

Introduction: On the Proper Use of Phenomenology Paul Ricœur Centenary

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Paul Ricœur devoted his intellectual life to rigorous philosophical thinking, while engaging in close dialogue with different branches of the human sciences. He significantly contributed to major debates of his time, not only by addressing an impressively wide range of topics, but also by proposing innovative approaches to various disciplines such as psychoanalysis, history, narratology, or semiotics. The centenary of Paul Ricœur's birth is thus an opportunity to celebrate, through the multiplicity of reflexive paths he set forth, the possibility of "philosophizing and continuing to do philosophy". Upon closer examination of Ricœur's philosophical itinerary—which begins with a phenomenology of the will and ends with an extended phenomenology of what he calls "the capable human being"—it would be no overstatement to consider his philosophizing a "questioning of the destiny of phenomenology today".

This issue of *Studia Phaenomenologica*, celebrating the centenary of Paul Ricœur's birth, is an invitation to pursue the phenomenological paths of his work, an itinerary whose achievement implies two types of timing: the first involves lingering over and insisting upon the source-texts of Ricœur's phenomenology, whereas the second corresponds to a complex analysis leading to three major directions.

In connection to the first type of timing, that of the return to the first burgeoning of an idea, we offer two unpublished texts of great importance for those interested in the genesis of phenomenology and in its hermeneutic turn in the contemporary French thinking. The first belongs to Ricœur's early work and is an extended version of the lecture on attention that the young teacher, aged 26 at the time, held at Rennes, on the 2nd of March 1939, at the Philosophical Circle of the West. Ricœur refers to this text in his interviews with François Azouvi and Marc de Launey, gathered under the inspired title of

Critique and Conviction, where he says: “The choice of my area [of study, the voluntary and the involuntary] had been sketched out even earlier [of 1945], as witnessed by a lecture I gave in Rennes at the beginning of the war, while I was on leave: it was on attention considered as the voluntary orientation of the look” (p. 27). Searching deeply for the sources of the first volume of his *Philosophy of the Voluntary*, i.e. *The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, we discover this text on attention which is rich in references to psychology, history of philosophy and phenomenology, and which proves the “overdetermined” character of Ricœur’s first area of study. At the same time, it is equally important to notice the significance given by Ricœur throughout his analysis of attention to the phenomenological approach to this phenomenon. By considering attention and perception from the point of view of intentionality he is led to draw a close relation between them; moreover, the way Ricœur discerns the paradox of attention, which consists in bringing to light what was already there, is typical of the phenomenological approach. The text also includes an expression of Ricœur’s questioning of the relation between duration and attention, a relation which is essential for a deeper understanding of the issue of decision, as well as his phenomenological-inspired reading of the history of philosophy (from Descartes to James), in the context of his investigation of the relations attention has to truth and freedom. Given its distinctive phenomenological feature, and its focus on a phenomenon placed in-between the two poles that will mark, from now on, his entire work, namely the reflexive consciousness and action, this text represents one of the most clarifying sources of Ricœur’s phenomenological thinking.

The second text unpublished until now is of great significance for those interested in hermeneutical phenomenology and the relationships between two of its major representatives: Paul Ricœur and Hans-Georg Gadamer. It consists of their correspondence which spreads over for more than thirty years: it begins in 1964, when Ricœur proposes to Gadamer the translation of *Truth and Method* into French, in a new series he was editing for the Seuil Publisher. It ends with Gadamer’s inspired words congratulating Ricœur for the publication of his last opus, *Memory, History, Forgetting*—which was also a good occasion for Gadamer to evoke their first encounter (thus closing this circle of time), at Louvain, where he was giving his lectures on *The Problem of the Historical Consciousness*. This correspondence—transcribed, edited and translated by Jean Grondin—does not only fill a gap in the exegesis on their relations and on the common dimension of Gadamer’s and Ricœur’s hermeneutics (referring, for instance, to the fundamental expressibility of experience, the thing of the text, the historicity of comprehension); it also sheds light on the historical context of this project of translating *Truth and Method* into French, a project that marks, as Grondin notes, their entire correspondence. As he points out, this was a difficult project leading to what may be seen as an unfortunate result, which indirectly explains the weak impact of Gadamer’s

thinking in France until the '90s, when reparation is made—and a new and complete translation is launched, still at the Seuil Publisher, and still as a result of Ricœur's insistence. Exegetical considerations aside, the reading of this correspondence offers us an insight into the particular values that nourished their dialogues on the questions of memory, signification, or mimesis, namely their mutual respect and the profound feeling of belonging to the same community of inquirers sharing a questioning attitude.

We place the second phenomenological itinerary of Ricœur's oeuvre under the auspices of another type of timing, corresponding to the advancing of new ideas, creative irruptions and clarifying insights. Enfolding studies of a high academic level, this itinerary follows three major directions of investigation: the first inquires into the phenomenological sources and the hermeneutical breakthroughs of Ricœur's thinking; the second recognizes the creative role played by the "heresies" and the limit-notions at the heart of the Husserlian "orthodoxy" (if there is one); and finally, the third returns to the unsurpassable presuppositions of the hermeneutical experience (the horizons), and also to what may give the openness to the horizons, namely the dialogues.

The first step consists in reconsidering, by means of an immanent analysis of his texts, the encounters that Ricœur made possible between phenomenology and hermeneutics. However, each encounter poses a new challenge; and from each challenge, the hermeneutical "graft" of phenomenology enhances not only its capacity to receive the plural *logos* of experience, but also its penetrating insight into the things themselves. The spirit of recapturing the fascination of these first hermeneutical breakthroughs in Ricœur's oeuvre is at work in Jean Grondin's article that effectively opens the exegetical section of this issue, and offers an incisive interpretation of the second volume of the *Philosophy of the Will*, entitled *Finitude and Culpability*. This article challenges the established interpretation of Ricœur's first formulation of hermeneutics, according to which it is the problem of evil, inscrutable for an eidetic analysis that forced him to approach a hermeneutics of myths and symbols. Grondin's view is that, in fact, this first Ricœurian hermeneutics draws its strength from his manner of approaching modernity. Although it is in itself an acquisition of modernity, this hermeneutics presents itself, as Grondin points it out, as "one of the manners by which modernity overcomes itself as a forgetfulness of the sacred". Burkhard Liebsch puts forward in his article a complete and rigorous itinerary of Ricœur's phenomenological thinking: it starts from his early works on attention and the philosophy of the will, and concludes with Ricœur's late discussions with Levinas on the theme of the alterity. Another manner of looking into the phenomenological sources of Ricœur's thinking, in order to mark out its hermeneutical breakthroughs, is proposed by Marc-Antoine Vallée who, with this purpose in mind, dwells upon the problem of language. Ricœur wants to provide a hermeneutical framework to the Husserlian theory of language. What makes this task difficult is that Husserl built

his theory upon the idea that experience precedes language, while Ricœur defends the linguistic character of all experience. We are confronted with the paradox (highlighted by Claude Romano) of the intelligence of language superimposed onto a pre-linguistic intelligence, thus contesting the alleged autonomy of pre-predicative experience. It is the author's merit to have seen the solution to this (false) paradox in the "reflexive capacity inherent to language", a capacity which confirms the openness of language to being, without even reaching the hypostasis of language. Another attempt to revisit the sources of Ricœur's hermeneutical thinking is proposed by David-Le-Duc Tiaha who challenges the dominant view that identifies a hermeneutical breakthrough in the 1960's and, more specifically, in the second volume of the *Philosophy of the Will*. Tiaha identifies this hermeneutical breakthrough in Ricœur's attempt to articulate eidetic description and explanation in relation to the act of comprehending the "intra-subjectivity" of the proper body. All this is already taking place in *The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, a work dating from the 1950's. Tiaha shows a particular interest in the interactions between phenomenology and hermeneutics, revealed by means of questioning the epistemological and the ontological functions of the *Lebenswelt*, as they were theorized by Ricœur, following in Husserl's wake.

The direction of the second stage of our phenomenological itinerary is captured by two statements made by Ricœur. Whilst the first audaciously claims that "phenomenology is the sum of Husserlian heresies", the second, no less bold, but endowed with a more critical tone, claims that "phenomenology can be founded only by what limits it". In other words, we are invited to take into consideration the hermeneutical "graft" and "subversion" that Ricœur applied to phenomenology, while regarding as equally important Ricœur's constant attempt to relate phenomenological description to a critical approach to experience. Could we thus not understand the thematic variations and the theoretical interconnections to which Ricœur constantly opens phenomenology as a coherent project of founding phenomenology by precisely what limits it? The first in the series of authors who are concerned with these problems in this volume is Lorenzo Altieri. He treats Ricœur's phenomenological hermeneutics as a "heresy" in relation to the idealist version of the Husserlian method; Altieri's inquiry starts from the genesis of this "heresy" in the *Philosophy of the Will* and ends with its mature form in the theory of subjectivity (as other than I). But we shouldn't limit our endeavour to a single "heresy" in relation to Husserl's phenomenology: according to Scott Davidson there are actually at least two thinkers in France, responsible for giving rise and then criticizing the standard picture of Husserl's idealism: Ricœur and Levinas. Their 'heresies' share the same method and the same goal, but differ in their manner of turning this critique into a springboard towards an original thinking. This method implies a double reading: one attentive to the directions clearly drawn by Husserl and to the operative intentions at work in the undergrounds of phenomenology,

and another aimed against the dogmatic idealism set forth in *Ideas* and the *Cartesian Meditations*. This double reading yields a remarkable result: it leads to a restoration of the duality of the voluntary and the involuntary within the framework of the phenomenological approach to the constitution of meaning and at the same time it singularizes hermeneutics as a non-idealistic method of phenomenology. Often heresies fuel revolutions. Annalisa Caputo calls to our attention a second Copernican revolution within phenomenology, a revolution that finds its sources in Ricœur's last writings. The phenomenology of the capable human being is generally seen as the endpoint of Ricœur's phenomenology, but Caputo brings to the fore his phenomenology of mutuality and, by drawing on an old (and uncompleted) project of a poetics of the will (and the gift), argues that Ricœur's phenomenology of mutuality produces not only a methodological reversal (from the analytic to the a-logical) but also a major shift with regard to the subject matter (from the theme of intersubjectivity to that of giving and loving).

Having completed the picture of the "heresies" and "revolutions" taking place at the borders of phenomenology, we turn our attention to the semantic crisis affecting phenomenology from the inside. This crisis concerns certain limit-notions which, once inserted and assimilated into the core of the phenomenological discourse, perturb the pre-established order of its principles and induce irregular variations, thus opening up a multitude of approaches and new questions. This is exactly the case of the notions of narration, time and violence. Pol Vandeveldel deals with the problematic relation between narrative and past, as considered by Ricœur. He points out that two existing models of approaching this issue—the structural one, outlined by some commentators in relation to *Time and Narrative*, and the existential one, often identified in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, do not respond satisfactorily to the ontological vehemence of the "what" of the past. There is no invariable "what" of the past seized by the narration, because the past proves itself to be interpretable, according to the relevance it has for us or our capacity to articulate it. Not only does the past in its relation to narration raise a problem, but so does time as a whole, as Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron claims in his article. In order to illustrate this point, he critically reconsiders Ricœur's reading of the Augustinian reflections on the question of time. What is at stake here is the very interpretation of Augustine's theory of the triple present: should we treat the three *ekstases* of time as facts and relate them to the problem of time measurement (*intentio / distensio*), as Ricœur does, or should we regard them as forms of spiritual life, as Vieillard-Baron claims? A last limit-notion is addressed by Marc Crépon's article, namely the notion of violence and the paradox of the non-violence. In the context of the post Second World War years, the discussions around a subject like this, initiated by the publication of Koestler's book, *Darkness at Noon*, segue rapidly: Merleau-Ponty's analysis is followed by Camus' response and Ricœur himself takes part, emphasizing the positive

value of non-violence. His position should not be taken though as a neutral withdrawal from the course of history, but on the contrary, as the conviction that the acts of non-violent resistance can change the direction of history.

Finally, we are left with the problem of Ricœur's phenomenological heritage considered in its dual role: on the one hand, as horizon, as an inexhaustible paradigm in which Ricœur's thinking has constantly developed, to which the French philosopher steadily returned, after following complementary paths and, on the other hand, as a succession of philosophical ideas, tasks and problems that he handed over to us, often by way of dialogues with other phenomenologies or adjacent sciences and domains.

It is precisely with this very problem of the multiple meanings of the notion of horizon that Eddo Evink begins his article; after he determines the major meanings of this notion in Husserl's and Heidegger's thinking (limit, framework and openness), he takes into consideration Ricœur's two additions to the semantic of the horizon: the understanding of the horizon as that which comes to us from the future, and as originating from an absolute alterity which can be approached discursively only in religious terms. However, it might seem that it is difficult to reconcile these additions with the phenomenological core of this notion, as Evink shows by confronting Ricœur's views of the horizon with Derrida's different uses of this notion. In the end, he suggests, however, a possible semantic reconciliation which draws on Patočka's philosophy of history.

After dealing with notion of horizon, the focus of the analysis shifts to the issue of dialogue. First, Luis António Umbelino sets up a possible dialogue between Merleau-Ponty and Ricœur on the problem of the memory of the body. The development of this issue finds perhaps its most articulate form in Ricœur's theory of a proper human space which is established by an architectural act. Umbelino sees this type of human space as a spatial synthesis of the heterogeneous, and compares it to the temporal synthesis of the heterogeneous, which Ricœur discusses in *Time and Narrative*. In Rolf Kühn's article, the regulative notion of dialogue takes on a different shape: it is understood as speech opened to an absolute alterity. What is at stake here is Ricœur's manner of discussing the Scriptures as a philosopher and not as a theologian. Ricœur's dealing with biblical texts in terms of narrativity represents for Kühn a new form of the French philosophy of religion which, however, should not neglect the "priority" of the pre-textual sphere. Another point of view on Ricœur's contribution to a phenomenology of religion is offered by Adam J. Graves who confronts two manners of considering the phenomenon of revelation: Marion's approach, which formalizes revelation in order to grant the title of first philosophy to the phenomenology of religion, voiding it of all historical-material content; and Ricœur's account, which considers revelation, by means of phenomenological descriptions and interpretations of the biblical text, as a phenomenon occurring in linguistic and historical frameworks. On the latter

account we are required to respond to what was already named, to assume and endlessly interpret the textual “over-determinacy” of the revelation. The last two articles of this special issue illustrate the creative and innovative aspect of dialogue. Natalie Depraz argues that it is possible to discern in Ricœur’s descriptive phenomenology developed in *The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, in his interest for personal, concrete experience, and for the “incarnated” practice of reduction, as well as in his openness towards a scientific psychology, the first milestones of a first-person experiential phenomenology. This can be considered necessary, if we take into consideration Ricœur’s abandonment of this project, superseded by his hermeneutics. Finally, Jean-Philippe Pierron advances an audacious hypothesis—namely of Ricœur as an ecologist thinker. This audacity is, however, properly justified by the author, who identifies in Ricœur’s last writings a phenomenology of belonging to the Earth. Grafted with a hermeneutics of cultures, this phenomenology could be the basis for an ethics and politics applied to environmental tasks.

Each reference point of the phenomenological itinerary that we outlined here marks a different use of phenomenology. By gathering them together, under the aegis of this centenary issue celebrating Paul Ricœur, we aim to turn what appears a simple question of semantics, namely that of defining the proper use of phenomenology, into a problem of orientation, and of determining new directions of thinking.¹

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