The Narrative of Ricoeur’s Time and Narrative

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The Narrative of Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative*

This paper tackles two problems. The first is the impossibility of a direct application of the ideas in Paul Ricoeur’s book *Time and Narrative* (hereafter referred to as *TN* or cited by volume and page number) to literary studies. Ricoeur’s work cannot be used for literary purposes without rethinking it. However, I limit myself in pointing out the necessity of this task without undertaking it. The second problem—which is central for this paper—focuses on some peculiarities of the narrative of *TN*. My main point is that, by means of attenuating its narrative end, making its narrative beginning ambiguous, and expanding its narrative middle, *TN* resists the systematic tendencies of the hermeneutic type of philosophizing and thus, in a postmodern era, evades the pitfalls of a constituting consciousness which masters all meaning. In formulating this problem, I take over and try to elaborate in a narratological direction Ricoeur’s rethinking of Hegel’s *Reason in History*. Ricoeur’s critique of Hegel, as we will see, sets the possibility for such a development ajar without, however, exploring it. What intertwines the two problems of the essay is the fact that they both arise from a literary reading of a philosophical work that, among many other things, deals with literary issues.

**TIME AND NARRATIVE AND LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP**

The first question that a literary scholar faces while reading *TN* is the asymmetrical meaning of the seemingly symmetrical title of the book. The conjunction “and” in *Time and Narrative* (in the original, *Temps et récit*) does not entwine together two equal notions such as “time” (*temps*) and “narrative” (*récit*) but rather suggests the direction from which Ricoeur enters his project. In this methodological sense, “and” (*et*) stands for a logical connector that means “therefore”: “time, therefore narrative.” In order to explain this formula it is necessary to clarify the two major sets of notions in the book and their relation. The first conceptual field in *TN* tackles the issue of the threefold mimesis, whereas the second deals with the relation between time and narrative.

1. The threefold mimesis—mimesis$_1$, mimesis$_2$, and mimesis$_3$—is a universalization of Aristotle’s mimesis in the *Poetics*. It is a notion that is applicable not solely to tragic plots, as in Aristotle, but to the whole narrative province and especially to its two major branches comprising the primary interest of Ricoeur: fictional nar-
rative and historical narrative. Two basic notions are equivalent in terms of action in Aristotle—mimesis or “representation of action” and muthos or “organization of the events” (1: 37). Muthos and mimesis are operations, not structures, and bear the mark of production and dynamism. In production of plots activity is primal with regard to any static structures (1: 33). Aristotle’s poetics is the art of composing plots. The operative and dynamic character of Aristotle’s mimesis is the springboard for Ricoeur’s reading of the Poetics, and it opens the possibility of elaborating on the threefold mimesis as a phenomenological version of what the Poetics contains as a seed. What is the driving force of this elaboration?

Explicitly, the Poetics is a work only about the art of composition. Implicitly it also refers to what precedes and what follows the act of emplotment. The former is the realm of practical action as opposed to theoretical rationalization. The latter is the field where the world of the work and the world of the receiver overlap and start interacting.

The threefold mimesis consists, first, of mimesis_1 or prefiguration; this is the world of action. Following Heidegger, Ricoeur’s main idea is that living practice precedes narratives: “the story ‘happens to’ someone before anyone tells it” (1: 75). Ricoeur writes about an “existential analysis of human beings as ‘entangled in stories’” (1: 75) and invents a set of synonyms such as “a prenarrative quality of experience,” “(as yet) untold stories,” “a potential story,” and “an untold story” (1: 74). Narrative implicitly draws on the variety of the prenarrative resources of practice. Second, mimesis_2 or configuration is narrative per se; it is the constitution of narrative on the basis of practical prenarrative. Finally, mimesis_3 or refiguration is the junction where the world of the text and the world of the reader meet. Literature returns to practical life through reading. Reading of narratives—both fictional and historical—is a hermeneutic operation in which the text and the reader mutually affect one another. In general, therefore, the threefold mimesis is a mediating notion, one that brings together the real world, the textual work, and the receiver.

Our literary reading of TN requires a detour in order to stress that the operative and the mediating characteristics of the threefold mimesis are the driving force of Ricoeur’s argument against the rationalism of structural narrative semiology, which poses narrative logic prior to the world of action, and interprets plot statically (as a structure), not dynamically (as structuration). Ricoeur confronts this approach to narrativity both in historiography and fiction. For an illustration of this debate in literature we may juxtapose Ricoeur with Tzvetan Todorov (Ricoeur does not argue directly with Todorov, but since Todorov presents the focal point of the controversy succinctly, it is convenient to use him instead of Algirdas Julien Greimas, the actual opponent of Ricoeur in this respect [see note nineteen]). For Todorov, poetics studies “the literary text, or discourse, rather than the process by which it is produced or received” (Todorov 2). Ricoeur rejects this semiotic method.
because his hermeneutic approach “does not confine itself to setting mimesis₂ between mimesis₁ and mimesis₃. It wants to characterize mimesis₂ by its mediating function. What is at stake, therefore, is the concrete process by which the textual configuration mediates between the prefiguration of the practical field and its reconfiguration through the reception of the work.” (1: 53). Semiotics of the text (Greimas, Todorov) dissociates poetics (the textual work, mimesis₂) from the practical world (mimesis₁) and from reading (mimesis₃), whereas Ricoeur’s threefold mimesis and hermeneutics associate them.

The strategy of TN consists in relating Ricoeur’s two sets of basic notions—the threefold mimesis and time and narrative—by subordinating the former to the latter:

In constructing the relation between the three mimetic modes I constitute the mediation between time and narrative. [. . .] to resolve the problem of the relation between time and narrative I must establish the mediating role of emplotment [mimesis₂] between a stage of practical experience that precedes it [mimesis₁] and a stage that succeeds it [mimesis₃]. [. . .] my argument [. . .] consists of constructing the mediation between time and narrative by demonstrating emplotment’s mediating role in the mimetic process. (1: 53–54, see also 1: 71)

But this mediation is threatened by a vicious circularity that may turn TN into a tautology. This would be the case if mimesis₁ were itself a meaning effect of mimesis₃. In this case, mimesis₂ would reinstate to mimesis₁ what it had taken from mimesis₁ because mimesis₁ would already be a product of mimesis₃. Since, however, it is not narrative that is projected on life but life that engenders narratives the mediating role of mimesis₂ between mimesis₁ and mimesis₃ is not viciously circular, but a dialectical spiral. The vicious circularity is turned into a healthy dialectical circularity by subordinating the problem of the threefold mimesis and mimesis₂ as a mediation between mimesis₁ and mimesis₃ to the broader problem of time and narrative. Thus, we come to the second set of ideas in TN—these pertaining to time and narrative.

1. 2. In TN, time is thought of as an existent, which is both a natural phenomenon and a meditation on time dealing with the proliferation of different ideas of temporality. The realm of the thought of time, which Ricoeur is primarily interested in, is phenomenological thinking of time: from Augustine, who laid the foundation of phenomenological thinking of time, through Husserl, to Heidegger, the summit of phenomenological rumination on time. Augustine and Heidegger are the two poles of Ricoeur’s critical survey of the phenomenology of temporality but they by no means constitute the limits of thinking of time. Backwards, going deeper into the past, this thinking becomes mythical figurative representations of time and an-
cient wisdom holding that everything is in time, and time wears everything down bringing destruction and death. Forward, in the era after Heidegger, this thinking is represented, as we may infer, by Ricoeur’s contribution to the phenomenology of temporality in *TN*.

For Ricoeur, however, the phenomenology of time can be understood only in its interaction with the nonphenomenological, cosmological, or physical thinking of time—the tradition of Aristotle, Kant, and the supporters of the concept of “ordinary” time, who are viewed as the inevitable counterparts of Augustine, Husserl, and Heidegger, respectively (3: 12–96). Throughout intellectual history, these two types of theorizing about time—the phenomenological and the cosmological—presuppose and exclude each other. Each of these approaches to temporality implicitly and unavoidably refers to its opposite by mutual borrowing and mutual exclusion (3: 18, 21, 24, 44, 53, 57–59, 96).

Where is the place of narrative in this paradoxical thinking of time? It is precisely in Ricoeur’s contribution to the phenomenology of temporality. The breakthroughs and advances in the phenomenology of time, holds Ricoeur, are paid for by aporias in the phenomenological thinking of time (1: 83, 3: 18).

Ricoeur points out three major aporias of thinking of time. First, the aporia of a double, phenomenological and cosmological, perspective in thinking of time (3: 342, see also volume 3, chapters 1–3 and the narrative response to this aporia in history and fiction in chapters 4–8). This is the aporia that we have already outlined. Second is the aporia—which dominates the first one—of time as a collective singular, that is to say as a totality of the three ecstases of time: the past, the present, and the future (volume 3, chapters 9–10). (More about this aporia will be said when we discuss Ricoeur’s critique of Hegel’s *Reason in History*. ) Third is the aporia of “the ultimate unrepresentability of time” (3: 243), a problem which circulates in the whole phenomenological discourse of aporetics.

Narrative in its two major modes, fictional and historical, responds to these aporias poetically, not speculatively (1: 84, see also 3: 4, 138–41). History reconciles aporias of time, whereas fiction does not, but by resolving them poetically, makes them productive. The fictional and the historical narrative modes are dissymmetrical first and foremost because they differ in their responses to the aporias of time (3: 138). This, in reality, is Ricoeur’s major hypothesis in clarifying mimesis, i.e., the content of volume 3.

The correlations between aporetics and narrative unfolds as follows. History responds to the aporias of phenomenology of time by creating a third time—historical time—which mediates between lived time and cosmic time, whereas fiction responds by imaginative variations on time. The problem of the complementarity between history and fiction is treated by exploring the relation of narrative—historical and fictional—to reality; this question is posed not in the ter-
The narrative of reference (that is, the truth claim of history and fiction) but of refiguration. The central notions in dealing with history are “standing-for” (or “taking the place of”) and the trace, that is to say what is left by the past events that have been but are no longer. The counterpart of these notions in the case of fiction is the theory of effects (effects of revelation and transformation); these effects are mainly effects of reading. Ricoeur enlarges reading to include both historiography and literature, and the result is a general theory of effects. Historical narrative is fictionalized, whereas the fictional narrative is historicized, and by means of these mutual borrowings human time is born, which, in fact, is narrated time (3: 192).

But the narrative answers to the phenomenological aporetics differ in their adequacy to the three aporias. What is more, the poetic responses of narrative to the aporias are limited, and beyond these limits other discourses take up the task of speaking of time. The narrative answer to the three aporias is increasingly inadequate. With the third aporia Ricoeur reaches the limits of his enterprise in TN. Let us see how narrative responds to the three aporias.

The narrative answer to the first aporia is both adequate and inadequate. We speak of adequacy, if this response is called narrative identity, which can be both individual (as in psychoanalysis) or communal (as with biblical Israel). To state the identity in this case is to point out the subject of an action. This identity is not substantial (i.e., the subject is identical with himself) but narrative: to answer the question “Who did this?” is to tell a story of a life and this is a story of acting. The relation between identity and a narrative is circular: the self draws his identity from the stories he tells about himself. This, however, is a healthy circularity (cf. 1: 71–76, 3: 248).

The inadequacy or the limit of the narrative response to the first aporia is due, first, to the instability of the narrative identity: a life can be told through different, even contradictory plots. Second, narrative identity does not exhaust the question of the self-constancy or self-sameness but, being a category of action, is an element of a broader ethical realm that endorses the acting subject.

How adequate is the response of narrative to the second aporia, that of the totality of time? The correlation is good, if we stress the multiform unity of temporality and the imperfect character of the mediation. (The imperfect mediation is explained further, when I discuss Ricoeur’s criticism of Hegel’s Reason in History.) Historical thinking transposes in a practical way and on the dialogical level of a common history the phenomenological meditation that is speculative and on a monological level. This good correspondence between the imperfect mediation of the historical consciousness and the multiform unity of the three temporal ecstasies—the past, the present, and the future—cannot be attributed to narrative for two reasons. First, the plot prefers plurality (one course of events can be narrated by multiple plots) to the collective singular of the refiguration of time. Second, the
literary narrative is inadequate to the historical thought. In sum, narrativity does not respond to the second aporia of time as adequately as the first.

The third aporia expresses the inscrutability of time. At this point the impulse of thinking (not thinking itself) as the master of meaning fails. Narrative answers to this aporia with the confession of its internal and external limits to speak of time. It becomes clear that time is refi gured not only by narrative. Thinking of time is limited by two types of concepts: first, archaisms that resist the total mastery of a concept and, second, hermeticisms, that is, notions that put time in the role of something that is always presupposed.

The unrepresentability of time has a narrative parallel in the limits of narrativity itself, that is, in the limits of narrative to refigure time. The limits are internal and external. The former means that trying to reach the inscrutable narration exhausts itself; the latter means that narrative transcends into other genres speaking of time (3: 270–71).

Fiction explores the internal limits of narrative in different ways. First, it does this by searching the relations between time and its other, eternity. The multiplication of the limit-experiences, the imaginary variations, is made possible by the fact that every work constructs a world of its own. Second, fiction explores the borderline between story and myth by appropriating the archaisms and the hermeticisms which phenomenology evades.

The external limits of narrative are felt when discursive modes other than narrative take up speaking of time. In the Bible, for instance, time and eternity are spoken of not only by means of narratives but also by intersecting narrative, law, wisdom writings, laments, and praises (3: 334 n. 7). Another instance of speaking of the fundamentals of time without leaning on narrative consists of the breaches in epic and drama where short meditations or ample speculations about the fragility of life and the power of time to destroy are embedded. The same holds true for lyric as well.

The limits of narrative to speak of time testify to the awareness of Ricoeur that narrative is not another form by means of which the constitutive subject masters all meaning.

1. 3. The sketch of Ricoeur’s approach to the relation between time and narrative sheds light on the meaning of the formula “time, therefore narrative” with which I began this paper. However, the primacy of time over narrative in TN is not always obvious because Ricoeur, speaking of their connection, often uses circular formulae such as: “time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence” (1: 52, Ricoeur’s emphasis, see also 1: 3).

Yet the primacy of time over narrative in the logic of TN, i.e., as a direction from
which Ricoeur enters the problem of time and narrative, can be summarized on at least three levels:

First, in the threefold mimesis, the composition of the plot is grounded, among other things, on the temporal character of the world of action (1: 59–64). That is, the temporality of mimesis₂ is a corollary of its configuring of mimesis₁. In the second set of notions—this of time and narrative—narrative, as we have seen, answers the aporetics of time. Therefore, in the case of the threefold mimesis as well as in the case of time and narrative, narrative comes after time. With the threefold mimesis this “after” expresses an ontological statement: the existence of a temporal dimension in the world of experience results in the existence of such a dimension in narrative. With time and narrative the “after” has a predominantly epistemological and poetic (from poetics) character: our thinking of time is aporetic and this is counterbalanced by narrative.

Second and most important, we have seen that the whole strategy of TN is based on the subordination of the threefold mimesis to the mediation between time and narrative.

Third—which is a narrative embodiment of the first and the second—the parts of TN dealing with time always precede those dealing with narrative. To begin with, time comes before narrative in the title. Next, Part I starts with a chapter on temporality in Augustine’s *Confessions* and continues with a chapter on mimesis in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Part II and Part III, which tackle the technical problems of mimesis₂ in its two forms—historical narrative and fictional narrative—comprise the center of TN. Third, the analysis of mimesis₃ in Part IV again opens with analyses of the first aporia of time (volume 3, chapters 1–3); the same structure is repeated in the analyses of the second aporia of time (volume 3, chapters 9–10). Finally, the Conclusions of TN (3: 241–74) have a similar composition: first the three aporias are summarized and augmented, and then the decreasing adequacy of the narrative response to each one of them is explained.

To sum up the first problem in this paper: the driving force in Ricoeur’s work is his attempt to enhance the phenomenology of time. In TN, narrative is the means to achieve a philosophical goal. (This does not mean that the notion of narrative is not augmented as well: the threefold mimesis [1: 31–87] is a narratological innovation [Prince 53]; for the threefold mimesis, see also Ricoeur, “Narrative Time”; and Valdés, *A Ricoeur Reader* 99–116, 137–55.) In this sense, “time” and “narrative” in the title *Time and Narrative* (which in our case means also in the logic of TN) are not symmetrical and equal notions, because the latter is a function of the former: narrative is the junior partner in a philosophical undertaking inspired by time. Ricoeur himself spells this out when he writes of “the union of history and fiction [as the two major narrative modes] under the aegis of the phenomenology of time”
Or: “the phenomenology of time will be the common standard of measure without which the relation between fiction and history would remain absolutely undecidable” (3: 100, see also 3: 127).

From what has been said it is clear that the direct reversal of the title Time and Narrative (and also of the logic of TN) into, say, “narrative and time”—a title and an approach that would have benefited literary scholarship—is not possible.

THE NARRATIVE OF TIME AND NARRATIVE

I commence the analysis of the second problem in this article—the philosophical meaning of the narrative pattern of TN—by sketching the formative principle of the book.

2. 1. Two reciprocal tendencies shape the argument in TN: the first is repetitive, the second is innovative or, in Ricoeur’s own terms, the first is detailed reviewing, whereas the second is critical rethinking.

Ricoeur, who is sensitive to his own philosophical procedures and incessantly points them out—thus forming the important meta-philosophical layer of TN—speaks of his writing as a “critical review” (2: 38), “a short review” (3: 147), a “review” (3: 149, 186), “a critical examination of [somebody else’s] [. . .] analyses” (2: 77), a “free reading” of somebody’s text (1: 192); he writes “under [somebody’s] [. . .] guidance” (3: 209); his reading of the texts of the others is a “perusal” (3: 177), etc. “Review,” “examination,” “perusal,” “guidance,” and “reading” reveal the first tendency in Ricoeur’s writing: he builds his book as a compendium of works by other scholars which he presents in detail. In this sense, TN speaks of what is already known and leaves the impression of repetitiveness. On the other hand, Ricoeur’s reviews and examinations of what has already been said are always “critical” and “free”; they are “borrowings” (3: 224) that after reworking become “very different” (3: 125) from what has been borrowed. The second tendency in Ricoeur’s writing, therefore, is the extraction of arguments for his own theses from the reviewed works.

An example of the simultaneous work of these two tendencies is how Ricoeur finds implicit references to the world of practice that precede literary composition (mimesis1) and references to the receiver (mimesis3) in Aristotle’s Poetics, a treatise which seems to be strictly about configuration (mimesis2) (1: 45–51). Ricoeur proceeds in a similar manner when he critically reviews contemporary scholars and from their explicit statements extracts implicit arguments for his own cause.5

How do the heterogeneous elements—on the one side, these coming from different disciplines and those taken from the already known6 and, on the other side, the new meanings discovered by Ricoeur—stick together in a consistent philosophical whole? Further, I outline two cohesive forces: first, the unifying capacity of Ricoeur’s thinking stretched between repetition and innovation; and second, the
philosophical narrative in TN. The philosophical narrative, as we remember, is the central issue that interests us.

2.2. Ricoeur’s method of writing, based on the two opposite and complementary tendencies outlined above, can be termed a philosophical credulous incredulity. “Credulous” refers to Ricoeur’s reviewing; “incredulity” stands for his philosophical suspicion that is never satisfied with mere repetition. This credulous incredulity, which in the *déjà vu* looks for something neglected, forgotten, and misconceived, follows the matrix “at first sight […] And yet …” (3: 266).

Phenomenological philosophies are hermeneutic. Therefore, describing the functions of suspicion and incredulity as a stance of Ricoeur’s mind in TN, we can start by saying that it is one of the constructive badges of his hermeneutic approach that brings him near the hermeneutic phenomenology of the early Heidegger of *Being and Time*, where “what stands closest to us is also what is most covered over” (3: 87, see also 3: 61–63). This approach culminates in and is codified by the pivotal notions in TN—those of the aporias in the phenomenological speculation of time and the threefold mimesis. Where the philosophical tradition before Ricoeur has seen only progress in explaining both phenomenological and cosmological time, Ricoeur sees aporias as well: every new breakthrough in the thinking of time in general and of phenomenological time in particular has been paid for by a higher price and by new aporias. It is these aporias that give the logical impetus to the whole project of TN—one is aware of the aporias the question arises as to whether they can be made productive by the poetic response of narrative. On the other hand, the threefold mimesis trespasses the existent interpretations of the *Poetics* by bringing to the forefront the potential for universalization of Aristotle’s restricted model of emplotment in a double sense: first, to cover not only tragic plots but fictional and historical plots alike; and second, to be perceived as a mediation between mimesis₁ and mimesis₃ by means of mimesis₂.

Another example of the hermeneutic character of the credulous incredulity is what Ricoeur terms “an antithetical strategy” in his reasoning (1: 227). This means that he poses his own ideas in what seems to be the most unfavorable situation for proving them and then, step by step, refutes the objections and finally triumphs over them. A typical move of Ricoeur’s is, for instance, such an assertion: “At first glance, the relation between this analysis of [Heidegger’s] within-time-ness and narrative [which is Ricoeur’s concern] seems quite distant. Heidegger’s text […] even seems to leave no place for it […]” (1: 63). Ricoeur, however, shows how what does not seem to fit together is, in truth, in close relation. Another example: “I would like to return to Fernand Braudel’s work, despite—or even because of—the case made there against the history of events, in order to show in what sense the very notion of the history of a long time-span derives from the dramatic event […] in the sense of the emplotted event” (1: 208). Or: “But, first, it was necessary, in set-
ting aside a naive narrative reading of history, to pose the problem within the epistemo-
logical situation most unfavorable to a direct and immediate relation between
history and narrative” (1: 228).

The hermeneutic moment of the credulous incredulity is a major formative
force in TN because it releases the hidden potential of the well known (or subverts
and reformulates “obvious” truths).

2. 3. From another angle, philosophical incredulity can be viewed as a compo-
nent of Ricoeur’s dialectic. To augment one’s own argument at every successive
stage of one’s rumination, to “surpass, while prolonging” (3: 6), means that what has
already been said has even greater potential, which has to be revealed at the next
turn of the dialectical spiral. In TN, therefore, dialectic and hermeneutics go hand
in hand.

2. 4. The credulous incredulity has not only formal but concrete meanings as
well. By “formal” I mean that the first two characteristics of the credulous incredu-
lity—those pertaining to hermeneutics and dialectic—define the speculation in TN
as a hermeneutic dialectic. By “concrete” I have in mind that the credulous incredu-
lity explains some concrete goals of this hermeneutic dialectic. An example of this
concreteness is the difference in the way history and fiction respond to the aporias
of time. If history answers the aporia of the dual character of time by historical
time, which is the reinscription of lived time on cosmic time (3: 104–26), fiction re-
ponds to it by offering imaginative variations of time (3: 127–41). Historical time is
the invariant time in relation to which the fictional stories of time appear as imagi-
native variations (3: 99–100, 127). Fictive time differs from historical time in two
ways—negative and positive. The former means that fictive time is not constrained
by the need to refer to universal time, so the connectors between phenomeno-
logical time and cosmic time (the calendar, the succession of generations, the docu-
ments and traces) lose their importance. As a result fictive temporal experiences
are unique, incomparable, and cannot be totalized. The positive side of the freedom
of fictive time from cosmic time is that fiction can explore the resources of phe-
nomenological time which historical time restrains or leaves unexplored.9 It is this
ability of fictional narratives to explore the unexplored that constitutes a concrete
content of the formal abstract hermeneutic dialectic in TN and of its constructive
principle of credulous incredulity.

3. The second major cohesive force in TN that keeps together the variety of criti-
cally reviewed material is Ricoeur’s philosophical narrative. From this point until
the end of this paper I discuss two intertwined problems pertaining to this nar-
rative. The first is in what sense the narrative of TN—qua dialectical phenomeno-
nological narrative—follows some basic narrative characteristics of hermeneutic
narratives. To clarify this point I compare the hermeneutic narrative of Hegel with
that of Ricoeur. The second problem, which is a corollary of the first, is in what
sense the philosophical narrative of TN is different from Hegel’s hermeneutic narrative. The second question deals with how in a postmodern era Ricoeur’s narrative evades the traps of a narrative that is constituted by a consciousness claiming to master all meaning.

3.1. Let us begin by outlining the hermeneutic features of Hegel’s and Ricoeur’s narratives. Charles Taylor points out that in Hegel’s mature philosophy there are two kinds of dialectic. First, ontological or strict or self-authenticating, which is based on a certain undeniable standard (for instance, Logic or the first chapter of Phenomenology of Spirit). Second, there is a historical or interpretive or hermeneutic dialectic that presupposes the imputation of a purpose to men in history or to Geist through men in history. This imputation is not undeniable on its own, and so it is convincing not by an argument but by the plausibility of the interpretation, that is, by an examination of the whole (Taylor 214–21). Quentin Lauer, speaking of Phenomenology of Spirit, explains these concepts in the following way: “any step in the phenomenological process makes sense only from the vantage point of its culmination […] what is explicit at the end is already implicit in the beginning” (Lauer 113). Both Taylor and Lauer echo in a way Hegel who, in Reason in History, writes that “[r]eason rules the world” (Hegel 14) and explains: “It is not a presupposition of study; it is a result which happens to be known to myself because I already know the whole. Therefore, only the study of world history itself can show that it has proceeded rationally, that it represented the rationally necessary course of the World Spirit […]” (Hegel 12).

Ricoeur describes the philosophies of the synthetic type as philosophies purporting to be a system. Such a philosophy must be “in a position to furnish its own justification and must therefore be circular in character” (Ricoeur, Main Trends 35). The synthetical philosophies are subdivided into three types: categorial (Alfred North Whitehead), hermeneutic (phenomenological philosophies), and dialectical (Hegel, Marx). The logic in the Hegelian dialectic “has a circular and self-founding character” (Ricoeur, Main Trends 37). Ricoeur himself confesses his admiration for Hegel’s thought (3: 206) and writes of Hegel’s Reason in History as “one giant tautology” (3: 194, see also 3: 195, 323 n. 7). This is another way of speaking of Hegel’s interpretive dialectic that, more importantly in our case, resembles the tautological argument of Ricoeur himself in TN (cf. 1: 71–76, 3: 248).

What is important for my argument and what is the pivotal from here until the end of this paper, is the fact that what Hegel and his three students—Taylor, Lauer, and Ricoeur—say about the circularity of certain types of philosophical argument comes very close to the relation between the beginning, the middle, and the end in fictional narrative, a problem formulated in Aristotle’s Poetics and elaborated by contemporary narratologists (cf. Prince 10, 26, 52). To put it differently, the beginning and the end of certain philosophical as well as fictional narratives mutually...
enlighten and explain one another: the end is implicit in the beginning, whereas the beginning reveals its full meaning only in the perspective of the end. Therefore, the methodological bridge that enables a narratological reading of TN is the parallel between the relation of the initial imputation and the plausibility of the whole argument in hermeneutic philosophizing, on the one side, and the relation between the beginning and the end in fiction, on the other side.

The narrative of TN, to use Taylor’s terminology for Hegel, is interpretive. The two major imputations in TN are, first, the circular succession of mimesis₁, mimesis₂, and mimesis₃ and, second, the idea that narrative responds in a poetic way to the aporias of speculative thinking of time. The philosophical narrative of TN has a beginning (the analysis of mimesis₁, 1: 54–64), a middle (the sophisticated technical analyses of mimesis₂ in its two forms: historical narrative [1: 91–225] and fictional narrative [volume 2]), and an end (the analysis of mimesis₃ [volume 3]).

In the beginning of TN, Ricoeur points out the circularity of the book, that is to say its interpretive peculiarity: “What is sketched out here [in volume 1, chapter 3, i.e., the threefold mimesis—1: 52–87], therefore, is only a sort of reduced model of the thesis that the reminder of this work must attempt to prove” (1: 52). As I mentioned, the threat of vicious circularity is something which Ricoeur, on more than one occasion, has to dispel; his major methodological move—revealing the succession of the three mimetic stages as not unproductively tautological by means of transposing it as a relation between time and narrative—is dictated by his awareness of this threat, and comprises his solution of the problem of vicious circularity. In other words, the imputations that are the driving force of the whole argument in TN are not indisputable in themselves, and Ricoeur is well aware of this; their plausibility depends on the plausibility of the whole argument that, in the final analysis, will prove them. Or, in narrative terms, the end and the beginning of TN mutually contain and explain one another.

3. 2. Now let us try to answer two related questions: what is the structure of the narrative of TN; and what is the philosophical meaning of this narrative?

3. 2. 1. As we have seen, Ricoeur’s hermeneutic dialectic shares narrative characteristics with Hegel’s interpretive dialectic. Yet an important difference distinguishes them as philosophical narratives. Hegel’s narrative has an end in the strong narratological sense of the word. The “end occupies a determinative position because of the light it sheds (or might shed) on the meaning of the events leading to it. The end functions as […] the magnetizing force, the organizing principle of narrative: reading (processing) a narrative is, among other things, waiting for the end […]” (Prince 26).¹¹ In the domain of philosophy, a strong narrative end with “a determinative position” corresponds to a supreme authority constituting a final philosophical meaning. Ricoeur’s analysis of Hegel’s Reason in History as a work striving to achieve the totalization of historical time by transposing historical time
into the realm of speculative eternity (3: 193–206) can be viewed, in narrative terms, as underscoring the absolute importance of the end in a systematic philosophical narrative of a Hegelian type.

TN, narratologically speaking, has a weak end. The meaning of Ricoeur’s narrative does not absolutely depend on the end for the constitution of its overall meaning. Rather, it acquires its full meaning by pointing beyond its own narrative end. This narrative paradox plays a decisive role in distinguishing Ricoeur’s philosophical stance from Hegel’s philosophical stance: the weak narrative end striving to transcend itself is an indicator of the desire of a contemporary philosopher to evade “the claims of the constituting subject to master all meaning” (3: 274).

What are the concrete parameters of the correlation between the weak narrative end of TN and the philosophical renunciation of mastery of meaning?

First, this is Ricoeur’s repudiation of Hegel’s viewing of historical time as a totality in Reason in History. (Hegel’s and Ricoeur’s totalization of the three temporal ecstases is, in fact, two different approaches to the second aporia of time—time as a collective singularity.) This is, so to speak, the theoretical (or ideological) ground on which, as we will see, the French thinker builds his philosophical narrative per se. Ricoeur writes: “A critique worthy of Hegel must measure itself against his central affirmation that philosophy can attain not only the present, by summing up the known past, taken as the seed of the anticipated future, but also the eternal present, which assures the underlying unity of the surpassed past and the coming manifestations of life that already announce themselves by means of what we understand, because what we understand has already grown old” (3: 203). In narrative terms, Ricoeur, by criticizing the possibility of oneness or totality of time, subverts indirectly the philosophical narrative in which the beginning and the end mutually—and in the strong sense—presuppose one another, and this correspondence is, as it were, cast in stone in advance: this beginning/end relates only to that end/beginning. Such a fixed correspondence between the past, the present, and the future in Hegel is provided thanks to the idea of the eternal present. Transposing Ricoeur’s notions for our purposes, we may say that the past can be viewed as the narrative beginning, the present as the narrative middle, and the future as the narrative end, whereas we can view the eternal present as the narrative itinerary, which predetermines the relations between the beginning, the middle, and the end. With this narratological transposition of Ricoeur in mind we may read the passage where he parts company with Hegel:

The step we can no longer take is this one that equates with the eternal present the capacity of the actual present to retain the known past and anticipate the future indicated in the tendencies of this past. The very notion of history is abolished by philosophy as soon as the present, equated with what is real, abolishes
its difference from the past. The self-understanding that goes with historical awareness is born precisely from the unescapable fact of this difference. (3: 204)

To Hegel's Stufengang Ricoeur opposes “a branching development where difference constantly wins out over identity” (3: 205). In the terms of my paper, this means a possibility for freer, not predetermined narrative connections between a narrative beginning, a narrative middle, and a narrative end. Ricoeur spells this possibility out when he relates his criticism of Hegel to his own project of entwining time and narrative:

In fact, it is the very project of totalization that indicates the break between Hegel's philosophy of history and every model of understanding, however distantly akin to the idea of narration and emplotment. Despite the seduction of the idea, the cunning of reason is not the peripeteia that can encompass all the reversals of history, because the realization of freedom cannot be taken as the plot behind every plot. In other words, the leaving behind of Hegelianism signifies renouncing the attempt to decipher the supreme plot. (3: 205–06)

In this passage, we see how Ricoeur en passant alludes to but does not elaborate on the connection between the Hegelian and his own philosophizing with certain narrative models. It is this touched upon but unexplored domain that my essay, as I have mentioned in the beginning, tries to take over and develop further.

The time has arrived to see the two solutions of Hegel's predicament in Reason in History offered by Ricoeur. The first one is conceptual, whereas the second is formal.

The conceptual solution is explained in the final, tenth chapter of volume 3 of TN (3: 207–40). It consists of the answer to the question of what kind of imperfect, open-ended, and incomplete mediation between the future, the past, and the present has to supersede Hegel's total mediation (where reason in history and historical reality coincide thanks to a series of Aufhebungen) if we must think of our historical condition and our historical consciousness as a process of totalization. This problem, thinks Ricoeur, stems from a hermeneutics of historical consciousness, i.e., from an interpretation of the relation between historical narrative and fictional narrative taken together, on the one hand, and we as participants in actual history either as agents or as sufferers, on the other hand. Unlike phenomenology and the personal experience of time, this hermeneutics directly articulates—on the level of common history—the three ecstases of time: the future as an expectation, the past as a tradition, and the present as an experience. Such a hermeneutic procedure preserves Hegel's impetus for totalization but evades an impossible complete totality. The interplay among expectation, tradition, and experience, concludes Ricoeur, solves the question of refiguring time by narrative.

A corollary of Ricoeur's critique of Hegel and Ricoeur's hermeneutic constitu-
tion of an open-ended mediation among the three temporal ecstases is Ricoeur’s emphatic point that *TN* as a whole “indicates a certain progression without for all that turning into a system” (3: 273, see also 3: 273–74). In other words, the weak narrative end has as its philosophical and conceptual counterpart the refusal of a system-forming philosophical thinking closed in itself.

The openness of *TN*, that is, the effort to achieve a weak narrative end—besides the conceptual one—also has narrative or formal manifestations which are prepared throughout the work and are spelled out in two major ways in the Conclusions (3: 241–74). First, they are voiced implicitly by outlining the decreasing adequacy of the narrative response to the three aporias of time (3: 241–74): instead of a strong end which would have been the solution of the problem stated in the beginning of *TN* (the relation between time and narrative), the book ends with a weak end—the correlation between time and narrative, as we already know, is a decreasing one; it is also both good and bad. The question set in the beginning of *TN*, therefore, cannot be answered totally in the positive in the end.

Second, the explicit formulation of the weak narrative end of *TN* is given through the third aporia of time, that is, the inscrutable character of time and the limits of narrative in speaking of time (3: 261–73). The weak narrative end of Ricoeur’s book culminates in pointing out the limits of the project, beyond which some of the answers to the questions stated in its beginning are to be looked for.

3. 2. 2. An ambiguous narrative beginning corresponds to the weak end of *TN*; this beginning reiterates the tendency for the open-endedness of the book. The narrative beginning is the “[i]ncident initiating the process of change in a plot or action. This incident does not necessarily follow but is necessarily followed by other incidents. [. . .] the beginning, which corresponds to the passage from quiescence, homogeneity, and indifference to irritation, heterogeneity and difference, provides narrative with a forward-looking intention” (Prince 10). *TN* has, in a way, two beginnings (which will turn out to be more than two). The first entwines *TN* with another of Ricoeur’s books—*The Rule of Metaphor*. The second beginning is the introduction of the circular hermeneutic argument of *TN* itself. Let us detail these two cases.

3. 2. 2. 1. The very first sentence of *TN* reads: “*The Rule of Metaphor* and *Time and Narrative* form a pair: published one after the other, these works were conceived together” (1: ix). What is the meaning of “published one after the other” and “conceived together”? On the one hand, “published one after the other” means that before the narrative beginning of *TN* other incidents exist to which *TN* refers time and again, i.e., the beginning of *TN* is oriented not only prospectively, toward the end of *TN*, but also retrospectively, toward *The Rule of Metaphor*. The retrospective orientation, however, is ambiguous. *TN* is not only a narrative middle in respect to *The Rule of Metaphor* but at the same time it is a revision of this beginning. The revision consists in the repudiation of the vocabulary of reference used in *The Rule
of Metaphor, and its supersession by the vocabulary of refiguration (3: 157–59). The retrospective reference to The Rule of Metaphor accompanied by its revision means that TN both acknowledges and challenges The Rule of Metaphor as its beginning and, consequently, makes ambiguous the notion of its own, of TN’s, narrative beginning.

On the other hand, bearing in mind that the books were “conceived together,” we can say that the beginning of TN is at the same time the beginning of The Rule of Metaphor and vice versa. This means that the event of the semantic innovation produced by the productive imagination—as Ricoeur defines the theme of his two books (1: ix–xii)—can be narrated in two different ways: first, as the synthesis of the metaphor as in The Rule of Metaphor and, second, as the synthesis of the plot as in TN. “It is this synthesis of the heterogeneous that brings narrative close to metaphor” (1: ix). The possibility of narrating one event in different ways is another handhold of the narrative character of the conglomerate of TN and The Rule of Metaphor, a problem which Ricoeur discusses under the title of imaginative variations in fictional narrative (cf. 3: 127–41; he does not speak of his two books as imaginative variations of the same problem).

3. 2. 2. 2. The second beginning of TN is the constitution of a circular argument that is the starting point of every hermeneutics. This constitution, however, is accomplished in two steps, by “two independent historical introductions to the thesis of the reciprocity between narrativity and temporality” (1: 3). These two introductions are the chapters on Augustine’s Confessions (1: 5–30) and Aristotle’s Poetics (1: 31–51). In the first chapter, Ricoeur analyzes Augustine as the pioneer of phenomenological thinking of time, whereas in the second, he explores the Poetics as the kernel from which the threefold mimesis is derived.

In other words, as a phenomenological hermeneutic work TN begins by beginning twice: the first time with Ricoeur’s meta-philosophical explanation of the healthy circularity of TN, and the second time with the juxtaposition of Augustine and Aristotle.

So far, speaking of the two beginnings of TN, we have encountered, in reality, no fewer than five beginnings: first, The Rule of Metaphor as a work published before TN; second, The Rule of Metaphor as a work conceived together with TN; third, the construction of a circular hermeneutic argument on a meta-philosophical level; fourth, the introduction of the first part of this argument—the chapter on Augustine; and fifth, the introduction of the second part of the argument—the chapter on Aristotle. But this is not all: TN, on its meta-philosophical level, first dispels the suspicions that the circularity of its initial argument is viciously circular (1: 71–76) and, second, revises the relationship between TN and The Rule of Metaphor (3: 157–59). Besides, as we remember, striving to evade the vicious circularity of his project, in the introductory Part I (1: 3–87), Ricoeur inscribes the hermeneutic circle of the
stages of mimesis within the larger circle of a poetics of narrative and an aporetics of time (cf. 1: 86).

The obsession, as it were, of TN with its beginning(s) has an ambivalent effect. For one thing, the work incessantly stresses the importance of the beginning for a hermeneutic philosophical narrative. For another thing, however, this beginning is put in an ambiguous, even somewhat self-ironic light because it does not provide the philosophical narrative with “a forward-looking intention” but in different ways defers this prospective intention by discussing its multifaceted character.

Summing up the relation between the beginning and the end, we can conclude that both Hegel’s and Ricoeur’s narratives are interpretive philosophical narratives, and as such presuppose an end which clarifies an initial imputation and the meaning of the whole argument. The difference between them is that Hegel’s systematic thinking has a strong narrative end, whereas Ricoeur’s unsystematic meditation is inseparable from an attenuated narrative end. Besides, the weak narrative end of TN has as its counterpart an ambivalent beginning.

3. 3. The weak narrative end and the ambiguous beginning of TN, through a recoil effect, increase the importance of its middle part. The narrative of TN strives to configure an indefinitely extended middle thus deferring and weakening its end. The middle, narratologically speaking, is the “set of incidents in a plot or action between the beginning and the end. The middle follows and is followed by other incidents. […] the middle is doubly oriented (prospectively from beginning to end and retrospectively from end to beginning) […] it paradoxically progresses toward the end while, at the same time, postponing the reaching of the end […] it constitutes a (more or less prolonged) situation of deviance from the ‘normal’ (the non-narratable)” (Prince 52).

3. 3. 1. The mediation between the beginning and the end—as the most abstract meaning of the narrative middle—is revealed clearly on the meta-philosophical level of TN.”Meta-philosophical” here stands for, first of all, those parts of Ricoeur’s work in which he explains his own procedures and makes, as it were, the unfolding of his work directly visible for the reader. The meta-philosophical parts have a mediating function in the following sense: they, in the ideal and abstract case, are retrospective and oriented toward the beginning because they summarize what has already been said; they are prospective and oriented toward the end because they outline what will be discussed; they are the middle per se because they explain in what part of the project the reader is at this very moment. (The triple orientation of the meta-philosophical parts is an approximation which best characterizes these texts taken as a whole. In practice, many of these parts are, of course, not triple oriented but are predominantly prospective or retrospective.)

The meta-philosophical level comprises two types of compositional units: first, compositionally separate parts such as concluding or introductory chapters, sec-
tions of chapters, rounded-off paragraphs or special end-notes, and second, remarks scattered throughout the text which do not form explicit compositional wholes.

I conclude the narrative analysis of the middle of TN by outlining two mediating philosophical mechanisms in the book: Ricoeur’s dialectic and his hermeneutics.

3. 3. 2. The mediating character of the dialectical method consists in the focus on the connection between two opposite terms provided by a third term. Ricoeur develops his argument in TN dialectically: he starts with one thesis, then presents its negation, and finally, on the basis of their antagonism, reaches a new speculative stage that preserves the positive sides of the two conflicting arguments. This procedure is omnipresent in TN and it guides the argument both at the macro-level (the composition of the Parts of TN in general) and on the micro-level (the discussion of particular problems).

Speaking of the macro-level, we can point out the dialectical structure of Part II: chapter 4 is “The Eclipse of Narrative” (1: 95–120), chapter 5 is “Defenses of Narrative” (1: 121–74), and chapter 6 is “Historical Intentionality” (1: 175–225). The three chapters of Part II deal, respectively, with: the convergence of contemporary French historiography and the thesis of logical positivism about the unity of science; the attempts of English-speaking authors to extend our narrative competence directly to historical discourse; and Ricoeur’s main thesis in Part II which insists on “the indirect derivation of historical knowledge, beginning from narrative understanding” (1: 93). Another example of a dialectical argument is the interweaving of history and fiction in the second section of Part IV (chapters 4–8 of volume 3; 3: 104–92). In chapters 4 and 5, Ricoeur stresses the differences between history and fiction by opposing their responses to the aporias of time. In the next stage of his argument—chapters 6 and 7—he points out the parallels between standing-for in history and the passage from the fictive world of the text to the actual world of the reader. Finally, in chapter 8, Ricoeur discusses “the mutual encompassing of the two processes [history and fiction] of refiguration” (3: 180). The commensurability between the fictive time and the historical time is provided, first, by the phenomenology of time which supplies thematics common to both narrative modes (chapters 4 and 5) and, second, by a theory of reading of fiction that can be expanded to include also history (in this extended theory of reception reading is the phenomenological moment) (chapters 6 and 7).

Particular problems analyzed in a dialectical fashion are, for example, the calendar as a sublation of physical time and phenomenological time on the level of historical time (3: 107–109); or the solution of the problem of the reality of the historical past as a sublation of the past as the Same (3: 144–47) and the past as the Other (3: 147–51) on the plane of the past as the Analogous (3: 151–56).
3. 3. 3. How does the hermeneutics of TN provide a basis for mediation or, which amounts to the same thing, what is the connection between hermeneutics and the narrative middle of the philosophical narrative of the book? Ricoeur's hermeneutics in TN draws on Heidegger and Gadamer. From Heidegger, who is used for my particular topic here, TN retains the idea of the understanding of existence before the connection of existence with texts. Ricoeur reformulates this idea in different ways. Most broadly—because it pertains to TN as a whole—Heidegger’s impetus is felt in the notion of mimesis. Here existence has been reformulated as world of practical action, and text has been reinterpreted as narrative: human praxis precedes every narrative but praxis has a narrative potential because it is already symbolically and temporally structured (1: 54–64). Another reformulation of the same idea is Ricoeur’s debate with narrative semiotics (Greimas), which puts knowledge in the form of a narrative grammar before praxis as a preconfigured narrative (2: 29–60, see also 2: 156, 184 n. 76). Ricoeur, for his part, pleads for “the precedence of narrative understanding over narratological rationality” (2: 158).

The ontological character of Heidegger’s hermeneutics taken up by Ricoeur is important for understanding the connection of hermeneutics with the narrative middle of TN. “From the beginning phenomenology has always been an investigation into the structures of experience which precede connected expression in language; but it has not always been an ontology” (Ricoeur, Main Trends 127). Phenomenology becomes ontology when the early Heidegger overcomes the idealism of Husserl by pleading the primacy of existence over consciousness, by analyzing Dasein not as a consciousness but as a being-in-the-world. This primal starting point for a hermeneutic phenomenology, however, has been forgotten and obscured by the hypostatization of the subject-object relation that is a derivative form of the primordial structure of our situation and our possibilities in the world. The hermeneutic and ontological character of Heidegger’s phenomenology leads to an emphasis on the ontological character of language. The problem of truth is reformulated hermeneutically: truth is viewed as a revelation that can be expressed in the language of the fundamental poets and thinkers like the pre-Socratics.

In TN, Ricoeur makes use of these ideas in different ways. For instance, in order to reveal the indirect connection between history and narrative or, which is the same, the forgotten praxis and its prenarrative resources in what Ricoeur terms historical intentionality, he applies a modification of Husserl’s questioning back (Rückfrage) (1: 179–225), an operation by which in the philosophy of Husserl “language is referred to the experience which precedes language” (Ricoeur, Main Trends 251). Another example—on the macro-level—is the composition of TN which expresses Ricoeur’s central idea that phenomenology cannot speak directly of time but only by means of the mediation of narrative and, as a corollary, the connecting position of mimesis between praxis (mimesis) and reading (mimesis). The idea

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that phenomenological hermeneutics strives to reach the ontological dimension of language by exploring the fundamental language which precedes any philosophy is developed in TN when Ricoeur explores the mythical and archaic language that speaks of the inscrutability of time (3: 14, 17–18, 93, 105–06, 123, 277 n. 18, 262–66).

In all these instances, the invarying philosophical idea underlying them can be formulated—for our narratological purposes—as indirectness, mediation, and derivation. It is this abstract meaning that interlaces the problem of the narrative middle as mediation with the complex of phenomenological ideas, notions, and operations that in one way or another express mediation.

With this, my narrative analysis of TN is completed. True to the narratological nature of this essay, I will spare the reader the concluding remarks because, as we know, the end or the conclusion is already contained in the beginning or the thesis.

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NOTES

1 An attempt to underscore the importance of Ricoeur for literary criticism has been undertaken by Mario J. Valdés (“Introduction”) in a collection of Ricoeur’s articles pertaining to literary studies (Ricoeur, A Ricoeur Reader). Some of the articles in the collection are, as it were, drafts for TN. In his introduction, Valdés attempts to spell out in what sense Ricoeur can be helpful in studying literature. In my opinion, it is still an open question as to how the connection between Ricoeur’s philosophy and literary criticism can be made. Another, more advanced endeavor to demonstrate the heuristic potential of hermeneutics for literary studies is Palmer’s book, Hermeneutics. Palmer first presents the four major historical stages of hermeneutic philosophy (Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer) and then points out the literary importance of hermeneutics (220–53).

2 Explaining ordinary time, Ricoeur refers to and quotes Heidegger: “ordinary time can be characterized as a series of point-like ‘nows,’ whose intervals are measured by our clocks. […] Defined in this way, time deserves to be called ‘now-time.’ The world-time which is ‘sighted’ in this manner in the use of clocks, we call the ‘now-time’ [Jetzt-Zeit]” (3: 86). Or: Heidegger gathers “together under the heading of ‘ordinary time’ all the temporal varieties previously aligned under the neutral concept of the scale of time” (3: 91). Also: ordinary time is “a succession of abstract instants” (3: 120).

3 Ricoeur introduces and gradually distinguishes a set of synonyms and antonyms of the phenomenological and the cosmological understanding of time: on the one hand, the time of the “soul, mind, consciousness,” and on the other, the time of “nature, the universe, the world” (3: 14). On several occasions, he clarifies the aporetics of the opposition of the psychological time and cosmological time (3: 14, 242, 244).

4 The chapter on Aristotle comes second for other methodological reasons as well: first, because chapter 3 outlines the threefold mimesis; and second, because by putting Aristotle after Augustine Ricoeur underscores the logical, not the chronological, juxtaposi-
tion of these two analyses of time and narrative which, outside TN, are divided by a cultural abyss.

5 Cf.: “The remarks [in Günther Müller] that shatter this linearism [of time] are therefore all the more precious” (TN 2: 79; cf. Ricoeur’s comments on William H. Dray [1: 130–31] or Georg von Wright [1: 142–43]). See also how by examining the covering law model Ricoeur incorporates the relationship between explanation and understanding in history in his own analysis (1: 124–25) or retains the idea of an epistemological break (1: 228). Since such reformulations comprise the critical part of Ricoeur’s critical reviewing and are made, as a rule, after every text that he analyzes, here I only mention some other such examples: 1: 150–51, 168, 170, 181, 183, 184, 192, 194ff, 3: 190, etc.

6 For an overview of Ricoeur’s writings and some of his sources, see Clark; and Spiegelberg 585–600.

7 “A hermeneutic system purports to be a progressive deciphering of experience disclosing, in successive layers, the structures which are embedded in what is given and in terms of which there develops an increasingly adequate comprehension of experience through itself. Philosophies of phenomenological style could be cited as belonging to this type: the very idea of phenomenology is that of progressive unveiling of the phenomenon, i.e., of an exposure, as exhaustive as possible, of all that is implied in it. A phenomenology is a theory of manifestation” (Ricoeur, Main Trends 35).

8 Cf.: “to the extent that the immediate hides the essential, to that extent phenomenology [such as this in Heidegger’s Being and Time] is hermeneutic” (Ricoeur, Main Trends 267).

9 Cf.: “These hidden resources of phenomenological time, and the aporias which their discovery gives rise to, form the secret bond between the two modalities of narrative [history and fiction]. Fiction [. . .] is a treasure trove of imaginative variations applied to the theme of phenomenological time and its aporias” (TN 3: 128). Also: “At the very heart of the opposition between the imaginative variations produced by our tales about time and the fixed term of the reinscription by history of lived time upon world time, it appears that the major contribution of fiction to philosophy does not lie in the range of solutions it proposes for the discordance between the time of the world and lived time but in the exploration of the nonlinear features of phenomenological time that historical time conceals due to the very fact that it is set within the great chronology of the universe” (3: 132).

10 Cf.: “We are following therefore the destiny of a prefigured time that becomes a refigured time through the mediation of a configured time” (TN 1: 54; Ricoeur’s emphasis).

11 I use Prince’s definitions of a beginning, a middle, and an end of fictional narrative for two reasons: they are made on the basis of what has been said on this issue by outstanding scholars; and these formulations are abstract enough to allow me to use them for my own purposes.

12 In a different context, Taylor writes that in the mid 1970s—and long before that—Hegel’s “synthesis is quite dead. That is, no one actually believes his central ontological thesis, that the universe is posited by a Spirit whose essence is rational necessity [. . .]. History shows an open-ended series of transformations, forms whose significance is to be ‘understood’ (in the sense of ‘verstehen’), but none of these give history its defini-
tive meaning” (538). Taylor also explains why Hegel’s synthesis is dead (537–46) and in what sense his philosophy is still actual (546–71).

13 “The Stufengang is not a chronological sequence but a winding up that is at the same time an unfolding, a process of making explicit, and a return upon itself of the spirit” (TN 3: 201; see also 3: 200–01, 204).

14 I skip the intricate technical analysis of Ricoeur’s notions of experience, expectation, and tradition (the latter understood as traditionality, traditions, and tradition per se) that would occlude my point. Ricoeur’s major idea is to show two things. First, that the past is not dead and we are always affected by it. And, second, that we act and suffer at the same time because our actions are dependent on the conditions that we inherit from the past. The hermeneutics of historical consciousness means that we, being affected by the past as acting and suffering beings, ask and answer the past to the extent to which the past asks and answers us.

15 Some examples of introductory and concluding chapters and sections are: TN 1: ix–xii, 3–4, 91–94, 175–82, 226–30; 2: vii, 3–6, 153–60; 3: 3–7, 11, 99–103, 241–74. The meta-philosophical paragraphs, endnotes, and scattered sentences are ubiquitous. The chapter on the threefold mimesis can be viewed as a meta-philosophical text, if we stress its role of an itinerary for the rest of TN, i.e., as a synopsis of the problems of prefiguration (mimesis1), configuration (mimesis2), and refiguration (mimesis3).

16 Consider, for instance, how Ricoeur describes his dialectical procedure: “In the course of this polemic [between the nomological and the narrativist approaches to history as described in chapters 4 and 5 of volume 1], there was no thesis submitted to criticism that did not in some way contribute, at the cost of a series of rectifications, to an initial approximation of the relation between history and narrative” (1: 227; see also 1: 228).

17 Sublation is Ricoeur’s translation of Hegel’s tricky term Aufhebung (Ricoeur, Main Trends 37).

18 For the hermeneutics of the early and later Heidegger as connected with language and ontology, see Ricoeur 266–68; for the problem of phenomenology and ontology, see 126–34, esp. 129–30, where Ricoeur summarizes Heidegger’s innovation in comparison with the idealistic phenomenology of Husserl by stating that Heidegger “reveals the primacy of being over knowledge” (130).

19 This quote is a paraphrase of what Ricoeur sees as Heidegger’s contribution to turning phenomenology into ontology, namely, showing “the primacy of experience over consciousness” (Ricoeur, Main Trends 127). For the principle disagreement between Ricoeur and Greimas, see also “Greimas’s Narrative Grammar” and “On Narrativity: Debate with A. J. Greimas” (Ricoeur, A Ricoeur Reader 256–86 and 287–99). For the derivative character of the subject-object relation compared to the primordial ontological structure of our situation and our possibilities (in Heidegger’s Being and Time), see Ricoeur, Main Trends 130.

20 According to Ricoeur, his own questioning back has two advantages over Husserl’s investigation of the “life-world” to which Galilean science refers. First, “questioning back, applied to historiographical knowledge, refers to a cultural world that is already structured and not at all to immediate experience. It refers to a world of action that has already received a configuration through narrative activity, which with regard to its meaning is prior to scientific history” (1: 180). Second, “the advantage of finding at
the very heart of historical knowledge a series of relay stations for our questioning
back. In this sense, the derivation is never so completely forgotten that it cannot be re-
constructed with some sureness and rigor” (1: 181). Or: the questioning back accounts
for “the indirect character of the filiation that connects history to our narrative un-
derstanding by reactivating the phases of the derivation by which this filiation is realized”
(1: 228). For the method of questioning back, see also 1: 194, 206.

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