

## Otherness and Singularity in Ricœur's Hermeneutics of Works of Art

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### Abstract:

This article is divided into two parts. In the first one, we will ask what place Ricœur reserves for art works (particularly figurative) within his philosophical path. We will try to show how this issue is only apparently minor and unimportant. In fact, the language of figurative art, *totally other* than the conceptual/argumentative language of the *logos*, is that which more than any other experience can allow philosophy to reflect on otherness, and to discover 'itself as another.' In the second part, starting with this acquisition, we will ask ourselves what constitutes the singularity of artistic language and the particular communication specific to works of art. This will allow us to circle back to the initial question and ask ourselves, therefore, what figurative language can teach philosophical communication and what the arts can offer philosophy.

*Keywords:* Ricœur, Arts, Singularity, Otherness, Hermeneutics.

### Résumé:

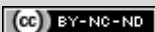
Cet article est divisé en deux parties. Dans la première partie nous nous demandons quelle place Ricœur réserve aux œuvres d'art (notamment à l'art figuratif) dans son parcours philosophique. Nous montrons comment ce sujet est seulement en apparence mineur et sans importance dans l'œuvre du philosophe. Le langage de l'art figuratif, en effet, dans la mesure où il est totalement *autre* par rapport au langage conceptuel/argumentatif du *logos*, est ce qui, plus que toute autre expérience, peut permettre à la philosophie de réfléchir sur l'altérité, et au "soi" de se découvrir "comme un autre." Dans la seconde partie, en partant de ce constat, nous nous demandons ce qui constitue la singularité du langage artistique et la particularité de la communication spécifique des œuvres d'art. Cette approche nous permet alors de revenir à notre question initiale et de nous demander ce que le langage figuratif peut enseigner à la communication philosophique et ce que les arts peuvent offrir à la philosophie.

*Mots-clés:* Ricœur, arts, singularité, altérité, herméneutique.

Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies, Vol 7, No 2 (2016), pp. 74-93

ISSN 2156-7808 (online) DOI 10.5195/errs.2016.358

<http://ricoeur.pitt.edu>



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# Otherness and Singularity in Ricœur's Hermeneutics of Works of Art

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This article is divided in two parts. In the first one, of a more introductory nature, we will ask what place Ricœur reserves for works of art (particularly figurative) within his philosophical path. We will try to show how this issue is only apparently minor and unimportant, because, in truth, in this 'dialogue' between the conceptual work (philosophical) and the work of the image (artistic) is hidden one of the most significant experiences of Ricœur's dialogic hermeneutics. The language of figurative art, in fact, *totally other* than the conceptual/argumentative language of the *logos*, is that which more than any other experience can allow philosophy to reflect on otherness, and to discover 'itself as another.'

In the second part, starting with this acquisition, we will ask ourselves what constitutes the singularity of artistic language and the particular communication specific to works of art. We will see, with Ricœur, how this particularity lies in the ability of the painter (and the work) to speak one to one (from the creator to the user), through the experience of "emotional contagion." This will allow us to circle back to the initial question and ask ourselves, therefore, what figurative language can teach philosophical communication and what the arts can offer philosophy.

The final answer will again be twofold. On the one hand, we will indicate in the continuation of the dialogue between the *Iipse* of philosophy and the *Otherness* of works of art, one of the legacies of Ricœurian hermeneutics; on the other hand, we will ask if *one to one communication* could not be and become an effective strategy for the philosophical word and writing.

## Art as the 'Other' of Philosophy

What place does Ricœur reserve for art works (especially figurative) in his philosophical path? If we were to respond by considering the number of books or pages that the philosopher devotes to the issue, we could only say that it is an insignificant place. There is no monograph, but only a few occasional articles, and some interviews specifically on the subject.

Certainly, the theme of the image (and imagination) is not extraneous to Ricœur's path<sup>1</sup> and also a general discussion on works of art emerges in different places in his texts, especially when he deals with the metaphor and narrative.<sup>2</sup> However, it remains a matter to ponder: in view of the specific attention given to other languages, disciplines, and experiences, his examination of the value of works of art appears to remain in the shadows; as well as in view of the many specific analyses of texts on the philosophical and literary tradition, for the most part Ricœur rarely made specific hermeneutical analyses of paintings. So much so that, to paraphrase what

George Taylor said on the theme of imagination, we could say: it remains somewhat enigmatic that Ricœur did not himself publish a volume more directly on Art.<sup>3</sup>

On this issue, Saulius Geniusas recently wrote an essay (*Against the Sartrean Background Ricœur's Lectures on Imagination*),<sup>4</sup> in which he also analyzed Ricœur's still unpublished *Lectures on Imagination* (Chicago: 1975).<sup>5</sup> In these *Lectures*, we can find some examples taken from the history of painting. However, Geniusas himself had to admit that

nonetheless, one cannot overlook that Ricœur presents his phenomenology of painting in a severely underdeveloped form. What we came across in the *Lectures* is nothing more than a set of references coupled with underdeveloped insights, which, regrettably, are not articulated in any greater detail anywhere else.<sup>6</sup>

Why then should we wonder about Ricœur and figurative art? And is it true that art occupies a secondary and marginal role within Ricœurian hermeneutics? Let us try to start answering by returning to an obvious exception to what we have just said: Rembrandt. Ricœur devotes, for example, a few pages to a self-portrait of the Dutch painter, from 1660. It becomes an opportunity for reflection, not only on this type of pictorial genre, but also on the very possibility of portraying 'oneself.' The essay, entitled *Sur un auto-portrait de Rembrandt*<sup>7</sup> is now in Vol. 3 of *Lectures*. For our purposes, however, even more interesting are the observations which Ricœur makes on another work by Rembrandt: *Aristote contemplant un buste d'Homère* (1653). The analysis can be found in *Le philosophe, le poète et le politique*, an interview with Edmond Blatthen, later published in the small volume *L'unique et le singulier*.<sup>8</sup> What is striking is not only the technical or hermeneutic interpretation of the painting, but Ricœur's explicit declaration: "This is the symbol of the philosophic endeavor, as I perceive it."<sup>9</sup> Why? – we may ask. Because, on the one hand, we see 'the philosopher' *par excellence* (Aristotle) and, on the other hand, we have 'the poet' *par excellence* (Homer). Rembrandt, then, shows us an ideal dialogue between philosophy and poetry. However, here the term poetry should be understood in a broad sense. In fact, shortly after Ricœur says, "I extend the term 'poetic' beyond the meaning of rhyme and rhythm, to the sense of the production of meaning, [...] of energy that creates innovation."<sup>10</sup>

Here, then, Homer is the symbol of the work of art in general; he is the symbol of a language that "creates meaning," as a "creative, primitive, original and originating energy,"<sup>11</sup> according to Ricœur's words. Heidegger would say that here 'poetry' is *poiesis* meant as 'creation' in the broadest sense of the word. So, we have Aristotle (that is Ricœur) that 'touches' the bust of Homer (that is the 'arts'). In this painting, then, we have the iconic representation of the relationship that, according to Ricœur, there is and there should be between arts and philosophy.

This is doubly interesting: first, because as a symbol of his '*entreprise philosophique*' Ricœur chooses a painting. Second, because this painting shows us how 'his' dialogue with the poetics of the arts was central in Ricœur's self-interpretation. In short, Ricœur does not choose the image of a philosopher in contemplation of the heavens or absorbed in solitary meditations; he does not even choose the image of a thinker who reads, in a dialogue with the history of philosophy or the history of literature; nor does he show the philosopher in a dialogue with the sciences, or with psychoanalysis. Instead, he chooses the image of a thinker who 'touches' a poet, touches a creator of images and meanings. This is not a random choice, nor even a mere suggestive allusion, because then Ricœur continues in his explanation and he tells us, "the

philosopher does not begin from nothing. And, moreover, he does not begin from the philosophy; he begins from Poetry."<sup>12</sup> So, in some ways, *poiesis* (i.e. art) comes 'before' philosophy. Why so? Because – as Ricœur taught us –<sup>13</sup> philosophy begins from the pre-philosophical, from the a-philosophical, from what is 'other' from philosophy itself.

Paraphrasing a famous Latin expression (*primum vivere deinde philosophari*) we might say: first there is life, then comes philosophy to interpret it; first there is experience, then conceptualization.

The arts (as we will demonstrate in the second part) are closer to life and experience, because they do not 'communicate' through conceptual language (as philosophy does), but 'communicate' through images and emotions. However, beyond this anticipation, Ricœur's quote is clear: art has priority over philosophy. If philosophy is 'superior' in its 'living' interpretative capacity ("the poet is immortalized in marble, while the philosopher is alive, that is always continues to interpret"),<sup>14</sup> nevertheless, art is 'superior' in its creation of meaning.

This means that it is first necessary that there be a creative energy of innovation, in order then to achieve a second level of communication. [...] Philosophy is reflective, it is always work on a second degree.<sup>15</sup>

In this sense, if we are allowed to make a pun, we can say that in Ricœur there is no longer a '*philosophia prima*,' because the essence of philosophy is to be 'second,' reflexive: with a second level of language and work on a second degree. Without the 'first' that precedes it and 'gives' it something to think about, philosophy would lose its meaning. Therefore, philosophy needs the pre-philosophical and the pre-conceptual.

I would like to try to express this idea in even more stringent terms, to borrow the expression from one of Ricœur's most famous texts: *Oneself as Another*.<sup>16</sup> So, I would say this: without its 'otherness,' philosophy would not be itself. Philosophy becomes what it is because of *all that is 'other'* than philosophy itself. The other of philosophy (the pre-philosophical and a-philosophical) is that from which philosophy is born, it is that to which it is prone and from which it returns, and it is the inevitable reference point in the constitution of its identity. When we say 'oneself as another' in 'as' we denote precisely this: that without the relationship with otherness no selfhood is possible. In the same way, without the relationship with what is 'other' than philosophy, there would be no philosophy.

*Oneself as Another*, then, is not only the title of the most famous book by Ricœur, but perhaps it is also the key to his hermeneutical philosophy, i.e. the root and the meaning of his interpretative and dialogic philosophy. It is no coincidence that many interpreters have called him "the philosopher of all the dialogues."<sup>17</sup> His philosophy as a matter of principle is dialogue: with the history of philosophy, of course, but also with the sciences (the humanities and the natural sciences). His philosophy, as a matter of principle, is dialogue with 'otherness.' And all of this is possible (and necessary) in Ricœur's view, because – we could say – philosophy is *oneself as another*, it is a dialogue with what is different from itself.

Just as each of us would not be himself without the internal dialogue with the otherness that inhabits us (and that we ourselves are... as another,) just as each of us would not be himself without the dialogue (conscious or unconscious, verbal or non-verbal) that we have always *been*,

from the moment we are born until the last moment of our life (a dialogue with those around us, with the 'you,' with 'everyone,' with friends and with enemies, with the books we read and with the symbols of the stories: the story that we live),<sup>18</sup> so it also is for philosophy, which would not be itself, if it were not in internal dialogue with its own history, but also in dialogue with all that philosophy is not.

The Rembrandt painting, in Ricœur's interpretation, reminds us of this. "Philosophy is always a second degree labor, [...] a second level of discourse."<sup>19</sup> The work of interpretation (of *logos*, so to speak) always arises from something that precedes it: i.e., "ordinary language, that of the sciences, psychoanalysis, poetic discourse."<sup>20</sup> This is what Ricœur did throughout his whole life, multiplying the *others*, multiplying the discourses, languages, disciplines with which he chose to enter into dialogue; to enrich – in this mediation – philosophy itself and to generate it.

Now, given all this, the question with which we began becomes even more complex, so much so as to present us with a paradox. Indeed, if what we have said is true (if Rembrandt's painting is, for Ricœur, the symbol of philosophy itself), then Ricœurian philosophy should have poetic language, or at least the language of art in general, as its privileged partner (as its privileged 'other').

Instead, on the contrary, as we said at the beginning, Ricœur does not speak in a systematic and clear way of his relationship with the poetic and the artistic. To understand it – i.e. to understand what is, *de facto*, in any case, a key to decisive self-interpretation (precisely as the choice of this painting by Rembrandt shows) – we have to dig into the folds of the unspoken Ricœur. In short, we have to look for the theme of the relationship between philosophy and art in scattered quotations and various interviews.

Even Francois Azouvi and Marc de Launay in the final chapter of their *Conversations with Ricœur (Critique and Conviction)* open the discussion in this way:

In your life, art has always held a prominent place; you regularly go to museums, you listen to a wide range of music. However, in your work, this dimension of human experience is singularly lacking, if we set aside your analyses of literature.<sup>21</sup>

Why? Probably the reason is to be found in the choice of what Ricœur called "the long road" of interpretation. As we know, from the end of the '60s Ricœur chooses to distance himself from the ontology of understanding typical of Heidegger (and, in some ways, even Gadamer), because he considers it to be the "short road" of hermeneutics: this not only for its methodological style of working without mediation, but also for its avoidance of the strenuous work of the epistemology of interpretation.<sup>22</sup> Ricœur's goal is to mend, in the *interpretive arc theory*, the scope of understanding and that of explanation, which, somehow, after Dilthey was interrupted<sup>23</sup>. Obviously, this also means not favoring 'only' the dynamics and the experiences that have been at the center of the short road of understanding, but really opening up to 'all' possible dialogues. Ricœur's shift of hermeneutic attention onto the theory of the text and action is thus simultaneously a deliberate distancing from the horizons which were, instead, investigated by Heidegger and Gadamer. To be more precise, Heidegger can put the relationship between philosophy and poetry (or between truth and works of art) at the center of his ontology, because it remains within the short road of understanding and a certain anti-epistemological way

of understanding hermeneutics. The same applies to Gadamer, who can favor the ontology of the game and the work of art because he seeks an extra-methodological path of truth. Ricœur, however, made a precise choice of field and, therefore, cannot favor, within his hermeneutic analysis, the aesthetic or poetic experience. To the extent that he delivered to himself (and us) the warning, "explain more to understand better," he inevitably had to follow the path of interpretation of these 'signs' that more than others allow for the evident and strong application of the theory of the hermeneutical arc: and so, the text, the action, the narrative and then the Self.

In short, it is also, and above all, to clarify his distance from Heidegger and Gadamer that Ricœur does not work directly, solely, specifically on the artistic and poetic experience. This means neither that he is not interested in the aesthetic dimension nor that he does not consider it decisive from the experiential point of view. It just means that from the point of view of his own intellectual journey, Ricœur did not consider writing about art to be a priority.

On the other hand, we have a very clear *analogon* in the choice that Ricœur makes at a certain point in his career: that of not writing (any more) a book on the *Poetics of Transcendence*. As we know, the great undertaking of *Philosophie de la volonté* remains an interrupted project. The first volume (1950) and the second (1960), should have been followed by a third: *Poetics of the Will*.<sup>24</sup> However, this volume was never published and Ricœur never wrote this Poetics in its intended form.<sup>25</sup>

Quant à la poétique de la Transcendance, je ne l'ai jamais écrite, si l'on attend sous ce titre quelque chose comme une philosophie de la religion, à défaut d'une philosophie théologique; mon souci, jamais atténué, de ne pas mêler les genres m'a plutôt rapproché de la conception d'une philosophie sans absolu. [...] Je ne dirais pourtant pas que rien n'a été réalisé de ce que j'appelais alors une poétique. *La symbolique du mal, La métaphore vive, Temps et récit*, se réclament à plusieurs égards d'une poétique.<sup>26</sup>

Ricœur never wrote a Poetics (in the strict sense of the term), despite having always maintained this ideal tension in his path, a tension which is particularly evident in his later writings. Similarly, for the same reasons, he never wrote an aesthetics, despite his awareness of the intimate, primordial dialogue that his philosophy had with the ambit of the 'creation' and the image. However, we can say, this ideal tension (in the relationship between conceptual language and the language of the image) is strongly present throughout his path, and resurfaces with greater freedom in his final years.

In the same way that, more and more clearly, starting in the late '60s, he distinguishes the pole of 'conviction' from that of 'critique,' so too, perhaps (we can assume), Ricœur distinguishes artistic experience from the strictly epistemological. Just as he decides to 'keep separated'<sup>27</sup> the ambit of religion from that of the philosophical, to be able to move more freely in both (for the first area, as a man of faith; for the second, as a professional philosopher), in the same way, he seems to separate the area of the hermeneutic from that of the aesthetic, initiating – taking the liberty to paraphrase – almost a 'prohibition' (*interdit de séjour*) against art in philosophy, specifically to escape the risks and limits of the 'short' ontology of understanding.

However, not surprisingly, as in Ricœur's last work (freed from the fear of confusing areas), he returns to work on issues on the border between 'conviction' and 'critique' (the



religious and the philosophical); he also returns with more freedom in some essays and interviews to work on the border between hermeneutics and aesthetics. It is no coincidence, in this sense, that *Critique and Conviction* ends with a chapter entitled *Aesthetic Experience*, in which an analysis on the work of art and mystical-religious observations are interwoven.<sup>28</sup>

So, summing up conclusively this first point, we can say that: on the one hand, from Ricœur's point of view, the most intimate otherness of philosophy is precisely Poetics and Art in the broadest sense, while, on the other hand, the fact remains that, in order not to risk a certain romanticism and aestheticism and to distance himself decisively from the 'short route' of Heidegger, Ricœur does not thematize an aesthetic discourse exclusively or centrally. Rather, paradoxically (as he does for specifically religious issues), he almost hides this original and intimate dialogue with the arts. He does not explicate it, advertise it, nor externalize it. So much so, that Ricœur – as we said already – never dedicated a Monograph to poetry, let alone art.

This is also the reason why, still today, there is no systematic reflection on Ricœur and the hermeneutics of art. However, art and poetics in general are and remain fundamental keys (hidden, concealed, yet decisive) in Ricœurian thought.

How, then, can we approach this subject? It is inevitable that we will take as 'sources' the few places in his texts in which Ricœur, in his later years, more directly addresses the experience of the work of art, which are, besides *L'unique et le singulier* with which we began, two interviews conducted in 1995 and in 1996 respectively. We have already mentioned the first, *Aesthetic Experience in Critique and Conviction*; the second is, *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics. Interview with Paul Ricœur. Conducted by Jean-Marie Brohm and Magali Uhl*.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, no scholar has thus far written on Ricœur's hermeneutics of art, linking the content of these two interviews.

If you read these pages carefully, you quickly understand that there are many issues at play. It would be impossible to address them all in the space of an essay. We will limit ourselves, therefore, to addressing the heart of the matter, wondering, then, how and why, according to Ricœur, art is 'other' than philosophy, and what constitutes, in short, the singularity of artistic language and the particular form of communication inherent to artwork?

## The Language of the Work of Art: from Emotional Singularity to Communicative Universality

We can anticipate the response that we will later verify: art is 'other' than philosophy because it does not tell about the world through representations and concepts, but by iconizing emotional experiences. Art can do this because (while aiming for communication and, thus, transmitting something 'universally') the language of art moves on the level of 'singularity' (experienced and expressed by the individual artist and received by the individual user) and not at the abstract conceptual level.

Let us try to figure out how all this will play out in Ricœur's discourse. In our opinion, it is no coincidence that in *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics* Ricœur begins with Kant because in the *Critique of Judgment* Kant clearly addresses the relationship between the universal and the singular, from two different perspectives: the determinative judgment (which we may

say is characteristic of philosophical argumentation) and the reflective one, which instead is specific to the aesthetic experience.

I believe that to clarify the question and direct the answer, we must situate ourselves in the work of the Universal, because here we have a Universal that Kant, at the beginning of the third Critique, opposes to the Universal of the determinative judgment. This latter posits the rule, and experience is subsumed under it; the case is therefore placed under the rule. The inverse situation is in this sense exceptional and incredibly disconcerting (*déroutante*). It is the case of the aesthetic judgment; here all the judgments are singular, but precisely singular, not by way of subsumption, but by direct apprehension. [...] What continues to effect the force of the Kantian analysis is that there is nevertheless the universal. With all his might Kant resists the idea that one cannot discuss colors and tastes, which would isolate each of us in his pleasure, in his mood. Now, how can there be a universal? The great force of the Kantian solution is to have staked everything on the idea of *communicability*. Communicability is the modality of the universal without concepts.<sup>30</sup>

Ergo: Ricœur in his hermeneutics of the work of art enacts the same choice regarding the Cogito in *Oneself as Another*, hence rejecting both the way of objective and absolute substantiality and that of nihilistic dispersion.

While it is true that, after the artistic and philosophical experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we cannot 'substantialize' the idea of beauty and we can no longer believe that a work is universally 'beautiful' (in the sense of objectively beautiful for everyone), on the other hand, we must not give up 'thinking about' the question of beauty and we cannot relegate it to mere individualistic moodiness. Between *idem* and *anti-idem* there is the question of the beauty of a work of art, which is not reducible to an objective sameness (*idem*), but neither can it be dissolved into the nothingness of an in-significant relativism (*anti-idem*).

Thus, Ricœur returns to Kant. However, even in the aesthetic what he proposes is basically a post-Hegelian Kantianism. In fact, as we know, Ricœur often called himself a *post-Hegelian Kantian*: not because he was interested in the answers of Kant, but because he found the universalizing tension of the thinker (his attempt to hold the universal to the singular) to be interesting.<sup>31</sup> This is the hermeneutic heritage of Kant, according to Ricœur. This is the recovery that hermeneutics can make of Kantian tension, after Hegel, after historicism, after the risks of historical relativism. Ricœur calls it: "the post-Kantian benefit of a return to the Kantian aesthetic [...], the reconquest of the transhistorical over the historical constitutes."<sup>32</sup> We could also call it the recapturing of a universal/universalizing moment in the singular/individualizing moment. Of course, today we can no longer do this in Kantian terms, we can no longer think that there is a universal *beautiful*. Today less than ever. Who could say that 'Munch' or 'Picasso' are universally beautiful?

On the other hand, today we no longer have any illusions that classical art was universally beautiful. Just think of Aphrodite of Knidos (Praxiteles), which was rejected by its buyers, because it did not meet the criteria for beauty of its era. Classical beauty does not exist. It is a myth. However, Ricœur reminds us (learning it not only from Kant, but also from authors like Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, Gadamer) that a work of art has its own trans-historicity. It exceeds



its period, despite being created in its period (“the work of art escapes the history of its constitution.”) “The result here is in excess of its production.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, it can speak to every era, beyond its era. This is its first form of universality, universalizability: a work of art is universal (or at least can be universal) because *it speaks*, because *it communicates*, because it is communicable.

So, then Ricœur shifts the problem of the universality of the artwork to the aspect that interests him most, i.e. the language. We have someone/something that speaks (the artist, the artwork) and someone who sees, listens, reads, interprets, uses, receives. Just as a book is potentially addressed to “a temporally open and indefinite public,”<sup>34</sup> so is every work of art. However, what makes it possible for a work to be communicable? Ricœur responds with a term we could call typical of a certain French philosophy: *monstration*. “The fact that a work of art aims, beyond the intentionality of its author, and insofar as it is a work of art, to be shared, therefore first of all to be shown.”<sup>35</sup>

A work made to show itself, that is, to communicate, that is, to create sharing “between the creator and his public.”<sup>36</sup> This is evident in what Ricœur (with Henri Gouhier) calls the *arts of two times*:<sup>37</sup> “those where the existence of the work requires a second time, which is that of its recreation: theatrical representation, musical execution, choreographic realization beginning with the writing of a libretto, of a score, of a script.”<sup>38</sup>

It is clear that a work is made to be shown. There is no theater if not in front of a viewer. There is no concert if not in front of a listener. However, according to Ricœur, this also applies to those that Gouhier calls the *arts of one time*, (“those where the existence of the work coincides with its creation: painting and sculpture, for example”),<sup>39</sup> because, even in this case, what makes an artwork an artwork (and lets it continue to communicate beyond the limits of time) is its ability to re-create itself in those who come into contact with it. Indeed, ‘it is perhaps here, in this indefinite capacity to be reincarnated, and in a way each time historically different, but substantially and essentially founding, that the profound signified’ of a work of art emerges.<sup>40</sup>

It is ‘monstration’ (i. e.: showing itself in one time, but being potentially open to infinite reception in all times) that lays the foundation for the possibility of a work to communicate. So, what does ‘communication’ mean for Ricœur, when this term refers to works of art? Communication is nothing more than recreation, reincarnation, “*monstration* renewed endlessly:”<sup>41</sup> i.e. *interpretation*. This is clear, immediate, in the case of reading a book. Ricœur says: “each plot is singular and has exactly the status of the work of art according to Kant: the singularity capable of being shared.”<sup>42</sup> Each book, we might say, is *one and one hundred thousand*. Indeed, it is the whole of all interpretations that have been given to *that book* (Gadamer calls it ‘history of effects’). However each time ‘*that book*’ is ‘*my*’ book, because the story speaks *to me* and it tells *me* things it does not tell others. This is the core of Ricœurian hermeneutics: the aim of the interpretation is not so much, or only, to understand the work of art in itself (i.e. try to understand what the author meant, his language, his historical or psychological context), but *to understand oneself* in front of the work of art.

Here Ricœur recaptures a metaphor of Proust. Novels are like magnifying glasses that authors give to readers, so that they can look inside themselves and try to discover parts of themselves that, before reading that novel, were completely unknown.<sup>43</sup> However, this applies to every work of art, if we really encounter it, if the encounter really happens. In the same way that,

if I let myself be met by a person (if I let the person in front of me question who I am), after having met him/her, I am no longer the same (I may come out of it enriched, or wounded, but, in any case, he/she will have left a mark on me, I will be changed), in the same way, if the work of art speaks to me and if I let it talk, this encounter will change me. It is the process of reconfiguration; or, we can say, the self/other dialectics, which we spoke of at the beginning. Ricœur says: "as reader, I find myself only by losing myself."<sup>44</sup> It is the first moment: the distance from self, from the world; it is losing oneself in reading, losing oneself in the work of art, losing oneself in the other: because I want to listen, I want to try to understand what it has to tell me, I want to be enriched by its otherness.

Then there is the return to self, the reconfiguration. I close the book; the concert ends; I leave the museum; the dialogue with that person ends. What did he/she/it tell me, in this meeting? How have I been changed? How has my identity changed, thanks to that otherness? It is what Ricœur calls 'mimetic reconfiguration.' In the case of the work of art, "the creativity of the art consists, penetrating the word of everyday experience in order to rework it from inside."<sup>45</sup> However, this is clear, and, in any case, in our opinion the originality of Ricœur's discourse lies not so much, or only, in this. Gadamer spoke of this perhaps in a clearer and more original way. Let us return to the problem of singularity, because it is here, as we said, that Ricœur's argument plays on a particular and paradoxical level: perhaps questionable; but that, for this very reason, makes us think. In fact, at this point Ricœur turns to Kant, and tries to recover another of his questions. We could say: the one about genius. Why is every doodle not a work of art? What is the secret of an artwork? Why does one work of art speak to me, communicate to me, tell me something, and another does not?

Of course, we could move the conversation to the historical level again (Ricœur also does so and remembers: only looking to the past can we say with certainty that a work was a work of art; if it has exceeded its historical significance and continued to speak in later times). However, this is a question of art history, or of the history of art criticism. It is not a hermeneutic-existential question. The hermeneutic-existential question is instead: why does this work speak to me? The question is not trivial.

It is not only a challenge to the aesthetic-relativistic theory of taste. It is obvious and much too easy (more now than at the time of Kant) to say that there is not an objective beauty or pleasure, that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so *what I like* speaks to me. So, I like Magritte and Magritte speaks to me. Another person likes Bach and Bach speaks to him. A third party likes Godard and Godard speaks to her. This is certain and obvious. However, the question is: what makes a work (in its singularity, in its difference from all the other works) speak to me, in my singularity, in my difference from all the others, a difference that is not only of taste, but also of history, culture, world, origin? The question is decisive, in our opinion, because it touches (perhaps beyond what Ricœur himself realized) the heart of the hermeneutics theory. Indeed, it is the same question that I ask myself when I am with someone else. And I choose him: to have a dialogue, to interweave our stories, of friendship, of love, of sharing, of work, or even just to walk a stretch of road together: why does his/her singularity meet my singularity? Is an 'us' truly possible? Where does this sharing (communication, communion) begin and where does it lead? Even here, in our view, the work of art can become a hermeneutical model. So, we return to our question, which is only seemingly trivial. Why does this work speak to me? A question that

clearly supposes at least two others: why and how does a work of art speak? And: why and how do I listen to it, can I listen to it?

We have to start again from the discussion about the communication/communicability of the artwork. What is it? Ricœur links the term '*communicability*' with the term '*contagiousness*.' "Communicability is the modality of the universal without concepts; it is a matter of a powder train, of contagion (*de traînée de poudre, de contagion*) from one case to another."<sup>46</sup> It is a communicability, universality, linguisticity (so to speak) that is universal without being conceptual. We could say (following the suggestive metaphor of fire and contagion) that it moves on an emotional level. However, of course, Ricœur does not believe in the 'hysteria of the masses' and the contagion he speaks of is not unbridled pathos.

Let us stop this, though, for the moment: it is a communicability in which what is at play is not so much, and not only, the level of verbal communication, but the imaginative-affective level. It is a communicability in which what is at stake is not so much the conceptual level, as the iconic-emotional level. Embracing and reintroducing an insight of Heidegger's, Ricœur points out that our existence is affective (first of all, and more than reflexive) and the infinity of our emotions is varied with nuances often unknown to us, not yet explored. Our soul is like a musical instrument. We are like a 'musical instrument' that vibrates differently, depending on how it is *touched* and depending on the keys (or strings) which are lightly touched. It can be the melody of the world, of a particular event (happy or sad) that *plays* it. It can be the symphony of love or the screech of rage, of a struggle, of despair that makes it vibrate. However, even reading a book, listening to a poem, looking at a picture, or listening to a song can modulate the strings of our soul. "Although, at the limit, could not one say that to each piece of art there corresponds a *mood*? The work of art in effect is referred to an emotion which has disappeared as emotion, but which has been preserved as a work."<sup>47</sup>

This is the key of our question. The essence of a work of art consists in this: it preserves, concentrates an emotion in a work of art. It 'iconifies' it. As a symbol concentrates in itself several possible meanings, in the same way, a work of art concentrates in itself a possible universe of emotions. Of course, this applies to every word, to every experience, but, in the case of art – exactly because there are fewer words, there is less of a concept (there is more silence, less conceptual representation, more space for the *mood*) – there is a greater concentration of imaginative-emotional meaning.

So, we are ready to respond to our question: why does a work of art speak, how does it communicate? "The work expresses the word by iconizing the singular emotional relation of the artist to the word, which I have called the *mood*."<sup>48</sup> There is, at the beginning, the artist's singular emotional relationship with regard to the world. There is, says Ricœur, a "singular grasp" of reality, which is not related to whether a work of art is more or less similar to reality.

If [a work] deserves to figure today in our imaginary museum, it is because [...] its genuine object was not the fruit bowl or the face of the young girl in the turban but the singular grasp by Cézanne or Vermeer of the singular question posed to them.<sup>49</sup>

A work of art is a singular grasp (a singular emotional relationship) by the artist, a grasp of the singular question that is put to the artist in the expression of the world. What does this mean? An obvious example is Monet, and his water lilies.<sup>50</sup> Another example is Cézanne. Why

did Cézanne feel the need to make more than fifty copies of *Montagne Sainte-Victoire*? Is it not always the same mountain? No, it's never the same.

It is as if it were necessary for Cézanne to do justice to something that was not the idea of the mountain – not the terms we use in general discourse – but that represented the singularity of *this* mountain, here and now, [...] what insists on receiving the iconic augmentation the painter alone can confer upon it.<sup>51</sup>

The mountain does not exist as an idea, as a universal. There is only 'this' mountain 'here and now,' calling me, asking to be painted, asking to receive that emotional concentration (iconic increase) that only the painter can give it. There is no universal question, but a singular question that requires a singular response: from the singularity of the artist, in the singularity of this particular situation of time, space, atmosphere, and feeling.

The artist is the person who perceives (Ricœur says) this question, this appeal, this "urgency of an unpaid debt with respect to something singular that had to be said in a singular manner:"<sup>52</sup> and the artist 'says' it. The surprising thing is that *this singular* communicates *something universal*.

[The] naked experience as such was incommunicable; but, as soon as it can be problematized in the form of a singular question which is adequately answered in the form of a response that is singular as well, then it acquires communicability, it becomes universalizable.<sup>53</sup>

This is the wonderful strangeness, the amazing possibility of art. Experience (of the artist, but of every man, every one of us) is always naked experience. They are incommunicable, like each unique experience (mine only), like each individual emotion (mine only). How can I express it, how can I communicate it? The *other* will perceive it starting from himself (*as his* experience) and not *as I* live it, *as mine*. However, in every naked experience there is a question, there is an appeal, an urgency, a need, that is *to be said, communicated*. In every naked experience, I wish that this not be just mine, that it be shared, shareable. How is this possible? The mystery of art shows us a way. The painter (musician, filmmaker, poet, writer), with colors, lines, fullness and emptiness, silences and notes, moving images, metaphors and narratives, tries to concentrate his singular experience in a particular moment of his life and his story. He iconifies his emotional relationship with the world *here and now*. He renders the different aspects of this '*here and now*' "ever denser" and he "intensifies them in condensing them," in the same way that a symbol, or a metaphor does. He gathers a "polysemy,"<sup>54</sup> which is the infinite polysemy of experience, of life. "The work of art can have an effect comparable to that of metaphor: integrating levels of sense that are overlaid, preserved and contained together."<sup>55</sup>

Ordinary language, in his practice, in the wear and tear of use, in becoming a mere instrument of communication, often fails in communication. It fails precisely where what it would like to communicate is deeper and more intense. Indeed, it does not reach those depths. It remains in the superficiality of general communication; it remains in the general, in the generic. This generality (the ordinary conceptuality of language, in which each word corresponds to one thing), fails in expression, because it is not able to say, in the way art does, *this is a pipe*; this is

love; this is pain. It is not the same with the universality of art, which, instead, knows that experience is singular and is only concerned with communicating its own singularity.

No one can die for me. No one can live for me. No one can see this cathedral for me and paint it for me. I already know that my response to the appeal of this cathedral is singular, as my experience before it is sacred. Ricœur says, "Van Gogh's *Church at Auvers-sur-Oise* [...] does not represent the village church [...], but materializes in a visible work what remains invisible, namely the unique and probably crazed experience that van Gogh had of it when he painted it."<sup>56</sup> Therefore, it can speak, can communicate in depth: because it is not communicating an abstract and general concept (as ordinary, common language risks doing). It speaks one to one, as Kierkegaard would say. It "involves each time a spectator, a listener, a reader who is also in a relation of singularity with the singularity of the work."<sup>57</sup>

Every work of art is the experience of a singularity, speaks to a singularity. And, because of this, it says different things to each of us. But, exactly for this reason, because it speaks to the individual in his singularity, it can, in principle, speak to all individuals; "it is the first act of a communication of the work to others and, virtually, to all."<sup>58</sup> Then, you can apply the words of Zarathustra to each work of art: this is *a work for everyone and for no one*. Not for anyone who is unwilling to be reached, in his singularity, by the singularity of that work of art; but for all those who want to be touched and transformed by its otherness. "The work is like a trail of fire issuing from itself, reaching me and reaching beyond me to the universality of humanity."<sup>59</sup> It is the *powder train/contagion* of the communicability of the work mentioned earlier.

Here then is what the work of art does. "To follow the requirements of singularity to the end is to give the best chance of the greatest universality: such is the paradox that must probably be maintained."<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the more the artist will be 'that singularity,' the more the artist will not be affected by profit, by trade, by what is fashionable, the more the artist will perhaps be outdated, counter-current, but 'singular,' ready to tell (as only he knows how, and only he can) the urgency of what inside him asks to be told [...] the more his work will speak, will communicate its singularity; and the more it will communicate to the individual (to us in our singularity) universally. Indeed, experience, emotion, and life are singular; and even art. The opposite is not art, but a repetition of what has already been said, thought, communicated. And with this we can move on to our conclusions, knowing that they will only be open, broken, fragile and provisional conclusions, as Ricœur himself has taught us.

## Concluding Remarks: the Dialogue between Philosophy and Arts as a Mutual Gift

We started by asking what was the place of the work of art in Ricœur's path. On the one hand, we have noted how Ricœur 'iconizes' his relationship with art through an image (that of *Aristotle touching the Bust of Homer*) that clearly states the centrality of the relationship between art and philosophy, and, on the other hand, we have remembered how in Ricœur's texts the aesthetic issue is singularly absent, or at least not thematized in a central and monographic manner. We have proposed not so much a solution, but an interpretation of this paradox, linked to the path of Ricœur himself, a tortuous path, which proceeds "by returning, taking a step backwards"<sup>61</sup> and that in the 60s and 70s strongly chose the way of an 'epistemological' hermeneutics that



deliberately set aside those fields of experience that might be too close to the level of personal 'conviction' or individual/singular experience (as is the case with religious experience and, in a different and yet comparable way, as is the case with aesthetic experience). Ricœur needs to keep the spectrum of 'all' his dialogues wide, and (also to distance himself from decisions such as those of Heidegger and Gadamer, who value more than all others the central themes of the art work and poetry), he chooses not to tie his hermeneutics primarily to the artistic-poetic ambit. In the '90s, however, a certain distance from himself also allows Ricœur to return to those areas in the past perhaps insufficiently themed. It is the case of what he himself called 'the biblical exegesis exercises'; it is the case of the theme of Poetry, which will become 'symbol' of the experience of Love as opposed to that of Justice (compared instead to Prose);<sup>62</sup> it is the case of the aesthetic experience, which re-emerges in the pages of some essays and, especially, some interviews.

The first thing that we can conclusively ask ourselves, then, is if this 'legacy' of Ricœur still needs to be deepened and revitalized, if it is not possible today to evoke his insights and make his proposal for the hermeneutics of works of art more systematic, *ex post* applying all the instrumentation that he gave us in relationship, for example, to the hermeneutics of the text and narration. This would allow us to give a voice and depth to that dialogue between 'Aristotle' and 'Homer' that Ricœur iconized more than explained, intuited more than discussed. The second thing that we can ask conclusively is what, in Ricœur's view, art and philosophy can learn from each other?

As we said in our first paragraph, on the one hand, art comes 'first' with respect to philosophy, because art is closer to experience, existence, uniqueness and it communicates in an a-conceptual, emotional, iconic way. On the other hand, regarding the decisive possibility of verbal language and argumentation, philosophy comes 'first' before art; indeed verbal language and argumentation are proper to philosophy and foreign to the artistic experience. In *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, Ricœur says, "always remain in language this superiority, that it permits us to speak about music"<sup>63</sup> and about arts. The arts, indeed, are not meta-reflexive. "Works of art [...] are symbolic devices that cannot produce their own meta-language."<sup>64</sup> Philosophy, in this sense, if no longer meta/physical, is, and remains, for Ricœur, meta/linguistic. Only philosophy can 'speak' about language, can interpret. However, what would language (and concept, and philosophy) mean (and say) if there were nothing before it, and out of it? Language can only say what is 'other' from itself. This is where the arts (particularly those devoid of words) are superior to the *logos*.

"Music makes us think" (*donne à penser*) – Ricœur writes in a passage of *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*. However, this expression can clearly be extended to all art forms (as we can understand from reading in full the interview cited above).<sup>65</sup> Art makes us think, *gives rise to thought* and *gives a gift*<sup>66</sup> to conceptual thinking, to philosophy. Philosophy is the recipient, the arts are the donors. However, if – in the logic of the gift – the donor precedes the recipient, then the arts (and, in general, ante-predicative, pre-conceptual experience) precede philosophy. Or, perhaps better, in the logic of the hermeneutic circle – which in Ricœur's last writings becomes the circle of the gift – this is a 'mutual' gift, an asymmetrical reciprocity.<sup>67</sup>

The arts give philosophy the gift of experience (singular, radical, emotional, iconic to think about). Philosophy gives the arts the gift of a possible interpretation. The arts give



philosophy the gift of non-verbal signs;<sup>68</sup> but philosophy gives the arts the gift of verbal signs, verbal meaning. This different speaking about (speaking about the world) becomes the capacity to be mutually interpreted. Art and philosophy are two ‘parallel works’ (to quote Ricœur again),<sup>69</sup> two ‘parallels’ that meet each other at infinity, in the infiniteness of their inexhaustibility. There would be no art without the possibility/capacity to express moods (and this ability is created with language); but there would be no language without all the fulfillment and feeling that remains unsaid.

Ricœur started this ‘parallel work.’ Perhaps today we can continue to carry it forward, in two directions. While, on the one hand, as mentioned above, the gift that philosophy can still give to art is that of deepening the meaning and possibilities of a (Ricœurian) hermeneutics of the work of art, on the other hand what is the gift (from the perspective of what we have discovered in these pages with Ricœur) that art can still give to philosophy?

We believe that this gift is hidden exactly in Ricœur’s discovery of the communication process typical of art itself. In fact, the process that Ricœur has described as typical of art belongs to every ‘authentic’ form of communication. What happens, in fact, when we want to communicate something to someone authentically? When we want to communicate ourselves to others – when I want to communicate my singular life, to another individual – I can only do it by fully expressing my singularity.<sup>70</sup> What we have said about the artist and the work of art then applies to every ‘single’ individual and for every ‘singular’ communication.

The more we are ourselves, in our truth (even contradictory and torn, not masked by what is generally said and thought of us,) the more we strip off our masks and we show in our fragility (the fragility of our naked existence, poor in words, poor in certainties, poor in generalities,) the more we are not influenced by profit, by trade, by what is fashionable, the more we are perhaps outdated, counter-current, but singular (ready to tell, as only we can tell, the urgency of what inside us, inside me, here and now, in my singular history of life, asks to be told)... the more I really talk, I really communicate, because then it is ‘my’ life that speaks, before and more than my words. However, this is true for (or, at least, should apply) also to philosophy. In my opinion, this is the best gift that art can give to philosophical thought. Philosophy, in dialogue with art (like Ricœurian philosophy), can discover something that perhaps goes beyond the conclusions of Ricœur himself. Philosophy can discover in fact that, in order to communicate, it should not always use only conceptual and argumentative language, but can also use allusive, symbolic, emotional language. Perhaps today we are ready to disrupt the dualism from which Ricœur began. Perhaps today we are ready to include emotional communication in some way within philosophy, we are ready to find that the iconic-affective dimension is not just ‘other’ than the philosophical, but ‘is’ and can ‘also’ be philosophical.

While the other is not only the other who is in front of me, but also the other that I am (*me as another*), then it is also true that the language typical of art (the iconic-affective communication) is not only that upon which philosophy can reflect, but it is also that which philosophy can experience. I think it is the challenge that thinkers like Ricœur (singular thinkers, thinkers on singularity) delivered to us, with their deconstruction of metaphysical-conceptual, abstractive philosophy, with their deconstruction of the ‘universal’ philosophy (in the general and generic sense of the term ‘universal’). If philosophy was only work of the concept, it could never be ‘singular’ and could never communicate anything. What is, then, the relationship between

singularity and philosophy, between emotion and concept? Can philosophy be communication between one individual and another and, if so, how?

Perhaps it always has been so, despite conceptual philosophy itself; indeed, since the time of Plato, "as light that is kindled by a leaping spark," philosophy has only been the "result of communion," of a life lived together, through dialogue together, conceived together.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps it still is so, in spite of us, professors of philosophy, and writers of the concept. Perhaps philosophy still continues to speak today – within and beyond the *logos* – from the singularity of those who thought (the great philosophers of the past) and of those who still try to think in the present (we little philosophy professors) to the singularity of those who read (a book of philosophy), or listen (to a lesson in philosophy).

Can philosophy still communicate something today? Yes, but only if in the lives of those who philosophize, teach philosophy, study philosophy, write about philosophy, life first speaks. Indeed, even in philosophy, as shown by the more radical philosophers, in their radical tragedy, we cannot communicate but in the singular. When a philosophy 'speaks,' it is because it is life that speaks in that philosophy (the urgency of life, the radical questions of life, the wounds and the depths of life... speak in that philosophy): before and more than the words that that philosophy has been able to say or will ever say.

This discovery can be a gift. A gift of art to philosophy. A gift of Ricœur's aesthetic hermeneutics to all of us.

It is perhaps at the point of the articulation of practice and the pathic that aesthetics has something to say [...]. What we have said about moods relates equally to the pathic. Perhaps here we are in the zone where the aesthetic and the ethical partially overlap. [...] In language, which is not only practical, there is also the lyrical which one can explore, like the story, from the point of view of time. This is the time of the burden, of usury, of the sadness of aging, of the nostalgia for what will never return, of the inquietude of what menaces or will not come. All this pathic of temporality takes place in that zone of connection and actual contamination between the verbal lyrical and the pictorial or musical expression of the pathic.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, ed. George H. Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Ricœur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," *Man and World* 12 (1979), 123-41; Ricœur, "Sartre and Ryle on the Imagination," in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1981), 167-78; Ricœur, "Imagination in Discourse and in Action," in *From Text to Action*, trans. Kathleen Blamey & John B. Thompson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 168-87.

On the issue of imagination in Paul Ricœur, see in particular Jeanne Evans, *Paul Ricœur's Hermeneutics of the Imagination* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Henry I. Venema, *Identifying Selfhood: Imagination, Narrative, and Hermeneutics in the Thought of Paul Ricœur* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000); Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2001); George H. Taylor, "Ricœur's Philosophy of Imagination," *Journal of French Philosophy*, 16 (2006), 93-104; Jean-Luc Amalric, *Paul Ricœur, l'imagination vive. Une genèse de la philosophie ricœurienne de l'imagination* (Paris: Éditions Hermann, 2013); Samuel Lelievre, "Langage, imagination, et référence. Ricœur lecteur de Wittgenstein et Goodman," *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies*, 5 (1) (2014), 49-66.

<sup>2</sup> See Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978); Ricœur, *Time and Narrative (Temps et Récit)*, 3 vols. trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1985, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> See George Taylor, *Ricœur's Lectures on Imagination*, Keynote Conference Presentation, *Paul Ricœur et la philosophie contemporaine de langue anglaise*, Paris, November 20, 2013: "it still remains somewhat enigmatic to me that Ricœur did not himself publish a volume more directly on imagination."

<sup>4</sup> Saulius Geniusas, "Against the Sartrean Background Ricœur's Lectures on Imagination," *Research in Phenomenology*, 46 (2016), 98-112 (see in particular 107 ff.: *Painting as a Form of Productive Imagination*).

<sup>5</sup> The volume is scheduled to appear in print in 2016 (George H. Taylor ed.). In the meantime, we can read George H. Taylor, "Ricœur's Philosophy of Imagination," *Journal of French Philosophy*, 16 (2006), 93-104.

<sup>6</sup> Geniusas, "Against the Sartrean Background Ricœur's Lectures on Imagination," 111. Geniusas continues: "Why is this captivating phenomenology of painting so severely underdeveloped? The reasons are by no means accidental: this phenomenology of painting is opposed not only to Sartre, but also to Ricœur himself. [...] It is just as incompatible with Ricœur's contention in his published essays on imagination that productive imagination is language-based. [...] It thereby becomes understandable (although by no means justifiable) why phenomenology of the pre-predicative art in general, and if painting in particular, has no place in Ricœur's fourfold classification of productive imagination." In our essay we will try to provide a different explanation.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Lectures 3* (Paris: Seuil, 1999), 13-5.

- <sup>8</sup> Paul Ricœur, *L'unique et le singulier* (Montréal/Bruxelles: Stanké/Alice éditions, 1999). On this painting by Rembrandt and Ricœur, see Drew R. A. Desai, "An Autoportrait of Paul Ricœur," *Logoi.ph*, 2 (2015), 139-47; Yvon Inizan, *La demande et le don. L'attestation poétique chez Yves Bonnefoy et Paul Ricœur* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), 20.
- <sup>9</sup> Ricœur, *L'unique et le singulier*, 55.
- <sup>10</sup> Ricœur, *L'unique et le singulier*, 59.
- <sup>11</sup> Ricœur, *L'unique et le singulier*, 59.
- <sup>12</sup> Ricœur, *L'unique et le singulier*, 55.
- <sup>13</sup> See, for example, Paul Ricœur, *Lectures 2. La contrée des philosophes* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).
- <sup>14</sup> Ricœur, *L'unique et le singulier*, 56.
- <sup>15</sup> Ricœur, *L'unique et le singulier*, 59.
- <sup>16</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1990).
- <sup>17</sup> See, for example, C. Delacampagne, "Paul Ricœur, philosophe de tous les dialogues," *Le Monde*, 21-05-2005. See also *Paul Ricœur, philosophe de tous les dialogues*, Conception et co-auteur avec François Dosse du DVD, film de Caroline Reussner (Paris: Éditions Montparnasse, 2008). See also the monographic issue of the on-line journal *Logoi.ph*, 2 (2015): *Ricœur and the Symphony of the Languages*.
- <sup>18</sup> I am referring to the 'threefold structure' of the 'person' in Ricœur: Self/Others/Institutions. I take the liberty of referring to Annalisa Caputo, *Io e tu. Una dialettica fragile e spezzata. Percorsi con Paul Ricœur* (Bari: Stilo, 2009).
- <sup>19</sup> Ricœur, *L'unique et le singulier*, 59.
- <sup>20</sup> Ricœur, *L'unique et le singulier*, 59.
- <sup>21</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction. Conversations with Francois Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 171. Ricœur responds and admits: "It is, in fact, by way of the narrative that I have approached aesthetics up to now" (Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 173). See also Jérôme Cottin, "Métaphore et esthétique dans la pensée de Paul Ricœur," *Rencontre des facultés de théologie protestante des Universités de Strasbourg et de Heidelberg, les 13 et 14 mai 2011*: <http://www.protestantismeetimages.com/Metaphore-et-esthetique-dans-la.html>: "Olivier Abel, qui a bien connu Ricœur – y compris dans l'intimité de sa vie privée –, m'a dit un jour ce témoignage: Ricœur ne se nourrissait pas simplement de sources verbales, mais aussi non verbales. Il passait des heures à regarder des images."
- <sup>22</sup> See Paul Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essay in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Hyde, trans. Willis Domingo et al. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 6 ff.

- <sup>23</sup> See Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 125 ff.
- <sup>24</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté: Tome 1: Le volontaire et l'involontaire; Tome 2: Finitude et culpabilité. I: L'homme faillible; II: La symbolique du mal* (Paris: Aubier, 1950; 1960).
- <sup>25</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Réflexion faite, Autobiographie intellectuelle* (Paris: Esprit, 1995), 25: "quant à la troisième partie, elle devait traiter du rapport du vouloir humain à la Transcendance [...]; devait s'épanouir dans une poétique des expériences de création et de recréation pointant vers une seconde innocence."
- <sup>26</sup> Ricœur, *Réflexion faite*, 26.
- <sup>27</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 139.
- <sup>28</sup> The link between the two experiences was already expressed in Paul Ricœur, "La place de l'oeuvre d'art dans notre culture," *Foi & Éducation*, 38 (1957): <http://www.protestantismmeetimages.com/P-Ricœur-La-place-de-l-oeuvre-d.html>.
- <sup>29</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics. Interview with Paul Ricœur. Conducted by Jean-Marie Brohm and Magali Uhl* (Paris, September 20, 1996), trans. R.D. Sweeney and John Carroll: <http://www.philagora.net/philo-fac/Ricœur-e.php>.
- <sup>30</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 1.
- <sup>31</sup> On this issue see: Pamela S. Anderson, "Paul Ricœur's Aesthetics: Tradition and Innovation," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy*, 3 (2010), 207-20.
- <sup>32</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 1.
- <sup>33</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 1.
- <sup>34</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 2.
- <sup>35</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 2.
- <sup>36</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 2.
- <sup>37</sup> See Henri Gouhier, *Le théâtre et les arts à deux temps* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989).
- <sup>38</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 2.
- <sup>39</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 2.
- <sup>40</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 2.
- <sup>41</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 2.
- <sup>42</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 3.

- <sup>43</sup> In *À la recherche du temps perdu* (in a passage loved and quoted by Ricœur), Marcel Proust writes: "I thought more modestly of my book and it would be inaccurate even to say that I thought of those who would read it as 'my' readers. For, it seemed to me that they would not be 'my' readers but the readers of their own selves, my book being merely a sort of magnifying glass like those which the optician at Combray used to offer his customers – it would be my book but with its help I would furnish them with the means of reading what lay inside themselves." Ricœur illustrates this metaphor with reference to Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, e.g. in *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 3 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 246.
- <sup>44</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Hermeneutics and Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 144.
- <sup>45</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 173.
- <sup>46</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 1.
- <sup>47</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 4.
- <sup>48</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 181.
- <sup>49</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 181.
- <sup>50</sup> "Le flâneur – Nymphaes Orangerie" is the title that Olivier Abel gave to one of his *Entretien with Ricœur*. We can read the two pages of this dialogue in the booklet (Paul Ricœur, *Le tragique et la promesse*) that accompanies the double DVD about the life and work of the French thinker: *Paul Ricœur. Philosophe de tous les dialogues*. In the booklet, the last pages are about the Orangerie. While, in the film, the scenes of the video presenting the flâneur – i.e. Ricœur, who 'walks' in front of Monet's Water Lilies are at the beginning.
- <sup>51</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 178.
- <sup>52</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 179.
- <sup>53</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 179.
- <sup>54</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 172.
- <sup>55</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 172.
- <sup>56</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 179-80.
- <sup>57</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 180.
- <sup>58</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 180.
- <sup>59</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 180.
- <sup>60</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 180.
- <sup>61</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 82.



- <sup>62</sup> See Paul Ricœur, *Liebe und Gerechtigkeit. Amour et justice* (Tübingen: J.B.C. Mohr, P. Siebeck, 1990).
- <sup>63</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 6. On this topic see: Roger Savage, "Is Music Mimetic? Ricœur and the Limits of Narrative," *Journal of French Philosophy*, 16 (2006), 16, 121-13.
- <sup>64</sup> Marcel Hénaff, "La condition brisée des langues. Ricœur: diversité humaine, altérité et traduction," *Esprit*, 3 (2006), 68-83.
- <sup>65</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 6.
- <sup>66</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Le symbole donne à penser," *Esprit*, 27 (1959), 60-76. In a first English translation, the symbol was qualified as 'food' for thought ["The Symbol: Food for Thought," *Philosophy Today*, 4 (1960), 196-207], because the symbol 'feeds' reflection without being absorbed into it or absorbing it into itself; but Ricœur clarifies the meaning of the expression "donne à penser," linking the verb "donner" (to give) with the noun "don" (gift). "Symbol gives rise to thought. This maxim that I find so appealing says two things. The symbol gives: I do not posit the meaning, the symbol gives it; but what it gives is something for thought, something to think about. First the giving, then the positing," Paul Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretation, Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 288.
- <sup>67</sup> I take the liberty of referring to Annalisa Caputo, "A Second Copernican Revolution. Phenomenology of the Mutuality and Poetics of the Gift in the last Ricœur," *Studia Phaenomenologica*, 13 (2013), 231-56.
- <sup>68</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 6: "is not this work absolutely parallel in language to what is done outside of language by the arts not transcribable into language, like music basically, but also, in different degrees, painting and sculpture? The possibility of 'speaking about' belongs doubtless to the character of significance attached to verbal signs and non-verbal signs and to their capacity to be interpreted mutually."
- <sup>69</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 6.
- <sup>70</sup> See Domenico Jervolino, *The Cogito and Hermeneutics: the Question of the Subject in Ricœur* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990).
- <sup>71</sup> Plato, *Seventh Letter*, 341 c-d.
- <sup>72</sup> *Arts, Language and Hermeneutic Aesthetics*, 8.