS

The preceding analyses have established that, though the bodily cogito is one life, its life can be spoken about in two senses, as both a subject that experiences life (*Erleben*) and as a body that is situated in life (*Leben*). To characterize this condition, elsewhere Ricoeur borrows Maine de Biran's expression "homo simplex in vitalitate, duplex in humanitate" (Ricoeur 1978: 17), which suggests that life is a source of unity as well as division. The division between the voluntary and the involuntary dimensions inscribes "a secret wound" (Ricoeur 1966: 444) or a fracture that divides the self from itself, as we have seen with regard to the three figures of the involuntary. Due to this division, life remains "a complex, unresolved situation, an unresolved problem whose terms are neither clear nor consistent" (Ricoeur 1966: 120). In addition to being passively exposed to the involuntary dimension of life, we have also shown that the self suffers from this exposure. The pathos of this suffering has been described in terms of three forms of sorrow that accompany the three forms of experienced necessity: the sorrows of limitation, formlessness, and contingency. At this final stage of the analysis, however, it is important to recall that Ricoeur does not only speak of life as an "unresolved problem" that ends in sorrow. By granting a privilege to reconciliation over division, Ricoeur also understands life as a task, and clearly this task is motivated by the longing to overcome the sorrow of the divided self and to reconcile it with life. The meaning of reconciliation here is for the self to be able to affirm that "I am alive, I am my life" (Ricoeur 1966: 353).

The answer to this longing, in *Freedom and Nature*, is supposed to be provided by Ricoeur's eidetic description of consent. This account is advertised by the chapter "Consent: Pure Description," but it is astonishing that this chapter lacks any clear or detailed treatment of this form of the will. After a brief attempt to piece together his various remarks on consent, I will suggest that the most important feature of Ricoeur's description of consent is the fact it fails. This is because its failure indicates the limits and limitations of a phenomenological approach to reconciling the division that fracture the self (Ricoeur 1966: 346).

We ordinarily talk about the issue of consent in ethical terms of giving our approval for some procedure or activity to take place, but this is not at all what Ricoeur has in mind here. He understands the notion of consent in a more metaphysical sense, that is, in relation to necessity. And so his discussion of consent has more to do with metaphysical questions concerning the relation between freedom and necessity, especially the existential concept of a "situation" (Ricoeur 1966: 345, note 2) and the Nietzschean notion of *amor fati* (Ricoeur 1966: 484).

Ricoeur begins his description of consent by noting that it is "singularly difficult" to describe (Ricoeur 1966: 343). What, then, is consent? Is it a theoretical judgment or a practical action? Consent, on the one hand, resembles a theoretical judgment when it is understood as the adoption of a specific attitude toward necessity. In consent, I judge that that is the way it must be. But, consent cannot be reduced to a theoretical observation, because I do not stand apart from necessity in consent. In this respect, it resembles a practical action, on the other hand. Consent includes a personal dimension in which I actively adopt necessity as my own. When I say "let it be so," to consent means "to take upon oneself, to assume, to make one's own" (Ricoeur 1966: 344). Yet, this is different from practical action, because the imperative "let it be so" does not change anything about the texture of reality itself, nor does it make the world my own. This is why Ricoeur describes consent as "patience rather than possession" (Ricoeur 1966: 346). In consent, I passively undergo necessity and bear it, and I reunite freedom and necessity by saying yes to the necessity I go through. I would say yes to my character which limits me but also accounts for my depth, the unconscious which eludes me but opens new possibilities for my freedom, and to life which has not been chosen but which is the condition of all choice (Ricoeur 1966: 479). Immediately following his description of consent, however, Ricoeur acknowledges that it "gives rise to more problems than it resolves or than it presents as resolved" (Ricoeur 1966: 347) and thus appears to undermine the account of consent that was just provided. What should we make of this situation?

The most important point about Ricoeur's eidetics of consent, as I have suggested, is precisely that an eidetic description fails. An eidetics of the will is limited to the description of the various parts of the will and their essential functions. It is thus well suited for analyzing the various divisions and tensions that divide and wound the self, but it is not as useful for the conciliatory task of mending those fractures and restoring unity. The failure of a pure description of consent is precisely what motivates the project of a "poetics of the will" that was intended to be the third volume of his proposed, but never completed, trilogy on the will. The task of reconciliation and of unification calls for a different method from an eidetics, namely, a poetics whose role

will be to restore the lost unity of the self and to bring about an affirmation that "I am my life." A brief allusion to this "poetics of the will" appears in a curious footnote about life:

> We must eliminate from the experience of being alive all the harmonies which already point to the "poetics" of the will. In our language, life has an ambiguous meaning: it designates at the same time the order of limits and the order of sources or creation. In this new sense life brings up a new method, namely, a "poetics" of the will which we are here abstracting. One of the crucial, difficult problems posed by such "poetics of the will" will be to know why the spontaneity of life below serves in turn as a metaphor for higher life, and what secret affinity unites those two meanings of the word "life." (Ricoeur 1966: 415)

This footnote suggests that the limitation of an eidetic phenomenology of life is that it can only describe life in its division, or in other words, in the unresolved situation that divides its voluntary and involuntary aspects. But life does not only signify a limit that divides; it also creates and unites. It will thus be the task of a new method—a poetics—to tap into this creative dimension of life. The poetics of the will thus promises a poetics of life that can reconcile these divisions and produce a new unity in the life of the subject.

NOTES

1. There is thus a fairly sharp distinction between the notion of consent here and the discussion of moral autonomy in Ricoeur's later reflections on ethics. For an interesting discussion of the implicit ethics of the early Ricoeur, see Michel (2015).
2. It should be noted, however, that he later acknowledges the limitations of this approach in Ricoeur (1970) and comes to emphasize the role of hermeneutics in psychoanalysis.
3. In this sense, I think that Ricoeur's early discussion of the unconscious closely resembles Michel Henry's reading of Freud in Henry (1993).

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Part III

NEW TRAJECTORIES

Chapter 10

A Descriptive Science of First-Person Experience

For an Experiential Phenomenology

Natalie Depraz

Paul Ricoeur originally published *Freedom and Nature* in 1950, the very same year as the publication of his French translation of Husserl's *Ideas I*.[1] In his "Preface" to Husserl's text, the young translator announced a historico-critical reading of *Ideas I*, which was the result of many notes that were handwritten in the margins of the German text during his captivity in Germany and which was accompanied by a first-rate index. But at the same time, he made references, albeit in a non-systematic way, to notions that could be called "existential," in keeping with the times, concerning Husserl's method:

> What is the reduction? . . . These things can't be told but must be achieved by the spiritual discipline (*ascèse*) of the phenomenological method. Also it is difficult to say at what point with *Ideas I* one is actually using the phenomenological reduction, a fact which is disconcerting to the reader. (Ricoeur 1967: 16)

Such notes are indicative of the young phenomenologist's interest in personal and concrete experience (a question of "askesis"), in the real, spatio-temporal incarnation of the method of reduction (a question of knowing and of "saying when" it "actually" took place), and in the practice of it (a question of "actually practicing" it). These questions identify, even if only furtively through the detour of a historical framework, some of the contours of a project that I have elsewhere called an "experiential phenomenology": in the first person, inscribed in the body, and responding to a practice.

Here I would like to propose a rereading of Ricoeur's first work in this light, with three main questions in mind. First, a question of historical fact:

Why did Ricoeur renounce the project of a descriptive phenomenology initiated in the first volume of his *Philosophy of the Will*," and why did he ultimately orient his philosophical project around the question of interpretation? (Depraz 2009; 2008). Second, an epistemological and methodological question: In what sense is or is not Husserlian phenomenology a first-person approach, and following this question, in what sense does Ricoeur's *Philosophy of the Will* pave the way for an experiential phenomenology in the first person? Third, a forward-looking and heuristic question: What criteria need to be established as the basis to arrive at a phenomenological science that is descriptive and about first-person experience?

THE QUESTION OF HISTORICAL FACT

Before directly addressing *Freedom and Nature*, I would like to carry out a critical examination of the arguments that Ricoeur offers retrospectively in order to justify his change of orientation afterward, namely, his passage from experiential description to interpretation or from so-called *pure* phenomenology to hermeneutics. For it is in 1975 that he turns back on this evolution over the course of several decades, in an article titled "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics" (Ricoeur 1991: 25–52).

The article proceeds in two parts. First, Ricoeur carries out the work of delineating Husserl's phenomenology, by performing a critique of Husserl's idealist position. The point of view from which it is delineated is called "hermeneutic," and this term itself is distinguished in three senses: (1) biblical exegesis, (2) the hermeneutics of facticity that initiates understanding, and (3) the hermeneutics of intersubjective dialogue. Second, Ricoeur carries out a more constructive task, where he shows the two possible points of connection between phenomenology and hermeneutics. In both cases, according to him, the phenomenological presupposition of hermeneutics resides in meaning. But one could ask: What about the "experiential" dimension? Is it not more basic than meaning? The hermeneutic presupposition of phenomenology resides in *Auslegung*. But what about the dimension of *indication* as a linguistic excavation of an experience that is more archaic and more corporeal than interpretation?

The hypothesis will thus be formulated in the following way: What is there about an experiential phenomenology that is not hermeneutical, in any of the three senses that were rightly distinguished by Ricoeur? To move forward with this hypothesis, it is necessary to rely on a language that is not shot through with multiple possible meanings, which always threatens to lead language back to itself and to close it on to itself, as is the case with the act of interpretation in all of its possible forms. For, the language that is suited

to an experiential phenomenology is a language that is based on indexicality and performative actions, according to criteria inherited from Austin's pragmatism. So, instead of ignoring language and falling into the ever-looming critique of its transparency and the ineffability associated with Husserlian intuitionism, an "experiential" phenomenology adopts the language of showing and of action. Such a language is best able to account for the corporeal and organic dimension of the experience of a singular subject (see Depraz 2011).

Two correlative arguments can be put forward in favor of Ricoeur's decision to renounce his initial project of a "descriptive phenomenology" (Ricoeur 1966: 4), which, as we will see, has a number of strong affinities with what I am calling an "experiential phenomenology." In fact, the conception of meaning that he has in mind becomes less about the meaning immanent to perception and corporeal consciousness, as is the case with his phenomenological predecessors like Husserl and then Merleau-Ponty, than about the meaning of the text. Henceforth, if it is the text more than living experience that forms the hearth of meaning, Paul Ricoeur, the protestant, immediately places the text of texts, the Bible, at the center of his inquiry into meaning, as an original source of meaning. This is the first argument that decenters experience and leads to hermeneutics, understood primarily as biblical "exegesis." The source-experience is only accessible on the basis of a source-text that weaves together the indivisibility of language and experience in the form of the *word*, which is both Logos and Incarnation. Following this original indivisibility, the biblical text becomes the depository of an unfathomable thickness that opens up the infinite multiplicity of its meaning. One draws from it such a wealth that the experience of different finite meanings ends up prevailing over the meaning of experience as an orientation and depth immanent to it (see Ricoeur 2000). The second argument is an extension of the first and foregrounds the wealth of interpretations. It involves the depth of another type of text, the literary text, with the polysemic weight that it carries intrinsically and which will be at the center of Ricoeur's work on metaphor, narration, and history. For whoever expresses polysemy expresses a recognition of lateral and sometimes forward meanings at the risk of opacity; whoever expresses interpretive depth, says a rupture with the search which is certainly an illusion of an absolute transparency of meaning and experience. The philosopher could not be any clearer: "A hermeneutical philosophy is a philosophy . . . that gives up the dream of a total mediation, at the end of which reflection would once again amount to intellectual intuition in the transparence to itself of an absolute subject" (Ricoeur 1991: 18).

Even more fundamentally, the road taken by Ricoeur consists in constructing a satisfactory mode of connection between phenomenology and theology. It implies the necessary demonstration of a new and different practice of

phenomenology. In fact, phenomenology can no longer be descriptive: direct experience will have to also introduce a critical exercise: "I unreservedly grant," Ricoeur says, "that there can be a phenomenology of feelings and dispositions that can be qualified as religious by virtue of the disproportion within the relation between call and response. This phenomenology would not be merely descriptive but critical" (Ricoeur 2000: 129). It is as if the descriptive requirement only had philosophical and epistemological validity to the extent that it contained within itself, intrinsically, a critical demand. Likewise, it is as if these two requirements—descriptive and interpretive—necessarily had to be joined together in order to define the movement of the founding basis of a phenomenology of religion and thereby enter into a mutually beneficial interaction. For, as Ricoeur insists, a phenomenology of religion must "run the gauntlet of a hermeneutic and more precisely of a *textual* or a *scriptural* hermeneutic" (Ricoeur 2000: 130).

Yet, one could ask whether, even in the context of religious experience, experiential lived experience could become an object of study independently from the textual resource of scripture and thereby orient the meaning of the experiential side rather than the hermeneutic one. This is already, in substance, Jean-François Courtine's question which is suggested by the guiding theme of his "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics of Religion": "Is there, in religious experience, a specific form of phenomenality, of appearing or of epiphanic arising, that can affect phenomenology itself in its project, its aim, its fundamental concepts, indeed its very methods?" (Courtine 2000: 122). It seems that the Ricoeurian project cannot answer this question coherently by adopting the formulation of the graft to designate how the interpreting subject remakes an identity as a reader through the reading of the text. It has the look of something grafted, which cannot exist without the new interpretation of the text that it just produced; more precisely, the text is born (or reborn) literally from the proposed interpretation. In short, in the relation to the text, the interpreting subject constitutes and reconstitutes its own identity in face of a text that itself is born again. It is as if the text makes us at the same time as we make and reconstitute it, or, interpret it. With this point, it is possible to conceive the grafting of experience on to the text in terms of this profound affinity, this undivided continuum, between phenomenology and hermeneutics.

The coherence of the Ricoeurian project can be understood on the basis of the choice to let go of a strictly experiential phenomenology. At the other extreme, if he would have privileged meaning less as a hearth of interpretation than as an indication and a performative act, this would have led Ricoeur, by contrast, beyond even the reflection on action that he carried out elsewhere and would have involved a conception of experience in the first person and the subject. And this would have taken place in the context of a scientific psychological activity that he ultimately chose to let go of in favor of psychoanalysis.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL-METHODOLOGICAL QUESTION

We will see that this choice had not yet been made in 1950, in *Freedom and Nature*, where there are a number of tracks that lead in the direction of a profound reflection on the complex methodological between phenomenology and the experimental sciences.

With respect to Husserl, however, it seems reckless to me to speak simply and point-blank about an experiential phenomenology in the first person. This is the case for two main reasons. First, for the founder of phenomenology, experience is intrinsically eidetic (invariant essences are the target of the investigation), quite simply because facts can only emerge from empirical experience which is criticized in the name of psychologism. There is no third way; there is only either the phenomenology of invariants or the empiricism of facts. And both methodologically and ontologically, Husserl maintains an irreducible discontinuity between these two orders. In order to exist in the first person, an experience must be situated at a given time and place, uniquely and irreducibly. In short, it must be singular. The second reason is that, for Husserl the phenomenologist, the subject is "transcendental" on its most evident level of meaning, that is, universal and necessary, according to features that are still typically Kantian. And even if Husserl considers the subject to be intrinsically incarnated and highlights this crucial component by naming it with the Leibnizian term "monad" to express its concrete force and vitality, its incarnation does not make the ego a unique singularity, an individual, nor a fortiori a person. In short, the subject remains for Husserl an I that is understood as an "it"; it is a first person envisioned as a third person, incarnated in the facticity of a felt contact and presence with things and beings, but without any initiative or receptivity at the hearth of its intimacy and its interiority (Depraz 2009b; Chauvier 2009). In fact, in order for a lived experience—and a subject—to exist in a first person stance, it is still necessary for the subject to respond to a contact with its *own* singular experience that is authentic and intimate (Depraz 2009a: 90–117).

And there is some comfort in reconstructing philosophical or epistemological positions, presenting them with a maximum of precision and neutrality (the interpreter will be judged, then, by the talent of internal coherence), and maintaining a position of conceptual exteriority toward the subject considered. Here, by contrast, the wager will be to go beyond the Aristotelian view that "there is only a science of the universal" and to seek validation by the singular, that is, by the absolutely lived experience of a given subject who happens to be myself. The question is how can one speak about the self without being anecdotal or entering into the domain of the "private"? Or rather, how can one create another mode of validation that is fully drawn from the

singularity of the intimate and that shapes its complete mode of universality there?

The issue is initially epistemological, but it also concerns the founding claims of phenomenology. Phenomenology boasts about a return to the things themselves and aims to describe the lived experience of the subject (rather than speaking about it or explaining it causally), and thereby to present itself coherently in the first person as an experiential philosophy. That is to say that it does not only speak about the "I" (a residual metaphysical instance?) or use it as a central "theme" (an object in the third person), but turns it into the operator of the very experience to be had. In that way, the issue also concerns the passage from a theoretical conception of phenomenology to its practical implementation, where the subject is no longer an object or theme, but an agent in the first person. If it is a question of adopting this "view from within," as Francisco Varela stated (Varela and Shear 1999), this could not occur by continuing to speak about the subject as one point of view among others, that is, by speaking about the subject "from nowhere" in an illusory mode of neutrality and distance from above. It is necessary to decide to act, to implement, and to enter into experience in the first person by being an agent oneself. It is only by investing experience from within, which is necessarily unique and situated here and now, that one can truly come to assess its validity and truth, as well as to define its limits and intrinsic difficulties. This claim meets up with Husserl's initial project, where appearing draws its ultimate truth from its *mode* of appearing as something irreducibly experienced as mine. As long as one is making claims about the experiences of others (experiences that are sometimes themselves already general, conceptual, and imagined, which is to say non-individuating, even when these experiences are singular), one can only have a mediated and external access to them, at best in the second person, and therefore one cannot ultimately assess their full truth. The radical hypothesis consists of reaching universality (scientific validity and philosophical truth) by the absolute singularization of the position, or rather, by reaching full objectivity through the completely assumed subjectivization of the topic. The point where I depart from Husserl is when it is a question precisely of this requirement of passing into the act by *carrying it out* (Depraz 2006), that is to say, of entering into experience radically in the first person, and of doing this in a way that is not wildly private nor anecdotal navel-gazing but that uses a disciplined method. It is thus by answering the requirement for a return to singular experience, that is to say, by taking its practice seriously that Husserlian phenomenology can become fully a first-person approach.

After this Husserlian ambivalence, one might wonder whether the work proposed by Ricoeur in *Freedom and Nature* might pave a more pertinent way as a precursor of what a first-person experiential phenomenology could

become. In this perspective, I will turn to the book's "General Introduction," and more specifically, to the first section that is devoted to "The Descriptive Method and its Limits" (Ricoeur 1966). In this regard, there are three points that draw my attention.

The first point results from Ricoeur's stance toward Husserl and could actually dissuade us. For it reveals a position in which Ricoeur actually seems regressive in relation to Husserl. To be sure, the author distinguishes between description and explanation as well as between meaning and fact (Ricoeur 1966: 4). Yet, on the one hand, he associates understanding and description without distinguishing them (Ricoeur 1966: 5). On the other hand, while supporting Husserlian eidetics, he considers transcendental phenomenology and the experience of the body to be irreducible: "All our considerations drive us away from the famous and obscure transcendental reduction which, we believe, is an obstacle to genuine understanding of a personal body" (Ricoeur 1966: 4). Here Ricoeur adopts an interpretive line that will be a constant throughout his reading of Husserl and that is later confirmed by the articles collected in *A L'école de la phénoménologie*, where the transcendental only concerns the formal level of the possibility of experience, in a very Kantian manner, and proves to be absolutely orthogonal with the concrete experience of incarnation.

Moreover, two other elements in this introduction attest to a recognition of the soundness of empirical psychology and a strong alliance with the theme of introspection. It is on these two points of emphasis that I would like to focus, since they provide a remarkable point of passage to the experiential phenomenology that I am calling for.

Ricoeur first repeats the recurrent phenomenological theme of taking a distance from empirical psychology as a corporeal objectivism that is transposed onto experience: "in becoming a fact, the lived experience of consciousness becomes degraded" (Ricoeur 1966: 8). But he does this in order to advocate, rather than for a metaphysics of subjectivity, a "complete experience of the cogito" "understood in the first person" (Ricoeur 1966: 9). In an extremely remarkable way, what Ricoeur has in view is not what one would call a "philosophical psychology," namely, a general discourse about internal states but rather an introspective psychology that does justice, as Ricoeur insists in the matter of a few paragraphs, to "necessity in the first person, as the nature which I am" and to "the intra-subjective relation" or what he calls "the cogito in the first person" (Ricoeur 1966: 9–10). What does this mean? Speaking about the "cogito in the first person" could seem redundant: why does one need to add to the *cogito*, I think, "in the first person"? This is because, in philosophical terms, the cogito is always "the Cogito," a concept, and the unique experience of the "I" that is in the process of being delivered over to the act and the experience of thinking gets lost from sight. Whence the

need of reincarnating the "cogito" in the "I think" of the concrete activity of thinking "in the first person." But from another side, Ricoeur says that introspection does not suffice, because it does not suffice to contrast it with extrospection or to contrast the internal (me, a unique) with what is external to me. This duality remains factual, oriented around objects, and Ricoeur insists that this difference must be modal, tied to two attitudes and two regards. In short, methodologically it must be phenomenological. And remarkably, that is where the modal method of phenomenology comes to prop up and support the introspective orientation of psychology in order to confer its true power "in the first person" and to keep it from "degrading" into an "empirical psychology" in the style of Hume or Condillac. In contrast with the "empirical" philosophical psychology of the "there is" (or what we would call today "in the third person"), Ricoeur opposes a description in the first person where I am an actor in a specific situation, joined with a description "in the second person" "by another person." In short, the virtue of the distinction proposed by Ricoeur is that it helps us to escape from a simplistic dichotomy between internal and external, between introspective psychology and empirical psychology: "if introspection can be naturalized, external knowledge can in turn be personalized" (Ricoeur 1966: 10). Or "We can see from this that the transition from the phenomenological to the naturalistic viewpoint does not take place by inversion of the internal and the external, but by a degradation of both" (Ricoeur 1966: 11).

In conclusion, Ricoeur's project consists of taking modal phenomenology as a guide for the transformation of psychology in such a way that still continues to be empiricist-naturalist, even when it is introspective. Likewise, he acknowledges his confidence in "scientific psychology" and states that the phenomenological method is "receptive" to it, because it offers "a normal path for discovering the subjective equivalent which is often quite ambiguous" (Ricoeur 1966: 13). In fact, the empirical path has a soundnesss which can support phenomenology: "With equal frequency a phenomenological concept will be no more than a subjectivization of a concept that is far better known along an empirical path" (Ibid.).

These two harmonious movements of the empirical and phenomenology are the force behind Ricoeur's re-characterization of phenomenology by the expression "descriptive phenomenology." In contrast with Husserl, he expresses his confidence in empirical scientific psychology as the basis for the discovery of "subjective indications." But in agreement with Husserl, he grants phenomenology the notable power of the first-person regard. For it seems to me that it is with respect to this latter point that a new distinction needs to be made, by granting a more precise meaning to the expression "in the first person" and by avoiding its collapse without further consideration into "lived experience." For, in phenomenology lived experience is often general and nonspecific.

A PROSPECTIVE AND HEURISTIC QUESTION

The question to ask is then the following: What criteria have to be brought out in order to obtain a phenomenological science that is descriptive of experience in the first person, namely, one that is specific and singular?

Here I want to move forward on the basis of a point of view that I would like to be, as Pierre Vermersch calls it, not only "in the first person" (to speak on the basis of my singular experience) but "radically in the first person" (to speak on the basis of the position of the researcher who takes him or herself as the subject). That is to say that it is neither historical, conceptual, nor general but absolutely singular, based on the unique example that is my own. The question is what do I gain by proceeding in this way? And immediately, do I not first "gain" supplementary, or even insurmountable, methodological obstacles in seeking to validate a claim on the basis of a method that stands at the opposite extreme from the objectivity that is defined in philosophy (and by Kant especially) by universality and necessity and in the sciences by the quantification of data and their averages, which is standardly called a third-person approach?

THE NECESSITY OF A FIRST-PERSON METHOD

To present a description of a singular experience that corresponds with my own first-person experience requires a way of accessing it that is tested and detailed. Of course, one knows the risks of this genre that plunges into self-observation, especially when one is a philosopher! We are so accustomed to general functions in argumentation and reasoning (where we employ the pronoun "one" or "we" in making philosophical claims, or completely impersonal propositions) that when the philosopher begins to speak "in the first person," this is usually done in an unbridled way. When the philosopher uses examples that correspond to a private individual experience, they lend themselves to the critique of a subjectivism lacking any scientific or philosophical weight. One might believe that this is what kept Ricoeur from going further in search of an introspective descriptive phenomenology: the lack of a rigorous method.

A method is thus required to avoid the abrupt leap between the general a priori conceptual analysis that is valid in its logical coherence "in the third person" and the recourse to a very particular example-illustration that validates nothing but the implicit preconceptions of the author's contingent subjectivity, but is unable to correspond to a rigorous first-person approach. One can find striking examples of this discontinuity and this lack of methodology in the first person in Jean-Luc Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon* which

naively supports the "first person" and in Renaud Barbaras's *Introduction to the Phenomenology of Life*, which dramatizes a private example in order to concretize his general proposition (the only one in the whole work, a *hapax*). The example is so crucial that one senses that it has escaped him and that he did not ask the methodological question about this choice and about the meaning of the reference to an experiential example.

Jean-Luc Marion, with regard to love (but could one not say the same for every phenomenon?), out of concern for the coherence between living and expressing it, expresses himself in this way:

> One must speak of love in the same way as one must love—in the first person . . . because one must speak of love as one must love, I will say *I*. And I will not be able to hide myself behind the *I* of the philosophers, that *I* who is supposed to be universal, a disengaged spectator or a transcendental subject, a spokesman for each and every one because he thinks exclusively what anyone can by right know in the place of anyone else (being, science, objects): that which concerns no one personally. In contrast, I am going to speak of that which affects each of us as such; I will therefore think about what affects me as such and constitutes me as this particular person, whom no other can replace and from whom no other can exempt me. I will say *I* starting from and in view of the erotic phenomenon within and for me—my own . . . I will therefore say *I* at my own risk and peril . . . I am paying the price here of speaking in my own name . . . I am going to speak of that which I barely understand—the erotic phenomenon—starting from that which I know badly—my own amorous history. (Marion 2007: 9–10)

With respect to the originally affective experience of proximity, Renaud Barbaras says:

> When I was a child, the expected visiting time for some person, when the morning began, seemed very far away to me . . . Likewise, the city of Rio is closer to me than the city of Clermont-Ferrand because some people who are close to me live there, people toward whom I am turned and whom I visit as often as I can. Nonetheless, the city of Clermont-Ferrand, even though I practically never go there any more, remains near. It is at least closer to me than some other village situated only a few kilometers from here, because I was a professor there, because an important event in my life occurred there, such that it remains there, present, and in proximity. The past to which it refers has not been closed, while this nearby village is truly foreign to me. Because I do not have anything to do there and thus have "nothing to do with it." (Barbaras: 319–320)

So whoever speaks about experience in the first person is speaking about a "first-person method," unless the experience is drawn from the private realm. This first-person method is itself structured and differentiated. To begin, it concerns the mode of access to my singular experience, namely, the internal acts, the gestures that I use to relate myself to my experience. But, beyond a

method of access to lived experience, it also touches on the operations of discriminating between different modes of statement (descriptive or explanatory), reorganizing the time of experience, and so on. That is also why "saying I" does not in any way suffice to authenticate a first-person approach (Chauvier 2001). It presupposes that one clearly situates one's relation with the chosen example and makes its status explicit as well as the meaning of its retained features; otherwise, the arbitrary and subjectivism lie in wait (see Vermersch 1997).

MICROPHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLICATION AND THE ACCESS TO MEANING BY WRITING

At this point, I see four main activities, which are often paired as corollaries to one another, that allow us to bring out and identify the meaning of an experience: speaking and listening, writing, and reading. These activities respond to different strategies for the emergence of meaning. They are all mobilized in the framework of the practice of phenomenology. The first two are central in the situation of teaching, while also being related to the second pair. Some therapeutic practices favor the former and sometimes use the second as a support, but with a sort of mistrust toward the abstraction or the impoverishment that the written has in relation to the vivacity and the wealth of the oral. Research practices (but also poetic practice, in another way, outside the return to oracular speech, the anxiety of the blank page that attests to the contrasting need to write) are often only focused on the second, leading to the hypothesis that the written allows for digging, deepening, and enriching.

Among these four activities, I have chosen to focus on writing, because my aim is research and not only the internal transformation or the discovery of my internal relation to experience, as would be the case in a meditative experience, in an analytic cure, in a therapeutic practice, or in another way, in the case of the microphenomenological explicitation put in place by Vermersch with the hope of proposing a rule-governed method of investigation and explicitation that is guided by subjective lived experience and the finest possible description of it. I will certainly utilize the technique of the method of explicitation, but not with the aim of a better understanding of myself or a professional practice, but rather as a first step that is itself a tool for a research objective. Moreover, here I am setting aside the activity of reading, which responds to another type of research, starting in the framework of a rereading of philosophical texts in a non-argumentative or historico-critical mode (hermeneutics in the initial sense of textual hermeneutics) and that opens the way for a type of reading that I call experiential or pragmatic. This differs from the philosophical interpretive understanding of the internal coherence of the reasoning of the author and brings up its unthought aspects, in order to question its relation to lived experience. These will be described

by calling attention to performative discursive procedures, the emergence of indexicality, the use of personal pronouns, and the way of referring oneself to examples (see Iser 1985; Depraz 2008 and 2009).

THE STATUS OF THE TEXT IN A "FIRST-PERSON PHENOMENOLOGY"

That said, when the identified activity is writing, how will we consider the text that will be our object? At this stage, I find three possible orientations: the philosophical relation to the text turns it into an object whose internal structural coherence is studied. One thus gives a priori credit to the author for having thought everything that has been formulated, and one respects its internal logic, which one restores and reconstitutes, all the way to criticizing it on the basis of locating an unthought. The literary relation to the text, likewise, does justice to its structure as a totality, but examines it in terms of its signifiers, its formal procedures, its images, in short, its language; it values its internal resources without any critical distance. The third relation to the text is scientific: it takes the text as a tool for viewing the experience that is presented and described by it. As a result, the text is no longer a whole whose internal complexity, whether conceptual or formal, must be taken as an object and respected. It is a material to be passed through in order to rejoin the experience that is inscribed there. That said, this scientific relation to the text does not turn it merely into a transparent tool; it also has its own matter, but the writing that marks the process is representative of a lived experience, which is the proper object of the scientific, once it has become interested in first-person approaches (which only concerns a very small minority of scientists, to be sure, who are working at the Husserl Archives (ENS-Paris), l'Université technologique de Compiègne, and l'Université de Rouen, and a few other places). Through this clarification of the text, one can better understand perhaps which phenomenological approach I would like to deploy: neither philosophical, nor literary, nor scientific, properly speaking, but one that considers the text in its specifically experiential and practical tenor as a support that is not exclusively transparent but yet allows the experience in question to flourish by way of its linguistic, literary, and logical markers.

FROM THE MICROPHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLICITATION INTERVIEW TO SELF-EXPLICITATION

With respect to my adopted method, I will begin with a distinction that is central to my thesis between the explicitation interview and self-explicitation,

in Pierre Vermersch's terms. The former is done orally and intersubjectively. That is to say on the basis of questions that are non-inductive "in structure" and of the following kind: "and when you say 'that,' what do you have in mind?" that aim to allow the explicitating subject to unfold further some aspects of his or her experience that remained unperceived, without the interviewer making any hypotheses about the content of the explicitating subject's experience. The latter occurs in writing and in a solitary manner (even if the intersubjective context can serve as its driving force), with writing sessions that aim to consign the different strata of an experience that is identified as singular. Here the subject of explicitation takes him or herself as an object, and this confers writing a motivating and creative role in which first-person experience is constructed and created by writing rather than simply a role of consignment or of the transcription of oral speech. Thus the process of writing is generative of lived experience in two ways. It does not only unfold different aspects of this experience which were not initially known about the subject who explicates him or herself in writing. In addition to producing knowledge for the subject (this is what Pierre Vermersch primarily insists on), it is also creative on its own of a new referential experience, the lived experience of writing (see Berger 2009, with whom I agree).

CONCLUSION

So here is the purpose. On the basis of a first-person exploration of one's own singular experience (a standard first-person method, which requires the development and exercise of a lived contact with experience by way of acts and experiential gestures, detailed under the register of the suspension, redirection, and letting-go as a practical epoché in *On Becoming Aware*), it is turned into an object of investigation that is completely separate (a radically first-person method) by relying on the continuity of a coherent first-person method. From the outset, it collects empirical data and then there is the generativity of the writing experience (an emphasis proposed by Berger with the "creativity of meaning"), and at each step, there is the remobilization of singular experience with the help of the recreation of an internal, intimate contact with its concrete aspects (place, time, person, subjective disposition), and in the end, there is the interpretation and analysis of these data carried out by *the same* subject-investigator (which corresponds to my own hypothesis here). In my opinion, that is how the first-person methodology fully and completely plays out and continues along all the steps in the process of constructing the object of investigation. One could hypothesize that this method of the explication of singular lived experience was valuable in allowing Ricoeur to deploy a "descriptive phenomenology" that was allied with an introspective

empirical psychology. And it is the lack of this type of rigorous method that led him to seek out methodological resources from hermeneutics.

Translated by Scott Davidson

NOTE

1. This chapter was originally presented, in a shorter version, during the *Journée Paul Ricoeur* that took place September 12, 2009, at the *Faculté protestante de Paris* hosted by Olivier Abel. It was published originally in French in *Studia Phaenomenologica*, Vol. XIII (2013): 387–402.

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Chapter 11

Ricoeur's Take on Embodied Cognition and Imagination

Enactivism in Light of Freedom and Nature

Geoffrey Dierckxsens

This chapter will explore Ricoeur's take on cognition in *Freedom and Nature*. It might seem unusual, especially today, to approach the topic of cognition in relation to this particular work. Indeed, in contrast to the notion of the "Cogito" (which Ricoeur uses frequently in *Freedom and Nature* in reference to Descartes), the term "cognition," which has a less idealistic connotation than "Cogito," is scarcely used in the book. It is not listed in the index, nor does it appear in the main titles (see 1966: 6–19, 29, 67, 68 ff.). Moreover, today cognition is widely associated with the mind-body problem in analytical philosophy, which is mostly critical with regard to Cartesianism. Although Ricoeur is also quite critical of Descartes and idealism, *Freedom and Nature*, in its turn, offers a phenomenological and existential analysis of the voluntary and involuntary life inspired by such thinkers as Edmund Husserl and Gabriel Marcel. And in the secondary literature, the book is mainly studied in relation to this heritage, or as part of Ricoeur's work as a whole (Rasmussen 2010; Fiasse 2014). Furthermore, whereas analytical philosophy plays a key part in Ricoeur's thought as a whole, this is much more the case in his later writings than it is in *Freedom and Nature*.

Yet, from the first pages *Freedom and Nature* is a book about cognition. Indeed, Ricoeur's method and scope, as announced in Introduction, amount to analyzing consciousness, or mind, in relation to a scientific study of the body and empirical knowledge. Ricoeur writes that the "body" is "an empirical object elaborated by the experimental sciences," and that "the structures of the subject constantly refer to empirical and scientific knowledge" (Ricoeur 1966: 8, 19). *Freedom and Nature* thus explicitly addresses the mind-body problem by describing the sphere of the mental (the voluntary) as incarnated within the sphere of the body (the involuntary).

What is more, the mind-body relation that Ricoeur describes in *Freedom and Nature* has significance for contemporary discussions in philosophy of mind, in particular, for the recent "enactivism" movement. Very generally speaking, enactivism defines cognition in terms of the active interaction between the body and the physical world, rather than in terms of an inner model of mental representations (i.e., of mental images that represent the external world).[1] It originally found its inspiration in cognitive science and in the continental tradition of phenomenology, including Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's ideas of the embodied consciousness.[2] However, despite phenomenology's influence within the field of enactivism, enactivists rarely discuss Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's successors who put embodiment at center stage (Sartre, Henry, Ricoeur).[3]

This chapter aims to show that Ricoeur's theory of cognition, as developed in *Freedom and Nature*, does fit within the enactivist framework and also allows us to understand a problem that enactivists are only beginning to discuss, namely, that of the imagination.[4] In order to show how Ricoeur's approach to cognition in *Freedom and Nature* applies to recent discussions of enactivism, this chapter will consist of two parts. In the first part, I will sketch how Ricoeur's conception of the mind-body relation fits within the theoretical framework of enactivism. Both Ricoeur and enactivism, especially in its original version as conceived by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, understand this relation as an interaction and a "mixture" between the involuntary (bodily functions and needs) and the voluntary (creative adaption and consent). In the second part of this chapter, I will suggest how *Freedom and Nature*—and its conception of imagination—could contribute to the enactivism movement. While enactivists offer new insights from the cognitive sciences that can provide empirical knowledge about the imagination as a kind of experience, and can put Ricoeur's theory of cognition in a more recent philosophical context (e.g., by offering knowledge about animal cognition), Ricoeur highlights the crucial role of imagination for embodied voluntary action as such, and thus invites a reconsideration of the enactivist theoretical framework (by understanding imagination as a creative process for adaptation to bodily need).

THE EMBODIED MIND: A "MIXTURE" BETWEEN THE MENTAL AND THE BODY

It is no exaggeration to say that *Freedom and Nature* is essentially a book about embodied cognition. In fact, many understand Ricoeur's endeavor in this book as an approach that embeds the voluntary in the involuntary, that is to say, an approach of human knowledge, motivation, and action as

intertwined with human need, effort, and desire. Scott Davidson puts it accurately in the introduction of this anthology, according to Ricoeur "every 'free' decision is faced with the fundamental paradox that it emerges out of what is unchosen" (17). Gaëlle Fiasse, to give another example, interprets Ricoeur's hermeneutics in general as an "in-between" of the involuntary and the voluntary, although this hermeneutics grants too little attention, in her opinion, to the role of bad luck and unfortunate events in our life stories (Fiasse 2014: 39). In order to illustrate this dialectical approach of the voluntary and the involuntary, scholars often refer to Ricoeur's phenomenological heritage (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 54ff.).

Yet, there are few, if any, elaborate studies that address Ricoeur's approach to embodied cognition in relation to the recent developments of enactivism in the philosophy of mind. This lacuna in the secondary literature is surprising. Indeed, recent attention has been paid to Ricoeur's understanding of embodiment (Sautereau and Marcelo 2017). Moreover, while Ricoeur himself is not an enactivist, his philosophy and enactivism have several aspects in common. Both are inspired by Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, and emphasize the correlation between embodiment and the mental. Ricoeur contends, like recent enactivist theorists, that embodied cognition gets shaped by sociocultural contexts (Hutto and Myin 2017). He also puts a particular focus on narrativity, like enactivists, especially on how imagination plays a part in the reception of (literary) narratives (Caracciolo 2013).

When comparing Ricoeur's program in *Freedom and Nature* with the enactivist program as it was originally formulated by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, the similarities are striking. Indeed, Ricoeur writes that "the method [of *Freedom and Nature*] is a *description* of the intentional, practical, and affective structures of the Cogito in a Husserlian manner. [It] constantly refers to empirical and scientific knowledge …, while … fundamental articulations of these structures reveal the unity of man only by reference to … incarnate existence" (Ricoeur 1966: 19; emphasis in original). And, Varela, Thompson, and Rosch define their own project as follows: "This book begins and ends with the conviction that the new sciences of mind need to enlarge their horizon to encompass both lived human experience and the possibilities for transformation inherent in human experience" (Varela et al. 1991: xv). They add, moreover, that their book finds its inspiration in phenomenology, in particular in the work of Merleau-Ponty.

Given the difference in time that separates these two projects (the 1950s and the 1990s respectively), they are in fact surprisingly similar. Both announce a descriptive analysis of consciousness and the mind, which does not seek to be representational but rather based on our concrete lived existence. Both stress that consciousness and mind are embodied and therefore point out the necessity of a dialogue with the empirical sciences. And both refer explicitly to the influence of phenomenology. In essence, there is a close

resemblance between the theoretical framework of *Freedom and Nature* and that of the original version of enactivism.

One might object, of course, that these similarities are only superficial and do not stand up against the many differences by which the two projects drift apart. It is undeniable that *Freedom and Nature* and *The Embodied Mind* are written in entirely different contexts. While Ricoeur writes his theory of the mind within the intellectual context of France of the 1950s, in which empirical and behavioristic psychology are still dominant, enactivism emerges in the midst of discussions about the mind-body problem in the 1990s, in particular as a reaction against functionalism and representationalism. At that time, the cognitive sciences were already much less oriented toward behaviorism and computational models of the mind, and much more toward evolutionary theory, and how organisms interact with their environment.[5] One finds immediate indications of this difference when looking at the language use of both *Freedom and Nature* and *The Embodied Mind*. While Ricoeur builds his theory around his concept of the "cogito," and still speaks in terms of representations (although, as will become clear, in a nontraditional way), enactivism *contests* the view that "cognition consists of the representation of a world that is independent of our perceptual and cognitive capacities" (Varela et al. 1991: xx).

Nonetheless, Ricoeur himself contests an idealistic version of representationalism. He contends, for example, that perception is "not a mental *presence*" and emphasizes the essential role of "anticipation in all modes of consciousness," which is an embodied consciousness (Ricoeur 1966: 51, 97). Moreover, this critique to representationalism is also reflected in his other works. In the three volumes of *Time and Narrative*, for example, Ricoeur contests the classical model of mimesis by arguing that it is always the creation of something new, rather than a copy of reality: human experience does not amount to copying reality.[6] Despite the differences in their terminology, Ricoeur's project in *Freedom and Nature* and the enactivism program thus point in the same direction: they both understand cognition as the result of a process of *enactment* in which our bodily relation with the world is the basis on which we experience the world and on which we act.

The theoretical overlap between Ricoeur's phenomenology in *Freedom and Nature* and the enactivism program of Varela, Thompson, and Rosch is particularly apparent when taking into account Ricoeur's notion of imagination in *Freedom and Nature*, as introduced in the section on need. This notion is a key concept in the book, and it is on the basis of imagination that Ricoeur builds his entire idea of voluntary action. Ricoeur writes, "Thus we are led to seek the crossroads of need and willing in imagination—imagination of the missing thing and of action aimed towards the thing" (Ricoeur 1966: 95). Moreover, in "The Metaphoric Process as Cognition, Imagination and Feeling," an article in which Ricoeur explicitly relates the ideas of embodied cognition

and imagination, Ricoeur confirms that imagination is nonrepresentational and should be understood in terms of an active relation with the world, a depicting that is a creation rather than a representation. He writes, "To imagine, then, is not to have a mental picture of something but to display relations in a depicting mode" (Ricoeur 1978: 150). And this depiction can refer to the anticipation of "qualities, structures, localizations, situations, attitudes, or feelings" (Ricoeur 1978: 150). In other words, rather than on the basis of an inner model of the mind, we act in the physical world (e.g., search for food, get around obstacles, etc.) by creatively imagining the particular goal that is needed in a physical situation (e.g., the pictured food, the effort of getting around the obstacle, etc.).

In order to show more precisely how the imagination works and how it brings Ricoeur close to the enactivism movement, I will discuss briefly three experiences which are key to Ricoeur's theory of embodied cognition in *Freedom and Nature*: need, pain, and pleasure. As for need, Ricoeur writes that it "tinges the imaginary with [the] corporeal" (Ricoeur 1966: 98). He defines imagination as a means to go from the bodily affection that results from "needing something," to the desire of the needed object, and eventually to the *enactment* of the perception of the needed—as if the body already obtained the satisfaction of the needed—that moves the body toward it. Ricoeur writes:

> We can come to understand the central role of imagination in this juncture of need and willing by starting from the intermingling of perception and need. The fundamental affective motive presented by the body to willing is need, extended by the imagination of its object, its program, its pleasure, and its satisfaction: what we commonly call the *desire* for, the wish for, . . . If imagination can play such a role, it is because . . . it itself is an intentional design projected into *absence,* a product of consciousness within actual nothing and not a mental *presence*. (Ricoeur 1966: 97)

In short, it is not so much by representing objects in the world that we are motivated to obtain them, but in the first place by being affected by our bodies, by needing objects, wanting them and by imagining or, one can add, by *enacting* the pleasure of obtaining them.

Ricoeur's idea of imagination in *Freedom and Nature* thus not only highlights how the involuntary lies at the heart of the voluntary. It also offers a view of cognition that fits in the enactivist agenda. More exactly, this idea meshes well with George Lakoff and Michael Johnson's theory of embodied cognition as based on metaphor. According to Lakoff and Johnson, basic embodied experience and cognition is mediated by metaphors:

> Correlations in our everyday experience inevitably lead us to acquire primary metaphors, which link our subjective experiences and judgments to our

> sensorimotor experience. These primary metaphors supply the logic, the imagery, and the qualitative feel of sensorimotor experience to abstract concepts. (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 303)

We use metaphors, according to Lakoff and Johnson, in everyday language, when we, for example, refer to "arguing" in terms of war: we want to "win" an argument, we "attack" a position, my arguments were "weak," his opinion was "spot on target," and so on (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3). Or we use metaphors concerning bodily motion in sentences that have more complex meanings as is clear in the following example: "France fell into a recession and Germany pulled it out" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 60). Lakoff and Johnson's position is interesting in that they provide a theory within the context of discussions of philosophy of mind that explains how images play part in basic embodied cognition. This supports Ricoeur's idea, in *Freedom and Nature*, that cognition, even in its basic function, is infused by imagination.

A second experience that underscores the significance of the imagination for understanding the embodied mind is pleasure. Like need, pleasure is mediated by the imagination according to Ricoeur: "Pleasure in fact enters motivation through the imagination: thus it is a moment in desire" (Ricoeur 1966: 101). More precisely, the imagination triggers the "representation" of the absent pleasure (Ricoeur 1966: 101). Again, representation should not be understood here in the classical sense, but rather as the anticipation of the pleasure itself or the imagining of the "sense-affect" that comes with the future pleasure. To put it differently still, the imagination works here as the staging or enacting of the future pleasure. In that respect, it is close to how Marco Caracciolo defines his enactivist theory of imagination. He writes, "The imagination works by simulating (or enacting) a hypothetical perceptual experience, and that this accounts for its experiential quality" (Caracciolo 2013: 81). Imagination thus allows for the creation of "quasi-experiences," that is to say, the hypothetical experience of pleasure that makes us move our body in order to get the object that possibly generates pleasure. When thirsty on a hot summer evening, for example, one can imagine the pleasure of having a cold drink on the terrace.

Imagination plays a similar role in experiences of pain according to Ricoeur. He writes, "Imagined pleasure is called desire—imagined pain is called fear" (Ricoeur 1966: 107). Whereas in the case of pleasure, the pleasant experience of the satisfaction of a desire is anticipated, the imagination of pain (e.g., a stab, a burn, a fall, etc.) functions as a protection mechanism for our bodies. It makes sure that we are careful in performing our actions. Like Ricoeur's analyses of need and pleasure, his description of pain highlights the imaginative character of embodied cognition. When the body is affected by pain, we learn to engage with the world in a certain way. We avoid further contact with the painful object; we move our bodies toward a safer place. Moreover, imagining

pain implies an enactment of the affective experience, which aids in learning to avoid it. In that sense, imagination lies at the heart of embodied cognition.

I have discussed need, pleasure, and pain as examples of experiences that show the role of imagination for embodied cognition, and how Ricoeur points in the direction of this role in *Freedom and Nature*. Yet imagination does not simply play a part in these basic experiences for Ricoeur, but it is the crux of "life" itself as it allows for the creativity to obtain different "values" (Ricoeur 1966: 30). One might think of more complex forms of enjoyment, like the enjoyment of a work of art by means of imagination. Or one might think again of Lakoff and Johnson's examples of the metaphoric imagination that we use to express ourselves in ordinary language.

To conclude this section, Ricoeur demonstrates in *Freedom and Nature* that imagination is what connects the mind to the body: it is the center of creativity that allows human beings to actively adapt to bodily affections and ultimately allows them to act in the world. In that regard, it is the imagination that brings Ricoeur close to the enactivist idea that cognition and action result from an active interplay between the body, the mind, and the physical world. Just how close the enactivist program is to Ricoeur's own thought becomes clear from the following quote taken from *The Embodied Mind* that captures the phenomenological heritage of enactivism:

> The attitude toward common sense has begun to affect the field of cognitive science, especially in artificial intelligence. We should note, however, that the philosophical source for this attitude is to be found largely in recent Continental philosophy, especially in the school of philosophical hermeneutics, which is based in the early work of Martin Heidegger and his student Hans Gadamer. … Continental philosophers … have continued to produce detailed discussions that show how knowledge depends on being in a world that is inseparable from our bodies, our language, and our social history-in short, from our *embodiment.* (Varela et al. 1991: 130; emphasis in original)

Although they do not engage in a direct discussion of Ricoeur's work, Varela, Thompson, and Rosch refer explicitly to hermeneutics—the study of socio-cultural and embodied lived existence—as the source of inspiration for their version of enactivism.

IMAGINATION AT THE HEART OF EMBODIED COGNITION

There is, however, more than a set of similarities between *Freedom and Nature* and enactivism. The account of imagination in *Freedom and Nature* also adds, as I will show here, to recent discussions of enactivism. Ricoeur shows the

essential role of imagination for understanding embodied cognition and in that sense allows a broader understanding of the enactive relation with the world. Generally speaking, enactivists agree that embodied cognition results from an active relation between the body and the world, especially regarding basic types of cognition (planning, adaption to the environment, perception, etc.) (Hutto and Myin 2013). Yet how enactivism can account for more complex, culturally mediated types of cognition (narrating, thinking, performing moral actions, etc.) and what kinds of experiences are an essential part of this embodied relation with the world is less clear. To understand this relation, theories of enactivism typically do not attribute an essential role to imagination. In the following section I will first demonstrate that Ricoeur's notion of the imagination helps understanding basic forms of cognition that we can also find in animal behavior. By combining Ricoeur's theory of imagination in *Freedom and Nature*, as expressed above, with recent theories of animal cognition it will become clear that basic nonlinguistic types of cognition such as play or pretense should be understood in relation to imagination. Next, I will argue with Ricoeur that more complex linguistic forms of cognition, like having a conversation or writing literature, essentially relate to the imagination as well.

In order to understand more precisely how the imagination plays a part in basic forms of embodied cognition, consider Jennifer Gosetti-Ferencei's enactivist theory of animal imagination. She argues that "if we take 'imagination,' not merely as representational consciousness, but as a constellation of activities rooted in embodied interaction—including pretense, play, metaphoric transfer or substitution, creative expression, empathy (or entertaining a different point of view)—these have been shown to rely on our embodiment" and that this is similarly the case with other, nonhuman animals (Gosetti-Ferencei 2017: 130).

Furthermore, Gosetti-Ferencei continues to draw a connection between imagination and human literature as a more complex form of embodied cognition. In particular, she shows how German modern literature offers an example of the use of imagination, by means of metaphors, to "enact" what it is like to exist in the perspective of animals. She provides the example of Rilke's poem "*Der Panther*," which describes what it is like to be a caged panther in a Parisian botanical zoo of the nineteenth century (Gosetti-Ferencei 2017: 131ff.). It is not my intention here to give a detailed account of animal embodied cognition. That would require writing a different chapter. Yet, the point is simply that to understand imagination as a crucial part of embodied cognition, as Ricoeur proposes in *Freedom and Nature* and as Gosetti-Ferencei also proposes, adds to the understanding of basic and complex embodied cognition and in that sense contributes importantly to the recent debate of enactivism.

There are also some enactivist theories that draw a link between more complex forms of cognition and the imagination, in particular theories that

examine the imagination as an embodied mental activity that resembles other mental activities such as communication or perception. I already mentioned Lakoff and Johnson's approach to embodied cognition, which they understand in terms of human language and metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson's focus is mainly on human language, but the way in which imagination plays a role in embodied cognition remains to be explored. This theory adds something important to Ricoeur's idea of embodied cognition, by providing additional empirical support for the idea that embodied cognition is imaginative. For example, they explain that empirical research has found that, because physical illness naturally forces our bodies to lie down, we most likely associate health with upward positions/movements, and sickness with downward positions/movements. ("He's at the *peak* of his health. Lazarus *rose* from the dead. He's in *top* shape . . . He fell ill. He's sinking fast. He came down with the flu") (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 40; emphasis in original).

Yet, while Lakoff and Johnson mainly focus on the essential role of human (metaphoric) language for embodied cognition, Ricoeur's notion of imagination has the advantage that it accounts for basic, nonlinguistic, relations between our body and the world, as well as more complex, linguistic relations. Of course, Ricoeur's phenomenological analysis of the voluntary and the involuntary in *Freedom and Nature* is meant to be, like Lakoff and Johnson's theory of language, an account of *human* embodied cognition. Nevertheless, by placing imagination at the center of basic types of embodied cognition, such as need, pleasure, and pain but also basic motor activity and coordinated action, we can also understand some of the relations between humans and other animals. In that regard, *Freedom and Nature* can open some new avenues for understanding embodied cognition, especially when we supplement it with newer empirical findings about animal cognition. In fact, there already exists significant research in cognitive science showing that animals are capable of certain types of imagination, such as play and coordinated planning (see Dawkins 1995; Jensvold and Fouts 1993).

Regarding more complex forms of cognition, one advantage of Ricoeur's idea of imagination in *Freedom and Nature* is that it accounts for the personal character of the "what-it-is-like" aspect or the so-called qualia-aspect of consciousness. Many enactivists have already addressed the qualia-aspect of consciousness in response to what has become known as "the hard problem" in the philosophy of mind: how the internal phenomenal character of consciousness (the qualia or what-it-feels-like character) relates to the external properties of the brain that cause it. One of the main arguments that several enactivists have endorsed is that there is in fact no such thing as "the hard problem" of consciousness, because our conscious experiences, being part of embodied cognition, are not so much the result of internal brain processes, but more widely of the interaction between the body as a whole and the

physical world. Alva Noë, for example, puts it as follows: "My consciousness now—with all its particular quality for me now—depends not only on what is happening in my brain but also on my history and my current position in and interaction with the wider world" (Noë 2009: 9).

This idea that phenomenal consciousness is extended has also been criticized by enactivists who argue that, although phenomenality might be significant to the phenomenal properties of certain experiences (e.g., the redness of red), there is no supervenience of consciousness, or consciousness is caused entirely by the brain and not by the extending surrounding world. However interesting and much discussed "the hard problem" may be, what enactivists often overlook is the question of how to account for the personal aspect of consciousness, that is, the question of in what sense the experiences of consciousness are *my* experiences, rather than the question of whether or not phenomenality supervenes the brain.[7] Here *Freedom and Nature* can help, because it shows that the subject's personal experiences and motivations (e.g., the subject's needs and desires) depend upon its imaginative-embodied relation with the world.

The idea of imagination in *Freedom and Nature* helps to account for the personal aspect of consciousness. As I argued above, imagination is the locus of motivation according to Ricoeur. It allows for adaptation to the sphere of the involuntary, working with it in order to make decisions and to act in the world. Yet this implies that the imagination is an essential part of the personal character of experiences and decisions as well. When I desire food, for example, I do not simply respond to a stimulus; I actively search for an imaginative solution to obtain it, one that it matches my personal situation; when I am motivated to tell a story, I look for a way of expressing myself in a certain way that I feel is fitting. Therefore, Ricoeur contends that "the creative act" of subjectivity is connected to "incarnation" (Ricoeur 1966: 194).

This embodied subject, moreover, is sensitive to contexts in a double way, which makes it suitable for complex forms of cognition. (1) The self's experiences are influenced by others, and by the cultural and historical contexts that we share with these others: these contexts influence how I am motivated and act in the world. (2) My own experiences help me to understand those of others. Ricoeur thus offers an answer to the problem of how to understand a "core" of the self, by defining the self as the result of a "dialectic" relation between the mind, the body, and the external world which we share with others (Ricoeur 1966: 12). The personal character of the "what-it-feels-like" aspect of conscious experiences, which drive embodied actions, is entangled with imagination, which allows us to engage in a cultural and historical world with complex meanings. For example, social customs influence how we imagine ourselves, but at the same time we are not merely the product of those customs. We can create to a certain extent a personal image that we

would like others to see, by acting according to this image—enacting this image—in the world.

Ricoeur shows that the imagination is crucial for lived experience, and that we use it to build our personal identities, these identities being the whole of the experiences and decisions that constitute embodied life. This idea that the imagination offers the building blocks of our personal identity, which is a narrative identity, reflects Ricoeur's later work, in which he explicitly connects imagination with narrative identity (Ricoeur 1988: 249). The metaphoric aspect of the imagination, which is to say the human capacity to connect different meanings and to produce meaning in our embodied relation with the world, allows us to make sense of things. Ricoeur writes in "The Metaphoric Process," "a metaphor may be seen as a model for changing our way of looking at things, of perceiving the world" (Ricoeur 1978: 152).

This is obviously true when we speak of things, as Lakoff and Johnson's example of "argument is war" attests. Yet it is also true when we move our bodies (the sun is inviting to go and bade in it), when we experience things in a new way (this tree looks like a rock), and when we decide on things (I decide to take a swim because the water seems gentle). And although other animals are obviously not the same narrators as humans, there are cases known of other animals that make imaginative use of the same thing for different purposes. We can think of Merleau-Ponty's example of crabs that give different symbolical functions to sea anemone. Crabs use anemone either as a replacement tool for their shells, as protection against predators or simply as food (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 176). Our embodied relation with the world is imaginative through and through—creating types of cognition that go from basic to more complex forms—and "imagination" is therefore also "carnal" (Ricoeur 1966: 110).

I am arguing that Ricoeur's idea of imagination, as understood in *Freedom and Nature* (and in several of his later texts), makes it possible to provide an answer to the problem discussed in enactivism of what constitutes the personal character of our embodied relation with the world. Marco Caracciolo makes a similar point with his enactivist theory of imagination. According to Caracciolo the narrative, and literature in particular, has a special role to play with respect to the qualia of experiences. More specifically, the metaphoric aspect of literature invites the imagination of the reader to actively enact the qualitative character of certain experiences. Caracciolo writes, "If experience has an active character, it is by metaphorically associating the experience to be described with an activity that we can give an idea of what it is like to have that experience" (Caracciolo 2013: 22). By referring to Saramago's novel *Blindness*, Caracciolo gives the example of describing the experience of pain (in terms of sawing, drilling, hammering a wound) to a person who cannot, supposedly, experience pain. Yet Proust's famous description of the

madeleine cake might also—in a different sense—be understood as a literary description of the experience of a madeleine, by means of which a person who never saw nor tasted a madeleine could imagine what it would look like: "plump little cakes called 'petites madeleines,' which look as though they had been moulded in the fluted scallop of a pilgrim's shell" (Proust 2016: Chapter 1). These examples taken from literature also attest to a more complex form of imaginative-embodied cognition.

Caracciolo's enactivist approach to the experience of reading highlights the point I am trying to make in this chapter; that is, that imagination is salient for our experiences of things, for their personal character, as well as for how we act in our embodied relation to the world. Yet Caracciolo's analysis focuses on literature and on the imagination of the reader. My point, however, is that not only this particular kind of imaginary experience should be explained by the enactivism framework, nor that enactivism works well to explain the particular experience of imagination (which many have done already), but rather that imagination *as such* lies at the very heart of embodied experience and action, if we understand experience and action in enactivist terms. The reason for this is that the imagination helps to explain why our experiences and actions are personal: because we imaginatively engage with the world, come to understand in that way the qualitative feel of experiences, which then in turn influences how we act in the world.

CONCLUSION: BRINGING PHENOMENOLOGY BACK TO ENACTIVISM

Applying Ricoeur's account of imagination to enactivism sheds a different light on embodied experience and action within the enactivist theoretical framework. Doing so invites to turn things around, and to see imagination not only as a *type of experience within the enactivism framework* as enactivists like Caracciolo propose to do, but as *the heart of* this framework. Ricoeur's idea of imagination fleshes out this framework. As I argued in this chapter, embodied cognition—both basic minds and more complex ones—closely relates to imagination. When needing, desiring, planning, speaking, narrating, and so on, we actively and imaginatively adapt to our bodies as to seek the best way of interacting with our surroundings.

One might object, from a naturalistic point of view, that combining Ricoeur's concept of imagination, as understood in *Freedom and Nature*, with recent enactivist discussions would imply an explanatory fallacy. Indeed, *Freedom and Nature* is written as a critique of naturalism (Ricoeur 1966: 41), whereas many enactivists see themselves as the defenders of naturalism (Hutto and Myin 2013). Explaining the personal character of qualia

on the basis of the concept of imagination taken from *Freedom and Nature* would thus introduce theoretical presuppositions, which can no longer be explained as part of the natural relation between the embodied mind and the physical world, while an naturalistic-enactivist take on "the hard problem" aims to explain the link (or explaining away the gap) between the subjective feeling-like aspect of consciousness and the physical-neural relations that cause it.

However, as I argued in the first part of this chapter, Ricoeur's phenomenological approach to the imagination does not conflict with enactivism, at least not with the original version of enactivism that defines the mind as an embodied, active relation with the physical world. The idea of imagination in *Freedom and Nature* therefore offers a fitting basis, as I have been arguing in this chapter, for an enactivist concept of imagination, and for offering new insights to contemporary cognitive theories in general. What is more, this idea adds to the understanding of the embodied consciousness, and in particular by offering one of the reasons why experiences of consciousness that motivate actions take a personal turn. The personal character of consciousness comes with our imaginative capacity to adapt the body to the world which in turn allows constituting a personal-narrative character. At the same time, while *Freedom and Nature*'s theoretical program does not necessarily conflict with enactivism, new insights and empirical data collected by the cognitive sciences, such as data on animal cognition for example, might add to Ricoeur's theory of imagination as well and might help re-actualizing *Freedom and Nature*.

In conclusion, I think that Ricoeur's insights on imagination and embodied cognition in *Freedom and Nature* show that this book is still quite timely. It is timely, so I argued, because it can contribute to contemporary theories of embodied cognition by showing that imagination is at work in the embodied mind: embodied cognition implies imaginative coordination and planning, working with and around need and desire, imaginative narrating and the use of metaphors, and so on. Combining Ricoeur's thought with enactivism is thus "not to force a marriage," to use Ricoeur's way of indicating the role of analytical philosophy in *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur 1992: 17). On the contrary, there is a similarity from the start that allows introducing Ricoeur's idea of the mind within enactivist discussions without assuming theoretical presuppositions that would contradict with these discussions.

Freedom and Nature invites a reconsideration of the enactivist program by conceptualizing the embodied mind in terms of the imagination. Rather than "radicalizing" enactivism or naturalizing phenomenological conceptions of the embodied consciousness, as many propose to do, we should "phenomenalize" enactivism again, return to its original intention, by bringing phenomenology back into enactivism. Examining Ricoeur's work and certain

of its phenomenological concepts, such as the experience of imagination as understood in *Freedom and Nature*, might offer an excellent opportunity to do this.

NOTES

1. Some representative examples of the enactivist movement are (O'Regan and Noë 2001; Hutto and Myin 2013).

2. Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, who first introduced the term "enactivism" found their inspiration in the works of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. See Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991.

3. One exception is Kathleen Wider's discussion of Sartre and enactivism in (Wider 2016).

4. There exist a number of enactivist theories that discuss the problem of imagination, especially in relation to experience of the narrative. See, for example, Goldman 2006; Caracciolo 2013.

5. See the entry on "Embodied Cognition" in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://www.iep.utm.edu/embodcog/).

6. This is especially evident in the third moment of mimesis that amounts to finding meaning in narratives, which in turn leads to new experiences and the motivation for acting. See (Ricoeur 1984: 52 ff.).

7. The question of personal character of the ego as "I" is of course much discussed in phenomenology, but relatively undiscussed in enactivism. Kathleen Wider (2016) also points to this lacuna in enactivism. Loc. 10199.

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Chapter 12

Freedom and Resentment and Ricoeur

Toward a Normative-Narrative Theory of Agency

Adam J. Graves

INTRODUCTION: METAPHYSICAL FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

In an oft-cited passage on free will, Nietzsche alludes to the Baron Hieronymus Carl Friedrich von Münchhausen, a German aristocrat, sportsman, and lieutenant in the Russian army who gained a reputation for telling farfetched tales about his escapades while leading a cavalry to victory against the Ottoman Turks. In one such anecdote, he is said to have pulled himself, and the horse upon which he was riding, up out of a muddy ditch *by nothing but his own hair*. Commenting on this tale, Nietzsche observes:

> The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far, . . . but the extravagant pride of man has managed to entangle itself profoundly and frightfully with just this nonsense. The desire for "freedom of the will" in the superlative metaphysical sense, . . . the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to absolve God . . . involves nothing less than to be precisely this *causa sui* and, with more than Münchhausen's audacity, to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness.[1]

The Baron's stories were quite deliberately audacious and nearly always impossible to believe. But they were good stories nonetheless—so good, in fact, that it was not long before people began spinning their own fables about the Baron, adding bits from this or that folktale, and from this or that local legend. The fictional Baron eventually took on a life entirely of his own, a

literary life no longer rooted in that of the real Münchhausen or any *one* individual for that matter. So, in a sense, the fabulous, larger-than-life Baron to which Nietzsche refers, the man of legend and myth, was indeed pulled "out of the swamps of nothingness"—if not by his own hair, then by the telling and retelling of his tale.

Of course, Nietzsche's passage is not really about a Baron, fictional, or otherwise. Nor does it have anything obvious to do with the process whereby narrative identities, such as Munchausen's, are formed. It has to do with the contradictory nature of a certain picture of freedom: freedom "in the superlative metaphysical sense," an absolutely spontaneous and unconditioned form of causality belonging uniquely to the human will. Nietzsche believed that a commitment to this metaphysical idea of freedom was implied by, and required for, our everyday beliefs and practices concerning moral responsibility. "People" he once wrote, "were thought of as 'free' so that they could be judged and punished—so that they could be *guilty*" (Nietzsche 2005: 64–65). Since these two ideas—freedom and responsibility—appear to hang together in our ordinary ways of thinking about human action, we seem to face the following dilemma: either to accept a picture of freedom fraught with contradiction or to abandon our everyday beliefs and practices concerning human responsibility. Nietzsche seems to have been content to let the fruit of responsibility die along with the branch of freedom.

Most philosophical work on these issues aims to show why this is a false choice, and the usual way of doing that is to develop a more fine-tuned theory of freedom, one which does away with the untenable metaphysics without relinquishing the sort of responsibility for which this metaphysics previously seemed necessary.[2] Advocates of this approach agree that our responsibility practices depend upon freedom of a kind—that we are only genuinely responsible for what we do when we have acted freely in some sense or another—but they try to offer accounts of freedom that are somehow compatible with various forms of determinism (which explains why such theories are generally known as "compatiblist"). Another approach, originally formulated in P. F. Strawson's trailblazing lecture "Freedom and Resentment," and further developed by R. Jay Wallace, Akeel Bilgrami, and others, has tried to sidestep the metaphysical conundrums associated with questions of freedom altogether by showing how our ordinary practices of responsibility might be better explained in light of *normative* rather than *metaphysical* facts about ourselves, facts about our ordinary interpersonal "reactive" attitudes, rather than the supposed properties of our wills or some mysterious notion of causality underlying our actions.

The purpose of my contribution is twofold. On the one hand, I put forth an experimental reading of Ricoeur in which this Strawsonian approach will serve as a normative moment or "detour" within Ricoeur's decades-long

reflection on human agency, bridging, as it were, his earlier phenomenological analysis of the will in *Freedom and Nature* with his later narrative approach to action in *Oneself as Another*. Between an eidetic analysis of the will whose scope is deliberately restricted to the description of *first-person* subjectivity and a narrative analysis that situates the agent as a character within a story "constructed in the *third person*" (Ricoeur 1992: 329), I suggest that we introduce a Strawsonian moment focusing on the interpersonal attitudes that are typically expressed in the *second person*, as normative and "non-detached" evaluations of the actions of those with whom our lives are intimately connected. One of the chief advantages of this normative detour is that it releases us from the metaphysical commitments—still fully operative in *Freedom in Nature*—that tempts us to search in vain for the conditions that would justify our responsibility practices within an alleged introspective subjective experience of freedom. On the other hand, I hope to show how Ricoeur's work can in turn help to bolster the case for this normative approach to agency by making explicit certain "narrative" assumptions that already operate (albeit tacitly and without being properly formulated) within Strawson's core argument. In the final section of the chapter, I indicate some additional benefits that might come from wedding this normative theory of agency to a Ricoeurian theory of narrativity, one of which is to preserve a greater share of our ordinary intuitions about the relationship between freedom and responsibility. My overarching claim is that a hybrid "narrative-normative" theory allows us to circumvent the intractable metaphysical problems associated with freedom and responsibility, without forcing us to abandon entirely the pre-philosophical intuitions which seem to generate these problems in the first place.

Given that Ricoeur and Strawson occupied distinct corners of the philosophical world, my decision to put them into dialogue in this manner may call for some justification.[3] Despite their differences, both of these thinkers were inclined to ground their philosophical analyses in the concrete linguistic expressions that give voice to our ordinary or pre-philosophical intuitions. We might say that they worked within the same medium, only using different tools. On the one hand, Strawson's essay, born out of the ordinary language philosophy that flourished in Oxford, is a perfect example of how attention to ordinary language (e.g., about gratitude or resentment) can dissolve the metaphysical problems resulting from philosophy's penchant for over-intellectualizing the facts. Ricoeur, on the other hand, recognized early on that in order to complete the project first outlined in *Freedom and Nature*, he would eventually need to adopt a hermeneutic approach that privileged concrete expressions of sin and guilt (as found, for example, in penitential discourse of religious communities) over and above the pseudo-philosophic theories of Gnosticism or the dogmatic formulas of post-Augustinian thought and

scholastic theology. In both cases, getting at the truth of the matter requires lending an ear to ordinary forms of discourse that many philosophers rule out as either too imprecise or lacking in conceptual sophistication.

Following their lead, I claim that a crucial desideratum of any proposed solution to the range of problems concerning freedom and responsibility is that it should accommodate as many of our pre-philosophical intuitions as possible. The misgivings I have about strategies that purport to explain our responsibility practices in ways that require widespread revision of our basic intuitions about them is that such strategies wind up producing philosophical theories that explain practices that we can no longer recognize *as our own*. That is to say, theories that contradict our common sense beliefs about responsibility typically require and endorse a radical *transformation* of the very practices they set out to understand. Whether explicit or not, I fear that most classical forms of compatibilism advocate just this sort of change.[4] Why such a transformation, and the corrective knowledge it would allegedly impart, could neither be coherently regarded as advantageous, nor deemed an improvement of our natures or practices, is something which I hope to make clearer in the third section of this chapter. At this point, let me just say that the desideratum in question need not require a slavish adherence to mere common sense or unreflective naiveté. Rather, it simply stipulates that we *identify* and *preserve* precisely those features of our basic intuitions that are necessary to ensure that our self-understanding remains a genuine understanding of *ourselves*, of *our* beliefs and *our* practices, rather than those of some other kind of being whose natures and practices we can surely conceive but never want to adopt.

CAUSE, CHARACTER AND EXPERIENCED NECESSITY

But let me begin by fleshing out in a bit more detail the problem to which this normative-narrative theory responds; for I have yet to say what exactly makes the metaphysical picture of freedom to which Nietzsche alluded so very problematic and yet so very captivating in the first place. To do so, I will first demonstrate how this problem arises within the context of *Freedom and Nature,* where the very same methodological commitments that enable Ricoeur to bring the issues into sharper focus also preclude him from offering a clear solution, or at least one capable of being articulated in non-paradoxical terms.

Ricoeur, like Nietzsche, recognizes the seemingly inextricable connection between responsibility, on the one hand, and freedom understood in terms of causality, on the other—a bond, which Ricoeur observes, is implicit in the etymology of accusation itself: "*Accusare*: to designate as the cause" (1966: 58). To hold oneself responsible is, in the first place, to designate oneself as

the cause of one's actions and their consequences. But Ricoeur is equally attentive to the problems that arise from uncritically situating action within the order of causality. Insofar as we view ourselves and others as objects of empirical observation, we are prone to regard human action as the result of natural events whose ultimate explanations would require us to follow a chain of causes well beyond the scope of the individual agent, whom we might have otherwise been inclined to blame or accuse. "On the level of empirically considered objects, causal explanation knows no limit. There are no gaps in determinism—it is total or not at all" (Ricoeur 1966: 68). In lines that recall though without explicitly naming Kant's third antinomy, Ricoeur writes:

> Unable to reconcile freedom of choice and the inexorable limitations of nature [as a causally determined whole], common sense successively affirms a false unlimited and unsituated freedom, and a false determination of man by nature which reduces him to an object. (Ricoeur 1966: 355)

At the outset, Ricoeur appears to think his first person, phenomenological analysis promises to furnish a kind of compatibilist solution, which would reconcile these opposing views by allowing us to acknowledge the truth of natural determinism while simultaneously situating the unique kind of causality involved in free human action outside its all-encompassing fold. We will see, however, that his optimism on this score will be tested as the paradoxes continue to mount until finally reaching their breaking point in *Freedom and Nature*'s ambiguous conclusion, where Ricoeur ultimately embraces a Nietzschean *amor fati*—a shocking development, which even the most charitable reader will be tempted to interpret as a sign of freedom's ultimate defeat. In the remainder of this section, we will retrace the steps leading up to this critical moment.

The conflict between freedom and nature results from a general cosmological view that takes "the phenomenal order of physical causality as its initial datum" (Ricoeur 1966: 68). However, Ricoeur suggests that if we begin alternatively from the vantage point of an eidetic description of consciousness and its essential structures, the "causality" implied in the bond that makes my actions my own (and thus something for which I am responsible) takes the form of a "motive," which, unlike a physical cause, can be said to *incline* me to act without *compelling* or determining my action in the way that a natural cause presumably would (Ricoeur 1966: 71). Ricoeur's justification for this distinction between motive and physical cause is as intriguing as it is questionable. An agent's decision to do this or that is said to be based on motives that he or she accepts as reasons for doing this or that. This, in turn, implies that agency involves the recognition or "reception" of some moral value—for, in the process of deciding to act, I "base myself" on reasons

whose validity I *accept*. "I do my acts to the extent to which I accept reasons for them. I provide the basis for the physical being of my actions even when I base myself on their *value*, that is, their moral being" (Ricoeur 1966: 78; my italics). And this acceptance of value is tantamount to the acceptance of responsibility, which, as noted above, the term "accusation" articulates in terms of an assimilation of agent and cause. On this view, the distance separating motive from mere cause is now marked by the former's responsiveness to reasons, norms, or values. The question that interests us here is whether such phenomenological distinctions articulated at the level of the will can help satisfy the conditions necessary to justify our ordinary notions of responsibility, or whether they will undermine precisely this sort of justification.

That this account of freedom already entails reference to values and norms is of no small significance for the project outlined in the following section of this chapter, since it suggests the seeds for a normative account of agency were already sown in *Freedom and Nature*.[5] However, when framed within the limits a strictly phenomenological analysis focused on first-person experience—as is the case in *Freedom and Nature*—this vaguely compatibilist solution immediately threatens to reinscribe the fundamental conflict between freedom and necessity at a deeper level, beyond that of a "physical" or "external" cause. Now, instead of pushing against me from without, as a physical cause compelling me to act, necessity will take on a series of internalized forms: character, the unconsciousness, and finally life. These forms of so-called *experienced* necessity—the central concern of *Freedom and Nature*'s penultimate chapter (Ricoeur 1966: 355–443)—arise as soon as we consider why, in the first instance, I am *receptive to* and thus *motivated by* certain values rather than others. As such, character, the unconsciousness and life represent the un-chosen conditions of every choice—conditions that I can neither dig beneath, nor animate from behind, but to which I can, at best, only ever *consent*.[6] An examination of the first of these three forms of experience necessity (namely, character) will suffice to show how Ricoeur's phenomenological approach sets him on a path toward paradox and consent—a destination from which it becomes exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to account for our ordinary intuitions about the nature of freedom and responsibility.

Ricoeur begins his discussion of character by noting the ambiguities contained in our common sense understanding of it. On the one hand, since my character is the "external manifestation" of my abiding self, my "unsubstitutable singularity"[7]—that which others recognize when they recognize an action as my own—it is natural to think of my character as something I have chosen, something I have become through my free choices, in short, something I can be held responsible for being or having become. But, on the other hand, since every choice implies the existence of a preexisting character, of

an already acquired disposition or motivational structure (we might say the structure of receptivity), character seems to be "a determinate reality such that it includes in itself even the use which a will, claiming to react to its own conditions of functioning, can make of it" (Ricoeur 1966: 357).

To make this last point clear, we need only note that every supposedly free action takes place against a backdrop of seemingly countless un-chosen facts about ourselves—about the beliefs, desires, and motives that we happen to possess at a given moment. In order for me to be truly responsible for my present action, these facts would apparently need to be "caused" by something *in me* that is prior to them—something that would *account for* my having freely adopted certain principles over others, or my having acted on a desire rather than not. We are then tempted to posit still deeper principles—second-order principles, which would evidently be far more constitutive of my character, of *who I truly am,* than the first-order principles that had immediately, and thus only ostensibly, determined my action. But, of course, one can always ask how and why I came to possess those second-order principles in the first place. So these too will be susceptible to a causal account in terms of an always already preexisting character or motivational structure, otherwise my choice of these second-order principles would be a totally arbitrary one and, thus, no choice at all (and certainly not one that could be said to be *mine*). Therefore, it seems to follow that in order to freely choose anything at all, one must already have a determinate motivational structure, or "character," in place. And it is in this sense that my character, as Novalis and Heraclitus remind us, could just as well be called my destiny (*Schicksal*) or fate (*daimōn*).

This deliberation on the nature of character confronts us with the most insidious form of determinism, since it not only suggests that my actions are determined by anterior (external) causes rather than my will, but that my receptivity (or non-receptivity) to motives, values, reasons, and so on—in short, my "free" will as such—is itself always already determined from the inside. "Character," as Ricoeur puts it in *Freedom and Nature*, "is the necessity closest to my will" (Ricoeur 1966: 355)[8]—*closest* because it butts up against my will, hiding just beneath its surface, surreptitiously "forcing me to encounter value" in a specific or determinate way (Ricoeur 1966: 369). As that which determines my receptivity to value, character remains the ever-present and "incoercible *aspect* of my coercible powers, … the non-willed aspect of my decision and of my effort" (Ricoeur 1966: 369).

As his analysis of character draws to a close, Ricoeur concedes that "there is, for pure [i.e., phenomenological] understanding, no harmonious resolution, no system of nature and freedom, but always a paradoxical, precarious synthesis of intentional structures which support free will and the idea of nature [i.e., the experienced necessity of character]" (Ricoeur 1966: 373).

In reality, though, this paradoxical synthesis is less of a resolution than it is a sign of ultimate resignation. For having failed to discover a freedom capable of escaping from the ever-tightening clutches of experienced necessity, the path of introspective analysis finally limits the will to the passive attitude of consent. The "human, only human freedom" that Ricoeur advances in the conclusion of *Freedom and Nature*, is the freedom of a patient rather than an agent—for it "constitutes itself by receiving what it does not produce." To be sure, Ricoeur tries to give the "yes" of consent a positive spin, construing it as a choice constituting the obverse of necessity: "consent which reaffirms an existence which is not chosen, with its constriction, its shadows, its contingencies, is like a choice of myself, a necessary choice, as the *amor fati* celebrated by Nietzsche" (Ricoeur 1966: 484). But my will, thus whittled down, is really left with no choice but to embrace the "fate within me."

It is hard, if not impossible, to see how such a "choice" could ever be regarded as a genuinely free one, let alone one that would serve to justify our practices and beliefs about the nature of responsibility. Here we need only recall Nietzsche's more candid assessment of what this *amor fati* actually entails: "*Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth! . . . I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse" (Nietzsche 1974: 223).[9] Freedom, once reduced to an act of consent, no longer binds an agent to his action in a manner that would legitimize accusation. Far from justifying responsibility, this form of attenuated freedom is more likely to abolish it altogether. In the end, Ricoeur's phenomenological analysis exposes the futility of seeking a justification for our responsibility practices at the level of the will, through a first-person introspective gaze.

Within contemporary Anglo-American philosophy, the problem revealed by this reflection on character is known as "the basic argument" (Strawson 1994), which can be summed up (albeit hastily) as follows: Since we do what we do because of the way that we are (i.e., our characters), we can only be said to be the causes our actions if we are also the causes of the way we are. It follows, so the argument goes, that our ordinary responsibility practices are justified only if we are indeed the causes of the way that we are (of our characters) *from the bottom up*. But since nothing can be the cause of itself (*causa sui*)—or, as the above analysis demonstrates, since human freedom "does not posit itself absolutely" (Ricoeur 1966: 486)—our practices of moral responsibility must be wholly unjustified.

Ricoeur concludes *Freedom and Nature* by contrasting our "only human freedom" with a series of limiting concepts orbiting around the idea of a "creative freedom"—a kind of freedom that would posit itself in just this way, namely, from the bottom up. A consideration of the "basic argument" allows us to add to Ricoeur's reflection on this limit concept. Common sense is led to embrace freedom "in its superlative metaphysical sense" by traversing the

lines of this argument in reverse: since most of us assume that human beings are responsible for their actions, we naturally infer that human beings *must* be responsible for who they are (or for the way that they are). One can then see how, with only the slightest nudge toward philosophical speculation, common sense can be rather precipitously coaxed into thinking that this, in turn, implies a metaphysics of the *causa sui*—or the capacity "to pull oneself up into existence" as Nietzsche would have it.

No matter how powerful our objections to this obscure libertarian metaphysics may be, I think we would be mistaken to dismiss straightaway the common sense intuitions which motivate it. For one thing, it appears to express a widely held and deeply felt human desire—a perhaps all too human fantasy. This fantasy has proven so captivating that one might say, without too much exaggeration, that it has fueled the philosophical enterprise from its very beginnings, manifesting first in the intellectualism of the Greeks, then in the late Patristic's endeavor to absolve God, and finally in the modern impulse to make the self an indubitable starting point of knowledge and the final measure of truth. I happen to be of the opinion that it is worth taking quite seriously any view with *that* kind of longevity. At the very least, it is worth considering how we might give countenance to this fantasy, or rather to that *of which it is merely a symptom*, without indulging the symptom itself or without entangling ourselves in the metaphysical illusions which, on account of their incoherence, seem to provide only a momentary relief, or even worse, a philosophically dishonest kind of appeasement. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to suggest how joining a narrative theory with a normative conception of agency might enable us to do just that.

OPTIMISTS VERSUS PESSIMISTS

Since, as our reading of *Freedom and Nature* has shown, the attempt to seek a justification for responsibility within the framework of a first person, phenomenological analysis of the will ultimately comes up empty-handed, this justification will have to be sought elsewhere. But where, exactly? One of the virtues of P. F. Strawson's landmark essay "Freedom and Resentment" is that it identifies an entirely new terrain upon which our responsibility practices might be grounded. However, in order to understand the nature of this seismic shift, we must first take a step back and examine Strawson's characterization of the initial playing field. Indeed, he begins his essay by offering his own idiosyncratic labels to characterize the two major parties in the age-old dispute about freedom and responsibility. On the one hand, he uses the term "pessimists" to describe those who hold that if the thesis of determinism is true "then the concepts of moral obligation and responsibility really have

no application, the practices of punishing and blaming, of expressing moral condemnation and approval, are really unjustified" (Strawson 2008: 1). The so-called *optimists*, on the other hand, "hold that these concepts and practices in no way lose their *reason d'être* if the thesis of determinism is true" (Strawson 2008: 1).

Since the optimist insists that our practices of responsibility are valid even if it turns out that we live in a thoroughly deterministic universe, her justification for these practices obviously cannot depend upon a radical break from or suspension of this causality (such as is implied by the concept of a *causa sui*, or a self-cause). Rather it will have to rest upon a distinction drawn *within* the domain of causality itself, a distinction between two different types of causes: coercive and noncoercive causes. On this view, actions performed in the *absence* of certain types of causes (such as compulsion by another) are said to involve a kind of "negative freedom" in virtue of which they become suitable targets of blame, moral condemnation, punishment, and the like. The pessimist will claim that systems of reward and punishment, approbation and disapprobation, are wholly justified when restricted to the sphere of actions produced by noncoercive causes precisely because such systems serve a useful regulative function: they help to cultivate socially desirable behaviors while discouraging harmful or unacceptable conduct.

Strawson clearly presents this utilitarian account of "negative freedom" merely as a foil, as a sort of "intuition pump," whose purpose is to tease out those features of our basic intuitions about moral responsibility that are indispensable to our ordinary practices but not fully captured by most classical compatibilist theories. For even though social utility may provide *one* sort of justification for our practices of punishment and moral condemnation, Strawson's pessimist is quick to point out this utility is hardly a *sufficient* basis for these practices *as they are ordinarily understood*—"it is not even the right sort of basis" (Strawson 2008: 3). And on this score, Strawson agrees, "To speak in terms of social utility alone is to leave out something *vital* in our conception of these practices" (Strawson 2008: 24).

But what exactly is this *vital* thing? Naturally, the pessimist would have us believe that it is nothing less than "freedom in the superlative metaphysical sense"—something akin to Nietzsche's uncaused causality, or *causa sui*, which would imply in turn that the thesis of determinism is false. One of Strawson's central aims in "Freedom and Resentment" is to demonstrate that the gap in the compatibilist's account of our responsibility practices can be filled without having to embrace this metaphysical picture of freedom, which, as he puts it, takes us well "beyond the facts as we know them." Strawson contends that what *is* in fact missing from the compatibilist's account is *not*

to be found *in actions themselves*, as the pessimist had mistakenly thought, but rather in the "non-detached attitudes and reactions of [agents] directly involved in [inter-personal] transactions," attitudes such as gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, wounded feelings, and so on (Strawson 2008: 24). In other words, our practices of moral responsibility are not grounded in theoretical facts about the will, but rather in the normative attitudes that we express in our everyday interactions with one another.

Recent work by Akeel Bilgrami offers a useful demonstration of why this is the case. He frames the problem to which this normative theory responds in terms of what he calls a "what about?" question. For the pessimist wanted to know what exactly it is *about* noncoercive causes that justifies our punishing those who are subject to them.[10] If both sets of actions (one involving coercive and the other noncoercive causes) are determined by antecedent causes, then what could possibly make the consequences of one set imputable to agents, while those of the other set are not?[11] How are we to distinguish between these two laundry lists of actions? Bilgrami writes that the traditional way of answering this question was "to go from saying something about the causes [i.e., specifying certain properties they possess] to inferring something about the actions that they caused (that they were free or unfree), and then finally, on that basis, in turn, evaluating actions (as praiseworthy and blameworthy or not so)" (Bilgrami 2006: 51). Strawson's breakthrough was to have pointed out that, in reality, our examination of action moves in just the opposite direction: we begin by noticing our evaluative reactive attitudes toward an action, whether it provokes resentment or admiration (or not), and on the basis of that we impute freedom (or not) to the action, and non-coerciveness (or not) to its cause (Bilgrami 2006: 52). So, as Bilgrami puts the matter, "The distinction between free and unfree actions, and between the causes on the two laundry lists . . . , itself rests on decisions we make based on *normative* considerations that we bring to them, rather than in the nature of the cause themselves" (Bilgrami 2006: 52). In order to distinguish between the two lists, we will not only have to attend to our reactive attitudes, but also to the "variations to which they are subject, the particular conditions in which they do or do not seem natural or reasonable or appropriate" (Strawson 2008: 7). This approach encourages us to examine and classify various ordinary language sentences, capable of being expressed in the second person—such as "I know you didn't mean to," "you were not being yourself," and "you were only a child"—for each of these conveys a distinctive manner in which our reactive attitudes are modified, mollified or in some cases entirely suspended.[12] And it is precisely this variation in our reactions that enables us to initially distinguish between free and unfree actions.

FROM NORMS TO NARRATION

It is here, at the heart of Strawson's constructive project, that Ricoeur's theory of narrativity first becomes relevant. The normative theory of agency that I have been sketching claims that our ability to distinguish between actions that are free (and thus imputable to agents) and those that are not free (and thus not imputable to agents) results from and thus depends upon an attentiveness to our reactive attitudes toward others. We attribute freedom to an action only when our reactive attitudes have been engaged in a particular fashion (when, for instance we feel resentment or gratitude toward another person on account of what he or she has done). It stands to reason, then, that we ought to be able to give some account of the various narrative configurations that serve to elicit these normative attitudes in the course of ordinary life. In fact, Strawson himself seems to acknowledge this point, albeit only obliquely, when he says that "much imaginative literature" has been devoted to exploring the complexities of these interpersonal attitudes. In any case, I will insist that the reactive variations we observed above in conjunction with the second person expressions are never fully intelligible when abstracted from the context of more or less complex action sequences, which are most naturally expressed by narratives constructed in the third person.

But the connection between this normative approach and a narrative theory becomes even more pronounced as soon as we notice the quite particular, though often underappreciated, contexts in which questions about freedom actually arise. Under what circumstances will a given event's candidacy as a potentially free and thus imputable action come up for review in the first place? In answering this question, we must be careful to avoid the myopia of certain classic philosophical examples of "actions"—such as "the waving of a hand"—which, in their artificiality, often conceal more than they reveal. For only when one is engaged in the most pedantic philosophical speculation does one ask whether such abstract or non-contextualized kinds of bodily movements are free or determined by antecedent causes. If, on the contrary, we pay attention to ordinary (as opposed to philosophical) examples, it will be evident that our actual interest in questions about freedom are almost always bound up with some normative commitment to what *ought* to be done in a given circumstance. We care—and thus care enough to ask—if a person has acted freely only when the person's action violated a rule, met an obligation, set an example, and so on. This is consistent with the normative theory of action we are pursuing here. For as R. Jay Wallace observes, "There is an essential connection between the reactive attitudes and a distinctive form of evaluation, or quasi evaluation, that I refer to as holding a person to an expectation (or demand)" (Wallace 1994: 19). These two—our normative expectations and our reactive attitudes—go hand in hand: "to hold someone

to an expectation is essentially to be susceptible to a certain range of emotions in the case that the expectation is not fulfilled" (Wallace 1994: 21).

To be sure, it is plausible that certain rudimentary actions are describable in what might be called "evaluatively neutral" ways, for example, when we say merely *what* was done, without any reference to *who* or *why*: that a door was closed, that a switch was turned, and so on. But at this level of discourse, actions are nearly indistinguishable from mere events; they are more like "happenings" than "doings." It will be noticed that this kind of description, which reduces action to a species of events, roughly corresponds to the "agentless semantics of agentless actions," which Ricoeur examines in the third study of *Oneself as Another*. Using Ricoeur's nomenclature, we can say that actions only begin to stand out against the backdrop of "an ontology of impersonal events" when our characterizations of them embody some normative commitment and thus situate them within a setting of significance: when raising one's hand comes to be understood as a meaningful gesture, as the raising of an objection to a lecture, the casting of a vote, or the greeting of a friend from across the street (Ricoeur 1992: 61). Something is now finally at stake in the matter and so, in keeping with Wallace's observation, we are bound to have some expectations about how an agent ought to behave in each of these cases.

It would be difficult to overlook the contribution Ricoeur's narrative theory can make to this normative account of agency, since we seem to be involved in "narrative reasoning" whenever we situate action within the setting of significance.[13] Joining this notion of narrative reasoning with our previous observations about the normative nature of significant action yields the following conclusion: it is only when "bare-bone" action descriptions are configured through narrative reasoning into more or less developed plot-structures—structures which serve to integrate the what, the why and, above all, the *who* of action—that events begin to take on the kinds of ethical-normative significance that provoke reactive attitudes. As Ricoeur demonstrates in the fifth study of *Oneself as Another*, "the practical field covered by narrative theory is greater than that covered by, for example, a semantics of action sentences" or a theory of acting under a description (Ricoeur 1992: 115). In fact, narratives serve to mediate between mere action *description* and action *prescription* "because the anticipation of ethical [i.e., normative] considerations are implied in the very structure of the act of narrating" and as Ricoeur is fond of repeating, "there are no ethically neutral narratives" (Ricoeur 1992: 115). But, for our purposes here, it is worth noting that the reverse is equally true: there can be no normatively thick action descriptions in the absence of narrative structures. To see oneself and others as subject to normative prescriptions is, at least in part, to regard ourselves and others as characters in a story, and therefore to see ourselves and others in light of paradigmatic stories with which we are familiar. As Ricoeur writes, "Literature is a vast laboratory in which we experiment with estimations,

evaluations, and judgments of approval and condemnation through which narrativity serves as a propaedeutic to ethics" (Ricoeur 1992: 115). We can add that narrativity similarly serves as a propaedeutic to the reactive attitudes. So while Strawon's suggestive reference to literature remained for him no more than a passing remark, we can now say that it constitutes an indispensable narrative detour within a more fully developed normative account of agency.

These observations might not seem immediately relevant to the issue of freedom and responsibility. However, when considered in light of our previous discussion, the consequence is rather enormous: it means that we cannot properly identify free (non-coerced) actions without the resources of what might be called narrative understanding. In other words, the normative solutions to Bilgrami's so-called *what about* question concerning how we are to distinguish between free and unfree actions will ultimately require that we have recourse to narrative understanding.

Returning now to the details of Strawson's essay, we can now observe that narrative understanding was already implicitly employed within one of the central arguments designed to show that our responsibility practices are grounded in normative rather than metaphysical concerns. The argument in question rests on his distinction between a purely objective or "detached" attitude toward actions, on the one hand, and the non-detached, participatory, "reactive" attitudes, on the other. According to Strawson, one way of seeing why we would be wrong to expect that the debate over freedom and responsibility could ever be resolved on metaphysical turf is to observe the conditions under which these attitudes are modified, and, specifically, how little impact metaphysical facts are likely to have on these attitudinal modifications. The pessimist has all along assumed that the acceptance of the truth of determinism would undercut our reactive attitudes and reinforce a purely objective view of human action. But Strawson shows that this assumption is false, noting that in actual instances where we suspend our reactive attitudes toward specific persons (such as a crying infant or a patient suffering a nervous breakdown), our adoption of the detached, objective viewpoint does not result from a belief that the person's actions are causally determined, but from our recognition that the person we are dealing with is in some sense situated "outside the reach" of ordinary personal relationships, thus not yet or no longer subject to ordinary evaluative standards and norms (Strawson 2008: 13). Strawson's point is that such modifications in our attitudes, and their corresponding modifications in our responsibility practices, are not themselves consequences of our having uncovered facts about determining causes, as his pessimist had supposed. On the contrary, these attitudes and practices are grounded in normative rather than metaphysical concerns.

But it seems to me that we would not be able to recognize the ways these reactive attitudes are modified under various conditions without relying upon

the imaginative variations supplied by the store of narratives (real and fictive) with which we are readily familiar. More precisely, it appears that the success of Strawson's proposed argument—or, rather, the effectiveness of the thought experiments upon which that argument rests—tacitly depends upon his reader's ability to recall stories involving different kinds of characters, which Ricoeur, drawing upon the work of Claude Bremond, refers to as agents ("the one who acts") and sufferers ("the one who undergoes") (Ricoeur 1992: 145). One of the advantages of joining Strawson's normative account of agency to a narrative theory along Ricoeurian lines is that it enables us to draw out and clarify such assumptions.

OUR FABULOUS FREEDOM

I want to conclude by briefly indicating additional ways Ricoeur's work on narrative might help strengthen the normative theory of agency as developed by Strawson and his followers. By focusing its analysis almost exclusively upon actions, the normative theory of freedom (especially as developed in the work of Bilgrami) has failed to take full stock of the significance personal identity plays in eliciting our normative responses. In order to make this point clear, consider the paradigmatic reactive attitude: *resentment*. It seems to me that the proper object of resentment is the person not the action. For I can resent a person without resenting *everything* he does or says. But it is harder, at least for me, to imagine cases where I might resent something done or said without *also* resenting, at least for the moment, the person who did or said it. To be sure, I will resent someone on account of his actions, but it is *him* that I nevertheless resent. The person is the target of my attitude. Thus, I believe our account of normative freedom needs to tighten up this relationship between the action and the agent.

And, once again, narrative theory seems to provide the most promising field for investigating how these morally relevant actions are related to an agent. The relevant concept here is, once again, that of character, though no longer only in the sense of one's always already acquired motivational structures (as we had discussed in section two above), but also in the sense of a personal identity established through the telling of a story. While the French often distinguishes between these two senses of the term, Ricoeur's analysis joins them together, equating "the character (*personnage*) in the story with the lasting dispositions or character (*caractère*)" (Ricoeur 1992: 150). The recognition of the interdependence of the identity of character and the development of emplotment (*muthos*) goes at least as far back as Aristotle, and has been given increasing attention in the last few decades. As Frank Kermode suggests, developing a character is nothing but recounting a story (Kermode 1979). Ricoeur argues that "It is indeed in the story

recounted, with its qualities of unity, internal structure, and completeness which are conferred by emplotment, that the character preserves through the story an identity correlative to that of the story itself" (Ricoeur 1992: 143).

Finally, and perhaps a bit more ambitiously, I wonder if we might be able to do more justice to our ordinary intuitions about the nature of freedom and responsibility by offering a narrative supplement to that deep-seated desire to be (like our old friend Münchhausen) our own beginning, to own up to our actions and our destines, and to take responsibility for ourselves from the bottom up. Strawson's normative approach to the problem of freedom and responsibility ended, as we will recall, in a truce between the optimist and the pessimist. The optimist had to concede "that to speak in terms of social utility *alone* is to leave out something vital in our conception of these [responsibility] practices" (Strawson 2008: 24; my italics). And the pessimist had to concede that this vital thing could be accounted for solely in terms of our reactive attitudes, and thus without having to posit a metaphysics of the *causa sui*. I doubt that a "real-life" pessimist would regard this as a fair trade. Since, on the one hand, the optimist can still claim social utility as *one* sort of justification for these practices (albeit not the only, nor most important justification), he basically gets to keep all his cards. The pessimist, on the other hand, has to give up the very thing she cherished most: namely, the idea that a person (rather than external antecedent causes) determines his or her own actions. I think Ricoeur's narrative theory of agency allows us to be just a bit more generous to the pessimist. And by making a better offer, we not only increase her odds of taking it, but we also do a better job of accounting for the basic intuitions underlying our ordinary understanding of free will (and, thus, a better job of satisfying our initial desideratum). I am not suggesting that we somehow accommodate the concept of *causa sui* within the domain of events. However, since the concepts of character (or narrative identity), on the one hand, and free action, on the other, arise simultaneously through the dialectical process of emplotment, couldn't this fantasy be meaningfully accommodated within the narrative, rather than theoretical, domain?

Framing the problem in terms of Kant's third antinomy, Ricoeur's analysis of narrative selfhood provides a model for how such an accommodation might be made. Ricoeur, like most contemporary compatibilists, is no more inclined to endorse Kant's theoretical resolution to the antinomy than he is inclined to accept the pessimist's metaphysical characterization of freedom. However, he suggests that the narrative domain offers a "poetic reply" to the problem in the following way:

> The narrative resolves the antinomy in its own way, on the one hand, by granting to the character an initiative—that is, the power to begin a series of events, without this beginning thereby constituting an absolute beginning, a beginning of time—and on the other hand, by assigning to the narrative as such the power

> of determining the beginning, the middle, and the end of an action. (Ricoeur 1992: 147)[14]

This poetic solution is, I think, more likely to satiate the pessimist's lingering desire to make good on our ordinary intuitions about freedom and responsibility by providing her with a means of recuperating a sense of initiative (i.e., a power to begin or initiate series of events) within the framework of narration. Instead of merely pointing to our reactive attitudes as a source of justification for our responsibility practices, this approach allows for the possibility of offering "narrative explanations," and thus narrative-based reasons for seeing agents (or "characters") as the initiators of their actions.

That this kind of explanation involves telling stories about ourselves and others should not come as much of a surprise, given the dialectical relationship between character and emplotment noted above. In fact, such agency demands that we narrate our lives in such a way as to place ourselves at the beginning of our own story (or at the beginning of the various stories of which our lives are comprised). Ricoeur suggests that doing so requires more than the resources of memory alone can provide; it will require us to draw from the narrative resources of history and fiction as well.

As for the notion of the narrative unity of a life, it must be seen as an unstable mixture of *fabulation* and actual experience. It is precisely because of the elusive character of real-life that we need the help of fiction to organize life *retrospectively*, *after the fact*, prepared to take as provisional and open to revision any figure of emplotment borrowed from fiction or from history. In this way, with the help of the narrative beginning which our reading has made familiar to us, straining this feature somewhat, we stabilize the real beginnings formed by the initiatives (in the strong sense of the term) we take (Ricoeur 1992: 162).

This initiative would be an achievement of narrative self-understanding. By recounting our own story, by taking ownership and responsibility for our past, we not only come to better understand ourselves, but in some sense we even reclaim the possibility of becoming, within the narratives of lives, *our own beginning*. This would entail a new kind of freedom—one that is no longer metaphysical, nor merely normative, but *fabulous* nonetheless. Perhaps we are not so different from the legendary Baron after all.

NOTES

1. Nietzsche (1966: 28).

2. This characterization is intended to be broad enough to capture most garden varieties of compatibilism. That said, the number of varieties seems to be increasing by the day. For a relatively recent discussion of these issues, see Levy and McKenna (2008).

3. That Ricoeur made no mention of Strawson's landmark essay "Freedom and Resentiment" in his published work, even though he was clearly familiar with Strawson's philosophy, is quite surprising. In a sense, the present paper tries to surmise what Ricoeur *might* have said about that essay.

4. The work of Manuel Vargas offers the most thorough and systematic treatment of "revisionist" approaches to free will. However, for all its merits, I find his attempt to draw a sharp line between compatibilist and revisionist accounts unconvincing. See Vargas (2009 and 2005).

5. In fact, Ricoeur appears to have been on the brink of realizing the normative and interpersonal (rather than causal or metaphysical) basis of responsibility, but was prevented by his phenomenological methodology from carrying out the project: "If, in effect, I assume charge of things and beings for which I respond, it is to the extent to which I feel charged with them, that is, to which I receive responsibility for them . . . In terms of this orientation by legitimizing value I can be not only responsible for . . ., but also responsible to . . . ; for value . . . is the suprapersonal bond of a group of men to which I dedicate myself . . . The possibility of a principle of judgment passed on my action, of blame and approbation, in a word, sanction, is imbedded in this legitimatization of my responsibility" (1966: 81–82).

6. "The circular relation of motives and decision is the eidetic norm of all empirical observation. In this sense, we could repeat the classical formula: motive inclines without compelling. But the term 'compelling' has many meanings which we must distinguish. First of all, if necessity is synonymous with natural determinism, the formula should be interpreted as 'a motive is not a cause.' The second possibility is that *necessity indicates the invincible depth of character, of the unconscious, and of life from which determinate motives arise* . . . Then the formula acquires a different meaning: it stresses the difference between an involuntary which is susceptible to being surrounded, faced, and changed, and which precisely is a motive, and the diffuse, enveloping, and incoercible involuntary which can no longer be a 'motive of . . .' This is the necessity in the first person which gives rise to still another dimension of free will—consent" (Ricoeur 1966: 71).

7. Ricoeur employs the phrase "unsubstitutable singularity" when he returns to the theme of identity years later in Ricoeur (1992: 119).

8. Picking up on this theme years later, and with an eye toward the problem of personal identity rather than freedom, Ricoeur will claim that character is the "sameness in mineness" or the "what of the who"—that is to say, it is the set of lasting dispositions by which a person is recognized, an "immutable and inherited nature" associated with idem-identity, but which nevertheless overlaps with ipse-identity. It is a nature only in the sense that it is our second nature. See Ricoeur (1992: 120–122).

9. Also see section 8 of *Twilight of the Idols*, where Nietzsche draws the connection between an acceptance of necessity and that "grand emancipation" whereby "no one will be made responsible any longer."

10. Absent an answer to this "what about?" question, we have no right to claim that actions determined by noncoercive causes are indeed free, while those caused by coercive ones are unfree. See Bilgrami (2006: 49–53).

11. Ibid., 66–68. Bilgrami notes the futility of tying draw the distinction along the lines of an "*internal* source verses *external* source criterion," since we are all perfectly aware of internal forms of coercion—such as the addict's inner compulsion to place another bet or slam another drink, or, perhaps more controversially, the person who tries, but fails, to prevent himself from laughing at an inappropriate joke, or a ridiculous presidential candidate.

12. That Strawson's essay formulated these sentences in the third person should not distract us from the fact that they are intended to articulate our engaged, interpersonal attitudes and are thus more naturally expressed in the second person, as reactions to *your* behavior, the behavior of another person who faces us directly.

13. As Annette Baier points out, certain kinds of events seem to better explained in light of narrative reasoning rather than theoretical reasoning (by which she means Hempel's "Kantian account of explanation as subsumption under law"): "We seem to *explain some happenings by giving a narrative, a sequence of connected events* made possible but sometimes only improbable by the laws we know. Explanations of events in human history seem to take this form, and since some of the events in human history are intentional actions, so also do *ordinary explanations* of some human *actions*" (Baier 1985: 155–156).

14. Readers interested in the development of Ricoeur's thought will want to consider whether or not this poetic reply finally fulfills the promise of the so-called *poetic* dimension of the will, first announced in the closing lines of *Freedom and Nature* nearly fifty years earlier.

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