

## Paul Ricœur and the Idea of Second Naivety Origins, Analogues, Applications

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### Abstract

Despite the fact that it is only rarely mentioned by Ricœur, the concept of second (or post-critical) naivety seems to express an idea that is central to his hermeneutical attitude, which is why it deserves more attention. This idea can be broadly understood as the aspiration to arrive at a mediated and post-critical (self-)understanding through “detours” provided by different critical methods such as psychoanalysis or structuralism. My article consists of three parts: first, I examine the origins of the notion of second naivety, drawing attention to the fact that both Ricœur and his precursors used the term in connection with religious symbols and faith. Then, by comparing it to analogous ideas in Ricœur’s works, I argue that the concept of second naivety can be extended to interpretation in general. Finally, I explore the possibility of a second naivety after those particular critical methods.

*Keywords:* Second Naivety; Post-critical Naivety; Detour; Self-understanding; Mediation.

### Résumé

Malgré le fait qu’il ne soit que rarement mentionné par Ricœur, le concept de seconde naïveté (ou naïveté postcritique) semble exprimer une idée centrale dans son attitude herméneutique, et c’est pourquoi il mérite plus d’attention. Cette idée signifie au sens large l’aspiration à atteindre une compréhension (de soi) médiatisée et postcritique à travers des « détours » fournis par diverses méthodes critiques comme la psychanalyse ou le structuralisme. L’article se structure en trois parties. D’abord, j’examine les origines de la notion de seconde naïveté, en attirant l’attention sur le fait que tant Ricœur que ses précurseurs ont utilisé le terme pour parler des symboles religieux et de la foi. Ensuite, en faisant une comparaison avec des idées analogues dans l’œuvre de Ricœur, j’affirme que le concept de seconde naïveté peut être étendu à l’interprétation en général. J’explore enfin la possibilité d’une seconde naïveté après la mise en œuvre de ces méthodes critiques particulières.

*Mots-clés :* seconde naïveté ; naïveté postcritique ; détour ; compréhension de soi ; médiation.

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# Paul Ricœur and the Idea of Second Naivety

## Origins, Analogues, Applications

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### Introduction

Hermeneutics, as the art of interpretation, seeks to mediate where it is necessary.<sup>1</sup> But it seems that mediation is not only necessary where there is a gap in understanding between different persons (reader and writer, listener and speaker), but also within the self. In other words, self-understanding also requires some form of mediation: by engaging in dialogue with others, by reading historical texts or exposing ourselves to artworks, and by applying psychological or sociological knowledge to ourselves, we have the chance to augment our self-understanding. Thus, self-understanding (a question of reflection), on the one hand, and the understanding of texts and other persons (a question of epistemology), on the other, are *intertwined*. This idea is central for the representatives of hermeneutics influenced by Martin Heidegger, such as Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricœur. While hermeneutics had earlier been conceived of primarily in terms of *epistemology* (as the art of interpreting texts or as the method of understanding in the humanities), Heidegger transformed it into a form of *ontology* by drawing attention to the inevitably hermeneutic structure of *Dasein*.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, Gadamer and Ricœur followed quite different (though often convergent) paths: while Gadamer was interested in mediation provided by dialogue and the interpretation of texts, strongly opposing the use of objectifying methods in the humanities, Ricœur saw the mediating potential of the latter as well, which is why his philosophy is characterised by a constant confrontation with these various methods such as structuralism and psychoanalysis.<sup>3</sup> Still, Ricœur shared Gadamer's conviction that methods are only transitionally useful, and the distance they create must be overcome by hermeneutics. In this article, therefore, my main question is how this confrontation with critical methods is built into the process of mediated (self-)understanding in Ricœur's hermeneutical theory, to which question the response will be facilitated by the concept of *second naivety*.

Throughout the history of hermeneutics, a number of arts or methods of interpretation have been developed. However, for Ricœur, modernity is characterised by two fundamental

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on my Research Master's Thesis at KU Leuven, under the supervision of Professor Ernst Wolff. I am grateful to Prof. Wolff for his guidance and help throughout my research. I would also like to thank my reviewers for their valuable remarks.

<sup>2</sup> See § 32 of Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 139-144.

<sup>3</sup> For the similarities and differences between the positions of Gadamer and Ricœur, see e.g. "The Conflict of Interpretations: Debate with Hans-Georg Gadamer" in *A Ricœur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdés (Toronto: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 216-241.

attitudes towards texts, others, and ourselves: on the one hand, there is a “willingness to listen” (*volonté d’écoute*), and on the other, a “willingness to suspect” (*volonté de soupçon*).<sup>4</sup> The former is best exemplified by the phenomenology of religion, while the latter by the so-called “masters of suspicion” (*maîtres du soupçon*) which includes Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that, for Ricœur, this opposition is asymmetric: he sees modernity as containing a tendency of excessive suspicion, which he finds important to complement with an attitude of listening in interpretation. This is not to say, however, that he would denounce the exercise of suspicion: on the contrary, he regards it as a necessary step, but one which can only be transitional and which must be followed by a form of listening.

In general, therefore, one of the main characteristics of Ricœur’s hermeneutics is this quest to go not only beyond our naïve understanding of ourselves and others, but also beyond the methods of suspicion and objectification which present themselves as the ultimate keys to the right interpretation. This motive is expressed in various ways throughout Ricœur’s writings, but a thorough overview and comparison of all these expressions would exceed the scope of this article. What I will do instead is to focus primarily on his books and essays from the 1960s-70s, especially on *The Symbolism of Evil*,<sup>6</sup> *Freud and Philosophy*,<sup>7</sup> *The Conflict of Interpretations*,<sup>8</sup> and *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*,<sup>9</sup> occasionally touching upon his earlier and later writings. The reason for this limitation is that it was in this period that Ricœur dealt the most explicitly with general questions of hermeneutics and with the conflict of different methods in the human sciences. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that Ricœur’s writings are difficult to categorise into clearly distinct periods, which makes my choice to some extent arbitrary.

In the present article, I propose an interpretation of the aforementioned texts of Ricœur from the perspective of the concept of *second naivety*. My main argument is that despite the fact that this term occurs only a couple of times in Ricœur’s writings, the intuition behind it is central to his hermeneutical theory, or at least to those texts which I will analyse. To put it differently, my question is to what extent the concept of second naivety is useful for the understanding of Ricœur’s general hermeneutical attitude. First of all, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of this concept. Ricœur uses it mostly in connection with religion, that is, as referring to a type of faith or to a

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 27.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to add that what Ricœur calls “hermeneutics of suspicion” can include a much broader set of approaches than just the “masters of suspicion”: see e.g. Ernst Wolff, “Utilitarianism as an Exercise of Suspicion?” *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, XIV (1) (2022), who argues that utilitarianism as a theory of action can also be conceived of as an exercise of suspicion in a Ricœurian sense, because it assumes the maximisation of utility as a guiding principle of decision-making, regardless of how agents interpret their own actions.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon, 1967).

<sup>7</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970).

<sup>8</sup> Paul Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, trans. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

<sup>9</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

reading of the Bible which moves beyond modern criticism and aspires to attain a post-critical (“naïve”) attitude. However, his discussion also allows for a broader interpretation of what second naivety might mean, which is why my aim is to point out how, for Ricœur, interpretation (in the sense of a process of mediated self-understanding, as I expounded earlier) can be thought of analogously to a movement towards second naivety.

It is important to mention that there have been other interpretations of Ricœur from this perspective, of which here I briefly highlight two, one by Alison Scott-Baumann<sup>10</sup> and another by Mark I. Wallace.<sup>11</sup> Scott-Baumann’s book is a very detailed discussion of Ricœur’s œuvre, focusing on the role of the term “hermeneutics of suspicion” in his philosophy, and her analysis also attributes a high significance to the concept of second naivety. Wallace’s book, a comparison of Ricœur, Karl Barth, and the so-called New Yale Theology, examines the concept from the perspective of theology and biblical exegesis. However, although I will return to them later, my interpretation and focus differ from theirs on several points. First, while Wallace focuses mostly on the theological and Scott-Baumann on the philosophical and human scientific relevance of Ricœur’s thought, I will argue for the necessity of discussing all of these aspects due to their interrelatedness. Second, as I see it, neither of these authors examines the specific critical methods in detail from this perspective, which is why I intend to show how a movement towards a second naivety is to be conceived through these methods.

The structure of this article is as follows. First, I briefly discuss the origins of the idea of second naivety, and – given that Ricœur also introduces the term in connection with the question of religion – I will turn to how second naivety appears in the phenomenology of religion of Gerardus van der Leeuw, an author who is recognised by Ricœur as a significant reference in this context. Then, in the next chapter, I will elaborate on the significance of the concept in Ricœur’s hermeneutics in general, and compare it to other analogous ideas of his. And finally, in the last chapter, I will discuss various critical methods in the human sciences, and explore the possibility of going beyond them and attaining a second naivety.

## Second Naivety Regarding Religious Faith

### The Origins of the Concept

First, I will investigate where the term “second naivety” comes from. This is well summarised in an article by Joachim Negel,<sup>12</sup> therefore I will primarily limit my discussion to it. According to Negel, the first occurrence of the term “second naivety” (*zweite/sekundäre Naivität*) can

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<sup>10</sup> Alison Scott-Baumann, *Ricœur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (London: Continuum, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Mark I. Wallace, *The Second Naiveté. Barth, Ricœur, and the New Yale Theology* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Joachim Negel, “Zweite Naivität: Begriffsgeschichtliche und systematische Erwägungen zu einem vielbemühten, aber selten verstandenen Konzept,” in *Welt als Gabe: Hermeneutische Grenzgänge zwischen Theologie und Phänomenologie* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2013), 259-288. I am grateful to Prof. Ernst Wolff for calling my attention to this article.

be found in a 1925 text by Peter Wust,<sup>13</sup> a philosopher of religion, so it is possible to assert that the term was coined by him. However, only a couple of years later, in 1931, the German-Jewish educator and philosopher Ernst Simon used the exact same term independently from Wust, which, for Negel, shows that the idea of second naivety was “in the air” at the time.<sup>14</sup> It is unclear where exactly Ricœur borrowed the term (to the popularisation of which he contributed significantly) from, but it is very likely that he learned it from Gabriel Marcel, who, in turn, borrowed it from Wust.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it is worth investigating in what sense Wust used the term in order to understand Ricœur’s usage better. As Simon used it in a quite different sense and as there does not seem to be a direct influence between him and Ricœur, I do not discuss him in detail, given that that would lead far from our focus.

Before turning to the exposition of Wust’s usage of the concept, it is important to note that – although he was the first to use the exact term – similar ideas had already been expressed earlier: Negel reminds us that Wust was influenced by certain philosophers (e.g. Edmund Husserl) as well as by theologians (e.g. Augustine) and literary authors (e.g. Friedrich Schiller) in developing the concept.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in vague terms, we can understand Negel’s claim that the idea of second naivety was “in the air” as the observation that several religious authors at the time (i.e. in the interwar period in Germany) were seeking a new form of naivety after the disenchantment, scepticism, and criticism brought about by modernity, for which they turned to the ideas of earlier authors. This observation already shows that the idea of second naivety is especially important for those professing religious faith, but also that this idea is relevant for anyone who is dissatisfied with the predominance of criticism and disenchantment in modernity. Now let us turn to what Wust meant by second naivety. To begin with, the first naivety of the child is characterised by the attitude of trust (*Vertrauen*) and the affirmation of being (*Bejahen des Seins*). This is usually replaced by the scepticism (*Skepsis*) and doubt (*Zweifel*) characteristic of adulthood.<sup>17</sup> A subsequent second naivety consists in the overcoming of both stages, that is, in a “pious equilibrium of scepticism and regained affirmation of being.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, as we will see, this three-stage movement is very similar to what Ricœur talks about later, but it lacks the precise phenomenological-hermeneutical framework, in which Ricœur places the idea. “Childhood” and “adulthood” are, of course, used by Wust as analogies for a premodern and a modern attitude towards religion, respectively. In short, regardless of whether Ricœur was influenced directly or indirectly by Wust, we can definitely say that Wust was his precursor in this regard.

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<sup>13</sup> Negel, “Zweite Naivität,” 262.

<sup>14</sup> Negel, “Zweite Naivität,” 269.

<sup>15</sup> Negel, “Zweite Naivität,” 277.

<sup>16</sup> Negel, “Zweite Naivität,” 262-264. With regard to Husserl, it is worth adding that he also used the term later in the 1930s, but in a slightly different sense.

<sup>17</sup> Negel, “Zweite Naivität,” 265.

<sup>18</sup> Negel, “Zweite Naivität,” 267: “ein frommes Äquilibrium von Skepsis und wiedergewonnener Seinsbejahung.”

## Van der Leeuw's Phenomenology of Religion

As I mentioned in the introduction, I also find it useful to briefly discuss some features of the phenomenology of religion, exemplified here by Gerardus van der Leeuw. In *Freud and Philosophy*, where Ricœur sketches the aforementioned spectrum of hermeneutic attitudes from a "willingness to suspect" to a "willingness to listen," he refers (among others) to van der Leeuw as a typical representative of the latter.<sup>19</sup> Since the phenomenology of religion as a possible hermeneutical attitude is regarded by Ricœur as a paradigmatic example of an aspiration to attain a second naivety, it is worth discussing the main features of this method before turning to Ricœur's ideas. I chose to discuss van der Leeuw rather than other leading figures of the phenomenology of religion cited by Ricœur (such as Mircea Eliade), because in his writings we can find a concise description of a phenomenological approach to religious experience. To begin with, van der Leeuw distinguishes the phenomenology of religion, on the one hand, from the *history* of religion which collects *facts* about particular religions (e.g. practices, teachings), and, on the other hand, from the *psychology* of religion which aims at psychological *explanations* of religious phenomena (such as belief). In contrast, he argues, the phenomenology of religion intends to go beyond facts and particular religions, and it is not its task to provide explanations.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the main characteristics of van der Leeuw's method are the following. First, it is a *systematic* (not a historical) approach, which means that its aim is to arrive at phenomenological structures of religious experience. Second, unlike theology, it is not normative, but merely *descriptive*. And finally, it uses the phenomenological method of *epochē* (as developed by Husserl), which consists in suspending our judgement regarding the truth claims of religions as well as regarding the natural scientific explanations of the phenomena. In other words, the phenomenology of religion is interested neither in whether religious claims correspond to a "reality," nor in the value of different religions, nor in how religious phenomena have come about. Instead, the question it asks is what religious experiences are *like* and what their *meaning* is.<sup>21</sup> It is clear, therefore, why Ricœur regards this approach as a radical willingness to listen: by suspending all judgement concerning the truth, value, and origin of religious experience, it takes the position of a listener without suspicion. This is also why Ricœur sometimes calls van der Leeuw's method "hermeneutics of restoration," because its aim is to restore the religious meanings.

Van der Leeuw's discussion of the phenomenon of fetishism<sup>22</sup> provides an elucidating example of his method. Historians of religions have collected a number of facts about phenomena of fetishism from several cultures and historical periods (e.g. Africa, ancient Rome). However, these facts are not really understandable for us who are outside this particular religious experience: reading them from a modern European perspective makes it very unlikely that we could imagine what the experience of fetishism is like. But a psychological explanation would also be insufficient

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<sup>19</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 28. This hermeneutic attitude is also referred to by Ricœur as "recollection" or "restoration of meaning."

<sup>20</sup> Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Inleiding tot de phaenomenologie van den godsdienst* (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1948), 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> van der Leeuw, *Inleiding tot de phaenomenologie van den godsdienst*, 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> van der Leeuw, *Inleiding tot de phaenomenologie van den godsdienst*, 21-25.

for its understanding. Thus, van der Leeuw argues, the task is to describe what the experience of the object of fetish *is like* for the fetishist. Comparing various forms of fetishism, he observes that the fetish object is not regarded as a “god” (i.e. as an agent, a spirit), but merely as an object whose power is increased. This means that the key to understanding the phenomenon of fetishism is to be able to look at objects as possessing an excess of power. Thus, van der Leeuw suspends the judgement of whether these objects *really* possess additional power and the normative judgement whether it is *worth* looking at objects in this way: he simply shows the meaning of the experience of fetishes through examples which are familiar to us, thereby attempting to mediate this meaning. Perhaps at this point the opposition between radical listening (restoration) and radical suspicion (demystification) becomes clearer if we compare this approach with Marx’s famous treatment of fetishism: while Marx presupposes that there is a (material) reality which is distorted by fetishism, and, therefore, the task is to unmask this distortion, for van der Leeuw there is no such reality.

To return to the initial question of mediated self-understanding which I expounded in the introduction, I believe that van der Leeuw’s method already contains to some extent what I would like to highlight in Ricœur’s hermeneutics, namely, the task of getting to know ourselves better through the objectifications of life. The historical facts about religious experiences and practices are *texts* (i.e. objectifications of life), which means that they must be, so to say, brought to life in order that they “say something” to us. I will return to this later, so for now there is one question left: in what sense can we talk about second naivety in van der Leeuw’s approach? Of course, the first naivety is the pre-critical religious attitude, here exemplified by the belief in the power of fetish objects without reflection. The critical stage, however, which consists of causal, historical, or functional explanations (such as the methods of psychology, critical theory, etc.) *reduces* the initial meaning to something other, *replaces* it with something else. Therefore, what the phenomenology of religion can provide is to complement critical methods with the restoration of meaning which would otherwise be excluded. This is the sense in which Ricœur refers to van der Leeuw’s method as a quest for a second naivety.

## Second Naivety in Ricœur’s Hermeneutics

### Overview: Different Expressions of the Movement towards Second Naivety

In Ricœur’s writings, the term “second naivety” first appears in *The Symbolism of Evil*,<sup>23</sup> in the context of a discussion on the role of religious symbols in modernity. In this respect, for Ricœur, modernity can be characterised by a “forgetfulness of the sacred,” which means that our pre-modern relation to the sacred (i.e. the first naivety) has become impossible. Instead, he argues, “we can, we modern men, aim at a second naïveté in and through criticism, [...] it is by *interpreting* that we can *hear* again.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, Ricœur announces the project of the restoration of meaning through

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<sup>23</sup> Originally published in 1960. However, as Ernst Wolff pointed out, although the term itself does not appear earlier, similar ideas can already be found in Ricœur’s 1950s writings, when, for instance, he talks about an “instructed sympathy” (*sympathie instruite*). See Ernst Wolff, *Lire Ricœur depuis la périphérie. Décolonisation, modernité, herméneutique* (Bruxelles: Éditions de l’université de Bruxelles, 2021), 149.

<sup>24</sup> Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 351.

the interpretation of symbols. But why should we choose restoration and second naivety over criticism? Because, as he puts it, “beyond the desert of criticism, we wish to be called again,”<sup>25</sup> that is, “this second naïveté aims to be the postcritical equivalent of the precritical hierophany.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, Ricœur is led to the idea of second naivety through the problematics of religious symbols in modernity, and uses the term primarily in this sense even in *Freud and Philosophy*. However, I will later argue that this conceptual framework can be extended to a wide range of fields in the humanities.

The question arises, then, why Ricœur abandoned this term later, since – apart from a couple of mentions – he did not seem to attribute much significance to it. This question is difficult to answer, but my hypothesis is that he eventually found more fitting terms for the particular problems he was interested in. Nevertheless, there definitely seems to be an analogy between the idea of second naivety and these terms. First, in addition to the hermeneutic attitude of *listening* and the *restoration* or *recollection* of meaning which express a similar intuition, Ricœur also talks about *appropriation*<sup>27</sup> as the final stage of the interpretation of texts. In this case, there is an initial *belonging* to the world of the text, followed by a moment of *distanciation* provided by objective methods, which, in turn, leads to the creative appropriation or *application* of the text.<sup>28</sup> But further related terms can be found in his later writings as well, such as the concept of *practical wisdom* (or *phronesis*),<sup>29</sup> which he borrows from Aristotle to refer to practice that is neither naïve nor guided by certain moral laws, but instead surpasses them in using them creatively, or the famous concept of *narrative identity*, according to which “the self of self-knowledge is not the egotistical or narcissistic ego whose hypocrisy and naïveté the hermeneutics of suspicion have denounced, [but] the fruit of an examined life.”<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, as I mentioned in the introduction, there is also secondary literature on second naivety in Ricœur’s thought which is worth examining.<sup>31</sup> First, Scott-Baumann draws a parallel between the three stages of the hermeneutical process and the actual unfolding of Ricœur’s

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<sup>25</sup> Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 349.

<sup>26</sup> Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 352.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. in Paul Ricœur, “Appropriation,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 144-156.

<sup>28</sup> It is important to note here that all these three-stage models of interpretation can be traced back to traditional (pre-Romantic) hermeneutics. As Gadamer also emphasised, the triad of *subtilitas intelligendi-explicandi-applicandi* (i.e. the “finesse” of understanding, explication, and application) constituted the traditional hermeneutical process, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall (London & New York: Continuum, 2004), 306. However, neither for traditional hermeneutics nor for Gadamer did explication include the objective methods of the human sciences, only for Ricœur.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. in Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 240-296.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 3*, trans. Kathleen Blamey & David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 247.

<sup>31</sup> For an exhaustive selection of the different conceptualisations of Ricœur’s three-stage process of interpretation, see Wallace, *The Second Naïveté*, 55, n.16.



thought. This means that the first naivety corresponds to his earlier linguistic analyses, the critical stage to the “methodological dialectics” (when Ricœur creates tensions between conflicting interpretations), and, possibly, the second naivety to his philosophical anthropology developed later in the 1980s-90s.<sup>32</sup> I find this interpretation quite interesting and plausible, but my focus is narrower: my argument is only that this movement can be found in much smaller scales and in various ways throughout Ricœur’s writings. Thus, my interpretation follows the more “traditional” one (exemplified here by Wallace), according to which second naivety is the final stage of the “hermeneutical arc” in the analysis of each particular “text” (understood in a broader sense, i.e. as referring to any expression of life).<sup>33</sup>

The last thing to discuss briefly before turning to the exact description of the stages is how Ricœur’s hermeneutical attitude (conceived of as an aspiration towards a post-critical naivety) is to be distinguished from earlier types of hermeneutics, especially as developed by Wilhelm Dilthey and Gadamer. Dilthey’s hermeneutics is founded on his dichotomy of *explanation* (*Erklärung*) and *understanding* (*Verstehen*) – the former refers to the method of the natural sciences, while the latter to the human scientific method – which means that there is no place for explanation (i.e. identification of causes, laws, underlying mechanisms, etc.) in the humanities and no place for understanding (i.e. an interpretative attitude) in the natural sciences. However, Ricœur makes it clear that he rejects this dichotomy in the sense that he attempts to incorporate both into interpretation.<sup>34</sup> Thus, for him, hermeneutics starts with an initial understanding and arrives at a deeper understanding, but the explanatory methods must be built into the process as well. In short, Ricœur’s hermeneutics as a way towards a second naivety can also be thought of as a dialectic between the two poles of Dilthey’s dichotomy.

With regard to Gadamer, I have already mentioned the main difference: even though Gadamer’s hermeneutics (unlike that of Dilthey) is founded on a Heideggerian ontology, he shares Dilthey’s rejection of explanation in the humanities. I would like to highlight here, however, that the opposition Ricœur identifies in *Freud and Philosophy* between the phenomenology of religion and the masters of suspicion is eventually replaced with an opposition between Gadamer’s hermeneutics and the hermeneutics of suspicion (especially Jürgen Habermas) in his 1970s essays.<sup>35</sup> That is, the hermeneutics of “restoration” or “listening” is no longer exemplified by van der Leeuw and the other phenomenologists of religion, but by Gadamer. In my interpretation, this shift supports the claim that the dialectical opposition between listening and suspicion and the attempt to overcome them in a second naivety is not limited to the question of religion: it is a more general concern which, in this case, arises from the methodological problems of social sciences.

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<sup>32</sup> Scott-Baumann, *Ricœur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, 114.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. Wallace, *The Second Naiveté*, 52.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Ricœur, “What is a text? Explanation and understanding,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 107-126.

<sup>35</sup> E.g. in Paul Ricœur, “Hermeneutics and the critique of ideology,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 23-60.

## First Stage: Initial Naivety in a Non-Religious Sense

But what is this initial naivety that both the various modern schools of criticism and the hermeneutics of restoration seek to overcome? If we are talking about religion, then the answer is more or less clear: it refers to a sort of naïve faith which precedes rational reflection and lacks suspicion in the Ricœurian sense (i.e. referring to the “masters”). But how can we grasp this first naivety in a non-religious sense? In general terms, we can understand it as our *pre-reflective, everyday attitude*, in which meaning seems to be immediately accessible to us. But in order to be more precise, it is worth recalling the three types of understanding I referred to in the introduction, namely, the understanding of ourselves, of others and of texts. As I mentioned there, for Ricœur, these three are intertwined, but at this point I still find it reasonable to treat them separately. With regard to self-understanding, first naivety would mean an immediate understanding of ourselves, which means that a moment of reflection, whereby we can interpret ourselves differently (or “see ourselves in a different light”), is lacking. With regard to others and to texts, I propose to understand the initial naivety as “too much trust,” or, in Ricœur’s terms, as an excess of the attitude of “listening” to the detriment of “suspicion” (or any critical attitude in general). Of course, again, the lack of reflection and the lack of criticism are related, so there is definitely a parallel between self-understanding and the understanding of others in this respect. To put it differently, I agree with Scott-Baumann that the link between naivety in a religious sense and naivety in general is that the former is a (pre- or post-critical) *religious faith*, while the latter is an (also pre- or post-critical) *faith in meaning* (e.g. in the case of self-understanding: *faith in the self*).<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that the first naivety varies according to our initial situation (e.g. the tradition, culture, age we live in): it refers to the set of our presuppositions or “biases” which differ significantly among individuals.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, in short, the point here is that first naivety is a useful abstraction when we think of the hermeneutic process, and that naïve religious faith is a paradigmatic example of it.

## Second Stage: The “Detours” Provided by Critical Methods

In his essay “Existence and Hermeneutics,” Ricœur contrasts his own hermeneutics to Heidegger: according to him, Heidegger takes a “short route” because he rejects the use of any method and turns directly to the ontology of understanding, whereas Ricœur proposes a “long route” which consists in making several *detours* through the various methods of the human sciences before arriving at the Heideggerian ontology of understanding.<sup>38</sup> But what does this mean and why is it important? For Ricœur, Heidegger’s philosophy is incapable of dealing with the human scientific methods and tackling the problem of conflicts of interpretations. At the same time, however, he is strongly influenced by Heidegger’s idea of grounding hermeneutics in phenomenology, which is why his aim here is to complement Heidegger with the human sciences.

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<sup>36</sup> Scott-Baumann, *Ricœur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, 152.

<sup>37</sup> Ricœur agrees with Heidegger and Gadamer that the “hermeneutical circle” is not a vicious circle, given the inevitability of presuppositions, but this of course does not mean that our presuppositions cannot distort our understanding, which is why they must be questioned.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Ricœur, “Existence and Hermeneutics,” in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, 6-11.

Consequently, Ricœur's arguments are, I think, quite convincing that phenomenology and hermeneutics must not ignore the human sciences and the conflicts of interpretations which are always present in them, which means that it is necessary to make detours again and again through these methods.

Thus, there seems to be an analogy between Ricœur's concept of detour and the critical stage in the movement towards second naivety: the return from critical methods (which I will discuss later in more detail) to Heideggerian phenomenology through the conflicts of interpretation is similar to the passage to second naivety. Here it is also important to mention that Ricœur applies to himself Éric Weil's term "post-Hegelian Kantianism," because his philosophy is dialectical, but instead of sublating (*aufheben*) the opposites in a totality, he sustains them and points to the limits of each approach.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it is crucial to stress that the passage to second naivety is not the passage to the Hegelian Absolute: it must be repeated in each particular case of interpretation.

### Third Stage: Characteristics of a Possible Post-Critical Naivety

The question might still be raised why a passage to second naivety should be preferred to the critical methods. Thus, before turning to the examination of particular critical methods, I find it necessary to briefly respond to this question by summarising the traits of the post-critical stage. I will discuss three traits which appear in Ricœur's writings,<sup>40</sup> namely, the *reduction of distance*, the possibility of *creation*, and the *balance* between conflicting interpretations. The reduction of distance is a task that is very much in accordance with Gadamer's hermeneutic project, with the distinction that Gadamer focuses more on the problems with objectification, while Ricœur on suspicion. The main problem is that the exercise of suspicion and objectification towards the text creates a distance (between writer and reader, speaker and listener, or even within myself), which hermeneutics would like to avoid. What hermeneutics aims at is, to use Gadamer's term, the "fusion of horizons,"<sup>41</sup> the enlargement of our individual horizons through an encounter with the other, whereby the interlocutors come closer to and understand each other better.<sup>42</sup> Thus, in my interpretation, second naivety can also be conceived of similarly to Gadamer's fusion of horizons, with the distinction that it incorporates somehow the objectifying methods as well.

The second trait we can identify in Ricœur's writings, that is, the possibility of creation, can be illuminated by two paradigmatic examples: the *metaphor* and *music*. Ricœur's view of the metaphor as the paradigm of creation rests on the distinction of "living" and "dead" metaphor (*métaphore vive et morte*), the latter of which refers to those which are solidified in our language,

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<sup>39</sup> Marcelo Gonçalo, "Paul Ricœur et Eric Weil: Histoire, Vérité et Conflits des Interprétations," *Cultura* 31 (2013), 247-266.

<sup>40</sup> These aspects of interpretation are discussed by Ricœur only later in the 1970s and never as attributes of second naivety. However, I believe that they are related and that, therefore, they can help to illuminate the idea of second naivety.

<sup>41</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

<sup>42</sup> Ricœur, "Hermeneutics and the critique of ideology," 35.

while the former to the (poetic) invention of new ones.<sup>43</sup> The living metaphor establishes a connection between two ideas which have so far been separate, and, for Ricœur, this elementary creation can serve as a paradigm for more complex instances of creativity. Thus, to apply this to the passage to second naivety, we can try to establish links between ideas gained through the critical methods in a creative and playful way. In other words, for Ricœur, since there is usually a *plurality of meaning*, interpretation can be an open process which results in the *enlargement* of the field of meanings and the emergence of something *new*. This will be clearer later when I discuss more concrete examples, but the point is that the creation of new meaning is central here.<sup>44</sup>

The analogy of music is also elucidating: while explanatory methods could be conceived of analogously to music theory (i.e. the theory of harmony, rhythm, and other elements), given that they both analyse the internal structures of texts or musical pieces, hermeneutic reading is more like “the execution of a musical score,”<sup>45</sup> because it “brings into life” the possibilities present in the text. To put it differently, we can always identify general forms and structures both in texts and in musical pieces, but, according to Ricœur, no text or piece can be exhaustively explained as a sum of its elements. The reason I think this idea is related to second naivety is that here we can also see an attempt to surpass critical methods and attain a state of creativity. And finally, Ricœur’s permanent insistence on balancing conflicting interpretations by finding the appropriate measure in each particular context is also related to the idea of second naivety, because the tensions between the various interpretations and explanations provided by critical methods can only be resolved in a creative solution which takes them into account.

## Particular Critical Methods as “Detours” towards a Post-Critical Naivety

So far, the discussion of second naivety has moved on a rather abstract level, which is why I find it worth directing our attention to particular critical methods to see what a passage to a post-critical naivety through them would look like, paying attention to the particular problems which arise in each case. I will discuss three types of critical methods which are present in the human sciences, namely, Freudian psychoanalysis, Marxian critique of ideology, and structuralism (complemented by post-structuralism). These three types are important not only because Ricœur wrote extensively about them due to their contemporary prevalence, but also because they were influenced by and further developed the tools of the “masters of suspicion.” One more preliminary remark: since there is substantial literature (both by Ricœur and by others) on how a *religious*

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<sup>43</sup> Paul Ricœur, “Metaphor and the central problem of hermeneutics,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 127-143.

<sup>44</sup> A similar idea is already expressed in *The Symbolism of Evil*, the closing chapter of which is entitled “The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought” (“*Le symbole donne à penser*”), 347. This title already indicates that – through the final stage of interpretation (i.e. application, actualisation) – the symbol has the capability to stimulate new thoughts.

<sup>45</sup> Ricœur, “What is a text?” 121.

second naivety is to be attained after these critical methods,<sup>46</sup> in this chapter, I will focus not on religion, but on the possibility of attaining a second naivety in *understanding and self-understanding* in the specific domains which each of the following critical methods focuses on.

## 1. Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is the only critical method to which Ricœur dedicated an entire book. Although, as the French title (*De l'interprétation*) suggests, *Freud and Philosophy* deals with the question of interpretation in general through Freud, it is of course also a very detailed philosophical discussion of Freud's writings. Ricœur's attitude towards psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic discipline was ambivalent from early on: he regarded it as a valuable – and, in modernity, almost indispensable – tool for interpretation, but, at the same time, he never hesitated to point out its limits. Thus, the first question to be answered is why Freud is a master of suspicion, which leads to the question why psychoanalysis belongs to the hermeneutics of suspicion. To begin with, all three masters of suspicion “suspect” different underlying forces to be unmasked behind the appearances: for Marx, these are economic relations of oppression, for Nietzsche, different “wills to power,” and for Freud, *desires*. However, Ricœur's first point is that Freud's analysis of the psyche is not only a form of explanation in a naturalistic sense, but also a type of *interpretation*, which is why it can be regarded as a distinct hermeneutic discipline.

But how exactly does psychoanalytic interpretation work? Simply put, we can say that Freud always asks the following questions: what kind of desire produced a certain expression and what is its psychic function? In other words, Ricœur argues that in psychoanalysis conscious content is always a *symbol* to be deciphered, and the real meaning is situated in the underlying layer of the *unconscious*. Thus, for Freud, to think that we understand ourselves without reflecting on how our unconscious desires shape our consciousness is naivety: the reasons we give for our thoughts, feelings, and actions are illusions. It is not only our self-understanding, however, but also the understanding of others and texts that remains naïve without a reflection informed by psychoanalysis. This is why Freud extends his theory (which first concentrated on the interpretation of dreams) to the interpretation of any cultural phenomenon (artworks, customs, religion, etc.), which is what makes it a *general* hermeneutic discipline. However, what Ricœur strongly opposes is the pretension of psychoanalysis to become “scientific” in that it posits a *realism* of the unconscious.<sup>47</sup> Such a realism reduces symbols to their unconscious meanings, thereby denying the plurality of meanings which Ricœur claims symbols possess. To put it more clearly, Ricœur contrasts psychoanalysis with phenomenology, claiming that psychoanalysis can never grasp the phenomenological field of meanings, which is why he suggests a dialectical opposition between the “hermeneutics of the unconscious” and the “hermeneutics of consciousness.”<sup>48</sup> In

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<sup>46</sup> See e.g. Paul Ricœur, “Religion, Atheism, and Faith,” in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, trans. Charles Freilich, 440-467. Here the quest for a second naivety is not explicit, but his project fits the above description of the idea.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. Paul Ricœur, “Consciousness and the Unconscious,” in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, trans. Willis Domingo, 107-108.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Ricœur, “Consciousness and the Unconscious,” 114.

short, Ricœur regards psychoanalysis as one art of interpretation among others, which means that he defends its right to contribute to understanding but rejects its universalistic pretensions.

How can the aforementioned three stages of the movement towards a second naivety be applied to psychoanalysis as a critical method? The stage of first naivety is, of course, when we disregard the questions posed and the tools provided by psychoanalysis: if I interpret my thoughts, the expressions of others, and the texts I read “in their own right” (i.e. without reflecting on the desires which produced them), then I do not take into account an important dimension of reality, which can be viewed as a sort of naivety. An example might be the use of the so-called “defence mechanisms” (identified by Anna Freud) without reflecting on the fact that we use them. The exercise of Freudian suspicion, therefore, challenges this first naivety and leads to a world-view in which all expressions of human life appear as products of certain desires. This view, however, has its limits as well: as Ricœur observes, it can turn into a form of reductionism and excludes other, equally legitimate, interpretations. But what would a second naivety through this detour look like? I give three indications of it based on Ricœur’s texts. First, Ricœur emphasises that Freud himself (as well as the other masters of suspicion) aimed at a *liberation* from our illusions by means of an *enlargement* of our consciousness<sup>49</sup> – even though the reductionist tendencies in them, which were amplified by some of their followers, seem to point in the opposite direction. Thus, the chance for a second naivety in the sense of a post-critical (self-)understanding is already present in Freud. In other words, the “archaeology” and “dispossession” of the subject can be followed by its “re-appropriation.”<sup>50</sup> This leads to the second formulation of this idea by Ricœur, namely, to *consciousness as a task*:<sup>51</sup> after we have destroyed consciousness by unmasking it as an illusion, the task is to reconstruct it. And finally, to return to the characteristics of second naivety mentioned in the previous chapter, the way to achieve this is through a creative resolution of the conflicts of interpretation between psychoanalysis and phenomenology in each particular case.

## 2. Marxism and the Critique of Ideology

Marxism was another central theme for Ricœur: he dedicated some articles to it already in the 1930s<sup>52</sup> and continued to engage with the theme up until his later works. However, since Marxism is only relevant here *as a critical method of interpretation*, I will limit my discussion to some of Ricœur’s 1960s-70s writings which dealt with precisely this question. Given that French intellectuals of the era (such as Jean-Paul Sartre or Louis Althusser) typically shared a Marxist political and philosophical conviction, this question was of course especially relevant. Ricœur, just as with psychoanalysis, emphasised the value of Marxist approaches, but, at the same time, he was also quite critical towards some of their aspects. In this section, therefore, I intend to show how Ricœur related to Marx’s philosophy as a form of hermeneutics (that is, I will not discuss his relation to Marx’s *political* philosophy). Another limitation is that – despite the fact that Marxism

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<sup>49</sup> Paul Ricœur, “Psychoanalysis and the Movement of Contemporary Culture,” in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, trans. Willis Domingo, 150.

<sup>50</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 495.

<sup>51</sup> Ricœur, “Consciousness and the Unconscious,” 108.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Paul Ricœur, “Nécessité de Karl Marx,” *ÊTRE 2* (1938), 6-11, where he already defended a “critical” form of Marxism and attacked the dogmatic and reductionist interpretation of Marx.

in Ricœur's time (which Ricœur also discussed) deviated in various ways from Marx's thought – I only focus here on Ricœur's treatment of Marx himself. Nevertheless, much of what is said here about Marx can be applied to several French Marxist approaches as well.

It is worth beginning with the same question as in the last section: in what sense is Marx's ideology critique a form of hermeneutics of suspicion? Again, in a simplified way, we can say that a Marxist interpretation asks the following questions: what kind of material relations of oppression manifest themselves in social relations and how do these relations help in reproducing the existing economic order? Thus, for Marx, the underlying (real) layer is the material *base* (the relations of production, such as the capitalist mode of production), and everything else (philosophy, art, religion, law, morality, etc.) is considered to be part of the *superstructure* which is determined by the base. Moreover, the reproductive function of the superstructure is called *ideology*, which is why an essential feature of Marxism is the critique of ideology. Thus, just as psychoanalysis, the critique of ideology is also an art of interpretation: we can pay attention to the socio-economic position of the speaker or writer, and unmask their (mostly unconscious) function of reproducing the existing order. But, also similarly to psychoanalysis, we can apply this art of interpretation to ourselves as well, which is facilitated by the notion of "false consciousness":<sup>53</sup> according to Marx, we are not aware of our function of reproducing the capitalist mode of production, which is why we have a false self-understanding as well.<sup>54</sup>

The first naivety, therefore, would be the lack of reflection on these socio-economic forces of domination. One might think, for instance, of ideologies such as the ideal of the "self-made man" as an open possibility for everyone, or of the "freedom" of the workers to enter into (disadvantageous) working contracts in the absence of viable alternatives. But, more generally, we can think of our self-image as naïve as well, if we do not reflect on our socio-economic status. However, Ricœur argues, in the same manner as psychoanalysis, the critique of ideology also tends to turn into a form of reductionism, whereby the totality of human culture appears as a mere expression of these economic forces of domination. So, what would a second naivety after Marxist criticism look like? It is worth taking a look at Ricœur's article "Ideology and Utopia"<sup>55</sup> which might show the way in this direction. Here he makes the claim that – while ideology does have the functions of *distortion* (of reality) and *legitimation* (of existing authority) – it has a third function as well, namely, *symbolisation* (i.e. symbolic mediation between individuals). The reason why this is important is that, on the one hand, symbolic mediation seems to be inevitable (which means that the complete elimination of ideology is impossible), and, on the other, that ideology can have a (normatively) positive sense as well, because symbolisation brings integration and cohesion into societies. Thus, the critique of ideology is a necessary step to take, especially in situations where ideology becomes "pathological," but, Ricœur emphasises, the critique of ideology itself can

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<sup>53</sup> Ricœur, "Psychoanalysis and the Movement of Contemporary Culture," 148.

<sup>54</sup> This idea was, for instance, further developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, according to whom one must analyse one's own social *habitus* (which serves the function of reproducing the existing order) in order to understand oneself. For a comparison of Ricœur and Bourdieu on this subject, see Johann Michel, *Ricœur and the Post-Structuralists: Bourdieu, Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Castoriadis*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), 1-29.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Ideology and Utopia," in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey & John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 308-324.

become excessive as well (e.g. because it harms social cohesion), in which case it must be criticised. In other words, the hermeneutical process here is the following: first, we recognise that we live in ideology and attempt to unmask it, but then, we also realise that ideology – at least as symbolic mediation, but sometimes also as legitimation – is inevitable, which is why the stage of second naivety would consist in being able to decide in each particular situation whether it is ideology critique or the *critique of ideology critique* that should be applied. In this way, it is possible to avoid both an uncritical naivety and an excess of criticism, which means that second naivety represents an enlarged understanding.

### 3. Structuralism and Post-Structuralism

Structuralism is yet another critical method which Ricœur often engaged in a dialogue with. However, since in the 1960s France, Marxism and psychoanalysis were often merged with a structuralist framework (as exemplified by the already mentioned Althusser and Lacan, respectively), with this separate section on structuralism I mostly intend to emphasise the fact that Ricœur did not equate critical methods with the “hermeneutics of suspicion.” That is, structuralism in general is more important to him as an objectifying and explanatory method rather than as a form of exercising suspicion.<sup>56</sup> In other words, the point is to demonstrate that what is at stake here is not only Marxist and Freudian structuralism, but structuralism in general (including, for instance, Claude Lévi-Strauss). So, the next thing to clarify is the difference between suspicion and objectification. While suspicion in a Ricœurian sense refers to the hermeneutic attitude consisting in the replacement of the apparent (“illusory”) meaning with a latent (“real”) one, objectification – which, as I mentioned, is also strongly criticised by Gadamer – refers to the use of scientific methods in the humanities, which is necessarily accompanied by the elimination of individuality and subjectivity. Thus, although the two tend to coincide, this is not necessary: the Freudian idea, for instance, of making ourselves aware of our underlying desires does not necessarily seem objectifying, and a positivist sociological model which identifies a correlation that corresponds to the meanings we give for our actions is objectifying but not an exercise of suspicion. In any case, French structuralism usually involved both objectification and suspicion.

Structuralist analysis, simply put, is characterised by the following steps: it decomposes complexities (e.g. texts, social phenomena) into elementary units, identifies the relations between them, which leads to the establishment of structures. Structuralism is in opposition with hermeneutics because 1) it eliminates the subject (the subject is reduced to a set of structural characteristics), 2) it only studies the internal structures and rejects external referents, and 3) the resulting structures are closed and rigid, which hinders the possibility of creation through interpretation. Thus, Ricœur’s intention is, on the one hand, to include the advantages of structural analysis in the hermeneutic process, but, on the other, to point out its limits. One instance of this can be found in his critique of Lévi-Strauss’s structural anthropology, where he argues that the application of structural analysis to anthropology is seriously limited due to its insistence on *synchronic* structures at the expense of *diachronic* analyses, but, in the end, he argues that the establishment of such structures is transitionally useful if it is followed by a hermeneutic (i.e.

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<sup>56</sup> Scott-Baumann, *Ricœur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, 66.



interpretative) approach.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, we can say that the opposition between the hermeneutics of recollection and structuralism (which is one of Ricœur's conflicts of interpretation) is a manifestation of the Diltheyan dichotomy of understanding and explanation, with the distinction that – instead of natural scientific explanations – structuralism applies linguistic tools in the various fields of the humanities.<sup>58</sup> In my understanding, the second naivety here would consist in, on the one hand, identifying the underlying structures in each specific case (e.g. as Lévi-Strauss did with myths or family relations), but, on the other, pointing to the dynamic nature of structures, and thus preserving the possibility of creation and singularity.

Nevertheless, since structuralism (understood in this strict sense) was eventually replaced by “post-structuralism,” the question arises whether the latter can serve as a detour towards a post-critical naivety as well, even though by the time this turn occurred Ricœur had mostly abandoned the conceptual framework of second naivety. However, given that the label “post-structuralism” does not cover a unified movement (Ricœur himself is sometimes called post-structuralist due to his aforementioned intention to both incorporate and surpass structural analysis), I now focus only on Foucault and Derrida, following Johann Michel's account,<sup>59</sup> and, I must emphasise in advance, in a highly exploratory and schematic manner, which means that their comparison of Ricœur requires more discussion. The point here is, therefore, to merely sketch the hypothesis of the possibility of moving from the interpretative frameworks of Foucault and Derrida in the direction of a second naivety. To begin with, post-structuralism seems to present slightly different challenges to hermeneutics than structuralism: 1) the preference of synchrony to the detriment of diachrony no longer applies, 2) the boundaries between explanation and interpretation are less clear, and 3) the identified structures are also less rigid and closed. Furthermore, post-structuralists do not suspect a “hidden reality” behind the appearances in a reductionist way, which is why they cannot be simply categorised into the hermeneutics of suspicion, either. At the same time, however, they are of course radically opposed to any type of “restoration” or “listening,” which clearly separates them from Ricœur and the hermeneutic tradition.

But how can we understand Foucault's and Derrida's approaches as constituting critical stages in the hermeneutical process? Foucault's interpretative questions can be summarised in the following way: what kind of *power* produced the given discourses and understandings (genealogy) and what is the *historical a priori* that makes them possible (archaeology)? Although the latter question is more characteristic of his earlier works, while the former was raised by him later, what is common to them is the focus on the historical conditions of ideas and the destruction of the subject.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, if we are interested in the possibility of a second naivety through the Foucauldian critical stage, we can think of *the task of recovering the subject*,<sup>61</sup> which has already been

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<sup>57</sup> Paul Ricœur, “Structure and Hermeneutics,” in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, 27-61.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Ricœur, “What is a text? Explanation and understanding,” 107.

<sup>59</sup> Michel, *Ricœur and the Post-Structuralists*.

<sup>60</sup> It is important to emphasise that I am only talking about certain tenets of Foucault and Derrida, not about their entire work. Perhaps what I say is more applicable to their followers who apply a “Foucauldian” or “Derridean” *method* to various texts and phenomena than to Foucault and Derrida themselves.

<sup>61</sup> Michel, *Ricœur and the Post-Structuralists*, 105-108.

mentioned in connection with Ricœur's discussion of Freud. Thus, Ricœur valued Foucault's approach, but he was dissatisfied with his destructive attitude towards the subject.<sup>62</sup>

With regard to Derridean deconstruction, again in a very schematic manner, the interpretative questions to ask might be summarised as follows: what kind of unequal binary oppositions (i.e. where one element is privileged over the other) is the text founded on (or: what is the underlying "metaphysics" of the text)? It seems quite difficult to conceive of what a second naivety would mean after this interpretative framework, and Michel also arrives at the conclusion that Ricœur's hermeneutics "can enter into dialogue with, but not fuse with, Derridean deconstruction."<sup>63</sup> He also adds that they are two distinct "philosophical archetypes":<sup>64</sup> Ricœur aims at the mediation and critical re-appropriation of tradition, while Derrida at shaking its foundations. Nevertheless, it is still possible to complement deconstruction with restoration in each particular case of interpretation. There does not seem to be a necessary contradiction between looking for the text's potential for mediation and pointing to its metaphysical foundations. Thus, a second naivety after deconstruction would take into account the inherent exclusionary structures, but, at the same time, it would seek a subsequent critical re-appropriation. To conclude, it would be anachronism to read into Ricœur a quest for attaining a second naivety after post-structuralism, given that – as I mentioned – he abandoned the term by the time Foucault and Derrida became well-known, so my point here was rather to argue that post-structuralist interpretative frameworks can also serve as critical detours in a Ricœurian sense. And finally, of course, the list of possible frameworks serving as detours could be further extended, but that would exceed the scope of this article.

## Conclusion

My main aim in this article was, on the one hand, to investigate to what extent the relevance of the idea of second naivety for Ricœur's hermeneutics exceeds the explicit mentions of the concept in his texts, and, on the other hand, to examine what a second naivety would look like after the detours provided by the various critical methods. My conclusion is that, assuming that our intention is to understand ourselves, others, and texts as deeply as possible, Ricœur has strong arguments for the insufficiency of the critical methods in themselves, but, at the same time, I also agree with him that they are worth being considered and included in the hermeneutic process. Furthermore, I hope to have been able to show that the concept of second naivety has affinities with many of Ricœur's later ideas, which demonstrates that his attitude towards the problem of religious faith in modernity is closely related to his way of tackling the methodological problems of the human sciences. It is nonetheless important to emphasise that this hermeneutical attitude sketched above is only an open possibility, not something that should be forced in each case: depending on our concrete motivation for interpretation, we might choose a critical attitude as

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<sup>62</sup> In his later works, Foucault's approach towards the subject was less destructive, which is why, as Michel points out as well, Ricœur eventually felt closer to it. See Michel, *Ricœur and the Post-Structuralists*, 103.

<sup>63</sup> Michel, *Ricœur and the Post-Structuralists*, 66.

<sup>64</sup> Michel, *Ricœur and the Post-Structuralists*, 32.

well. I would like to conclude by underlining once again the relevance of the idea of second naivety: it provides an alternative both to approaches with universal pretensions and to deconstructive attitudes. Nevertheless, it is an alternative not in the sense of replacing those approaches, but in the sense of being a complement and a partner in dialogue for them, always pointing out their limitations and providing alternative interpretations.

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