



Action, Intersubjectivity and Narrative Identity

*Essays on
Critical Hermeneutics*

Vinicio Busacchi

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INTRODUCTION

In dissonance with the famous thesis of hermeneutics as a new *koiné* of contemporary philosophy, the hermeneutical field today seems to be fragmented and more and more marginalised. ●f course, hermeneutics and philosophical hermeneutics continue to offer a great deal on the horizon of contemporary philosophy. ●n the other hand, however, hermeneutical philosophy is currently practiced in such varied and vague ways, in the most unlikely territories, and under such dubious disciplinary and procedural amalgamations, that it is beginning to seem that the *koiné* did not so much concern the interrelation between interpretation and facts or the antecedence of interpretation before facts, as the widespread abuse of the very idea of antecedence or predominance.

How can we continue to support the idea of hermeneutics as *koiné* in light of this?

First of all, we must abandon the interpretative extension of Gianni Vattimo's proposition and return to his circumscribed idea that "hermeneutics is the *koiné* of philosophy, or more generally, of the culture of the eighties" (Vattimo 1987). This is a downsizing that certainly makes this thesis more acceptable even if it tends to counterpoise, marginalise and misrecognise the role and growing importance of analytical philosophy. At the same time, it represents a rereading that helps us to properly (re-)establish the specific proposal of a critical hermeneutics that Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) – who constitutes the main reference of this book – advances in that same period, prospecting a different understanding of the role and position of philosophical hermeneutics today. Ricoeur uses philosophy to work between philosophy and science, as well as between the so-called "continental" philosophy and "analytical" philosophy, giving them equal importance. His critical hermeneutics fully reflects, both in methodology and speculative development, the characteristics of this vast and tensional philosophical work.

Starting from another speculative tradition and perspective, Richard Rorty aims to realise something similar: a dialectical bridge between "analytical world" and "continental world". In his work *Philosophy in America today*

(1981) he advances exactly this idea with the full awareness of the respective philosophical and cultural differences.

Critical hermeneutics is not a “container” that collects a unitary corpus of answers, arguments or theories (see Bayón 2006, 26). It is not a school, a tradition or an ideological movement, but essentially a way to exercise philosophical hermeneutics in connection with other procedures, on the field of practical and/or theoretical philosophy, as well as between philosophy and science, or among philosophies and sciences. It is of a certain interest to consider the interpretation advanced by John B. Thompson and Charles E. Reagan, rereading Ricoeur’s approach and proposal as a way to hermeneutically restructure the human and social sciences or, rather, as a way to consider critical hermeneutics as a science (see Thompson 1991; Reagan 1991).

The option of hermeneutical human and social sciences operates both on a theoretical-methodological and epistemological basis, even if it does not seem to properly reflect Ricoeur’s project in a comprehensive way. Ricoeur refuses the attempt at both a philosophical levelling of the sciences and a scientific levelling of philosophy. On the one hand, a methodological and epistemological model can be extracted from Ricoeur’s philosophy itself, and, being able to work interpretatively and analytically-descriptively, it may be used for human and social sciences. On the other hand, such a comprehensive and flexible approach was conceived by Ricoeur for a different and more vast kind of purpose, that is, to provide comprehensive knowledge of the human being: to put in connection and dialogue all (scientific and non-scientific) discourses around the human being. Clearly, this is a philosophical task.

Today the hyper-specialisation and hyper-sectorialisation of science and other research fields makes this differentiation of knowledge equal to the disintegration of knowledge. A comprehensive synthesis, or meta-disciplinary recomposition, seems impossible even for philosophy and, perhaps, it does not represent the real or essential point. Conversely, it appears to be more achievable and useful a goal to find a way to reinforce collaboration and connection between the sciences and knowledges. This necessity finds significant reverberation both in philosophy and in science.

With regard to the perspective of a dialectical link between philosophy and the human and social sciences, different perspectives of research have developed. Some, for example, recognise that objectivity does not depend on substantial differences in the object of investigation, nor on formal

differences between methods, but rather from the procedures of objectification underway within the specific disciplines or kinds of knowledge. It is therefore not so much a question of comparing the human sciences with the natural sciences as two paradigmatic types of scientificity, so much as rethinking the procedures more generally, according to how the objects of the various scientific domains become thinkable and considerable. In the perspective of objectification, the false antinomies between universal and unique, general and particular, nomothetic and idiographic, are suspended to think in general of all *possible* objects. How, and through what formal configurations, do objects become thinkable? In this perspective, there is no opposition between nature and history (see Borutti 1999, 19–20).

The idea of critical hermeneutics that this book advances refers to the philosophical project of the early writings of Jürgen Habermas (i.e. a kind of a critical theory) and to the 1960's debate between Habermas and Hans-George Gadamer between the critique of ideology *versus* the hermeneutics of tradition. Into this debate, even Ricoeur enters, proposing *in nuce* a first idea of a philosophical hermeneutics with critical functions.

In my research, I have for years been advancing the thesis that critical hermeneutics represents both the unifying methodological key of the vast Ricoeurian research, and the essential tool for the exercise of philosophy today as an intra- and inter-discipline.

Today, philosophy no longer lives by nourishing itself by itself. It is destined to die if it does not work with and for the sciences, if it is not exercised as a bridge-discipline, if it does not actively contribute to the advancement of knowledge, dialogue and contamination between knowledges, traditions and cultures.



Action, Intersubjectivity and Narrative Identity: Essays on Critical Hermeneutics articulates its analyses and arguments in twelve chapters distributed in three parts: respectively, “Methodology” (Chapters 1–5), “For a New Understanding of the Human Being” (Chapters 6–8), and “Rebalancing Narrative Identity” (Chapters 9–12).

Chapter 1, titled “The Ricoeurian Way: Towards A Critical Hermeneutics for the Human and Social Sciences”, presents a paper published in the *American International Journal of Social Science* in 2015 (see Busacchi 2015a). Focusing on Paul Ricoeur’s philosophical methodology as

practised in his mature speculative work, it is possible to profile a hermeneutical procedural model: that of a critical hermeneutics, methodologically and epistemologically structured, for the most part by following the theory of the *arc herméneutique*. Ricoeur's reinterpretation of Freud's psychoanalysis offers one of the first theoretical and disciplinary bases for this theory, and his practice of philosophy offers in itself the model of a philosophy exercised as a practical theory and as a human and social science. Indeed, Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics is at once a philosophy, a philosophical approach, and a methodological model for the human and social sciences, which works to coordinate explanation and understanding under the rule of interpretation.

Chapter 2, titled "Textuality as a Paradigm for Hermeneutics" deeply reconsiders and re-treats the analysis developed for a paper I gave in the 3rd International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences & Arts SGEM 2016 given in Vienna, 2016 6–9 April (the first version of the talk can be found in: Busacchi 2016a). This paper reconsiders Paul Ricoeur's speculative research from the perspective of a critical hermeneutics understood as a general methodology which is able to work at an interdisciplinary level, particularly between philosophy and the social and human sciences. The specialisation in science constitutes a differentiation of knowledge that determines advancement as well as provokes a great increase in complexity and fragmentation. Among the human sciences, some problematic disciplines, such as psychoanalysis, sociology and history, have not yet found a unified methodological and epistemological structure revealing an objective, scientific limitation; in this regard, critical hermeneutics may work as a mediatory inter-discipline.

Chapter 3, titled "Hermeneutics 'Reloaded'" presents a paper published in the inaugural volume of *Critical Hermeneutics. Biannual International Journal of Philosophy* in December 2017 (see Busacchi 2017). Currently, hermeneutics is no longer a *koinè*, yet it pervades the field of human knowledge on different and diverse levels. With the decline of philosophical hermeneutics, the inheritance of a rich tradition of thought, there remains some very important problematic and speculative cornerstones and a poorly ordered horizon of hermeneutical practices and procedures, to varying degrees technical and/or speculative. From this composite picture the (negative) possibility of truths without method and methods without truth or validity emerges; and thence, again, emerge the problems of consistency, rigour and philosophical legitimacy, along with the risk of non-rational seductions and/or ideological distortions. From another point of view, philosophy and reflection within hermeneutical traditions have

elaborated sufficient critical content and devices for the definition of an organised, rigorous and controlled model of a *comprehensive procedure*. From this perspective, Paul Ricoeur's philosophical work seems emblematic. From his philosophy it is possible to extract a general model of a non-philosophically-engaged hermeneutical method, which is valuable for the human and social sciences as well as a useful procedure for interdisciplinary work. This is critical hermeneutics: a specific form of speculative *and* theoretical hermeneutics whose methodological and epistemological foundation mirrors the new form of the contemporary hermeneutic-scientific *koinè*.

Chapter 4, "Ricoeur and Habermas", reconsiders and deepens the analysis of a talk I gave at the 3rd International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences & Arts SGEM 2016, held in Albena (Bulgaria), 22–31 August (the first version of the talk appears in: Busacchi 2016d). This chapter aims to provide a better understanding of issues related to the theme of recognition in sociology, politics and philosophy. As Charles Taylor underlines, recognition constitutes a "vital human need"; consequently, it cannot be an end, nor a means or something similar, but a basic law, a principle and a fundamental reason. The passage through Habermas and Ricoeur's sociology of recognition stresses the centrality of the other for human emancipation and realisation. Thus, in order to promote the real progress of individuals and of society, it is of central importance that a philosophy of emancipation takes root. In addition, it is necessary to promote, sustain and deepen a philosophy of communitarian participation and intersubjective recognition.

Chapter 5 is titled "Why Reality Is Not Totalisable" and reproduces a paper published in the *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* in 2017 (see Busacchi 2017e). This article thematises Ricoeur's speculative *parcours* around the philosophy of action. It starts by offering a perspective on French (Continental) philosophy's contribution to the Philosophy of Action. The roles played by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology and by the Structuralists are particularly emphasised, including references to Ricoeur's speculative research endeavours. These Ricoeurian developments can be connected under a general anthropological perspective, creating a double (productive) implication: (1) to recognise a new interpretative key for the Ricoeurian *parcours*, and (2) to find a new (Ricoeurian) way to defend the idea of the gnoseological and epistemological impossibility that considers the reality of the world as a comprehensive knowledge.

Chapter 6 (which opens the second part of the book), titled “The Human and Its Discourse: From Fragmentation to Unification”, presents a paper published in the *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* in 2016 (see Busacchi 2016b). We are living in an era in which the differentiation of knowledge in the contemporary sciences has spurred a great increase in complexity. On the one hand, this complexity is accompanied by specialisation and fragmentation; on the other hand, it fosters increased research of shared methods and vocabularies, and interdisciplinary approaches. The character and complexity of the various intertwined series of challenges and problems connected to this discourse become particularly vivid if we consider the knot around the discourse of the human and the contemporary paradoxes related to the pre-eminent idea of what it means to become a person. Paul Ricoeur’s research offers a comprehensive contemporary, example of the complex interconnection of this dialectic. At the same time, it offers an example of a general model capable of being considered a multilevel methodology for philosophy and the human and social sciences. This is critical hermeneutics: a theoretical-practical and interdisciplinary procedure based on a transversal epistemology. In the end, the application of Ricoeur’s philosophy and methodology to the concrete case of contemporary human life will lead to reasoning with new complexities and paradoxes, revealing that, in the end, any comprehensive attempt to define the human being requires the support of a new, varied, nourished humanism.

Chapter 7, “Habermas and Ricoeur on Recognition: Toward a New Social Humanism”, represents a paper published in the *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* in 2015 (see Busacchi 2015b). The concept of recognition identifies a cornerstone of the new dynamic and problematic structures of contemporary social life, including the problems of recognition in a multicultural society, and the struggles for recognition of individuals, associations and identitarian groups. It is also a fundamental term for various theoretical and empirical areas of research, such as psychology, sociology and politics. This paper will examine the issue of recognition in sociology, assuming a philosophical stance. It starts with a brief overview of the concept’s most important uses and its theoretical potential. It argues that philosophy reveals a problematic but potentially constructive balance between the two key-concepts of “struggle” and “dialectics”.

Chapter 8, “Semantics of Action: Human Action between Motivation and Causation” summarises the main analysis and conclusions achieved in a series of talks given at the 4th International Multidisciplinary Scientific

Conference on Social Sciences & Art SGEM 2017, in Vienna, 2017 28–31 March (published in: Busacchi 2017b; 2017c; 2017d). From the beginning of his book *Le discours de l'action* (1977), Paul Ricoeur emphasises the importance of a practical ethical approach for a speculative study of human action and for a philosophical theory of action. Ricoeur approaches this question by intertwining analytical philosophy, phenomenology and practical hermeneutics. Ricoeur profiles a new theoretical speculative model of philosophy of action which is realised, on the one hand, through a methodology articulated between linguistics, phenomenology and hermeneutics and, on the other, through a philosophy practically and ethically oriented. In the end, it becomes clear that a deep and comprehensive philosophical study of human action requires both the intervention of a multileveled, theoretical-practical procedure and the establishment of a non-substantialist philosophy of the human being (i.e. Ricoeur's philosophy of the *capable human being*).

Chapter 9 (which opens the third part of the book), titled “Telling a Life: Narration and Personal Identity”, presents a paper published in the *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* in 2018 (see Busacchi 2018b). In recent decades, the theme of “narrative identity” has seen significant development in various disciplinary domains, both at a practical and interdisciplinary level. The issues connected to narrative identity have (re-)gained a central position not only in narratology and philosophy, but even in psychology and in a number of psychotherapeutic approaches. Several scholars agree with the idea that the psychological reality is narrative and that narration is a determinant of personal identity. Starting from a short overview on identity and narration in literature and narratology, this article aims to thematise the issue of narrative identity as the fulcrum of a scientific theorisation by showing how the interrelationship between these two sciences is particularly productive in psychology as well as philosophy.

Chapter 10, “Imagining a Life: On Imagination and Identity”, reopens a paper strongly connected to the previous chapter and published in the same issue of the same journal (see Busacchi 2018c). A reflective study on the role of imagination in constructing the subjective self involves both the theme of representation and that of the imagination as a common speculative practice. This chapter proceeds from a speculative overview around the issue of personal identity to exploring the hermeneutical analysis of certain uses of imagination in some of the most recent scientific studies. The aim is to (re-)determine which anthropological(-philosophical) model best reflects current scientific advancements in

recognising the function of imagination in personal identity determination. The chapter goes on to propose that Paul Ricoeur's philosophy of the capable human being offers a productive approach to the dialectic of experience, imagination and self-representation in the development of human identity. Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology reveals the profound and constitutive intertwining of the mind and body, reality and imagination, self-representation and social interaction, relation and recognition.

Chapter 11, "Image and Representation in Historical Knowledge", presents a paper published in the *American International Journal of Social Science*, in 2017 (see Busacchi 2017a). Proceeding onwards from a survey of the current state of the debate on the function of representation in the philosophy of history, this contribution investigates the epistemological question of representation in historical knowledge from an indirect point of view. It does not aim at a direct analysis of the dialectical relationships between (a) rhetorical-narrative construction and the writing of history (M. de Certeau, H. White); (b) hermeneutics and the epistemology of historical knowledge (P. Ricoeur); (c) explanation and understanding (von Wright, Ricoeur); (d) meaning, truth and reference in historical representation (Ankersmit). Instead, the question is reset from the point of view of representation as a mechanism/dynamism of mind and memory, as a linguistic instrument, and as an instrument of knowing. The intent is to explore how the imaginative-representative function of the philosophy of history can contribute to "solving" the duplicity of historical reality as something that has "passed", is no-longer-existing, but existed in the past as something "yet-existing". In this way, it may be possible to grasp the crux, the point of origin of the epistemological problems of explanation, understanding and representation in historical knowledge.

Finally, Chapter 12, titled "Justice Through Recognition: From Philosophy to Action", reconsiders the analysis proposed with talk given at the Asian Conference on Ethics, Religion, & Philosophy 2016 (ACERP2016), Kobe, Japan, 31 March–3 April (see Busacchi 2016c; 2018, 75–82). The issues concerning recognition and mutual recognition have been largely discussed at all levels, non-scientifically and scientifically, in philosophy, in psychology, in sociology, in political theory, within ethical, communitarian, intercultural and political debates etc. But there is still much to do in reflecting upon all the implications of recognition, particularly considering the deep relationship that flows in both directions between social mutual recognition and personal emancipation. The question of precisely "what the psychological, sociological and political implications" are is still open, but with Taylor, Habermas, Ricoeur and

Honneth we may definitely understand how and why recognition could be established as a theoretical-practical basis for individual realisation, social progress and the strengthening of justice and democracy.

PART I

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 1

THE RICOEURIAN WAY: TOWARDS A CRITICAL HERMENEUTICS FOR THE HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

1.1 Preamble

The central question of this paper is linked to the possibility of a reinterpretation of Paul Ricoeur's philosophy by way of critical hermeneutics. Certainly, this "critical" determination marks a passage of secondary importance in his hermeneutical evolution, which progressed from the paradigm of an interpretation of symbols to the analysis of text, to narrative hermeneutics, thence to phenomenological hermeneutics of the self, and finally to the hermeneutics of translation and recognition. However, the point of this paper is to see whether the structure of such a critical hermeneutics may be generalised according to the intrinsic possibilities of Ricoeur's hermeneutics as a unified speculative discourse and as a philosophical procedure. Hence, critical hermeneutics must be clarified in its methodology, in its epistemological structure and in reference to its field of application. But another, more comprehensive, interest underlies this study, which concerns the place and the role of philosophy and philosophical work within the current cultural, and particularly interdisciplinary, context. What is the role of philosophy in relation to the enormous amount of data and knowledge accumulated by the sciences today? Is it a simple "cultural" role, or rather a "scientific" one? Is it possible to conceive of critical hermeneutics as a methodology? This study of Ricoeur's philosophy aims to find an answer to the question of the epistemological constitution of the human and social sciences without taking a specific position on his speculative content and arguments. Ricoeur's work is examined from this perspective, as a potential general model for theoretical research and, more specifically, for the human sciences. It is an analysis free from specific thematic interests, and from speculatively angled positions.

1.2 What is Critical Hermeneutics?

The diversification of knowledge around the human being in the contemporary sciences has provoked a great increase in complexity of the universe of discourse around the subject. It constitutes a problem that Ricoeur identified in the 1960s. I write “problem” because, despite all of this rich knowledge that “perhaps for the first time”, makes it possible “to encompass in a single question the problem of the unification of human discourse”, no one has yet been able to elaborate such a unified synthesis. (“A modern Leibniz with the ambition and capacity to achieve it would have to be an accomplished mathematician, a universal exegete, a critic versed in several of the arts, and a good psychoanalyst”; Ricoeur 1970, 3–4).

Ricoeur never considered himself “a Leibniz” of our times, even if the dimensions of his work are truly exceptional. Actually, with his long and winding route of multiple hermeneutic detours, he traverses a considerable part of human knowledge: from phenomenology of the voluntary and involuntary, to empirical psychology and the hermeneutics of symbols; from history to psychoanalysis; from structuralism to linguistics and the philosophy of language and action; from rhetoric to narrative theory; from literature to science; from anthropological philosophy to neuroscience; from biblical exegesis to religion; from theoretical philosophy to practical philosophy; from sociology and anthropology to law; and so forth. His ambition to co-philosophise, his aspiration to engage in dialogues, and the interdisciplinary character of his reflexive feat clearly reveal, among other elements and aspects of his research, a strategy for a comprehensive approach to overcoming the disciplinary fragmentation of knowledge. In this sense, he considers collegial work between scholars and philosophers of central importance. Through his work, Ricoeur models the idea that philosophy may play the role of a mediatory discipline on the *plateau* of challenges within sight of the reunification of human knowledge. By its theoretical richness and depth, philosophy reveals a flexibility and a capacity to operate transversely, qualities that other disciplines do not have. Ricoeur offers an understanding of how great the potential of critical hermeneutics is as a methodology and epistemology for the human and social sciences.

However, there are some problematic aspects to resolve before considering this a definitive thesis. Firstly, Ricoeur has always underlined the fragmentary character of his research, somehow “dispersed” in his auto-understanding. In *Oneself as Another* (1990), he tried to use the reunifying

thematic key of a phenomenological hermeneutics of the self. But this is a solution of a “thematic” kind: neither a methodological nor a procedural solution, nor an epistemological one. Therefore, it is not sufficient at all. Secondly, the concept of “critical hermeneutics” seems understandable and useful only if coordinated with two other hermeneutical approaches with which it was originally in dialectic. This notion, which characterised K. ●. Apel’s hermeneutical work, as well as Habermas’ critique of ideology, is linked to the Frankfurt School.

Javier Recas Bayón’s *Hacia una hermenéutica crítica* (2006) offers a good perspective from which to characterise critical hermeneutics. In effect, he tries to generalise the concept, opening up a broader perspective in working with the ideas of Gadamer, Habermas, Apel, Vattimo, Rorty, Derrida and Ricoeur. Bayón considers certain productive consequences, comparing their respective theories; but he too mostly focuses on Apel’s and Habermas’ perspectives. He underlines how,

for Apel as well as for Habermas, hermeneutics cannot remain a mere description of the felt, as the Gadamerian mode does, but rather it has to mediate these results with the critical auto-cognition of the interests underlining comprehension. [...] We may characterise Apel and Habermas’ critical hermeneutics through the fundamental characteristics which constitute the essence of its detachment from Gadamer and ontological hermeneutics (Bayón 2006, 193).

Effectively, it is possible to consider critical hermeneutics as to be an extensive articulation of ontological hermeneutics, but in this way, its theoretical potential to be generalised as a universal procedure and as an epistemology is condemned to lose its strength, meaning, and value. Furthermore, its “genesis” is more closely connected to quarrels over the methods of the social sciences than over philosophical speculation, as John Brookshire Thompson’s *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (1981) shows. Through a comparative approach to Wittgenstein, Ricoeur and Habermas, Thompson not only reveals the underlying structural difficulties of the conceptualisation of action, of interpretation as methodology (for the social sciences), and of a theorisation of reference and truth (which are some of the critical aspects of Wittgenstein, Ricoeur and Habermas’ philosophies, respectively), but in seeking to differentiate considerations of what must be a procedural and an epistemic structure in the natural sciences and in social sciences, and in pursuing a specific procedural model for the social sciences, he proposes a critical-linguistic hermeneutical rereading and readdressing of three philosophers’ theories and their respective problems and solutions.

Language is a key concept and a central domain of analysis and research in his study. Following the different perspectives of Wittgenstein, Ricoeur, and Habermas, it becomes clear that this research is directly involved in the epistemological question in various ways. In fact,

Ricoeur views language as a medium of objectification and assigns hermeneutics the task of unfolding the dimensions of being which are expressed in, and disclosed by, the semantic structure of symbols and texts. Habermas conceives of language as the locus of ideology, suggesting that the distortions effected by the exercise of power can be criticised through a reconstruction of the presuppositions of speech. [...] Whereas ordinary language philosophers tend to treat this field as the ultimate ground of inquiry, both Ricoeur and Habermas view it as a region through which in the end it must surpass (Thompson 1983, 214).

Bayón's view and theoretical approach is different; epistemologically, it is weaker than Thompson's. But this perspective offers help in reconstructing and understanding Ricoeur's attempt to profile a critical hermeneutics in dialectic between Gadamer's hermeneutics of tradition and Habermas' critique of ideology. In fact, he uses more than any others Ricoeur's essay "Herméneutique et critique des idéologies" (1973, republished in *From Text to Action*, 1986). Unfortunately and unreasonably, this central passage of Ricoeur's discourse on critical hermeneutics has been underestimated or even disregarded. As David M. Kaplan writes in his remarkable study on *Ricoeur's Critical Theory* (2003): "the critical dimension in Ricoeur's works has been generally overlooked in the secondary literature. Very little attention has been given to his conception of the relationship between hermeneutics and critical theory, his theories of ideology and utopia, and the normative basis for a critique of society" (Kaplan 2003, 2).

1.3 Between Hermeneutics and Critique of Ideology

Although Ricoeur did not take part in the tense debate between Gadamer and Habermas, collected in *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik* (1971), neither did he follow it as a distant observer. His "Herméneutique et critique des idéologies", demonstrates his active interest in it, and his intention to carefully check the various positions and arguments in order to find a position of synthesis and mediation. This middle-way-angled theory is precisely how Ricoeur conceives of "critical hermeneutics", a theory that is intended to mediate between interpretative work (polarised on tradition, historicity and authority), and critical work (polarised on anti-

ideological issues). Certainly, Ricoeur finds in Gadamer and Habermas' dialectical exchange some important elements from which to profile a third hermeneutical way, which will not simply be a "middle way" but will constitute a (third) dialectical "bridge". In fact, Gadamer and Habermas' debate underwent an evolution, as Gadamer reveals in his addendum to the 1972 edition of *Truth and Method*, underscoring what was contemporary hermeneutics' *methodological* evolution. The reference to his disputation with Habermas is clear, as is the impact of this dialogue on Habermas' research around the logic of the social sciences. If Gadamer's work in the sixties marked an important turning point for Ricoeur's practice of philosophy as a reflexive phenomenology (but, after Gadamer, as a reflexive-phenomenological hermeneutics), then Habermas' achievement of a *critical philosophy*, as an alternative to the Frankfurt School's *critical theory*, further impacted Ricoeur. In reality, a narrow correspondence can be found between Ricoeur's use of psychoanalysis as a productive example for the humanities, as a discipline with a bifacial epistemology (with a register of force and a register of meaning), and Habermas' modelling of critical philosophy as an emancipatory critical procedure to work at a personal and social level as psychoanalysis does at the level of psychological therapy. Without the Gadamer-Habermas debate of the seventies, it would be difficult to understand Ricoeur's about-face in criticising Freudian psychoanalysis, previously condemned as an imbalanced, weak science unable to coordinate its double epistemological register through its biologicistic, theoretical view. In fact, psychoanalysis plays an important role in the Gadamer-Habermas debate, and directly or indirectly in the redetermination of the difference between the natural and the human sciences, and of what the social sciences must be. The hermeneutics of Freudian psychoanalysis, as well as other disciplines and theories (such as history, and the theories of text and action), prompts Ricoeur to develop the idea of a methodological and epistemological model transversally disposed between *explanation* and *understanding*. This model is precisely implemented in his critical hermeneutics, which comprise not only a philosophical whole, but also an analytical-interpretative procedure.

Gadamer's re-actualisation of the concept of "authority" and "tradition" constitutes his reaction to the unilateral, universalistic centralisation of "objectivity" as a paradigmatic term for all the sciences, as positivism taught. Not only does this perspective deny the role of historicity, which is central in the humanities (since historicity is the constitutive characteristic of the human being), but it also fails to recognise that tradition, as well as prejudice, offers a possible way of knowledge. Unilaterally, it denies any

articulation and differentiation of the sciences (only natural sciences should be considered sciences). Habermas too develops his critical theory by targeting positivism. This becomes clear in his work *Knowledge and Interest* (1968). But, in fact, this book was realised after a decade of research and dispute around and against the positivist approach to sociology. Habermas has been one of the protagonists of the *Positivismusstreit*. In a 1961 conference in Tübingen, he represented – along with Theodor W. Adorno – the Frankfurt School’s perspective on the social sciences, opposing the neo-positivist perspective of Karl Popper and Hans Albert (see Adorno, Popper et al. 1969). He counter-proposed a critical epistemology – characterised as *dialectic* and founded on the concept of “human interest” – in opposition to positivist epistemology, defined as *analytic*. At the time, the concept of human interest was central in Habermas’ theorisation. He used this same concept in criticising Gadamer, for whom the root of misunderstanding the specific character of the human and social sciences lies in a lack of understanding of the centrality of historical knowledge. For Habermas, the critical point does not lie in this lack of a sense of historicity, but rather within ideologically-determined distortions, which occur under the influence of specific, variable human interests. Only positive intentions for emancipation may help a philosophy formed as a critical theory and as a critical social science to operate properly (as “sciences” do) and productively (as “critique” does). In pursuing the intention of emancipation, a philosophy may be exercised as an auto-reflexive critique of the sciences, whereas a critical social science may be exercised as a critique of social distortions in communication and action, or as a kind of social psychoanalysis.

Inserting himself into this debate, Ricoeur, firstly, does not recognise a narrow connection between psychoanalysis and critical sociology. He speaks reflexively of a parallelism between the two disciplines: between, from one side, the ideological mechanisms of distorted communication which correspond to the social unconscious; and, from the other, the unconscious psychological mechanisms which work on a subjective level. However, beyond this parallelism, he recognises that a similar procedure, wedged between explanation and understanding, must work within critical sociology in order to obtain a critical diagnosis of ideology, while at the same time facilitating their critical dissolution. But he critiques Habermas’ proposal for not advancing a theoretical way through which would transpose explanatory and meta-hermeneutic schema from psychoanalysis to ideology. It is important to underline here that both Ricoeur and Habermas (as well as Gadamer), share a similar re-reading of Freudian psychoanalysis as a “depth hermeneutics”. It is from this point of view that

all parallelisms are possible; and, then, that somehow it becomes possible to exercise Freud's theory as one of distorted communication. Habermas may connect psycho-physiological distortion of communication to the ideological and social distortion of communication via hermeneutics; so, too, may Ricoeur consider some theoretical aspects of this operation since, generally, he recognises as correct Habermas' hermeneutical transposition of psychoanalysis.

In fact, in *Freud and Philosophy* (1965), Ricoeur reconsiders Freudian psychoanalysis as a hermeneutical discipline or, more specifically, as a discipline that has a substantial connection with hermeneutics. In this essay, he reads psychoanalysis as an *expérience-limite* because of the explicative force connected to the "reconstruction" of the "primitive scene". In order to understand the *cause* of a certain symptom, it is necessary to explain its *reason*; and it is within this explanatory passage that the meta-psychological apparatus effectively tackles the conditions of the possibility of explication and reconstruction. Ricoeur seems closer to Habermas because he seems to accept his re-reading of the three psychoanalytical apparatuses of ego, id, and superego as connected to the communicative sphere by the progressive intermediation of dialogue (through which neurosis is re-conducted to the reflexive sphere). However, he counter-poses to (Gadamer and) Habermas' perspective the different epistemological perspectives of a discipline which is considered to be founded "energetically" and "hermeneutically" (because psychoanalysis works with an explicative and a comprehensive register). This is the central thesis of *Freud and Philosophy*, and marks a peculiar key of Ricoeur's interpretation of Freud's psychoanalysis as a depth hermeneutics. The only major difference is that, for Ricoeur, this thesis plays the role of a generalised multi-epistemological theorisation and presents a procedure that can be considered a general model for critical philosophy (in contrast to Habermas) and for the human and social sciences (again, in contrast to Habermas). This so-called "theory of the hermeneutic arc" forms the core of Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics, where the example of its functioning is discoverable within Ricoeur's philosophy itself if considered in general terms, which is to say, in terms of a general model of analysis and interpretation, of the diagnosis and exercise of criticism, of the construction of speculations and theorisations, and so on. More analytically, but following another "logic" of discourse, David Kaplan resumes Ricoeur's relation with the hermeneutics of tradition and the ideology critique, respectively indicating four critical aspects for both. For Kaplan, Gadamer's hermeneutics: (1) "substitute discourse for dialogue as the model of communicative understanding" (Kaplan 2003, 38); (2) "overcome

the dichotomy between explanation and understanding in order to account for our capacity for criticism" (*Ibidem*); (3) consider that "the world of the text, the referential dimension opened for the reader, contains a potentially subversive force in the imagination" (39); and (4) consider that "a thematic connection exists between the transformation of subjectivity in interpretation and the critique of false consciousness" (*Ibidem*). With regard to Habermas' critical theory, Ricoeur offers these subsequent remarks: (1) "the Habermasian theory of interests function like Heideggerian existentials. As quasi-transcendental categories they are neither empirically justifiable nor theoretically posited" (*Ibidem*); (2) "the distinction between an interest in emancipation to the interest in communication is illegitimate" (40); "the practical task of the critique of ideology is identical to the goal of hermeneutics: to enlarge and restore communication and self-understanding" (*Ibidem*); and (4) "no antinomy exists between the prior consensus to which we belong and an anticipation of freedom in an ideal of unconstrained communication, or between an ontology of understanding and an *eschatology of freedom*" (41).

1.4 Paul Ricoeur's Philosophy as an Interdisciplinary Procedure

Without a doubt, Ricoeur's work must be defined as non-systematic, for if it is true that he conducted his research with the idea of intersubjectivity as the essential character of truth (see Ricoeur 1970), and therefore positing philosophical work as the communitarian work of philosophers, then it must also be true that the thematic fragmentation of his work (i.e. voluntary and involuntary, finitude and guilt, symbolism of evil, unconscious, discourse, text, action, narrative, self, memory, recognition), as well as his evolutionary reference to different methodologies, schools and traditions (such as spiritualism, phenomenology, philosophy of reflection, hermeneutics), together form his philosophy into a heterogeneous and non-unified open whole. There are scholars that consider Ricoeur's work rhapsodical, strong in his reflexive specific application, yet weak as a comprehensive philosophy and general methodology. For them, there is no methodology. Ricoeur himself recognised the prominence of fragmentation in his enterprise, as opposed to synthesis and unity. He also has underlined how the differentiation, specialisation, and enrichment of disciplines and knowledge not only constitutes a real challenge for the human being, but, actually, has consistently transformed the philosophical work in its nature and approach. In his *Autobiographie intellectuelle*, he

explicitly declares that philosophy dies if it interrupts its millennial dialogue with the sciences (whether mathematics, the natural sciences or human sciences; see Ricoeur 1995, 62). In our own times, a complete, comprehensive synthesis of all of human knowledge is impossible for just one man, as we read in *Freud and Philosophy*. Thus, Ricoeur's interdisciplinary work, his sense of collegiality, and his *engagement* in constant dialogue must be interpreted as a coherent and deliberate response to this state of things. The fragmentation, or even “explosion”, of his area of research is an inescapable, “structural” consequence, which does not necessarily weaken the role of philosophy. In fact, in many ways, interdisciplinary work is becoming more and more central and essential among the sciences, sometimes pressing them to evolve and develop in terms of problematisation, approach, methodology and procedure. Within such a context, philosophy may play a central, mediatory role; but first, it must evolve from its own fragmentation in different schools, conceptions, procedures and so on. The entire oeuvre of Ricoeur represents the sum of his diagnosis, as well as his choice in selecting questions, approaches, and ways to treat and solve problems.

Stephen H. Clark is right in saying that Ricoeur develops a “comprehensive philosophy”, and that he is “a genuinely interdisciplinary thinker [...] always addressing himself attentively to the question in hand with a courteous rigour” (Clark 1990, 1), and that “his is a rationality genuinely inclusive, kinetic, in constant internal evolution: the Socratic inheritance in its most positive form” (4).

During an international symposium in Granada in 1987, he clearly described the problematic of a speculative or scientific construction as an objective impossibility because of our times, which he calls “post-Hegelian”: an era of non-synthesis, without a system, or an era of “blessed systematicness” (see Ricoeur 1991, 26-42).

Now it becomes possible, as well as interesting and useful, to consider what elements may be generalised in Ricoeur's philosophy, and whether there is any possibility of synthesising his work in terms of methodology and approach. We find encouraging the central function of critical hermeneutics in Ricoeur's enterprise, his attempt in *Oneself as Another* to reorganise and readdress his work in a more unified way, and the recurrences of certain technical and procedural aspects of his analysis and his “speculative style”, as subsequently summarised.

From the non-philosophical to the philosophical. The first point that seems to be typical in Ricoeur's methodology is the beginning of speculative reflection from a non-philosophical or a pre-philosophical point of departure. The idea of "non-philosophical" has various implications. Primarily, Ricoeur makes reference to the spheres of the empirical and symbolical; essentially, to the sphere of applied hermeneutics (applied to interpretation of symbols [*The Symbolic of Evil*, 1960], to psychoanalysis [*Freud and Philosophy*], and to religion [*L'Herméneutique biblique*, 2001]). Secondly, he applies philosophy to the social sphere, not as a sociology of a particular kind, but as a practical philosophy engaged toward and interested in society. In the same manner, philosophy operates in relation to politics, justice and law (see, *Le Juste*, 1995; *Le Juste 2*, 2001). Thirdly, he treats the "non-philosophical" as the domain *aux frontières de la philosophie* (as one of his collection of articles is subtitled in *Lectures III*, 1994), defining it as the domain of literary and cultural projects, where philosophy is enriched by the exercise of reflection and (again) hermeneutics (see, for example, the interlude within *Oneself as Another*). Finally, the non-philosophical dimension represents the sphere of all non-philosophical disciplines, above all sciences. This implication is already evident in Ricoeur's first speculative work, *The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (1950), where he thematises Freudian psychoanalysis, as well as empirical psychology. As Stephen Clark writes, "there is no hostility to scientific fact but rather a diagnostic relation towards it: a series of complex antinomies are established between intentional analysis and the data of the empiricist and objectivist sciences. The cogito [i.e., the subject] can only be known through the outward detour of interpretation" (Clark 1990, 22–23). Other examples include *Freud and Philosophy*, dedicated to psychoanalysis; *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays on Hermeneutics* (1969), dedicated to structuralism and psychoanalysis; *The Rule of Metaphor. Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning* (1975), a philosophical study between linguistics and rhetoric; a 1998 book of dialogues with neurobiologist Jean-Pierre Changeux, *Ce qui nous fait penser. La Nature et la Règle* (1998); *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2000), a vast philosophical study in dialectic with historians and working around historiography; and *The Course of Recognition* (2004), in which Ricoeur's work is developed in dialectic with cultural anthropology and other disciplines.

Between theory and praxis. Another typical Ricoeurian way of spreading and developing speculative research is through a multi-levelled argumentation disposed according to different discursive degrees, levels and registers. Ricoeur's dynamic passage from the theoretical plan to the

practical plan is intertwined with this disposition. Clearly, it is because there is a general “discipline of method” that a similarly complex and dynamic operation is possible, as *Oneself as Another* reveals by providing an example of a general synthesis of Ricoeur’s philosophy and methodology. In fact, through its ten studies, a hermeneutical phenomenology develops a philosophy of the self progressing from a linguistic level of analysis to a pragmatic one, thence to a speculative-anthropological level, and, finally, from a practical-ethical level to a juridico-political level. The result is never a discourse that is theoretically and practically juxtaposed or mixed, because, constitutively as well as dynamically, Ricoeur’s discourse is a transversal discourse, able to articulate theoretical analysis and interpretation onto or into a practical dimension. Moreover, it is generally configured as a “theoretical practice”, like the sciences (see Ricoeur 2003). Therefore, critical hermeneutics operates as an applied critical theory, as well as a practico-theoretical discipline. In Ricoeur’s work, critical hermeneutics is an interdisciplinary theoretical practice, with a descriptive, interpretative and reflexive methodology.

Between conflict and mediation. As a third general characterisation of Ricoeur’s approach, it should be underlined how consistent is his tendency to be attracted by conflict and, at the same time, to exercise mediation. This maintenance of tension is evident everywhere: for example, in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, where “in an impressive variety of contexts, [...] the process of understanding involves a double movement of the recovery of meaning and of an exercise in demystification: opposing perspectives which complement each other in an open-ended and productive contest” (Clark 1990, 3).

However, this discourse does not necessarily mean that Ricoeur’s philosophy is a philosophy of “happy ends”. At its core, in fact, is conflict, which explains the necessity of a mediatory work. For Ricoeur is focused on theoretical, practical, speculative and ideological conflicts, though with a temperate, equitable, rational approach which is oriented to rebalancing and resolving problems. Clark is correct in writing that:

Ricoeur never picks a fight. One of the most impressive traits of his work is his respectful, almost grateful, assimilation of criticism: there is nothing in his work remotely comparable to Derrida’s altercation with Searle. At times we may lament the absence of ‘blistering refutations’ [...], but these would run counter to the values that Ricoeur’s whole intellectual enterprise seeks to promote: humility, mutual respect, the truth of charity” (4).

At the same time, François Dosse is also correct in asserting that “contrairement à l’image souvent répandue d’un Ricoeur toujours consensuel, c’est une pensée du conflit, du dissensus” (Boltanski, Dosse et al. 2006, 52).

1.5 Conclusion

The primary question of this paper has been whether it is possible to comprehensively interpret Ricoeur’s philosophy as a critical hermeneutics, assuming the idea of “critical hermeneutics” as a methodology and epistemology of “a third kind”: neither a speculative construction, nor a “doctrine”. This is a different perspective from those expressed in John Thompson, Javier Bayón and David Kaplan’s interests and works, even as they contribute to re-orienting the focus onto this undervalued aspect of Ricoeur’s thought and enterprise. In his *Critical Hermeneutics*, Thompson elaborates a new critical-theoretical perspective for the social sciences focused on a specific re-interpretation of human action. Meanwhile, Bayón stays on the philosophical field, looking for the foundation of a “critical hermeneutics” as an autonomous *philosophical* hermeneutics (ontologically, epistemologically and speculatively founded). And Kaplan presents Ricoeur’s critical hermeneutics as a “critical theory”, as if it was a parallel, alternative or dialectical “response” to Habermas’ challenges connected to positivist approaches to the social sciences and to the problematic aspects of the Frankfurt School’s “critical theory”. On the contrary, this paper considers Ricoeur’s critical hermeneutics in the most generalised terms, searching for a new methodology and epistemology for the social sciences. At the end of this quick “journey” through Ricoeur’s work, we come to the understanding that such a critical hermeneutics must have an epistemological structure similar to Freudian psychoanalysis and to disciplines like history (as described and formalised by certain philosophers such as von Wright, for example, or even Ricoeur): one that is dynamic and transversal, working between explanation and understanding, under the control of interpretation (and under a controlled interpretation). Moreover, we have discovered other elements, variously connected to epistemology and methodology: the collegial work of experts, scientists and interpreters; an interdisciplinary approach in studying a particular phenomenon or problem; the focus on critical argumentation; the dynamic passage from a theoretical level to a practical level of discourse, and vice-versa; the dialectic between the theoretical and the speculative, between non-philosophical/non-scientific and philosophical/scientific; the exercise

of science and philosophy as a “theoretical practice”, and as an engaged work (*engagement*); the transversal and tensional disposition of an approach which may work between (theoretical and practical) conflict and mediation; and the multi-levelled articulation of this approach from different levels, degrees, and registers of discourse (i.e. multi-doctrinal, multi-theoretical, multi-procedural approaches).

Certainly, there is a large and concrete risk in reading, interpreting and transforming critical hermeneutics into a collapsed methodology with a disordered, rhapsodic, and “subjective” procedure, where almost anything is possible, everything is relative and provisory, and all truths are well accepted and welcome. This negative procedural spiral constitutes a real problem and an effective challenge. But, at the same time, the possibilities of a positive procedural spiral are similarly concrete, as the example of Ricoeur’s work, among others, demonstrates. Finally, this attempt at rendering critical hermeneutics as a technique finds its justification and reason within urgent aspects and issues of our times: the diversification and growing complexity of knowledge, which has already shut the doors on a comprehensive understanding of the human being, and the impossibility of adopting a general perspective that could be defined as synthetic and unified. The consequences are undetermined, and could be potentially ruinous. If we have diffusion or dispersion without centre, then where is its meaning and function? If we have a centre without confines, where is its order and articulation? If we have knowledge without understanding, then where is concrete progress and emancipation? If we have division without unity, then where is the work of the community of scientists?

CHAPTER 2

TEXTUALITY AS A PARADIGM FOR HERMENEUTICS

2.1 Introduction

Paul Ricoeur's philosophy may be summarised and considered a critical hermeneutics. His vast and varied speculative and interdisciplinary research can be unified both as a general speculative perspective and as a methodological-procedural model. The latter is a point of particular importance because it can be used in the fields of the human and social sciences as an instrument for interdisciplinary research as well as an internal structure (a methodology or procedure) for the human and social sciences *as sciences*.

It is true that Ricoeur has essentially considered his work to be non-systematic and thematically fragmented. In fact, on the one hand, it is methodologically articulated in a various combination of phenomenology, hermeneutics, reflexive philosophy, analytical philosophy and non-philosophical disciplines such as history and historiography, religion and literature, psychoanalysis and neuroscience, rhetoric and linguistics, and so on. On different occasions he has described his *parcours* – or long way of hermeneutics (as counterposed to Heidegger's short way) – as a long journey on which continuity is determined by the perpetual introduction of new speculative themes on the base of something residual left from a previous thematic moment of research. In fact, from his first focus on will, guilt and evil in the 1950s, in which he left open the problems of understanding symbolism and articulating a poetic of the will, he moved onto symbols and the unconscious in the 1960s, and wrote on metaphor, language and narration in the 1960s and 1980s. Then, from the articulation and deepening of the hermeneutics of text, action and history, and from the development of hermeneutics of the text into narrative hermeneutics (again, in the 1960s and 1980s), which left open the problematic concerning narrative identity, he moves on self, translation, history (again)

and memory in the 1990s, and finally on just and recognition from the nineties to his last period of life. Effectively, Ricoeur's attempt to unify his research under a phenomenological hermeneutics of the self, as it is presented in his 1990 book *Oneself as Another*, must be considered only *partial*. On the one hand, anthropological philosophy represents a major and constant issue in his research but in it there is far more than a philosophical-anthropological perspective or conception. It is for this reason that Ricoeur himself proposed a unitarian rereading of his work (*Oneself as Another*) whilst retaining, at the same time, the idea that his research does not provide a unitarian or synthetic philosophy (see Ricoeur 2002). It is interesting to consider how scholars such as Stephen H. Clark have underlined the "comprehensive" character of Ricoeur's philosophy, its interdisciplinary construction and "inclusive" disposition (see Clark 1990, 1 ff). This is an aspect of great significance, because the differentiation of contemporary sciences has led to different important advances in different domains, and with varying degrees of complexity and sophistication, as well as to the fragmentation and compartmentalisation of knowledge(s) and the huge effects this has. Many disciplines are moving towards a more integrated procedural basis, looking for vaster vocabularies, interdisciplinarity and better-articulated theoretical fundamentals. At the same time, this process is revealing a certain degree of limitation in theoretical synthesis, in analytical-explanatory strength, in logic-rational coherence, in conceptualisation, and so on. Philosophy can play a strategic, epistemological and procedural role of mediation thanks to its diverse traditions, theoretical areas, vocabulary, and varied approaches. Conceived as a methodology or procedural approach, critical hermeneutics appears to be a particularly flexible tool, able to work coherently in coordinating, summarising and readdressing/applying various kinds of scientific and non-scientific knowledges. It works with different models, theories and discursive registers because, essentially, it is a multileveled approach both methodologically and epistemologically speaking. Its essential aspects may be defined through reconsidering and summarising, in general, the theoretical-practical and procedural aspects of Ricoeur's work. What he calls the "hermeneutic arc" is more than a methodology that advances the coordination of explication and comprehension under interpretation. It is the methodology of a critical hermeneutics: a philosophical intra- and inter-discipline and a general procedure that can work with and for the human and social sciences. In particular, psychoanalysis, sociology and history have clear difficulties in finding a strong and unified methodological and epistemological structure – a fact that puts at risk their capability to respect the scientific parameters

of objectivity, rigour and verifiability. With his critical research, and through a long process of interdisciplinary application and study – in which he carried on studying epistemic solutions elaborated by scholars like Weber for sociology, von Wright for history, and himself for psychoanalysis (see Ricoeur 2012) – Ricoeur defined a method that not only reflects his own way of doing philosophy, but even incorporates Weber and von Wright’s comprehensive and generalisable approaches to the human and social sciences. His critical hermeneutics has a structured epistemology which operates between description and analysis, explanation and understanding, all under the rule of interpretation. Through its transversal theoretical apparatus, it may work *between* disciplines of different kinds, directly or indirectly connected to the historical and the social sciences. Indeed, critical hermeneutics expresses at once a philosophical theoretical-practical approach and a methodological technical-procedural model.

●nce the main aspects of this critical hermeneutics have been defined through a general focus on Ricoeur’s philosophy, it will be interesting to thematise the theory of text, because, together with the theories of action and history and the hermeneutics of psychoanalysis, it plays a central role in defining the epistemology of the “hermeneutic arc”. In addition, it reveals the connections that exist in Ricoeur’s work between philosophy and the non-philosophical and non-scientific disciplines. This is an aspect that demonstrates the importance of disciplines such as literature and art for science, philosophy and, in the end, for all research interested in approaching the study of the human being from a holistic perspective.

2.2 Around Critical Hermeneutics

The interdisciplinary character of Ricoeur’s philosophy reflects the vastness of his interests and domains of research and investigation. Clark is right in saying that Ricoeur’s “work possesses an acute and immediate relevance throughout the human sciences: concerning their epistemological value, on the problem of the subject, in the philosophy of language, and in all spheres of interpretation theory. Ricoeur is a genuinely interdisciplinary thinker, with distinguished and original contributions in a host of different areas – in addition to those listed above, hermeneutics, historiography, literary criticism, phenomenology, political theory, semiotics, structuralism, theology” (Clark 1990, 1).

There is an integrated axis at the centre of Ricoeur's various paths of research which somehow mirrors the epistemological dilemmas relating to the epistemic and discursive constitution of the human and social sciences in parallel with the problems related to the fragmentation and compartmentalisation of sciences. Concerning the disjunct between the various discourses on the human being, this axis connects the epistemological problem of the human and social sciences with the contemporary problem of fragmentation of knowledges and, at the same time, with the eternal questions about the nature, reality and meaning of the human condition and constitution: How do we improve our holistic understanding and knowledge around the human being? How do we obtain a comprehensive discourse on the human being?

As Ricoeur had already explained in his *Freud and Philosophy*, "today the unity of human language poses a problem"; even if we possess "a symbolic logic, an exegetical science, an anthropology, and a psychoanalysis and, perhaps for the first time, we are able to encompass in a single question the problem of the unification of human discourse" this unification remains impossible because of science's fragmentation and specialisation (Ricoeur 1970, 3–4). Such a unified philosophy of language and knowledge cannot be realised by a single scholar or by means of a single discipline, because a "modern Leibniz with the ambition and capacity to achieve it would have to be an accomplished mathematician, a universal exegete, a critic versed in several of the arts, and a good psychoanalyst" (4). On the one side, fifty years after *Freud and Philosophy*, considering subsequent development in Ricoeur's research, it is better to speak of a critical hermeneutics, instead of a philosophy of language. On the other side, it would perhaps be better to consider neuroscience and cognitive psychology in addition, and even other important disciplines. However, the essence of Ricoeur's discourse and perspective does not change, because, fifty years after, nothing has changed. On the contrary, complexity, dismemberment and fragmentation have progressed, and beyond any attempt to interconnect (certain) sciences and knowledges, what emerges is a disordered disintegration, a new Babel of science and knowledge. However, it is true that a widespread understanding of the importance of working towards interconnecting different kinds and domains of knowledge, different methodologies and different approaches is growing and growing. And it is precisely for this reason that Ricoeur's work sounds like something of extreme newness and usefulness. It is, significantly, both a double solution and a positive example: the solution of a philosophy used and applied as a procedure with a transversal methodology, and an example of a theoretical practice

exercised following Leibniz's ideal model.

With his long *parcours* of multiple detours, Ricoeur has covered a large portion of theoretical-speculative traditions and themes of our epoch, and an impressive number of scientific and non-scientific disciplines. Flicking through his research we come across spiritualism, phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, epistemology, philosophy of science, empirical psychology, structuralism, psychoanalysis, linguistics, ontology, anthropology, metaphysics, theology, religion, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, critical theory, logics, rhetoric, narrative theory, philosophy of literature, literature, theory of action, analytical philosophy, pragmatism, ethics, history, philosophy of history, historiography, sociology, political philosophy, political theory, law, mythology, neuroscience, traductology and more.

Inspired by Jaspers' idea of co-philosophise on the basis of an intersubjective conception of truth, Ricoeur engages an open confrontation, potentially with all disciplines. This is an essential part of his strategy and methodology for a holistic approach able to overcome the disciplinary fragmentation of knowledge. From the one side, it is in this way that, step by step, he progressively reinforces his ability to use and apply philosophy with flexibility and efficacy; from the other side, it is the nature of philosophy in itself as an intra- and inter-disciplinary endeavour to offer a flexible and transversal possibility in scientific and non-scientific uses and applications.

Ricoeur indirectly participated in the historical debate between Gadamer and Habermas collected in *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik* (1971) with a short essay, "Herméneutique et critique des ideologies", where he placed himself in a middle position between the hermeneutics of tradition and the critique of ideology. This is precisely the position that Ricoeur conceived for critical hermeneutics: a vision with a strong connection to critical theory (see Kaplan 2003; Thompson 1981/1983) and, at the same time, a strong potential to be extended. Directly or indirectly, the Gadamer-Habermas debate does not simply refer to an inner contrast between two philosophical approaches with antithetical paradigms: authority and tradition from one side, critique and emancipation from the other. It involves a critical dialectics on various analytical and dialectical traditions, but above all on the epistemology and methodology of the social sciences and (in general) the role of philosophy in science. A narrow connection exists between Ricoeur's use of Freud's psychoanalysis as a model for the human and social sciences – having a dual epistemology and a discursive

register doubled in an energetics and a hermeneutics – and Habermas’ critical philosophy, which has been structured following the model of the dialectical logics of the social sciences, in contrast to the predominant, positivist model of analytical logics (see Adorno, Popper et al. 1969). In Ricoeur, the hermeneutics of psychoanalysis – as well as the hermeneutics of history, text and action – plays a central role for the hermeneutic arc theory. And, somehow, psychoanalysis plays a comparable role in the Gadamer-Habermas debate, because it variously takes part in helping to redefine the methodological structure of the social sciences compared to the empirical ones. In Ricoeur, certainly there is a direct and significant connection between his efforts to find a more integrated and flexible methodology and to work in an interdisciplinary way. On different occasions, he has explained that interdisciplinary work is a must in our non-systematic (post-Hegelian) era and that philosophy is condemned to disappear if it does not progress in promoting interdisciplinary work (see Ricoeur 1991b; 1995).

Considering Ricoeur’s philosophy as a whole, we may actually extract the procedural structure of a critical hermeneutics, as we will be see it in the subsequent chapter.

2.3 Around the Paradigm of the Text

Today, scholars are perhaps underestimating the epistemological and procedural role of non-scientific disciplines and art in Ricoeur’s philosophy. But, as previously mentioned, if on the one hand there are many reasons to doubt that a unified knowledge may be elaborated by a singular expert, on the other, this task may be achieved only through the synthetic and dynamic harmonisation of different disciplines and different forms of knowledge. If Ricoeur quotes the arts among these disciplines, it because there is an essential link, in all his research, between philosophical work on the sciences and on non-scientific and non-speculative disciplines.

Starting speculative investigation from a non-philosophical or a pre-philosophical point of departure has been a characteristic of Ricoeur’s research from the outset. In his book *The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (1950), the non-philosophical is constituted by the movement of phenomenology through spiritual/moral topics and empirical psychology. In *Fallible Man* (1960) it is determined by the reflective movement through the “pathetic of misery”; in *The Symbolic of Evil* (1960) by the

movement through symbolism and mythology: in *Times and Narrative* (1983-1985) by the movement through literature, rhetoric, historiography and poetics; and so on. As recalled by David Wood, “metaphor and narrative are for Ricoeur integral parts of a general poetics, ‘one vast poetic sphere’, both instances of the productive imagination” (Wood 1991, 6). The pre-philosophical and non-philosophical represent a challenge both in terms of philosophising to the boundaries of philosophy, and philosophising beyond the boundaries of a purely rational/rationalized work. As a consequence of the fact that the epistemological problem of the human and social sciences, the contemporary problem of fragmentation of knowledge, and the dilemmas around the human being are interconnected, all kinds of human knowledge, all cultural experiences, research activities, studies, reflections, expressions and creations have a specific and unique role, and philosophy must start from this and must tend to return to it. Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of text demonstrates that we are far from the classical circular dialectics between the object and the subject of study. By following Ricoeur, Wood explains that:

the analysis of the text extends [...] to the frontiers of the text and forbids any attempt to step outside the text. [...] The distinction between the inside and the outside is a product of the very method of the analysis of texts and does not correspond to the reader’s experience. This opposition results from extending to literature the properties characteristic of the sort of units with which linguistics works: phonemes, lexemes, words; for linguistics, the real world is extra-linguistic. [...] It is precisely this extrapolation from linguistics to poetics that appears [...] to invite criticism: the methodological decision, proper to structural analysis, of treating literature in linguistic categories which impose the distinction between inside and outside. From a hermeneutical point of view [...], a text has an entirely different meaning than the one recognized by structural analysis in its borrowings from linguistics. It is a mediation between man and the world, between man and man, between man and himself; the mediation between man and the world is what we call *referentiality*; the mediation between men, *communicability*, the mediation between man and himself, *self-understanding* (Wood 1991, 26-27).

From his point of view, Ricoeur explains that:

The preceding description of the dialectic between understanding as guessing and explanation as validation was roughly the counterpart of the dialectic between event and meaning. The following presentation of the same dialectic, but in the reverse order, may be related to another polarity in the structure of discourse, that of sense and reference. [...] This new dialectic can be considered from one point of view as an extension of the

first one. The reference expresses the full exteriorisation of discourse to the extent that the meaning is not only the ideal object intended by the utterer, but the actual reality aimed at by the utterance. But, from another point of view, the polarity of sense and reference is so specific that it deserves a distinct treatment, which reveals its fate in writing and, above all, in some literary uses of discourse. The same points will hold for the counterparts of the theory of the text in the theory of reading. [...] The new dialectic between explanation and comprehension is the counterpart of these adventures of the referential function of the text in the theory of reading (Ricoeur 1976, 80–81).

The text requires a perpetual work of analysis, interpretation and reflection between subject and object, the self and the world, and between our comprehension of all things in a dialectical tension between explanation and understanding. At first, hermeneutics must be applied to the reconstruction of what could be called “the work of the text” (*travail du texte*), which has a double interpretative textual dynamism: internal, around the construction and structure of the text in itself; and external, around the determination and projection of a new, representative world. The latter could be an alternative imaginative world, a world created by fantasy, or a representation of a real world (made of facts, acts, interactions, memories, values, dreams, inventions, etc.) reconfigured by the concurrence of new knowledge, new concepts, new categories, and so on. (Actually, the world – or, rather, the lifeworld – in itself may be considered as a written text and, according to specific feelings and interests, as a text prevalently written with a spiritual language, a scientific/scientistic language, a poetic language etc.) Being a discourse fixed through scripture, the text is the continuation and realisation of the discourse; but differently from it, the nature of its internal and external dynamic structure determines a different dialectical functioning with a unique dialectical movement between reference and figuration, representation and reconfiguration, fixation and indication, etc. The internal dynamism of a text constitutes its sense; the external dynamism expresses a *project of the world* that forms its reference. But this reference may be fully “realised” or “activated” only by the reader, who encounters the horizon of a text through his own cultural, historical and linguistic horizon (we are not really far from that which Gadamer describes as *Horizontverschmelzung*). The reader exercises his hermeneutical reflection, activating a circular process of analysis and interpretation which goes beyond the sole movement of understanding the text in itself, because – consciously or unconsciously, deliberately or otherwise – this process activates the deep, personal dialectics of self-meditation, reflective “dialogue” and inner reconfiguration. Through the text we may gain a

better comprehension and knowledge of ourselves, our past, of others and, in general, of the world. We may modify our self-representation and our representation and understanding of others and the world. We may change; we may enter into a process of personal emancipation. Considering such a theory of text as a field in which to test the functioning of a pluriepistemic approach and of a critical hermeneutics certainly helps to see how constitutive are the parallels between the course of things and human action, between representation and intervention, representation and expression, representation and imagination, representation and creativity, and so on.

The connections and dialectics between physical causality and human action are strong.

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I tried to reconsider Ricoeur's philosophy as a critical hermeneutics unifying and generalising his vast research under the perspective of a specific epistemological and methodological general interest, i.e. the interest in a flexible and multileveled approach capable of working in philosophy and in science, as well as at an interdisciplinary level. Critical hermeneutics can be thought of both as a methodological model for the human and social sciences and a philosophical approach applicable to theory and practice. This is part of today's epistemological research and one of the structural aspects of the way we develop and improve our knowledge and understanding of ourselves and of the world. The chapter also aimed to demonstrate how Ricoeur's theory and philosophy of the text reveals that the dialectical movement of explanation and understanding is articulated between scientific, philosophical and non-philosophical disciplines, and crosses the dialectical movement of self-representation and human action.

CHAPTER 3

HERMENEUTICS “RELOADED”: FROM SCIENCE/PHILOSOPHY DICHOTOMY TO CRITICAL HERMENEUTICS

3.1 Introduction: Hermeneutics’ Persistent Legitimacy and Its Paradoxes

I am in full agreement with what David Pellauer says at the start of his 2014 paper, “Work to Be Done”, dedicated to hermeneutics and its current task. Indeed, even more, the hypothetical and circumstantial position according to which we can overlook the distinction between philosophical hermeneutics and hermeneutic philosophy is *generalised* on the basis of the assumption that: “hermeneutic philosophy is philosophy that takes seriously the question of interpretation in relation to understanding, where understanding is both the result of interpretation and, quite paradoxically, also what motivates interpretation in the first place” (Pellauer 2014, 1). The only distinction that is necessary, and to which we will return later, is between hermeneutics as a technique and hermeneutics as philosophy. It is a distinction that has aspects of overlap and interrelation to the extent that, on the one hand, the technique is nourished by and involved in theoretical and methodological research, and on the other, philosophy is also exercised on a theoretical-methodological level. In fact, it is around the relationship between interpretation and comprehension that the legitimacy and speculative value of hermeneutics is at stake. This relationship defines the terrain of its problematicness and opens up the space to a series of quasi-paradoxical, if not fully paradoxical, aspects.

With Pellauer, I say: “we exist as understanding, understanding ourselves, others, our world, things in that world, our possibilities in that world” (3). Actually, Schleiermacher already explained that hermeneutics’ role or end is not interpretation, but understanding: *Verstehen als die Aufgabe der Hermeneutik (Die Aphorismen, 1805)*. This is the source of the epistemic,

cognitive and speculative strength of hermeneutics, because it enables hermeneutics to move beyond the one-dimensionality of analytical-descriptive and scientific-explanatory knowledge, and to synthesise knowledge data, values, creation of meaning and inspiration in a unified theoretical practical synthesis, closer to both the human being and life-world reality than emerges by calculation and measurement only. However, this is also the source of the epistemic, cognitive and speculative weakness of hermeneutics, constantly driven to be articulate between truth and evaluation, knowledge and interest, reality and ideology. A discipline capable of actively supporting and nurturing both nihilistic and relativistic conceptions as well as positive and affirmative conceptions reveals all about its flexibility, ambivalence and ambiguity. ●n the other hand, however, some degree of mixture of the same kind does not lack even the so-called "analytic" and scientific knowledge, as above all, today, that much analytic thought advances a purely ideological pretence of purity and perfection, and much scientific knowledge conceals an idolatry of human intelligence, the manipulability of nature and the possibilities of technology.

The problem is deep, and it is deeper than the problem of knowledge. In some ways, hermeneutics establishes and maintains as radical and perpetual the problematicness of truth, value, goodness/rightness and legitimacy with regards to knowing, acting, doing and even existing. And everything is knotted on the point of (evident) precedence and the effect of a greater degree of completeness and significance of understanding on knowing.

Through this, I am not supporting the reasoning behind the ontological or ontological-existential anchorage of understanding to the Being as intended by Heidegger and Gadamer, I am just suggesting that hermeneutical understanding is the form of human existence as *human existence*, that is, in the individual's relations with himself/herself, with his/her *Erlebnisse*, with others, with the environmental context, with values, with the world, and even with abstract and transcendent ideas. (In fact, knowing is inevitably anchored to some guiding interest, and there is no need to bother the young Habermas to grasp this point). Even without embracing the ontological-existential idea of the grounding of understanding within the Being, one can grasp the truth, validity and scope of what Schleiermacher has already pointed out: namely that *only* by means of hermeneutics does the child arrive at the meaning of words (*Jedes Kind kommt nur durch Hermeneutik zur Wortbedeutung; Die Aphorismen, 1805*). Conversely, without contravening this thesis, science is today able

to identify with precision and in a structured formula the concatenation of neurobiological, cognitive and functional processes that make a child's interaction with the mother and the world possible and thus lead to his/her mental and experiential evolution.

Thus, the point of strength of hermeneutics is also its point of weakness, and this is not the only paradoxical element that characterises it:

(1) Philosophically, we no longer live in the season of hermeneutics, but that of analytic philosophy (of mind and of language). Today is the season of rooting (and radicalisation) on the naturalistic pragmatist paradigm. Hermeneutics no longer has the pervasiveness of a *koinè* (see Vattimo 1987), except within a certain circle of followers and believers. Yet philosophical hermeneutics remains and continues to affect many disciplines and scientific research: from dynamic and relational psychology to neurophenomenology, from social psychology to critical and qualitative-interpretative sociology, from theory of law to literature, and from history to political theory, etc. Today, hermeneutics is no longer a *koinè*, and yet it persists in pervading the field of human knowledge.

(2) With the decline of philosophical hermeneutics, the teachings of an important tradition of thought remain, along with a series of speculative residuals, fertile problematic issues, and a not well-ordered horizon of hermeneutical practices and procedures.

From this variegated picture, the (negative) possibility of truths without method and methods without truth or validity emerges; and therefore, again, there emerges the problem of consistency, rigour and philosophical legitimacy, as well as the risk of non-rational and ideological seductions and distortions. However, from a different point of view, philosophy (in general) and hermeneutics (more specifically) have elaborated sufficient critical content and devices for the definition of an organised, rigorous and controlled model of a comprehensive procedure. The case of Paul Ricoeur's philosophical work seems emblematic from this point of view. A general and generalisable model of hermeneutical procedure can be extracted from his philosophy that does not imply an ideological or a value-speculative personal engagement.

(3) The hermeneutical solution generates the problem, and the nature of the problem determines only one type of possible solution: that of a huge philosophical downsizing, in favour of a more meaningful theoretical-practical generalisation. To renounce speculative dogmatism or adherence

to a particular school is not the same as renouncing the truth; and renouncing hermeneutical radicalisation does not mean renouncing rigour, abandoning the primacy of philosophy, or suffering cultural diminution. Rather, today more than ever, it is necessary to start from the premise that all forms of philosophical knowledge and philosophical practice not equipped with self-reflection and self-criticism disposals are *already* oriented towards radicalisation and dogmatism. The solution is to keep and practice *problematically*. The solution is to seek aporia and conflictual difficulty, that is, to exercise philosophy as a perpetual cognitive-procedural tension and as a tensional mediation between paradigms and knowledge. This is not the expression of restlessness of thought or mind: it is philosophical research in *scientific* form. Critical hermeneutics in all disciplinary domains can be a critical procedure of philosophy exercised around truth, value and meaning.

3.2 Hermeneutics Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

In contrast with the idea of hermeneutics as a new *koinè* of contemporary philosophy, today, the field of hermeneutics is more fragmented than ever. However, it is not fragmented by the effect of an analogous sectorial hyperspecialism at work in analytic philosophy; it is fragmented because it is an “exploded” field. Hermeneutics is currently practised in the most varied ways (many of them productively vague and weak), and as often within strict modalities as in uncontrolled multidisciplinary melting pots. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the contemporary philosophical panorama forms a fragmentary multiverse.

The wide diffusion of analytic philosophy across various theoretical-speculative and practical fields and territories does not represent an alternative answer, but rather is causally implicated in the problem. In one way or another, all analytic philosophies are focused on fragments of fragments. This new characterisation of current philosophy has an uneasy framing in the history of thought and speculative traditions. Here, too, the theoretical ground assumes an orderly arrangement according to the cultural perspective “from which” or “for which” it is observed. This is immediately seen when trying to determine a reasoned collocation of critical hermeneutics in relation to traditional philosophical hermeneutics. It can not be done by demonstration, by trial or by argumentation; it can only be done through an *argued statement*.

The tendency to classify Anglo-Saxon philosophy as “analytic” in contrast to European philosophy understood as “Hermeneutical” still relatively widespread. In his 1987 article, Gianni Vattimo noted that since the 1980s hermeneutics has been used in the US to qualify more-or-less all contemporary European-continental philosophy, without making distinctions between phenomenology, existentialism and hermeneutics. Thus, it has been considering Gadamer, Ricoeur, Derrida, Foucault, Apel and Habermas as members of the same hermeneutical family (see Vattimo 1987, 4). In Europe, this is a still surprising simplification, even more surprising considering the growing number of areas and places in which analytic philosophy, not hermeneutic or phenomenology, is embraced and practised. There is no doubt: analytic philosophy is the new *koinè*.

Beyond this discourse, the framing of critical hermeneutics requires a specific determination about philosophical hermeneutics within the history of hermeneutics. The historical approach has been largely relevant, in this regard: specifically in identifying in Schleiermacher’s work the first starting point of hermeneutics as philosophy, and of a philosophical hermeneutics anchored to an exegetical tradition. In this sense, the work performed by Schleiermacher is significant and particular. His speculative developments on hermeneutical issues are closely intertwined with the procedural and theoretical problems of hermeneutics as a technique. From here it has been possible to retrospectively anchor the whole philological, rhetorical and speculative tradition of Alexandrine hermeneutics to the advent of Judeo-Christian and patristic hermeneutics. It can subsequently be traced from medieval exegesis (Scoto Eriugena *et alii*) to Renaissance philology (Valla, Ficino, Luther *et alii*). According to Wilhelm Dilthey, scientific hermeneutics started with Protestantism; see Dilthey 1966, 597). From the seventeenth to eighteenth century we have biblical hermeneutics (Dannhauer, Emesti, Vico *et alii*), and from there we move to historical and (proper) philosophical hermeneutics (Vico, Herder).

Reflecting on critical hermeneutics in reference to contemporary philosophical hermeneutics, the first dilemma concerns the possibility of a specific intra-disciplinary framework or whether it refers not only to the historical diatribe between Gadamer, Bubner, Habermas, Apel, etc., but also to the models conceived for human and social sciences.

According to Javier Recas Bayón, the “critical” adjective became paradigmatic and generalisable starting with Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (see Bayón 2006, 22). According to him, despite being a broad and ambiguous concept, critical hermeneutics represents better than any other

concept the perspectives of those who propose and require a critical extension of the hermeneutics of ontological affiliation. Human understanding is *critical*, and this critical understanding is ontologically rooted. Critical hermeneutics is a demystifying hermeneutics of the meaning, and Ricoeur’s idea of a hermeneutics of suspicion opposes the traditional idea of ontological hermeneutics as appropriation of meaning (see *Ib.*, 23).

This is the philosophical framework of critical hermeneutics, according to Bayón. It is a wide frame, certainly interesting, but not without difficulties: above all, the general historical philosophical difficulties that arise from the juxtaposition under the brand of “critical hermeneutics” of philosophies as different as those of Gadamer and Habermas, Rorty and Derrida, Heidegger and Ricoeur.

According to Bayón, the *critical* element constitutes the cornerstone of a contemporary hermeneutic alternative with respect to the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics. Starting from Maurizio Ferraris’ articulation of contemporary hermeneutical philosophy in the three main areas of ontological, methodological and critical orientation, Bayón tries to reorganise, in an original way the speculative work of Gadamer, Habermas, Rorty, Derrida, Heidegger and Ricoeur, overcoming Ferraris’ grid. He replaces these figures on the basis of the pre-eminence of the *critical* paradigm in contemporary philosophy. And within the framework of this enlarged conception of critical hermeneutics, Apel and Habermas are placed on the *foundationalist* front, while Ricoeur and others stay on the *anti-foundationalist* front.

This redetermination of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics certainly gives strength and significance to the critical line of hermeneutics. However, it places criticism along a mainly philosophical line. This is a *speculative* perspective that underestimates the specific potential of critical hermeneutics as a theoretical-practical procedure. In addition, by extracting critical hermeneutics from Ricoeur’s philosophy, the perspective appears in a different light both speculatively and methodologically. It is true that Ricoeur’s work explicitly mentions critical hermeneutics as a philosophy. In fact, the notion of “critical hermeneutics” is used by him to define the field of his philosophical exercise of *tensional mediation* between Gadamer’s hermeneutics of tradition and Habermas’ critique of ideology. However, I am referring to the indirect qualification of Ricoeur’s critical hermeneutics by considering his philosophical work as a whole and then extracting from it his general procedural approach (see Ricoeur 1973;

see Busacchi 2013: 81–127; 2015).

While all philosophical hermeneutics seems outdated – or reduced and transfigured into deconstructive, nihilistic or post-speculative formulations – the path of critical hermeneutics seems to remain open and extremely fertile, even for philosophical research. And this requires reconsidering the entire theoretical-speculative and practical field of philosophical hermeneutics, keeping the aim of reconsideration from the procedural point of view. The challenge of a rigorous interpretation, of an interpretation as a scientific process, is the same as that posed by Emilio Betti in his *Teoria generale dell'interpretazione* in 1955. However, Betti's enterprise is in some ways philosophically bound to and limited by the ontological perspective of Heidegger and Gadamer, to which it is opposed. Whereas the latter understand hermeneutics as a circular movement between the Being-there (or presence; *Dasein*) and the Being (*Sein*), and therefore see hermeneutics as an expression and production of the Being, Betti persists in considering hermeneutics philosophically, embracing the relationship between the subject and the world and, indirectly, between the subject and the Being. To him, hermeneutics is the clarification – or rather, the recognition – of the Being and the world; therefore, hermeneutics is conceived of as a clarification or, better, a *recognition* of the Being through the world (see Ferraris 1998, 96–97). The problem is that this alternative generates a partial rigidity (in terms of objectification and historicisation); it is an ontological conception that requires redefinition. It is not only ontology that can be defined in alternative ways, without an exclusive focus on the Being or the world; the problem of rigour in interpretation is *one* among many problems concerning the validity of critical hermeneutics. Moreover, validity and rigour are not the only decisive components for determining and recognising the significance and productivity of the critical and scientific application of hermeneutics.

3.3 Hermeneutics and Ontology

With critical hermeneutics, I do not intend to take the path of a methodology. This, in fact, would be a withdrawal of the technical matrix of hermeneutics, and even an abandonment of critical hermeneutics' work as a philosophical commitment. The challenge consists in rigorously articulating hermeneutics as a *theory* and as a *speculative procedure*. Ricoeur's philosophy shows the concrete possibility of this dual path: on the one hand, a tensional exercise of mediation between Gadamer's hermeneutics of tradition and Habermas' critique of ideology is an

example of the speculative use (and interpretation) of critical hermeneutics; on the other hand, his use of and approach to philosophy follows a non-speculative procedural model.

There is first an obstacle to be clarified that concerns the connection of this critical hermeneutics with the ontological problem. Obviously, because of its dual nature, critical hermeneutics can have a free hand in terms of its philosophical use (ontology included). When used philosophically, critical hermeneutics can only introduce and implement elements of mediation and argumentative rigour, but within a philosophical space that remains freely passable (even from neo-Heideggerians, neo-Derridians, etc.). More interesting, however, is the extra-speculative application of hermeneutics as a critical procedure, particularly in its coordinated functioning with science. In no way does this constitute a negation of the relation between hermeneutics and ontology, nor is it a matter of redefining the nature of this relationship; rather it (re)establishes *what ontology is*. The ancient claim of a certain philosophical hermeneutics to establish itself as an ontology is part of a determined history. Not all hermeneutics said, says and can say with Nietzsche: “facts do not exist, only interpretations”; nor is all hermeneutics interested in the experience of the Being in a Transcendent or Pantheistic sense (as Heidegger and others did). Neither more nor less than scientific work, hermeneutics remains close to the ontological discourse insofar as it deals with facts and with the interpretation of facts. In this context, the downsizing of the defined content of ontology shows up the parallels between critical hermeneutics and scientific discourse, revealing at the same time the former’s specificity.

Critical hermeneutics does not have an idea of the primacy of interpretation because it is an exercise that (as we will see) is articulated between description, explanation and comprehension, under a truly interpretive linking function. Here, the function of critical hermeneutics is *to describe, to know, to understand* and *to evaluate* what the state of things (natural objects, social elements, cultural products, psychic or internal states, dispositions, actions and values) is or must be. This involves functioning at both the theoretical and practical level. In addition, there is a meta-theoretical plan for the application of critical hermeneutics, and it is here that the first aspect of specificity emerges. To the extent that knowing, understanding and evaluating things and states of things involves language, conceptual networks and a (pre-)theoretical framework, critical hermeneutics can work flexibly to adapt its procedures and functioning to the form and logic of a given descriptive construction, of a

given legitimated system, and so on. This is not a relativistic or *debole* approach in a philosophical sense. It is a principle of rigour in relation to a due referential paradigm or a transcendental ideal, as well as a further possibility of support for scientific and non-scientific knowledge. The possibility and effectiveness of a truth as truth remains: there is, in fact, a state and reality of the world beyond the historical-cultural framework of our way of living and knowing, much as there is a true state of the past (how things happened) that is independent from the cognitive, reconstructive, interpretative and representative resources we have today. Certainly, there are those who *believe* that we are nothing more than “brains in a bath”, but where this is not understood in the original sense of a mental experiment (Putnam), this discourse is valid only as a mythology, as a thesis without consistency, useful for nihilistic believers only.

The critical exercise of hermeneutics also concerns science at a more philosophical level, insofar as the latter is becoming increasingly involved with metaphysics. We can push this idea further and say that today science is tightening more dangerously around a certain radicalised ontology, contributing to the strengthening of a metaphysic credo based on *only biological and natural data*. To illustrate this point, it is opportune to set the problem in the Husserlian formulation (as Husserl’s *Krisis* suggests), to which critical hermeneutics offers elements of correlation and alternative. “Correlation”, because the phenomenological point of view introduces discourse on the life-world, which is an application field for both eidetic-descriptive and hermeneutic philosophy; “alternative”, because the phenomenological approach remains trapped in a philosophical *a priori*, where critical hermeneutics can operate without or, rather, can take into account, an *a priori* in a non-exclusive way. The pre-eminence (or even radicalised antecedency) of a subject’s point of view is this philosophical *a priori* of phenomenology. On the one hand, we have the paradigmatic model of scientific process being organised according to a categorial logic (in a more or less sophisticated Aristotelian sense), that is, a categorism with a substantialist tendency. And here lies the root of the Parmenidism which, according to Enrico Nicoletti, forms metaphysics, and also science (see Nicoletti 1989). In his re-reading of Husserl’s *Krisis*, he points out how the German philosopher considered the correlation of philosophy and science within the European or Western crisis of reason. Furthermore, he recalls that this crisis does not concern science as a methodologically constructed knowledge, but science as a global interpretation of life and reality (see *Ib.*, 246). “Science faces a crisis [...] when it elevates its own objectiveness to the authentic representation of the world and of life. It is a dilation of the sense of science in which the

true face of reality and life, from which science itself springs, remains concealed. In this context, science acquires a universal and necessary value: that is to say, it becomes philosophical. This is the fall of science into objectivism; it is becoming philosophy” (*Ibidem*).

● On the other hand, we have phenomenology, whose alternative system is expressive of a metaphysics of subjectivity, where the substantiality of the Cogito is opposed to the categorial substantiality: the subject is substance, therefore the lifeworld itself is transformed into a new metaphysical field. Phenomenology aims to play the role of liberator, freeing science from its objectivism and representationism, which is a sick reflection of the crisis of modern rationality. At the same time, it aims to safeguard the methodology of the science-technique, whilst contrasting science’s radicalisation with a new metaphysics of the subjective, or a conscientialist metaphysics. It is certainly still significant that the phenomenological aim is exemplified by the eidetic motto *zurück zu den Sachen selbst!* The “returning to the things themselves” is, in fact, a sign of the *return to the world*, which establishes and recognises the pre-eminent value of the world with respect to an objectivising and radicalised science. In Husserl’s perspective, the fundamental operation that phenomenology must perform with respect to science is to define the foundations of a rigorous science of the lifeworld from which all sciences are born, and to which sciences must relate in order to not lose the sense and limitation of their work. Therefore, the principle of scientific objectivity becomes *relative* to the transcendental foundation of the lifeworld, which is the only possible foundation, according to Husserl (see *Ib.*, 245).

Critical hermeneutics, insofar as it is also exercised in problematic reference to its phenomenological anchorage, can remedy this risk of “re-sacralisation” and metaphysical relapse by exploiting the critical-reflexive function. In this way, it does not float on the surface of questions and problems, nor does it keep implicit or hidden any uncomfortable or “powerful” truth. It simply operates under a domain of the prevailing contingent commitment, and it can suspend its argumentative-demonstrative commitment concerning *last things*, which can be so much as not a motive of philosophical interest. To do this and not be engaged with it does not necessarily imply the negation of a philosophical work’s value and meaning. Critical hermeneutics can support it as it can also evade it. And a similar argument is valid with respect to the (Husserlian) objective of phenomenological reflective clarification which is lacking in science, that is, the sense of its own procedure. Here, hermeneutics can make a productive critical contribution without self-interpreting in the role

of a re-foundational discipline and without entering into the field of ultimate implications. To give an example, the dehumanisation brought by radical scientist approaches in the field of human relationships can be the subject of effective criticism of the distortion of public communication, or of psychological impoverishment, or of social alienation, without “inconveniencing” the ontological-existential discourse of an authentic or inauthentic existence, as explained in Heidegger’s early work, *Being and Time* (1927).

3.4 Hermeneutics and Epistemology

The renewed interest, in the last 40 years of epistemological research, in interpretation and the use of hermeneutical models and procedures in science is due, in particular, to the crisis of the neo-empiristic conception of scientific theories (Kuhn, Hanson, Feyerabend and others; see Parrini 1998). The current scenario still remains fragmented and slow-moving, with certain strongly polarised proposals (new scientism or new Parmenidism vs. relativism). It is interesting to note how in all cases the problematic node remains the determination of what is objectivity and what are the possibilities and forms of valid knowledge.

And it is interesting to note how the distance between the alleged rigourism of natural science’s methodologies and the “problematically rigorous” character of the social and historical-hermeneutical sciences has now been reduced. There is an explicit hermeneutical problematisation (on truth, evaluation, procedure and interpretation) that is internal to the natural sciences’ different methodologies (hypothetical-deductive, inductive, falsificationist methodology, etc.). And much methodological research in the social, historical and psychological fields aims at the application of non-hermeneutical models and therefore has an approach to the problem of interpretation under *determined procedural or epistemic aspects*. Paolo Parrini remarks the methodological parallelism that characterises the interpretative sciences and the natural sciences (Parrini 1998, 15), by thematising the detailed comparison between the empirical process and the hermeneutical procedure that Adolf Grünbaum developed by studying Habermas and Ricoeur’s interpretation of psychoanalysis (Grünbaum 1984). The methodological link is intertwined and strengthened through a redefinition of objectivity according to the critical-analytical model developed by Mary Hesse (Hesse 1980), which recognises: (1) the non-separability of data from theory; (2) that theories are not as hypothetical-deductive schemes but as perceptive-cognitive

classifications of the facts themselves; (3) the role of logical-theoretical synthesis in constituting facts and logical-causal correlations between facts; (4) the metaphorical dimension of all the scientific language and of the representative constructions through which science interprets nature; and (5) that terminological value is given the reference to the theory and not to the reality of the facts (170, 172–173; see Parrini 1998, 15). Parrini is able to strongly highlight the parallelism, recalling (according to Gadamer) the two general and characteristic traits of the hermeneutic work: (1) the role attributed to the prejudices as conditions for understanding; and (2) the hermeneutic circle, that is the dependence of comprehension of the whole upon single components (of a text) and, vice-versa, the understanding of individual components starting from the whole. As Parrini explains, "there is therefore a substantial similarity between the empirical and the hermeneutical method. Science also has to do with an equipped nature of conceptual assumptions and uses these same assumptions and experience data to develop hypotheses on specific issues" (17). Undoubtedly, this recognition is not limited to the interest represented by the parallel in itself, but implies the implementation of a certain degree of *epistemic relativism*, both in the (prevalently) interpretative sciences and in the (prevalently) descriptive-explicative sciences. It is in this way that the problem arises of the compatibility of relativism with the possibility of objectivity and truth as the fundamental objective of scientific and hermeneutical practices (see *Ib.*, 18). For Parrini, the alternative viable ways are as follows: (1) the abandonment of the epistemological project for the hermeneutical one (as exemplified by Richard Rorty's conversational position; see *Ib.*, 20–22); (2) the awareness of subjective points-of-reference and the intra-systemic value of objectivity (that is, the recognition of the partial autonomy of cognitive experience with respect to epistemic conditioning; this is the way indicated by Hans Reichenbach and considered by Gadamer; see *Ib.*, 23–24); (3) objectivity and truth as trans-regulatively transcendental ideals (see *Ib.*, 25–26). The last of these, which is Parrini's privileged position, can be understood as a criterion applicable to the ambit of both the descriptive-explanatory and hermeneutical disciplines. At the same time, it is an *ideal* theoretical-philosophical position, since the relativistic oscillation is not reducible to a threshold of neutrality. In other words, it is a referential transcendentalism, a *transcendental ideal*. Here lies the transversality of hermeneutics and the indispensable hermeneutic-epistemological connection. Today, it has become impossible, even for the empirical sciences, to formulate historical and purely formal criteria of scientificity. However, it is possible to compare theories with respect to the canons or

values (Kuhn) that shape the scientific process according to its own progressive historical-knowing refinement (see Parrini 2002, 156). Certainly, this can also take the path of a strong relativism, so that “truth” and “objectivity” are strongly conceived of as inevitably connected and dependent upon cultural adhesion and intersubjective participation, as it operates within the procedural context of accreditation-recognition from a community of scientists.

Parrini does not have this in mind. He rather conceives of the historical-cultural progress of methodological and epistemological knowledge as transcendental from a due historical-cultural context to the extent that it is *progressive*. This transcendentalist path aims to limit the relativistic drift and can be interestingly correlated with the analysis that Luigi Perissinotto proposes regarding the Donald Davidson vs. Michael Dummett diatribe on the objectivity of knowing or understanding. Dummett (Dummett 1986, 464; see Perissinotto 2002, 93–117) goes back to Ludwig Wittgenstein to refute Davidson’s thesis that every understanding is inevitably interpretation. Dummett points to Wittgenstein’s central observation (around how to follow a rule): that “there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation” (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section 201); and, analogously, “there is a way of understanding a sentence or an utterance that does not consist in putting an interpretation on it”. There is no absolute freedom, no completely decontextualised or ahistorical operation: to know and to follow the rules is intertwined *with* the specific reality of a *form of life*. As Perissinotto remarks, if Platonism reifies and mythises the rules, who maintains the idea that between the rule and its particular applications there is always an interpretation he/she is denying and dissolving them. And with respect to these two outcomes, Wittgenstein’s move consists in emphasising that it is in its *use* that a rule is a rule (see *Ib.*, 114). As stated in section 202 of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, “obeying a rule is a practice”. The linguistic game is not a system of propositions at the foundation of which are certain other propositions that are true in an evident, immediate and incontrovertible way. At the foundation of the linguistic game is neither seeing nor knowing but acting. And this acting is not a blind acting that awaits a justification, nor an uncertain acting that suffices until an alternative basis for exclusion is found; nor is it an acting that can be chosen or abandoned in radical and absolute free will (see *Id.*, 116–117). It is not the claim that the rules of scientific play are eternal and absolute that allows the rigour and certainty of advancement in knowledge; but rather the stability, consistency and continuity of life experience within the particular historical-cultural context of the rules given in a scientific game

that determine its degree of truth, legitimacy and value. Change is possible, but rules are not arbitrary. They are the result of the sedimentation of knowledge and know-how from generation to generation. They have become that canon or transcendental ideal on which we build a scale of certainty of knowledge and a scale of greater or lesser relativity, correctness, validity, and credibility for a certain interpretation and knowledge.

3.5 Critical Hermeneutics

Certainly, the *critical* determination of hermeneutics was a passage of secondary importance in Ricoeur’s philosophical-hermeneutical evolution. He progressed from the paradigm of interpretation of symbols and myths to the interpretation of symbols within psychic inner life, from the interpretation of metaphor and text to narrative hermeneutics, from a description-interpretation of action and Self to the philosophy of translation and the hermeneutics of recognition. However, within Ricoeur’s work there are intrinsic possibilities for extracting and developing a procedural methodology that can work both in/for a theoretical field and in/for a speculative field.

Today’s specialisation and articulation of knowledge concerning the human being has led to a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, there is an increase in complexness and a deepening of the universe of discourses on the human being, and these discourses are fragmented, non-harmonised and, in some cases, even contradictory. On the other hand, thanks to human advancements in science, philosophy, culture and art, “perhaps for the first time”, it is concretely possible “to encompass in a single question the problem of the unification of human discourse” (Ricoeur 1970, 3).

In his 1965 essay on *Freud and Philosophy*, Ricoeur expresses an ambivalent position towards this problem: on the one hand, he expresses the clear perspective on its potential resolution via a (inexactly determined) philosophy of language; on the other, he suggests it might be possible to apply and experience this kind of interdisciplinary-comprehensive-universalised knowledge or “comprehensive philosophy of language” (4). He writes, in fact: “I doubt [...] that such a philosophy could be elaborated by any one man. A modern Leibniz with the ambition and capacity to achieve it would have to be an accomplished mathematician, a universal exegete, a critic versed in several of the arts, and a good psychoanalyst” (*Ibidem*).

Through his writings, Ricoeur explores and connects many different fields of scientific and non-scientific knowledge. His vast work – which has been defined as fragmented yet, somehow unified or continuous – touches and traverses hermeneutics, epistemology, religion, myth, rhetoric, linguistics, literature, history, political theory, psychology, psychopathology, neurobiology, law, anthropology, social science and more. He connects and intertwines different traditions and approaches: phenomenology, philosophical hermeneutics, reflective philosophy, psychoanalysis, structuralism, philosophy of language, philosophy of action, and more. Ricoeur's work offers in itself an example of how philosophy can play the mediatory role of interdisciplinary analysis, theoretical synthesis and theoretical-practical correlation. Philosophy is a vast tradition or series of traditions. It has an expansive, rich and varied conceptual and theoretical patrimony. It has a flexibility for theoretical-practical uses and applications that other disciplines do not or cannot have.

In addition, Ricoeur's work, which is not a comprehensive philosophy of language but rather interdisciplinary hermeneutical research based on description, interpretation and critical reflection, offers the concrete example of the potential of critical hermeneutics as a methodology and epistemology for culture and science (especially for human and social sciences).

In an important introductory essay entitled *From Text to Action* (1986), Ricoeur summarises the methodological set of reflective philosophy, phenomenology and hermeneutics that he followed in his research. Without any doubt, Ricoeur has followed this methodological perspective, but other aspects of his research – particularly his epistemological-procedural model called “hermeneutic arc” – have played an additional important role. This model or theory suggests more than a reflective-based interpretative description: it suggests the idea of a hermeneutic-based philosophy exercised as a theoretical and critical practice. Many explanatory and anchoring points are already present in Ricoeur's 1970 paper, “Qu'est-ce qu'un texte? Expliquer et comprendre” (Ricoeur 1970b). First, he encourages the connection between critical hermeneutics and the epistemology of the hermeneutic arc. Among Italian scholarly experts on philosophical hermeneutics, Franco Bianco was the one who grasped the epistemological centrality of the hermeneutic arc theory, especially in reference to the broader contemporary debate around philosophical discourse and its use within the natural and the human/social sciences (see Bianco 2002).

Secondly, there is already an indirect but established connection between critical hermeneutics and Freud’s psychoanalysis. Because both the epistemological and methodological constitution of Ricoeur’s theory of the hermeneutic arc is realised by thematising the theories of text, action and history, but *even* by considering Freud’s psychoanalysis problematic case as a productive example of a multi-epistemic and multi-methodological discipline; and thus, as a paradigmatic example of an *explanatory and interpretative* discipline and procedure.

Critical hermeneutics is an engaged interdisciplinary philosophy, exercised in theoretical-practical fields and as a practical theory (see Busacchi 2015). It is a methodological model that is descriptive as well as explanatory, interpretative as well as reflective and analytical as well as comprehensive. This is not a mixture of confusing free-functions but an articulated series of disposals coordinated with a certain degree of rigour and argumentative logic under the work of critical hermeneutics.

To conclude, by considering the more general and typical uses, factors and characteristics of Ricoeur’s applications, we can summarise its main functions as follows: (1) the dialectical and dialogical approach as an ideal of theoretical and interdisciplinary research, which can make productive connections between diverse theories and disciplines; (2) the interdisciplinary approach as a method (which is mirrored in critical hermeneutics’ open and transversal methodology and epistemology); (3) the mediatory function of an explicative-comprehensive argumentative approach on a theoretical and practical level; (4) the articulation and differentiation of the philosophical procedure by analytic-reflective *degrees*, theoretical and practical *levels*, thematic and disciplinary *domains*, and methodological *registers*; (5) the neutral-value use(s) of critical hermeneutics as an interdisciplinary approach; (6) the possibility of an evaluative use of critical hermeneutics as an applied, interpretative-argumentative philosophy of tension *and* mediation; (7) the reflective-hermeneutic work from non-philosophical dimensions to philosophical ones and vice versa; (8) the prevalence of considering and using philosophy as a theoretical practice; and (9) the philosophical *engagement* within the real life, at a cultural, ethical, civic, social and political level.

CHAPTER 4

RICOEUR AND HABERMAS: TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICAL-CRITICAL THEORY

4.1 Introduction

The issue of recognition has become an increasingly fundamental concern in various fields of scientific and speculative research, ever since Marcel Mauss influenced economic anthropology and sociology with his studies on *reciprocity* (Mauss, Polanyi 1944), opening the way for philosophical-speculative investigations. In different ways, both Marcel Hénaff's book on anthropology, *Le prix de la vérité* (2002) and Paul Ricoeur's *The Course of Recognition* (2004), among others, have demonstrated their connection and dependence upon ethno-anthropological studies on the issue on recognition.

Another important precursor to psychological, sociological and philosophical studies directly or indirectly linked to the question of intersubjectivity and mutual recognition is the work of George H. Mead, whose writing are still of a central importance in philosophical studies related to this question. Actually, his work is a recurring theme in Charles Taylor's reflections on multiculturalism and political recognition, in Axel Honneth's critical-philosophical sociology, and in Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics of recognition. There are currently a number of scholars working recognition (Simon Thompson, Nancy Fraser, and others), covering themes such as recognition and moral values, recognition and human rights, recognition and norms, recognition and redistribution, and so on.

Despite the variety of approaches, problematics, perspectives and disciplinary differences, it seems possible, as well as reasonable, to try to summarise the results of the various investigations of recognition, connecting via a critical philosophy the main disciplinary areas involved,

namely, psychology, sociology and political studies. By summarising their most important results, we may identify the disciplinary characterisations and uses as well as theoretical commonalities that may potentially be of use for an interdisciplinary synthesis or for seeking philosophical finalities. This is hard task, above all because there is a general theoretical lacuna surrounding a *general theory of recognition*. This theory does not exist; and without such a theory there is no way to speak of an accomplished, effective and comprehensive philosophy of recognition. The proliferation of different theoretical models of recognition has not yet produced a general philosophical theory (Ricoeur 2005, IX). Ricoeur noted this contemporary paradox in the introduction of his book *Parcours de la reconnaissance* (2004) – a philosophical study that represents the first work on recognition that operates from a generalized perspective. In fact, a general philosophical theory of recognition should subsume not only the most important communicative and scientific disciplinary and interdisciplinary uses, but also take into account the wide variety of semantics of recognition, and express a sort of meta-theory. For philosophy, this means working at an interdisciplinary level, referring to a procedural model that can work with scientific disciplines, and starting from a non-scientific and non-speculative first step (i.e. classifying, defining, describing and understanding the various uses in language, communication, culture and knowledge of the idea of recognition).

In a different publication (see Busacchi 2015), I posited psychology, sociology and politics as the main disciplines where the concept of recognition has gained a central level of theoretical elaboration and a significant intra-disciplinary role. I justified my speculative approach, favouring the methodological and cultural variety of an open critical philosophy, by showing that it can bring a significant advantage in studying and understanding an intertwined, complex and important phenomena such as human recognition, its psychological experience, its social practice, and its cultural and political constitution, defence and promotion. Finally, I emphasized the fact that a truly open critical philosophical exercise must be theoretical and practical at the same time, as is Ricoeur's critical-hermeneutical approach (see this volume, Chapter 1). It was Ricoeur himself who methodologically defined his vast and varied philosophical as a "*reflexive philosophy*" that remains within the "*sphere of [...] phenomenology*" as its "*hermeneutical variation*" (Ricoeur 1991, 12). With his theory of the hermeneutic arc, a transversal epistemological structure, we can understand that the philosophy of Ricoeur develops according to a *dialoguing* vocation of philosophy, and also by building up a more defined and well-advanced model of

interdisciplinary speculative research.

In this chapter, I want to follow the same line, using the approach of a critical hermeneutics on the issue of recognition, even if here the task is a bit different. Through using an articulated analysis of sociology and of recognition, I want to try to explain why a philosophy of communitarian participation is (re-)taking root as an ethical-practical productive perspective for the present and the future, and in what ways it is connected to and dependent upon a philosophy of personal emancipation. It is the reflective movement through Habermas and Ricoeur's "sociologies" of recognition which stresses the centrality of the other and of intersubjective dynamism in the process of emancipation.

In order to promote real progress among individuals and in society, it is necessary to reinforce the education of mutual respect, individual responsibility, and intercultural education; in this sense Ricoeur's practical philosophy, connected to his conception of the human being, emerges with a prominent role. In addition, it is necessary that a perspective of communitarian participation and mutual recognition returns to nourish the reality of everyday life and promote a culture of active participation; in this sense it is Habermas' critical sociology and philosophy of communicative action that takes the pre-eminent position.

4.2 On Habermas' Intersubjective Communication

The concept of recognition has been receiving more and more attention in the disciplinary fields of sociology, social psychology, social anthropology, social theory and the sociology of institutions. It emerges in relation to questions of ethnic identity, in respect to disputes in political anthropology, social anthropology, and legal anthropology, in studies on social systems, and in relation to the theory of social conflict. The notion of *interaction* is of particularly great significance, with its vast fields of study (social exchange, social interaction, symbolic interaction, personality and more). Essentially, the work done by Talcott Parsons in developing his *General theory of social action* (1949) marked a new stage, moving forward from sociological research that investigated the question of intersubjectivity and interrelation from the angle of social behaviours and rituals revealing *reciprocity* (anthropology and ethnology).

Today, connected to the notion of reciprocity are some ideas related to both the classical concept of interaction and the more contemporary

concept of recognition. Standing out among them are the concepts of solidarity and reciprocal altruism, in reference to which the Meadian concept of *symbolic interaction* is located. Mead's social theory owes much to Max Weber's qualitative sociology and theory of social action. He additionally articulated it in terms of psychology, speculative consequences and generalisation. As is known, "Self", "Mind" and "Society" summarise his entire program of research and, at the same time, indicate the very thematic-speculative pillar of his philosophy.

For Mead, the attitude of the community as "other generalized", and the control that it exerts on the behaviour of its members, becomes a determining factor in the type of relationship a person has with others as well as with his/her Self; it is the community, in fact, that essentially conditions its members and not vice versa.

The attention placed on Mead's work by developments in sociological research around the issue of emotions seems to put major emphasis on the contribution of a phenomenological sociology, where the phenomenological notion of intentionality has a predominant role with profound consequences in the study and understanding of the process of intersubjective mutual or social recognition (i.e. recognition of the other). The other can experience "me" as an other from "his/her" perspective, as I can experience "her/him" as an other for "me". It is from an analogical (psychological) association, which is constituted through empathy (that is, immediate emotional identification; recognition-identification) that the other, from the outset, never comes merely as a body-in-movement, but also as a being with a instantly recognisable inner life similar to mine. From Husserl's phenomenological perspective, the experience of intersubjectivity is determined from this reciprocal series of intentional relations. A significant advancement of the phenomenological approach to sociology has been that of Alfred Schütz. He interprets society as a dynamic interrelation, where, however, its operations are not intelligible through the analysis of its *structure* but through its *processes*. In fact, the social world is the complex, ever moving result of the encounter of various spheres of experience and the overlapping of various defined areas of significance and, then, of different kind of relations (see Schütz 1967).

Recognition emerges as a key theme in sociology and philosophy within the theoretical-practical dialectic of intersubjectivity and reciprocity. Jürgen Habermas' research plays a clear central function here, extensively working between (1) a general speculative (but interdisciplinary) theory of action and (2) the sociology of intersubjectivity. In his *Theory of*

Communicative Action (1981), he delineates a critical social theory of modern society in which a process of “colonization of the lifeworld” is progressively brought about by the state and the economy’s logics and dynamics. Power and money, in fact, are systemic mechanisms that inevitably transform the social processes of integration and symbolic reproduction into pervasive and levelling forces that limit, bend and harden the lifeworld. As Thomas McCarthy explains, this inexorable attack on the communicative and interrelational spheres of social life can be kept back, for Habermas, by actively working at expanding the areas of life through intersubjective communication (see McCarthy 2006², 200). For Habermas, it is the lifeworld’s role to provide the arena for emancipation, for interrelation, and thus bring about the realisation of the “individual” as a *person*.

All areas of the lifeworld, such as personality, culture and society, have their own specificities in relation to the influence of culture on actions, forms of appropriate behaviour in society, and the ways of behaviour respective to the expression of a socialised personality. As a result, the assiduous (communicative active) commitment of the individual on a cultural, social and personal level brings to the reproduction of the lifeworld, with the reflected effect of strengthening the culture, the social integration and the same personalities.

From a Meadian point-of-view, Habermas’ perspective seems to demonstrate that it is the notion of intersubjectivity that is more significant on a philosophical-critical and pragmatic level. But if Mead’s notion of intersubjectivity constitutes an evident reference in Habermas’ work, it is also true that he specifically re-configures this conception by emphasising the communicative dimension. Habermas’ idea of *intersubjective communication* defines a perspective on the dialectic between the lifeworld and the system in which the possibility of progress and development/empowerment is not dependent on adaptation or rupture, but rather on the lifestyle choices of individuals and groups regarding the quality of intersubjective (communicative) relations. The choice of recognition is crucial: only individuals and groups advancing instances of recognition, and fighting for them, can counterbalance the invasive hyper-rationalised pressure of the system.

4.3 On Ricoeur's Philosophy of Recognition

Following Ricoeur, we can indirectly understand how the sociological approach to recognition may be studied and analysed in parallel with a psychology of recognition responding to a “Hegelian” line, i.e. a theoretical line which is aware of the inner and external role of the *dialectic dimension* within the process of recognition. This discourse may be easily intertwined with Habermas'. If, from the one side, every process of recognition is in fact an expression of, or a part of, a *dialectical* process, from the other, it is only the *relational and communicative commitment* that allows the accomplishment of a recognition process to become a process of personal and communitarian emancipation.

Under a philosophical lens angled between critical sociology and hermeneutics, many elements of correlation for psychology and sociology emerge. Ricoeur's philosophy – which is strongly oriented towards both and displays a favourable disposition towards integrating Habermas' and Honneth's points of view – offers in particular a speculative theorisation constructed around a philosophy of psychology or, more precisely, around psychoanalysis. His anthropological philosophical conception is constructed around an ideal of the dialectical and intersubjective process of recognition as paralleling the process of personal formation and emancipation itself. In this discourse, Freud's psychoanalysis and Heinz Kohut's self-psychology play an important role, as demonstrated in Ricoeur's various books (Ricoeur 1970; 1992) or in papers such as “The Self in Psychoanalysis and in Phenomenological Philosophy” (1986) and “Narrative: Its Place in Psychoanalysis” (2012). The former of these is an article about Kohut's 1984 book *How does Analysis Cure?* (1984). Ricoeur's attention is focused on the reality of the *self* in psychoanalysis, particularly in relation to the experience of the *other* – which places this work into a similar vein as *Oneself as Another*, which summarises his philosophical anthropology, demonstrating that the problem of defining the self has also been clarified through a survey carried out in the study of the psychology of the unconscious and of interrelation. Specifically, Ricoeur believes that Kohut's self-psychology can orient philosophy concerning “the relationship between subjectivity and intersubjectivity” (Ricoeur 2012d, 73) better than Freud's psychoanalysis can. “The Freudian systematization is solipsistic, whereas the situations and relations analysis speak of and which speak in analysis are intersubjective” (Ricoeur 1970, 61). In Kohut the dimension of intersubjectivity is constitutive of subjectivity in itself. The other is an element of the structure because it determines the *cohesion* of the subjective self. Until the end of our lives

we need the help of human beings who offer the supportive function of psychic cohesion against the tendency towards fragmentation.

From the paper “Narrative: Its Place in Psychoanalysis”, which follows a comparable argumentative line, we learn that the entire analysis aims to bring out past relationships with others. The relationship with the father and the mother is a relationship of language, because the child is born into a pre-existing environment of language, meaning and discourse: an environment in which the father and mother are not merely the “beings” that nourish it, but also the ones who bring the child into the community of language, into the lifeworld (see Ricoeur 2012c). Another intersubjective element emerges through the issue of *narration* which is the true nature of the intersubjective dialectic, in Ricoeur’s view. The dialectic of intersubjectivity assumes properly this *narrative* nature and dimension. Ricoeur was led to reflect on the place of “narrative function” in psychoanalysis by the various reflective lines; and above all, by the line that comes from his narrative theory of identity, where the process of self-understanding is conceived as *narratively* constituted, in conformity with psychoanalysis’ proof, offered in its therapeutic context and with its therapeutic practice.

4.4 Conclusion

Habermas stresses the centrality of intersubjective communicative dynamism; Ricoeur’s sociology of recognition, essentially anchored to psychological-hermeneutic perspective, highlights the complexity and centrality of the dialectical process concerning progressive and regressive, emancipatory and constrictive forces both at a personal and a interrelational level. In considering the current social and global situation from the perspective of the international web of social systems, we can see that the challenges for recognition are becoming more pervasive from both sides: both in social and personal life. We must change our social dynamism for guarantee and promote our own emancipation; and we must make active efforts to promote our personal, social and moral emancipation for guarantee and promote a significant change in society. It is between emancipation and intersubjective recognition that the future of civilisation is at the fore. But the related issues are not psychological, sociological or political *tout court*. *But, primarily, this is neither a psychological nor a sociological or political challenge.*

If by the many ways we went back on the point of moral life and human emancipation, that means we *primarily* need to provide a new intercultural humanism for a comprehensive theoretical practical philosophy of recognition.

CHAPTER 5

WHY REALITY IS NOT TOTALISABLE: AN INTRODUCTION TO PAUL RICOEUR'S PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION

5.1 Preamble

Philosophy of action's continued significance and use in contemporary French philosophy primarily results from the phenomenological (phenomenological-existential) tradition, as well as philosophical hermeneutics and structuralism. Within this framework, philosophy of action is defined as a broad inter-discipline or inter-dominion, ranging from general practical philosophy to existentialism, and covering such diverse fields as pragmatism, philosophy of mind and language, structuralism and linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and beyond.

The general philosophy of action had its first speculative articulation in the Francophone area. The philosophical-religious work carried out in the mid-nineteenth century by Léon Ollé-Laprune and Maurice Blondel turned the focus of the field to the moral idealism of action (Fichte). A century later, philosophy of action underwent new developments in the same area, first through Sartre's phenomenological-existential analysis and then via Paul Ricoeur's phenomenological-hermeneutical research (which was developed between Paris and Leuven). Ricoeur conducted a large survey under the title *phenomenological hermeneutics of the self* (a philosophical anthropology realised through an interpretative description) which has been of tremendous use for the traditions and approaches cultivated in France and the Anglo-American philosophy of action. Reconsidering Ricoeur's speculative course on action makes it possible to cover some of the most significant themes and figures of philosophy of action and much of Ricoeur's personal research. Furthermore, it allows us to identify possible theoretical-practical roots of the idea that it is impossible to affirm *conclusive* knowledge of the world. The world is not totalisable.

The anthropological perspective developed by Ricoeur – the philosophy of “capable human being” – provides a general explanatory and justificatory horizon. Regarding the non-totalisability of the world, it is the philosophy of action incardinated in this perspective (rather than the anthropology) that provides a rationally justified theoretical key without need for metaphysical or ontological support.

5.2 From the Phenomenology of the Voluntary to the Hermeneutics of the Text

The tradition of French reflexive philosophy (Lachelier and Lagneau and others) is a spiritual ideal comparable to Lapruné and Blondel’s spiritualism and is the basis of Paul Ricoeur’s first philosophical formation. However, it is neither the point of origin nor the point of support for his inquiries concerning the philosophical theme of action. These investigations begin on the ground of Husserlian phenomenology, which parallels Ricoeur with Sartre, though the Sartrean perspective on phenomenology is more markedly existential.

Accordingly, its clarification of the phenomenon of action is essentially developed by considering the question of human freedom and its part in the general philosophy of human existence. Ricoeur, who expresses a philosophy with a strong *practical* component, is more comparable to Merleau-Ponty, who also developed an applied phenomenology. Ricoeur performs on the will an operation similar to that which Merleau-Ponty performs in the field of perception. The latter is an easier field for phenomenology, given the more secure, complete access to the immediacy of the connection between consciousness and the world and between knowledge and the lifeworld’s reality. The phenomenology of the voluntary and the involuntary is set as a “counterpart”, in the practical order, to Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (see Ricoeur 1995, 23), which only develops a description of representative acts to pursue the goal of “widening the eidetic analysis of the operations of consciousness to the affective and volitional sphere” (*Ibidem*, the translation is mine). This gives way to an empirical anthropology and the hermeneutics of evil and culpability. It is in the first volume of the unfinished trilogy *Philosophy of the Will* (a project developed between phenomenology, empiric and poetic-hermeneutics), entitled *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (1950), that Ricoeur’s research develops its first descriptive analyses based around the thematic terrain of

action. This validates the previous parallel between Ricoeur and Sartre. In *Being and Nothingness* (1943), “perception”, “the perceived world” and (above all) “the body” constitute the fundamental prerequisites through which the existentialist philosopher develops his phenomenological analysis of action and his existential examination of freedom. *Freedom and Nature*’s analysis of the volitional dimension reveals the characteristic of an eidetic that takes the body into account and thematises the ontological-ethical-existential problem concerning the connection between *nature* and *freedom*. Sartre reaches a different solution from Ricoeur, arguing that freedom concerns the “fundamental project” rather than the particular volitions and relative acts. The comparison between the two is nonetheless interesting and of theoretical significance regarding their terminological uses and approaches to certain themes. For example, we may compare the initial pages of Ricoeur’s phenomenology of the will with those of *Being and Nothingness* in which Sartre uses the terms *mobile* (motivation as quasi-causation or motive-cause) and *motif* (motive) to illustrate the thesis that having reasons to act does not mean that those reasons are the cause of action, thus attacking both the deterministic and libertarian approaches in favour of a different deterministic perspective.

Ricoeur’s phenomenological starting point is the description of the Cogito as a subject of will. I understand myself first as “I want”. From this “I want” comes the descriptive passage for the wanted; the wanted as the first instance, is “what I decide, the *project*” (Ricoeur 1966, 7). The *motive*, or justification of an action, is explicated by the “why”. This first descriptive/comprehensive moment of the phenomenology of the will appears to be “the reciprocity of the involuntary and the voluntary” (4). “I decide” can also emerge as the first structural element to join these two. This enables the relation of several functions – including need, pleasure, and pain – to the centre of perspective: the “I” in Cogito (7). Decision is action; to decide is to act. For acts of intention, decision is different from desire, as it is endowed with intentional correlation; it “knows” its object as it is “established” or “given” by me. “To decide” is different from “to command”, because the command is immediately felt and “experienced” as something “depending on me”. In contrast, the decision is rooted in my own power/capacity and shows a reflective dimension: I define myself through the subject of my decision and the exercise of deciding. The act of deciding is the constitutive act of my mode of being.

At this point, Ricoeur deepens the discourse of the voluntary and involuntarily internal dialectics, reaching the dialectic of nature and freedom, which is useful to understand certain assumptions and

characterisations of human activity and the broader framework of Ricoeur's general practical interest. Here, Ricoeur limits himself to the spheres of the interior and experienced life. He explains that "not all the involuntary is motive or organ of the will. There is also the inevitable, the absolutely involuntary with respect to decision and effort" (8). The involuntary dimension exerts its influence even in the fundamental voluntary act of the decision. It does so directly, acting on the motives behind the decision: the motivations that inevitably constitute, affect and orient action. Motives are not causes. The *bios* (biological reality) expresses the need and impulse that affects motives in various ways. Because of the vicissitudes of life, a "pathological automatism" can work in the unconscious, the functionality of which is linked to the same physical-natural causality taught by Freud. The deep dialectic between the voluntary and involuntary spheres is particularly evident within the second moment of the eidetic of the will, the precise moment regarding movement and action. Ricoeur sees a close, continuous link that joins decision and action. Decision implies, and is implied by, action and is realised through it.

Through phenomenological analysis of the spontaneity and functionality of the involuntary instance in action, defined as performative abilities, habits, and emotional, deep expressions, Ricoeur concludes that a genuinely determined action is, *de facto*, the extension and incarnation of the will. Nature, motivation, and extent of action are not just Cogito's essential aspects; by observing the voluntary and involuntary perspective, we can determine the motivation/will of the individual. We can determine the person's "I" of the Cogito "the centre of a perspective", and the sense corporality related to it. The dimension of the involuntary defined as "absolute involuntary", rooted in corporality, acts as "the terminus of that original act of willing" (*Ibidem*). It relates to the Ego as the alterity of the Cogito. In light of this, the possibility of an integral experience of Cogito becomes a "bet"; an existential, ethical and ideological task or ideal. Ricoeur's "reconquests" include "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. Our description, yielding to what appears to the consideration of the self, thus moves into a unique universe of discourse concerning the subjectivity of the integral Cogito" (9).

Ricoeur proposes that unification of interiority and corporality is possible because "the nexus of the voluntary and the involuntary does not lie at the boundary of two universes of discourse, one of which would be reflection

concerning thought and the other concerning the physical aspects of the body: Cogito's intuition is the intuition of a body conjoined to a willing which submits to it and governs it" (9–10). With this idea, the dualism of Cogito and corporality assumes the problematic dualistic physiognomy of body-object to body-subject. This problem can be attributed to Edmund Husserl's analyses of corporality and to Jean-Paul Sartre's analysis of the correlation between motivation and motive. More generally, it refers to the theoretical question of cause and reason and the practical question of nature and freedom. Ricoeur solves the problem by addressing its reality, specifically the fact that there "ought to be" a relation "because it is the same body" (13). He also views it as a moral, personal and perpetual dilemma; "to consent", as Ricoeur sees it, is to recognise, accept and embrace body and mind together as a continuous and difficult dialectical datum of natural necessity and freedom. This is a moral challenge that, under certain practical-emancipatory condition can reveal the experience of a unified dualistic reality.

5.3 From Structuralism's Challenges to a Semantics of Action

Oneself as Another (1990) contains a philosophy of action in which Ricoeur subsumes ideas from both the phenomenological passage for the voluntary and involuntary and the hermeneutical-analytical passage (as discussed in *Semantics of Action* [1977] and the series of essays collected in *From Text to Action* [1986]). The "linguistic turn" and linguistic structuralism play a constitutive role in Ricoeur's philosophy of action; they parallel the analysis and examination of structuralism that Ricoeur deals with (the first in France to do so) regarding analytic philosophy and the problems concerning philosophy of action. This is accomplished through work with semantics (Strawson), pragmatism of language (Austin, Searle), and the analytical theories of action (Taylor, von Wright, Anscombe, Kenny, Davidson). Later, Davidson and Anscombe's research would become important for the development of Ricoeur's discourse of action).

Among Ricoeur's books discussed here, the one from 1986 offers a broader and more articulate synthetic point of view. It also provides the best general view of his passage through hermeneutics of text and hermeneutics of narration, linguistics and structuralism, philosophy of language, and philosophy of action. Text and action are the thematic poles

that support Ricoeur's speculative development at this stage. The two are individually distinct but closely related, as stated in *From Text to Action*. Self-understanding is mediated through signs, symbols and texts. Ultimately, self-understanding coincides with the interpretation applied to these mediatory terms (see Ricoeur 1986, 30). On the other hand, there is an articulated and complex discourse on narration (both narrative history and narrative fiction) that is directly linked with the problem of action: it mirrors the significance of the convergence of action and narration regarding (1) self-formation, (2) self-knowledge and self-understanding, and (3) the process of prefiguring choices and actions. The 1986 volume addresses how the world of the text redefines and prefigures possible paths of real actions. It is with this in mind that we have to consider the possibility of understanding and knowing ourselves from a text. The text offers a factual possibility to us since it is not closed to the real world, which it in fact reflects, represents, re-describes, reinvents, and re-creates. This methodological and epistemological dialectic of action and narration (part of the theory of *narrative identity*) finds its roots in Ricoeur's 1973 paper, "Discours et communication" (see Ricoeur 1973a [2004]). This paper deals with the problem of communication by analysing the constituent factors of linguistic processes identified by Roman Jakobson, as well as the possibility of their radical problematisation.

The paper further addresses Emile Benveniste's opposition between *discourse* and *language*, and finally identifies the problems inherent in expressing discourses as events and understanding them as meanings ("tout discours, en effet, est effectué comme événement, mais compris comme sens"; 30). Thus, Ricoeur attempts to identify the foundation of a theory's communicability in discourse with a multiple discursive-disciplinary register. A multiple-register discourse is articulated according to a coordination and hierarchy of three different levels of its subsumed semantics (*sémantisme*): the theory of statements, the speech-acts, and the intentions. While the philosophical treatment of action in *The Semantics of Action* is wider and richer than this, it draws its core ideas from Ricoeur's article.

The Semantics of Action goes beyond the important dialectic conjuncture of phenomenological hermeneutics and the linguistic turn, exploring the deepening of the epistemological problem of explanation and understanding. It accomplishes this through a passage on the hermeneutics of the text and the problem of the epistemic status of Freud's psychoanalysis. *The Semantics of Action* establishes the theory of action as a paradigmatic term of reference and, alongside psychoanalysis, history and the theory of the

text, creates a field for exercising and testing the possibility, validity and applicability of a new epistemological model. Ricoeur defines this model as the *hermeneutic arch*, a theory and procedure that articulates explanation and understanding under the general work of interpretation. Exploring the contribution of language to the philosophy of action is the first objective stated in the opening of the *discours de l'action* (Ricoeur 1977, 3). It pursues this goal by considering ordinary language as treated by the Anglo-Saxon philosophers. The essay conducts a critical analysis of discourses in which a man says his doing (“une analyse des discours dans lesquels l’homme dit son *faire*”; 5), an analytic that seeks to establish the linguistic bases of a theory of action through organisation into the three levels of “concepts”, “propositions”, and “arguments” (5–10).

To develop the basic concepts or categories of action (intention, purpose, motif, desire, choice, preference, agency and responsibility), Ricoeur draws on philosophical contributions from ordinary language, beginning with the second Wittgenstein. He develops his analysis of propositions, incorporating the concepts previously dealt with and defined, by drawing on research related to the theory of linguistic action (8–9). His investigation into the analysis of arguments focuses on the discursive dimension, specifically the means/ends concatenation which forms the discourse. After the linguistic bases are established, the task becomes finding the critical foundation of the theory of action. To do so, Ricoeur distinguishes between (1) linguistic analysis and phenomenology, (2) linguistic phenomenology and the human sciences, and (3) linguistic phenomenology and ethics (18–19; see Ricoeur 1986b, 113 ff). These distinctions are not merely disciplinary, but related to the dimension and reality of human action. The discussion then addresses the difference between the two universes of discourse, *action* and *movement*, to which it connects the duality of motif and cause. Ricoeur attacks this contrast by making explicit or implicit reference to his phenomenology of the voluntary and the involuntary, as well as to his hermeneutics of psychoanalysis. He highlights that at a very deep level, energy, mind, body and the interior mental life-sense tend to converge and coincide. He further proposes that another kind of causality – teleological causality – needs to be addressed (Ricoeur 1977, 16). This makes it imperative to develop a description of the action at the level of ordinary language which corresponds to a teleological explanation of the systems of intentional action.

Speculative development around the theme of action and agency deals with the confrontation between motive and cause and the analysis of

desire. Though not explicitly called the notion of agency, the first analytical description of “motive” analyses the conceptual network of action. This same analysis is deepened by introducing the notion of “agent”, which implies a power to produce action. This implication supplants the reason/cause dichotomy, necessitating a re-definition of causation that *includes the means of producing*, or the agent’s power to produce action (“la notion d’agent implique un *pouvoir* de produire l’action qui remet en cause toutes les dichotomies antérieures entre motif et cause”; 85). Notions of action and motivation play a central role in the analytical description of this “conceptual network of action”. This network includes “action”, “intention”, “motivation”, and “agent”, which are initially considered separately and then in terms of how they are connected to each other. Theoretical analysis of action defines the problem as the discursive dualism between the order of action and the order of the event, between doing and happening, and between action and movement. On the contrary, the theory of meaning explicitly states the interconnection of the terms of the conceptual network of action; this is made possible by the relationship between reason and intention, as redefined by Ricoeur, which identifies the motive as the motive of an intention (40). Ricoeur states that the difference between reason and intention does not resign unless the motive is translated into the misleading formula, “a reason for...”. Intention answers to the question “what?”, whereas reason answers the question “why?”; while intention forms and denotes action, reason explains it. It is at this point that Ricoeur introduces the theme of desire. Linguistic analysis reveals this reference to be, from a recursive perspective, incomplete. Though it has the merit of reintroducing desire to the field of motivation against improper attempts at reduction or objectification, the reference eliminates the energetic dimension from human desire. Desire spans the gap between the dimension of *bios* and the dimension of inner reality, or energy and meaning (45). Motive and cause become coincidental within desire, as desire is a motivation when defined as “a disposition to...”. The second stage of critical analysis of motive and cause developed in *The Semantics of Action* begins by considering the implications of the crisis of the modern concept of causality that relates to the idea of agency as power. Ricoeur focuses on two aspects related to Richard Taylor’s argument, put forward in *Action and Purpose* in 1966. The first is connected to the idea that agent causality is a basic or primitive philosophical category (86), and the second is linked to the association of *agency* with the other concepts that form the descriptive network of action, specifically its conjunction with the concept of *purpose*. Ricoeur recognises Taylor’s identification of the fundamental criterion that

differentiates motive from physical cause. However, he highlights the limitations created by a dichotomisation between “free action” and “determined action” that does not consider a third intermediate internal component.

Taylor goes wrong by failing to consider the dimension of the involuntary expressed by the passivity of desire (90). According to Ricoeur, the limit in this situation is the philosophy of ordinary language, because it is incapable of discussing desire as “my passivity” or as a motive that cannot be entirely reduced to a reason. Motive is both the expression of a rational/rationalised argumentation and an irrational/affective “disposition to” (an inner or corporal element that expresses “my passivity”). The personal body not only constitutes the field of motivation and the organ of the voluntary motion, but is implicated in the reality of the absolute invulnerability (129). Considered this way, the philosophy of action developed in *The Semantics of Action* explicitly links the outcomes of phenomenology with the voluntary and the involuntary. This gives this phenomenology a new essence and the possibility of a new philosophical reading. Moreover, it provides valid proof of the viability of referring to the essential roots of Ricoeur’s philosophy of action in his first philosophy of the will.

5.4 From Philosophy of Action to a Hermeneutical Philosophy of the Self

Oneself as Another broadly references the speculative developments of voluntary and involuntary phenomenology, while still referring to the problematic areas of action and corporality and to the wider sphere of philosophy of the self. *Oneself as Another* not only explicates that question concerning the subject, a theme which Domenico Jervolino points out is present in all of Ricoeur’s research, it also unifies and articulates the various levels/discourses involved. The levels are articulated as (1) the linguistic level, (2) the praxis-pragmatic level, (3) the narrative level, and (4) the ethical-normative level, which the text explores in the context of the question “who?” (“who is the subject of language, action, narration, or moral responsibility/accountability?”). The heart of this interdisciplinary course is a hermeneutical phenomenology of the self, or a philosophy of “who” as a *capable human being*.

The philosophical discourse of action plays a role both at the linguistic and practical levels. It resumes the dialectics of identity and narration, and

defines an ontological itinerary around the Aristotelian dynamic of *power* and *act* or *potentiality* and *actuality*. Ricoeur's philosophy of the *homo capax* is (somehow) anchored in this ontology, and his theory of narrative identity is the precise expression of it. This is because of its dual dimension of being connected to the biological dimension of the self (*the fact to be an individual*) and to the historical experience of human living (*the experience to become a person*) (see Ricoeur 1992). Narrative identity mediates and modulates the relationship between the natural and historical dimensions of human identity. Narrative identity reconfigures human action to fit within narration. Through such translation, human identity assumes a constitutive narrative connotation. The narration of action becomes the core of narrative identity, and makes action the primary function, or *constituent*, of personal identity. I am *capable* because I *act*. I become a person because I *act*. This is possible because I *act*.

5.5 From Capacity to Initiative

Philosophical anthropology represents the speculative haven of Ricoeur's philosophy of action. Speculative analysis and discourse of action support such anthropology by nurturing (1) the linguistic and discursive analytic, (2) the narrative hermeneutics, (3) the phenomenology of the voluntary and involuntary, and (4) the ontology of the being. The discourses focus on the philosophy of the capable human being. The reciprocal effect between philosophy of action and philosophy of the human being produces an outcome which extends influence into the world's ontology, knowability and totalisability.

Ricoeur's discourse regarding "initiative", as developed in *From Text to Action* and *Oneself as Another*, deals heavily with this discursive passage. From the latter, we learn that "initiative" intervenes in the course of the world through the agent of action. In Ricoeur's words, "Initiative, we shall say, is an *intervention* of the agent of action in the course of the world" (Ricoeur 1992, 109). Conversely, *From Text to Action* explains that to understand initiative, we have to reverse the order of priority between seeing and doing by thinking of the beginning not as the effect of a generic happening, but rather as an act which starts something or makes something happen. "To do" and "to act" do not allow for the totality of fate to be included in this whole; to act to act and do make reality not totalisable (Ricoeur 1986, 270).

As part of the capable human being's faculties, initiative is a manifestation of man's power and ability to act. Action intervenes at the intersection of an agent's powers with the resources of the system. Initiative, as the beginning of something new, expresses this dual characterisation of expressing power-action dynamism and effecting world changes; it must be considered in calculations of possible and actual changes *to the world*.

To conclude, human action ensures that the world is not ended, and initiative keeps the world's potential perpetually open. Thus, it can only be understood in the fullness and completeness of its implications. The world is always susceptible to new interventions, in the senses of both *novelty* and *renewal*. This latter determination does not depend on "initiative", nor does it derive from "to act" in an abstract or general sense. Rather, it is dependent on the individual in question, the unique person with his/her own character, motivations, interpretations, judgements, and sense of responsibility. Such individuals' resolution to exercise power and to act is what can significantly change the course of events in the world.

PART II

FOR A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN BEING

CHAPTER 6

THE HUMAN AND ITS DISCOURSE: FROM FRAGMENTATION TO UNIFICATION

6.1 Preamble

Without a doubt, we are living in a “post-Hegelian” era of the non-synthetic and non-systematic ordering of our knowledge of the world, of life and the human being. Even compared to the recent past, the flourishing of our theoretical, practical, and technical knowledge has today reached an unexpected, extraordinarily high level in these different areas. This differentiation of knowledge in the contemporary sciences has provoked a great increase in complexity. If, from one side, such complexity accompanied by specialisation, thus reinforcing its negative aspect of fragmentation and isolation, nevertheless, from the other, it fosters a proliferation of shared research methods, vocabularies and interdisciplinary approaches.

Critical hermeneutics may help in re-harmonising the disciplines and re-coordinating knowledge production, because it offers a multilevel approach in terms of epistemology, as well as methodology, and benefits from the vast and well-articulated vocabulary of philosophy, whose own critical hermeneutics may succeed in extracting it from its theoretical and traditional sources. The character and complexity of the various, intertwined challenges and problematics connected to this discourse are particularly evident if we consider the knot at the centre of the discourse around the human, and the contemporary paradoxes related to the pre-eminent idea of what it means to become a person. The horizontal axis of the movement of the differentiation, division and specialisation of knowledge and the sciences crosses and intertwines, at different levels, the vertical axis of the traditional problematic dialectic regarding the question of what is the human being versus what is personal identity. Obviously, this second thematic line brings additional difficulties because of its long and varied history, and because of the extended, non-unified conceptual

net of philosophy, developed over thousands of years, of speculative and scientific research around the human being.

The research of Paul Ricoeur offers a contemporary, comprehensive take on this complex dialectic. In its philosophical approach, it reflects both the difficulties related to the simultaneous enrichment and fragmentation of our knowledge we experience today, and the commensurate impact on our understanding of the human being (which is richer and more fragmented than ever before). At the same time, Ricoeur's work indicates a possible new way to approach this open intricacy, a way that is resistant to any synthetic or reductive solution. From his entire philosophical oeuvre, it is possible to extract a model that could be considered a general multileveled methodology for philosophy and the human and social sciences. This is critical hermeneutics: a theoretical-practical and interdisciplinary procedure based on a transversal epistemology which works between *explanation* and *understanding*, and which is outlined in Section 1.

Ricoeur's anthropological philosophy subsumes and reflects the strength and productivity of this multileveled and varied approach. It meets, undergoes, and assimilates different elements and aspects from various philosophical schools and traditions – spiritualism, existentialism, phenomenology, reflexive philosophy, hermeneutics, structuralism, pragmatism, narrative philosophy, philosophy of action, philosophy of history –, as well as various scientific and human science disciplines including empirical psychology, psychoanalysis, psychiatry, rhetoric, linguistics, anthropology, history and historiography, neuroscience and law. The progressive evolution of his philosophy of the human being will be briefly summarised in Section 2.

Certainly, the connection between the horizontal axis of a critical hermeneutics as a general methodology and the vertical axis as a complex open philosophical anthropology will largely reproduce the constants of compartmentalisation and differentiation that are the invincible ciphers of our times. But, perhaps, the Ricoeurian approach can offer a more comprehensive alternative, one more focused on re-connection and reunification, and less fragmented than others.

However, I argue in Section 3 that the application of Ricoeur's philosophy and methodology to the concrete case of contemporary human life will lead to reasoning in new complexities and paradoxes, revealing that, in the end, any comprehensive attempt by the human being requires a multileveled approach that crosses a multileveled anthropology *within* a

humanism, variously nourished by an open (interminable) dialectic that is developed at a psycho-biological, sociological, philosophical, moral and spiritual level.

6.2 General Characters of a Critical Hermeneutics

Ricoeur provides a definition in his 1986 book *From Text to Action* of his speculative procedure, with clear reference to specific methods and schools: it is a *reflexive* philosophy angled toward the perspective of Husserl's *phenomenology* as its *hermeneutical* variant. This formula certainly reflects Ricoeur's method in its essence as well as its preponderant characterisations. But it is not without criticism in terms of comprehensiveness – considering Ricoeur's punctual reference to other traditions such as spiritualism, existentialism and philosophy of action; and to social sciences such as psychoanalysis, linguistics and history – or in terms of technical, theoretical, and methodological articulation, accord and functioning. Ricoeur has progressively developed an epistemological model, in parallel, which he calls a *hermeneutic arc*, showing how the work of interpretation is the point of synthesis and, at the same time, of coordination between *explanation* and *comprehension*. ● on the one hand, this model represents an alternative solution to the bi-centenarian diatribe between *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*, whose differences were often shown by the antithetic use of *erklären* and *verstehen*, which Ricoeur coordinates under the work of a hermeneutics. ● on the other hand, this theory clearly demonstrates the central role of hermeneutics on a methodological and an epistemological level.

Through his mature work, he profiles his philosophy as (1) a practical theory, (2) a speculative procedure able to work in an interdisciplinary way, and (3) an active, engaged and emancipatory critical practice. Thus, it seems closer to *critical* hermeneutics than to *reflexive* (descriptive-interpretative) philosophy. The idea of critical hermeneutics goes back to Habermas' early project of a critical philosophy (a sort of remodulation and accomplishment of the Frankfurt School's *Kritische Theorie*) and to his 1960s quarrel with Gadamer over the "hermeneutics of traditions" vs the "critique of ideology". Ricoeur participated in this debate with a paper titled "Herméneutique et critique des ideologies" (1973; subsequently collected in *From Text to Action*) where he took a third position of mediation formulating the alternative of a "critical hermeneutics". Compared to the theoretical discourse that we are developing here and that Ricoeur himself develops in the course of his research, two aspects are of

explicit importance in the paper. First, is the strong connection of critical hermeneutics to the epistemology of the hermeneutic arc, a conception elaborated through a phenomenological hermeneutics of text, action and history that gives critical hermeneutics the potential of an interdisciplinary and transversal approach articulated between *explanation* and *understanding*. The second aspect is the connection between critical hermeneutics and Freud's psychoanalysis, the reinterpretation of which demonstrates the productive problematic for the human and social sciences of a scientific discipline with both a double discursive register (energetics and hermeneutics; explanatory and interpretative) and, at the same time, a double and varied approach to the complexity of human identity and psychic life. Embraced as an interdisciplinary whole, critical hermeneutics emerges as a coordinated and coherent procedural system and technique that can work (1) between different kinds of knowledge scientific and non-scientific; and (2) between differentiated and fragmented models, theories and discursive registers that have a constant need to be flexibly reconnected and recombined, at the procedural level and at the levels of conceptualisation, theorisation, and thematic synthesis.

The major aspects of critical hermeneutics as a philosophy are: (1) to consider theoretical and speculative work as the conjunct work of the community of philosophers and scholars, ideally without prejudicial attitudes and positions in preferring models or traditions; (2) to follow the ideal of an equal contemplation of all the theories and possible solutions from the texts and works of all times and places; (3) to maximise the interdisciplinary approach; (4) to articulate an dwell-argued rational and critical discourse without any anchorage to implicit or hidden "ideologies", "beliefs" and so on; (5) to dialectically apply philosophy to non-philosophic and non-scientific disciplines, articulating the hermeneutical approach between description and interpretation, between theoretical explanation and practical reflection; (6) to develop research and theories that distinguish between reflexive degrees, thematic registers and methodological-speculative degrees; and (7) to practice philosophy as a theoretical, practical and *engaged* discipline, that is a discipline with a direct application to social and political life.

6.3 The Metamorphoses of a Philosophical Anthropology

The transformations that Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology has gone through are not simply the fruit of the articulation and evolution of his theoretical and speculative research, or even of his methodological

variations. Summarising and ordering the main aspects of this metamorphosis will help us to understand his philosophy of the human being, particularly its connection between the epistemological and methodological, both as part of Ricoeur's philosophy and, at the same time, as an expression of a general problem within the human and social sciences in and of themselves. Effectively, the vertical problem of the multidimensional reality of the human being and personal identity – spiritually, psychologically, culturally, morally, socially, historically and juridical-politically – is a product of different knowledges and competences being involved in the study and understanding of human nature, including philosophy and religion, psychology and sociology, history and ethics, literature and art, law and politics. Step by step, all of these elements were variously thematised in Ricoeur's anthropology and they were even progressively considered as disciplinary elements of reference during his phenomenological, reflexive, and hermeneutical research.

In Ricoeur's first anthropological construction, the spiritual viewpoint is preeminent in its connection with the psychological dimension. He develops his first great sketch of a philosophy of the human being in *The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (1950), a work of philosophical phenomenology which aims to realise a full and comprehensive experience of the integral or concrete Cogito. In this book, he describes the essential structures of the voluntary and corresponding involuntary structures. At this level, the level of the "absolute involuntary", he introduces Freud's central concept of the *Unbewusst*, the unconscious. *Stricto sensu*, this domain is one of *corporal necessity* – with its articulation of *character*, the *unconscious*, and *life* – which shows the structure of taking the root of subjectivity or freedom into nature or necessity. Necessity reveals itself to be the key of an abstract subjectivity that is invincible, involuntary, separated from other subjects of will, from history, and from the course of nature. To accept, to consent is the only form of choice in this reality. Yet the dialectic between the voluntary and the involuntary is constantly being reopened; thus the human is continually confronted with conditions of contradiction and conflict, and, yet again, forced to consent. In fact, the character constantly reveals my specificity and limit; the unconscious constantly drags me towards the sorrow of formlessness; and life, which constantly reminds me of my provisional condition, generates in me the sorrow of contingency. At the end of this research, an oppositional conception of the human being emerges, as compared to Freud's vision. In fact, if for Freud, man is essentially *homo natura*, for Ricoeur he is *homo existentialis*.

The second anthropological point of view is formulated by Ricoeur in his *Fallible Man* and *The Symbolism of Evil*, which are two volumes within the same book, *Finitude and Culpability* (1960). Throughout these works, he maintains the same methodological dialectic of a spiritual and psychological approach to human consciousness, integrating the cultural dimension and register through the hermeneutic of symbols and myths. This reflects his methodological passage from phenomenological to empirical speculation, overcoming the limit of a pure, abstract description of the subject. At the same time, it reflects the general movement of his philosophy; this point, it was characterised by a reflexive phenomenology, and from here onwards a hermeneutical, reflexive one. Thematically speaking, it is like the passage from an innocent to a guilty conscience, for the man who carried out evil acts and lives with his guilt. Direct access of this kind of “spiritual” experience is not possible, because it is part of the experience of human kind spread throughout the mythic and symbolic content of all cultures. It requires, then, the reflexive work of a philosophy of language and of hermeneutics. The deciphering and interpretation of symbols and myths offers to the philosopher the possibility of reaching an understanding of what is not understandable in itself: the phenomenon of evil. Symbolism becomes the expression of the depths, of the hidden and mysterious dimension of interior life that seeps into rationality and consciousness. Once again, Ricoeur refers to psychoanalysis, although less to Freud than to Jung. Even for the latter, in fact, the passage through mythic and symbolic creations constitutes a means of accessing a knowledge of the unconscious and its language. And, finally, to have a better and narrower experience of our subjective symbolic inner life is to have a more specific experience and understanding of the archaism of all humankind.

In his 1965 book *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, we see a new methodological moment in Ricoeur’s philosophy with the consolidation of the connection between phenomenology and hermeneutics, now systematised as a generalised and coordinated process of description-interpretation. This has an important impact on his philosophy of the human being. The anthropological perspective that emerges from his reinterpretation of Freud’s psychoanalysis is one of human personal identity as a hermeneutic process: that is, an emancipatory dialectic between regressive (towards the *archê*) and progressive tendencies (towards the *telos*). Now the problems of interdisciplinarity – a coordinated approach to the study and understanding of the human being and the fragmentation of different knowledges – can be thematised as part of the same question. In fact, he writes:

We have at our disposal a symbolic logic, an exegetical science, an anthropology, and a psychoanalysis and, perhaps for the first time, we are able to encompass in a single question the problem of the unification of human discourse. The very progress of the aforementioned disparate disciplines has both revealed and intensified the dismemberment of that discourse. Today the unity of human language poses a problem (Ricoeur 1970, 3-4).

Following the anthropological logic of this essay, “in order to have an *archê* a subject must have a *telos*” (459). The confrontation that developed in these pages brings us to Hegel’s phenomenology. In fact, as an archaeology of the subject, psychoanalysis presents a regressive perspective, indicating the reality of a subject whose sense is deferred into his past and his archaic inner dimension. By contrast, Hegel’s phenomenology of the spirit shows the dialectical movement of subjectivity and spirit in which each figure or moment finds its meaning and realisation teleologically, in the next moment or figure.

Following on from *Freud and Philosophy*, *Oneself as Another* offers a new synthesis of Ricoeur’s anthropological philosophy through his philosophy of the capable human being, which introduces new disciplinary references to narrative and to the juridical and practical-political discourse. It is re-presented in his last book *The Course of Recognition* (2004; section titled “A Phenomenology of the Capable Human Being”; Ricoeur 2005, 89–109) by the examination of its four main aspects: *To be able to say, I can; being able to narrate and to narrate oneself; and imputability.*

The hub of this new conception is the notion of *narrative identity*. Consequently, it introduces two new disciplinary levels of connection with the speculative work of philosophy: narration/literature and history. Ricoeur thematises narrative identity for the first time at the end of *Time and Narrative* (3 vol., 1983–1985), in its general conclusions. And, in *Oneself as Another* it is conducted by means of confronting to the problematic of personal identity and the non-substantialist views on the human being. More precisely, Ricoeur posits that without the help of a narrative approach, the problem of personal identity is destined to antinomy without solution: one must either accept the idea of a subject identical to oneself despite the differences of states, or accept that the idea of an “identical subject” is a “substantialist illusion”, as Hume and Nietzsche have affirmed. The aporia disappears if we replace the idea of an identity “understood in the sense of being the same (*idem*)” with “identity understood in the sense of oneself as self-same [*soi-même*] (*ipse*)” (Ricoeur 1992, 246). Following his argument, it clearly appears

that narrative mediation plays a central role in the constitution of subjectivity. In fact, if the mediation of action and language is fundamental in the process of forming the *ipse*, only narration permits us to introduce the factor of temporality and, then, the factor of the historical and progressive development of a subjective identity as an existential experience of life. I experience my life and my personal identity as my personal history of life, narratively reconfiguring all the facts and experiences.

Now, returning to the central thematic point of this paper regarding the constitution and nature of personal identity, we must extract the essential theoretical-speculative aspects from Ricoeur's anthropological research in order to gain a better focus around this question. How, then, does one relate the problem or task of becoming a person to one's realisation as a person? How does one read the dialectic person-freedom?

I think that pure, realised, perfect lives do not emerge with the correlation of identity, or of certain identities. The major challenge, the struggle, the conflictual dialectics certainly operate in and through certain levels and forms, in their proper moment in the subjective history of life. Again, it is through Ricoeur that we may gain a better understanding of this question, particularly through his philosophy of recognition, which is structurally related to his philosophy of the human being, re-actualised in *The Course of Recognition*.

The dialectic between Hegelianism and Freudianism is the hidden theoretical pillar of the *Course of recognition*. In this book the term "course" refers to the research of a theory of recognition, or to the philosophical journey related to the concept of recognition, or to the journey through recognition-identification, in which the subject of thinking is in search of an accomplishment in terms of sense and mutual recognition. In addition, "course" refers to the theoretical way of researching, investigating and enquiring, and, finally, to the emancipatory movement of a subject within a dialectic of recognition articulated from the progression of the themes of identity, otherness and recognition/misrecognition. The book follows this thematic sequence of (1) recognition-identification, (2) self-recognition, (3) mutual-recognition, (4) recognition-gratitude, according to a dynamism ruled by the progression from the abstract to the concrete, and from theory to practice. However, it can also be read as the itinerary of an enquiry into the significance of recognition of the self. This is the way that has to be followed towards the harmonisation of recognition as gratitude. Certainly, this last perspective touches the

ethical discourse involving the process of becoming a person and the process of interiorising values and acting in accordance with them.

Le chemin est long pour l'homme "agissant et souffrant" jusqu'à la reconnaissance de ce qu'il est en vérité, un homme "capable" de certains accomplissements. Encore cette reconnaissance de soi requiert-elle, à chaque étape, l'aide d'autrui, à défaut de cette reconnaissance mutuelle, pleinement réciproque, qui fera de chacun des partenaires un être-reconnu (Ricoeur 2004, 110).

In Ricoeur's work, the theme of recognition emerges in a structured and articulated way for the first time through the mediation of Freudianism and psychoanalysis. It emerges precisely through the dialectics of Hegelianism and Freudianism, notoriously a paradigmatic point. From this comparison between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, Ricoeur extracted the idea of subjectivity as a tense dialectical-hermeneutical process between *archê* and *telos*, unconscious and spirit, need and freedom, destiny and history. In *Freud and Philosophy*, he tries to realise a synthesis between Hegelianism and Freudianism, translating the psychic dynamism in terms of a dialectics of figures. It is in this way that the connection between *Id* and *Ego* becomes a sort of dialectic master-slave. It was exactly at this point that the term recognition came into play.

Generally speaking, for Ricoeur, personal identity is constituted through a hermeneutical process which is simultaneously (self-)interpretative (which is a vertical dialectic of self-emancipation) and interrelated (which is a social dialectic of recognition). In fact, to become a person is, for Ricoeur, a hermeneutic process and dialectic of *emancipation* as well as of *recognition*.

6.4 From the Logic of a Non-Substantialist Philosophy of Person to the Paradox of a Personality Trapped between Representation and Skin

To become a person is a long, difficult and non-linear process, because we are born as natural beings without personalities. Personal identity is actually the product of psychological, social, cultural and historical evolution. For this reason, we may say that we are born as an *individual*, but we have to become a *person*. This process of becoming a person is impeded in various ways by the obstacle of a subjective, psychological, or existential limit, due to the influence of a distortive ideology, distortive

social relationships, and so on. We may define “distortive” as all those relationships not positively connected to the vital, psychological, social and moral needs of a specific person: that is, non-emancipatory social relationships (see Habermas 1972). Moreover, distortion may even be considered a kind of very close relationship, such as the relationship in regard to oneself. The problematics of becoming a person pass through the various complex dialectics between the personal and the social, the internal and the external, the intimate and the relational. The idea that “one become’s a person” essentially synthesises the processes involved, which are social and, at the same time, emancipatory.

In addition to social and external occurrences, this process can be hidden from the inner being by active will, repression, immaturity, limitations of character, or destiny. A significant limiting function can be exercised by moral and spiritual weaknesses, as countless personal life histories have demonstrated in all times and places. This dialectic between the natural individual level and the personal social level cannot be reduced simply to a question of condition, or of capacity. Even actively embraced and practiced values play their role; somehow, we may say that the axis of the individual-person intersects with the axis of person-values or, more extensively, person-freedom. The consequence is a re-modulation of what “to become a person” and “to become one through the dialectic of relationship” can signify.

To become a person is, at one and the same time, a subjective, social and moral task and responsibility.

Human beings are persons in and through relationships.

Having presented a synthetic survey of Paul Ricoeur’s philosophical anthropology we may now enrich and complete it through examining his philosophy of the person, which is partially related to the personalistic conception of Mounier. In Ricoeur, there is a strong correlation both between Mounier’s Personalism and use of the concept of the person, and between the phenomenological hermeneutics of the self, as developed in *Soi-même comme un autre* (1990), and a (generalisable) philosophy of the person. This is evidenced by works such as *Autobiographie intellectuelle* (1995), *La critique et la conviction* (1995), “Meurt le personnalisme, revient la personne...” (1983) and “Approches de la personne” (1990). The theme of the person was already present in Ricoeur’s research and reflection before his partnership with Mounier’s review *Esprit*.

Ricoeur's relatively unknown paper "Note sur la personne", published as a secondary school professor in 1936, presents a certain degree of problematisation and even some interesting conclusions. From the question "What is the person?" follows an analysis – articulated along a dialectic of differing perspectives – of various hermeneutic and sectorial trajectories. Having established a speculative approach as the prevalent discursive domain, Ricoeur presents and examines the triad around which the question of the "who" is rooted: the biological, the psychological, and the sociological. Biological forces determine temperament, but the person is not reducible to just his temperament. Psychological forces determine the character; but the person is not only his character. And social forces, which are as constitutive as the previous two, contribute to the formation of a person's mentality, influencing character (as do economic and moral forces); but they also do not determine who the person is as a whole. A person is not an individual: "If I call *the individual* the temperament extended through character crowned by mentality, I would say that *the person is not an individual*" (Ricoeur 1936, 438; the translation is mine, as the following). Certainly, the temperament, character and mentality of an individual could each become an object of scientific research; the person, however, can never become an object of science. In fact, Ricoeur is able to keep in check the previsions of characterology and sociology. One can say this: "The human being is a person (*personal*) in so-far and in-as-much as he impedes the sciences from being rigorous" (441). If the person is neither an individual nor a knowable scientific object, then how can one know the person? What makes a person? Ricoeur replies that a person is recognisable and knowable through his actions: "I am a person when I do what I do, in the radical and radically active sense of the word do, when what I am doing is not explicated by all of my determined forces, but through *me* and through my free decisions" (438–439). Freedom makes me able to know my actions as mine, as an expression of what they are and, at the same time, as actions that are imputable to me, actions for which I have to take responsibility: "The person *acts* and is not acted upon [...]. The person is the one who requests a certain act, he who acts assuming the consequences, because he is responsible" (439). However, there is no radical opposition between the individual and the person; actually there is no possibility at all for such opposition. The human being, in fact, is not on one side a body and on the other a spirit, or on one side an individual and on the other a person: I am an embodied, unified being. This theme of the corporal nature of the person and the personal nature of the flesh is repeatedly presented in Ricoeurian phenomenological and hermeneutical work, and the same applies for the question of the person in

itself in its connection with Personalism. This connection, which is inherently critical, is transformed into an open counter position in the paper “Meurt le personalisme, revient la personne...”, wherein Ricoeur suggests that Mounier’s definition of Personalism is connected to a cultural and philosophical constellation that is no longer present in our times, namely that of Marxism and Existentialism. The question of the person, and even neo-Personalism, must today face a different speculative-ideological counter-part in order to define or re-define itself.

The mature Ricoeur presents a new philosophy of the person in the form of his philosophy of the capable human being. The central axis of this new vision is the concept of *narrative identity*, which Ricoeur begins to build in *Conclusions of Time and Narrative* volume 3. He expresses his conviction that the self of self-knowledge is the product of a life examined and clarified by the work of reflection and self-interrogation (à la Socrates), and by the work of self-clarification through historical and fictional narratives. Human identity expresses two different experiences in relation to time – *character* and *keeping one’s word* (Ricoeur 1992, 118) – and in relation to the narrative dimension, which serves a mediatory function between the biological (my body) and the existential (my history of life).

In this way, Ricoeur re-actualises his previous anthropological vision in studying the dialectics of the voluntary and the involuntary, which is the dialectics between the body and the will, between nature and freedom (*Philosophie de la volonté*). But now Ricoeur considers the narrative dimension to be the central element of unification: a dimension in which it is possible to re-modulate our natural drives and tendencies into meanings and intensions. Narration is, in fact, the chief way of telling the history of a life, offering the possibility of experiencing that life as a whole reconfigured as a story wherein all actions, experiences, feelings, decisions and so on become a temporary concatenation of fact. We transform ourselves into the subject, the characters of a story, of our story, narratively readdressing and remodulating the history of our own lives. As Ricoeur explains, self-understanding is an interpretation and remodulation of forces and meanings. Natural inclinations and forces have the tendency (or have been educated) to find an expressive form of meaning and narration; interpretation of the self, in turn, finds in the narrative a privileged form of mediation. The former are oriented towards finding a civilised way to express themselves, while the latter absorbs from history, as well as from fiction, a way to reframe the various and complex materials of a certain experience of life as a “fictional history” or as

“historical fiction” (114).

Thus, through narrative and self-narrative, the objectivity of lived facts are rearticulated and readdressed in terms of their function and meaning. Under certain circumstances, or in relation to certain facts or moments of life, it could be of secondary importance to have an exact memory of the objective fact of an experience, for the coherence of an experience and the temporary concatenation of fact under certain orders may play a role of major importance. Nevertheless, it is exactly in this dialectical function between reality and representation, history and fantasy, self-psychology and narration/re-narration that the risks of a distorted and pathological approach to life lie (pathological and distorted in the sense of self-misunderstanding or misrecognition, of an unrealistic approach to life and one’s existence).

There is a deep relationship between this philosophy of a person and Ricoeur’s mature anthropological philosophy as expressed in *Oneself as Another* and rearticulated in *The Course of Recognition*. At the same time, this mature anthropology may be conceived of as a synthesis of his long course of investigation around the human being. Actually, by re-unifying Ricoeur’s earlier anthropological philosophy (which had its foundation in a specific hermeneutical vision and approach) that of a phenomenology of the voluntary and the involuntary, a hermeneutics of symbols and a depth hermeneutics, we may speak of a double perspective and understanding of the human being: vertical, from himself, as a conscious subject and a subject of will, to his deeper, symbolic, unconscious and “archaic” life; and horizontal, from his present to his lived and experienced past and future, as well as from himself to others who are a part of his life, directly or indirectly connected to the history of his life and his long journey in becoming a person.

The root of this vision lies in the fact that the key to understanding the person is not the substance of being a person; it is not the history (of being a person living in a certain family, society and so on), nor is it the novelty of being a unique, irreplaceable person; it is the capacity or capability of being a human being, and then a person.

Ricoeur’s philosophy of the human being offers a comprehensive vision of what is human and what is involved in the process of becoming a person. This process is not simply a natural development: It involves values, education, culture, vision, ideas, representations, society and so on and it involves all of these elements and dimensions in various ways, positively

or negatively, according to the specific moment and experiences in a certain life history. If, from a social perspective, the key to personal emancipation is a positive and progressive dialectic of personal and mutual recognition, then from an individual perspective the key is the overcoming of inner regressive natural forces in order to progress psychologically and morally. Both of these pathways or perspectives reveal a specific dark side to personal emancipation, that is, a specific way to block the emancipatory process or to prevent the individual from becoming balanced and fully developed as a person. In the first case, it is disruptive or hostile behaviour and acts of misrecognition of all kinds that inhibit this process; in the second, it is the impediment of our regressive or destructive natural forces, or the objective difficulty of counteracting them, that may stop this process. These two axes are so intertwined and interdependent that it sometimes appears crystal clear that behind a specific asocial behaviour there is a subjective regressive experience; and vice versa, that sometimes a regressive subjective experience is provoked by a lack of social recognition.

Finally, it seems that the dialectic between reality and representation works in various ways as the core or the point of connection between the two axes. It is certainly true that Ricoeur's conception of the capable human being focuses on the dialectic between passive forces and active forces, between passiveness and action, instead of reality and representation; but at the same time, his non-substantialist vision of the human being is forced to place the idea of narrative identity at the hub of a conception of personal development in which there is a constant dialectical tension between a stable biological dimension and a stable *and* unstable historical dimension.

All of this analysis may be applied to the contemporary moment, particularly the strong tendency to be attracted to nihilistic visions of the self and life, or to be attracted to overly-charged, overly-abstracted and overly-evaluated self-understandings, where representation, fantasy and ideology seem to constantly trump reality. Such is the case with radicalisation, as in religious fanaticism. And this is also the case of so-called post-humanism, an ideology deeply nourished by scientism and technocracy; fiction, literature and film; and the cultures of the internet and technology.

Thanks to the research into *Gestaltpsychologie* in particular, we have a better understanding of the connections and correlations between visual perception, the reorganisation of perceived contents, and self-representation.

Through the theory of developmental psychology, we understand how the dynamism of self-representation and self-understanding is deeply related to the different phases of the psychological development of the mind and mental life. And thanks to sociology and social psychology, we know something of the various connections between, on the one hand, interrelation, cultural influence and social representation, and, on the other, self-representation and realisation. Our self-representation is mediated by a specific psychology (in a specific psychological moment), as well as by culture, social representation, and predominant ideologies. For teenagers in particular, all changes in the body have impacts on the mind, self-imagination and representation. But a similar discourse may arise from dramatic cases of physical change, which provoke particular phenomena of reaction; the phenomenon of *phantom limb* is well known and widely studied in this regard. From psychoanalysis and dynamic psychology we know that the body is lived and experienced in a dynamic, changeable way, like a field strength, like a “screen” for emotional and imaginary projections, as well as for libido’s forces and expressions. The momentum of these forces and energies is not without impact in self representation and feeling; conversely, personal ideas, representation and behaviour are not without impact in the distribution or redistribution of libido and psychical energy through the body. The case of a certain self-perversion may sound extreme, but it shows clearly the reality and consequences of this movement and the readdressing of forces through the body. For example, in sexual fetishism we have the case of a sexual focus on a non-genital body part (Freud).

The body has its own language, but at the same time, the body is the expression of psychical and social life. Body language mirrors in itself the coexistence of the physical and the psychical, of the real and the representational in the body. Psychophysical disturbances and symptoms in all cases demonstrate how the body may “work” as a vehicle of certain representations, meanings and messages. The classic speculative and scientific debate on dualism needs to be approached from multiple perspectives, because the issue is not reducible to the mind-body problem and its interrelations. In fact, there are multiple dualisms in relation to the body itself. First, following Husserl, Ricoeur, and others, there is the lived/experienced body and the objective body, in the sense of a contrast between subjective and objective knowledge. Second, we have body simultaneously perceived and seen from inside and outside, in the sense of a contrast between the psychology of self and social psychology. From one side, this body is me; from the other, this body expresses my relation with you in this society, culture, country and era. At the same time, the body

expresses what I am based on my experiences, ideas, understanding and self-representation; it is the entity through which I am addressing others when I am asking for recognition.

Freud focused on the modern human's tendency "to become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times" (Freud 2005, 76). We are increasingly surrounded by technology, and implanted or incorporated techno-prosthesis. Cyberspace contributes to modifying our lifestyles and our ways to reconfigure and represent our life, our own body, and our sense of realisation. Certainly, it is not the case that a large proportion of extended technologies are optical. Today, representation is overcoming reality in many ways. And this is not without its implications and consequences for the body and mind. Actually, it is a time of new and paradoxical experiences. From one side, through tattoos, piercings, and other mechanical-technical accessories, the body is becoming an ever more central site of self-representation and of the transmission of a self-designed identity. From the other, an increasing number of people (especially, but not exclusively, young people) are spending increasingly large portions of their daily life at home, physically detached from society but connected to the entire world via the web. They spend countless hours at a desk in front of a computer, physically petrified in a quasi-religious, totalising position, where only seeing, thinking, representing, and moving the hands constitutes the actually experienced and actively exercised self. All functions are under the service of imagination and representation. The body and reality are absent. In fact, when you switch on your computer you wear the avatar of your Linked-in or Instagram or Facebook profile, where you may be whoever you want to be by modifying, remodulating, transforming, deforming, distorting and otherwise altering the reality of your "real life" through your ways of representing it.

Here you have the paradoxes of a multiplied series of new post-human, abstract, and fictive, components to re-organise the representations of yourself. From one side, they are applied to your body and your skin as a real and substantial support of who you are and want to be; from the other, your body is subtracted from the real and you renounce meeting the other in real life in favour of staying at home, maintaining your avatar, your e-character, the upgraded reality of yourself.

Sketching this new experience, representation, and realisation of personal identity today, the multidimensional reality of the human being re-appears,

but under a new spiral connection. The skin is now substantial, but in the sense of being the support for representation and a site for symbolism and artistic expressions, like a painting or, better, a canvas; and yet, the body is insubstantial in spite of the fact that it remains the physical support of the person. On another level, the connection between historical and cultural-narrative dimensions is transformed and deformed under the rule and predominance of narrative over the historical, and of the representational over the cultural. While it is true that, today, the vertical problem of personal identity – which is spiritual, psychological, cultural, moral, social, historical, and juridico-political – is one with the problem of the various knowledges and competences involved in the study and understanding of human nature, it is also true that the massive diversification of values, ideologies, approaches to existence, and philosophies of life – i.e. widespread relativism, materialism, nihilism, technocracy and so on, which are largely expressions of specific and specialised knowledge and science have created the confusing effect of a disordered approach to personal identity as an experience and as an object of research and study. At the same time, behind the privilege of a predominant approach to this object – psychological instead of medical, for example – almost invariably hides an ideological reduction and (then) distortion: psychological, scientific, physicalist or materialist, and so on. Thus, from the point of view of the human being, we are assisting in an externalisation and representative falsification of the process of becoming a person (and the correlated problems). From the point of view of the articulation of different kinds of knowledge around the human being, we are intertwining the problem of diversification and fragmentation of knowledge with the ideological use of it. The latter certainly provokes a backlash with regard to the negative effects of distortion in relation to self-understanding and self-realisation of a life, although even this provokes negative reactions to knowledge and the sciences, and to their public and social uses and applications.

6.5 The Solution of an Integrated, Dynamic Humanism

As Jean Landrière explains in his “Expliquer et comprendre” (2004), Ricoeur’s theory of the hermeneutic arc has developed from the theoretical-practical context of a theory of interpretation, i.e. from a kind of genuinely epistemological problematic. Epistemology has been the central theme in Ricoeur’s hermeneutics; but, subsequently, it underwent an ontological development, and then an anthropological articulation of

the ontology took place. Landrière explains that the development of the epistemological problematic, which was determined from the sciences of life in general and from the sciences applied to the human being in particular, had established a strong connection with the ontic problematic about the status of the human being (Landrière 2004, 148).

We may consider and use the interpretation of Charles E. Reagan as complementary to this reading. In his “L’herméneutique et les sciences humaines”, he generalises Ricoeur’s epistemology in a way that refocuses the anthropological point of view as central for his philosophy and for all of the human and social sciences. Following the Ricoeurian perspective, he sustains the idea that all the social sciences have a constitutive line of connection with communicative competence and with the hermeneutical method. By taking seriously the model of the text, all human actions (social as well as individual) are susceptible to being interpreted through the textual paradigm, as a text. Thus, all the human and social sciences are, at their base, hermeneutical sciences. All of them are, in fact, involved in the study and comprehension of human action. The dialectic between explanation and understanding connects this comprehensive hermeneutical approach to the study of the human being as an object of science, with the general comprehension of the human being as a subject of experience.

Philosophy helps in formulating a proper methodological and epistemological articulation of this dialectic of explanation/understanding. But, at the same time, as speculative research nourishing an anthropological interest based on an ontological viewpoint, it pushes towards a dynamic connection between the process of becoming a person (natural, psychological, educative, social, etc.) and the hermeneutical process of auto-interpretation, which is part – in Ricoeur, above all – of a personal emancipation conceived of as a dialectical process of interpretation and recognition. Therefore, human and social scientific research, led by the work of a critical hermeneutics, must be at one and the same time a coordinated, interdisciplinary endeavour (both in epistemological and methodological terms) and a humanistic project, due to its direct link with the philosophy of the human being and the subjective, human experience of becoming a person. The explosion of paradigms and theories, the diversification of knowledges, the differentiation and fragmentation of the sciences, and the war between beliefs and ideologies cannot simply be resolved by establishing a hierarchy of values or truths, but can be managed by re-affirming and maintaining the idea that all forms knowledge have a direct or indirect impact on the human being and that, therefore, all of them are responsible and imputable. The humanistic logic,

value, *ratio* and approach must re-become the necessary and sufficient conditions to reorganise a well-balanced relation between the vertical axis of a set of knowledge involved in personal realisation and emancipation, and the horizontal axis of a set of knowledge *of* and *for* the human being.

CHAPTER 7

HABERMAS AND RICOEUR ON RECOGNITION: TOWARD A NEW SOCIAL HUMANISM

7.1 Preamble

The sociological theme of recognition is relatively recent, having only begun to take shape in the 1990s. The concept emerges (1) in relation to the questions of identity of a specific group; (2) with respect to settlement disputes in political anthropology, social anthropology and the anthropology of law; (3) in the analysis of the continuity/discontinuity of social systems; and (4) in relation to the theory of social conflicts. The discussion of sociology in broad and general terms should consider that *interaction* assumes a greater significance in a wide spectrum of fields of study. These range from social exchange to social interaction, and from symbolic interaction to the question of personality (*i.e.*, interaction processes: interaction and the social system; conditions of integration; roles, pluralism and personality; organisms and environment; generalized media of integration). Essentially, Talcott Parsons' *General theory of social action* (1949) distinguishes the use of recognition from the kind of sociology traditionally used in anthropological and ethnological research, namely via research investigating intersubjectivity and interrelations related to behaviours, as well as the social behaviours and rituals that reveal *reciprocity*. Mauss's work (1925) provides the first and most important study in this area, and remains a foundational reference for the study of the dynamics of recognition (in philosophy as well as in the narrower field of social theory).

As one of his most important contributions, Mauss brings the issue of reciprocity into the field of economic anthropology, where experts such as Marshall Sahlins (1972) would later develop a new paradigm of analysis and understanding of the social phenomenon of interrelationships as reciprocity. Sahlins transforms reciprocity by measuring the change in social distance, and therefore the degree of integration and, to an extent,

the quality of interrelationships in a given, specific social reality. He identifies three forms of reciprocity: *balanced*, *generalized* and *negative*. The first expresses an intermediate degree of solidarity, within which one is expected to return the gift; this kind of reciprocity concerns relationships outside of the family circle; those between relatives, and those between families in the community itself. The second expresses the highest degree of solidarity, as the value of the goods traded is scarcely considered. This form has no precise contents, does not set time limits, and does not even require that the item returned has the same economic value as the item originally gifted; relationships within family members are included in this category. These two types of reciprocity are united by the fact that such relationships are morally governed. The last form of reciprocity indicates a complete lack of reciprocity, that is, the maximum social distance. For example, robbery and theft were recognised and accepted in archaic societies during wars, and were believed to provide honour.

Currently, some notions are related to both the classical concept of interaction and the more contemporary concept of recognition. Amongst these, the concepts of solidarity and reciprocal altruism are particularly notable. Closely related to this modern usage is the Meadian concept of *symbolic interaction*, which almost assumes the function of a thematic connection (between interaction and reciprocity) and a disciplinary factor (between philosophy and sociology). Social interaction assumes especially strong sociological significance in the study of group dynamics. However, determining the forms of interaction is a prerequisite to fully understanding the processes of interaction. George H. Mead's (1934) Social Behaviourism, or rather his Symbolic Interactionism (and more precisely the work of H. Blumer [1969]), postulates that the Mind and the Self are social products. It also argues that language constitutes the place of their emergence: language is the *medium* through which experience and (social) reality can be formulated symbolically, and subsequently built and shared. A central element of symbolic interaction is an individual's ability to assume the other within oneself, and to regulate his own conduct using this perspective. Obviously other influential factors exist, such as *emotions*. But scholars have established that Meadian symbolic interactionism is also a fundamental reference for the cultural approach to emotions. The fact that we are capable of understanding the other is not only the result of an interrelational *experience*, but is also the result of our emotional interrelational dynamism. It is not a coincidence that Mead (and after him Hochschild [1979; 1983] and others) discusses symbolic interactionism rather than linguistic or rational interactionism (Kemper 2000).

Mead's social theory shares both aspects of functionalism and structuralism, due to Weber's theory of social action. The constitution of the social actor (*Self*) is at the core of Mead's theory, and demonstrates how mind and thought (*Mind*), as well as social organisation (*Society*) are formed. *Self*, *Mind* and *Society* are elements of the functioning of a single whole. While external behaviour originates in interior attitudes, some internal elements come from outside, as an internal attitude is an integral part of an external act. While there are absolutely no *subjective* meanings that are radically internal, the same meanings and individual acts can be understood and explained throughout the relational context of a collective consisting of a set of social relations. Individual conduct must be explained using the behaviour of organized social groups, for society as a whole is anterior to the individual, who is only a part of its larger whole. The way of thinking is itself interrelational, as it "mimics" the exchange of social dialogue, while thought arises when an individual develops an internalized conversation with himself. The internalized gesture is significant as a symbol. It holds the same meaning for all individuals in a given society or in a certain social group, and it is within this common meaning that the members of this group develop conscious thought and relationships with each other. Therefore, thought would not be possible without social relations or language. Social interaction always provides a basis for common meaning, as a gesture is only clearly meaningful in the reaction it causes in the other. However, the fact that I can consciously objectify this meaning, and abstract it from the immediate reaction of other, allows me to universalise this meaning. I can also therefore autonomously develop a specific re-elaboration based upon the general framework of reference that Mead calls the *generalized other*. Mead's perspective applies sociological research to both philosophy and psychology, and has some important implications. In addition to the evolution of sociological research and subsequent critical developments, the Meadian approach leads us to address the phenomenon of interaction using the peculiar perspective of social psychology. This explains its significance for Axel Honneth and Paul Ricoeur's research, as well as in phenomenological studies (Honneth 1992; Ricoeur 2005). In this regard, conflict is another key concept in social psychology, and is fundamental for studying the dialectics of social interaction. If Hegel gives philosophy the highest speculative and critical importance, then Karl Marx elevates sociology to the dignified role of a true *paradigm*. The latter believed that social behaviour is formed from conflict, and more precisely from the attempt to dominate others and to avoid being dominated. Studies on Marx have generally focused especially on the struggle between social classes,

but Georg Simmel's investigation is more systematic. For Mead, both the attitude of the community (*i.e.*, as the "other generalized") in relation to personal individuality, and the control it exerts on the behaviour of its members become determining factors in the type of relationship a person has with his Self. Assuming the same attitudes that others exhibit toward him, the individual participates in a common universe of discourse. In addition to being a prerequisite for developing the reflection of the mind, this is also the basis for the feeling of the Self; the structure that establishes both a character's personality and his self-consciousness. The attention that sociological research gives to Mead's work on emotions strengthens the possibility of a more rigorous approach to phenomenological sociology. To explain the phenomenon of intersubjectivity, Husserl applies the concept of *Einfühlung*, or empathy. However, Husserl's original transcendental intersubjectivity precedes this concept, as it explains the formation of areas of common meaning and action (language, society, history). The process of recognizing the other is analysed on the basis of Husserl's phenomenological description of intentionality, based on the preliminary element of the experience or constitution of material nature (space, time, causality), of the psyche, and of the body. The other experiences me as other from himself, as I experience him as other from myself. From an analogical association, which is constituted throughout an immediate emotional identification (empathy), the other is never merely a body, but also an inner being with a psychic life similar to mine. The series of intentional relations are reciprocal and allow Husserl to realise the concept of intersubjectivity.

The Austrian philosopher and sociologist Alfred Schütz made an important development to the phenomenological approach to sociology. The comprehensive phenomenological sociology, which exists in a strong but productive critical dialectic with Weber, focuses on the formation of the significants experienced, and the relationship between action and meaning, thus deepening the various methodological problems that arise in the interpretation of action. Nonetheless, society is interpreted as a dynamic interrelation, although its operations are not intelligible through the analysis of its structure, but rather via its processes. These include the social world, which is actually the complex result of the encounter of different spheres of experience, as well as the overlapping of various defined areas of significance (Schütz 1967).

When generally considering the development of sociological research surrounding the issue(s) of recognition, we can argue that, over the decades, it has transitioned from being polarized on the issue of the

philosophical and sociological theme of intersubjectivity into the sociological-ethical and sociological-political theme of reciprocity. Recognition in sociology emerges in the “dialectical” theoretical-practical realm of intersubjectivity and reciprocity. It is necessary, interesting and important to expand the general theory of action and the sociology of intersubjectivity found in the work of Jürgen Habermas. If dialectic and recognition appear to be strategic terms from a psychological perspective, in sociology the concepts of social action and intersubjectivity are key terms for philosophical research on recognition, which seeks to incorporate this sociological perspective.

7.2 The Intersubjectivity in Habermas’ Social Theory

The core of Jürgen Habermas’ vast research is occupied by the question of the public sphere as a space for mutual relationships and communicative rationality. He derives similar political commitment from the same (essential) conceptual triad of *public sphere*, *discourse* and *reason*. His espoused profile of the philosophy of man implies and sustains all speculative developments surrounding this triad. It refers to a strict interpretation – literal, and nourished by evolutionary biologism – of the Aristotelian idea of man as a “political animal”, living *in the public space*. A comparison with biology and the behaviour of newly-born mammals reveals that no other species in the world emerges as imperfect and helpless as humans. We are radically dependent on each other, and are thus constitutively intersubjective; we become persons in the public space because we continually learn from each other (Habermas 2004).

This specific dimension of human intersubjectivity is echoed throughout Habermas’ entire corpus. The construction and organisation of public spaces, whose structural framework is of a *social* nature, reveals the constructive or decadent, the harmonies or rifts; of a communitarianism that is either emancipatory or repressive. In comparison with the specific context of our social reality, Habermas initially observed a general dynamism of coercive and repressive natures, within which the work of the social critic and the “militancy” of a free and emancipatory communication were considered necessary and urgent for ensuring authentic human coexistence in a positive state. Subsequently, he changed the angle of his diagnosis by considering the importance of the progressively complex modern society. Such societies are only held together by the abstract concept of solidarity, mediated between juridical citizens of the state. This community, which today cannot always be

strong, only reaches an acceptable degree of stability and cohesion via the formation of public opinion and will. Therefore, the condition of a given democracy is not isolated in its ability to test itself via evaluating the forms and quality of its political public space. Rather, research on the forms and methods of communication assume the meaning and significance of *systematic* sociological research. This occurs because communication is now the ultimate structure of social reality. The basic reference for this notion is Habermas' *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), which is entirely centred on a theory of action. One could also say that, on the one hand, this text focuses on the dialectic between instrumental action and communicative action, and on the other hand between the lifeworld and the system (that is to say, from the point of view of subjects who act in society, and the point of view, or power of action, which is either external or "objective", and has its roots in the lifeworld). However, this force also progressively develops its structural characteristics, such as the family, the law, the state and the economy). Several critical passages of major theoretical models reveal the rich network of dialogical and dialectical confrontations, including those by Weber (with particular attention to his theory of rationality), Lukács and Adorno (because of their alternative perspective on critical Marxism), Durkheim and Mead (regarding their outline of the change from the paradigmatic perspective of a philosophy of the subject to an communicative intersubjective understanding) and Parsons (for clarifying the relationship system and lifeworld). One could also add Winch and Wittgenstein, Austin and Searle and Piaget and Popper to this list.

The research originates from the concept of rationality, which is clarified in relation to its different usages. It is connected to the central notion of communicative action, (which is elevated to the highest level of scientific and heuristic importance, due to the linguistic turn). This notion is first clarified in contrast to instrumental action (expressive of a different rationality), and then in connection with it. This is done via the dialectic operating between the *system* – namely, the economic organisation, the political-administrative apparatus of the State and Power – and the lifeworlds, which are the sets of values shared by a given society in a manner not immediately reflected. This theoretical development constitutes the final and more current theme in this topic. The modern system responds, for the first time, by interfering in the life of the world, to a degree that far exceeds the direct needs of material reproduction. For Habermas, this problem is both speculative and political, and is radically and directly connected to the human condition, which is essentially intersubjective. As a constitutively intersubjective condition, critical

sociology's approach is decisive for a framework that includes both scientific research and diagnostic analysis, and works from the perspective of political action. On the other hand, in such circumstances the examination of reality and the structuring and functioning of inter-relationships (especially communication) depend upon the efficiency, explicatory power, and significance of a critical sociological approach. Linguistic communication incorporates a *telos* of mutual understanding. At this point and (linguistic) level, (1) a theory of rationality is closely connected to (2) a theory of communicative action, (3) to a dialectic of social rationalisation and (4) to a concept of society that reunifies systems theory and the theory of action (Habermas 1981a). In the theory of communicative action, an analysis that uses the specialized contributions of linguistics, sociology and hermeneutics has been developed with initial reference to Popper's theory of the three worlds. This operates "according to the model of self-criticism" and applies to "an *epistemic* subject who is capable of learning and has already acquired a certain knowledge in his cognitive-instrumental dealings with reality, or as a *practical* subject..., or as an *affective* subject..., and has already demarcated from the external world of facts and norms a special domain of subjectivity marked by privileged access and intuitive presence" (Habermas 1981b, 75). In addition, the lifeworld must be added, as proponents of communication have used it as a contextualizing referent and background. The lifeworld is essentially connected to the concept of communicative action, while its counterpart, the system, is essentially bound to the concept of instrumental action. This combination is expressed primarily by the state, especially in light of its apparatus and its economic organisation. Therefore, as individuals and members of the community, each person expresses a set of values, and experiences them in a spontaneous and natural way. The crucial focus of Habermas' diagnosis of contemporary society addresses the massive and growing interference of the system in the lifeworld, (which should not be understood merely in the sense of the public sphere's pervasive interference into the private sphere). The lifeworld is threatened by an "internal colonisation", expressed via a new form of social violence at the level of communication and in the conduct of life: "a progressively rationalized life-world is both uncoupled from and made dependent upon increasingly complex, formally organized domains of action. [...] This dependency, resulting from the *Mediatization* of the lifeworld by system imperatives, assumes the sociopathological form of an *internal colonization* when critical disequilibria in material reproduction [...] can be avoided only at the cost of disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld" (305). Systemic imperatives currently intervene in areas of

structured communicative action, namely on the level of cultural production, social interaction, and in socialisation itself. Alternatively, they engage on the level of activities related to individual choices of cultural types, and of types of style, belief, and so on. The Marxist and neo-Marxist critical-sociological model of class struggle fails, because the new *dialectical* phenomenon is expressed through this process of formalized colonisation, which is systematic and represses the lifeworld.

Regarding Habermas' *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, Thomas McCarthy provides the following interesting synthesis:

[Habermas] sketched a critical theory of modern society that focused on "the colonization of the lifeworld" by forces arising from the economy and the state. [...] The phenomena that Max Weber pointed to in his vision of an "iron cage" and that Marxists have dealt with in terms of "reification" arises from an ever-increasing "monetization" and "bureaucratization" of lifeworld relations. This relentless attack on the communicative infrastructures of society can be contained, he argued, only by a countervailing expansion of the areas of life coordinated via communication, and in particular by the subordination of economic and administrative subsystems to decisions arrived at in open and critical public debate (McCarthy 2006², 200).

This synthesis compares the entire dialectical continuity of Habermas' perspective with Marx and Weber, and considers the repressive violence of the modern systematic colonisation, that he perceives as occurring in our society. However, it does not offer a complete picture of synthesis, nor does it consider the perspectives of either the "diagnostic" or the positive response strategies that Habermas identifies. Firstly, it is not possible to develop a comprehensive synthesis of the entire colonisation of the lifeworld, nor can a unified strategy be proposed as a counter-action or policy response. The "systematic" nature of this colonisation must be broadly understood in light of its diffuse and pervasive character. In fact, it occurs in so many and varied forms. Secondly, Habermas tends to emphasise the negation of a radical resolution, or any antirationalistic resolution. He therefore maintains not only the early perspective of a strong critical rationalism, but also a communicative and interpretative framework. On the one hand, critical work provides the only measure for eventually counter-balancing these colonizing forces. This assumes the right distance of occurrence (procedural, factual and institutional) which results from the work of Western rationality. On the other hand, one of the most important mature additions to Habermas' theory is the consideration of social movements dedicated to specific causes, such as: environmentalism,

feminism, and so on. Operating within these specific social, moral, and cultural contexts, these citizen-led movements might be able to restore the independence, uniqueness and value of the lifeworld.

Habermas argues that the lifeworld provides an arena for emancipation, and interrelation, and therefore the subsequent realisation of the “individual” as a *person*. When combined with a *system*, the second aspect of Habermas’ theory of “society”, the lifeworld concept becomes strategic. This occurs first in relation to a theory of social evolution that distinguishes between the rationalisation of the lifeworld and the increased complexity of social systems. That is to say, it leads to a critical theory that must empirically focus upon the node between the forms of social integration and the levels of systematic differentiation (Durkheim). From the conceptual perspective of an action oriented toward mutual understanding, the concept of lifeworld appears to have a limited range in terms of the theory of society (Habermas 1981b, 119). In fact, the dialectical relationship between lifeworld and system provides the best apparatus, which includes the broader social reality and emancipatory processes, both individual and social. The lifeworld is composed of culture, society and personality. However, the faculty and the heuristic power operating in relation to the dynamism of social evolution are assumed by a dialectic existing with the system. Societies establish connective actions and systematically stabilise socially integrated groups according to a formula. This is explained by clarifying that it indicates the proposed heuristic when considering society as an entity which was differentiated during evolution both as a system and as lifeworld. This systemic evolution is comparable to an increase in the capacity for societal control, while the gap between culture, society and personality indicates the state of development of a symbolically structured lifeworld.

Each area of the lifeworld, including culture, society and personality, has unique and specific requirements and interpretive perspectives. These exist in relation to (1) the influence of culture on the act, (2) forms of appropriate behaviour in society, and (3) the types of people and ways of behaviour, that is with respect to the formation/expression of socialized personalities. As a result, an individual brings commitment to the reproduction of the lifeworld on a cultural, social and personal level, which strengthens the culture, the social integration and the individual’s personality. If these areas were closely interconnected in archaic societies, Weber’s notion of the rationalisation of the world produces an increasing and distancing differentiation and complexification. In the hypercomplex and hypertrophic situation that will emerge from our contemporary

socialisation, the system dominates, invades, bends, and subdues the lifeworld.

Mead is one of Habermas' main references, and leads him to the explicit theme of individual and social recognition within his theory of communicative action. When considering Habermas's theory from this Meadian perspective (but also considering some important steps from Schütz's social phenomenology), the notion of intersubjectivity appears to be more significant on the philosophical plane. Habermas applies his theory in order to locate useful elements for developing (philosophical) research on the sociology of recognition. In addition, Thomas McCarthy explains that Habermas applies his theory of communication (developed in Volume 1 of *The Theory of Communicative Action*) not simply to re-read the Meadian conceptual or logical analysis of the genesis of the self and society, but also to develop a social analysis from the individualistic model of social action. "Habermas argues that [...] motivations and repertoires of behavior [sic] are symbolically restructured in the course of identity formation, that individual intentions and interests, desires and feelings are not essentially private but tied to language and culture and thus inherently susceptible to interpretation, discussion and change" (McCarthy 1984, xx). Evidently, such a reading reflects an optimistic and rationalist approach which views societies as (potentially) progressive and emancipatory realities, operating under a dynamism of socialisation, and connected by internalized symbolic and communicative competences that are shared and rationally organized. Thus, recognition essentially becomes an issue of participation, membership and *communicative* dialectic between social actors. The quality of the interrelationships *in general* do not determine or evaluate the degree of social development or the evolution of the society's members; rather these depend upon the quality of the communicative relationships. In this regard,

Habermas argues that our ability to communicate has a universal core. [...] In speaking we relate to the world about us, to other subjects, to our own intentions, feelings, and desires. In each of these dimensions we are constantly making claims, even if usually only implicitly, concerning the validity of what we are saying, implying, or presupposing claims, for instance, regarding the truth of what we say in relation to the objective world; or claims concerning the rightness, appropriateness, or legitimacy of our speech acts in relation to the shared values and norms of our social lifeworld; or claims to sincerity or authenticity in regard to the manifest expressions of our intentions and feelings (x).

Therefore, what is fundamental in this passage is not the general concept of communication, but rather the concept of communicative rationality; that is, the ability and competence to translate personal feelings, desires, intentions, values and beliefs into rational-communicative concepts and ideas. As Habermas explains, this concept “carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective views and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity of their lifeworld” (Habermas 1981b, 10). Of course, communicative rationality has limitations, especially regarding the comprehensive study of all phenomena and social processes. On the one hand, it may help to understand the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld of social groups controlled internally. But, on the other hand, it is not possible to entirely explain social reproduction in terms of a single communicative rationality. However, an examination of Mead’s philosophical sociology is directly linked to this argument, (which actually forms the beginning of the second volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action*) and therefore provides a more detailed focus on the question of intersubjectivity.

In conclusion, and although not explicitly thematised, Habermas’ theory of recognition is founded upon the notion of *intersubjective communication*. This concept is inserted into a theory that can be understood as both philosophical sociology and as critical social theory, and which indicates the dialectic between lifeworld and system. In this dialectic, the possibility of both progress and development/empowerment is not due to the adaptation, rupture or reorganisation of the system, but rather exists in the lifestyle choices of individuals and groups, in terms of the quality of their intersubjective (communicative) relations. The choice of recognition is of pivotal importance, as only individuals and groups can counterbalance the invasive pressure, levelling and hyper-rationalising of the system. Their struggles may provide a counterbalance to the invasive pressure, levelling effects and hyper-rationalization of the system. This is the only possibility for progress and emancipation available in this model.

7.3 The Intersubjectivity in Ricoeur’s Philosophy

Sociology and critical theory’s approach to recognition exemplifies the continued persistence of the category of intersubjectivity as well as heuristic and factual centrality. If, via Honneth and Ricoeur, the

psychology of recognition essentially brings the central functionality of the *dialectical* element into the foreground, sociology, via Habermas, brings back the issue of intersubjective communication. The generalized and speculative outcome extractable from the study of the psychology of recognition is that recognition cannot exist without the *dialectic process*. It will not function without *relational and communicative commitment*, and in short, without intersubjectivity. The recognition process will not be activated as a process of emancipation, as determined by our investigation into the sociology of recognition. However, we can observe that the psychological and sociological are interrelated on two planes; they include many elements of correlation, mutual reference and connection, which emerge in the theoretical structure of these philosophies with even stronger evidence. This is also due to the specific character of *philosophical discourse*, which is flexible and is openly interdisciplinary. One must not overlook this aspect, as it in fact requires a new level of philosophical analysis that, by considering psychology and sociology, connects the concept of dialectics to intersubjectivity.

There are several ways to accomplish this task, but the essentially Ricoeurian perspective of my own research, and the possibilities inherent in his philosophy, have encouraged me to adopt the perspective developed in *The Course of Recognition* (throughout Honneth), and also to refer to the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut's analysis of *self-psychology*, which Ricoeur discusses in his essay "The Self in Psychoanalysis and in Phenomenological Philosophy". This article focuses upon a specific theoretical development of psychoanalysis, in critical reference to Freud's theory of man. However, Ricoeur also examines Kohut's theory in order to develop an expanded theme of intersubjectivity. This extends beyond the change in his perspective on the hermeneutics of psychoanalysis, and results in a dialectical interpretation that will be central to the final development of his philosophical anthropology. At the conclusion of the chapter we will find that the inquiry into the politics of recognition leads us to focus upon the notion of recognition as *responsibility*. This concept is well known as a crucial part of Ricoeur's philosophy of the *capable human being*; a philosophy established on the three constitutive concepts of *dialectics*, *intersubjectivity* and *responsibility*. Some consider this triad to constitute a comprehensive philosophy of recognition.

Let us now examine the Ricoeurian essay on Kohut in detail, in order (1) to immediately indicate its connections with Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self, as expressed in his 1990 *Soi-même comme un autre*, and (2) to explain that this philosophical perspective does not lead too far from the

communicative perspective of Habermas' critical sociology. In fact, both Ricoeur and Habermas stress intersubjectivity as terms or fields of recognition; the first developing a discourse of intersubjective narration; the second of an intersubjective communication as explained previously.

"The Self in Psychoanalysis and in Phenomenological Philosophy" (Ricoeur 2012, 73–93) is connected to another article that Ricoeur published only in Italian in 1988 (in *Metaxù*). It remained long unpublished in its original French version, "Le récit: sa place en psychanalyse" ("Narrative: Its Place in Psychoanalysis" [201–210]).

The article was intended to contribute to studying the 1984 last work of Kohut, *How does Analysis Cure?* (Kohut 1984). This philosophical interest does not concern the dispute between the psychoanalytic schools, but rather the place occupied by *consciousness*, *ego* and *self* (Ricoeur 2012, 73). Its first speculative suggestion regards the nature of the *self* in psychoanalysis, particularly in relation to the experience of the *other*, by which this work can be categorized via the subject line *Soi-même comme un autre* (*Oneself as Another*), which reveals how Ricoeur has also clarified the problem of defining the *self* through a survey carried out into the psychology of the unconscious. The presence of psychoanalysis in *Oneself as Another* is thus also illustrated relation to the problem of intersubjectivity. Before delving into this point, we must consider the essay's second interesting element, as it allows us to develop this argument in reference to the essay's specific content. This element can be immediately discerned from the paper's general structure and procedure. Resembling *Freud and Philosophy* (1965; translation 1970), the article "The Self in Psychoanalysis and in Phenomenological Philosophy" is divided into two parts. In the first, Ricoeur presents an *analytic* of the metapsychology and technique of *self-psychology*; in the second, which is a *dialectical* section, he asks about their possible contribution to philosophical reflection (in particular relation to the question of the relationship between subjectivity and intersubjectivity). This represents Ricoeur's first use of a similar transaction regarding a school other than Freudian psychoanalysis.

Ricoeur's, the articulation of "analytic" and "dialectic" expresses the movement of the *reflection* proceeding from a non-philosophical to a philosophical level. Put more precisely, it transitions to a level where Ricoeur "lets one learn" from the analytical experience, and where the latter enters the sphere of philosophical reflection. This movement was already applied to psychoanalysis in *Freud and Philosophy* and in *The*

Conflict of Interpretations (1969). As such, we must inquire as to why it is repeated in this second passage, and especially in relation to Kohut's psychoanalysis rather than Freud's?

Ricoeur thinks that Kohut's self-psychology can "instruct" philosophy concerning "the relationship between subjectivity and intersubjectivity" (*Ibidem*) better than Freud's psychoanalysis can or could have. He had already found, in his 1965 essay on Freud, that this latter thinker's model was unable to account for the phenomenon and experience of alterity and intersubjectivity (Ricoeur 1970, 61).

This movement from Heinz Kohut's psychoanalysis compensates for its lack of Freudianism, in addition to contributing to the philosophy of the theme of intersubjectivity. Two passages from the 1988 article confirm this claim. The first (from the first Italian edition), reads: "The review *Metaxù* published an article I had written about the *self-analysis* of Heinz Kohut. I am, in fact, very interested in the fact that this author has assigned a primordial place at the relationship with the other". He then discusses the entire 1986 article and, as evidenced by the identical conclusions reached in the work, his primary interest is clearly the three configurations of self-transference that Heinz Kohut describes (mirror transference, the idealizing transference, and twin transference). Specifically, these parallel the three paradigms of intersubjectivity derived from the more radical thoughts of modern and contemporary philosophy (Hegel, Husserl, Lévinas) (Ricoeur 2012, 93). However, the second passage reaffirms the criticism of Freud's systematisation, which closes subjectivity and confirms "there is never an other" (204).

Considering Kohut's thought, we should perhaps speak of the abandonment, or even the *overcoming* (in the Hegelian sense of the term), of Freudianism rather than of its integration or completion. In fact, for Kohut, the dimension of intersubjectivity is *constitutive* of subjectivity in itself, and as such the entire metapsychological model leads to a redefinition. In Kohut, the other is *always* thematised as a structural element because it determines the *cohesion* of the subjective self. We require lifelong help from other human beings who trust us and who position the supportive function of psychic cohesion against the tendency towards fragmentation. In "The Self in Psychoanalysis and in Phenomenological Philosophy", Ricoeur explains, "We have already seen that the self always needs the support of a self-object that helps it to maintain its cohesion. In this sense we might even speak of an autonomy through heteronomy" (82). On the one side stands Freud's solipsistic and *closed* model, in which the

principle of cohesion depends on an intrinsic autonomy, and in which fragmentation is mostly related to internal dynamism. On the other side we have Kohut's *open* model, in which the cohesion of the self gives and maintains intersubjectivity.

Ricoeur is sensitive to the differences between these two models. In fact, his interest in Kohut appears to mark an important step in his progressive distancing from Freud (towards whom he now claims to feel an "increasing dissatisfaction"): a distancing marking a new phase of Ricoeur's philosophy of psychoanalysis. From the beginning of the 1980s, Ricoeur became increasingly attentive to the experience of the clinic, and particularly to the phenomenon of *analytical narration* or, more precisely, to the technical/therapeutic phenomenon of re-constituting the *narrative identity*. In conjunction with this, he also became increasingly attentive to the experience of the encounter with the other. This latter theme had held Ricoeur's attention since his early studies on Husserl, and it became central to the anthropological construction of *oneself as Another*. Here, in fact, the subject seems to resemble Kohut's *self* significantly more than Freud's.

This change of perspective has not only affected the interpretation of psychoanalysis, but consequently has also made this interpretation suitable for and compatible with the content and the "necessities" of Ricoeur's philosophy, which he developed during the 1980s. Proof of this lies in the theme of intersubjectivity, which prompted Ricoeur to overcome (via Kohut) the "Freudian" (and solipsist) idea of the *semantics of desire*, and to assume the broader and clearly directed conception that "human desire has a dialogical structure" (204). This change in perspective has allowed psychoanalysis to *support* and, in some ways, *legitimise* the Ricoeurian theorisations of intersubjectivity and alterity (although obviously not simply due to the introverted dimension of otherness within in the "figure" of the moral consciousness). The article "Narrative: Its Place in Psychoanalysis" explains that analysis seeks to illuminate old relationships, especially those with one's father, mother, and anyone related to a child's desires. The analytic experience itself (in each Freudian case) is thus based upon the first reported desire with the other, via language. The other may correspond to this desire, as evidenced by the psychoanalysis revolving around fundamental dramas. The relationship with the father and the mother is one of language, because the child is born into an environment of language, meaning and discourse. In this pre-constituted realm, the father and mother are not only the "beings" or "parents" that nourish the child: they are also the ones who bring it into the

community of language, and therefore into the lifeworld (204–205).

The issue of narration presents a second piece of evidence, broadening and, in a sense, overtaking the hermeneutical perspective on the interpretation of symbols. Ricoeur recognises (and, in fact, seeks to indicate) that “Freud himself never thought to theorize” the “basic fact” that “each session of analysis [includes] some narrative element, as when one recounts a dream” (207). Freud never discussed the possibility of establishing a correlation between the narrative and analysis. Therefore, by extension, he would not have theorized the possibility of reading psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic, in the sense that man is a being who understands himself both through interpretation (208) and via the comprehensive method of *narrative interpretation* (which is to interpret one’s self narratively). This is the main reason behind Ricoeur’s “increasing dissatisfaction” with Freudianism.

I became more and more convinced that Freudian theory is discordant with its own discovery [...]. In saying this I am in complete agreement with Jürgen Habermas and others, as well as with a number of English-speaking interpreters of psychoanalysis. They all see a growing gap between its theory which is ultimately based on a mechanistic model, an economic one, hence an energetic one, which completely misses the key dimension of Freud’s discovery and its practice (202).

Thus, in the course of the 1980s, Ricoeur departs significantly from Freudianism. His departure from the theoretical-hermeneutic model has profound implications for philosophical anthropology, particularly regarding the conceptual connection between *dialectic* and *intersubjectivity*. The article “Narrative: Its Place in Psychoanalysis” clearly defines the *narrative* characterisation of Ricoeur’s dialectic of intersubjectivity. Ricoeur follows two independent lines of thought to reflect on the place of “narrative function” in psychoanalysis. One line comes from narrative theory, and while not having or bringing anything to the depths of psychology, Ricoeur first encounters psychoanalysis during the mediation between the two modes of storytelling, the historical and the fictional, which both contain “narrative identity”. He also encounters psychoanalysis in relation to the concept of “narrative identity”, and in the hermeneutics of the self, where the process of self-understanding is always constituted narratively (even when storytelling) and resembles the process of the analytic situation.

In contrast, the second line of reflection on the theory and epistemology of Freudianism leads Ricoeur to accept “in full formula” the thesis of

Habermas (and others) regarding the “scientific self-misunderstanding of Freud” and the “*hermeneutical* nature of psychoanalysis”. This line of thought, in combination with his “increasing dissatisfaction regarding Freudianism” pushes Ricoeur to *reinterpret* psychoanalysis. He does not begin with theory, but rather the analytic experience itself, *i.e.* the relationship between the analysed and the analyst, especially during the transference process (202).

This change of perspective convinced Ricoeur “to reintroduce the narrative element into the structure of the analytic experience” (203), via first examining the evidence Freud produced via his practical activities (in contrast to his theories), and secondly by considering the testimony of other French psychoanalysts, such as Piera Aulagnier and Marmoni (in addition to the German-speaking psychoanalysts Mitscherlich and Lorenzer). One should determine “the ‘criteriology’ of the analytical fact”, which Ricoeur seeks to explain in four steps. The last of these allows him to relocate this discussion from the epistemological to the hermeneutic plane of narration. As the first hypothesis making the use of the story possible, the first step allows Ricoeur to demonstrate a link to the language of psychoanalysis (via Habermas’ line of argumentation). This becomes a central and constitutive *practice of language*: everything happens in or through language, in order to “resymbolize what had been desymbolized” (204). The second step relies upon Kohut’s self-analysis to allow Ricoeur to discuss the “dialogical structure” of human desire. The third emphasises that our relationships to reality and to the other cross the boundaries of imagination, (for although the imagery may be complicated, it can also become a place of illusion). Finally, the fourth reaches the *narrative dimension*, which allows him to add the *dimension of time* as an element.

Ricoeur conducts this reinterpretation of psychoanalysis by connecting the “*warp*” of hermeneutics, the analytical experience of “plot”, the narrative theory of *Temps et récit* (1983-1985), and the narrative conception of a hermeneutics of the self (*Oneself as Another*).

Ricoeur’s work unites the concepts of time and narrative, as well as introducing the theme of narrative identity and narration as a method of self-understanding. In terms of the latter point, psychoanalysis interprets mediation through the element of self-understanding, and people undergoing psychoanalysis “are beings who understood themselves by interpreting themselves” via narrative.

To conclude, Ricoeur's research is rooted in a social-psychology perspective, and extends back to the philosophical-anthropological discourse. We cannot grasp the dissonance and distance using this perspective. Nevertheless, Habermas uses this and the context in which it is applied – that is, strictly speaking, the sociological scope and the scope of a social critical theory – to develop his “philosophy of intersubjectivity”. We cannot hide this discrepancy, nor can we locate its resolution. However, we possess more elements with which to reconstruct a theoretical elaboration of the inter-subjective split between psychology and critical social theory.

7.4 A Conclusion

From different perspectives, the transition to a sociology and a psychology of recognition stresses the centrality of the other, as well as the intersubjective dynamism in the process of emancipation. Ricoeur's psychology of recognition illuminates the complexity of the process of recognition, stretched between the dialectic of opposing forces (constructive and destructive; negative and positive; emancipatory and regressive; socializing and pathologizing; etc.).

When examining the contemporary world from the perspective of the international complexification of social systems (complex and contradictory at a political and cultural international level), or when considering the emergencies related to an increasingly conflictual reality, we can reach a few conclusions. Humans are increasingly dominated by individualistic selfishness and the irrationality of presently overwhelming capitalist liberalism. Following Habermas and Ricoeur, this realisation should compel us to establish a philosophy of recognition that, first of all, locates the vision of a new communicative humanism, espousing the dialectic of recognition as its central and pivotal node. In order to promote the real progress of individuals and society, it is necessary that (1) a philosophy of emancipation is established, and (2) a philosophy of communitarian participation and intersubjective recognition must return, in order to nourish social life and the reality of everyday life, and to promote and spread a culture of dialogue and active participation. As a “vital need”, its absence deeply injures society and inevitably causes people to adopt defensive responses.

In conclusion, Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology questions the method of reconsidering and re-examining the psychological and sociological

question of recognition in terms of the civic and ethical responsibility of the person. Put another way, it reconsiders and readdresses it as a matter firstly of moral and civic responsibility, and secondly of (emancipatory) participation for people (for all people, and for each person). This provides the basic general premise of his philosophy of recognition. Of greatest importance is that the recognition of self and other is always tied to mutuality, respect and gratitude. Ricoeur uses Honneth as his fundamental dialectical-critical reference, and particularly relies upon his analysis of the threefold recognition as mutuality: the pre-judicial form of mutual recognition as *love*; the juridical instrument of political and social recognition as *legal rights*; the practical and cultural instrument of social confidence as *social esteem*. Ricoeur is aware of the importance and centrality of this analytical grid. *De facto*, the absence of love can cause non-acceptance, exclusion, humiliation; the absence of legal rights causes disrespect, unbalanced relations, illegality, injustice; the lack of social esteem can cause suspicions, tensions, disrupted social order and misrecognition. However, Ricoeur surpasses these levels of analysis, and leads his research on recognition to the level of a moral problematisation.

The challenge for the present and the future will be realising the ideal and ethical values for the lives of individuals and groups of varying backgrounds within multicultural societies which are institutionally ordered and freely inhabited. This challenge exists in the dialectic between responsibility and empowerment; between justice and rights/obligations; it is manifest in questions of compliance with ethical and political integration, and in the dynamics of redistribution.

CHAPTER 8

SEMANTICS OF ACTION: HUMAN ACTION BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND CAUSATION

8.1 Introduction: A Comprehensive Approach on the Human Being

Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another* offers a comprehensive philosophical perspective of the human being: precisely, a phenomenological hermeneutics model of personal identity which connects and coordinates body and mind, external (corporal, relational and social life) and internal (psychic, experiential and spiritual) life. In fact, within this work, subjectivity is understood as a natural and existential/experiential “expressive power”, at the same time as being a physical, mental, social and moral process: that is, a means of emancipation as well as of development.

Ricoeur articulates the dialectic between identity and self by putting in connection the subjective characteristic related to the natural aspects of an individual to specific/unique inner cultural and historical aspects experienced by a person. The former refers to “bodily” aspects, such as one’s DNA code, personal character and so on; the latter is symbolically expressed in the practical, moral and social act of “keeping one’s promises” (see Ricoeur 1992, 118). For Ricoeur, the narrative dimension of identity, or *tout court* narrative identity, is the function that dynamically and synthetically modulates the relationship between these two dimensions of subjectivity. The rule of narrative mediation is of central importance in the formation and perpetual redefinition of an idea and representation/understanding of the self, as well as in the very constitution of personality and personal identity. Human identity needs a corporal as well as a mental and a social component for the constitution and expression of a *self*, but its essential structure is historical-cultural and existential. This explain why, in Ricoeur’s understanding, “self-understanding

is an interpretation; interpretation of the self, in turn, finds in the narrative, among other signs and symbols, a privileged form of mediation; the latter borrows from history as well as from fiction, making a life story a fictional history or, if one prefers, a historical fiction, interweaving the historiographic style of biographies with the novelistic style of imaginary autobiographies” (114n).

The mediation between the corporal/natural dimension of the ego and the existential dimension of the self is both a cultural and a social product of mediation; at the same time, it is involved in and expressed by personal emancipation. The more a person progresses as a cultural and moral being (from an individual to a person) the more he/she is able to harmonise natural or unthinking characteristics (drives, instincts and so on) with cultural/moral aspects (such as social recognition and intersubjective respect).

We can interpret this perspective through its direct link with the ontological constitution of the human being, advancing the idea that behind this processual dialectics of human existence and corporality there is an Aristotelian conception of the Being as a Power/Act dynamic, which expresses the idea of subjectivity as an expressive power (*ἐρμηνευτικός δύναμις*). In fact, Ricoeur indirectly thematises this idea in his tenth study of *Oneself as Another*. This is a conception that offers a way to deepen the idea of the *human capacity* to re-“read” drives as desires and causes as motivations or, better, to receive, rebalance, remodulate and transform physical-emotional drives into desires, linguistically and symbolically represented as justified or argued motivations, and from there into actions and behaviours culturally and socially (re-)modelled. As known, both in *Oneself as Another* and in the *Course of Recognition* Ricoeur organises his study of the human being around the questions: “Who speaks? Who acts? Who tells?” (see Ricoeur 2005, 96 ff). All of these questions are connected to the Power/Act dynamic which constitutes the essential dimension of the *capable human being*.

Ricoeur’s comprehensive philosophy of the human being is able to subsume and coordinate a wide range of speculative and scientific discourses. It is, *de facto*, an interdisciplinary approach that transversally embraces and subsumes (1) empirical psychology and psychoanalysis, (2) linguistics, philosophy of language and phenomenology, (3) semantics of action and philosophy of action, (4) phenomenology, philosophical hermeneutics and moral philosophy, (5) philosophical anthropology and narrative hermeneutics, and (6) literature, cultural studies, the philosophy

of history and historiography. In fact, with his long and winding route of multiple speculative detours from speculative and non-speculative points of departure, in Ricoeur's work and approach, philosophy itself becomes a mediator between the human and social sciences (see Ricoeur 2003). It is for this reason that Ricoeur's philosophy proceeds from discursive level to discursive level, putting into dependent connection philosophical anthropology and the phenomenological hermeneutics of the self, the phenomenological hermeneutics of the self and the philosophy of action, the philosophy of action and the pragmatics and semantics of action, and so on. Actually, a philosophy of action cannot be sustainable without interdisciplinary examination and speculative synthesis at an anthropological level concerning causation and motivation, desire and intention, and agency and responsibility.

Today, the theory of action has reached the configuration of an autonomous discipline that uses the philosophy of language to summarise its semantic and pragmatic studies concerning action. It has achieved important disciplinary and interdisciplinary results, but its narrow/exclusive focus on the dialectic between philosophy of language and philosophy of action tends to be lacking both in clarification of a certain number of structural aspects and in the determination of new kind of dilemmas. This is evident from critically-hermeneutically analysing the semantics and pragmatics of action and applying the findings to a holistic philosophical anthropology of action. A unilateral analytical approach is not capable of concretely and wholly penetrating the phenomenon of action as *human action*. Without employing critical-reflective means, it is not possible to reach the existential level of the human being as *human*.

Several contemporary studies in analytical philosophy reveal a serious loss of the holistic and comprehensive sense of things, and even of the simple fact that a study concerning the human being requires a multileveled, non-linear and interdisciplinary discursive construction. Some essays reveal a tendency towards a form of reasoning or intellectual approach that manages to be simultaneously simplistic *and* arrogant: for example, putting the problematic of action connected to the decision to hit a ball at the same level as the decision to kill someone or play a Beethoven sonata (see, for example, Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 174, 175). Sometimes, argumentative efficacy is gambled on this rhetoric and the seductive strategy of colourful exemplification and fragmentation of aspects and issues.

Ricoeur recognises the importance of developing a study that articulates the levels and methodological registers of discourse by following an

analytical approach on it; nevertheless, he constantly makes the effort to re-coordinate the results of these steps under a major speculative synthesis, retaining an opened approach towards subsequent, though not necessarily rationalizable, degrees of factual complexity. In the specific case of the philosophy of action, he underlines that any strategy aiming to articulate the conceptual net of action (which is the first moment of a linguistic phenomenology of action) must be analytical and must be accessed by answering the key questions: “Who?”, “What?”, “Why?”, “Where?” and “When?”. Conversely, there is a current tendency to reduce the questioning to “What?” and “Why?”, which is an evident expression of cultural impoverishment and a clear impoverishment of philosophical knowledge and understanding within a *scientistic* cage (see Ricoeur 1992, 57 ff). By staying fixed at the level of a linguistic semantic approach, human action is condemned to be bound to the spatial and abstract dimension instead of referring to the existential sphere of initiative and responsibility. In fact, if the human acting is “reduced” to acting in itself, that is, to a “thing”, then it is an *event*. Conversely, the study of the human acting as an acting of a specific subject coincides with the consideration of action as initiative and experience, that is, as a subjectively motivated and justified action. To describe an action and to grasp its full sense is to fully understand it by embracing both the rational-explanatory aspects of its *causal* elements and the hermeneutical-practical aspects of its *motives* or *reasons*.

By following the reasoning developed to this point, we can articulate the following section with a step-wise structure that is simultaneously progressive *and* circular. First, we will consider the question of causation and motivation in a philosophy of action, offering practical-speculative reflections on the application of phenomenology to the philosophy of action. Second, we will explore the contribution of language and critical hermeneutics to a philosophy of action, before a comprehensive, final return to the question of the body, and the phenomenological and critical hermeneutical study of the dialectics between causation and motivation.

8.2 Philosophy of Action between Causation and Motivation

In Ricoeur’s view, a philosophy of action is not a science of action (Ricoeur 1977). The scientific study and knowledge of the human being led to a fragmentation of the universe of discourse related to this subject,

mirroring the division, fragmentation and non-coordination of its own specialised disciplines. Conversely, phenomenological hermeneutics and critical hermeneutics may work toward the unification of this discourse (we already discussed this aspect in the first part of this book; see, in addition, Busacchi 2013a).

Ricoeur's 1977 book *Le discours de l'action* uses specifically this approach, working with it to negotiate between the science of language and the philosophy of language, as well as between phenomenology and a pragmatic philosophy of action. This is clear from the first chapter, where Ricoeur introduces a distinction between the human sciences (i.e. psychology and sociology) and philosophy. Both psychology and sociology focus on human action based on knowledge linked to observed/analysed human behaviour.

This is the basis of the work advanced by scholars such as Talcott Parsons and Alain Touraine. For Parsons, the main objective of a scientific sociological research on action is to study the relationship between the agent and his/her aim, whereas Touraine stresses the social aspect of all processes and the reference of a singular action to the tensional elements of change, subordinating subjective action to the collective dynamism. Within such a vision, the philosophy of action may contribute, at a practical level, by introducing critical reflection on the ethical and practical value and substance of social action. Ricoeur proposes considering this ethical-practical discourse not as an analytical exercise of pure criticism but as a practical-reflective discourse and a prescriptive theory, something that lies somewhere between Aristotle and Kant, so to say (see Ricoeur 1977, 4). In fact, both Aristotle and Kant articulate their ethics by connecting action or will to practical rational concepts or prescriptions, while Ricoeur presents his research as a preliminary step towards the ethical hermeneutical study and understanding of human action. This preliminary step is a phenomenological description and a hermeneutical analysis of the discourses in which the human being says what he/she is doing (*Ibidem*).

It is true that the strong connection between philosophy of action and ethics is currently recognised (see, for. ex., Craig 2005, 3), but for the most part, contemporary philosophy of action ignores ethics and ethical issues as a critical-reflective approach. It is thematically articulated in: (1) "acts and actions" (basic actions, bodily movements, the causal theory of action, speech acts, grammar of action and logical form, collective action and the like) and (2) "agency and causation" (volition and will, intention,

deliberation and decision, teleological explanation, reasons and causes, causation and motivation, mental causation, mental acts, agency, patency, personhood and so on) (see ●Connor, Sandis 2010). In short, currently, the predominant current perspective is not fully representative of the various approaches to the philosophy of action. Certainly, Ricoeur's view on the philosophy of action reveals him to be particularly interested in a comprehensive approach and, for this reason, his speculative movement through ethics seems to be particularly strategic and reasonable, even if it methodologically presents some problematic aspects, for example, how to harmonise the purely *descriptive* approach of the semantics and phenomenology of action with a *prescriptive* practical evaluation.

8.3 From a Linguistic-Phenomenological Analysis to a Practical-Speculative Phenomenology

●pening his 1977 book, Ricoeur explains that his goal is to explore the contribution of language to the philosophy of action (Ricoeur 1977, 3) in terms of interdisciplinary research that negotiates between the philosophical and non-philosophical level. The progressive direction of this research reveals how such interdisciplinary work becomes polarised around analytical and phenomenological-hermeneutical philosophy, and how a philosophy of language offers the basis for a theoretical and a practical exercise. In this manner, Ricoeur provides a new speculative perspective for a practical philosophy of action via a philosophical linguistic analysis which is methodologically placed between analytical philosophy and phenomenological hermeneutics.

The first challenge of this research appears within the analytical course examining discourses in which a subject says what he/she is doing, because this "saying what one is doing" must be queried at the level of the *concepts* involved in describing action, at the subsequent level of the *propositions* by which action is expressed, and at the subsequent level of the *arguments* upon which subject justified his/her actions; from this, a "strategy of action" emerges. Conceptual analysis clarifies the difference in meaning and highlights various categories that define an action (intention, scope, reason for acting, motive, desire, preference, choice, agent and responsibility). It is the function of the analysis to identify and reproduce the "conceptual net of action".

Ricoeur follows the approach of analytical philosophers of ordinary language. The linguistic expression of common language offers a double

objectification expressed via discourse from the external point-of-view of the observer and from the interior point of view of the actor. Ricoeur connects his phenomenological and interdisciplinary approach at this level, for this double dimension of discourse and ordinary language: of being lived *and* perceived, of being objectified *and* experienced. A simple analytic or scientific analysis can not equally embrace both at the same time. The latter, in fact, characteristically involves describing things using an eidetic approach from lived experience; critical hermeneutics may function as a bridge between this eidetic and the practical-ethical level, where linguistic analysis is a formal external approach to a given fact or product, and a philosophy of language may subsume certain general aspects only.

It is interesting to consider how Ricoeur's study of the discourse of action phenomenologically approaches the dichotomy between an intentional act and a causal act. The assertion "I'm raising my arm to indicate that I have to turn left" describes an action I am taking and an experience I am having, where the assertion "The arm is rising" defines a movement, a fact of the world, of the body I am observing as an external observer. It is at this problematic level that the ethical practical discourse enters into play. Ricoeur (who makes explicit reference to Elizabeth Anscombe's investigations on the subject; Anscombe 1958) underlines that the first assertion is "knowledge without observation", and classifies it as a kind of "practical knowledge". He does not simply distinguish between intentional and non-intentional acts but establish intentionality as the main aspect, together with the dimension of practical knowledge, bound to analytical philosophy, phenomenology and ethics. In this manner, his linguistic analyses are immediately oriented in a practical direction, and his approach makes it easy to introduce and intertwine phenomenology with language (see Ricoeur 1973, 125–126). Due to this mixed strategy, the course of a descriptive analysis of language seems incomplete. This is, perhaps, explainable considering the general declared finality of the study; however, Ricoeur takes the risk to decrease the descriptive and objective moment of his research. The consequence is the presentation of a non-balanced study on causation and motivation because the descriptive level of analysis is much subordinated to the prescriptive moment. A similar difficult mix and complexity is evident in the second general step of this investigation on action. This thematises the logical form of the propositions describing and expressing action that Ricoeur approaches by reconsidering Gottlob Frege's propositional logic and John Austin's, Peter Strawson's and John Searle's analytical philosophy of language. ● Of particular interest to Ricoeur is the question related of *speech acts*.

Analytical philosophy distinguishes between performative and constative utterances (“I promise you” and “I take you to be my wife/husband” are utterances where to say is to do; see Ricoeur 1977, 8). Ricoeur connects and subordinates it to another distinction, that is, the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts (introduced by Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*, 1962). The latter distinction readdresses things in a practical way by introducing the key point of the meaning of an action as intertwined with the action in itself; that is to say, the meaning of a proposition referred or connected to an action is not internal, but depends on the jointed locutionary act and the various impacts on a proposition related to whether its sense is oriented to indicate, to relieve, to order, to solicit, and so on. Thanks to the illocutionary act, this second dimension significantly contributes to solving the problem that the theory of speech acts imposes on the philosophy of action.¹

Following this line of analysis and interpretation of the philosophy of language, Ricoeur reveals that he is subsuming two of the three major approaches on the autonomy of logical sense from psychological operations, namely the approaches of Frege and Edmund Husserl (and, marginally, even Bertrand Russell). Ricoeur recalls how this (secular) research on the autonomy of logic from psychology has been accompanied by an attempt to divide sense from subjectivity. Frege considers sense (*Sinn*) a third kind of reality, with a specific kind of objectivity, separated from *nature* and *spirit*, an *ideal* reality. For him, an “ideal object” is irreducible to a representation (*Vorstellung*) or to subjective mental elaboration, and it is also different from meaning (*Bedeutung*). Frege postulates that a theory of signs is incomplete if there is no correlation between sign and sense, and if the final destination or transcendental reality of sense is not admitted and postulated. He points out that it is possible to have propositions furnished with sense but not with meaning.

This postulation – that there something real always subsists beyond a proposition – plays in Ricoeur’s writings a mediatory function for the movement from an analytic of language and discourse to a phenomenology of human practical experience of action. In fact, his trajectory from Frege to Husserl parallels this theoretical-practical vector. Husserl’s interest in separating logic from psychology intertwines with his

¹ As Ricoeur explains: “Il faut mener à bien une analyse de tout ‘speech act’ qui mette bien en place, d’une part, la proposition avec sa référence (ce sur quoi elle porte) son sens (ce qu’elle dit de ce sujet logique), d’autre part, la force illocutionnaire dont elle revêt cette proposition”; Ricoeur 1977, 8).

interest in finding a solution that preserves objectivity but not in an abstract way, that is, without cutting off reality. Ricoeur embraces his theoretical and procedural solution, putting it in relation to Frege's theorisation and, at the same time, finding a way to connect Husserl's logic of the sense to the theory of speech acts from a phenomenological-practical viewpoint (a phenomenological-practical view that is interesting to put in a dialectical connection with *action* and *moral responsibility*; see Ricoeur 1973).

Ricoeur continues his study by considering the genesis of conceptual and propositional analysis. Both had their starting point in logical positivism, although their theoretical development (speech acts, in particular) has gone beyond it. The fundamental mistake of this logic is that it unilaterally identified the predicate and the sense of a proposition only with the constataion and structural analysis of propositions, whether the analysis of ordinary language reveals the existence of the sense even beyond both the descriptive level and the structural dimension of a proposition.

If, on the one hand, Ricoeur recognises the important contribution of a new conceptual analysis and the theory of proposition, on the other hand, he persists underlining that a comprehensive deepening of the discourse concerning human action requires going even beyond the theory of speech-acts, as demonstrated by studying the discursive dimension of a proposition from the perspective of human intention/intentionality. As already mentioned, any comprehensive research must consequently progress through a triple critical analysis that takes into account the relationship between linguistic and phenomenological analysis, between linguistic analysis/phenomenology and the human sciences and, finally, between linguistic/phenomenological analysis and the ethical practical reality. It is through such a critical approach that the notions of "intention" and "intentionality" come to play an essential role in Ricoeur's philosophy of action.

Thanks to Anscombe's work on language, these concepts have become a "middle way" between language and phenomenology, as well as between phenomenology and practical philosophy. For Anscombe, a declaration is a proper declaration (truly expressed as such and truly received/receivable as such) only within a linguistic game (which is intrinsically shared) where the form of a possible response mirrors the form of a correlated question. Intention effectively and meaningfully participates in the construction of a proposition as a meaningful proposition; it is what makes sense of what one is saying, and it underpins what one understands when listening to

what another individual is saying. Ricoeur establishes a narrow link between the analytical phenomenological sphere of description and the practical sphere of existence. The movement is now from a natural level that thematises concept, structure, order and logic to an existential level that thematises reasons and motivations, feelings and lived experience (see Ricoeur 1977, 15).

This path toward ethics is not strictly connected to the philosophy of language and phenomenology as two simple intertwined methodologies (14), but rather requires an additional practical hermeneutical work. The subsequent two critiques support this hermeneutical practical line through their reciprocal inferior and superior limitations. In fact, the dialectical confrontation between linguistic phenomenology and the human sciences reveals the inferior limit and difficult dialectic between the sphere of causation and the sphere of motivation (17). Conversely, the confrontation between philosophy of action and ethics reconsiders and reinterprets human intentions in a practical way connecting it to the notion of *responsibility* (18).

8.4 From Anscombe and Davidson's Approach to Ricoeur's Critical Hermeneutics

As already anticipated in the introduction to this chapter, to describe an action and to grasp its full sense is equal to fully understanding it by embracing both the rational-explanatory aspects of its *causal* elements and the hermeneutical-practical aspects of its *motives* or *reasons*. In fact, action is and is not an event. Action is an event from the external point of view of an observer, from a scientific point of view or from the point of view of the world; but from a subjective perspective it is a lived experience, an expression of the *Erlebnis* (Ricoeur 1992, 61). Here it emerges a logical epistemological critical problem. "The 'what' of action [...] is specified in a decisive way by its relation to the 'why?' To say what an action is, is to say why it is done" (63).

The validity of this discourse is confirmed by introducing and comparing two alternative strategies for the study of human action, namely those realised by Anscombe (see above) and Donald Davidson (Davidson 1963). Even though they are approaches more focussed on the subjective/experiential dimension of action, from them we can reach new problems and quasi-paradoxical solutions. From Anscombe, we have that intentionality *causes and does not cause* the action; from Davidson we discover that human

action is a completely different thing from the world *and*, at the same time, something reducible to it. For Anscombe, the three uses of intention – intention to act, intention in acting, intentional action – constitute the response to three different kinds of question, that is: “What are doing?”, “Why?”, and “For what reason?”.

In fact, action is always comprehended through its relationship with an agent’s intention (and examination through linguistic analysis reaches beyond the simple linguistic level). The analysis of language enters into the relationship between language and action, as well as into the critical evaluation of whether an action is motivated or caused. The analytical approach overcomes the contrivance dichotomy of *movement and initiative*. “What distinguishes actions which are intentional from those which are not?” (Anscombe 1958, 9). The question is without meaning when the answer exactly reiterates the evidence of a cause for action instead of providing a reason for acting in a specific way. However, because an analytical analysis of ordinary language does not use hermeneutics in interpreting what is said, it also does not overcome the world of an assertion to interpret the real intentions and the real consciousness and awareness of the speaker. The real functioning behind the process from deliberation to action can remain obscure and unintelligible even for the individual who acts, for example, from the perspective of the degree of influence of subjective emotions and unconscious drives or content involved in the process of ideation, (self-)motivation and (self-)justification (see Busacchi 2016).

This objection to Anscombe’s approach introduces a second problematic point, which expresses the passage from the question of “why?” to the question of “who” effectively did and is responsible for a certain action. The analysis of ordinary language stays at the rational level of analysis of possible causes or motivations and addresses the “ordinary man” in general, not the concrete person in front of one right now.

● On the one hand, the conceptual analysis of intention instructs us about the language of action from the communicative point of view, indicating/explaining certain modalities of knowledge and offering an approach to understanding the reasons behind non-causal actions. ● On the other hand, this kind of analysis is unable to tell us anything about lived experiences, that is, actions relating to intention and dependent on free will instead of inhibitions, traumas and drives. Through Anscombe’s approach, we understand that intention does not cause action but rather motivates it; nevertheless, we cannot understand when an action is actually caused

instead of being motivated. That is the aporia.

Davidson's approach is different. His distinction between *actions* and *events* is particularly interesting because suggests considering human action as something perpetually distinguished from a simple event; *ergo*, it does not appear as explainable through the world. However, by following his reasoning, Davidson's distinction between event and action, between the human sphere and the world, reveals a kind of unilateral distinction. In fact, he sets up the teleological character of human action as different from natural causalism, yet it is characterised as causalism. Where is the subject of intention? Who is he/she? How do we manage the non-explainable or non-teleological reasons, the motivations that require interpretation? If human actions are reduced to explainable actions, it offers the solution of a reductionist rationalisation in which human action *is not explainable by the world but it is like the world*.

Ricoeur's phenomenological-critical hermeneutics tries to overcome these aporias, trying to coordinate the analytical exercise with a descriptive-interpretative procedure. In addition, as we already said, not only does Ricoeur provides a mixed epistemological and methodological model, he defines a specific philosophy of the human being that absorbs and expresses both objective/natural and subjective/existential dimensions of the self. Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutical research concerning action may accept that teleological causation is different from natural causation, but also – and this is an essential point – it reveals that the dialectic between causation and motivation within the human process of elaboration, deliberation and action is complex and varied involving the psychological and neurobiological spheres on the one hand, and the social and practical and cultural-historical spheres on the other.

8.5 From the Phenomenology of the Body to the Dialectics between Motivation, Causation and Desire

Why is it reasonable to ask “How do you loosen a screw?” while it is not reasonable to ask “How do you raise your arm?” The exercise of a capacity does not simply result from knowledge. I do not “know” my body when I am acting, because I am simply *able to act*. At this corporal event, “I know” when I am doing is not the same as what “I do”. Like Anscombe, Ricoeur embraces the idea that intentional acts are part of a more general class of events that are knowable without observation, and also recognises that, under the same class, other events that are not actions take place, as

in the position of one's body or involuntary actions (see Ricoeur 1977, 24). Between doing and happening there is a substantial difference, like that between the two different universes of discourse and experience. "Happening" has to do with something external, an observable fact; "doing" is an experience directly connected with agent's inner life; it is something experienced and performed. The phenomenological distinction between body-subject and body-object focusses on and exemplifies this important dialectic. As implemented by Ricoeur, it additionally focusses on the anthropological question concerning human nature, which subsumes the dialectics of motivation and cause in a richer way. In fact, there are multiple dualisms connected to the body understood as a dimension of the self, as a mode for expression and realisation, expressed (1) as an experienced body and as an objective body in the sense of a contrast between subjective and objective knowledge which crosses the dilemmas of voluntary and involuntary instances, and (2) as a body that is simultaneously perceived and experienced as *this body that I am* and the social psychological dimension that I relationally and culturally express with/through my body. I am constantly overcoming its natural limitations. I am not reducible to my biology because *I am not my body*.

We certainly must consider the human anthropological understanding of action under a non-reductionist and non-substantialist perspective, as Ricoeur's philosophy of the capable human being does.

It is within his first speculative book, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* (1950) that Ricoeur developed his first approach on the anthropological philosophical problem through a phenomenology of the *Integral Cogito*, which essentially aims to overcome and resolve the problem of an abstract Cogito. The Cogito is rooted in the *sum*, and phenomenology must face the series of dualisms that a phenomenology of the *Integral Cogito* must solve and overcome, starting from Cartesian dualism. As Ricoeur stresses,

The reconquest of the Cogito must be total; and it is within the Cogito itself that we must find the body and the involuntary which it nourishes. The integral experience of Cogito includes the I desire, I can, I live, and in general the existence as a body. A common subjectivity based the homogeneity of the voluntary and the involuntary as structures. The description, attentive to what appears to the self-reflection, moves in a single universe of discourse: the discourse on the subjectivity of the integral Cogito (Ricoeur 1966, 9).

For Ricoeur, subjectivity has the principle of unity in itself. This key is not expressed either by the fact that I recognise that "I am" or by the fact of

(objectively) being a subject: it is expressed by “I exist”. Ricoeur approaches the problematic of internal and external dualism in a similar way. In fact, he does so in a way that produces a different effect when applied to an interrelational context, remodulating and attenuating the radical distinction between fact and action, between the world and the experience, and between the other and me. By following Husserl’s fifth *Cartesian Meditation*, he summarises this as follows:

A personal body is someone’s body, a subject’s body, my body, and your body. For while introspection can be naturalized, external knowledge can in turn be personalized. Empathy (*Einfuehlung*) is precisely the reading of the body of another as indicating acts which have a subjective aim and origin. Thus subjectivity is both “internal” and “external”. It is the subject function of someone’s acts. By communicating with another, I have a different relation to a body which is neither included in my perception of my own body, nor inserted in an empirical acquaintance with the world. I discover body in the second person, body as motive, organ, and nature of another person. I read decision, effort, and consent in it. It is then not an empirical object, a thing. The concepts of subjectivity (of the voluntary and the involuntary) are formed by gathering experience derived from multiple subjects. On the one hand, my consciousness is profoundly transformed by the reoccurrence of the other’s consciousness in it. I treat myself as a you which in its external appearance is a presentation to the other. From this viewpoint, to know myself is to anticipate my presentation to a you. On the other hand, knowledge of myself is always to some extent the guide for deciphering the other, even if the other is in the first place and principally an original revelation of empathy. The you is an other myself (10–11).

This phenomenological rereading or reinterpreting of the development of self-awareness constitutes a central moment in Ricoeur’s anthropological research, as well as an unavoidable point for his phenomenological hermeneutics of the self. This is “unavoidable” even when he articulates it as a process of recognition that implements the dialectical conflictual approach of a (neo-Hegelian) struggle for recognition (see Ricoeur 2005; Honneth 1992; Busacchi 2015).

The problematic relationship between cause and motivation plays an important role in this discourse and not only in reference to the sphere of a philosophical anthropology. Within *Le discours de l’action*, the confrontation between the two notions and dimensions is realised in two main moments: (1) through the analytical description and study of the concept of “motivation” as articulated in the conceptual net of action, and (2) through the analysis of the notion of “agent” as implicating a “power” to produce action. David Hume’s approach is unable to take into

consideration this form of causation by the agent's exercise of power, because it includes the idea of causation as *production* (see Ricoeur 1977, 85).

As we said above, the first moment concerns the conceptual net of action; and it is particularly the notion of action that plays an important role in the analysis of all concepts, essentially because it clearly opens the problematic of the duality of the universes of discourse – in this case, between action and movement, action and event, and doing and happening. Ricoeur counterpoises the notion of “intentional action” against the metaphysical idea that intention is transcendentally antecedent to action; and it is around the practical reasoning on intention as *something wanted* that he enters the psychological sphere (38). Then, he shows that *desires have a sense*. Here, there is a dialectical dimension and reality that does not simply concern the psychological or mental sphere but rather mirrors the complex and varied dialectics of mind and brain, mind and body, identity and personhood, the natural physical and (at the same time) existential historical cultural dimension of the human being (see Busacchi 2016).

By following this line of reasoning, we are driven again into the anthropological problem, specifically into the problem of providing a philosophical anthropology able to summarise and express the flexible, multifaceted profile of human identity, which is *natural* and *existential* at the same time. We know that Ricoeur's philosophy of the *capable human being* goes exactly in this direction.

8.6 Conclusions

As distinct from the scientific approach, in philosophy, a full comprehension of human action must have a practical ethical reference. Ricoeur approaches the theme of action by trying to intertwine it with parallel dialectics articulated between phenomenology and hermeneutics. In this specific case, his use of hermeneutics appears to be “soft”, but the methodological and procedural approach works as a *de facto* critical hermeneutics, and philosophical hermeneutics is at work behind a reflective phenomenology whose key notion of intentionality is immediately linked to the practical-ethical notion of responsibility. This operation is facilitated by the specific idea of ethics that Ricoeur embraces in *Le discours de l'action*, making explicit reference to ethics as the *deontological* domain of normativity, obligation and then *responsibility*. In

contrast, he also refers to ethics as the teleological domain, by means of which a linkage can be established between the intentional sphere of action as an expression of intentionality and the intentional sphere of human choice as an act of responsibility. In this approach, Ricoeur is oriented towards realising a new theoretical foundation for a philosophy of action with a practical ethical basis.

His analytical survey on the conceptual net of action continues this thread by exploring the concept of intention; followed by the concept of motivation (with its complex, internal and external, dialectics of motive and cause) and, finally, the concept of agency. At this point, he also explicitly considers and exercises the phenomenological approach, whose use is subsequently reinforced by the movement from the conceptual to the propositional and discursive analysis of action.

The full critical implications of such a use of phenomenology, and the course that philosophy of action is following in moving toward the practical and anthropological spheres, is already evident. The notion of intention is explained, understood and used as having reference only to the rational and conscious sphere. This criticism has some connection to the sphere of the "lived" or "proper" body. And because of its theoretical centrality, it claims the consideration of an analytical critical movement through anthropology, determining the evidence that a philosophy of action cannot be sustainable without a philosophical examination at an anthropological level.

This represents a second element of criticism that we address to Ricoeur's philosophy of action. If, on the one hand, it is true that in *Oneself as Another* he develops such an anthropological philosophy, on the other hand, this anthropology enters into a different speculative synthesis that is in contrast to the philosophy of action as modelled in *Le discours de l'action*. There is neither systematic continuity nor explicit parallel articulation between the 1990 book and the latter. *Le discours de l'action* takes ordinary language and the analytical phenomenology of ordinary language as the true basis for building a philosophy of action. Conversely, the pillar on which the entire construction of *Oneself as Another* rests the anthropological philosophy of the *capable human being*. To cross and unify the two models remains up to us because, from the perspective of Ricoeur's philosophy of action, they are like two different sides of two different coins. In terms of efficacy and productivity, the best way to reunify these two models is not from the comprehensive perspective of a general practical philosophy or ethics, but rather from that of a speculative

anthropology; thus, it involves remodelling a philosophy of action starting with a philosophy of the human being. And this seems to be a productive consequence of our double criticism; a criticism that, in the end, reinforces Ricoeur's perspective and proposals on the philosophy of action.

As defined and described in *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics of the self offers a model of personal identity in which subjectivity is understood (1) as an "expressive power" (natural and existential/experiential at the same time) and (2) as a process of development and emancipation. Ricoeur articulates the dialectic between identity and self, suggesting that the concept that must mediate and modulate the relationship between these two figures of subjectivity is the concept of *narrative identity*. Only narration makes it possible to re-represent and re-organise human action in a temporal chain, with a beginning and an intertwined plot.

Where is the ontological foundation of this kind of anthropological view? Clarifying, again, that the dialectic between the natural *ego* and the existential *self* is a social product of mediation and a cultural and moral product of emancipation, we can advance the idea that this vision is ontologically rooted in a conception of *being* as a *powerlact* dynamic. Such a conception perfectly mirrors the idea of subjectivity as an expressive power, giving to the idea of human *capacity* the exact determination of a tensional dynamism of natural and spiritual forces, of regressive and progressive drives, and of natural evolution and moral emancipation.

At the end of this survey of Ricoeur's philosophy of action, we discover the centrality of his comprehensive philosophy of the human being, which is able to subsume and coordinate different speculative discourses. At the same time, we find confirmation of the hypothesis that a complete and accomplished philosophy of action must have its basis and its starting point in a philosophical anthropology.

PART III

REBALANCING NARRATIVE IDENTITY

CHAPTER 9

TELLING A LIFE: NARRATION AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

9.1 Preamble

In recent decades, the theme of “narrative identity” has undergone significant development in various disciplinary domains, both at a practical and interdisciplinary level. The issues connected to narrative identity have (re-)gained a central position not only in narratology and philosophy, but even in psychology and in a number of psychotherapeutic approaches. Joan McCarthy is right in saying that “The nature of the relationship between narrative and personal history is the focus of much of recent psychological literature” (McCarthy 2007, 11). Despite the fact that the question is, directly or indirectly, considered in personal and social psychology as well as in clinical and therapeutic psychology, only few strands of psychological and clinical research recognise the necessity to deepen through philosophy the question of narrative identity. Philosophy significantly helps to articulate and clarify many key aspects, both at a theoretical and practical level. Psychologists such as Jerome Bruner already recognise the tight dialectics between narrativity and reality, both in relation to the construction of a sense of reality and to personal development. In fact, “Building on Freud’s deployment of the narrative in analysis and case-studies, psychologists like [...] Bruner have promoted the usefulness of the narrative method as a means of understanding the way in which the self is psychologically constructed and constituted” (10). Bruner is clear in explaining that:

We organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative stories, excuses myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on. Narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally and constrained by each individual’s level of mastery and by his conglomerate of prosthetic devices, colleagues and mentors. Unlike the constructions generated by logical and scientific procedures that can be weeded out by falsification, narrative constructions can only achieve

“verisimilitude”. Narratives, then, are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and ‘narrative necessity’ rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness (Bruner 1991, 4).

Bruner’s lesson still constitutes an important reference, as authors such as Juan Balbi (an expert in cognitive psychology and psychotherapy) demonstrate. Balbi’s research is not limited to reproducing Bruner’s theories of narration, experience and self-development; rather, he follows and develops a narrative discursive line to the point of articulating it with new philosophical research, such as Paul Ricoeur’s phenomenological hermeneutics of the self. In fact, in his *La mente narrativa* (2004), he expresses a point of view pretty much similar to Ricoeur’s perspective on personal and narrative identity. This discourse binds the vast and articulated research on mind and language. Balbi explicitly makes reference to Humberto Maturana’s ontogenetic approach on language. For Maturana, language is the essential source of the human, because language structures the human being. His paper “Lenguaje y realidad: El origen de lo humano Maturana” sustains the thesis “that human beings arise in the history of bipedal primates with the origin of language, and the constitution of a lineage defined by the conservation of an ontogenic phenotype that includes conversations as part of it” (Maturana 1989, 77).

Generally speaking, the interest of psychological research goes beyond this historical-natural and biological level of understanding and explanation of the relationship between language and brain, and operates between the structural and cultural dimensions. In fact, the study of narrative identity within psychology can be used to explore the dialectic between language and mind in a way that focuses on narration as the form of one’s lived experience and the way in which one understands one’s concrete existence and relationships with others and the life world. A hermeneutical philosophical re-reading of the theoretical-practical conception of psychoanalysis (that is, its dynamic model of mind and self-development) sustains and strengthens the thesis that narration expresses and determines the psychological reality. This (always) new or different (kind of) “reality” mirrors a representation of oneself, one’s human relationships and one’s sense of life as much in accordance with dispositions, culture, ideals and experience as with deeper dynamisms, drives, topical experiences and character. A broad range of practical-procedural proposals related to the narration are grafted onto this reflective strand, relying on the theoretical-speculative functions of fictional or non-fictional representation via narration. If psychoanalysts, such as Freud and neo-Freudians, saw narrative representation and (re-)construction as a function involved in

therapy and as a constituent in the writing of a clinical case, other psychotherapists, in turn, have identified with narrative activity: a process that is therapeutic and curative *per se*. For James Hillman, for example, therapy is a way of giving life to the imagination in an emancipatory and productive way. He writes:

Put it my way, what we are *really*, and the reality we live, is our psychic reality, which is *nothing but...* the poetic imagination going on day and night (Hillman 1992, 62).

The therapeutic activity is essentially conceived of as a sort of imaginative practice that revives the oral tradition of narrating stories.

Certain psychotherapists have been following a comparable theoretical-technical line since the 1970s, as is the case with Roy Schafer, for example (see Schafer 1976; 1982; 1992), who is more directly bound to the philosophical hermeneutical speculative and practical approach to narration, human identity and interrelation.

Schafer identified several important aspects of the narrative function in psychotherapy, even if his acute intuition and intelligence in writing is not backed up by a rigorous body of documentation and empirical verification. In *Retelling a Life*, for instance, there is a speculative deepening of the narrative phenomenon and practice plot in connection with self-representation, unconscious fantasy and metaphor that tries to take into account the analyst-patient dialectic from their respective perspectives.

If, on the one side, these hermeneutical-narrative approaches seem more reachable than Jung's analytical psychology, on the other, already in Freud's psychoanalysis we find some theoretical-procedural elements relevant to the question of narration in therapy. In psychoanalysis, a patient's life history is intuitively related to metapsychological research, and clinical-therapeutic practices are oriented on the basis of clinical cases summarised in material written supports. Written from the point-of-view of an experienced analyst-(re)narrator, the cases reproduce all the basic mechanism of a narration (context, beginning, main character(s), plot and so on).

Freud recognises the significant *and* problematic double aspect behind this question:

it still strikes me myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science. I must console myself with the reflection that the nature

of the subject is evidently responsible for this, rather than any preference of my own. The fact is that local diagnosis and electrical reactions lead nowhere in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers enables me, with the use of a few psychological formulas, to obtain at least some kind of insight into the course of that affection (Breuer, Freud 2000, 160-161).

However, we find significant differences and limitations when evaluating the hermeneutical narrative contribution to psychoanalysis. For example, Jean Laplanche clearly point out that

What we call an element of the narration, strictly speaking, is *anything* of the narration: as much a detail as a scene or the whole ensemble of a dream. No relation of subordination exists between the part and the whole: the part can be as significant as the whole, and the whole can assume significance as one element among others (Laplanche 2006, 174).

In fact,

To interpret in psychoanalysis is first of all to radically dismantle and lay out flat the organization of the manifest "text". From there on it is to follow, without losing one's footing, the associative chains that form a seemingly disorganized and monstrous network, lacking any proportion or correspondence to the chain to which it is appended. And if the outline of a latent content does begin to become legible, it does not do so as a translation, in the common sense of the term, of the manifest material, nor as a transformation even with the complexity of an anamorphic transformation which would still entail a point-to-point correspondence between manifest and latent text.

To interpret is to cling to every thread of the discourse without glo, moving step by step, but motivated by the single certainty that the innumerable interlacings of the tracks left by the hunter-game will eventually be revealed to plot out the signifying knots which punctuated a certain unconscious sequence (175).

Beyond this internal "debate" among psychoanalysts, we may say that this "narrative" line of research and reasoning does not focus only on the psychoanalytical approach. It tends to bring together different theoretic models in therapy, such as hermeneutical psychoanalysis, cognitive psychotherapy and socio-constructive psychology, thanks to a wider range of speculative references that build connections between philosophical hermeneutics and philosophy of literature. One way or another, all psychotherapists state that it is necessary to know and understand the

experiential-biographical line of a mental pathology in order to intervene in an effective or productive way. In fact, the mechanisms of adaptation that regulate the patient's current behaviour and existential feeling are defensive mechanisms of re-adaptation directly linked to the lived experience. The reference to collected documents (letters, diaries, etc.) also represents a main component of a psychological therapy, even if it seems to belong more to the indirect knowledge of the therapist than to his effective understanding at work during the therapeutic process (see Veglia 1999, 25).

Narration has been of interest to philosophy and psychology as a fundamental issue since 1980's "narrative turn". Today, narrative identity constitutes a broad interest for psychology, even if its theoretical roots require an interdisciplinary approach, because they are not entirely scientific but speculative and cultural. In fact, the notion of narrative identity does not simply summarise a given conception; rather, it refers to a general vision concerning the human being and the constitution of personal identity. This, has been an intertwined dilemma for thousands of years, in religious terms as well as in philosophical terms. What is the essence of the human being? What is the difference between spirit and mind? How can we solve the mind-body problem? Is there any predominantly biological rather than cultural-experiential *dialectic* between mechanism and personal identity or vice versa? For certain scholars, "individual development" is a subject that essentially requires reference to evolutionary and psychobiological models; in contrast, others believe that culture, social interaction, adaptation and experience are the main element of reference studying the development of the self.

The idea of "narrative identity", which acquires full theoretical-philosophical significance only through the work of Paul Ricoeur, absorbs some of these major modern dilemmas. Indeed, Ricoeur's research does not simply sustain the thesis that the "capable self" is a *culturally* or *narratively* "mediated unity of action" (see McCarthy 2007, 106): it reveals the profound connections that link the study of the narrative self with more traditional questions of gnoseology, epistemology, philosophy of mind, anthropology and ethics.

9.2 A Tensional Mediation

Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another* (1990) develops a "hermeneutical phenomenology of the self", an investigation which essentially concerns

human existence and personal identity. The notion of narrative identity constitutes a pillar of this philosophical anthropology, together with the idea of capable self. This had already emerged within the general conclusions of his previous trilogy, *Time and Narrative* (1983-1985), where Ricoeur thematises the dialectics between history and fiction in personal identity (see Ricoeur 1988, 246). In *Oneself as Another*, in turn, the articulation of identity in terms of *idem*- and *ipse*- is reactualised within a critical reflection and focused more on the anthropological question. “*Idem*-identity is, paradigmatically, the sameness of objects; *ipse*-identity is, paradigmatically, the selfhood of reflexive beings. Ricoeur notes that although the two relations of identity – *idem* and *ipse* – are very different; they intersect to the extent that they both display features that endure through time, and they both display temporal continuity”; “the sense of self as character with *idem*-identity is enriched and energized by a sense of self as contractor with *ipse*-identity” (McCarthy 2007, 124 and 126). Ricoeur seems primarily interested in counterpoising the sceptic solution to personal identity, which can be documented via his explicit reference to Locke and Hume. In particular, Hume intertwines his critique of personal identity with a critical analysis of the consciousness, underlining how self-consciousness and inner subjectivity depends on mere collected perceptions. For Hume, the experience of the self is a mental and fictive experience, and the mind works as a kind of theatre whose essence lies in temporality, or in the temporal succession of impressions and ideas, that is, in a flow of unrelated and non-substantial and/or illusory perceptions, connected to one another to form an ostensibly unified entity called “identity”, “mind” or “self”. Locke’s perspective seems to fit into the same framework of non-substantialist conceptions, even if his view is different and less radicalising than Hume’s.

Shaun Gallagher highlights the significance of Hume’s point of view via Kant and Husserl’s receptions. In Husserl’s view, Kant does not fully analyse Hume’s wider problematic, having failed to grasp the dilemma of the constitutional problem in transcendental subjectivity. In fact, he opposes an abstract idea of the mind as an operational centre against the perceptual flow. By contrast, Husserl develops his own critical vision which directly addresses Hume’s perspective. For Husserl, in contrast to Hume, there is a substantial continuity in the flow of consciousness and a unity of process. Husserl accounts for the unity of both consciousness and identity of the perceived object in the double intentionality of the retentive structure (within consciousness; see Gallagher 1992, 22).

It is interesting to note the productive variety of uses of the phenomenological approach has been put to in connection with the problem of personal identity, both in contemporary philosophy and science, and above all at an interdisciplinary level. Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleonor Rosch's phenomenological project is one expression of this kind of interdisciplinary, scientific and philosophical research of this kind. However, many similar projects still retain unresolved problems and unsubstantiated solutions, whereas more rigorous scientific-speculative approaches, such as Ricoeur's, seem much more able to resolve their main theoretical and epistemological problems in terms of argumentative non-determination, terminological vagueness and brachylogy (see Busacchi 2015).

Indeed, the phenomenological hermeneutics that Ricoeur applies to the study of personal identity operates in dialectic with analytical philosophy, psychoanalysis and neuroscience, and even thematises certain problematic lines of reasoning between theoretical philosophy and cognitive science related to the debate on consciousness, which started in the 1990s (with David Chalmers, Johan Searle and others). The latter, which advances a more biological model, somehow re-actualises the substantialist point of view, speaking of the constitution of states of consciousness as the physical-biological property of the brain. Ricoeur's point-of-view is an articulated and stronger alternative to the use of modelling in a biological/causal dimension, which represents a return to a substantialist conception of identity. By contrast, Ricoeur conceives of the idea of personal identity as an existential and cultural process at the core or ontological source of which lies the reality of the dynamism of power and action (Aristotle) and of possibility and realisation. This vision was already sketched in Ricoeur's first volume of *Philosophy of the Will* (1950), where (again) the phenomenological approach reveals the difficulty of a unified experience of the *Cogito* and the splitting of corporality into an objective and a subjective dimension. In *Philosophy of the Will*, this level of dualism is solved in a practical-moral way, whereas in *Oneself as Another*, he uses the speculative strategy of a hermeneutic-phenomenological solution to overcome all speculative and scientific criticalities. In another book, he clearly explains:

Mental experience implies the corporeal, but in a sense that is irreducible to the objective bodies studied by the natural sciences. Semantically opposed to the body-as-object of these sciences is the experienced body, one's own body — my body (from which I speak), your body (the body that belongs to you, which I address), the body of another (his body or her

body, about which I make up stories). [...] My initial hypothesis, then, which I submit for your consideration, is that I do not see a way of passing from one order of discourse to the other: either I speak of neurons and so forth, in which case I find myself in a certain language, or I speak of thoughts, actions, and feelings that I connect with my body, to which I stand in a relation of possession, of belonging. Thus I can say that my hands, my feet, I grasp with my hands but this comes under the head of personal experience, I do not have to commit myself to an ontology of the soul in order to speak in this way. By contrast, when I am told that I have a brain, no actual experience corresponds to this; I learn about it in books (Ricoeur, in Changeux, Ricoeur 2000, 15-16).

The distinction and dialectical correlation between the biological and the narrative dimensions of identity, within which Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity fits, responds precisely to this need for a comprehensive synthesis. It is through this differentiation that Ricoeur tries to counter the ideas of the ego as a social fiction (Hume), making the narrative dimension the true tension and mediating cornerstone upon which the body and the unconscious are brought back. In fact, as already mentioned, he considers the problem of personal identity to be lost in antinomy without solution if narrative function is not given the main primary "role" in mediation, synthesis and comprehensive (self-)realisation. And it is via the dialectics between -idem and -ipse dimensions of the self that "Ricoeur drives a wedge between objectifying accounts of the self, on the one hand, and his account of a self as somehow capable of resisting its reduction to naturalist descriptions" (McCarthy 2007, 128).

9.3 The Problem of Narrative Identity

Ricoeur characterises narrative identity as a specific form of human identity which an individual or a group of individuals forming a community experiences through the mechanism of mediation determined by the perpetual dynamism of history and fiction, of experience and imagination. As Olivier Abel and Jérôme Porée explain:

L'identité assignée par le récit l'est également, selon Ricoeur, aux individus et aux communautés historiques. D'où les "deux exemples" qu'il met d'abord "en parallèle" celui de l'expérience psychanalytique et celui de l'histoire de l'Israël biblique. Dans les deux cas, "un sujet se reconnaît dans l'histoire qu'il se raconte à lui-même sur lui-même" [...]. On peut se demander toutefois s'il s'agit d'un simple parallélisme non tant parce que l'histoire de l'individu se confond pour partie avec celle de sa communauté, que parce que l'individu seul peut devenir, par la grâce du

récit, une personne proprement dite. Encore, peut-on lire, à cet égard l'aveu que "l'identité narrative n'épuise pas l'ipséité du sujet" (Abel, Porée 2007, 40).

From such a possibility, we possess intuitive pre-comprehension, for we know how to reach to a better understanding of human life in its *existential and cultural nature*, precisely through the narrative expressions that individuals and people are told and tell (see Ricoeur 1988b). In addition, we grasp the meaning of an experience of life more deeply when it is (re-)presented through narrative. In particular, the epistemological status of autobiography confirms, for Ricoeur, the validity of this pre-philosophical understanding, and even gives strength to the thesis that there is a deep interconnection between self-knowledge and self-interpretation, and that this interpretive exercise and practice is one with the practice and exercise of oral and written narration, transmitted from individuals to individuals within their communities. This articulates an important part of the multidimensional physiognomy of personal identity as reflected in the dialectics of *idem*- and *ipse*- identity.

In *Oneself as Another*, the differences between conception and constitution behind these two uses are explored by thematising the specific mode of permanence in time, which varies significantly in both, and which refers to two dimensions proper to human experience and the human condition; *character* and *keeping one's word*. The dialectic between *character* and *keeping one's word* expresses a debate between the biological and the cultural-existential dimension of subjectivity. It is a tension that can only find harmonisation by virtue of a continuous tensional mediation. This perpetual and tensional dialectic of mediation is precisely exerted by narrative identity, which therefore cannot be traced back to the sole cultural-existential dimension of individual identity. In fact, narrative identity oscillates between a lower limit, where permanence expresses the confusion of *idem* and *ipse*, and an upper limit where *ipse* poses the question of its identity in an autonomous way (see Ricoeur 1992, 118 and 124). This "oscillation" of narrative identity is the formula for a perpetual tensional solution of the substantial and non-substantial dimension of the self. The common, everyday human experience of *change* over time and *permanence* in our sense of self as a unique and consistent entity reveal the consistency of this perpetual movement.

It is the narratological category of the character that constitutes the path of knowledge of identity on the dialectic side of permanence and change over time. The individual realise himself/herself, via representation, as the one

in the story who performs the action, becoming the object of the plot; and this can be accomplished because the story does not just structure the action and its context, but the identity of the character. In fact, his/her identity is connected to his/her actions, because his/her actions mirror his/her view, intentions, values, understanding and so on. This is an identity that is now expressed, understood and *accomplished* as a narrative identity. As Ricoeur explains, the person, understood as a character in a story, shares the regime of the dynamic identity of the story being recounted. The narration defines and substantiates the identity of the character, which can be called his/her narrative identity; and it is the identity of the story to build the identity of the character. The placing of this dynamic of the discordant concordance of the character into the dialectic of sameness and selfhood is imposed, since the discordant concordance of the character is compared with the request for permanence over time. In addition, it is absolutely necessary to show how the dialectic of the character comes to be inscribed in the gap between these two dimensions of permanence over time, to act as a mediator between them. This mediating function, which the character's narrative identity exerts between sameness and selfhood, is attested to by the imaginative variations between narration and identity. As Ricoeur explains:

From this correlation *between* action and character in a narrative there results a dialectic *internal* to the character which is the exact corollary of the dialectic of concordance and discordance developed by the employment of action. The dialectic consists in the fact that, following the line of concordance, the character draws his or her singularity from the unity of a life considered a temporal totality which is itself singular and distinguished from all others. Following the line of discordance, this temporal totality is threatened by the disruptive effect of the unforeseeable events that punctuate it (encounters, accidents, etc.). Because of the concordant-discordant synthesis, the contingency of the event contributes to the necessity, retroactive so to speak, of the history of a life; to which is equated the identity of the character. Thus chance is transmuted into fate. And the identity of the character employed, so to speak, can be understood only in terms of this dialectic (Ricoeur 1992, 147).

The previous passage is from a key paragraph that constitutes Ricoeur's theoretical articulation proper to the narratological theory of narrative identity, and has a close connection with the experiential and practical spheres of a concrete person who is fed both an effective *and* imaginative experience. I can identify myself with the character of a story and transform the world of text into a productive laboratory of reconfiguration and personal renewal. This is possible not only because I can interpret

myself as a narrator of my own story, but also because making myself a “character” opens the way to a possible reinterpretation of who I am, of the representative possibilities concerning the circumstances of my life. The new congruence of meaning determined in the context of the narrative re-elaboration and re-determination has to do with the elaboration and re-elaboration of my own experiences of life and development. The act of reading and narrating allows me to understand myself differently and better, to rethink and define new perspectives of meaning and transformation. To narrate is to create meaning, is to re-determine our lifeworld. Narration articulates and develops the self. Both self-knowledge and self-maturation are perpetually accomplished via narrative experiences, in the reflexive and critical examination aroused by narrative means.

The analysis that Ricoeur applies to the question of proof in psychoanalysis gives greater argumentative strength to this discourse, which closely links imaginative functions and cultural life on the one hand, and personal experience and human psychology on the other (see Busacchi 2016, 103–107). Published in 1977, “The Question of Proof in Freud’s Psychoanalytic Writings” goes beyond the epistemological problem in Freud’s psychoanalysis. In fact, Ricoeur does not simply apply the theme of clinical cases to the notion of narrative identity, but places narrative identity as a tool of mediation between factuality and representation. The criterion of narrativity must resolve the aporia of the loss of anchorage to reality from which the “psychoanalytic fact” suffers, because in Freud’s interpretation it is not the patient’s experiences that are “relevant” so much as what the patient makes of his/her own fantasies.

In Ricoeur’s interpretation, the criterion of narrativity contributes to smoothing out the difficulty arising from the fictional criterion, that is, from the recognition of the truthful force of a “reasoned mythology”. This narrativity reconciles, in some ways, the *Dichtung* and the *Wahrheit*, but it is a reconciliation not by substitution. In fact, the “true saying” and the “true doing” are reconciled in the perpetual (re-)construction of a coherent story starting from the scattered fragments of our experience. Following the theoretical-practical route opened by the narrative character of the psychoanalytic fact, it emerges that what it is at stake in psychoanalysis is not only its ability to explain the whole case history of a patient in a broad and singular way (Sherwood), or that to explain means to reorganise the facts into an acceptable and understandable whole that forms a unique history that is simultaneously *false and true*, but that this functioning has to do with the formation and maturation of personal identity in general.

In short, Ricoeur takes us beyond Aristotle's metaphysical perspective on power and action by stating that every well-told story is an element that may exercise power upon us. Moreover, he argues that a story reveals universal aspects of the human condition and that, to this end, poetry is more speculatively substantiated than the history of historians, which is too dependent on the anecdotal aspects of factuality. The narrative dimension is the most comprehensive and dynamic form of personal identity (see p. 108–110). It not only absorbs the psychic-physical dimension of life through the intuition of instinctual drives and emotions, and through the disposition of the character, it also expresses the power of individuals in their redetermination of perspectives, meanings and projects of action. Ricoeur supports the thesis that the process of configuration is not accomplished in the text but rather in the reader, and this very condition makes the reconfiguration of life via the world of the text and narration possible. The meaning of a story springs from the *intersection* of the world of the text and that of the reader. Thus, the act of reading becomes the crucial moment of the whole analysis. In it resides the story's capacity to transfigure the reader's personal experience (see Ricoeur 2012b).

9.4 Conclusion

It is true that while a story is being told or life is being lived, the act of reading or storytelling or writing becomes a form of suspension within an interregnum between reality and imagination, between pure possibility and possible experience. However, this interregnum is not a simple temporary suspension from concrete circumstances. It is something already concrete, above all from the perspective of our psychic life. In fact, the substance of our *psychic reality*, which is different from empirical reality, and different from abstract, ideal or purely imaginative realities, is a kind of reality *per se*. It is at this level that narrative hermeneutics intercepts and tightens into a single problematic node the gnoseological and anthropological question of the dialectic between world and experience, recognising in the narrative function a quadruple value of mediation, namely (1) between an individual and the world, (2) between an individual and his/her community, (3) between an individual and another individual and (4) between an individual and himself/herself.

The effect of identification and catharsis, of configuration and reconfiguration, which generates the character is exactly what touches and defines our psychic reality. And, this psychic reality constitutes a concrete reference: a

reference to the facts of the world and to our communities, to intersubjective relations and to the historical experience and planning horizon of an individual.

CHAPTER 10

IMAGINING A LIFE: ON IMAGINATION AND IDENTITY

10.1 Preamble

In philosophy, especially in the philosophy of knowledge, the theme of imagination has a long and varied speculative history that can be traced back to Aristotle, who, in his *On the Soul*, distinguishes imagination from both sensation (“sensations are always true, imaginations are for the most part false”; *On the Soul*, III, 428a) and opinion (“imagination cannot be (1) opinion plus sensation, or (2) opinion mediated by sensation, or (3) a blend of opinion and sensation”; *Ibidem*). Of a more naturalistic orientation was St. Augustine of Hippo (“the mind is destitute of images presented by the imagination, so long as it has not been informed by the senses of external things”; *Letters of St. Augustine*, Letter VII, chapter II). St. Thomas Aquinas includes the imagination among the four interior senses (together with common sense, instinct and memory; see *Summa Theologica*) giving to it both, a positive and negative function (imagination works between the mind and body, providing first “reasons”, via perception, which are subsequently purified by the intellect; but it is a function that may confuse images with reality and in no case does it penetrate the essences).

In the modern era, René Descartes in particular attributes a stronggnoseological value to the imagination, giving it a strong role even in reference to the construction of self-knowledge (see *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*; Rule XII). David Hume, who aligns with Thomas Hobbes, places the imagination more explicitly at the base of the constitution of the self. He interprets this process in a negative way, conceiving of the identity as a “fiction” (“The identity which we ascribe to the mind of man is only a fictitious one, and of a like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies”; see Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*; Book I, Part IV, Sect. VI). He starts a long line of

discussion on the construction and substance of personal identity, which is currently the bearer of important theoretical and practical implications and dilemmas, even in the fields of psychology and psychiatry. This problem, too, has ancient and varied roots, linked to the original thematic of mind-body dualism, self-knowledge and immortality (or permanence of the individuality of the deceased). In some ways, classical religious-philosophical paradoxical dilemmas persist in Hume's ideas, inherent in the dialectic of permanence and change or, better, the dilemma of the permanence of personal identity despite the continuously changing experiences, feelings, dispositions, beliefs, interests and the like of a specific person.

The debate has now deepened and diversified not only thanks to the results of scientific research, but also thanks to the great narrative literature that has been able to propose and re-propose old and new dilemmas concerning personal identity.

The cases of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (1772-1831), Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (1867) and *Doll's House* (1879), and Luigi Pirandello's *The Late Mattia Pascal* (1904) and *One, No One and Hundred Thousand* (1926) are emblematic. They variously thematise the dilemmas concerning human identity and the realisation of life, the crisis of identity and the search for authenticity, the fragmentation of existence and the effort to unify it, the dialectics between mind and (inner) "demons", self-representation and the real world, the other and the mask, and so on. All of them variously question the nature, constitution and validity of personal identity, rejecting its substantialist interpretation – in other words, considering personal identity as essentially already given at birth.

Beyond narrative literary explorations and imaginary representations, an attentive analysis and evaluation requires scientific and speculative work at various levels psychological, sociological and educational human development and into the exact theoretical-practical definition of what subjectivity, identity and personality in effect are. The question becomes even more complicated when theoretical constructs are pondered from interdisciplinary and speculative perspectives, and also in the dialectical comparison of various different theories of identity with ethical, social or cultural value systems.

How is human identity formed? What is the difference between identity and personal identity? What makes someone a person? What determines that a subject stays the same, despite the variety in experiences, mind-body

changes and so on? What remains as recognisable for a person being “the same person”? And which are the connections between the development of personal identity and social and cultural values?

Far from solving the theoretical and speculative challenges of identity, nowadays strong disciplinary differentiations have brought further complexifying elements. Thus, the idea of inconsistency of the self finds not only incisive reasons (for example, in the postmodern and post-human approaches), it can also avail itself from the ever-richer framework that psychology and neuro-science are establishing to define the mechanisms and dynamics. Without a doubt, the risk of reversal of perspective in the most radical simplification lies here (consider, for example, the case of Changeux; see Changeux 1983). This work of revision, which is connected to the growth of our knowledge concerning the self and person, requires a lot of attention.

Just as discoveries about the role of particle physics and electromagnetism in the unitary constitution of matter and the relationships between singular objects in the space nothing has changed in the experience and factuality of singular (unified) objects, in a similar way, it is worth considering whether something analogous has happened and must be understood in relation to (unified) personal identity and person.

How can the new scientific progress refute or rebut that unifying property which causes me to recognise myself as the person “I am”? And, what is the relationship between the different dimensions of psychological and personal life and the unitary expression of the identity in relation to the self and the social sphere?

10.2 Imagination Today

The most recent research on imagination follows the triple thematic line of *imagination*, *mental imagery* and *self-representation*, with a persistent, sceptical anchoring. But there is also a wider debate in the ethical sphere: on the role that imagination plays in developing our practical competence; and on the relationship between imagination, emotions, moral values and social reality (in connection to this, see Nussbaum 1993).

In philosophy, the question of imagination is currently (preponderantly) discussed in those branches of philosophy that are placed in the framework of cognitive science. Above all, the investigation concerns the relationship

between memory and the imaginative function; the role of imagination in the mental prefiguration of action and experience; the role of imagination together with the functioning of empathy and interaction; and the role of imagination in counterfactual reasoning.

A number of research initiatives are developing studies on subjects closer to the area of philosophical anthropology, which is consistently sensitive to the psychological, psychopathological and psychiatric implications questions concerning imagination and identity. These tend to follow three major investigative grounds: (1) the question of how the imagination correlates to the condition of autism; (2) the implications of the imagination in pathological frustration; and, (3) the role of imagination in the schizophrenic experience. These three areas are expanded upon below.

Regarding autism, one of the damaged areas of the so-called *Wing's triad* concerns imaginative skills (see Wing, Gould 1979; Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Frith 1985; Carpenter, Tomasello and Striano 2005; Rogers, Cook and Meryl 2005³). Scientists, such as Gregory Currie and Ian Ravenscroft, even judge autism as a substantial deficit of imaginative capacity, which must thus be considered as a “disorder of imagination” (see Currie, Ravenscroft 2002; Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Frith 1985; Carpenter, Tomasello and Striano 2005).

The pathological aspects of frustration concern different levels of imaginative life because frustration, understood as the destruction of a belief, reveals implications both on the level of a representation of the others and the world, and on the level of self-representation and the recognition of others. This is the destruction of a false self-representation, a false representation of a relationship or of the other. Even the pathologies connected to frustration have been understood as a disorder of the imagination. The imaginative processing of a certain belief would disappear because of the impact of the representative and affective interior needs feed into a tested of the ‘reality’ and of experiential practice. However, there are also those who oppose this thesis by differently revealing the dense dialectical interweaving of imagination and belief experiencing frustration (see Gendler 2007).

A complex pathology, such as schizophrenia may be the manifestation or counter-effect of a chronic delusion and a massive and radical emotional detachment from reality. The debate on the reality and on the causes of schizophrenia is wide and non-linear, and a certain number of scholars place attention on the role played in it by imaginative functions, and not

only in the sense of the loss of distinction and substantial differentiation between the real and imaginative (see Harrison 2005; Frith 1992; Campbell 1999; Langdon, Davies and Coltheart 2002; Zahavi 2000).

10.3 Looking for a Narrative-Hermeneutic Approach

The two discursive lines on the imagination and the imaginary may be different as well as closely linked, particularly when the philosophical interest is deeply connected to a reflective research concerning the human being. Behind the idea of the human being as an “imagining animal” there is the philosophical anchoring on the factuality of imaginary and imagination both within psychic and existential human life. But, what kind of experience does the image form? And, how do we have awareness of the different uses of this reality or of the participation of it in the representational and experiential reconstruction of ourselves and the wider world? For a philosopher like Carlo Sini, who establishes a strong connection to Sartre’s existential phenomenology, the image is at the heart of the “strategy of the soul” (see Sini 1989, VIII). Actually, it is Sartre who realises some of the most important and in-depth philosophical studies on the imagination (1936) and the imaginary (1940). Sini underlines how images exist in a specific, ontological way, compared to other things. In effect, they reproduce the essence in a phenomenological sense: that is, the essence connected to concrete individuality, whilst at the same time generating consistency via consciousness and not via the material world (see *Ibidem*, 6), as if to say that things and their corresponding images are “one” in essence and “two” in manifestation, experience or even existence.

From his Sartrean perspective, Sini strongly criticises what he calls “naive metaphysics”, in which reality is attributed only to something that is seen as possessing sensitive attributes and from which the idea of the image as a copy of the existing thing is taken, when instead the image is not a psychic state. ● On the one hand, there are no images in consciousness, because consciousness is not a container or a box. ● On the other hand, images form a certain type of consciousness, that is, they are an intentional act and not a thing. The image is consciousness of something (8). Imagination constructions are synthetic organisations of experience. They are not perceptions or free products of the work of memory, but rather are directly connected to the unconscious or voluntary intentional functioning of the psychic-organic life. However, we can also have perceptual images (returning home, I can immediately recognise my dog or the two rows of

oak trees, etc.). Yet perceptive images are retentions, the result of perceptual activity that operates by impacting on memory, and there is no same intentional productivity of imaginative work and imaginative knowledge.

In the second chapter of Sini's book, the image is described as a way in which we have learned to understand ourselves and the world. On the one hand, this enriches our self-knowledge, but on the other hand, it allows a cultural prejudice to operate. It is an acquisition that can be traced back to Descartes, and further to Plato, and it reflects an orientation to the illusory behind a path of interiorisation or to the interiority of the image. It is significant that Plato, the creator of the allegory of the Cave, never attributes images and shadows to the work of the mind. Sini emphasises that "the question of imagination [...] is the pivotal question and the underlying problem of all Platonism. It is the very core on which the operation of the 'strategy of the soul' is implanted" (67; translation is mine). This is the formation of the human person, of the political man, of the epistemic subject, of the creative innovation of the self. "Establishing the psychic image as a mediator between sensation and concept is an indispensable condition for the origin of a humanity characterised by the scientific knowledge of what we are. This is certainly still the problem that Husserl recognised when he declared that psychology is for us the science of ultimate decisions" (67–68; translation is mine). At the discursive level, an intertwining between gnoseology, epistemology, psychology and philosophical anthropology seems to be determined here. And as for Freud, the "scene" of the strategy of the soul becomes radicalised (114). According to Freud's perspective, in fact, there is nothing productive in the imaginative function, when understood as potential functions of symbolic-representative productions and creations. Conversely, psychoanalytic understanding constituted a rational penetration or reabsorption of psychic events and an anchoring of representative and spiritual life to the psycho-biological dynamism. Interiorly, the Freudian subject is representatively and symbolically impoverished. Yet, Freud also generates a new problematic regarding the relationship between the psycho-representational dimension and reality. The effect of the dialectic between the pleasure principle and the reality principle on the level of psychic life and of the representative and evaluative reconstruction of the world produces a new configuration of the subjective-objective, representational-real and interior-exterior setups. The change in meaning, and strong relativisation of the objective, the reality and the world, reveal an increased centralisation of representative, imaginative and reconstructive

functions within the realisation of personal identity and (ultimately) the world itself.

With Sini's analysis, we take one step away from the opening of the hermeneutic-narrative path, allowing us to rethink the representative and imaginative functions as not only ways to penetrate, know and tell about ourselves and the world, but also, ways in which we reconstruct and remanufacture the world and ourselves: that is, how we realise ourselves, and how we participate in the realisation of the world.

10.4 The Two Sides of Imagination

Another philosopher, Virgilio Melchiorre, is bound to the tradition of French phenomenology, from which he develops a theory that refers to the imagination through the problematic field concerning the construction of the utopian consciousness. Imagination can reach the point of denial and the passing of reality. This can happen in close correlation with the function of imagination in constituting and reconfiguring the self. Imagination is an organ of liberty. It is an "instrument" of historical construction and of making history (see Melchiorre 1972, 81 and 85). In fact, it is via imaginative experience and realisation that the concrete possibility of realisation and transformation of the world is given. Melchiorre proposes that every historical progress draws strength from the work of utopia; hence the idea that history needs imagination. However, his speculative itinerary tends to anchor the theme of the imaginative function onto anthropological discourse. Melchiorre states:

Catch up the sense of the imaginary is also to inscribe its scope in the essentially temporal structure of the human being [...] The liberation of the mythical conscience and, finally, the emergence of historical consciousness corresponds to the recovery or acquisition of the properly imaginative dimension. At this point the maximum problem of the imaginary will be repeated, that is the one that reaches the top of the symbolic expression: a historical symbolism, that I have already called utopian, will have to be the landing point of our research (*Ibidem*).

The transformation of time by virtue of utopia coincides with the emancipatory liberation of the symbolic in the inner life. For Melchiorre, if the absent is the object of the work of imagination, then imagination in itself is the "organ" of the future. "The being of the human being is [...] always a being in prospect, in a relationship of orientation with the world". In some ways, we can talk about the idea of subjectivity understood as an

emancipatory push towards the future, perhaps (somehow) in accordance with the same tensional dialectics of the *archê* and the *telos* that Paul Ricoeur has theorised by crossing the Hegelian phenomenological-anthropological perspective with the Freudian psychoanalytic perspective. We do not simply push out with the future, but engage in a difficult and conflicting dialectic, in which the work of imagination in memory can be (characteristically or even pathologically) fixed on the past (for example, due to painful, traumatic and still-vivid images of past experiences). ● we project ourselves on the future, according to life projects, utopias or even alienating escapes.

For Melchiorre, “when the imaginary is pushed forward to give new different space and time and to reorganise the images of memory, it always does so in the sense of an existential determination, albeit in the sense of possibility. In effect, the material that the imagination elaborates is in the order of the determination, and it is like such conditioning” (35; translation is mine).

Certainly, the liberation of the imaginary is understood as an essential part of an individual’s development. Much of the normal developmental process is intended to play precisely on the valorisation and correct harmonisation of representational and creative functions, symbolisations, imaginative satisfaction and the like. Melchiorre is aware of the paradox connected to the emptying of creative productions of their symbolic charge. In some way, that duplicity in human vision and imagination is recomposed in a kind of anthropological re-elaboration, which psychoanalysis expresses in distinct ways according to Freudian or Jungian modelling.

● on the one hand, Freud observes that even an artist is somehow an introvert, not very far from neurosis (see Freud 1967, 384). ● on the other hand, reflecting on the scarce symbolic significance of today’s life, Jung points out that, in general, “one half of humanity batters and grows strong on a doctrine fabricated by human ratiocination; the other half sickens from the lack of a myth commensurate with the situation” (Jung 1965, 331).

To summarise, imagination has to be considered, on the one hand, as a substitutive, compensatory and sublimatory operation and, on the other, as a landing place for reality and an individual “fullness” or “truth”. These are not the only two schools or interpretative approaches, but they are expressions of two possible alternative functions of the deep and

influencing role of the imagination. With Freud, we can ponder a range of expressions of the self that vary from phantasmal production to symptomatic manifestations to the alienating sublimation. From Jung, we can ponder of a range of issues from the expressive and emancipatory study of *individuation* to the mythical-symbolic-religious project of a new vision of life.

This discourse should not aim to explore fixed issues or establish complete and comprehensive models. Rather, perhaps, we should reason in terms of the perpetual questioning that continuously arises, the new formulations being continually produced, in order to attack and undermine the modelling referred to here, or to open up other types of modelling.

The most recent generations in society, seem particularly attached to fragments, speed, surface, variation, adrenaline, impulse and gusto than those that preceded them. This could be a sign of fragile, mobile, liquid, vague and uncertain personalities. The life story tends to degrade into an illustrated collage-of-life or to a non-narrative combination of literally “figural” exemplary moments. And an illustrated collage does not make a unified, internalised and recognised history (of life). Indeed, it seems that a radical submission to the tyranny of the image predominates today. This total dominion of the image comes at the price of a powerful impoverishment of the imaginative and expressive resources of interiority. The enchantment of the dialectic productive image and imagination seems to be broken. Nonetheless, the possible inclusive contribution of hermeneutics, as represented by Melchiorre, is no less important. In many ways we are brought closer to the perspective of Ricoeur, manifesting itself by virtue of a greater anthropological-philosophical proximity (at least compared to Sini).

10.5 On Narration, Recognition and Personal Emancipation

The theoretical relevance of imagination in Ricoeur’s philosophy of the human being has its roots in his trilogy *Time and Narration* (1983-1985), particularly in connection with the role played by the triple mimesis in the framework of narrative theory. The key term of this work “is certainly *mimesis* in all its dialectical richness, [...] [for it] presides over the complex architecture of the trilogy, that is, the power of language to prefigure the action, which itself is readable as a text and inserted into the symbolic plot of a given cultural universe, that is the power of language to

configure the human and temporal world of praxis in the two different but converging modes of historical and fictional narration. Finally, the power of language of re-figuring, of speaking a new praxis, of shaping in a new way and of preserving and renewing the sense of human action and suffering” (Jervolino 1993², 157–158; translation is mine).

In a sort of correlative (re-)determination, the whole work is based on the hermeneutic circle formed by experienced and narrated time. If all that is narrated takes place temporally, there is no temporality without narration (and, obviously, no narration without experience). *Time and Narration* can be read as a hermeneutic investigation on the historicity of existence. We are historical beings, in fact. And, narration is precisely the modality that makes this dimension of historical individuality effective in personal development and emancipation. In fact, personalities mature by placing themselves in a narrated time and within a determined (narrated and experienced) tradition, according to a modality that makes an identity that can be constituted through those texts and stories, which are themselves the expression and testimony of a given social identity and culture. In this sense, the formation of identity and its representative and expressive modalities pass through the symbolic mediation of the determined experiential and representative heritage of a particular culture’s tradition. In the general conclusion of *Time and Narration*, Ricoeur introduce the concept of narrative identity, a concept that he will largely develop and deepen later in *Oneself as Another* (1990). As Ricoeur explains:

The notion of narrative identity, introduced in *Time and Narrative* 3, responds to a different set of problems: at the end of a long voyage through historical narrative and fictional narrative, I asked whether there existed a structure of experience capable of integrating the two great classes of narratives. I then formed the hypothesis according to which narrative identity, either that of a person or of a community, would be the sought-after place of this chiasm between history and fiction. Following the intuitive preunderstanding we have of these things, do we not consider human lives to be more readable when they have been interpreted in terms of the stories that people tell about them? And are not these life stories in turn made more intelligible when the narrative models of plots borrowed from history or from fiction (drama or novel) are applied to them? It therefore seems plausible to take the following chain of assertions as valid: self-understanding is an interpretation; interpretation of the self, in turn, finds in the narrative, among other signs and symbols, a privileged form of mediation; the latter borrows from history as well as from fiction, making a life story a fictional history or, if one prefers, a historical fiction, interweaving the historiographic style of biographies with the novelistic style of imaginary autobiographies (Ricoeur 1992, 114n).

In *Oneself as Another*, narrative identity is explored starting from a comparison of two positions on the critical approach to personal identity developed by John Locke and David Hume, the demystifying philosophers of the subject. In fact, “the lesson that, without the guideline of the distinction between two models of identity and without the help of narrative mediation, the question of personal identity loses itself in labyrinthine difficulties and paralyzing paradoxes was first taught to philosophers of the English language and of analytic formation by Locke and Hume”; (125). It is in response to this that Ricoeur develops his philosophy of the capable human being, which matures in a philosophy of personal identity understood as a dialectical-emancipatory process of self-realisation and mutual-recognition. This is a phenomenological hermeneutics of personal identity based on the dynamism of power and act according (1) to the four fundamental moments of being able to talk, act, narrate and feel responsible, and according (2) the inter-relational dialectics of mutual recognition.

The narrative function, which is structurally connected to the imaginative functions, plays a pivotal role here. Ricoeur subsumes it in his vast interdisciplinary research on time and narration which is articulated between narratology and hermeneutics, while the second speculative pillar, that is, namely, the concept of recognition, is analysed for the first time in his 1965 work *Freud and Philosophy*, in which he intertwines Hegel’s dialectical phenomenology with Freud’s psychoanalysis (see Busacchi 2016). As Ricoeur explains in *Freud and Philosophy*:

I do not pretend to complete Freud, but to understand him through understanding myself. I venture to think that I advance in this understanding of Freud and myself by revealing the dialectical aspects of both reflection and Freudianism.

What I wish to demonstrate, then, is that if Freudianism is an explicit and thematised archaeology, it relates of itself, by the dialectical nature of its concepts, to an implicit and unthematized teleology.

In order to make this relationship between a thematised archaeology and an unthematized teleology intelligible, I will make use of a detour. I propose the example or rather the counterexample of the Hegelian phenomenology, in which the same problems present themselves in a reverse order. *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is an explicit teleology of the achieving of consciousness and as such contains the model of every teleology of consciousness. But at the same time this teleology arises on the substrate of life and desire; thus we may say that Hegel himself acknowledges the unsurpassable character of life and desire, in spite of the

fact that this unsurpassable is always already surpassed in spirit and in truth (Ricoeur 1970, 461).

In particular, Ricoeur connects Hegel's master-slave dialectic with Freud's analyst-patient therapeutic relationship. The latter is understood as the search for authenticity through the excavation of the past, while the first is understood as research into the realisation of meaning in the progressive effort. Both symbolise the two polarities of the individual dialectic of recognition, which is perpetually in tension between regression and progression. Ricoeur explains:

In order to have an *archê* a subject must have a *telos*. If I understood this relationship between archeology and teleology, I would understand a number of things. First of all I would understand that my notion of reflection is itself abstract as long as this new dialectic has not been integrated into it. The subject, we said above, is never the subject one supposes. But if the subject is to attain to its true being, it is not enough for it to discover the inadequacy of its self-awareness, or even to discover the power of desire that posits it in existence. The subject must also discover that the process of "becoming conscious", through which it appropriates the meaning of its existence as desire and effort, does not belong to it, but belongs to the *meaning* that is formed in it. The subject must mediate self-consciousness through spirit or mind, that is, through the figures that give a *telos* to this "becoming conscious". The proposition that there is no archaeology of the subject except in contrast to a teleology leads to a further proposition: there is no teleology except through the figures of the mind, that is to say, through a new decentering, a new dispossession, which I call spirit or mind, just as I used the term "unconscious" to designate the locus of that other displacement of the origin of meaning back into my past (459).

This anthropological model seems to suggest the idea that the realisation/maturation of personal identity and personal psychic health is not only dependent on the possibility of expression and action, but also on success and advancement in terms of emancipation and recognition.

According to this perspective, how relevant is the imaginative-narrative function? And, when and how does it come into play? Answering this, first requires acknowledging that Ricoeur does not accept a unitary and substantial conception of identity. In *Oneself as Another* he writes:

When we speak of ourselves, we in fact have available to us two models of permanence in time which can be summed up in two expressions that are at once descriptive and emblematic: *character* and *keeping one's word*. In both of these, we easily recognize a permanence which we say belongs to

us. My hypothesis is that the polarity of these two models of permanence with respect to persons results from the fact that the permanence of character expresses the almost complete mutual overlapping of the problematic of *idem* and of *ipse*, while faithfulness to oneself in keeping one's word marks the extreme gap between the permanence of the self and that of the same and so attests fully to the irreducibility of the two problematics one to the other (Ricoeur 1992, 118).

In his vision, the dimension of identity that he calls *-ipse* is mobile, experiential and historical, while the dimension of *-idem*, is fixed, structural and coincides with our biological being. The latter structural dimension provides the support of the neuronal, psychological and mnemonic functions needed for the maintenance, development and realisation of a historical identity. And precisely because we develop such a historical identity, the components of the theory of narration become the fundamental pillars of the development of personal identity. In fact, without the functioning of these components, no virtuous dialectic of recognition would produce effects of maturation, emancipation or the realisation of identity and subjective personality. Ricoeur persistently comes back to the mechanism of narrative mediation (through symbolic and linguistic representation) in which a kind of circular dialectic is at work between the *-idem* and *-ipse* aspects of the identity, between psycho-biological (deterministic) mechanisms and experiential (meaningful) content. In some ways, we can say that narrative mediation is the *functional* fulcrum of the development of personal identity, while the dialectics of recognition can be called its *existential* fulcrum (see Busacchi 2015). Speaking on narrative identity in his last book *The Course of Recognition* (2004), Ricoeur says:

the idea of narrative identity gives access to a new approach to the concept of ipseity, which, without the reference to narrative identity, is incapable of unfolding its specific dialectic, that of the relation between two sorts of identity, the immutable identity of the *idem*, the same, and the changing identity of the *ipse*, the self, with its historical condition. It is within the framework of narrative theory that the concrete dialectic of sameness and ipseity an initially blossom, in expectation of its culmination in the theory of promises (Ricoeur 2005, 101-102).

In addition, Ricoeur underlines the deep relationship between personal realisation and social interrelation, that is, he embraces a vision of personal realisation via mutual recognition. As he writes:

We can complete this panoramic survey of the problem of narrative identity by referring to another dialectic than that of the *idem* and the *ipse*,

the dialectic of identity confronted by otherness. The question of identity in this sense has two sides, one public, one private. The story of a life includes interactions with others (103).

Eventually, “the course of self-recognition ends in mutual recognition” (187), and “the alternative to the idea of struggle in the process of mutual recognition is to be sought in peaceful experiences of mutual recognition, based on symbolic mediations as exempt from the juridical as from the commercial order of exchange” (219).

If *narrative identity* unifies the cultural-historical-spiritual dimension of life with the biological and neurological sphere, *mutual recognition* unifies all the differences opening the way for personal and social realisation.

The road to recognition is long, for the “acting and suffering” human being, that leads to the recognition that he or she is in truth a person “capable” of different accomplishments. What is more, this self-recognition requires, at each step, the help of others, in the absence of that mutual, fully reciprocal recognition that will make each of those involved a “recognized being”, as will be shown in my next chapter. The self-recognition at issue in the current chapter will remain not only incomplete, as in truth mutual recognition will, but also more mutilated, owing to the persistent dissymmetry of the relation to others on the model of helping, but also as a real hindrance (69).

However, it is the dialectic between experience and imagination that makes narration and recognition two effective forces and key drivers of human emancipation.

10.6 Conclusion

Considered as a referential model, Ricoeur’s anthropology contains a significant synthetic function, capable of reabsorbing in a comprehensive formulation the speculative and scientific problematic of the dialectical relationship between imagination, experience and personal identity. In fact, his anthropological model is not a simple interdisciplinary hybrid, but rather the result of an amalgamation of extra-philosophical acquaintances. Ricoeur uses an interdisciplinary method via an epistemological-hermeneutical model whose procedure combines the descriptive and explanatory functions of the biological and natural sciences with the interpretative and comprehensive functions of the human and social sciences.

Furthermore, there is a close interweaving of method and anthropological research. This emerges with particular and immediate relevance in the dialogue with the neurobiologist Jean-Pierre Changeux, in the work *What Makes Us Think?* ([1998] 2000). With Changeux, Ricoeur approaches the question of personal identity via the ontological and scientific issues of the mind-brain relationship in a way that he subsequently develops more fully in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2000). Based on his dialogue with Changeux, Ricoeur declares the thesis that a subtle “semantic dualism” insinuates itself between the experiences organised at a prelinguistic level and the objectified formal forms of the mental level. It is no exaggeration to say that, to Ricoeur, the semantic gap is between the cognitive sciences and philosophy is great. The gap between the experienced phenomenological and the known object runs along the dividing lines between the two approaches to the human phenomenon.

However, this semantic dualism can only form a starting point. The multiple, broad and complete experience occurs in such a way that the two discourses do not cease to be linked by multiple points of intersection. In a certain way, it is the body itself that is lived and known. And, it is the same mind that is lived and known; it is the same human being who is “mental” and “bodily” at the same time.

This ontological identity may depend on a third discourse that goes beyond both phenomenological-hermeneutical philosophy and science (see Changeux, Ricoeur 2000, 14). Here, Ricoeur distinguishes a number of connections: to the study of personal identity, the objective discourse of explanatory disciplines, the critical-intuitive and ethical-practical discourse of the understanding and speculative knowledge, and the over-philosophical discourse of the poetic and the religious spheres. It is by considering this that his phenomenological hermeneutics of the self can be understood not only as a new and far-reaching anthropological synthesis, but as one which puts at its centre the fulcrum of the instability and problematic nature of personal identity, that is, imagination. Furthermore, it recognises the dialectical process as the key to a new design that justifies and explicates the “substance” of personal identity. Together with narrative, imagination plays a pivotal role in Ricoeur’s philosophy of the capable human being; that is to say, imagination plays the same role as experience, emotion, culture, education and social life in personal emancipation and realisation.

CHAPTER 11

IMAGE AND REPRESENTATION IN HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

11.1 The Question of Representation

A study of representation brings to light various difficulties, even at the most basic level, such as the determination of representation's meaning and range as a concept. This difficulty is not only related to multiplication of models and historiographical theories, but also to the close connection between these models and their theory and specific philosophical issues. It relates to the breadth and variety of the use of the notion of representation in philosophy (a variety and breadth that requires retracing the history of philosophy from Scholasticism onwards, in fields as diverse as the theory of knowledge and epistemology, aesthetics, logic, linguistics, the philosophy of mind, rhetoric, law, psychology, sociology and historiography).

Language has incorporated this variety and richness at the level of semantics. The State Printing Institute's *Lessico Universale Italiano* counts as many as 26 groups of semantic meanings of representation. The Latin *repraesentare* (from which the corresponding expressions are derived in Italian, English, French, and Spanish) has a tighter definition, but is not devoid of richness and semantic variety, and its three main meanings are full of speculative significance: (1) to represent as "re-present" that is, present again, "envisage", "imagine", "to reproduce", "to be the image of"; (2) "determine", "effectuate"; and (3) "to take the place of", "to be for". The third sense here, which refers more to the field of law in its *stricto sensu* lexical value, also indicates the *modus* through which the representation of something that is absent is originally themed in philosophy; the present representation of something that is absent not (arbitrarily) through the imagination, but in the correspondence of concept and feeling. The Aristotelian perspective connects the cognitive level to experience and reality: the concept represents or re-presents something that is perceived (this is shown in the third book of Aristotle's *De Anima*).

Subsequently, of William of Ockham's three ways of representation, the third one proposes this close relationship. In fact, his definitions point towards: (1) representation as an idea, as "representative/representational knowledge"; (2) representation as image, as likeness; and (3) representation as the knowing objectification of a thing.

The epistemological and gnoseological approach has been articulated and differentiated in various disciplinary fields, although some "classical" uses have been re-actualized. In Heidegger, for example (in *The Question of the Thing* 1935/36), the action of re-presenting is defined as the action of "bring[ing] something in front of oneself, to have it in front of me, to have something as present to oneself as a subject, bringing it back to oneself" re-mind, re-present. For Kant, a fundamental modern point of reference is that all representations, even of external things, are determinations of the spirit: to represent (*Verstellen*) is not just "to think": it is also to feel, to-know-through-intuition. Since all human knowledge is the union of thought and intuition, representation constitutes a common character that can unify all knowledge. According to this second definition, representation shows its validity within the historiographical plane, both epistemologically and gnoseologically. It seems that the Kantian definition of the notion of representation serves better than other definitions as a support for Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutic approach to the question of historical knowledge. In Ricoeur's work, the notion of representation works at a theoretical, technical-procedural, and speculative level, not only where there is a certain semantical retention, but also where there is a certain oscillation between the aesthetic and linguistic levels of representation, and between cognitive realism and the relativism of representation.

The problematic question of critical hermeneutics can be posed first on this Kantian paradigm, which is formulated onto the triptych of *Vorstellung*, *Repräsentierung*, *Vertretung*, and here its character of oscillation can be (essentially) proved. These three terms are translated as "representation" but are used differently by Kant, although there are some similarities. *Vorstellung* is composed of *vor* and *stellen*: literally, "put in front of". Kant sometimes refers not only to the more direct *Repräsentierung*, but defines *Vorstellung* in reference to the ordinary verb *vertreten*, which is evocative of *vor etwas treten*, "to put something in front of oneself". The *Vorstellung* "is a determination (*Bestimmung*) in us, which we relate to something else (in place [*vertritt*] of which it is)" (*Letter to Beck*, December 4, 1792; AK, t. 11 395; see Dokic 2004, 1072, the subsequent passage has also been taken from this same source).

Certainly, a few general differences in the use of these three terms can be noted: *Vertretung* and *Repräsentierung* tend to indicate an action or the relation of representation; *Vorstellung*, on the contrary, normally designates the “mental state”, a determination in us that has the value of representation. However, what is most interesting is that, within *Vorstellung*, Kant distinguishes between two main uses of the notion of conscious representation: the “singular representation or intuition (*repraesentatio singularis, Anschauung*)” and the “general representation or concept (*repraesentatio generalis, Begriff*)”. First, each representation is inherently directed toward an object (“All representations have, as representations, their object”; K.r.V., A. 108). In this sense, *Vorstellung* is the term that is used for an intentional relationship of representation. Second, *Vorstellung* is “in us”, it is something that is inherently subjective or psychological (an epistemological and gnoseological element of considerable “tension” comes into play here). Third, the notion of *Vorstellung* implies a certain degree of differentiation between the object that is represented and the way that the object is represented, which Kant defines as the *Inhalt* (matter) of the representation.

When we consider the gnoseological effect of representation in Ricoeur’s historiography, we can observe at least two elements: the issue of subjectivity and the psychological dimension of representation. Ricoeur shows the “semantic ambiguity” of the notion of representation: both as a *represented object* and as a *representation-operation* (Ricoeur 2004/2006, 235). The issue of subjectivity carries the specific problem of realism in history, the general problematic of the scientific solidity of historical knowledge, and the problem of the “dialectic” between mental representation and knowledge on the one hand, and memory and history on the other. This passage seems unavoidable in Ricoeur’s perspective of the problematic function(s) of representation in historical knowledge. Here is why:

Presence, absence, anteriority, and representation thus form the first conceptual chain of discourse about memory. The ambition of the faithfulness of memory would thus precede that of truth by history, whose theory remains to be worked out (229).

The problem of the representation of a represented object precedes the question of representation-operation. The question of the reality/factuality of what happened goes into a three-way polarity of *representation* (experience/knowledge) – *memory* (remembering/remembrance) – *history* (what happened/the past), and relates to the specific problem of historical

knowledge as a technique (with a degree or pretence of scientific rigor and controllability), and the specific problems of philosophical knowledge. Therefore, this moves from the philosophy of mind to the phenomenology of memory, from narrative hermeneutics to historical ontology (that is, the aporia of *the being from what has been* [see Michel 2013, 278 ff], and beyond). It is perhaps here that the concept of representation finds its point of maximum exposure to the criticism (which is still widespread) of its non-conceptual and non-scientific characterization. In the context of historical knowledge, this notion should be abandoned. Ricoeur thematises this problem (see *Ib.*, 227). For the moment, it is sufficient to say that this issue is embedded in a context that is epistemologically mobile and specific in itself: a *hermeneutical* model (or modularization). In Ricoeur, this mobility is perhaps due more to the articulation of his model of *critical hermeneutics*, going between two very different epistemological paradigms, *explanation* and *understanding*; it is due perhaps more to the oscillation(s) and function(s) of representation between these two paradigms, rather than being due to hermeneutics in itself as a philosophy of interpretation, textuality and narrative.

Before entering a *media res*, it is necessary to further specify the term of representation in the fields of the psychology of representation and the representative functions in memory. The latter field has been well probed by Ricoeur in his *Memory, History, Forgetting* (and in other works), thanks to a phenomenology of memory that is articulated between philosophy and psychoanalysis, along the thematic axis of the concept of trace. However, the psychology of representation requires different research, mainly through cognitive psychology. This would mean moving away from the question that is posed in this essay. In reality, cognitive psychology (as well as the phenomenology of memory) reveals the regularity and historicity of the representational life. It is precisely this process that allows us to recognise the validity and effectiveness of the permanence of the reasons for action and the meanings that are the basis of historical agents, regardless of the epochs, cultures, mentalities and even languages from which they emerge (that is, the “vectors” [concepts and ideas], the forms, and the ideal, imaginative, representational contents).

But does representative function and capacity come before language? Is it independent from ethos, mentality, and from the visions of the world? In the field of historical knowledge, the contrast between Ricoeur and White is more evident (and strong) than the contrast between Ricoeur and Ankersmit. This will become clearer later. For now, it is sufficient to recall Ricoeur’s notion of oscillation, which is expressed along the thematic

strand of the phenomenology of trace (between the third tome of *Temps et récit* and *Mémoire, histoire, oubli*). This oscillation is between a realist ontology that looks at the dialectical problem of “historical reconstruction”/“having been”, and an onto-epistemology that conceives representation as a relationship that tends to be tropological, or, more precisely, metaphorical.

This pre-eminent linguistic setting, which brings Ricoeur very close to White, finds a new remodelling in *Memory, History, Forgetting* which is linguistically softer and more receptive of instances of realism. However, Ricoeur does not embrace a linguistic-structuralist approach, or the point-of-view of the post-structuralist White, for whom representation is essentially an aesthetic-linguistic and narrative question. For Ricoeur in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, representation is a *complex dialectical movement*. It is a movement that functions between knowledge and reality; explanation and understanding; language, experience, and the world; past and present; archival work; testimony and narration; the reconstruction/representation and the understanding of the historian; and the comprehension/(re-)representation of the reader of history.

The transition through cognitive science, the phenomenology of memory, and psychoanalysis, which is now required, will again be delayed in order to define its significance, and what is at stake in terms of uses and the importance of representation in historical knowledge in relation to truth, image and normativity. Even in the context of a theory of historical knowledge, this triad, if it is polarized on the norm, can act as a function of the support and legitimation of representation as a *stable* part of occurrences over time and of the psychological, ideal, and social motivation of humans acting over time. This can be seen in a particular way, “varying the scale of the research, reconstruction, and writing of history” through the discussion of microhistories, which allows it to shift “the accent to individual, familial, or group strategies that call into question the presupposition of submission by social actors on the bottom rank to social pressures of all kinds, and principally those exercised on the symbolic level” (218). Explicitly referring to Durkheim’s theorisation around the idea of *basic norms*, Ricoeur underlines the dialectical relation between guiding concepts and “those governing the appropriation of these rules of agreement about agreement”. “Under the heading of the scale of efficacy or of coerciveness, the problems of institutions and of norms, which each obey different contextual rules, can be considered jointly” (220).

Following this perspective, we can understand how the validity of representative functions lies not only in the structural and psychological universality of perceiving, feeling and knowing, but also in a certain historical and social stability in terms of the symbolic life (of a certain *habitus* of life), in terms of beliefs, ideals, values, etc. Institutions and norms, as well as cultural elements, actively and significantly participate to create that *regularity* which is necessary for the permanence of representation(s).

11.2 The Mechanism of Representation

The notion of “representation” in psychology assumes various modalities of function, meaning, and theoretical declination. In psychoanalysis the concept of a broader and more incisive use goes back to Freud himself which, on the one hand, points to the term of *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* (“representance given by a representation”), related to the Freudian concepts of *psychische Repräsentanz* (“mental representance”) and *Triebrepräsentanz* (“instinctual representation”), and on the other hand, can be related to the notions of *Sachvorstellung*, (“representation of a thing”), and *Wortvorstellung*, “representation of a word”. If Freud generally resorts to the customary use of the notion of representation, a new, specific, opposition between representation and affection can also be found in his theorization: that is, between the affective-emotional dimension of the instinctual expression and the expressive-communicative characterization of the representation of affectivity. Following this Freudian perspective (beyond the criticism of the metapsychological and epistemological model), Ricoeur departs from Lacan and from the structuralist point of view.

In terms of mental functioning, or rather of psychic life, representation is never entirely linguistic or entirely and originally a sort of perceptual, mnemonic and imaginative refiguration. Rather, it is a synthetic function that is located on the point of transition from the level of instinct to the level of desire, which is the level in which perceptual, sensorial, and motional functions feel, (self-) perceive and express need and desire through words and concepts. It is a *synthetic function of an essentially symbolic character*, which is a formula of a refigurative expression of a given mnemonic/mnestic trace, revived in (a) memory, (b) imaginative reconfiguration, (c) conceptualization, and (d) rationalization.

Between the sphere of instinct and sphere of desire, the same fertile problematic is reproduced that Ricoeur first articulates relating to the notion of *trace*, for its rich aporetic polysemy. He does this, first, in reference to the phenomenology of memory (essentially, trace as mnemonic trace and as memory itself), and in reference to the work of historical knowledge (trace as material residue, or intentional archaeological-historical signs, and trace as a clue, as an element of hypothetical-detective reconstruction). Secondly, it is done in reference to epistemological issues, such as the historical certainty of memories, the scientific certainty of the reconstruction of the past, and so on. At one point, Freud began to speak of psychic reality. How can we verify the truth of the experience that patients relate? What is the incisiveness of this experience in terms of the therapeutic process (actually experienced)? Does “psychic reality” have an ontological status? If so, what is it? According to the perspective of Ricoeur’s theorization of historical knowledge, which tries to stay focused on the notion of representation, this has considerable significance. In fact, from this perspective, the problem of representation comes into play as a problem of trace, at the level of phenomenology of memory. In Ricoeur, the ambition of the *faithfulness of memory* precedes the operational-scientific rule of *truth by history*.

Nevertheless, the “faithfulness of memory” is a problematic concept that requires reference both to memory and to experience; that is, to what has actually been experienced, and to the correlation between memory and what is expressed by the words of testimony, narration, and conceptual and scriptural representation. So far, the contribution of psychology has proved to be significant: what comes from the regularity of representation? For White, this is a question of linguistic-conceptual regularity.

One of the most meaningful concepts in psychology is *mental representation*, which has become popular with its use by Jerry Fodor and cognitive psychology. It broadly includes the linguistic-conceptual and the logical-linguistic spheres, as well as the non-rational (non-conscious) sphere (that is, the assets of internalized codes, rules of conduct, ways of interpreting, relating to and prefiguring facts, and so on). The mental representations that are susceptible to a verbal description/testimony in reference to their relevance and their past only represent a subclass of mental representations, known as mental images (for example, “I represent Saint Paul’s Cathedral”). The semantic representations that are widely studied in cognitive psychology can be understood either as being caused by the terms of a given propositional formula (for example, “the cat chases/persecutes the mouse”), by the meanings that are expressed by a

given propositional formula, or by the symbolic formulation behind a certain representation (for instance, being expressive of value-reasons, such as honour, lineage, race, and so on, in the interpretation of actions and historical events). This proposition does not lead to a simple representation of a scene (a cat, a mouse, and a chase) in either case, but instead reflects causal relationships (an agent-persecutor, a patient-victim). Imagine what may be perceived about a variety of narrative representations of the same historical event, depending on whether history is written by the winners or the losers in the situation.

Models of cognitive psychology recognise the functional centrality of long-term memory and learning processes, both perceptual and linguistic. In other words, it is recognized that the regularity, stability and representational maintenance of memory is not preformed, but determined by customs, practices and dominant models. Therefore, we build a representation of the experienced reality, both in our present and with reference to our past, according to the architecture of knowledge, understanding, values, behaviour, and so on: essentially, according to the *habitus* of own time. As such, representing is both mobile and permanent, *universally* anchored to human perceptual and neurobiological functions (which are the same throughout time), but *historically* determined by the predominant social, cultural and cognitive characters (this double characterization of the nexus of causal determination, represented both as a physical-functional causation and as a logical-semantic causation, can also be found in Fodor).

The significant aspect here is not only given by the constitutive dialectical nature of *historical representation* (with respect to the specific experience of a given historical agent and the *modus operandi* of a historical element; and with respect to the archival recovery of traces in a representational form of the past, compared to the reading of history in itself, and compared to the representation both as a represented object and as a representation-operation). If there is some confusion in the use(s) of the notion of representation in cognitive science, Arthur B. Markman's *Knowledge Representation* (1999) is very useful and productive in clarifying. However, the framework that he presents changes very little from what has been previously mentioned; in fact, on the contrary, the last element strengthens the role of the *dialectical* aspect. Markman's work should be examined, especially because it acknowledges the *possibility* and the *difference* between *analogical* representation and *symbolic* representation. This gives the author the power to represent things in the external world (that is, assuming that cognitive systems have

representational capabilities), and certainly does not aim to consider and solve the philosophical problem as a physical system, such as the brain-mind (Markman 1999, 10). His definition of representation consists of four components: “(1) *A represented world*: the domain that the representations are about [...]; (2) *A representing world*: the domain that contains the representations” (5); “(3) *Representing rules*: the representing world is related to the represented world through a set of rules that map elements of the represented world to elements in the representing world” (7); “(4) *A process that uses the representation*: [...] Only when there is also a process that uses the representation does the system actually represent, and the capabilities of a system are defined only when there is both a representation and a process” (8).

According to this framework, representation can be defined as the functioning of a cognitive system in the processional dynamic, both with respect to the formation, extension, adaptation and structuring of capabilities, and with respect to the representational modalities for the contribution of the contents of cognition, experience, knowledge, learning, language, mental and behavioural habits, symbolic functions, and so on. It is possible to see a correlation between this perspective and the sociological conception that is implicit in Ricoeur’s re-actualization of Durkheim. The notion of *collective representation*, in which Durkheim refers to concepts, beliefs, values, and symbols as a result of social interaction (which binds the members of a group), seems to be a structural component of the same psychology of representation (that is, according to the dominant forms in a given time).

11.3 The Representation of the Past

From one point of view, the issue of representation takes us into the hub of the disciplinary and philosophical problem of the epistemology and methodology of historical knowledge. This involves investigating the role of representation in the construction of historical knowledge, or its median position between the level of explanation in the writing/reading of history and the level of the understanding/interpretation of history. This also involves the link between representation and narration – in testimonies and expressions of memory, in the effect of narrative representation, in the problematic functioning of rhetorical figures and strategies, and in the reconstruction of historical fact- as well as the role of the ontological-epistemological reality of the historical past, its knowability for representation, and the general link between representation and reality.

From another point of view, the contribution of cognitive science, in terms of understanding the cognitive mechanisms – in particular the mechanisms that are related to *mental representation* – seems to offer an argumentative contribution that can deviate, in historiography, from a linguistical-structuralist, rhetorical-narrativist, and aesthetic unilateral drift (anti-realism), as well as from a unilateral empiricism and scientism (radical realism). *Compared to the representational function or functions, reality remains in the same sense in which the Kantian noumenon remains in relation to the phenomenon.* From this angle, historical knowledge has the same problems as any other form of scientific knowledge.

● One specific problem is found in its position, as classically determined, between the human and social sciences. The cognitive science approach shows not only the close essential relationship between representation and reality, but also the progressive and productive intertwining between the cognitive representation of perceptive experience and the contents of memory on the one hand, and the semanticisation of this representational function and the narrativisation of the thing that is perceived, experienced and remembered on the other. With this approach, as the narrativist, we do not reject a rhetorical, logical-linguistic or aesthetical point of view in history, since all of these approaches (which are often intertwined) have to do with the representational function(s), revealing constitutive and critical aspects. However, we need to “re-measure” the incidence of these approaches. From another angle, this model reveals an epistemic flexibility that is able to reflect the same flexibility inherent in the dimension of historical knowledge which, following von Wright and Ricoeur, seems to be a mixed epistemology placed between explanation and understanding. This briefly retraces the problematic nature of these historiographical models, in relation to the issue of realism, and a specific profile seems to emerge, which enhances the contribution of cognitivism, the sociological declination of making history (that is, the connection between the *theory of history* and *theory of action*), and the declination of the problem of realism, *not in terms of the reality of the past, but in terms of the occurrence in time of a given event* (that is, not in terms of reality but in the terms of the inscription of facts in *time*).

This point of view, as expressed in Hayden White’s *topology*, certainly captures some characteristic and characterizing aspects of the work of the historian, to the extent that, as he says, recalling Croce, “where there is no narrative [...] there is no history”; White 1987/1990, 5). For White, the main speculative-procedural dilemma becomes “how to translate knowing into telling” (1), while his contribution thematises the question of how

telling comes into play in knowing. On the other hand, Barthes (quoted by White) solves the dilemma by explaining that knowledge is translated into “telling” through *narration*. The distinction between historical discourse and historical narrativised discourse is useful and important (this latter is over-exposed to the risk of fictional, distorting, rhetorical drift, and other problems). Finally, for White, what makes a past fact historical is, first and foremost, that it will be remembered, and then narrated, not that it really happened (or *how* it really happened).

Common opinion has it that the plot of a narrative imposes a meaning on the events that make up its story level by revealing at the end a structure that was immanent in the events all along. What I am trying to establish is the nature of this immanence as the proper content of historical discourse. These events are real not because they occurred but because, first, they were remembered and, second, they are capable of finding a place in a chronologically ordered sequence (20).

If White’s approach cannot be reduced to a narratology because he thematizes the exclusive characters of the *historical discourse* as a peculiar discourse (to him, the relationship between historiography and literature is as difficult to determine as the relationship is between historiography and science (44). Despite this, with tropology, the problematical centrality of the representational reference to reality is lost, to the extent that the figures of historical thought become the objects of study, clarification, and correlation to the method of making history *as figures of thought*. It is not acceptable within a given frame, and within specific procedural modules, that a historical report is representatively true as historical discourse to the extent that its representation adheres to one or more *experiential memories*. It is always *significant* that, in an archive, certain materials and not others are stored: this could be the consequence of a series of occurrences, as well as the result of a previous selective/destructive *mise en ordre* for evaluation in relevance. In addition, the places where the writing of history is organized are partly arbitrary, and in part the result of selective and destructive choices; and even this is within the process of representative reconstruction, as much as the *destructive selection* of the historian who “chooses” to make use of certain materials rather than others, and so on.

On the point of realism, Ricoeur is a critic of White; and yet White is critical of Ricoeur. For White, Ricoeur ultimately builds and defends a *metaphysical narrativity*, to which everything is returned (even though he tries to open up the whole problematic field of historiography, and even though he considers a wide range of historians and philosophers).

According to the French philosopher, even human action is narrative, to the extent that, as an interpretative key of the historian's work, it could be "read" as we read a text (49). For Ricoeur, this is a *trend*, rather than a *radical* characterization; in his theorization, the problematisation of reality and truth in history remains, and no *narratological solution* has been found. For his part, Ricoeur interprets White's contribution as favourable to rhetoric, with the disadvantage that it allows questions of reality, and even truth, to disappear in history. However, it is precisely this *topology* and historiographical approach, which thematises narration, that helps to modify and clarify the most appropriate epistemological perspective in history. In this respect, Ankersmit's approach seems to be very significant. For Ankersmit, in history, truth cannot be stated in terms of the issues that arise from the conception of truth as truth-correspondence (in Ankersmit's model, there is no useful model of truth in historiography). Why? Because it is impossible to compare the content of history, the content of the narrative-historical representation, to something that you can show. In history, there has never been "anything"! The *narrative substances*, substances of a historical narrative (such as the French Revolution, the Italian Risorgimento, the Cold War, and so on), which Ankersmit (simply) calls "visions of the past", can be understood as a third entity, neither unilaterally things of the past or true events, nor unilaterally pure linguistic-discursive representations. However, they are also intermediate entities, which are actually true and valid insofar as they are expressed as discursive representations that refer to a past as it was. However, beyond the importance of this theorization, Ankersmit develops an essentially anti-realist point of view, which looks to a *narrative ideal* as a procedural and scientific point of reference. It is true that narrative realism tends to be understood (according to Ricoeur himself) as some variant of a *picture-theory* (in the sense of a mapping projection, of a translation, a pictorial reproduction, a representative image, and so on). There is a specific way to intertwine particularities, instances, and problematic aspects of realism with particularities, instances, and problematic aspects of representational reconstruction, such as narrative understanding: this is how the *trace* can be thematised. The trace is a material trace, an object, an inscription, a tangible piece of evidence (of what was); it is also a clue, an intangible item, an object of hypotheses, of attribution of meaning, of interpretation. We can even speak of a memory-trace as a trace of memory; follow the trace, interpret the trace, analyse the trace, get back on the trace: these are operations of historiographical investigation, research and reconstruction where realist instances and epistemological-hermeneutical instances can be found intertwined. A second way (also presented by Ricoeur) is a

revised version of the notion of historical factuality, and therefore of historical reality, as a past reality: reality of what happened and of what has been. Even Ankersmit does not remove reference to the past. Beyond the character of “residual realism” in his theory, his conception of *narrative substances* can perceive both the mixed component of the trace and the reconfiguration of temporality. If the visions of the past and the “ways of seeing reality are not part of the constitution of reality as such”, historical representational reconstructions are recoveries, re-actualizations or re-effectuations not of a material reality but of those representational forms and expressions that have guided the intention and motives of the agents of the past: that is to say, reproductions of historical facts.

Historical facts are real facts in the sense of having really happened with data agents, according to a given causal network and a con-causal hierarchy of dynamics and processes. Historical facts are not objects, but representational processes within other processes that also produced objects and left traces, which are not historical facts either, but are the same as historical facts in a given time, and acquire meaning and significance with respect to that particular time. Therefore, the “historical-real” is constitutively *representational* and constitutively *temporal* because it is a *process*. The question of what is a given truth in history then becomes the dilemma of creating a representative reconstruction of the process of (past) events that is closer to the real events as they are given in that time. Those “real” events have been conceived, represented, lived, created, and narrated. The interweaving of the theory of history and the (cognitive) theory of representation is revealed as a central interlacing that could be proposed between the theory of history and the theory of narrative on the one hand, and the theory of history and the theory of action on the other. From one perspective, history is about other people, other institutions, other representations and visions of the world: people who lived in different eras, who have created and inhabited different institutions, who have spoken other languages, embraced other conceptions and beliefs, and so on. From another perspective, historians are not faced with a *radical otherness*. Not only were they *people like us*, but we are the heirs of those cultures, those institutions, that wealth of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and so on, and we are not without tools to recover or reproduce/re-present them. Without believing that this diminishes the scientific value of the work of the historian or distorts the authentic scientific problematisation, this can be taken as a benchmark. Even in history, this remains a matter of history’s exact knowledge and technique-procedure. Certainly, historical events are not measurable events like natural events, but they are given according to a linkage that is

susceptible to a specific causal explanation. As natural events, they are enrolled in the same unique universe of occurrences (occurrences that are susceptible to measurement, correlation, etc., because they belong to a calendar time). Therefore, the construction of history or histories acquires significance, value and scientific importance, not only in reference to the establishment of a given occurrence in relation to the historical calendar, but also in relation to the readings of different historians over time, compared to those from previous times. For example, compare Herodotus' interpretation of his past to our reconsideration of that same past, in the light of our consideration of Herodotus. This way of organizing events and the historical interpretations of events *in time* is a way to give historical time a term/paradigmatic role in our reconstructive/representational procedure of making history (and as an internal-but-objectified structure of events). This is not an experienced time of consciousness, or a cosmological time that is determined by physical changes. Rather, it is what Ricoeur calls *calendar time*, a third type of time, a time that is between reality and experience. This could also be called "a *representational time*".

11.4 Conclusion

This chapter investigated the epistemological question of representation in historical knowledge from the point of view of representation as a mechanism/dynamism of mind and memory, as a linguistic instrument, and as an instrument of knowing. In particular, we found a significant point of correlation between Markman's analysis and Ricoeur's re-actualisation of Durkheim's notion of "collective representation". Representation can be defined as the functioning of a cognitive system in the processional dynamic, both with respect to the formation, extension, adaptation, and structuring of capabilities and with respect to the representational modalities for the contribution of the contents of cognition, experience, knowledge, learning, language, mental and behavioural habits, symbolic functions, and so on. This definition subsumes psychological, sociological, methodological and epistemological elements which constitute the central focus of our investigation around the problematic dialectic of representation and fact in historical knowledge.

We understand that the validity of representative functions lies not only in the structural and psychological universality of perceiving, feeling and knowing, but also in a certain historical and social stability in terms of the symbolic life, in terms of beliefs, ideals, values, and so on. Institutions and

norms, as well as cultural elements, actively and significantly participate to create that *regularity* which is necessary for the permanence of representation(s).

Representation has in itself a unique, substantial stability made by psychological, sociological, factual, temporal and imaginative elements. And a well-addressed (procedural) dialectic of explanation and understanding may guarantee its scientific use as a productive source for historical knowledge.

CHAPTER 12

JUSTICE THROUGH RECOGNITION: FROM PHILOSOPHY TO ACTION

12.1 Preamble

The issue of recognition is now deeply instilled into the reflective fabric of public debate. Not only does this concept identify a cornerstone of the new problematic structures of contemporary social life, it is also a fundamental term in various fields of theoretical and empirical research.

I will try to summarise the most important and specific uses, in order to identify the “disciplinary characterisation” and its theoretical and speculative potential.

Although in several of the singular perspectives on recognition (mainly those of Ricoeur, Habermas, Honneth and Taylor) we find a persistent, interdisciplinary connection between the psychology, sociology and politics of recognition, and all these elements all feel as if they should be central to a *general theory of recognition*, this theory does not yet exist (see Ricoeur 2005, IX).

The ideal philosophical approach to establishing such a theory must be both theoretical and practical; it must bear an essential ethical mark; and it must also be interdisciplinary led by a flexible methodology that is never one-sided but always capable of embracing multiple perspectives. Ricoeur’s approach seems to meet all these requirements. In the mid-1980s, Ricoeur defined methodologically his vast and various philosophical work as follows: (a) a “*reflexive philosophy*” that remains (b) within the “sphere of Husserlian *phenomenology*” as (c) its “hermeneutical variation” (Ricoeur 1991, 12). While it is undeniable that Ricoeur generally adhered to this/these tradition(s), in the following twenty years, some factors suggest that his philosophy showed the traits of a *critical hermeneutics*, rather than an “interpretive description based on reflection” (see Busacchi

2015).

The critical hermeneutics approach in many ways helps the development of his philosophical research because a philosophy of recognition requires a coordinated dialectical analysis between its theoretical and practical grounds.

This chapter explores some questions relating to the practical-ethical implications of recognition in relation to social reality, with respect to the new context of the political, moral and cultural conditions which we are facing today. What place does the discourse of recognition have today? What are its practical implications? What are the psychological, sociological and political implications? What is the connection between justice and recognition? Is justice only a question of laws and formal procedures, or are the dialectics of recognition in fact the basis of laws and rights? Is it possible to establish recognition as a basis for individual emancipation (psychology), social progress (sociology) and the strengthening of justice and democracy (politics)?

12.2 Psychology and Recognition

The question of recognition is central to the field of cognitive psychology (for example, in research around memory, referring to the process of perception, identification and re-presentation), but its theoretical and clinical uses in other schools of psychology and psychopathology are broad and varied.

In the field of psychoanalysis, the issue of recognition is also particularly important, specifically in the therapeutic process and the patient-analyst relationship. The dynamism of transference-countertransference can be understood as a social dialectic of recognition. In philosophy, this is the interpretation offered by Paul Ricoeur, as we shall see. With a different expressive formula, a similar idea can be found among psychoanalysts themselves. For Jessica Benjamin, for example, intersubjectivity is the real field of intervention for the psychoanalysis, whose essence is defined as “space of recognition”: the analyst and the patient must be aware of their own subjectivity and recognise the subjectivity of the other (see Benjamin 1998). The same is true for Salomon Resnik.

Studying the psychology of recognition from a speculative point of view, we may find it useful to comparatively intertwine Paul Ricoeur and Axel

Honneth's views since both make reference to psychology or psychoanalysis using Hegel's theory of recognition. The theory of recognition developed in Ricoeur's *The Course of Recognition* (2004) is explicitly connected to Honneth's *The Struggle for Recognition* (Honneth 1995), even though the French philosopher opposes the Honneth's ethics of conflict, which is a philosophy of recognition developed between struggle and gift, that is, between the struggle for recognition and "states of peace", as he calls them.

Honneth's book pursues his project along the line of a preliminary work (historical-philosophical and empirical) which occupies two-thirds of the work. The first of its three sections contains "the systematic reconstruction of the Hegelian line of argumentation" on the issue of recognition, from Hegel's early writings – *System der Sittlichkeit* (1802) and *Jenaer Realphilosophie* (1805-06) – with attention to the differences generated through the final formulation of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1809). Honneth starts by sketching out how the Hegelian interpretation of the three forms of recognition – love, rights, social esteem – will help (in the section dedicated to the social psychology of Mead, or rather to the renewals of Hegelianism through Mead) to profile the "intersubjective conception of the person" for the base of his theory. It is only in the sphere of the first of these three Hegelian moments – as we shall see – that the discussion of recognition in terms of psychology starts from both, Honneth and Ricoeur.

Honneth tightens the grip of the ethical discourse with the Hegelian innovation². Certainly, Ricoeur's renewal of the Hegelian theory of recognition tends to incorporate the natural perspective of Honneth's proposal; yet is still true that this renewal lies in a philosophical anthropology presented by the author as the phenomenology of the capable human being. Introducing his third studies, he writes:

² It can be clearly tested through the following passage: "By thus using a theory of conflict to make Fichte's model of recognition more dynamic, Hegel gains not only the possibility of providing a first determination of the inner potential of human ethical life but also the opportunity to make its "negative" course of development more concrete" (Honneth 1995, 17). Yet this is not incompatible with the interpretation in terms of the psychology of recognition, rather it gives just an ethical characterization: "[...] the conflict that breaks out between subjects represents, from the outset, something ethical, insofar as it is directed towards the intersubjective recognition of dimensions of human individuality" (*Ibidem*).

Self-recognition [...] found in the unfolding of the figures of the “I can”, which together make up the portrait of the capable human being, its own space of meaning. But what is most important for our pursuit of the course of recognition is that identification [...] not only has changed its referent in passing from something in general to the self but has been elevated to a logical status dominated by the idea of the exclusion between the same and the other, and to an existential status thanks to which the other is likely to affect the same (Ricoeur 2005, 151).

The effect of the naturalistic “contamination” is evident and significant: Ricoeur, welcoming the course of Honneth through Winnicott, facilitates the entry of psychoanalysis in his analysis. Yet it is precisely at this point – interweaving with an enlargement of the theory proposed by Simone Weil – that the French philosopher takes the opportunity to introduce phenomenology, through an old formula that, retaining Hegel, leads the psychoanalytic lesson into new grounds. This process is not easy to grasp but it is undoubtedly present. We can begin with an excerpt taken from the Ricoeurian essay *Image et langage en Psychanalyse* (1978): “Not only does desire speak, it speaks to someone else, to the other person. This second starting point in analytic practice [...] does not lack theoretical implications. It reveals that from its beginning human desire is, to use Hegel’s expression the desire of another’s desire and finally for recognition” (Ricoeur 2012, 96).

In Ricoeur’s conception, the idea of the dialectic of recognition is welded to the psychoanalytic doctrine – along with all the problematic burden involving the consideration of Freudianism, whose mental model does not operate on behalf of the *other* (in contradiction to what psychoanalysis *does* in its therapy). This difficulty – recalled and mentioned by Honneth – has been highlighted and studied by Ricoeur since the seventies in his psychoanalytic research; research that has had a strong influence on Ricoeur’s narrative hermeneutics and his anthropological philosophy. This profoundly important influence can also be seen in *The Course of Recognition* (84). Compared to the Hegelian theory, it is true that the *Parcours* takes advantage of the work of Honneth, enriching his analysis through the writings of the early Hegelian research; and it is equally true that this does not constitute a denial but rather a further reason for fitting the dialectical to psychoanalysis (through Winnicott, as we have seen). But if Honneth tends to emphasise more strongly the character of *the constitutive dynamic of struggle*, Ricoeur emphasises and highlights the *emancipatory strength of the gift behind the dialectics of recognition*. In fact, in more recent developments in his philosophy of the human being made around the time of *The Course of Recognition* suggest that both

aspects – the constitutive dynamic of the struggle, and identity as a process of emancipation – are present and operating equal equal status.

From the comparison between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, Ricoeur reaches the idea of *subjectivity as a hermeneutic-dialectic process* stretching between the opposites of *archê* and *telos*, of the unconscious and spirit, of necessity and freedom, destiny and history. He tries to somehow achieve a synthesis between Hegelism and Freudianism, translating *psychic dynamism* in terms of the *dialectic of figures*; in this manner the relationship between *id* and *ego* became a kind of dialectic between lordship and bondage. And it is precisely on this point that he brings the issue of recognition onto the scene. We find it expressed in *Freud and Philosophy*, in the third chapter of the “Dialectic”.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* outlines an explicit teleology of consciousness that rises in the background of desire and life without transcending it radically. Desire is the point on which Hegel and Freud meet. In Hegel, “desire is revealed as *human* desire only when it is desire for the desire of another consciousness” (Ricoeur 1970, 466). Hegel’s concept of desire is closely related to recognition. The phenomenology of desire is fulfilled in a dialectic of recognition. We know that the figures of the famous *Phenomenology* who express this dialectic are that of lord and servant. According to Ricoeur, what happens in therapeutic analysis is something substantially similar (see, *Ib.*, 474).

A new important step for the concept of recognition can be found in Ricoeur’s book *Oneself as Another* (1990), in which the conception of identity is expressed as a hermeneutical-narrative process, and as a dialectic of recognition that is both vertical, of the self relative to the otherness in itself, and horizontal, of the self relative to the other. On the one hand, the relationship of the *self* with its otherness, on the other hand, the other and the dialectic of recognition as a part of the process of identification and emancipation. Not two separate movements, but two movements as elements of a single process. This conception remains unchanged until *Parcours*, where it is summarised as follows: “We do not mistake ourselves without also being mistaken about others and our relations with them” (Ricoeur 2005, 257).

Psychoanalysis contributes in an essential way to the formation of the Ricoeurian philosophical discourse on the human being. For Ricoeur, identity is constituted through a process of interpretation that is at once interpretative and narrative, a process that takes on the form of the

dialectic of recognition – recognition of the self and recognition of the other – and in which the phenomenon of emancipation becomes established. Finally, there is the idea of identity as a *hermeneutical process of emancipation*. Ultimately, beyond the particularity and uniqueness of the experience, the path of the development of the self and of the fulfilment of the human individual (as a person), always assumes the connotation of an emancipatory process of self-recognition (to one's self and of the self with respect to the other). The emancipated subject is one who recognises himself or herself as a person, and that recognising the other as one's self. To become capable of the full and complete recognition of the other as a person is certainly the result of a complex, difficult and varied interrelational and spiritual dialectics. This is the challenge of being and living as a free, emancipated human being.

12.3 Sociology and Recognition

Now we have to focus on the sociological theme of recognition, which is a relatively recent theme. Essentially, the work done by Talcott Parsons in developing his *General theory of social action* (Parsons 1949) marked an important shift from the kind of sociology involved with anthropological and ethnological research, to the sociological research that has investigated the question of intersubjectivity and interrelation alongside social behaviours and rituals that reveal *reciprocity*.

But in philosophy, it is again George H. Mead's research that represents one of the major references. Mead's social behaviourism (1934) or, rather, his symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969) postulates that the *mind* and the *self* are social products and that language constitutes the place of their emergence: language is the *medium* through which experiences and social reality can be formulated or symbolically built. A central element of symbolic interaction is the individual's ability to assume the other within him/herself and to regulate his/her conduct from this perspective. Obviously, other factors come on the scene here, such as *emotions*, and Meadian symbolic interactionism is still a fundamental reference in the cultural approach to emotions. The fact that we become capable of putting ourselves in the place of the other is not only the result of interrelational *experience* (proving our mental ability to recapitulate all of our interactional experience in our head), but the result of the interrelational dynamism of our emotions. At the heart of Mead's research is the issue of the processes by which social actors (*Self*) are constituted; it shows how mind and thought (*Mind*) and social organisation (*Society*) are formed.

Self, Mind and Society are parties to the proceedings of a single whole. External behaviour originates in interior attitudes, but it is equally true that there are elements within arising from outside: the internal attitude is an integral part of the external act.

Considering a generalised perspective of the development of sociological research around recognition, we can say that it has moved over the decades from a polarisation of the philosophical and sociological theme of intersubjectivity to the sociological-ethical and sociological-political theme of reciprocity. The theme of recognition in sociology emerges in the theoretical-practical dialectic of intersubjectivity and reciprocity.

It seems necessary – and certainly interesting – at this point to delve into Jürgen Habermas’ the general theory of action and the sociology of intersubjectivity.

The theme of the public sphere as a space of a mutual relationship of communicative rationality occupies the core of Habermas’ vast and structured research – a political commitment he derives from the essential conceptual triad of *public sphere, discourse* and *reason*. His philosophy of man implies and sustains all speculative developments around this triad. It refers to a strict interpretation – literal, nourished by evolutionary biologism – of the Aristotelian idea of man as *zoon politikòn*, a “political animal”, that lives *in the public space*. We are radically dependent on each other, we are constitutively intersubjective; we become persons in the public space, because we are learning continually from each other (see Habermas 2005).

This specific aspect of the human intersubjective dimension has strong reverberations right across of Habermas’ work. In fact, if on the more strictly theoretical plane, his comprehensive structures are essentially sociological, on the thematic and reflexive plane Habermas has focused his research on the political public sphere. The construction and organisation of public spaces – whose structural framework is of a *social* nature – reveals the constructive or decadent, the harmonies or rifts of a communitarianism that is either emancipatory or repressive. Compared to the specific context of our social reality, initially, Habermas saw at work the general dynamism of coercive and repressive natures, within which the work of the social critic and the “militancy” of a free and emancipatory communication were considered necessary to ensure a positive state of authentic human coexistence. Subsequently, his diagnosis changed slant, taking into account the importance of the progressive complexification of

today's society. Modern societies can be held together normatively only by abstract solidarity, juridically mediated, between citizens of the state. This community, which today cannot always be strong – since it is now impossible to know oneself personally and properly – only achieves an acceptable degree of stability and cohesion through the formation of public opinion and will. Therefore, the condition of a given democracy is not isolated in its ability to test itself via evaluating the forms and quality of its public political space. Rather, research on the forms and methods of communication assume the meaning and significance of *systematic* sociological research. This occurs because communication is now the ultimate structure of social reality.

The basic reference for this notion is Habermas' *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), which is entirely centred on a theory of action, on the one hand, and between lifeworld and the system on the other. We can say that the lifeworld is essentially connected to the concept of communicative action, while its counterpart, the system, is essentially bound to the concept of instrumental action. If this combination is expressed primarily in the State, its apparatus and its economic organisation, the second is the set of values that each individual, as an individual and as a member of the community, experiences in a spontaneous and natural way. The crucial focus of the (negative) Habermasian diagnosis of contemporary society, regards the massive and growing interference of the system in the lifeworlds. The lifeworlds are threatened by an "internal colonization" that is expressed through a new form of social violence exerted at the level of communication and conduct of life: "a progressively rationalized lifeworld is both uncoupled from and made dependent upon increasingly complex, formally organised domains of action, like the economy and the state administration. This dependency, resulting from the *Mediatization* of the lifeworld by system imperatives, assumes the sociopathological form of an *internal colonization* when critical disequilibria in material reproduction [...] can be avoided only at the cost of disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld" (Habermas 1985³, 305; see Busacchi 2015). Systemic imperatives intervene today in areas of structured communicative action, namely at the level of cultural production, social interaction and socialisation itself; or, at the level of activities related to individual choices of cultural types, of types of style, belief and so on. Today it is not possible to develop a comprehensive synthesis of the totality of the phenomenon of colonisation of the lifeworld, nor a unified strategy that could be proposed as a counter-action or policy response. The fact that this colonisation is "systematic" has to be understood, broadly speaking, in the sense of its diffuse and pervasive

character. In fact, it occurs in so many and varied forms. Habermas – who tends to emphasise the negation of a radical resolution, or an antirationalistic resolution (a typical postmodern attitude) – maintains not only the early perspective of a strong critical rationalism, but also a communicative and interpretative framework. ● On the one hand, critical work provides the only hope of counter-balancing these colonising forces, by taking stock of the influences (procedural, factual and institutional) that are the result of Western rationality. ● On the other hand, one of the most important mature additions to Habermas' theory is the consideration of social movements dedicated to specific causes, such as environmentalism, feminism, and so on. ● Operating within these specific social, moral and cultural contexts, these citizen-led movements might be able to restore the independence, uniqueness and value of the lifeworld.

Habermas argues that the lifeworld provides an arena for emancipation, and interrelation, and therefore the subsequent realisation of the “individual” as a *person*. When combined with a *system*, the second aspect of Habermas' theory of “society”, the lifeworld concept becomes strategic. This occurs first in relation to a theory of social evolution that distinguishes between the rationalisation of the lifeworld and the increased complexity of the social systems. That is to say, it leads to a critical theory that must empirically focus upon the node between the forms of social integration and the levels of systematic differentiation (Durkheim). From the conceptual perspective of an action oriented toward mutual understanding, the concept of lifeworld appears to have a limited range in terms of the theory of society. In fact, the dialectical relationship between lifeworld and system to provide the best apparatus, which includes the broader social reality and emancipatory processes, both individual and social. The lifeworld is composed of culture, society and personality. However, the factuality and the heuristic power in relation to the dynamism of social evolution are assumed by a dialectic existing with the system. Societies establish connective actions and systematically stabilised of socially integrated groups according to a formula. This is explained by clarifying that it indicates the proposed heuristic when considering society as an entity which was differentiated during evolution both as a system and as lifeworld. This systemic evolution is comparable to an increase in the capacity for societal control, while the gap between culture, society and personality indicates the state of development of a symbolically structured lifeworld.

For Habermas, recognition is essentially a question of participation, membership and communicative dialectic between social actors. It is not

the *general* quality of interrelationships determines a society's degree of development or the evolution of its members; rather it depends on the quality of communicative relationships.

In conclusion, Habermas' theory of recognition is founded upon the notion of *intersubjective communication*. This concept is inserted into a theory that can be understood as both philosophical sociology and as critical social theory, and which indicates the dialectic between lifeworld and system. In this dialectic, the possibility of both progress and development/empowerment is not due to the adaptation, rupture or reorganisation of the system, but rather exists in the lifestyle choices of individuals and groups, in terms of the quality of their intersubjective (communicative) relations. The choice of recognition is of pivotal importance, as only individuals and groups advancing instances of recognition, and fighting for recognition, can counterbalance the invasive pressure, levelling and hyper-rationalising of the system. Their struggles may provide a counterbalance to the invasive pressure, levelling effects and hyper-rationalization of the system. This is the only possibility for progress and emancipation available in this model.

This overview of the sociological critical theory-based approach to recognition has highlighted the ongoing heuristic and factual centrality of intersubjectivity. If the psychology of recognition has, essentially, foregrounded the central functionality of the *dialectical* element, sociology has brought back – generally speaking – the point of intersubjectivity (in the specific case of Habermas, on the point of intersubjective communication). Without dialectic process there is no recognition: that is the generalised speculative outcome of our study of the psychology of recognition. Without *relational and communicative commitment* no process of recognition can be activated as a process of emancipation.

12.4 Politics and Recognition

In the field of political theory, the concept of recognition became well-known in the 1990s – thanks in particular to the work of Charles Taylor (*The Politics of Recognition*, 1992) – but it has a much longer history in the fields of politics and law. I agree with Simon Thompson that: over the last fifty years, the configuration of Western political and social life has not developed under the horizon of *social democratic consensus* (as it did for at least two decades after World War II), so much as the series of *struggles for recognition* that followed (anti-segregation or anti-racist,

women's movements, peace movements, etc.), several of which are still in progress. Indeed, recognition has taken on such great importance – not only in the political world in the strictest sense, but also in political theory, political philosophy, political sociology, political ethics and social politics – that it has become naturally connected with questions of law, international law, human rights and so on, not to mention being an essential element within sociology, psychology and moral philosophy. From the point of view of theoretical philosophy, Paul Ricoeur's approach is entirely appropriate when, in *The Course of Recognition*, he brings together the different uses of the concept. But from the socio-political perspective, the uses of recognition must be dependent upon the theoretical-ideal models that characterise them or the modality with which a person is recognised. In fact, in socio-political terms, recognition can be only understood as a basic acquisition-regulation (which is the viewpoint of Robert Brandom, who considers recognition an essential “social achievement”; Brandom 2007, 136).

Taylor distinguishes three kinds of recognition, expressed in the politics of universalism (*recognition as respect*), the politics of difference (*recognition as esteem*) and in the context of private relations (*recognition as love*). The first expresses respect by virtue of recognition or affirmation of the common humanity of all people (it is often associated with the theme of human rights). The second expresses acceptance of the differences between groups and cultures (it is often associated with communitarianism). The third, focused on personal individuality, does not express a politics of recognition but, by incorporating both love and friendship, nonetheless constitutes a central element of human life and society.

To develop this line of questioning, it is necessary to mention two major thematic strands that have, for more than two decades affected the public debate and academic research in a way that is closely intertwined with recognition. The first strand is that of cultural relativism and multiculturalism. Even if it does not entirely relate to the full scope of the politics of recognition (being a matter of culture and ideology), it does largely depend on it, because certain *political* choices and operations can emerge in the organisation of society and social life, and have an effect on culture through changing perspectives and behaviour. In fact, the political philosophy of recognition has itself been tied to the question of “multiculturalism”. Taylor's *Politics of Recognition* contains a broad discussion of multiculturalism: it is at the core of his theory. His take on recognition “is of practical significance, given” the current phenomenon of

globalization and the issues multiculturalism raises in terms of the coexistence of cultures, cultural values, etc. The ethnic, cultural and moral diversity of today's major urban centres poses certain challenges in terms of coexistence: there is the differentiation of social needs in terms of services, environment and public spaces; there is the need to adapt lifestyles, patterns of coexistence and social behaviour to the new milieu; and, above all, there is the diversification of the identitarian order. Taylor notes that this problem of recognition has become an identitarian problem which is drawing greater attention to the value of identity, the uniqueness of identity, of meaning of identity. He describes this situation as the "new fact" of contemporary life.

The second thematic strand – which is not so much separate from the first as more related to the ethical-legal field – addresses conflict-mediation and intercultural rights. It is a practical and legal theme that calls into question political philosophy as much as politics itself, philosophy of law as much as actual law. It is especially connected in international law to areas such as peace studies, incorporating specialised practices like conflict resolution and mediation. It is, perhaps, the area that today is found more than others in close connection to philosophy, law, politics, religion and ethics. The increasing *plurality* of cultures, worldviews and faiths in modern societies is at the source of the growing and relevance of this theme. Tensions and conflicts are inevitable, permanent and structural. The question is no longer how to avoid or erase them, but how to *manage* them, how to use them as an opportunity for enrichment, intercultural development, and growth.

This is the new horizon of the individual and collective, social and moral challenges societies face, yet the law does not seem to be adjusting to these new trends, to the needs of our times. Even as the basic elements of multiculturalism are penetrating the public sphere (see Xanthaki 2010), law and regulatory social mechanisms it defines continue to be operated according to an imperative and coercive *ratio*. To some extent, the public acquisition of multiculturalism as an idea and a new dimension of social life seems to reflect only the idea of its "use" as a means of exercising of political promotion, without a real problematisation of the challenges and issues it presents, or support for multiculturalism in the context of cultural politics and the politics of tolerance (see Markell 2003, 153). A number of challenges lurk at this level, including the acceptance or rejection of the idea/project of multicultural companies, *de facto*. Meanwhile, the differentiation in ethics, culture, values and worldview complicate action and conduct to such a degree that the enrichment and sophistication of the

formalisation does not seem the most appropriate response.

One cannot standardise the multicultural world only by virtue of a compelling and imperative *ratio*, nor can this be effective if there is no connection with the practical exercise of wisdom, the direct involvement of an individual judge and jurist, as a person and man carrying skills of comparative law as well as a multicultural *Weltanschauung*. Multiculturalism raises the question of personal emancipation not just professional, but moral and cultural of the singular agents and representatives of law and institutions. Everything “runs” to the “specific cases”, to the exercise of an experiential and practical wisdom, to the evaluation/appreciation of the singularity-uniqueness. As you can see, we are forced back to the discursive terrain of identity and recognition. Yet here the dialectic between the new normative formalisation and the new practical-emancipatory engagement of men collides with the non-negotiability of the values of the individual. Constituting (today) the basis of individual and collective identity, values are untouchable. Therefore the same conflicts appear unresolvable.

The challenges to law are also new on the level of internationalisation. All mass movements, such as interculturalism, cultural relativism and transculturalism, open up new scenarios in which the identities of individuals and groups are differentiated from geographical or national constraints. On the other hand values are still rooted in the differentiation of identity, often internal to the nations themselves; this demands the attribution of recognition and “contractual” power politically, socially and culturally. As already mentioned, in terms of policies relating to human rights, it seems that the challenge is today no longer expressed in terms of the resolution/dissolution of differences, identitarian politics or separatist politics, but in terms of the reception/acceptance and management of difference, of conflict, and of increasingly identitarian diversity.

The only possible way forward seems to be through dialogical-communicational approaches: the approach recommended by Habermas, the practical-technical *transcend method* of Johan Galtung, and even in the politico-spiritual activism of Nelson Mandela, or the philosophical-religious tactics of Martin Luther King, John Paul II, Desmond Tutu, Daisaku Ikeda and others. We must also consider inter-religious relations, because in many cases, the challenge of multiculturalism is expressed through differences in belief and not just culture. Indeed, essentially, the challenges that lie between law and faith, between social order and religious practice (including contradictions between secular and doctrinal

law) are more complex and delicate than is often acknowledged by academic multiculturalists.

12.5 Conclusion

This journey through the psychology of recognition has highlighted how complex the process of recognition is. It broaches the dialectic of opposing forces: constructive and destructive, negative and positive, emancipatory and regressive, socialising and pathologizing, etc. The transition to a sociology of recognition highlighted the centrality of the *other* and the importance of intersubjective dynamism in the process of emancipation. Finally, the transition to a politics of recognition revealed the relevance of this term in the context of the contemporary world, and in what manner the stability, progress and wellbeing of individuals and the community depend upon recognition.

It is therefore in the relationship between emancipation intersubjectivity that the future of human civilisation is at stake. Human civilisation is becoming more complex, more tense and divided, increasingly unequal and contradictory, yet at the same time more and more aware, mature and determined. We are seeing the international complexification of social systems (complex and contradictory above all at a political and intercultural level) and a rise in planet-wide emergencies related to an increasingly conflict-driven reality dominated by the individualistic selfishness and irrationality of a now immoral, unjust and pernicious overwhelming capitalist liberalism.

Perceiving this, we should work on a philosophy of recognition that, first of all, places at its centre the vision of a new intercultural humanism which has the principle of recognition as its pivotal node. In other words, we need a new humanism founded on human rights and interculturalism. In order to promote real progress among individuals and in society, a philosophy of emancipation must take root, supported by a curriculum of education based on human rights, interculturalism and the development of self-control and self-reflection. In addition, we must return to a philosophy of communitarian participation and intersubjective recognition in order to nourish our society and the reality of everyday life, to spread a culture of dialogue and active participation. The absence of these “vital needs” causes deep wounds and leads inevitably to defensive responses characterised by destructive action, conflict and denial: in other words, to hatred.

This chapter has shown the psychological and moral or spiritual bases of recognition.

From this perspective a practical theory can take form: a theory that concentrates primarily on human emancipation, rather than on structural/legal reforms and policies relating to recognition. We must first consider the human being. We have to rethink culture, education and morality in order to reshape society; we should build policies based on humanism and the search for a new form of welfare: emancipatory welfare.

Speaking in general terms, the challenge for the present and the future will be realising the ideal and ethical values for the lives of individuals and groups of varying backgrounds within multicultural societies which are institutionally ordered and freely inhabited. This challenge exists in the dialectic between responsibility and empowerment; between justice and rights/obligations; it is manifest in questions of compliance with ethical and political integration, and in the dynamics of redistribution.

It is a huge challenge that, nonetheless, must be overcome. Why? Because, as Charles Taylor underlines, “there must be something midway between the inauthentic and homogenising demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards, on the other. There are other cultures, and we have to live together more and more, both on a world scale and commingled in each individual society” (Taylor 1994, 72).

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