

Introduction

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Introduction

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A retrospective glance at the path of Ricœurian philosophical anthropology now allows us to recognize the importance of the question of affectivity in Ricœur's early works. The philosophical rehabilitation of affectivity, carried out by Ricœur from *Freedom and Nature: the Voluntary and the Involuntary* and *Fallible Man* onwards, leads us to the central ontological problem of human fragility and man's capacity for initiative. In the transition from "I can" to "I do" a certain tension has already come into play between the fragile human being and the responsible human being, which Ricœur's ethics of solicitude and human vulnerability will explore in the 1990s. It is precisely the essential contributions that an analysis of the ontological and anthropological functions of affectivity makes to the Ricœurian theorization of ethics that this issue has endeavoured to define.

From *Freedom and Nature: the Voluntary and the Involuntary* onwards Ricœur explores the deep sources of human freedom; and the analyses of *Fallible Man* invite us to try to find in affectivity man's "opening" up to the world of persons. In the same way, in *History and Truth* and in other texts of the same period, Ricœur is already wondering about the possibility of seeking "in feelings the revelation of the existence of others" (1954, 340).¹ Nonetheless, we will have to wait until the 1980s (especially for *From Text to Action*) for the question of intersubjectivity to be truly explored; and it is only from *Oneself as Another* onwards that the question of the other, in its ethical dimension, becomes a central theme of Ricœur's reflection.

We have chosen the title, "Affectivity, Initiative, Fragility and Vulnerability in the Philosophical Anthropology of Ricœur" for this issue because it seemed to us that a retrospective reading of the phenomenological and ontological contributions of the constitution of the affective fragility of man in the *Philosophy of Will* would clarify the ethical question of the initiative and power of the responsible human being in Ricœur's work. From this point of view, the exploration of the specifically bodily and affective anchoring of our capacity for initiative appeared to us to be fundamental because in the first place it allows access to a detailed analysis of Ricœur's ethical and political reflection as well as a better understanding of the notion of human vulnerability (a notion that will replace that of fragility, particularly in *The Just* and *Reflections on the Just*). In our opinion, another thing that makes a return to the treatment of the question of affectivity in the early days of Ricœur's thought interesting is the fact that it leads to a renewed reading of the relations between teleology and ethics in Ricœur at the same time as it sheds new light on the sense of this recovery of the moral norm – linked to the question of justice – at the level of the more original character of the feeling of love that operates in the works of the later Ricœur. Beyond these essential contributions, Ricœur's theory of the passions – developed in Chapter IV of *Fallible Man* – can also be read as the outline of an analysis of the properly ethical consequences of the tension – between

fragility and responsibility, desire and the performance capabilities of a sensible life – which characterizes the human self. It already reveals a self that is traversed by conflicts inherent in life and confronted with the tragedy of action, that is to say, a self that is vulnerable because it is sometimes unable to say, to do, to recount and to answer for itself faced with the call of the other.

This thematic issue opens with a contribution by Beatriz Contreras Tasso and Patricio Mena Malet entitled “Le risque d’être soi-même. Le consentement et l’affectivité comme fondements de l’éthique ricœurienne.” The hypothesis, serving as a main thread for this article, is that the Ricœurian ethics of solicitude and vulnerability expounded in *Oneself as Another* cannot be thought without taking account of the anthropological and ontological reflections that the philosopher develops over a period that extends from his first great phenomenological project up to his mature work. Starting with a reading of a little known text on the topic of risk, written when Ricœur was still very young (1936), the two authors then devote themselves to a very detailed exploration of the issue of consent and affectivity in the *Philosophy of the Will* in order to reveal the inchoate foundations of the ethics developed in the philosopher’s late works. This study derives its benefit from the fact that it does not make do with bringing to light the genesis of Ricœur’s ethical thought, but it also throws a new light on the dynamic relations between *pathos* and *praxis*.

It is precisely this question of the relations between *pathos* and *praxis* that is at the heart of Emmanuel Nal’s article entitled, “Ce que l’action doit à l’affection. Éléments d’une phénoménologie de l’initiative chez Ricœur.” The author examines the question of the genesis of initiative and sets out to show how, in Ricœur’s thinking, human action and initiative find their anchorage in affection. To this end, he starts with a detailed analysis of the question of the owned body centred on the notion of “affective perception” with a view to linking together the ethical intention and a desire whose content is explained with reference to Ricœur’s interpretation of Plato’s *thumos*. The original passivity manifested in affection then appears as the foundation of the self’s power of initiative as well as its ability to hold itself accountable for its actions. Finally, the author tries to show how initiative confers its meaning on Ricœur’s ethics by facilitating a dynamic link-up between its teleological and deontological dimensions.

The question of the owned body is also at the centre of Jean-Luc Amalric’s article entitled, “La médiation vulnérable : puissance, acte et passivité chez Ricœur.” The author sets out to address the question of embodiment in Ricœur’s philosophical anthropology, choosing to focus his analysis on these two major works: the *Philosophy of the Will* and *Oneself as Another*. He argues that Ricœur’s thought on embodiment consists in developing an analysis of the lived body as *fragile mediation*, striving to articulate two complementary dialectics. A first dialectic of *act and power* expresses the ontological and operating character of this dynamic process of mediation, while a second *dialectic of activity and passivity* points to the limits and to the vulnerability of this mediation. The articulation of these two dialectics constituting our affective experience of embodiment can then ultimately be read as a *dialectic of structure and event* whose *ethical and ontological* character is at the heart of Ricœur’s philosophical anthropology.

The next two articles have chosen, for their part, to speak more directly about the question of the person and the formation of self-identity. In an article entitled, “À travers la vulnérabilité et l’effort. De la personne que nous deviendrons,” Vinicio Busacchi intends to show how the dialectic of vulnerability and effort constitutes the person’s emancipatory driving force. The author opens his reflection with a confrontation between Ricœur and Levinas’ respective contributions to the

development of a phenomenology of vulnerability. From this perspective, the experience of vulnerability appears inevitably linked both to a certain affective relationship to otherness and to a certain effort through which the self attempts to take the form of a person. It is this “becoming a person” that the author then tries to reflect upon by analyzing – in the light of the influence of Jean Nabert’s reflexive philosophy – the passage from “fallible man” to “the capable human being,” which is accomplished in Ricœur’s philosophical anthropology. In the light of these analyses, the article finally turns its attention to the question of the impenetrableness of the suffering and the vulnerability of mental illness.

In his article, “La ‘faillie’ chez Paul Ricœur. De l’identité symbolique et narrative, à l’identité gestuelle et langagière,” Guilhem Causse also raises questions about the formation of self-identity in Ricœur, but this time it is to insist on the “fault” or otherness that runs through it according to the two different versions of Ricœurian anthropology that we find in *Fallible Man* and *Oneself as Another*. First, the author endeavors to define what it is that makes the thematization of fault and human frailty in these two moments of the work of Ricœur continuous, but also how they differ, in order to then initiate a critique of the Ricœurian conception of identity. The last part of the article then focuses on Ricœur’s analysis of myths in *The Symbolism of Evil* in order to show that, in its insistence on the linguistic, symbolic and narrative dimension of our experience, it is again stymied by a fault that is both that of language in “its dual adherence to the symbolic and the conceptual” and that of the broken universe of myths. For the author, who denounces the privilege that Ricœur accords to the linguistic dimension, it is a reconsideration of the role of biblically inspired rites in their opposition to rites of participation in an original (and “faultless”) Act that would make it possible to rethink the question of identity in the light of gesture and the body.

In the following article entitled, “A Poetics of the Self. Ricoeur’s Philosophy of the Will and Living Metaphor as Creative Praxis,” Iris J. Brooke Gildea strives to lay the conceptual groundwork for a “poetics of the self” by making an original comparison between the philosophy of the will, developed in Ricœur’s early works, and the theory of the living metaphor, which the philosopher worked out subsequently. The point of making such a comparison is that it helps us to see living metaphor as a creative ability that radiates human praxis at the same time as it makes it possible to interpret affectivity as the locus of the dynamic intersection between the linguistic, anthropological, and ontological dimensions of the capable human being. The author first endeavors to link the tension constituent of human disproportion and affective fragility to the tensional status of metaphorical truth, in order to then linger over the significance of the act of writing poetry. In her eyes, such an act can be considered an aesthetic mediation through which a better understanding of the original discord of the human will is discovered.

Morny Joy’s article, “Ricœur’s Affirmation of Life in this World and his Journey to Ethics,” which brings this thematic issue to a close, aims to give an overview of Ricœur’s entire ethical and anthropological journey from the *Philosophy of the Will* through to *Oneself as Another* and the philosopher’s late works. According to the author, it is in order to fight against injustice and the inhumanity of the unmerited suffering that human beings inflict on others that Ricœur strove to develop an ethical approach based on affirmation and the search for “the good life, with and for others, in just institutions.” In this journey, which takes us from fallible man to the capable human being, the author points to the decisive influence that the thought of Hannah Arendt had on

Ricœur's philosophy and, at the same time, she underscores the continuity of an ethical itinerary that has led Ricœur to further deepen the ontological foundations of human fragility.

Beatriz Contreras Tasso and Patricio Mena Malet

Translated by Eileen Brennan

¹ Paul Ricœur, "Sympathie et respect," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 59 (1954), 380-97.