# The Ontology of Actuality and Potentiality as a Way for a Speculative Approach to the Aporetics of Time

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## Abstract

In this article we will show the process that allowed Ricœur to apply the Aristotelian ontology of actuality and potentiality to his hermeneutics, and how this development ended up providing him with a speculative solution to the aporetics of time. We will distinguish two alternative solutions: the poetic solution, given in *Time and Narrative* and the speculative one, developed in *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Despite the importance of the existential analytic, we believe that the introduction of the Spinozian *conatus* was decisive for Ricoeur's change of perspective.

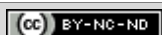*Keywords: potentiality; conatus; care; death*

## Résumé

Dans cet article, nous montrerons le processus qui a permis à Ricœur d'appliquer l'ontologie aristotélicienne de l'acte et de la puissance à son herméneutique, et comment ce développement a fini par lui fournir une solution spéculative à l'aporétique du temps. Nous distinguerons deux solutions alternatives : la solution poétique, donnée dans *Temps et récit*, et la solution spéculative, développée dans *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. Bien que dans les deux cas l'analytique existentielle joue un rôle important, nous considérons que c'est l'introduction du *conatus* spinozien qui a rendu possible le changement de perspective.

*Mots-clés : puissance ; conatus ; souci ; mort*

# The Ontology of Actuality and Potentiality as a Way for a Speculative Approach to the Aporetics of Time

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## I.       An ontology of actuality and potentiality

In his interview with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay, Paul Ricœur pointed out that none of his works addressed any of the central questions of philosophy, and that they were all fragmentary and limited in character.[1] He also recognized the existence of particular kinds of continuity. Some of his works concluded by opening themes, which would then be taken up and developed in later texts. For example, the question of identity was raised in the conclusion of *Time and Narrative* but only developed in *Oneself as Another*. In addition to this type of continuity recognized by Ricœur, we find another that, beyond the objectives of each of the works considered, elaborates fundamental questions of philosophy in a hidden way. This is the case with Ricœur's reappropriation and application of the ontology of actuality and potentiality and its articulation with temporality in his hermeneutics.

In an article from the mid-1990s, Ricœur argued that the hermeneutics of selfhood provided an *a posteriori* justification of an ontology of actuality and potentiality by articulating the phenomenological concepts of speaking, doing, recounting, and imputing under the concept of analogical unity of acting.[2] We are of the opinion that this process extended beyond *Oneself as Another* in a period extending at least from *The Rule of Metaphor* to *Memory, History, Forgetting*. In this process, Ricœur set out to continue the project initiated by Ravaisson of preventing metaphysics from "getting bogged down in the ruts of either a substantialist or a truth-based ontology", opting instead "for the signification of being governed by the terms *energeia* and *dunamis*."[3]

The aim of this article is to show how Ricœur applied the Aristotelian ontology of actuality and potentiality to his hermeneutics, and how its development after the 1990s provided a "speculative solution" to the aporetics of time presented in *Time and Narrative*.[4] We believe that the

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[1] Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 81.

[2] Paul Ricœur, "From Metaphysics to Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy Today,* vol. 40, nº 4 (1996), 449.

[3] *Ibid.*, 444.

[4] Here I take the expression of Ricœur himself, who, in his article on initiative, describes it as "if not a solution on the same speculative level [as the paradoxes confronting the present, torn by the cosmological and ontological conception of time], at least the response of *action*, which produces in a nonrepresentative way the synthesis of the living present and the anonymous instant" (Paul Ricœur, "Initiative," *From text to action: essays in hermeneutics II*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991, 212). The italics are ours.

main reason this development has been overlooked is the difficulty of conceptualizing a present from such an ontology *without* potentiality diminishing its centrality in favor of actuality.

Let us explicitly consider the difficulty of conceptualizing a present of the initiative from such an ontology, without blurring potentiality with actuality. Ricœur adopts "the guiding idea of *Being and Time* that temporality constitutes not only a major characteristic of the being that we are, but the characteristic that, more than any other, signals the relation of this being to being *qua* being."[5] The issue lies in the close link between substantialist thought and the present, a link already noted by Heidegger at the beginning of *Being and Time*. Therefore, if his intention was to elaborate a hermeneutics based on actuality and potentiality, he had to conceptualize temporality in those terms. As Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron explains, "to think temporality in terms of temporalization is not only to de-substantialize time, but above all to think of it as act, as vitality, as free existence."[6] The relevance of *Being and Time*, both in *Time and Narrative* and in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, reveals the importance of Martin Heidegger's temporal analysis in Ricœur's work. However, we will argue that the German philosopher did not determine the direction taken by temporal analysis in either work; rather, this role was played by Augustine in *Time and Narrative* and by Baruch Spinoza from *Oneself as Another* onwards.

## II.   The poetic mediation of the aporetics of time and the senses of being

Whatever the contributions of *The Rule of Metaphor* to the treatment of metaphor or the question of reference, its real philosophical relevance is to be found in its ontological impact,[7] among which the proposal for an ontology of actuality and potentiality, and the role played by the human being, stand out."[8] Ricœur explains that, for Aristotle, metaphor was characterized by its ability to put the scene before our eyes."[9] In Book 3 of *Rhetoric*, the Stagirite explains that setting before the eyes is "to 'represent things as in a state of activity' (1411b24-25). And the philosopher specifies: when the poet infuses life into inanimate things, his verse 'represents everything as moving and living; and activity is movement' (1412a8)."[10] In the last study of *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricœur proposes three interpretations of these brief but vague considerations, where actuality and potentiality are prioritized over the other senses of being, and he assigns to the poet the character of creator of movement and life.

The former reduces the things of the world to actions, as if it were a tragedy. However, Ricœur considers this alternative abusive because it reduces the vision of the world to a human

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[5] Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2006), 345.

[6] Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, "Les formes du temps et la vie spirituelle selon Paul Ricœur," *Studia Phænomenologica*, vol. XIII (2013), 281.

[7] Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor. The creation of meaning in language* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 48.

[8] While Mongin notes its presence in the chapter "Negativity and Primary Affirmation," in *History and Truth* (Olivier Mongin, *Paul Ricœur*, Paris: Seuil, 1998, 186), we consider this reference to be minor, and in the context of a debate with the Sartrean philosophy of negativity.

[9] Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 38.

[10] *Ibid.*, 363.

deed. The second alternative understands the things of the world as a work of art or a technical production, but insofar as it presents reality as a vast artefact of the artistic will; it is rejected on analogous grounds as the first option. The third alternative treats the world as *physis* and things as natural hatchings, as described by Heidegger in his later work. In this alternative the poet would have the capacity to perceive power as act and act as power.[11] Although Ricœur shows some sympathy for this alternative, it is not entirely satisfactory either, since it fails to establish the relation between the human being and the world. (In fact, in his later works, Ricœur will not take up the post-*Kehre* Heidegger again but will restrict himself to existential analytics.)

*Time and Narrative* directly confronts the question of time, but the impossibility of proposing a "speculative solution" to the aporias it uncovers allows Ricœur to develop his "poetic solution".[12] However, this very approach signals the existence of an ontological problem in the background: each of the two conceptions of time, the cosmological and the phenomenological, are identified with a different ontology.

This book begins by analyzing how Augustine dealt with time. Ricœur does not give any explicit ground for this choice, but among the reasons that could be presumed we find that, for the French philosopher, the phenomenological tradition initiated by Augustine constitutes progress with respect to Aristotle's cosmological conception.[13] A second explanation could be that, as the first representative of this tradition, Augustine was the one who established the guidelines that his successors, such as Edmund Husserl and Heidegger, will continue.[14] Whatever the reasons, this decision affects the rest of the work: it establishes the link between substantialist ontology and the philosophy of presence on the one hand, and the unbridgeable gap between phenomenological time and cosmological time on the other. To answer what time is, Augustine had to face two aporias. The first is that, of the three tenses, the only one that really exists is the present; the second is that time is experienced as extensive, even though the only one actually experienced, the present, is not. To overcome both aporias, Augustine substituted the concept of presence by that of measurable transition.[15] Instead of asking what the past is, Augustine redirected the question of time towards memory. If past things are in my memories, then to remember is to have a present impression-image of the past things. Since the trace remains in the spirit, it is possible to measure time by means of a distention of the spirit.

Vieillard-Baron points out the theological aim of Book XI of the *Confessions*.[16] It is pervaded by the preoccupation with the eternity of God and the origin of the world. As Ricœur explains:

"The contrast between eternity and time is not limited to surrounding our experience of time with negativity, as we do when we link our thought of time to what is other than time. This

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[11] *Ibid.*, 364.

[12] Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative III* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 3

[13] *Ibid.*, 12.

[14] See, for example, *ibid.*, 85 and Paul Ricœur, "Intellectual autobiography of Paul Ricœur," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur*, ed. Lewis Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 42.

[15] Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative I* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 12.

[16] Vieillard-Baron, "Les formes du temps et la vie spirituelle selon Paul Ricœur," 274.

experience is permeated through and through with negativity. Intensified in this way on the existential level, the experience of distension is raised to the level of a lamentation."[17]

Eternity, described as a constant present, functions as a limiting idea, which exceeds any changing entity that occurs in time.[18] The spirit is amid this tension between the divine and the mundane: it aspires to eternity but is irremediably affected by change. The Augustinian conception of time is founded on this yearning, even to the detriment of associating time with change. The constant reference to the present of distension is nothing other than the manifestation of the wish for permanence, and the regret of not being able to achieve it.[19] This dissociation of phenomenological time from cosmological time will finally give rise to the temporal aporia that will be dealt with throughout the third volume of *Time and Narrative*.

Aristotle argues from the antipode of Augustine, taking motion as his starting point. Ricœur emphasizes that Aristotle manages to dispense with a soul that perceives, discriminates, compares, and counts time, even though Aristotle defines time as the number of (a) movement. What matters is not that movement has a number, but that it can be numbered. For the Stagirite, we are not the producers of time, but the temporal succession comes from a relation of order that is found in the world and surrounds us.[20] This definition of time is consequently based on an ontology of actuality and potentiality, which defines the present as the instant in which being in potentiality passes into being in actuality. However, this analysis cannot identify the now from any other moment. Every instant is equally worthy of being the present.[21] The possibility of establishing references that would make it possible to distinguish one from the other, as well as from the past and the future, would have required a soul to "threaten the dependence of time on movement, the single, ultimate principle of physics."[22]

In this brief characterization of each of the approaches to the question of time, an aporia of time was revealed. Each position provides answers to a series of questions about time, but there remain points that cannot be answered except from the opposite perspective. The phenomenological conception of time, represented by the position of Augustine, associates time with the permanence of the trace. Thanks to its constant presence, it is possible to measure the passage of time. On the other hand, the Aristotelian characterization of cosmological time took motion as its starting point and prescinded from a soul capable of differentiating this now from other points in time. At the same time, neither of these positions can be derived from the other, but rather they dissociate themselves from each other. Finally, we should have in mind something that has already been mentioned: each of them has a different ontology at its base. Augustine's ontology used a substantialist vocabulary, while Aristotle resorted to an ontology of actuality and potentiality. The strengths and limitations of each of these views were linked to these ontologies. To say that Ricœur is not going to provide any speculative solution to this problem means that he is neither going to develop an alternative ontology to the two presented here, nor is he imposing

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[17] Ricœur, *Time and Narrative I*, 26.

[18] *Ibid.*, 23.

[19] *Ibid.*, 30.

[20] Ricœur, *Time and Narrative III*, 17.

[21] *Ibid.*, 19.

[22] *Ibid.*, 21.

one of these two ontologies over the other. The poetic solution to the aporetics of time also implies establishing a poetic articulation to these two ontologies.

It is complex to answer the question about the articulation between a substantial ontology, and an actuality-and-potentiality ontology, since, instead of finding a great synthesis of both conceptions of time in human time, we find a series of articulations that take place at different levels, each of which Ricœur analyses.

The first level describes in parallel how history and fiction articulate this aporetic. History links the two conceptions of time by means of three connectors: the succession of generations, the calendar, and the trace, with a strong substantialist imprint. Indeed, although the very expression "succession of generations" is based on change, the attribute that is most highly valued in this connector is its "historical continuity", anchored in the nature of the human species.[23] The calendar, for its part, takes a founding event as a fixed and constant point, which makes it possible to organize and traverse cosmological time towards the past and the future, following a repertoire of units of measurement. The trace, finally, is characterized as a material remnant of the past, which has not necessarily been intentionally left for us, but which serves as "material proof", "support" or "guarantee" of the truth of the historical account. This connector has the paradoxical peculiarity of articulating the aporia initiated by Augustine when he used a trace to characterize time. It is true that in the case of history it is the trace of an event in the world and, in Augustine's case, a mnemic mark. However, in both cases the same expression is used to refer to analogous phenomena: a present instance, linked to the past, which makes it possible to mark the passage of time. As for fiction, Ricœur points out that it articulates both times, the existential and cosmological, through the exploratory character of imaginative variations,[24] where the negative moment of imagination, neutralization, frees phenomenological time from the constraints of historical time. The recourse to imagination takes us back to *The Rule of Metaphor*, where the poet, by means of imagination, was able to perceive the power as act and act as power.[25]

Although it can be assumed *prima facie* that Ricœur's intention is to leave the temporal aporia open in order to implement his poetic proposal, it is possible to find other elements that could relativize this interpretation. If his aim had been only to present the poetic solutions to the temporal aporia given by history and fiction, the articulations we have just outlined would have been sufficient; history would then focus on the effective and fiction on the potential. However, this analysis takes a second step, proposing the interweaving and interpenetration of the articulating strategies and, with them, the respective ontologies that underlie them. Thus, history provides verisimilitude and substantiality to fiction, while fiction gives vivacity and potentiality to history. Stil, Ricœur would not have been satisfied with this solution, if only this interweaving had taken place. There is a further step in this union: the concept of narrative identity or *ipse* identity.[26]

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[23] *Ibid.*, 110.

[24] *Ibid.*, 127.

[25] Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 364

[26] Ricœur, *Time and Narrative III*, 246.

Unlike *Oneself as Another*, where narrative identity mediates between *idem* and *ipse* identity,[27] in *Time and Narrative* it is presented as the alternative to the antinomy between a substantial identity (*idem* identity) and the rejection of the very concept of identity. Narrative identity replaces substantial identity, insofar as this dynamic identity is the fruit of the poetic composition of a narrative text.[28] The recourse to the imaginative variation inherent to narrative might lead us to suspect that we are dealing with an identity based on the ontology of actuality and potentiality, an assumption that is reinforced when Ricœur points out that narrative identity is a substitute for substantial identity. If this were the case, it would clash with what we argued above, that the poetic solution of time would mediate between the two ontologies. However, this identity is not entirely detached from the substantial ontology. Even if "it is always possible to weave different, even opposed, plots about our lives,"[29] it always has a historical component, based ultimately on documentary traces that can be verified.

Before concluding our treatment of *Time and Narrative*, let us consider his two analyses of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. In the first volume, Ricœur takes from the German philosopher the *fore-structure* to establish certain continuities between prefiguration and configuration in the threefold mimesis, in opposition to the impositionalists such as Hayden White. Of the characteristics of prefiguration — structural, symbolic and temporal — references to Heidegger are to be found in the third of these characteristics, in connection with care and intratemporality,[30] issues to which he will return in the third volume. In the first section of the third volume, Ricœur elaborates a sort of history of the aporetics of temporality. In contrast to the first two chapters — the first is devoted to the aporia between the Augustinian and Aristotelian conception of time, and the second to the presentation of Husserl and Kant — he spends the whole of the third chapter on Heidegger. Here, Ricœur contrasts Heidegger's concept of temporality with that of ordinary time. In this analysis, he weighs up the ecstatic unity of the three times and the hierarchization of the levels of temporality, historicity, and intratemporality.

In Ricœur's opinion, the existential analytic of care constitutes a major contribution to philosophy. This existential possesses volitional, cognitive, and emotional aspects, without being reduced to any of them. As a structure that involves the question of time, it removes the question of time from the theory of knowledge.[31] Let us note that in this book, Ricœur refers us to Aristotelian physics for his treatment of the Heideggerian conception of ordinary time. However, at no point in this analysis of care do we find any link between this existential and Aristotelian *praxis*, as worked out in his ethics.

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[27] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 124: "Now it is this "milieu" that, in my opinion, the notion of narrative identity comes to occupy. Having thus situated it in this interval, we will not be surprised to see narrative identity oscillate between two limits: a lower limit, where permanence in time expresses the confusion of *idem* and *ipse;* and an upper limit, where the *ipse* poses the question of its identity without the aid and support of the *idem.*

[28] Ricœur, *Time and Narrative III*, 246.

[29] *Ibid.*, 248.

[30] Ricœur, *Time and Narrative I*, 59–64.

[31] Ricœur, *Time and Narrative III*, 64.

The passage from care to temporality is not immediate. In order to access this level of primordiality, a kind of reduction is necessary, a product of the meeting between totality, associated with being-towards-death, and authenticity, linked to moral conscience.[32] Ricœur criticizes the phenomenological relevance of Heidegger's concept of death, which he describes as existential and personal. It should be noted that Ricœur restricts himself to presenting Heidegger's position. He rejects the phenomenological value of being-towards-death as the most proper possibility, but he does not propose any alternative. This decision would support the hypothesis that Ricœur's intention was not to find a "speculative solution" to the temporal aporetics, but to leave it open to provide his "poetic solution."

This leads us finally to within-timeness, which would be the time of the world we count on and in which events occur. Ricœur gives a brief characterization of its attributes, datability, lapse of time, and public character, showing how each of them is linked to care.[33] The opposite position to this characterization of time is the ordinary concept of time, which defines it as an infinite and irreversible series of nows. Heidegger sets out to establish how these characteristics are derived from the three attributes of within-the-worldhood. Although Ricœur accepts that infinitude is a manifestation of the constitutive mortality of the human being, he considers the absence of any explanation of irreversibility. The reason for this fruitless attempt of derivation, and the impossibility of doing so, is that Heidegger has excluded in advance the hypothesis of the autonomy of the cosmological concept of time.[34]

In this context, I would like to dwell on his article "Initiative," in which Ricœur delves into chapter 7 of *Time and Narrative III*, and in a sense lays out the guidelines that lead to the ontology of the "capable human being". In this article, he outlines what he calls a "speculative solution" to the three paradoxes of present, arising from the aporetics of time. The first paradox is to see the present as an *origin* or a *transit*. From a cosmological reading, the present is the point of passage from the future to the past. From a phenomenological perspective, it is an origin in the sense that future and past appear as horizons projected ahead of and behind it. The second points out that, in the first case, the present is the origin of awaiting and memory. In this sense, it is a kind of externalization of the self, the *distentio* noted by Augustine. On the other hand, from a cosmological point of view, the connection between the time dimensions is external, so there is no relationship between them. This brings us to the final paradox. In the phenomenological perspective, the living present is decentered toward the imminence of the proximate future and the recentness of the receding past, while from the other position, each moment is an anonymous now.

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[32] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 358: "In its anticipatory resoluteness, Dasein has now been made phenomenally visible with regard to its possible authenticity and totality. The hermeneutical Situation which was previously inadequate for interpreting the meaning of the Being of care, now has the required primordiality."

[33] Ricœur, *Time and Narrative III*, 83–84: "It is on the basis of these three features of within-time-ness—datability, lapse of time, and public time—that Heidegger attempts to rejoin what we call time and to lay the groundwork for his final thesis concerning the leveling off of the existential analysis in the ordinary conception of time. This is the time of preoccupation, but interpreted in terms of the things alongside which our concern makes us reside."

[34] *Ibid.*, 88.

The "speculative solution" proposed by Ricœur is a third time intersecting with time without present and time with present, which serves as a backdrop against which our personal or collective initiatives may then stand out.[35] Although in the article on initiative he refers us to the common characteristics with calendar time that form the link with the "poetic solution", its "conditions of intelligibility for initiative on the plane of the individual"[36] are more relevant. There he explains:

"These are the four phases traversed by the analysis of initiative: first, I *can* (potentiality, power, ability); second, I *act* (my being is my doing); third, I *intervene* (I inscribe my act within the course of the world: the present and the instant coincide); fourth, I keep my promises (I continue to act, I persevere, I *endure*)."[37]

These categories of *action*, of doing and not of seeing lead us to what will be the ontology of the capable human being in *Oneself as Another*.

This formulation emphasizes the primacy of potentiality, which refers us to the action that is inserted and intervenes in the world. In this way, the living present coincides with the instant. Finally, there remains the promise, which, in our opinion, is a point of intersection between the project of *Time and Narrative* and *Oneself as Another*. In both, promise opens the space to the ethical plane by linking the present with the future. *Time and Narrative*, however, introduces the problematic of the historical present and articulates tradition with the horizon of expectation.[38] In "Initiative," on the other hand, it is restricted to the ethical dimension, like in *Oneself as Another*. Anticipating the epistemological logic of fidelity of the testimony linked to the anthropology of the capable human being, he declares that "being faithful to one's word thus becomes a guarantee that the beginning will have a sequel."[39]

## III. Ontological updating from Aristotle's practical philosophy

In his "Intellectual autobiography of Paul Ricœur," it is argued that the ontology of actuality and potentiality had not been sufficiently treated by contemporary interpretations, referring above all to post-Heideggerian authors.[40] It is not surprising, then, that, when it came to a conceptual reorganization of this ontology, he referred to Heidegger's work. We believe that if in *Time and Narrative* Ricœur did not rely on Aristotelian ethics as a path for his ontological development, it was because at that time the works of Franco Volpi, Rémi Brague, Jacques Taminiaux, even Gadamer, which were fundamental to articulate Aristotle's ethics with

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[35] Ricœur, "Initiative," 213.

[36] *Ibid.*, 215.

[37] *Ibid.*, 217.

[38] Ricœur, *Time and Narrative III*, 230.

[39] Ricœur, "Initiative," 217.

[40] Ricœur, "Intellectual autobiography of Paul Ricœur," 53.

*Being and Time*, had not yet been published.[41] Drawing on these works Ricœur takes up his intuitions from *The Rule of Metaphor*, in the second section of the tenth study of *Oneself as Another*, "Selfhood and Ontology."

Ricœur agrees with several interpreters about the difficulties in the characterization of actuality and potentiality, including their circular definition, the primacy of actuality over potentiality, the reliance on human activities for the whole of ontology and the lack of any articulation between the different fields involved. In order to rework Aristotle's ontology, Ricœur incorporates into this set a little discussed quotation from *Metaphysics* (1048b18-36). In this text, the Stagirite pointed out that, unlike movement, action occurs together with the end: one continues to live well when one has already lived well, or one continues to be happy when one has been happy. In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricœur resorted to this fragment to justify his first interpretation of the meaning of the Aristotelian expression that "to set before the eyes" is "to signify things in actuality," that is, to reduce the things of the world to actions.[42] In *Oneself as Another*, following Brague, Ricœur relies on verb tenses as a grammatical criterion to distinguish action from movement[43].

Olivier Mongin considers that, in the subsequent reorganization of Aristotle, which will give rise to his concept "ground of being, at once potentiality and actuality," Ricœur manifests his distance from his differences with Heidegger and his affinity with Spinoza.[44] We consider it necessary to qualify Mongin's hypothesis. It is true that in several passages of this work, Ricœur expresses his differences with the German philosopher, in matters such as the association of selfhood with being-for-death,[45] the absence to the treatment of the flesh[46] or his demoralisation of conscience.[47] All these differences, however, are presented based on a fundamental agreement with the German philosopher. As Ricœur himself puts it, "by using the Heideggerian reappropriation of Aristotle."[48] We believe that by comparing his "attempted reconstruction" of Aristotle's work with that of Volpi and Brague, both interpreters who also rely on existential analytics,[49] we will see the common Heideggerian inspiration that exists between them, as well as the point at which they diverge.

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[41] The works to which Ricœur refers in study X of the *Oneself as another* are: Franco Volpi, *Heidegger e Aristotele* (Padova: Daphne, 1984), Rémi Brague, *Aristote et la question du monde* (Paris: PUF, 1988). In addition to these texts, Ricœur dwells on the considerations of Jacques Taminiaux, *Lectures de l'ontologie fondamentale. Essais sur Heidegger* (Grenoble: Jérome Millon, 1989) and H. G. Gadamer, *Heidegger's Way* (New York: SUNY, 1994) and "Erinnerungen an Heideggers Anfänge," *Dilthey-Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften*, vol. 4, 1986.

[42] Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 364.

[43] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another,* 314.

[44] Mongin, *Paul Ricœur,* 187.

[45] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another,* 123–24.

[46] *Ibid.*, 322.

[47] *Ibid.*, 351.

[48] *Ibid.*, 311.

[49] *Ibid.*, 308 et seq.

Analogous to Ricœur, Volpi takes *care* as a starting point the ontologization of Aristotelian ethics.[50] As in *Time and Narrative*, the Italian interpreter justifies the capacity of this existential to make a practical imprint on all existential analytics, as opposed to the theoretical attitude of Cartesianism. At this point, Ricœur distances himself from Volpi's strategy of unifying the theoretical, practical and poietical attitudes and then subordinating them to the category of praxis. Ricœur argues against this interpretation on the grounds that Aristotle is closer to the maintenance of plurality, which is manifested in the expression "analogical unity of action,"[51] than to the imposition of a unitary principle. He also criticizes Volpi for assigning to praxis a function that does not correspond to it. This objection is striking when one considers the central role played by the Heideggerian concept of attestation, associated with praxis in Volpi's interpretation, which establishes a difference of modes of being, between Dasein and Being-Present, analogous to that which Ricœur postulates between Selfhood and Sameness… The problem with this unification is that the power of doing, decentered in the world of *poiesis* and associated with care, would end up subordinated and limited by the structure centered and closed in Dasein's temporality. As Ricœur explains:

> "if *energeia-dunamis* were simply another way of saying *praxis* (or, worse, of extrapolating in a metaphysical manner some craftsmanship model of action), the lesson of ontology would have no bearing; it is instead to the extent that *energeia-dunamis* irrigates fields of application other than human action that its fecundity becomes manifest. […] What is essential is the *decentering* itself — both upward and downward in Aristotle — thanks to which *energeia-dunamis* points toward a ground of being, at once potentiality and actuality against which human action stands out."[52]

Ricœur appreciates Brague's interpretation of the Aristotelian concept of actuality in terms of being-in-the-world. He explains further that the correlation between the self and being-in-the-world is presupposed in his hermeneutics from the moment when, in order to answer the question of who, it is necessary to make a detour through the question of what and why.[53] This interpretation involves a great deal of reconstruction work, having in mind that being-in-the-world is not an Aristotelian category, and Ricœur does not share the way in which Brague establishes the articulation between the self and the world. On the side of the self, the relevance given to the being affected by the state of mind is understandable, since it is the defining factor of openness. This, however, blurs the relevance of human initiative and his discovering function. The problem of emphasizing the affected being over the other existentials implies the prioritization of the present in the articulation of the self with the world. The association of facticity with presence leads to an emphasis on the present, thus undermining the primacy that Ricœur gives to potentiality in his reflections on initiative, and which he transposes in his expression "ground of being, at once potentiality and actuality": "But by placing the main emphasis on the 'always already' and on the impossibility of getting away from this tie of presence — in short, on facticity — does one not

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[50] Volpi, *Heidegger e Aristotele*, 100.

[51] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 310.

[52] *Ibid.*, 308.

[53] *Ibid.*, 311.

diminish the dimension of *energeia* and of *dunamis* by virtue of which human *acting* and *suffering* are rooted in being?"[54] By linking his interpretation of Aristotle to the Spinozian *conatus*, Ricœur believes that he succeeds in overcoming several of the difficulties pointed out in post-Heideggerian readings. In the first place, the Spinozian *cogito* does not have the value of foundation that it had for René Descartes but is a figure of second rank before the infinite substance.[55] In this way, the distance between the self and the world is diluted, making the tension between the central character of action and the decentering and irrigation towards other fields of application less problematic.[56] This dependence of the self on things also leads Ricœur to emphasize that Spinozian self-consciousness is not the starting point of reflection, but the product of a long detour.[57] Third, *conatus* emphasizes the effort to persevere in being,[58] akin to the vitality that Ricœur contrasts with the Heideggerian concept of death as the *ownmost authentic possibility*. Finally, potentiality in the sense of productivity is not opposed to its realization, but, like the quotation from *Metaphysics* (1048b18-35), Spinoza's concept of the *essentia actuosa*, the *acting energy*,[59] articulates human action and world in a manner analogous to Aristotle's presentation of movement and actuality together.

 *Memory, History, Forgetting* applies the ontology of actuality and potentiality to the field of the philosophy of history and time, even though it abandoned part of the conceptualization of *Oneself as Another*. In our opinion, in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, this intention is most manifest in Ricœur's treatment of the Augustinian concept of time. In this analysis, the relevance that the *vestigia*, images-traces of the past, had had in *Time and Narrative* is blurred. The reason given is that what was fundamental for Augustine was not the presence of traces but the pastness of the past things and the futurity of the future things.[60] Ricœur acknowledges that "Augustine must not be asked to solve a problem that is not his."[61]  However, the basis of this reworking of the Augustinian experience of time is the rejection of the negative consequences of the "metaphysics of presence" associated with the substantialist ontology assumed in Augustine's emphasis on the trace. Indeed, although the primacy of the present blurs some of the relevance that *distentio* would otherwise have had, which would have led to a temporal dispersion, in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Ricœur considers much more relevant the Levinasian warning that the privileging of presence, even that of practical manipulation, reduces the other to the same, which means subsuming it to the identity of the self.[62] The alternative proposed by Ricœur is to refer us to his "more polysemic reading of the notion of the present,"[63] in which he moves from the conceptualization of the present as a theoretical category of *seeing* to the dimension of *doing* of the above-mentioned initiative.

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[54] *Ibid.*, 315.

[55] *Ibid.*, 10.

[56] *Ibid.*, 308.

[57] *Ibid.*, 317.

[58] *Ibid.*, 316.

[59] *Ibid.*, 315, note 21.

[60] Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 352.

[61] *Ibid.*, 353.

[62] *Ibid.*, 360.

[63] *Ibid.*, 353.

In order to overcome the aporia of temporality and the difficulties just mentioned, Ricœur proposes a Heideggerian-inspired temporal analysis. This implies a change of attitude with respect to the reception of the existential analytic in *Time and Narrative*, where Ricœur objected to Heidegger's approach but did not carry out a conceptual reorganization. Let us recall that Heidegger's temporal analysis is structured on several levels, a product of the above-mentioned process of reduction, the hierarchization of temporality, and the leveling off. The first section of the published part of *Being and Time* concluded with the analysis of care as being of Dasein. As we pointed out in the previous section, the discovery of temporality as the meaning of Dasein's being was achieved through a kind of reduction through the anguished being-towards-death. In turn, within-timeness and historicity were derived from temporality. The status of both temporal manifestations is not entirely clear. In some contexts, Heidegger sustains their co-primordiality with temporality, and in others they are presented as derived phenomena. Finally, we find the levelling out of all temporal manifestations as a product of the fall. Among these we find the "ordinary" concept of time, which was presented in *Time and Narrative* as the cosmological counterpart in the Heideggerian manifestation of the aporetics of time.

In his presentation of temporality, Ricœur flattens the hierarchical structure, since, as he acknowledged in *Oneself as Another*, he is "not too quick to unify the field of human experience from on high."[64] The first step in this horizontalization is to place temporality and care on the same level, based on the Spinozian definition of time as the "continuation of existence."[65] Transposing this definition into a Heideggerian vocabulary we have that "care is temporal and time is the time of care."[66] Thus, care ceases to be based on temporality, and temporality, historicity and intratemporality remain on the same level. Let us recall that, according to Ricœur the question of the cohesion of life only makes sense by linking it to care. Within-timeness, for its part, is the time of concern for the things of the world. Next, Ricœur abandons the previously objected-to Heideggerian concept of authenticity, associated with the German philosopher's personal conception of being-towards-death. In his opinion, this presumed mode of being of Dasein not only leads to solipsism but impedes the dialogue between philosophy and history. Therefore, instead of conceiving of the human being as a being-towards-death, he prefers the vitality of the Spinozian *conatus*. The association he makes in "Initiative" between doing and being born[67] reappears in Hannah Arendt's defense of natality.[68]

This brings us back to the aporetic relation between phenomenological and cosmological concept of time, instantiated in Heidegger's case by the contrast between within-timeness and the time of the nows. Let us recall that already in *Time and Narrative* Ricœur had objected to Heidegger for assuming that the time of nows was within within-timeness and could not be conceived as the product of levelling. Consequently, the fact that Ricœur had abandoned being-towards-death had no bearing on the relation between the two concepts of time. However, from the article "The mark of the past" onwards, Ricœur proposes the incorporation of the time of the world into the scanning

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[64] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 312.

[65] Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting,* 6.

[66] *Ibid.*, 346.

[67] Ricœur, "Initiative," 215.

[68] Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting,* 357.

of phenomenological time and, without giving further explanation, points out that there are features such as datability that allow such incorporation.[69] From his explanation in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, we can assume that for Ricœur such an incorporation is possible because concern and temporality were placed on a same level. Indeed, in his analysis of within-timeness, he argues that it is absurd to conceive of an infinite series of abstract nows. In his opinion, "'saying-now' sums up, tacitly, the discourse of concern."[70] It remains, however, unjustified how the irreversibility of time can be conceived from within-timeness.

## IV.     Conclusion

In contrast to a phenomenological tradition that emphasized the theoretical component of the subject, Ricœur always valued praxis. His analyses of Aristotle's rhetoric and poetics in *The Rule of Metaphor* made it clear that his interest was not restricted simply to literary issues but was fundamentally ontological. His considerations on metaphor gave way to a glimpse of the possibility of a re-actualisation of the Aristotelian ontology of actuality and potentiality, and, thanks to it, to explain the interaction of the human being with reality.

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricœur pointed to the existence of an aporia between a cosmological and a phenomenological conception of time. The philosopher found no speculative answer to it and proposed a poetic solution as an alternative path. Our analysis of Augustine's and Aristotle's conception of time showed that the opposition was not only temporal, but also ontological. Augustine's vocabulary was based on a substantialist conceptualization, while Aristotle's was linked to actuality and potentiality. This association reinforced Heidegger's observations about the link between substantialist ontology and the present. Consequently, the poetic solution proposed in the third volume was not only proposed for the aporetics of temporality but also for the aporetics between a substantialist ontology and another of actuality and potentiality. In that sense, we pointed out that this solution is consistent with the sympathy he had for the plurality that Aristotle had sought to defend.[71]

The publications of various Heideggerian interpretations of Aristotelian ethics opened for Ricœur a new space of ontological exploration in *Oneself as Another*. From Volpi's association between care and praxis, Ricœur was able to develop an ontology of actuality and potentiality that would allow the link between the human being and the world, without either phenomenon taking precedence over the other. The problem remained that if the articulation between being-in and the world was based on the present, as Brague proposed, potentiality would lose the ontological relevance that Ricœur claimed. To overcome this difficulty Ricœur articulated this Heideggerian reworking of Aristotle with the idea of the Spinozian *conatus* that, in his opinion, emphasized the potentiality of the human being.

In *Memory, History, Forgetting* Ricœur develops his own Heideggerian-inspired temporal ontology, which managed to resolve in a speculative way the aporetics of *Time and Narrative*. The

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[69] Paul Ricœur, "La marque du passé," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, vol. 1 (1998), 16, note 2.

[70] Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting,* 383.

[71] Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 312.

characterization and objections he had about *Being and Time* were like those he had in *Time and Narrative*. In the reading of both works we could find the critique of the recourse to authenticity as a way of accessing temporality, or the fact that he presented within-timeness and historicity as the result of a process of derivation from temporality and not as co-primordial to the latter. It was only thanks to the conceptual reorganization implied by the introduction of the Spinozian *conatus* that Ricœur was able to simplify the Heideggerian hierarchical structure and to "solve speculatively" the aporetics of time thanks to an ontology of actuality and potentiality.

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