Granger and Ricœur — Two existentialist ripostes to the analytic challenge: Contribution to a history of the reception of analytic philosophy in France

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ABSTRACT. — *In this article, I recount how French philosophy attempted to respond to the challenge issued by analytic philosophy at the Royaumont Colloquium in 1958. I approach this historical investigation by way of the question of signification and the works of Gilles-Gaston Granger and Paul Ricœur. I contend that the response of these two authors should be understood from the point of view of existentialism. I carefully study the modalities of the confrontation by distinguishing four different levels, which take us successively deeper into the heart of the problem: the theory of language and the role of analysis in that theory; practical rationality and its clinical approach to the individual; the adopting of a transcendental orientation; and finally reflection, and the way in which its meaning and import was radically transformed.*

RÉSUMÉ. — *Dans cet article, je montre comment la philosophie française a cherché à répondre à l'appel que lui lançait la philosophie analytique au colloque de Royaumont, en 1958. Cette enquête historique est abordée à partir du problème de la signification, et sur le corpus des oeuvres de Granger et de Ricœur. Je montre que la réplique de ces deux auteurs doit se comprendre du point de vue de l'existentialisme. J'étudie les modalités de la confrontation en distinguant quatre niveaux qui sont autant d'approfondissements successifs : d'abord celui de la théorie du langage et de la place qu'y prend l'analyse ; puis celui de la rationalité pratique et de son souci clinique de l'individuel ; celui de l'orientation transcendantale qui est retenue ; et enfin celui de la réflexion, dont la portée est transformée de façon radicale.*

In this article I would like to show what the philosophies of Gilles-Gaston Granger and Paul Ricœur owe to analytic philosophy (and to which analytic philosophy they owe it), as well as discussing their decisive attempt to give it an existentialist inflection more suited to the French "terrain" of reflection.[1]

1. I would like to thank Elie Düring, Frédéric Fruteau de Laclos, and Jean-Michel Salanskis for having allowed me to present a first version of this text at a study day on "Analytic Philosophy and French Philosophy" at the École Normale Supérieure, Paris, June 12, 2002.

A number of preliminary remarks are necessary here. First of all, from the very start this approach involves us in a double paradox. For while it is entirely natural to speak of existentialism in Ricœur's case, the term may seem incongruous as far as Granger is concerned—and he himself would doubtless have rejected it. Yet I do not use the term without justification. The paradox is then doubled in so far as I am bringing together two authors who seem to be opposed on every point. Here again, I will try to show that this coupling is not at all artificial. Moreover, rather than my approach here being purely historical, I have sought to give it a theoretical dimension by emphasizing the prospects it opens up for a contemporary thought eager to avail itself of certain contributions of analytic philosophy, but equally keen to refuse wholesale absorption by the latter—without letting this concern for delimitation take precedence over pursuit of its own project. For I think that the work of these two authors can be seen as convergent from the point of view of a practical philosophy, in the twofold sense of a theory of action and a theory of norms, and not only (nor even primarily) because it opened the way to a true dialogue with analytic philosophy.

Of course, we shall have to define what we mean by "analytic philosophy," even though any attempt to define a philosophical movement is always daunting and perilous. Here I will use the term "analytic" to refer to the tradition that formed around the effort to explicate the meaning of propositions (in particular those that claim knowledge of some thing in the world) by logically analyzing them. Following Dummett, we could trace this movement back to Frege, then forward through Russell, Carnap, and Wittgenstein. This is what I shall call the "first generation" of analytic philosophy, around which of course there gravitated other authors (the members of the Vienna Circle, the Husserl of the *Logical Investigations*); their primary interest was formal logic and mathematics, and in particular the possibility of formalizing natural language (or of logically analyzing it, so as to eradicate equivocity). The second generation extended this enterprise and broadened it into other domains (action phrases, the furniture of the world, ordinary languages, art—Davidson, Anscombe, Austin and Searle, Goodman—and of course reflections on science—Putnam—and ontology—Quine, Strawson). Interest in the formal sciences is less prominent among this second generation.[2] As schematic and arguable as this partition may be, it must suffice as an underpinning for my efforts to bring together Granger and Ricœur

2. It may be possible to distinguish a third generation who are taking up analytic philosophy's question of the significance of language (and the nature of mind, in particular the objective mind, in Brandom and McDowell) but taking it in an inferential direction (Wilfrid Sellars's "space of reasons"), continuing its exploration of the philosophy of sciences and of metaphysics (Armstrong), or even leaving the domain of the analysis of logico-linguistic significations for that of mental states (Fodor).

by demonstrating how their bodies of work overlap, on the basis of two arguments, one doxographical, the other more philosophical. First, we cannot exclusively separate a "theoretical" Granger, reader of the first generation analytic philosophers, from an "ethico-practical" Ricœur, more interested in the second generation, because the two philosophers draw on a common corpus that includes the work of both generations.[3] Second, in his work Ricœur takes a keen interest in epistemological questions, despite certain missteps in his discussions of the formal sciences (and the relation of logic to natural language), and Granger takes a certain interest in the practical.[4] And finally, the two authors read and appreciated one another's writings.[5]

Now let us turn to the question of the meeting point, quite literally, between the two traditions. We might well describe the first systematic confrontation between analytical philosophers and French philosophers at the Royaumont Colloquium in 1958 as a true dialogue of the deaf.[6] It seems to have been impossible to build any bridges between Merleau-Ponty, Wahl, Quine, and Strawson. Postwar France was grappling with the legacy of "the three H's," Hegel, Heidegger, and Husserl, who to varying degrees haunted the work of Sartre and Hyppolite in particular; whereas in contrast analytic philosophy (Strawson, Quine, Austin) constructed its first great edifices on the heritage of the thinking of the Vienna Circle, Russell, and Wittgenstein. If there was one notion that brought out this differend most starkly, it was the notion of *meaning*. In positive terms, first of all, the analytic thinkers (in particular Austin, Ryle, and Strawson) understood meaning in terms of the plenitude of (propositional) language, whereas among Continental thinkers it was instead conceived of as the intimate vibration of our changing relation to being, upstream of language, which, ultimately, is only one modality of our relation to the world, and doubtless not the most fundamental (when compared to Van Breda's non-conceptual emotion or Merleau-Ponty's

3. It is true that Ricœur had little interest in Carnap, Lewis, or Kripke, and that Granger had no taste for Anscombe, Davidson, or Strawson. Yet both authors frequently cited Frege, Husserl, Russell, and Wittgenstein, but also Austin and Searle, Goodman, Grice, and von Wright—not to mention other authors who were close to the analytic tradition such as Chomsky, Pariente, Peirce, and Recanati.

4. This is the main theme in my overall interpretation of his work. See Philippe Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel: Essai sur le rationalisme pratique de Gilles-Gaston Granger* (Paris: Vrin, 2012), Introduction.

5. Ricœur for example borrows from Granger the notion of the "work" (the "œuvre") and modifies his conception of hermeneutics (after his 1965 *Freud and Philosophy*) to take account of the critiques addressed to it by Granger in his *Essai d'une philosophie du style* (1968). Moreover, Granger credits Ricœur with having correctly identified a specific (transphrastic) level of the complexity of meaning: see "Le langage dans la philosophie d'aujourd'hui" (an article written in 1992) in Guttorm Floistad, ed., *Language, Meaning, Interpretation* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2004), 45–71.

6. *Cahiers de Royaumont: La Philosophie analytique* (Paris: Minuit, 1962). This was not the first meeting, however, since in his writings and in his teaching Cavaillès had already introduced the work of Frege, Carnap, Russell, and Tarski, and Frege was also known to French readers of Husserl.

antepredicative experience). But even in terms of negativity, the notion created a gulf between the two traditions: either it is that which, in Strawson, obstinately escapes all efforts at reformulation (translation, reconstruction, description) or, in Quine, who prefers the notion of *identical* meaning, a kind of myth;[7] or, for the Continental phenomenologists, it is just the complement of an act of consciousness, the result of its intentional aim having been fulfilled. In its very ambivalence, then, the notion of meaning divides the two traditions rather than allowing any passage between them. And even when the discussion is brought onto the common terrain of language itself, one cannot help but notice the difference in emphasis between those who insist upon the description of the uses of ordinary language (for Ryle) and those more concerned with legitimating the creation of an argumentative (Ayer) or rhetorical (Perelman) philosophical language, or even advocating the importance of exploring more speculative and poetic usages of language (Wahl).

It will come as no surprise, then, that this meeting in the flesh ultimately failed to bring about any true engagement with regard to any of the three levels of analysis identified by J.O. Urmson: the analysis of Russell and Carnap's "formalized languages and calculation languages," Wittgenstein's analysis of the enigmatic ambiguities of concepts, and the Oxford analysis of ordinary language. In fact, it would be some years before a real debate began, and even then not without certain equivocations. In many respects Granger and Ricœur may be regarded as the initiators of this debate, since the problem of meaning was a central concern in both of their philosophies.

But in what respect can it really be said that the notion of *existentialism* provides the best framework for understanding their reception of what, at the time, seemed to many like a kind of philosophical interpellation? This is the case not only because the two authors were contemporaries of existentialism as a movement both academic and more widely cultural (both published their first major texts just after the war). More fundamentally it is because, on one hand, existential thinking goes far beyond the field of inquiry covered by a philosophy of consciousness; and, on the other hand, because an integral theory of language, one more complete than the contributions of analytical philosophy or structuralism alone, can act as the basis for a practical philosophy, understood as a rational exploration of existence.

Emmanuel Mounier puts it very well in his *Existentialist Philosophies*: for this philosophical movement it is man, with his vulnerability and his dramatic

7. Like Davidson after him, Quine refuses both Frege's *Sinn* and Carnap's *intension*. See Philippe Lacour, "Sens et interprétation dans la philosophie de Donald Davidson" (forthcoming).

destiny, that is the primary problem—not ideas (mind) or things (the world).[8] Consequently, knowledge loses its status as something of absolute value, for philosophy is not a gnosis but a life's mastering of itself, an ethos. This is why existential thinking overflows the field of philosophy of consciousness, which always runs the risk of being too cerebral. In spite of his attentive reading of Husserl, the influence of Jean Nabert (among others) is evident in Ricœur's work: the "I am" is infinitely more important than the "I think." This, moreover, is why the phenomenology of wanting is soon surpassed in the direction of a symbolism (of evil) and then a hermeneutics. In Granger, meanwhile, it is practice (*praxis*), and in particular scientific practice, that radically surpasses the "I think." The heritage of Cavaillès's and Bachelard's epistemologies is decisive here: the concept trumps consciousness.[9] For both authors, therefore, the confrontation with analytic philosophy will serve to confirm an abandonment of phenomenology. Certainly, neither completely does away with consciousness (the individual remains the central theme of philosophy), but both make of it a destination rather than a starting point.[10] Moreover, since one can only access the lived meanings of consciousness via the meanings of dispersed works, philosophical reflexivity is necessarily decentered. This break from consciousness and phenomenology does not translate into a movement in the direction of radical contingency, as in Sartre (for whom consciousness is a pure nothingness), but instead into an attempt to found a practical philosophy on a hermeneutical (interpretative) type of symbolic mediation—formal in Granger's case, natural (discursive) in Ricœur's.

Yet in itself this sidestep is not yet enough to explain the encounter with analytic philosophy. In fact, this encounter can be said to result from a methodological scruple: although the domain of existence may be explored mediately, that does not mean that it can be surveyed ad hoc. Hence the symbolic, and in particular language, is chosen as a guiding thread, which means that both authors must strive to clarify its properties in relation to other sign systems. It is here that the logical analysis of propositions furnishes some crucial aid, complementing what had already been established by Saussurian linguistics (or at least what was known of this at the time).

8. Emmanuel Mounier, *Existential Philosophies: An Introduction*, trans. Eric Blow (London: Rockliff, 1948).

9. See Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel.* See also Philippe Lacour, "Du surrationalisme de Bachelard à la raison clinique: le déplacement grangérien de la philosophie de Bachelard," in *Bachelard et l'avenir de la culture: Du surrationalisme à la raison créative*, ed. Vincent Bontems (Paris: Presses des Mines, 2018): 97-108.

10. In Granger, the project of ergology is explicitly opposed to a phenomenology of work (Gilles-Gaston Granger, *Essai d'une philosophie du style* [Paris: Armand Colin, 1968], 16). See also Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, 77 (and, on the difference between sense and signification, 75–76). Ricœur's farewell to phenomenology was the object of an entire article: "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics," *Noûs* 9, no. 1 (March 1975): 85–102.

Neither Granger nor Ricœur are interested in enunciations for their own sake, however, but only in so far as the deeper analysis of the act of speaking may serve, in some way, as prolegomena to a general theory of action, which itself would constitute the underpinnings of a practical philosophy. Marx purely and simply eliminates the Aristotelian difference between *praxis* and *poiesis* with his conception of production. But one might say that Granger and Ricœur seek to go beyond the Marxian concept of praxis without going back to Aristotle (both were great readers of the Stagirite); they therefore seek some sort of renegotiation of the relation between the two terms. In Granger, practice is in some sense absorbed into poiematics, in so far as action is thought as the result of the production of a work.[11] In Ricœur there is an analogy between practice and poetics: meaningful action is considered as a text, so that in a certain sense an action must be poietic in order to be practical.[12]

The circumstances of and reasons for the encounter between existentialism and analytic thought having been clarified, let us now examine in more detail the forms that it took. In each case, we shall distinguish the different aspects involved: first, the understanding of language, then the clinical orientation of practical philosophy, then the redefinition of the transcendental, and finally the role played by reflexivity as the very condition of possibility of the exercise of philosophy.

Granger and poiematic existentialism

Granger has a complex relationship with analytic philosophy: he saw in it a fruitful renovation of the question of the transcendental, but also a clumsy rationalist orientation that resulted from an inadequate philosophy of language. First, the transcendental, the elucidation of which requires a reflective effort, ceases to be a fixed categorical framework or a structure of consciousness: it opens onto the symbolic (in a broad sense, ranging from the formal to the natural) and onto history, fluctuating over the world that it organizes like a sort of filter at once playful and rigorous. As a result, rationality in its entirety is transformed: abandoning its Kantian rigidity but also the overly cubist nature that Bachelard attributes to it, it opens up, with wonder, to the prospect of the individual as the grain of reality. This clinical rationality passes by way of the rigorous constitution of a science of

11. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, first part ("Ergologie").

12. Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 176, n. 6: "If our analysis is correct, no action is only poiesis or only praxis. Are not the epic, which recounts the action of heroes, and tragedy, which puts it on stage, forms of poiesis?"

the human, a task that Granger therefore situates at the heart of his project, even if in retrospect it may appear peripheral. Finally, this means that, far from having an absolute status, philosophy of language has only a relative legitimacy in relation to a broader project of the critical examination of symbolic systems.

Before examining these four orientations in detail, it remains to clarify how they relate to existentialism: here I will just summarize arguments that explain in detail this apparent paradox.[13] In fact, as Mounier emphasizes, for existentialism the only truth that can be had about reality is that of the singular existent and discontinuous situations (cases).[14] Now, the individual is at the heart of Granger's philosophy, which is thus intended to be a practical philosophy "in situation"—an approach he inherits directly from Jean Hyppolite and his reprise of the Hegelian notion of alienation. But Granger's existentialism is also that of Jean Cavaillès, in the sense that, as Frédéric Worms has shown, *necessity*, just like contingency, belongs to the philosophical "moment" of the Second World War.[15] To be more precise, we might say that these are two connected problems. Because in so far as it is the dialectical character of the individual that lies at the origin of the historical dimension of scientific knowledge (the contingent character of the production of necessary formal contents), Cavaillès's problem converges with Hyppolite's: what is at work in the historical movement of science is an attempt to rationally overcome alienation. And since the response to the problem of the individual favored by Granger is a rather Spinozist one—a practice in accordance with knowledge—his program consists in studying the ways in which the individual can be rationally grasped in its concrete content.

To analyze language, or to put it to work?

Although he takes the role of language in philosophical reflection very seriously, to the point of subscribing to the (apparent) truism that "there can be no philosophy without linguistic expression,"[16] Granger refuses to reduce philosophy to a mere critique of language. On this point, his opposition to the strictly analytic approach, whether "Oxfordian" or Wittgensteinian in style, is explicit:

> We may be tempted by a radical conception of philosophy that reduces it to being an elucidation of language. Language being the site of meaning par excellence, to

13. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, chapter 1 ("Un existentialisme original").

14. Mounier, *Existentialist Philosophies,* "Existence and Truth" and "The Kingdom of Being is in Our Midst."

15. Frédéric Worms, *La Philosophie française au XX^e^ siècle: Moments* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).

16. Gilles-Gaston Granger, "Remarques sur l'usage de la langue en philosophie," *Langages* 34 (1974): 22–26. Translator's note: Unless otherwise stated, all translations of cited foreign language material in this article are our own.

> philosophize would be to police it, to hunt down pseudo-sense—an extremist stance that is strikingly represented in the work of Wittgenstein. "The results of philosophy," he writes, "are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language..." (*Philosophical Investigations*, no. 119). This is the negative side of the work of philosophy, an aspect that is all too often neglected. But that does not mean we cannot think of philosophy as something more than this hermeneutics of nonsense, if we reject the Wittgensteinian thesis of an absolute equivalence of the concepts "proposition, language, thought, world" (*ibid*., no. 96). If world means something beyond language and even thought, the task of philosophy cannot be just a grammatical critique. It is connected to a state of total experience, an experience of the individual in a physico-social context, which is *praxis*, and in which it remains immanent.[17]

It could not be said any more clearly that philosophy of language is not exhausted by analysis alone. And in fact, for Granger, philosophy is a continuing labor, of which stylistic epistemology offers a good example. He therefore passes harsh judgment on the Cambridge philosopher's quietism:

> "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" [. . .] But no. It is precisely because at every moment man encounters that which he has no immediate means of speaking about that he improvises a science, invents a new language, and annexes new objects.[18]

Consequently, philosophical language boasts a certain originality in relation to current usage: it is neither art nor science, it is still natural language, and yet it is irreducible to the rhetorical usage of that language. Through its work on language, philosophy seeks to "make into a system the meanings whose indices and figures it describes"; the systems produced "are not of the same nature as the structures that science establishes for the representation of experience, but nor are they, like the work of art, a creation of experience."[19]

Because it constitutes a practice in the strong sense of the word (it produces works) and because it implies a significant effort of reflection made possible by a legitimate use of metalanguage, philosophy cannot leave things as it finds them.[20] So that it makes sense to define philosophy as a "critique of *symbolic systems*" rather than as a "critique of language," so as to avoid a "literal, reductive

17. Gilles-Gaston Granger, "Sur la connaissance philosophique," *Revue internationale de philosophie* 47 (1959): 107.

18. Gilles-Gaston Granger, *Formal Thought and the Sciences of Man*, trans. Alexander Rosenberg and Carolyn R. Fawcett (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983), 6.

19. Granger, "Remarques sur l'usage de la langue en philosophie", 95.

20. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, chapter 4 ("Une réflexivité décentrée").

interpretation" of this phrase that would necessarily prove "ruinous" for philosophy.[21] This is the meaning of the ambitious program for the comparison of formal and natural systems that lies at the heart of Granger's project,[22] and which he represents as a (no doubt heterodox) inheritance from Wittgenstein's atypical enterprise. From this point of view, Granger seems quite close to F.W. Beth, who, at Royaumont, inquired into "The relations between formal and natural language."

Analytic philosophy and clinical reason

We can also understand Granger's attitude to analytic philosophy by way of his notion of the "work" (or the "œuvre"). For, from an epistemological point of view, analytic philosophy is interested not so much in the individual as in the general. On the contrary, it is his concern for individual works that secures Granger an original place in the landscape of epistemology, and particularly its French quarter.[23] In his work not only does philosophical reflection on science take a more historical and diverse turn, against the grain of the decontextualized approach of Anglophone "theory of knowledge";[24] it now proceeds, with great precision, by way of the study of *singularities*. Moreover, for Granger this adherence to the study of *actual* scientific discourses serves as a criterion for the "ranking" of other epistemologists, favoring Cavaillès and Foucault over Lautman and Bachelard,[25] but also of the traditions themselves (Continental vs. analytic).[26] This interest in particular works should not be seen as indicating an excessive interest in the particular circumstances of the epoch, which matter less in themselves than as (necessary) mediations of the rational dynamic itself. It is rather an extension of the French historical tradition in the direction of the concrete and the coherence of a rationalism of the singular, a move that endows Bachelardian trans-historical epistemology with a greater *granularity*.[27] This is not the place to

21. Gilles-Gaston Granger, "La philosophie est-elle une critique du langage?", *Le Langage comme défi*, (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1992), 245.

22. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, chapter 3 ("Le comparatisme sémiotique").

23. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, 35–37.

24. See Sandra Laugier and Pierre Wagner, *Philosophie des sciences* (Paris: Vrin, 2004), preface; and Jean-François Braunstein, "Bachelard, Canguilhem, Foucault: Le 'style français' en épistémologie," in Pierre Wagner, *Les Philosophes et la science* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 931–32.

25. Ibid. Lautman does study works "precisely," but from a perspective that is more idealist than historical. Whereas Bachelard's epistemology is not truly historical because, more sensitive to collective progress, it does not examine particular works "in fine detail" so much. Granger makes no judgment on Koyré or Canguilhem, merely repeats Bachelard's opinion of Meyerson, and explicitly opposes Foucault.

26. Ibid. The analytical tradition is interested in ideas or in the contemporary translation of problems, while the Continental tradition strives to understand singular bodies of work.

27. See Lacour, "Du surrationalisme de Bachelard à la raison clinique."

present an example of the analysis of a specific scientific body of work, but we could mention Granger's application of philosophical reflection to the styles of Descartes, Desargues, and even Euclid.[28]

A variable, symbolic transcendental

Granger read very early on the works of most of the representatives or "forerunners" of the first wave of analytic philosophy (Russell, Carnap), and we know of his passion for the work of Wittgenstein, which he was the first to introduce into France.[29] What interested him in all of these was certainly the way in which they displaced the notion of the transcendental: logicians have the merit of not being content with Husserlian egology, and of concentrating on what is "solid." But their approach can often be found wanting (in the case of Russell, for example), if not simply too rigid (Carnap). It is Wittgenstein who seems to Granger to suggest the right approach to the relation between transcendental and empirical, in terms of the *game*—which is neither the phenomenologists' illusory essences[30] nor the rigid table of Kantian categories, nor the logical empiricists' mysterious translation of formal protocol sentences. Following this approach, one must aim to think the fecundity of mathematics and to understand (although we cannot be a priori sure of identifying them exhaustively and definitively) the ways in which mathematics can help us to think the individual (and this is the role of stylistics as an activity of conceptual *reflection*).

In accepting this transcendental legacy from Bachelard and Cavaillès, Granger firmly opposes himself to Quine's program for the "naturalization" of epistemology (no doubt the differend between them bears upon their respective readings of Carnap): for him, meaning is not at all a myth, because it is the very element of philosophy; and symbolic categorization, which is constitutive of rationality, cannot be reduced by behaviorist empiricism to "natural kinds." But Kantian criticism is profoundly transformed in the process: the transcendental aesthetic takes on the new form of a "transcendental semiotic"; logic opens out onto a rhapsodic diversity of concepts in perpetual creation; and deduction also takes a symbolic direction (the operation-object duality). Correlatively, dialectic becomes the

28. Granger, *Essai d'une philosophie du style*. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, 75–83 and 210–16.

29. On Granger's ambivalent relationship to Wittgenstein, see Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, second part ("Critique").

30. See Granger, *Formal Thought and the Sciences of Man*, 148: "Essences, according to the philosophies of consciousness, appear rightly as mediators between the individual and the concept. This is a mythical mediation, for it conjures away both the dialectical nature of the concept and consciousness by making them revolve around a fixed imaginary point."

denunciation of a certain number of semiotic transgressions. Finally, along with history, theory of method takes on an increased importance.[31]Let us add that the existence of formal contents allows Granger to make the distinction between analytic and synthetic meaningful again. For we can trace the progressive birth of formal contents, from logic to mathematics: analyticity is the degree zero of formal content (the pure coincidence of operation and object in logical propositional calculus), and the synthetic begins with the appearance of objects, at first timidly in predicate calculus and heterodox (modal) logics, and then overtly in mathematics. With this concept of "formal contents," which he arrived at in the 1980s, Granger does not seek to restore one of the two dogmas of empiricism, but rather to reestablish the rights of a symbolic transcendental.[32]

Reflexivity at work

This transcendental inflection of analytic thought is only made possible by an effort of philosophical reflection which Granger, very consistently, sought at length to legitimate.[33] But this reflection is neither the mute act of a transcendental subjectivity as in Kant, nor the invisible passage from consciousness to a specular (thetic) dimension that supposedly permits the exploration of a constitutive subjectivity, as in Husserlian phenomenology. For Granger it is instead an operation of language itself, which is manifested on the occasion of a clinical examination of human works. Rather than the reflection of a transcendental subject, we can therefore speak of a reflective capacity of language. And this capacity, which is foundational for the speculative plasticity of discourse, does not derive, as if by magic, from some mysterious property. It is rooted in one of the universals of language: for it is the protological opposition between thema and rhema that allows language to grasp itself as a part of the world, and thus to speak of itself.[34] This metalinguistic function does not coincide with the descriptive program of a *mathesis universalis*, because its approach remains discursive (that is, linked to natural language, and therefore not strictly determinate); what is more, it pertains to an exercise (an effort), not to a simple given that could be objectivated without remainder (as in the computational dream). Yet it is indeed this potentiality that philosophy mobilizes in order to operate its reflexive reformulations.[35] And in so

31. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, 91–93.
32. On the notion of formal content, see Gilles-Gaston Granger, "The Notion of Formal Content," *Social Research* 49, no. 2 (1982): 359–82 and Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, chapter 3.
33. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel,* 125–26.
34. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel,* 104–11.
35. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, 135–43.

far as it constitutes an act that consists in making sense, the thinking of works does not consign itself to being a mere hermeneutics of nonsense.[36]

Moreover, this transcendental dimension of reflexivity is decentered, in so far as it cannot be effectuated a priori but only a posteriori, following the guiding thread of the objectivated traces of human actions deposited in works.[37] And because these works are not objects, philosophy can be a meta-discipline without being a meta-theory (like linguistics or logic, for example). In other words, even if it may sometimes give an illusion of fixity, by way of an effect of stasis,[38] reflexivity is never fixed but is always in movement, because it is condemned to survey singular productions in comparative and casuistic manner. Indeed this is why philosophy, like history, is a wholly stylistic discipline.[39] It is this mobile metadiscursivity that confers upon philosophy an operatory and critical role in relation to other disciplines: in this way, it can extract universals from language,[40] resist reductionist attempts to collapse the symbolic into the biological by way of the concept of duality, seek an ontology, and can play a part in stylistic commentary.[41]

Ricœur and practical existentialism

To understand Ricœur's interest in analytic philosophy, we must refer back to his overall project: that of elaborating a practical philosophy that would be neither a straightforward ethics, nor a science of action.[42] He therefore places the theory of action midway between the human sciences and normative theory—whence a consistent interest in the concept of *agency*. What is more, he indexes this theory of action to a philosophy of language, following the methodical idea

36. On the critique of Wittgenstein's denial of reflexivity, see Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, "Le déficit réflexif de l'herméneutique du non-sens," 126–35.

37. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel,* part one ("Ergologie"), 35–88.

38. In the case of Levi-Strauss's schematism, for example (Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel,* 197–99).

39. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel,* 83–88 and 216–23.

40. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel,* 108. Reflection is philosophical, not empirical, in the sense that the analysis of the empirical data is regressive. See "Contenus formels et dualité," in Gilles-Gaston Granger, *Formes, opération, objet* (Paris: Vrin, 1994), chapter 3.

41. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, 140. Studying the constitution of formal structures allows us to identify a style of energetics, of cybernetics, of balance, etc.; one might also wonder about the application of the structures, in approaching topical problems, of stratification and interpretation.

42. Paul Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action* (Paris: CNRS, 1977), 3–4. This work partly reprises a course given in Chicago and Louvain in 1971, a full version of which has recently been published by Jean-Claude Monod and Catherine Goldenstein (*Le Discours de l'action* [Paris: Fonds Ricœur, 2015]).

that the action of speaking can serve as an action *princeps*, or even as an organon (under the decisive influence of Austin and especially Searle). More precisely, Ricœur has a relationship with analytic philosophy that we might, once again, situate on four planes, each one progressively deeper. With regard to the descriptive nature of linguistic analysis, his strategy consists in complementing this descriptive dimension, which he readily acknowledges, with an insistence on its dialectical capacities. What is more, from his critical reading of the analytic authors he draws a highly sophisticated theory of discourse that allows him to affirm the clinical nature of his normative theory (thinking "the appropriate action"). Finally, the transformations to which he subjects the notion of the transcendental in order to achieve his goals are legitimated by a profound alteration of philosophical reflexivity, which takes a turn toward the desubjectivated and decentered.

Analytic philosophy and dialectical philosophy

If Ricœur did not interest himself in analytic philosophy before the end of the 1960s, it is above all because he was hardly even involved in the theory of language before that point. And for good reason: phenomenology was still indexed on the perceptions of consciousness, which, after an operation of purely eidetic reduction, take the form of a bundle that clarifies, without mediation, a residue of world (a structure of appearing). Phenomenology is therefore merely a "phenomeny." It was not until Ricœur became interested in the creative imagination (the key to his unfinished trilogy on the philosophy of the will), whose objectivated forms are legible in a symbolism (that of evil, in the case of Ricœur's study) that his attention was drawn to mediations of appearing, and in particular to language. Phenomeny could then become a phenomeno-*logy*[43] detached from Husserlian thought. It is between 1965 and 1975 that Ricœur developed his philosophy of language, in the form of a theory of discourse,[44] at a time when most French philosophy was also circling this question.[45] In doing so he

43. See *Le Discours philosophique de l'action: Projet d'enseignement au collège de France* (1969) (Paris: Fonds Ricœur, 2015).

44. Philippe Lacour, "Diskursivität. Zur *logischen* Erklärung der Hermeneutik Ricœurs," in *Energeia – Online Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft und Sprachphilosophie*, November 2009, http://www.romling.uni-tuebingen.de/energeia/zeitschrift/2009/diskursivitaet.html.

45. For example we could cite Foucault's effort to thematize a pragmatics of enunciations without the category of truth-representation, in *The Order of Discourse* and "The Thought from Outside"; Derrida's essay on metaphor (which led to a vigorous debate with Ricœur at the Montreal colloquium in 1971); the critique of the consensual presuppositions of pragmatics by Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Poulain; and of course structural linguistics and its semiotic declensions (Greimas).

turned to numerous authors, including many analytical thinkers: philosophers (Strawson, Derrida, Grice, Russell, Frege, Austin, Searle), linguists (Saussure, Benveniste, Guillaume, Chomsky, Greimas), and literary theorists (Jauss and Weinrich, among others)—not to mention authors of the hermeneutic tradition (Schleiermacher and Gadamer in particular). The fundamental thing that Ricœur retains from this first confrontation with the analytic authors relates essentially to the two definitions of discourse that he gives:

> (a) someone says something to someone about something according to (phonetic, lexical, syntactical, stylistic) rules.[46](b) I enumerate the basic polarities of discourse in the following condensed way: event and meaning, singular identification and general predication, propositional act and illocutionary act, sense and reference, reference to reality and reference to the interlocutors.[47]

The way in which these definitions are both inspired by and break with structuralism is well known. Let us simply remark that Ricœur partly adopts Granger's point of view as far as stylistic rules are concerned (which offers him a way to integrate into his definition a reflection on the formalization of language, as a particular case of structuralism); and that he insists on the meaning-effects proper to distanciation (which extend the individuation of the work into a becoming-text).

This approach, informed as much by his familiarity with the hermeneutic tradition (and its insistence on the holism of signification) as by structuralism, allows him implicitly to critique two rather major presuppositions of analytic philosophy. The first postulate is that of the *compositionality* of meaning, which makes the proposition an unsurpassable semantic unit, to the detriment of the transphrastic, whereas it is in fact the latter that constitutes the true dimension of discourse. This is why Ricœur, following Granger, insists upon the notion of the work ("a sequence longer than the sentence, which gives rise to a new problem of understanding relative to the final and closed totality which constitutes the work as such.")[48] For it is at this level, also called the hyperphrastic, that distinctions can be made between those genres of discourse that are rhetoric, poetics, and

46. Paul Ricœur, *Réflexion faite: Autobiographie intellectuelle* (Paris: Esprit, 1995), 39. This definition is largely inspired by an interpretation of the work of Benvéniste. Ricœur is nevertheless at pains to show that it is compatible with Jakobson's celebrated model: *someone (sender) says (contact) something (message) about something (reference) according to rules (code) to someone (recipient)*" (Ricœur, *Le Discours de l'action*, 16).

47. Paul Ricœur, "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics," *New Literary History* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1974): 95–110, here 98.

48. Paul Ricœur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," *Philosophy Today* 17, no. 2 (1973): 129–141, here 134.

hermeneutics (none of which can have preeminence over the others).[49] The second postulate concerns the *referential* conception of semantics which, although it quite rightly reminds us of the ontological vocation of language, no doubt neglects the differential dimension of meaning—something upon which, on the contrary, the entire structuralist movement insists.

If Ricœur's main overlap with the analytic authors concerns his definition of discourse, for him this definition is only the first stage in a theory of action (itself destined to serve as a basis for a normative philosophy). This is why the second confrontation concerns the semantics of action.[50] For the new philosophical project involves the "description and analysis of discourses in which man says what he does," a *logical* space as distinct from that of a science of action as it is from that of an ethics.[51] Ricœur's problem, then, while recognizing the fecundity of the classical works of authors such as Elizabeth Anscombe, Charles Taylor, Anthony Kenny, Peter Winch, and Joel Feinberg (among others), is how to surpass certain limitations linked to the overly *descriptive* nature of the analytical enterprise. In fact, this analysis of the "discourses via which man says what he does," according to Ricœur, proceeds via a threefold examination: the study of (a) concepts, (b) propositions, and (c) arguments. First of all, the conceptual analysis (a) establishes "the primary notions or categories without which we cannot give to action its meaning as action."[52] These are the concepts of intention, aim, reason for acting, desire, motive, preferences, agent, choice, and responsibility, which function "as a network" and "without which one would not be able to endow action with its sense as action." It is this conceptual network that, alongside the symbolic and temporal resources of the practical field, constitutes the mimesis$_1$ of *Time and Narrative*[53]—in other words, it designates the preunderstanding of the world of action upon which properly narrative understanding (the capacity to "follow"

49. Paul Ricœur, "Rhetoric—Poetics—Hermeneutics," in Michael Meyer, ed., *From Metaphysics to Rhetoric* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1989), 137–49.

50. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action*. In fact, this work stems from notes from a seminar that took place between 1973 and 1977. This study served as a basis for the mimesis$_1$ of *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), as well as the first studies in *Oneself as Another*.

51. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action*, 5: this is a study "prior to ethics itself," and thus "abstracted from the praise and blame with which [man] describes his actions in terms of morality." Similarly, *Oneself as Another* subordinates the normative to a semantics, a pragmatics, and a poetics of action (studies 3, 4 and 5–6).

52. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action*, 5.

53. Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, 70–74 (structural traits), 74– 77 (symbolic resources) and 77–84 (temporal resources). Although the temporal traits are privileged in this trilogy, as the title indicates, it is important to emphasize that, from the point of view of Ricœur's overall project (a philosophy of action) they remain one component of the practical field among others.

a narrative) will be built.[54] Subsequently, the propositional analysis (b) studies action phrases, deliberately stopping short of the transphrastic level of discourse. Here it is a matter of examining the "propositional structure within which these concepts [of action] are contained."[55] Ricœur thus relies essentially upon the theory of speech acts and the distinction between the locutionary (to which the traditional theory of the proposition limits itself), illocutionary, and perlocutionary components of language. Ricœur strongly emphasizes that "conceptual analysis and the theory of statements do not exhaust the resources and directives of the discourse of action."[56] Finally, the study of arguments (c) constitutes a last threshold of analysis. And it is this last level that Ricœur calls "properly discursive," that of the "very discursivity of discourses."[57] For the statement "A does N" in fact only responds to a limited question, and not to the questions *Why*? *So as to achieve what?*, which would imply the investigation of (means-end) sequences. And it is these sequences that are truly discursive, punctual statements being only the terminal point of their concatenations.[58] It is therefore in this transphrastic dimension that the decisive cut is made, by establishing the level of the *configuration* of discourse (mimesis$_2$). What is more, this level constitutes the most important factor in polysemy,[59] which is what provokes reflection (see below). In fact, the first two types of analysis belong to what Ricœur calls the

54. Although Ricœur speaks of a conceptual network rather than a concept of action, it is "in order to emphasize the fact that the very term 'action,' taken in the narrow sense of what someone does, gets its distinct meaning from its capacity for being used in conjunction with other terms of the whole network" (*Time and Narrative*, 55). The notion of "network" thus functions to semantically *identify* action: "to employ any one of these terms in a significant fashion, within a situation of questions and answers, is to be capable of linking that term to every other term of the same set. In this sense, all the members of the set are in a relation of intersignification. To master the conceptual network as a whole, and each term as one member of the set, is to have that competence we can call practical understanding." (*Time and Narrative*, 110), which is presupposed by narrative comprehension (mimesis$_2$). By mastering the network, in particular, one distinguishes the semantics of action from the semantics of physical movement (*Time and Narrative*, 7).

55. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action*, 8.

56. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action,* 10. And this even if *La Sémantique de l'action* essentially seeks to bring these two methods into convergence (9). In this sense, this work serves as prolegomena to the *discursive* analysis of action, whose *poetic* dimension is explored in *Time and Narrative* (and, to a lesser degree, *The Rule of Metaphor*.)

57. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action*, 10. In a certain sense, with this phrase Ricœur distinguishes the degree zero of discourse.

58. The same idea returns in *Time and Narrative*, 56: "narrative is not limited to making use of our familiarity with the conceptual network of action. It adds to it discursive features that distinguish it from a simple sequence of action sentences." And later, in "Événement et sens," in Jean-Luc Petit, ed., *Raisons pratiques 2: L'Événement en perspective* (Paris: EHESS, 1991): "Basically, in the semantics and pragmatics of action, it is hardly ever a question of anything other than action phrases; one can hardly apprehend the connection of even the least complex actions without making a story about them."

59. Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (London: Athlone, 1991), 177–78.

"descriptive and analytic"[60] examination of the discourse of action, which aims to clarify, distinguish, and make lists and inventories—in short, to "establish differences."[61] On the contrary, the hyperphrastic dimension of arguments refers to "constitutive and dialectical" examination, which analyzes "passages" and "compositions," and concerns the "discourse of meaningful action."[62] Now, it is the text that, when we highlight its compositional procedures, constitutes the model of symbolically mediated action.[63] We must also remark that, as far as its descriptive nature is concerned, Anglophone language analysis is comparable to Husserlian phenomenology: both "are opposed to the dialectical method."[64] To a great extent, what necessarily obliges us to pass from the analytical discourse of action to a dialectical approach is the difficulties encountered in speaking the body, and in particular desire.[65]

The clinical vocation

Like Granger's enterprise, Ricœur's project aims to shift rationality in a clinical direction by paying particular attention to the individual, in a threefold sense. First, at one extreme of his efforts, at the level of the philosophy of language, Ricœur adopts Granger's definition of the work (and of the role played by style), but greatly extends this concern by considering the text itself as an individual (or rather, as a process of individuation) that requires an interpretative reflective judgment. Subsequently, we might say that, at the other extreme of his program, on the normative level, Ricœur also has the individual in his sights, in the sense that he seeks to determine "the appropriate action," a function of both personal want and the application of rules. To which we might add that, here once again, in determining how the norm is to be applied, an interpretative dimension must be brought in to complete the role of argumentation, emphasized in different ways by Perelman and Habermas.

In between these two poles, at the level of the theory of action, the question of the individual once again plays a fundamental role, in the form of the question of causality. The individual is envisioned as (historical) *event*, knowledge of which requires a singular causal attribution. The latter plays the role of a *nexus* between

60. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action,* 128.
61. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action,* 116.
62. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action,* 128.
63. See Ricœur, "The Model of the Text," in *From Text to Action*.
64. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action*, 116.
65. Ibid. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action,* 131: "the conquest of one's own body and through it of the intelligibility that belongs to it qua mode of being leads far further than one might think at first," bringing to light the "limits of the analytical and descriptive discourse of action."

nomological explanation and comprehension, the relation between which is complementary: hermeneutics is not so much opposed to science as it encompasses science ("to explain more is to understand better").[66] And yet this procedure supposes a transformation of the notion of causality: rather than Hume's conception (contiguity, temporal anteriority, regularity) Ricœur prefers an alternative definition (conditionality, processuality, singularity) that, in particular, allows one to account for a principal feature of existentialism:[67] the passivity of the subject (and of the grammar of affection), too often neglected by the analytic theorists of action.[68] Thus understood, causality also signals toward a fundamental *power to act*. Considered as primitive (but not raw) fact and progressively approached via the aporia of ascription,[69] this causality of the agent manifests itself in the form of initiative, which differs somewhat from von Wright's "intervention."[70] In his quasi-causal model, Wright juxtaposes rather than conjoins systemic moments. Ricœur argues from this failure of the extension of the model of action to history, in order to bring to light the existence of a poetic transcendental: in so far as plot is an overall narrative comprehension that is interrupted by causal explanations, it is the condition of possibility for quasi-causal explanation.

Discursive dismembering of the transcendental

In a certain sense the encounter with analytic philosophy provokes a break in Ricœur's conception of the transcendental. It is no longer indexed on a constituting subject. Certainly, Ricœur never really subscribed to the transcendental turn of Husserlian phenomenology (the reduction used in *Philosophy of the Will* would be purely eidetic, with a descriptive aim). But although he conceives of

66. Paul Ricœur, *Du texte à l'action: Essais d'herméneutique II* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 236 [omitted in English translation].

67. Mounier, "The Revealed Type of Life," in *Existentialist Philosophies.* See the arguments on the ambivalence (both objective and subjective) of action, which makes any systematization impossible.

68. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 77–78: "If [. . .] the phenomenology of wanting demands a new model of the idea of motivation that will take into account the dimension of passivity correlative to the action of doing, a similar overhaul of the idea of cause that dissociates it from the Humean model would also appear to be necessary. [. . .] It is the very grammar of [. . .] the concept of affect [. . .] which requires that we articulate the intentional character of action onto a type of causal explanation that conforms to it." On Ricœur's alternative definition of causality, see Lacour "Pourquoi cela est-il arrivé? L'explication causale de l'événement chez Paul Ricœur", section I, "L'effort pour élaborer une conception 'non-humienne' de la causalité," *Methodos* 17 (2017) [online], available at: http://journals.openedition.org/methodos/4810; DOI: 10.4000/methodos.4810

69. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 98: the transcendental dimension of pragmatics (anchorage) ultimately relates to the body itself.

70. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 135.

the cogito as "shattered," he remains largely faithful to the Kantian idea of a transcendental as condition of possibility of experience. Nonetheless, the categories of this transcendental are now indexed on the logical properties of discourse: semantic, pragmatic, poetic.[71] And it is these three dimensions that are mobilized in the development of his concept of causality: first identified in discourse, they are then highlighted within the discourse of action.

As far as semantics is concerned, first, Ricœur in fact strives to endow the teleological explanation elucidated by Charles Taylor with a transcendental (and thus necessary) dimension, by trying to make it into a transcendental deduction, on the basis of expressions of current language.[72] In so doing he strives to follow Strawson's model of perception: the latter shows that "the operations of identifying predication and description are impossible unless we suppose an organization of experience in terms of basic particulars such as bodies and persons."[73] Now, "the categories of language that govern the discourse of action call for the same type of foundation."[74] In fact, "[t]he epistemology of teleological causality is thus the explanation of the insurmountable nature of ordinary language."[75]

As far as pragmatics is concerned, Ricœur strives here too to put a transcendental spin on various remarks by theorists of language and action. In fact, this is the decisive contribution of *Oneself as Another* (1991) in relation to that incomplete essay that is *The Semantics of Action* (1977): in the earlier study Ricœur limited himself to identifying the manifestations of pragmatics in semantics, following Austin and Searle; whereas in his later, major work he adopts Granger's argument from anchorage (which dates from 1979)[76] and extends it into an aporia. In fact, Granger endows Wittgenstein's remark on the "I" as limit of the world with a far stronger systematic depth, since he integrates it into the "universals" of language, which he identifies under the name of "protological conditions," and which constitute one of the endpoints of his program for the systematic comparison of the properties of natural and formal symbolisms.[77] The critique of

71. Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 142: "plot is to quasi-causal explanation what the assurance of our ability to do something was earlier to an agent's interfering in a nomic system, and what intentionality was to teleological explanation." See also Lacour "Pourquoi cela est-il arrivé?," section II "Infléchissement logico-transcendantal de l'analyse de la causalité."

72. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 78–79.

73. Ricœur, *La Sémantique de l'action*, 12.

74. Ibid.

75. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 79; "Classifying an action as intentional is determining by what type of law it is to be explained and, by the same token, ruling out a certain type of explanation. In other words, it is deciding on the form of the law that governs the action and at the same time ruling out the possibility that this is a mechanical law. Here, describing and explaining coincide. [. . .] explanation is a redescription of the goal in view."

76. Gilles-Gaston Granger, *Langages et épistémologie* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1979).

77. Lacour, *La Nostalgie de l'individuel*, 104–11.

Recanati's discursive pseudo-reflexivity in *Oneself as Another* depends directly upon this: for Recanati tries to relate reflexivity to the fact of enunciation, as to a subtle form of reference, whereas the transcendental perspective requires it instead to be linked to the ego of the enunciation. Alongside the teleological explanation, anchorage thus constitutes the other condition of possibility for a discourse of action.

It is in the determination of the third transcendental pole of this discourse that Ricœur's dialectical originality is most evident. Numerous theorists and epistemologists of history (and of causality) are called upon: Dray and von Wright on explanation without lawfulness, Danto on the narrative sentence, Mackie for his empiricist theory of causality (which Granger also studied), and Mandelbaum on explanation in history. Just as poetics was identified as a dimension of discourse (understood in the broad, transphrastic sense, and hence inclusive of the dimension of the text), plot is considered as a condition of possibility for the discourse of action. It is the analysis of the notion of causality, extended to the field of history, that allows this point to be emphasized: through a poetic replica, emplotment resolves the problem of ascription which the (semantic and pragmatic) analysis of action phrases brought to light.[78]

Two remarks are necessary here, which allow us to link the profound inflection of the transcendental to the philosophy of language. First, it is the constitutive (and dialectical) dimension of discourse that will take up the baton from the exhaustion of descriptive (and analytical) discourse.[79] In other words, the role of the dialectical is clearly to complement the analytical. Subsequently, if this resolution of the problem of ascription via plot is "provisional," it is because the logical solution still awaits its ontological elucidation (the analogical unity of acting). If language is therefore by no means condemned to an analytical dimension alone, it is because it is also liable to be carried by its own reflexive capacities[80]

78. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 147: "Confronted with the third Kantian antinomy, ascription appears to be torn between the thesis, which posits the idea of beginning a causal series, and the antithesis, which opposes to the former the idea of a sequence without beginning or interruption. The narrative resolves the antinomy in its own way, on the one hand, by granting to the character an initiative—that is, the power to begin a series of events, without this beginning thereby constituting an absolute beginning, a beginning of time—and on the other hand, by assigning to the narrative as such the power of determining the beginning, the middle, and the end of an action. By making the initiative belonging to the character coincide in this way with the beginning of the action, the narrative satisfies the thesis without violating the antithesis. Under its multiple aspects, it constitutes the poetic reply provided by the notion of narrative identity to the aporias of ascription."

79. Ibid.: "I am purposefully returning to the term 'poetic reply' that was used in *Time and Narrative* 3 to express the relation between the aporias of time and the narrative function. I said then that the narrative function did not provide a speculative response to these aporias but made them productive on another order of language."

80. The reflexive capacity of language is highlighted by the study of translation. See Paul Ricœur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), and in particular the article "The Paradigm of Translation," 11–29.

to a higher power, not only dialectical but also fully metaphysical.[81] In proposing this, Ricœur is only following the direction of Strawson's thought, identifying basic particulars, albeit on the basis of a far richer and more complex conception of language.

This transcendental approach is as opposed to empiricism as it is to "grammatical" deflationism. In many regards, the Wittgensteinian opposition between reason and cause, for example, flows from a certain, debatable manner of philosophizing, in so far as this simple dichotomy tends both to "pacify" and to "dissipate" the problem. The difficulty perhaps resides in a conceptual paralysis dissimulated under cover of an apparent liberalism:

> All language games possessing an equal right to exist, philosophy then no longer has the task of articulating, hierarchizing, and organizing knowledge but instead of preserving the difference between heterogeneous language games. This seemingly conciliating position is in fact untenable.[82]

Ricœur pleads for a *reflexive* and *discursive* conception of philosophy, against the multiform impotence of ordinary language analysis to reflect upon itself and to say in which language game one speaks of ordinary language; against its inability to demonstrate that the language described is something other than a contingent linguistic configuration; and, finally, against the Wittgensteinian dogma of the impossibility of classification because the family resemblances of one language game to another exclude any subordination of species to genera.

Reflexivity, in the course of interpretation

Of course we can find among Ricœur's principal teachers (Jean Nabert, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers) ample sources for his philosophy's reflective inspiration. This anecdotal argument however is not sufficient warrant for the coherence of his approach. The latter is far better secured by going back to his project for a *transcendental logic of polysemy*. In spite of numerous ambiguities, which would subsequently be progressively removed, it is in his book on Freud that we discover the origins of Ricœur's efforts to desubjectivate and decenter the notion of reflection, while founding its necessity radically, as the condition of possibility

81. Analytical philosophy is, certainly, already metaphysical (for example in Strawson). But Ricœur insists on the fact that this metaphysics must be based upon a theory of language that is coherent and complete (including both its analytical and dialectical dimensions).

82. Paul Ricœur, "Explanation and Understanding: On Some Remarkable Connections Between the Theory of Texts, Action Theory, and the Theory of History," in *From Text to Action*, 12–43.

of an objective fact.[83] This fact is not so much the plurivocity of natural language as a whole as that of the language of the symbol[84] and of the text.[85] For language cannot be equivocal in its entirety, otherwise the idea of interpretation as a mode of thought *specific* to language would become meaningless. But what is important is to admit the existence of cases of polysemy within language itself, without attributing them to some external level, psychological interpretation for example. It is this *fact of polysemy* that Ricœur identifies in the symbolic functioning of psychoanalytic, poetic, and even religious language,[86] and (later) in texts.

But how does he justify this? In 1965,[87] Ricœur's idea is that symbol and interpretation can be defined in terms of each other.[88] This implies that interpretation is conceived neither as vericonditional and univocal determination of signification,[89] nor as analogical exegesis, but as a competition of interpretations.[90]

83. Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1970).

84. Cassirer makes the symbol the universal mediation between man and world—what Ricœur prefers to call "sign" or "signifying function." Ricœur at the time uses a narrower definition of a symbol, so as to preserve a difference between equivocity and multivocity. According to him, it is from this distinction that the hermeneutical problem arises. He therefore limits "the notion of symbol to double- or multiple-meaning expressions whose semantic texture is correlative to the work of interpretation that explicates their second or multiple meanings" (*Freud and Philosophy*, 13). Its definition is, however, wider than that of analogy, which is a relation that is difficult to thematize, in so far as it remains adherent to its terms.

85. Paul Ricœur, "On Interpretation," in *From Text to Action*, 3. Speaking twenty years later of his initial idea of a restriction of hermeneutics to the interpretation of symbols, Ricœur describes that this definition then appears to him "too narrow," for two reasons: first, because "no symbolism, whether traditional or private, can display its resources of multiple meaning (plurivocity) outside appropriate contexts, that is to say, within the framework of an entire text, of a poem, for example"; and then because "the same symbolism can give rise to competitive—even diametrically opposed—interpretations," [. . .] But this conflict of interpretations is also to be found at the level of texts" (16–17).

86. The 1965 essay on Freud follows a study dedicated to *The Symbolism of Evil* (1960) and precedes the poetic analyses of *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975).

87. By adding the dimension of the text to that of the symbol, Ricœur's hermeneutics only further complicates this fact of polysemy. From this point of view, the 1965 proposition can therefore serve as a guiding thread, even if Ricœur later let it go (on the question of double sense, the "hidden" sense).

88. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 18: "A symbol exists, I shall say, where linguistic expression lends itself by its double or multiple meanings to a work of interpretation. What gives rise to this work is an intentional structure which consists not in the relation of meaning to thing but in an architecture of meaning, in a relation of meaning to meaning, of second meaning to first meaning, regardless of whether that relation be one of analogy or not, or whether the first meaning disguises or reveals the second meaning. This texture is what makes interpretation possible, although the texture itself is made evident only through the actual movement of interpretation." Let us once more insist upon the fact that Ricœur has abandoned this hermeneutics of double meaning, doubtless under the influence of Granger's critiques (in his *Essai d'une philosophie du style*). His definitive version is a hermeneutics not of the hidden but of the plurivocal.

89. In Aristotle, Ricœur remarks, the logical orientation reduces the question of sense to that of the vericonditional semantics of predication, and univocity is assured by the *essential* founding of signification (the *tode ti*); nonetheless, these characterizations are counterbalanced by the thesis of the plurivocity of being.

90. *Freud and Philosophy* speaks of the restoration of meaning *and* the exercise of doubt (27–36).

Interpretation is reflexive, involving a certain *reciprocity* between reflection and symbol. On one hand, the symbol incites us to think, because its signifying structure is overdetermined, because it takes the form of a myth and because it belongs to a signifying totality;[91] the semantics of multiple meanings thus calls for reflection. On the other hand, reflection supposes a passage via the analysis of its works and its acts.[92] And because the signification of works is "dubitable and revocable," reflection appeals to interpretation: the "primitive connection between the act of existing and the signs we deploy in our works" prevents one from "grasp[ing] the act of existence except in signs scattered in the world." This is why reflection takes the long route of hermeneutics.[93]

The hermeneutic problem is thus born of this encounter between the reflexive need for symbolic language and the recourse of reflection to interpretation.[94] Ricœur depends upon this reciprocity to argue for the *transcendental* nature of the logic of plurivocity. Even if his proposed criteria of demarcation from formal symbolism are clumsy,[95] his argument remains pertinent: the "incurable" ambiguity of natural language has to be taken seriously. Now, the conditions of possibility of multivocal symbolism are not those of univocal symbolism.[96] To consider polysemy as a fact, and as a fact that is not amenable to reduction by the absolute precision of formal symbolism, therefore necessarily implies considering it, from a transcendental perspective, as an *a priori* of reflection.[97] Only by exhuming the intimate bond between reflection and polysemy can one preserve

91. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 37–42.

92. For Ricœur, reflection is not immediate intuition (evidence), but mediation. Moreover, its importance cannot be limited to epistemological critique alone, as in Kant, who makes it a justification for science and for duty. Ricœur adopts from Nabert the idea of reflection as reappropriation of the effort of existing and of the desire for being, through works which testify to this effort and this desire (*Freud and Philosophy*, 42–46).

93. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 46: "a reflective philosophy must include the results, methods, and presuppositions of all the sciences that try to decipher and interpret the signs of man."

94. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 42: "what makes [the] recourse [of symbols to reflection] intelligible is reflection's recourse to symbols."

95. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 49–52. Formal symbolism does not admit of degrees; it is opposed to natural language as the linear is opposed to the multiple, precision to ambiguity, the informative and expressive function to the directive functions. The blind spot of such an opposition, as Granger's work underlines, is the existence of mathematics (which, notably, is not empty).

96. The importance of formal symbolism lies in its absolute univocity (although there are aberrations—and this is the whole meaning of a *history* of mathematics for Granger—they are only provisional).

97. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 52: "Transcendental logic is not exhausted in the Kantian a priori. The connection we have established between reflection upon the *I think*, *I am* qua act, and the signs scattered in the various cultures of that act of existing, opens up a new field of experience, objectivity, and reality. This is the field to which the logic of double meaning pertains—a logic we have qualified above as complex but not arbitrary, and rigorous in its articulations."

hermeneutics from the reproach of "complacency" in the face of ambiguity.[98] In addition, polysemy is an obstacle to any *general* hermeneutics.[99] In fact, the transcendental logic of polysemy roots multiple conflictual interpretations *together* in reflection.[100] The following passage from Ricœur is particularly lucid and dense:

> This appeal to an interpretation that proceeds from symbols assures us that a reflection upon symbols falls within a philosophy of language and even within a philosophy of reason [. . .]. In hermeneutics symbols have their own semantics, they stimulate an intellectual activity of deciphering, of finding a hidden meaning. Far from falling outside the bounds of language, they raise feeling to meaningful articulation. Thus "avowal" has seemed to me a word that tears feeling from its mute opacity; all the stages of feeling can thus be marked off by semantic stages. Symbols are not a non-language; the split between univocal and plurivocal language extends across the empire of language. That which reveals the richness or overdetermination of meaning and demonstrates that symbols belong to integral discourse is the work, perhaps interminable, of interpretation.[101]

Many of Ricœur's texts written far later echo this initial inquiry on reflection. First, in insisting on translation between languages, he in fact highlights:

> [. . .] other more hidden features concerning the practical experience of language, features that will lead us [. . .] into the vicinity of intralinguistic translation processes, namely [. . .] the reflexive capacity of language, that possibility, always on hand, of speaking on the subject of language, of placing it at a distance, and in this way of treating our own language as one language among others.[102]

In this way, external translation signals toward a fundamental property of language (and, by extension only, of subjectivity): "this massive fact characteristic of the use of our languages," namely that "it is always possible *to say the same thing in another way*."[103] And finally, let us emphasize the necessarily mobile nature of reflexivity, which cannot close itself up into a completed totality (notably, this is the meaning of the "renunciation of Hegel"): "the expression 'having reflected' [. . .] must not be confused with the sentence 'having taken everything into account.' Reflection, even redoubled, never closes up to give a final summation."[104]

98. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 52: "In the eyes of the logician, hermeneutics will always be suspected of fostering a culpable complacency toward equivocal meanings, of surreptitiously giving an informative function to expressions that have merely an emotive or hortatory function."

99. The aporias of interpretation are those of reflection itself: the contingency of cultures against a claim to universality, equivocation versus rigor, conflicting interpretations against coherency.

100. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 56.

101. Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 19.

102. Ricœur, "The Paradigm of Translation," 13.

103. Ricœur, "The Paradigm of Translation," 25.

104. Ricœur, *Réflexion faite*, foreword.

Portrait of the philosopher as a judoka

As we can see, although it ended in apparent failure in so far as it did not bring about an immediate confrontation, the Royaumont Colloquium was not without consequences, since it stimulated certain fruitful intersections. It forced French philosophy, having taken the full measure of the analytic challenge, to respond to it. The encounter did indeed take place, on the terrain of the notion of *meaning*: the meaning of human actions, beginning with the action of speaking, does not reside primarily in the consciousness of the agent, but in the objective trace the agent leaves in the world. Whence the double necessity of a philosophy of language (and of symbolism): it is necessary because it forces reflection to leave the comfort of the quasi-*direct* access to meaning promised by phenomenology (via reduction), and because it serves as prolegomena to a theory of action (and to a practical philosophy). Given this twofold nature, the response of French philosophers to the analytic interpellation is indeed related to *existentialism*, both because the domain of existence greatly overflows that of consciousness, and because it cannot be explored without a method or guiding thread. Whence the interdependency of the four different strands discussed above: the subversion of the primacy of analysis, the clinical inflection of rationality, the maintenance and desubjectivation of the transcendental, and, finally, the decentering of reflexivity.

The method of the two philosophers belongs to dialectical argument: in placing oneself on the terrain of the adversary and adopting his approach, but with greater rigor, one develops another logic that surpasses analytic description and, extending it to action in coherent (transcendental) fashion, one can deploy a profoundly renewed practical rationality. On an even more fundamental level, the approach of Ricœur and Granger can be compared to that of the judoka. Both respond to the challenge of analytic philosophy with a technique at once inventive, rigorous, and flexible, by using the adversary's own force against them. But where Granger sidesteps, Ricœur absorbs the opponent's blows. Ricœur begins by capturing the opponent's energy (integrating the achievements of discursive description), but tries to continue his movement in a new direction (the dialectical dimension of discourse), which inevitably brings about an imbalance (this is the transcendental "hold" itself). As for Granger, he begins by sidestepping the analytic technique, displacing its philosophical center of gravity onto a comparison of formal and natural symbolisms: the imbalance comes just as easily, and, here again, the "hold" is transcendental, made possible by the very reflexivity of the critical project.

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