

Introduction

Francois Dosse

Guest editor

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Introduction

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Questions concerning history attend the whole of Ricœur's journey. As early as 1952, he steps in delivering a lecture on "Objectivity and Subjectivity in History," which he will go back to in 1955 in *History and Truth*. Then, there will be the large triptych *Time and Narrative*, published between 1983 and 1985, and finally his masterwork *Memory, History, Forgetting* in 2000. The time has come to consider how these reflections can be fruitful for the professional historian who generally uses a number of notions, of concepts without questioning their validity and limits. In phenomenological, epistemological as well as ontological terms, Ricœur's work is, in our opinion, a particularly rich potential resource for accompanying the reflexive and hermeneutic turn of the historical discipline.

If, since Thucydides, the historian claims to be master of the truth, let us join Ricœur and examine that intentionality of the truth, of proof, that will to access how things actually were in the past, as Ranke expressed it in the 19th century and which Ricœur thematized using the concept of "standing for" (*représentance*). Situating the historian's epistemology between science and fiction, Ricœur showed the contribution made by the narrativists. Let us re-examine the limits, the frontiers that, according to him, differentiate these two poles, and particularly his position in relation to Hayden White who was the target of numerous criticisms by professional historians, but more often than not these criticisms were based on a misunderstanding.

Post-Hegelian Kantian, as he likes to describe himself, Ricœur will have "renounced Hegel" in the sense of questioning the presupposition of a *Telos*, thus making it possible to reopen the historian's investigation into uncertainty and a defatalizing rereading of the past. Ricœur thus gives its full meaning to *Kairos*, to the event whose [semantic] displacements we continue to look further into. Thus, he will have invited historians to switch from the strict mechanical causality of the explanations given for the enigmatic character of events to a preferred concentration on their traces and their transformations over time right up to the present.

Philosopher of the capable human being, Ricœur has always paid attention to the place of actors in history, which led him to be critical of the way the Annales School developed during the period, 1970-1980, i.e., towards a more and more unchanging, structural history. He will also have introduced the current pragmatic turn of the historical discipline that now mainly wonders about what acting means. The construction of a hermeneutics of historical consciousness by Ricœur around the two categories that he borrows from Koselleck, namely, experiential space and horizon of expectation, makes it possible first and foremost to respond to the crisis of historicity that we go through when re-examining something that goes unrecognized, namely, what was possible in the past, in order to construct a new project, a new horizon of expectation. In the face of growing scepticism, Ricœur teaches us a thing or two about hope in these times when the future is more and more opaque, with a "foreclosed" future on account of the

disastrous destiny of past utopian ideas. There hope in emancipation has replaced the idea of preventing a future catastrophe.

Ricœur makes it possible to resist a situation of an excess of memory that is inclined to content itself with recycling the past, repeatedly rehearsing without the effect of revitalizing present action. Here again, through the distinctions he makes between history and memory, Ricœur is of the greatest use to us, and one might wonder how the "work of history" can help soothe the wounded memories and to what extent this linking/untying may or may not allow the historian to become a miracle worker.

As a first step in this new issue, Volume 8, N° 1 of *Études Ricœuriennes/ Ricœur Studies*, the contributions of Martinho Soares and Christian Delacroix compare Ricœur's approach to two major events: the Peloponnesian War recounted by Thucydides and the traumatic event of the Shoah in its distinctly modern horror. Martinho Soares's article shows that the triad that defines the historiographic operation according to Ricœur is fully operative to understand how Thucydides' writing plan is constructed. Martinho Soares enriches his remarks with the work of Claude Calame, a Hellenic scholar knowledgeable in two fields: those of Greek antiquity and theories of language. At each stage, he puts into perspective in a heuristic way the conception of Ricœur and the practice of Thucydides. Of course, these two thinkers belong to two very different time periods. Soares is well aware of a number of differences, but also of similarities, equivalences between their positions — like that idea of the trace, fundamental in Ricœur which finds its equivalent in the notions of *semeia* (indication) and *tekmerion* (mark of recognition) in Thucydides. Martinho Soares highlights the prevalence accorded by Thucydides to "seeing," orality and *autopsia*, and at the same time shows how Thucydides, at the writing stage, favours administrative documentation as a model. He also reviews the importance of "seeing as" or "making the past visible" as rhetorical processes aimed at both *enargeia* and *ekphrasis* — both implying imagination in the act of writing with the aim of producing a living text. Martinho Soares shows that, far from opposing the desire to restore the past, the use of rhetorical figures is essential as an instrument at the service of the historian. For his part, Christian Delacroix analyses the work of the event's relative desingularisation that Ricœur operates by coupling with the narrative in *Time and Narrative* in the early 1980s, then the reopening of the question of the singularity and uniqueness of the event in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (in 2000) in the reconstructed theoretical frame of historical representation put to the test of the "event at the limits" which is the Shoah. In *Time and Narrative* Ricœur intends to transcend, through the interweaving of history and fiction applied to founding events of collective identity like the Shoah, the epistemological aporia of the dichotomy between a history which dissolves the event in the explanation and a purely emotional attitude in the face of events of considerable ethical intensity. However, this narrativisation of the event runs up against the traumatic power of the radical extra-textual of the event — the Shoah, which thus constitutes a challenge for the historical representation of the past. It is this question that Ricœur takes up in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, but his investigation has been largely reconfigured by the dialectic of memory and history, contributing to the representation of the past. For Ricœur, if we are to recognize "the impossible adequation of the available forms of figuration to the demand for truth" arising from the event, this does not mean that Auschwitz is "unspeakable." It is this link between the referential and the inadmissible, in the case of the Shoah, that Ricœur still intends to clarify from the analyses of Ernst Nolte's "exculpatory" positions on the causal relations between "Auschwitz"

and the "Gulag." While distinguishing the absolute moral incomparability of the Shoah and the incomparability relative to the historiographical plane, Ricœur maintains that the entanglement between historiographical judgment and moral judgment is inevitable, thus opening up the great question of the social, political and ethical responsibility of the historian.

The second axis of reflection in this issue focuses on Ricœur's contribution to historical representation when it is confronted with ruins as in the contribution of Laure Barillas or with landscapes as in the contribution of Josef Ridky. In both cases memory and perception are solicited at the same time as the imagination. Laure Barillas's contribution is an enrichment of the phenomenology of memory in Ricœur. She sees in the contemplation of ruins a paradoxical situation, which reverses the relationship between memory and imagination, between space and time, between individual and collective memory. The aim of the article is to question the separation between memory and imagination established by Aristotle and Ricœur. If the ruins make the absence present as the author says, this refers to the way in which Ricœur defines memory as the capacity to make the absent present. The thesis defended in this article is that the mode of existence of the ruins — a mixture of material presence and material existence — as well as their unique temporality — which seems to reorder the relations between memory and imagination — implies a "seeing" of the ruins, which in fact amounts to an "imagining remembering." Laure Barillas intends to carry out a critical rereading of the phenomenology of memory developed in *Memory, History, Forgetting*. It is a question of whether the experience of the ruins does not completely change the roles of imagination and memory as defined in "A Phenomenological Sketch of Memory" presented by Ricœur in the second section of the first part of the work. According to the thesis defended by Laure Barillas, the paradox of the ruins is to reverse the order of memory and recall and to question the notion of temporal distance — which, according to Ricœur, ensures the essential distinction between memory and imagination.

For his part, Josef Ridky tests a number of Ricœur's own ideas explicated in *Time and Narrative* by comparing them with Simon Schama's book, *Landscape and Memory*. First he recalls the controversy which has since faded away and opposed the supporters of the Linguistic Turn and the supporters of historical positivity. He then recalls Ricœur's demonstration that inquiry is inseparable from his narrative, where historical discourse belongs fully to the narrative as an experience of time. He also insists on the dual nature of the third time, at once natural and human, calendrical and lived, a duality that we find again in the historiographical discourse. According to Josef Ridky, Ricœur observes that the specificity of historical discourse lies in the development of plots which are the fruit of quasi-characters and quasi-events thanks to which the narrative is both an "explaining" and a "recounting." The author notes with pertinence that Ricœur whose *Time and Narrative* has been read as an expression of adherence to narrativist theses, will in fact have displaced the controversy of the 1960s-70s on the side of temporal experience. Then he exemplifies these contributions of Ricœur by confronting them with the work of Simon Shama, which aims to show the persistence, beyond the duration, of myths, symbols and collective representations. In his descriptions of the Polish forest, Schama adopts a post-modern writing, which combines the most heterogeneous material and ideal elements in order to bring out the contemporaneity of the past. From these successive layers of the past in the present, there is a questioning of linearity, a plurality of viewpoints and a prevalence of the present in a leafing through of temporalities, the various ages of which the trees bear witness to.

Josef Ridky shows that Ricœur's legacy continues to be fruitful, even within its limits — it prompts us to invent a theoretical complement.

Finally, I have extended these reflections in my contribution: "L'histoire entre la guerre des mémoires et la Justice," by situating them on the pragmatic axis of the citizen's concern expressed by Ricœur from the first lines of *Memory, History, Forgetting* when he says he is troubled by too much memory here and too much forgetting elsewhere. We are witnessing a generalized judicialisation of contemporary society, which also affects the historical discipline. It has resulted in disturbing memory inflation since the Gayssot law of 1990 and by a claim of Justice to repair the memories. International tribunals were set up on the model of Nuremberg and Tokyo in the aftermath of the Second World War. This judicialisation has its legitimacy and at the same time it can lead to confusions between history, memory and justice. The functions of the judge and the historian certainly have common features, as Marc Bloch has shown in *Apologie pour l'histoire* and Carlo Ginzburg in *Le juge et l'historien*, but only up to a point. The examining magistrate can be compared to the historian, but not to the judge who must render the judgment. This progressive hold of justice over the past perversely results in an attempt to sanction historical questions. Ricœur helps us to rethink the relations between justice, history and memory by distinguishing and articulating these various dimensions through the work of a clarification of concepts. He makes it possible to better articulate the judicial function, the work of memory and the historiographic operation while respecting the validity of each of these dimensions. Ricœur allows us to pass from the savage competition between memories and knowledge/powers to an alliance and pooling of their horizon of pacification of wounded memories. Since the historian has nothing of the miracle-worker about her, and history has nothing to do with morality, the idea of the reparation of history by justice is an illusion. There are no more miracle-worker historians than there are miracle-worker kings. There is no magical healing of knowledge or of recognition. Nevertheless, justice and history can together better know the ins and outs of these wounded memories in an approach that is always open, for if the truth animates the horizon of the work of history, it is always sought, and we must leave the historian free to find it.

Translation: Eileen Brennan