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# The miracle of memory: Working-through Ricœur on Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*

Abstract: Paul Ricœur's presentation of "Consciousness and the Unconscious" at a colloquium in Bonneval from 1960 cannot make sense until afterwards, which is fundamental to Freud's notion of *Nachträglichkeit*, often translated as *après*coup or afterwardsness. This chapter is an uncovering of the Freudian concept of Nachträglichkeit in Ricœur's own philosophical biography and writing. A reading of Freud's text from 1914 ("Remembering, Repeating, Working-Through") reveals how the work of mourning and the work of memory were already interlaced from Freedom and Nature to Living Up to Death. If Descartes is right about the cogito, then there cannot be a distinction between the two concepts of consciousness and an unconscious, and the après-coup cannot exist. But Freud's notion of working-through (perlaboration) finds a possible way out of this impasse. The little miracle of memory, the opposite of which is repetition toward compulsion (or hell), may resurrect the dead. The underworlds of Homer, Virgil, and Dante are taken up in 20th-century philosophy and psychoanalysis. At the core of this philosophical or psychological work is Ricœur's powerful claim: "consciousness is not given but a task."

> δοκῶ μοι περὶ ὧν πυνθάνεσθε οὐκ ἀμελέτητος εἶναι Plato, Symposium

And in the dismal litany of these names, which were full of sand and salt and too much empty, breezy space [...] which to this day, when they drift up like gas bubbles from the depths of memory, retain their full specific virtue, though they have to traverse one after another the many different layers of other mediums before reaching the surface.

Proust, À la recherche de temps perdu

#### 1 Introduction

To tell a story about the middle of Paul Ricœur's life is to speak of the *Colloque sur l'inconscient* at the former Benedictine monastery in Bonneval, France in the

autumn of 1960.<sup>1</sup> Although the relevance and meaning of his talk at Bonneval, entitled "Consciousness and the Unconscious," would be delayed,<sup>2</sup> the groundwork for his remarks had been laid a decade earlier. In Freedom and Nature, his first real foray into psychoanalysis, Ricœur explores the distinction between the voluntary and the involuntary. In this analysis he discovers the crisis at the core of the relationship between philosophy and psychoanalysis. The crisis of consciousness occurs in its relation to the unconscious. Psychoanalysis holds a realist conception of the unconscious whereas phenomenology holds a realism of the cogito. But neither of these views are sufficient for the crisis. The debate between energetics and hermeneutics, as Richard Bernstein has recently shown, contributes to the crisis.3 This means that there are two distinct sides to Freud's system. On the one hand, a scientific, medical, and physiological basis of memory composes the energetics. On the other hand, the hermeneutic aspect is made up of an interpretative, metaphysical, and philosophical realm. Neither of these systems can be reduced to the other. Freud's way of thinking opposes a Cartesian interpretation, in the sense that for Descartes one cannot become conscious after-the-event [Nachträglichkeit]. This notion of "after-the-event" is located at the intersection of body (energetics) and mind (hermeneutics) but also at the intersection of the two kinds of memory, what psychologists call episodic and procedural memory.5

<sup>1</sup> Ricœur also published two important works on the Philosophy of Will in 1960, collectively titled *Finitude and Culpability.* See Ricœur, *L'homme faillible / Fallible Man* and *La Symbolique du Mal / The Symbolism of Evil.* 

<sup>2</sup> During Ricœur's presentation on November 2, 1960, in Bonneval, there was a discussion that "was eliminated from the published volume of Bonneval colloquium at [Lacan's] request." See Ricœur, *La critique et la conviction*, 107–108 / *Critique and Conviction*, 68–69. A discussion of the colloquium can be found in the following sources: Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*, 398–405; Green, "Paul Ricœur à Bonneval"; Simms, *Ricœur and Lacan*, 7–8; Dosse, *Paul Ricœur: Les sens d'une vie*, 291–293; and Lery-Lachaume, "Ricœur, Lacan, et le défi de l'inconscient," 72–86.

<sup>3</sup> Bernstein, "Ricœur's Freud."

**<sup>4</sup>** Two recent interpretations of this notion, both from within the psychoanalytic field, are helpful: Eickhoff, "On *Nachträglichkeit*," and Stern, "Unformulated experience, dissociation, and *Nachträglichkeit*." See also Lacan, *Écrits* 256 / *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, 213. With this text, since it has the same title in both languages, the French page number will be followed by the English.

**<sup>5</sup>** Without naming them, Paul Ricœur comments on "two kinds of memory" in *La mémoire*, 550 / *Memory*, 424. Slightly earlier, he claims, "either I speak of neurons and so forth, and I confine myself to a certain language, or else I talk about thoughts, actions, feelings, and I tie them to my body, with which I am in a relation of possession, of belonging. We can credit Descartes with having carried the problem of epistemological dualism to its critical point" (Ricœur, *La mémoire*,

When a person uses the word memory in ordinary language, they are often confounding these two senses of memory. Episodic memory, also called autobiographical or declarative memory, refers to how one remembers the location of one's keys or what happened in one's childhood. According to Daniel Hutto, episodic memory is "a form of recreative or simulative imagining that enables us to construct and entertain possible episodes." For episodic memory, no substantial difference exists between imagining and remembering. Procedural memory, on the other hand, is the kind of involuntary neuronal "muscle memory" needed for riding a bike or tying one's shoes. For procedural memory, one cannot recall an image or reconstruct an event since these are "built in" to our bodies. Even language or music, as will be seen below, bridge these two kinds of memory.

"Recollection always presupposes a reconstruction," Dmitri Nikulin writes,<sup>7</sup> but, in a sense, episodic memory appears to be conscious and voluntary whereas procedural memory unconscious or at least involuntary. While the psychoanalytic conception would naturally theorize something like procedural memory, as it is neurological or biological in origin and cannot become conscious, the phenomenological account holds that memory is only accessible to consciousness and thus to rational scrutiny. Ricœur will show that these two types of memory, while not the same in access, are really one and the same in origin.

While autobiographical memory and declarative memory are forms of episodic memory, neither capture remembering, say, before the age of four.<sup>8</sup> Episodic memory is implicit and becomes procedural memory, as when "acting out." Ricœur de-naturalizes memory by critiquing the realism of the unconscious. While phenomenologists in general focus only on one of these kinds of memories (episodic), Freud thought the farther back one goes, the more powerful the memory, even if it is not easily accessible to consciousness. Whereas in empiricism, Locke and Hume claim the further you go back, the weaker the memory. While the distinction between episodic and autobiographical memory is important for psychologists and for accessing memory, many philosophers and psychoanalysts collapse the distinction. This paper will work-through Ricœur and Freud on the difference between philosophy and psychology on memory.

<sup>545 /</sup> Memory, 420). See also the discussion of memory in Deckard and Williamson, "Virtual identity crisis."

<sup>6</sup> Hutto, "Memory and Narrativity." See also Dessingué, "Paul Ricœur," and Dmitri Nikulin, "Introduction."

<sup>7</sup> Nikulin, "Introduction," 9.

<sup>8</sup> Hutto, "Memory and Narrativity," 194-195. See also Nelson, "Narrative and the Emergence of

a Consciousness of Self."

**<sup>9</sup>** For acting out, see Stiegler, *Acting Out*, 7–10.

In three sections, a closer look at Ricœur's reading of Freud's conception of memory uncovers these above-mentioned distinctions, lighting up the "empty, breezy space" between them. First, in "Consciousness is not given but a *task:* Ricœur's trajectory (problematic)," an overview of Ricœur's *œuvre* regarding the work of memory from 1950 to his *Freud and Philosophy* (1965) is given, illuminating earlier writings by later writings. Second, in "Remembering, repeating and working-through Freud (analytic)," a detour through Freud's own development on memory with a particular focus on his thinking from 1895 to 1912 will provide an archaeological attempt to unearth Freud's own developing theory of *Nachträglichkeit*. Third, in "Ricœur's Freud: From the oneiric to the sublime (Dialectic)," a synthesis concludes Ricœur and Freud on memory.

## 2 "Consciousness is not given but a task": Ricœur's trajectory (problematic)

The relationship of voluntary memory to the involuntary underlies Ricœur's œuvre. Consciousness and the unconscious incorporate time as well as the future. While much of Ricœur's dissertation, *Freedom and Nature*, was sketched out while in a camp in Pomerania, he situated the unconscious there within "experienced necessity" between character and life. He then moved to a "deeper layer of the involuntary that remains hidden from consciousness." This text will be examined below, since his critique of the realism of the unconscious was to set the stage for his later work. There are already hints there of what, fifty years later, he will speak of as "the duty of memory" (*devoir de mémoire*) or "the work of memory" (*travail de mémoire*) and "the work of mourning" (*travail de deuil*). The duty and work of memory and mourning are also crucial within *Living up to Death*, a posthumous scattered work that puts the point most perspicuously: "There's the rub: the work of memory is the work of mourning. And both are a word of hope, torn from what is unspoken." The ancient practice of

<sup>10</sup> For "d'espace trop aéré et vide," see Proust, In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower, 241, whose context is put in the epigraph above.

<sup>11</sup> Davidson, "The Phenomenon of Life," 160-162. See also Karl Simms, "Ricœur and Psychoanalysis."

**<sup>12</sup>** Ricœur, *La mémoire*, 106 – 107 / *Memory*, 87 – 88. Ricœur puts this point most succinctly in his "Fragile Identity," particularly 161 – 163.

<sup>13</sup> Ricœur, *Vivant jusqu'à la mort*, 73 / *Living up to Death*, 39. The French reads: "Voilà le nœud: travail de mémoire est travail de deuil. Et l'un et l'autre sont parole d'espoir, arrachée au nondit."

ascèsis is an interminable work of preparing for death. 4 "Here the philosopher learns from the physician and in the first instance listens and learns,"15 Ricœur writes. Recognizing the obstacles of Ricœur's reading of Freud, my claim concerns the ascèsis of constantly returning to oneself, working-through the pain. The task of consciousness can only be attained through difficult work. Even with a fifty-year interval between Freedom and Nature and Memory, History, Forgetting, the two forms of memory, episodic and procedural, reveal that the seeds of his last work were there from the beginning. The highlight of his trajectory is the event of Bonneval.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the Bonneval Colloquium instantiated both the conflict of interpretations and a way to hermeneutically dialogue between disciplines without absolute fusion.

#### 2.1 Freedom and Nature (1950)

From the very beginning of his scholarly career, Ricœur was not entirely unlearned in psychoanalysis. His most influential teacher in secondary school in Rennes, Roland Dalbiez, taught him the basics. François Dosse points out the relationship between the two thinkers: "Roland Dalbiez exercised on Ricœur a decisive influence that extends from 1929 to 1933...he left an indelible imprint on the attitude of his student." Mentioning The Symbolism of Evil and Freud and *Philosophy*, Roudinesco describes the historical importance of this relationship, "Student of Dalbiez, this philosopher [Ricœur] was entirely contrary to Lacan... born in 1913, he discovered the Freudian œuvre before the war and found in the atheist Jewish thinker a chosen field to which he immersed himself for many years."18 Already in Ricœur's dissertation, he had taken on Freud and Dalbiez.

According to Freedom and Nature, thinking alone cannot grasp the mystery of the soul and body. Ricœur writes, "Or, if you wish, it is really in thinking that we break the living unity of man...in the background of epistemological dualism

<sup>14</sup> For an excellent discussion of this theme in Ricœur, see Gregor, "Ricœur's askesis," 421-438.

<sup>15</sup> Ricœur, Philosophie de la volonté 1, 353 / Freedom and Nature, 376.

<sup>16</sup> See the appendix below. Roudinesco, Histoire de la psychanalyse en France, 319, states that Henri Ey, who had invited Ricœur to Bonneval, desired a confrontation between psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and philosophy.

<sup>17</sup> Dosse, Paul Ricœur: Les sens d'une vie, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Roudinesco, Histoire de la psychanalyse en France, 399 (my translation). See also Ricœur's own discussion of his teacher in "Psychanalyse Freudienne et Foi Chrétienne," particularly 122 - 129.

there is the *practical* incompatibility of necessity and freedom." <sup>19</sup> We can seek "glimpses of the mystery of the unity of soul and body" in Descartes, but one of these forms, thinking or bodily mechanism, cannot dictate to the other what the following means: "born of definite parents and being united to this definite body is one and the same mystery."20 There is no doubt Freud lurks not far behind the surface here. "The family is the refuge, perpetuation, and consecration of that crepuscular consciousness of childhood. Perhaps the obscure imprint and tender nostalgia of this vital continuity are never erased from our affection for our mother."<sup>21</sup> The desire to return to the womb, whether in dreams or waking life, connects two spheres of existence. "This does not mean that the sleeping man or the unconscious have a better memory or remain children longer, but the unconscious, which bears the mark of oldest impressions, gives matter to our thought, but it is based on the byways of unconscious."22 In Freudian analysis, the farther back you go the deeper you go into the unconscious. Ricœur calls the unconscious infantile in the sense that these realms are dark and murky unlike the clarity and distinctness of consciousness. Dreams and childhood are difficult tasks to interpret.<sup>23</sup>

The false dilemma for Ricœur concerns what is hidden to consciousness. It is not "an *ascesis* of self-consciousness," he claims, but "rather a method of exploration and investigation akin to that of the natural sciences." The revealed and the hidden are two sides of the same coin that is the self. Two errors must be avoided: 1) attributing thought to the unconscious (realism); 2) assigning perfect transparency to consciousness (idealism). Ricœur concentrates his argument on realms of the hidden. On the one hand, "affectivity is obscurity itself." In ask-

**<sup>19</sup>** Ricœur, Philosophie de la volonté 1, 417 / Freedom and Nature, 444.

<sup>20</sup> Ricœur, Philosophie de la volonté 1, 413 / Freedom and Nature, 439.

<sup>21</sup> Ricœur, Philosophie de la volonté 1, 413-414 / Freedom and Nature, 440.

<sup>22</sup> Ricœur, Philosophie de la volonté 1, 414 / Freedom and Nature, 440.

<sup>23</sup> Ricœur ties this claim to Descartes in the following: "the philosopher should not suspect childhood. Childhood is not only puerile. This does not mean being unfaithful to the Descartes of the *Treatise on Passions* but rather to seek in it glimpses of the mystery of unity of soul and body because the bond which binds me to my parents is only one aspect of the pact which I have made with my life and of which Descartes was not unaware. Being born of definite parents and being united to this definite body is one and the same mystery: these beings are my parents as my body is my body" (*Philosophie de la volonté 1*, 413 / *Freedom and Nature*, 439).

<sup>24</sup> Ricœur, Philosophie de la volonté 1, 351 / Freedom and Nature, 374.

**<sup>25</sup>** Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté 1*, 355 / *Freedom and Nature*, 378. The French puts this in context: "Pour commencement par le *besoin*, il est à peine besoin de rappeler qu'il est en nous le principe de toute obscurité; l'affectivité est l'obscurité même; cette obscurité, on voudrait bien la dissoudre en mécanisme et la renvoyer au corps; mais, si l'on ne veut point perdre le sens psychique, c'est-à-dire intentionnel du besoin, son manque et son appel, antérieurs à la lumière de

ing the questions, "what is it I want?" or "what is the point?," I am alluding to this fact. Hus, whether concerning need, emotion, or habit, I am not entirely transparent to myself. There are two forms of memory at work here. For Ricœur, psychoanalysis can only cure if the subject collaborates in therapy "by voluntarily relinquishing autosuggestion and critique." The therapist must be able to interpret the "flux of memories, associations, and emotions, oscillating among several levels of consciousness from waking to a state akin to hypnosis." At the heart of psychoanalysis is "the reintegration of traumatic memory in the field of consciousness ... It heals by means of a victory of memory over the unconscious." Ricœur repeats the point in different ways, but perhaps the clearest expression here is when he states: "Interpretation is not repression; it is the intuitive reintegration of memory which 'purifies' consciousness."

#### 2.2 "Consciousness and the Unconscious" (1960)

The difference between Ricœur and Lacan is important. Since the significance of the Bonneval colloquium, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, is deferred, it is important to retrospectively re-interpret the words of Ricœur and Lacan in Bonneval. While Lacan believed that "the unconscious is the chapter of my history that is marked by a blank or occupied by a lie," Ricœur thought of the unconscious as "an object constituted by the ensemble of hermeneutical procedures which must be deciphered." Unlike Lacan's blank or lie, the unconscious is like language, music, or text waiting to be deciphered through a restoration of meaning. It has a Janus face, one looking backwards and one looking forwards. Lacan, however, claims "the presence of the unconscious, being situated in the locus of the Other, can be found in every discourse, in

la representation imagée et intelligente de son objet, il faut bien y discerner une épaisseur confuse d'anticipation que nulle image et nul savoir n'épuisent." Kohák breaks all of this into separate sentences.

**<sup>26</sup>** For an excellent discussion of affect in relation to the body as source, cite, and place in the whole of Ricœur's *oeuvre*, see Arel, "Theorizing the Exchange between the Self and the World."

<sup>27</sup> Ricœur, Philosophie de la volonté 1, 360 / Freedom and Nature, 384.

**<sup>28</sup>** Lacan, *Écrits*, 257 / 215. This is from "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," delivered in 1953 compared to the claim at the beginning of "Consciousness and the Unconscious": Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx all "rise before him as protagonists of suspicion who rip away masks and pose the novel problem of the lie of consciousness and consciousness as a lie" (Ricœur, *Le Conflit des interprétations*, 101 / *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 99).

**<sup>29</sup>** Roudinesco, Histoire de la psychanalyse en France, 2, 399.

its renunciation."<sup>30</sup> While the confrontation of Ricœur and Lacan at the end of the conference has not been recorded, all references to it were that Lacan appreciated what Ricœur had to say.<sup>31</sup> The conflict of interpretations and egos occurs later, after the *Freud* book was published in 1965. Roudinesco is fair in her analysis of this event, as Ricœur himself states,<sup>32</sup> but how might we return to these texts and interpret them anew?

What is at stake in the Bonneval colloquium from 1960 concerns the breakdown of consciousness. If immediate consciousness entails a kind of certainty, then how far does the action of the afterwardsness (Nachträglichkeit, aprèscoup) enter into this immediacy? "If phenomenology is a modification of the Cartesian doubting of existence, then psychoanalysis is a modification of Spinoza's critique of a free will," Ricœur writes.<sup>33</sup> Psychoanalysis "would like to be, like Spinoza's Ethics, a reeducation of desire."34 The modifications of Descartes and Spinoza are not rejections of either. Furthermore, he summarizes the work on Freud as reflecting two recognitions: "the necessity of the detour through indirect signs, and secondly of the conflictual structure of hermeneutics and thus of self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is a striving for truth by means of this inner contest between reductive and recollective interpretation."35 The reductive and recollective interpretations may align with the two kinds of memory, or Descartes' immediacy and Spinoza's sub specie aeternatatis or third kind of knowledge. If the indirect sign of trauma has an "after the fact" presence, then all of our memories are affected by trauma. There is no pure access to a memory without a taint of trauma. Ricœur calls it "the admission of phenomenological distress" (l'aveu de la détresse phénoménologique).<sup>36</sup>

At the core of the philosophical and psychological work of the conflict of interpretations lies the claim "consciousness is not given but a *task*." The claim

**<sup>30</sup>** Lacan,  $\acute{E}crits$  707 / 834. "Position of the Unconscious" was the title of his talk for the Bonneval Colloquium in 1960. But he may have changed some between 1960 and 1966 when  $\acute{E}crits$  was published.

**<sup>31</sup>** See Ricœur, *La critique et la conviction*, 107 / *Critique and Conviction*, 68–69; Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*, 400; Reagan, *Ricœur*, 26. See p. 467–469 for Ricœur's contribution to Bonneval before being redacted for publication as well as André Green's response.

**<sup>32</sup>** See Ricœur, La critique et la conviction, 110 / Critique and Conviction, 70.

**<sup>33</sup>** Ricœur, *De l'interprétation*, 380 – 381 / *Freud and Philosophy*, 391. See also Deckard, "What's wrong with Phenomenology (according to Spinoza)?"

**<sup>34</sup>** Ricœur, Le Conflit des interprétations, 193 / The Conflict of Interpretations, 194.

**<sup>35</sup>** Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 376. This text was delivered in 1971 as "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language."

**<sup>36</sup>** Ricœur, Le Conflit des interprétations, 102–103 / The Conflict of Interpretations, 101.

from the third part of Ricœur's 1960 article differentiates his work from others who attempted the combination of psychoanalysis and philosophy, particularly in phenomenology. But as André Green put it in his letter to Ricœur from 1961, the confrontation between Hegel and Freud where Ricœur says that they are doing the same thing is at the heart of his Bonneval presentation.<sup>37</sup> What Ricœur addresses is an opposition, or two readings (an analytic and a dialectic) which in his own formal structure of *Freud and Philosophy* is preserved. He writes,

At the start, in an interpretation of psychoanalysis completely governed by Freud's own systematization, all opposition is external; psychoanalysis has its opposite outside itself. This first reading is necessary; it serves as a discipline of reflection; it brings about the dispossession of consciousness.<sup>38</sup>

#### Here is how he describes the second reading:

It is only in a second reading, that of our "Dialectic," that the external and completely mechanical opposition between the contending points of view can be converted into an internal opposition, with each point of view becoming in a way its opposite and bearing within itself the grounds of the contrary point of view.<sup>39</sup>

The section of "How to Read Freud" at the beginning of his Analytic is then crucial for a philosopher to open any text of Freud's. It is also crucial for understanding the impact of how Ricœur practices hermeneutics in general. The task of philosophy is always to read an event or memory more than once at multiple levels.

If we are bound by the taint of trauma and thus to repetition and regression, what is the task of consciousness? Ricœur describes the task as a move from childhood to adulthood in the Hegelian terms of mutual recognition (*Anerkennung*). The three spheres of meaning are important here, resembling the discussion in *Fallible Man*: possession, power, and value. First, possession is like Marxist economics and non-libidinal alienation in terms of "work, exchange, and appropriation." Second, power resembles both Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and Plato's *Sophist*: it is political power that drives "ambition, intrigue, submission, and responsibility."<sup>40</sup> The third realm of value, in which self-esteem and dignity

**<sup>37</sup>** See the André Green letter p. 471–472 in an appendix where he says that Ricœur is the only philosopher to attempt a true mediation between "ces ordres du primordial de l'inconscient au terminal du conscient."

<sup>38</sup> Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 68 / Freud and Philosophy, 60.

<sup>39</sup> Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 68 / Freud and Philosophy, 60.

**<sup>40</sup>** Ricœur, Le Conflit des interprétations, 112 / The Conflict of Interpretations, 111.

is established, "what it means to be esteemed, approved, and recognized as a person," includes works of art and culture.<sup>41</sup>

The thinking behind Nachträglichkeit finds its first expression here:

Consciousness is a movement which continually annihilates its starting point and can guarantee itself only at the end. In other words, it is something that has meaning only in later figures, since the meaning of a given figure is *deferred* until the appearance of a new figure. $^{42}$ 

The key to the dialectic of the unconscious and consciousness is that it "always moves backwards" (*toujours d'avant en arrière*). <sup>43</sup> The backwards movement is Freud's contribution yet the movement between Freudian analysis and Hegelian synthesis must be simultaneous, which can be seen as early as in the "Energetics and Hermeneutics." The questions posed there highlight what is at stake in the conflict of interpretations—here concerning psychoanalysis and philosophy, particularly phenomenology. According to Ricœur, "the whole problem of the Freudian epistemology may be centralized in a single question: How can the economic explanation *be involved in [passe par]* an interpretation dealing with meanings; and conversely, how can interpretation be an *aspect [un moment]* of the economic explanation?"<sup>44</sup> It is to this question I now turn.

#### 2.3 Fallible Man to Freud (1960 – 1965)

In Book I (Problematic) of *Freud and Philosophy* concerning the placing of Freud, there are three sections and precisely in the middle is a section titled "Interpretation as recollection of meaning (*L'interprétation comme recollection du sens*)". Under the rubric of "second naiveté," Ricœur emphasizes phenomenology's role in "its instrument of hearing, of recollection, of restoration of meaning."

<sup>41</sup> Ricœur, Le Conflit des interprétations, 113 / The Conflict of Interpretations, 112.

**<sup>42</sup>** Ricœur, *Le Conflit des interprétations*, 114 / *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 113 (emphasis added). The French reads: "la conscience, c'est le mouvement qui anéantit sans cesse son point de départ et n'est assuré de soi qu'à la fin. Autrement dit, c'est ce qui n'a son sens que dans des figures postérieures, seule une figure nouvelle pouvant révéler *apres coup* le sens des figures antérieures." Lacan will take credit for first coming up with the idea (from Freud) in *L'inconscient 6e colloque de Bonneval*, 164.

<sup>43</sup> Ricœur, Le conflit des interprétations, 114 / The Conflict of Interpretations, 113.

<sup>44</sup> Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 76 / Freud and Philosophy, 66 (emphasis original).

**<sup>45</sup>** Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 36 / Freud and Philosophy, 28; see also Ihde, Hermeneutic Phenomenology, 141.

Through hearing, we are capable of remembering what in terms of meaning is always already there. The ancient Platonic theme of recollection is barely described, but the claim that "[t]o be truthful, I must say it is what animates all my research," specifically highlights the reason for placing recollection between interpretation and suspicion in a section of the problematic entitled the conflict of interpretations. His primary message here is an "allusion to the ancient theme of participation [...] which is also the path of intellectual honesty: the fully declared philosophical decision animating the intentional analysis would be a modern version of the ancient theme of reminiscence." In order to grasp the ancient theme of memory more fully, I will briefly consider *Fallible Man*.

As early as the introduction to *Freedom and Nature* (1950) and in the preface to Fallible Man (1960), the importance of consciousness of fault is what links the two temporal ecstasies. Past and future are necessary for understanding fault and freedom as well as evil. If, following Kierkegaard, "corruption is born of the intoxication of freedom and that consciousness is born of the fault,"47 then the "act of taking-upon-one self creates the problem; it is not a conclusion but a starting point."48 The ambiguity lies between the following claims: 1) we are not the radical source of evil; and 2) we accept that we are evil. Is freedom or evil the starting point?<sup>49</sup> Whereas Ricœur turned to Kierkegaard on the relationship of freedom and evil in Freedom and Nature (with a footnote to his own earlier work on Jaspers and Marcel), it is to Kant and Nabert that he turns in Fallible Man. The same ambiguity exists between consciousness and the unconscious: how are we responsible for our actions? The "primary affirmation' by which I am constituted as a self over and above all my choices and individual acts"50 is like Freud's unconscious or Sartre's nothingness in that it enables freedom or fault to occur. 51 "The project," Ricœur says regarding the phenomenology of the will, "enriched by memory, re-emerges as repentance."52

<sup>46</sup> Ricœur De l'interprétation, 40 / Freud and Philosophy, 31.

<sup>47</sup> Ricœur, Philosophie de la volonté 1, 30 / Freedom and Nature, 27.

**<sup>48</sup>** Ricceur, *L'homme faillible*, 15 / *Fallible Man*, xlvii; see also Deckard and Makant, "The Fault of Forgiveness."

**<sup>49</sup>** This formulation comes from Ignace Verhack in his course on *Fallible Man* at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in 2001.

<sup>50</sup> Ricœur, L'homme faillible, 15 / Fallible Man, xlvii.

<sup>51</sup> See Sartre, Being and Nothingness.

**<sup>52</sup>** Ricœur, *L'homme faillible*, 15–16 / *Fallible Man*, xlviii. The whole passage reads in the French: "Dans la conscience de faute en effet apparaît d'abord l'unité profonde des deux "extases" temporelles du passé et du futur; l'élan en avant du projet se charge de rétrospection; en retour la contemplation affligée du passé dans le remords est incorporée à la certitude de la régénération possible; le projet, enrichi de mémoire, rebondit en repentir. Ainsi, dans la con-

Here is a nod to what he means by the task of consciousness: a "demand for wholeness" (*l'exigence d'integralité*) that constitutes the self in its very nature beyond individual acts as necessary for a "participation à rebours," that is, a retrospective *Nachträglichkeit* on the whole that we always already are.

After a brief analysis of *Fallible Man*, the essay on Freud begins to formulate itself like gas bubbles from the depths of memory: what was missing from his eidetics (1950) and empirics (1960) appears to be the energetics. What phenomenology gives in terms of meaning lacks in terms of energetics. Or, as Ricœur states, "It is easier to fall back on a disjunction: either an explanation in terms of energy, or an understanding in terms of phenomenology. It must be recognized, however, that Freudianism exists only on the basis of its refusal of that disjunction."<sup>53</sup>

The "key" to the "divorce" between "explanation and interpretation," on the one hand, and energetics and hermeneutics, on the other, will be found in Freud's *Project* of 1895.<sup>54</sup> What "Consciousness and the Unconscious" is to Ricceur's own life-long interpretation of Freud, Freud's *Project* is to his later development of psychoanalysis. Something clicked in Freud's brain, as he writes on October 20, 1895,

The three systems of neurones, the 'free' and 'bound' states of quantity, the primary and secondary processes, the main trend and the compromise trend of the nervous system, the two biological rules of attention and defence, the indications of quality, reality, and thought, the state of the psycho-sexual group, the sexual determination of repression, and finally the factors determining consciousness as a perceptual function—the whole thing held together, and still does. I can naturally hardly contain myself with delight.<sup>55</sup>

Never again will Freud try to "force a mass of psychical facts within the framework of a quantitative theory." <sup>56</sup>

Sentences of the Bonneval colloquium are expanded in "Instinct and Idea in the 'Papers on Metapsychology'": it becomes clear that the task of consciousness

science de faute, le futur veut enrôler le passé, la prise de conscience se révèle comme reprise et la conscience se découvre une épaisseur, une densité qui ne serairent pas reconnues par une réflexion seulement attentive à l'élan en avant du projet.

<sup>53</sup> Ricceur, *De l'interprétation*, 76 / *Freud and Philosophy*, 66. The word for "disjunction" is "alternative" in the original.

**<sup>54</sup>** For the words "key" and "divorce," see Ricœur, *De l'interprétation*, 77 / *Freud and Philosophy*, 67. For the project, see SE 1, 283–397, and Bernstein, "Ricœur's Freud," 205–206.

**<sup>55</sup>** Freud, *The Origins of Psychoanalysis*, 129. Ricœur refers to this letter in *De l'interprétation*, 80 / Freud and Philosophy, 70.

**<sup>56</sup>** Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 83 / Freud and Philosophy, 73.

which is work (*travail*) in place of hypnosis leads to the genetic way of interpretation that begins with the parents. Not with the *epoché* or the ego, but rather with interdiction.

In the New Introductory Lectures, Freud writes, "From the analysis of delusions of observation we have drawn the conclusion that there actually exists in the ego an agency which unceasingly observes, criticizes and compares, and in that way sets itself over against the other part of the ego" (SE XXII, 67). The description of the superego works towards the genesis of that ego, resembling the problematic of freedom and fault in the earlier work. Freud continues, "He senses an agency holding sway in his ego which measures his actual ego and each of its activities by an ideal ego that he has created for himself in the course of his development" (SE XXII, 67). The origin of conscience is at the root of authority. In childhood, a bridge between the clinical and the economic, requires a particular way of interpreting the world and its texts. How does the clinical and economic arise and resolve itself in Ricœur's thought? The genetic explanation also has a way of making sense of one's life, including Ricœur's hermeneutics, but not in the way traditionally presented. Since for Ricœur, workingthrough is the basis of detour and the task of consciousness is deeply related to the miracle of memory, let me take a detour through Freud's most important text.

# 3 Remembering, repeating and working-through Freud (analytic)

By 1967 interpreting in terms of difference was all the rage as seen in Derrida and Deleuze. The deluge of giant texts between Ricœur's in 1965, Lacan's in 1966, Derrida's in 1967, and Deleuze's in 1968, set the stage for the relationship of French psychoanalysis and philosophy. In the midst of the flurry, the Bonneval Colloquium on the unconscious is published in 1966. Ricœur's way of 'deferral' differs from Derrida and Deleuze due to his way between the conflict by means of memory. A way between means that his theory of interpretation is neither scientific certainty, as in Descartes's cogito, nor differ(a)ence, either in the Derridean or Deleuzian sense. Still remaining wholly within philosophy, since he confesses that he has neither undergone analysis nor given it, he reads Hegel and Freud as doing the same thing regarding the unconscious. They both equally

<sup>57</sup> See Lacan, Écrits; Derrida, Writing and Difference, 203; Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 14–19

**<sup>58</sup>** Ricœur, Le conflit des interprétations, 103 – 104 / The Conflict of Interpretations, 102.

dismantled the certainty of Cartesian consciousness. The underworlds of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton—as well as a passage through the symbolism of evil—are taken up in 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosophy and psychoanalysis.

For Ricœur, Bergson and Freud overlap over against philosophy's totalizing from Hegel to Sartre. The problematic of memory as a "present representation of something absent" is also present in Ricœur's Terry lectures, even though Ricœur only mentions Freud's text of "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through" once in the entire book. It is nevertheless central to the entire corpus. Freud's text, as short as it is, contains a germ of the whole of psychoanalysis. A patient and a therapist have free association, in which the patient comes to consciousness of what is repressed through hard work and time. The goal is to overcome resistances. The role of repetition replaces remembering and abreacting (Abreagieren), in which the therapist uses the "process of interpretation" (Deutungskunst) to identify the resistances. The earlier unconscious process becomes a conscious one by means of remembering. Working-through concerns the process of overcoming repression by means of remembering. However, workingthrough is not a simple task. Ricœur's detour through Freud is a process of working-through the past. But what happens to many patients in the process of working-through resistances concerns the acting out of the unresolved or repressed trauma:

...the patient does not *remember* anything at all of what he has forgotten and repressed, but rather *acts it out*. He reproduces it not as a memory, but as an action; he *repeats* it, without of course being aware of the fact that he is repeating it.<sup>59</sup>

Here for the first time Freud names the force of "the compulsion to repeat" (*Zwange zur Wiederholung*) as a seeming instinct, like the unconscious, which drives the patient.<sup>60</sup> The work, or "working" "underscores not only the dynamic character of the entire process, but the collaboration of the analysand in this work." The patient who wants to use the muscles in her arm again must also collaborate with the physical therapist to move her arm. Memory itself as a task, Ricœur says, must be "freed in this way, as a work—the 'work of remem-

**<sup>59</sup>** SE XII, 150, translated by John Reddick (emphasis added). The German reads: "der Analysierte erinnere überhaupt nichts von dem Vergessenen und Verdrängten, sondern er agiere es. Er reproduziert es nicht als Erinnerung, sondern als Tat, er wiederholt es, ohne natürlich zu wissen, daß er es wiederholt."

**<sup>60</sup>** Much of Walter James Lowe's reading of the "lecture de Freud" distinguishes the language of force from the language of meaning (*sens*). See Lowe, *Mystery and the Unconscious*, 108–116. See also Taylor, "Force et sens."

<sup>61</sup> Ricœur, La mémoire, 85; Memory, 71.

bering' (*Erinnerungsarbeit*)."<sup>62</sup> Might the psychic force of the compulsion to repeat be compared to "the Adversary" mentioned in *Fallible Man* and in *The Symbolism of Evil?*<sup>63</sup> To call this hell means that a compulsion nearly demonic forces one to act in a way that does not have recourse to the participation in "originary affirmation." Resembling the "blocked memory" of *Memory, History, Forgetting*, "the work of remembering against the compulsion to repeat" could sum up the "theme of [Freud's] precious little essay."<sup>64</sup>

Wounded or sick memory becomes blocked—even action cannot take place in certain forms of harm. Contemporary ethicist Jill Stauffer in her *Ethical Lone-liness* speaks to the condition:

Ethical loneliness is the isolation one feels when one, as a violated person or as one member of a persecuted group, has been abandoned by humanity, or by those who have power over one's life's possibilities. It is a condition undergone by persons who have been unjustly treated and dehumanized by human beings and political structures, who emerge from that injustice only to find that the surrounding world will not listen to or cannot properly hear their testimony.<sup>65</sup>

She refers to Jean Améry, briefly referred to also in Ricœur's text, <sup>66</sup> as well as other victims of genocide and rape, as those who suffer ethical loneliness. The three verbs in Freud's text, however, could be thought of as heaven, hell, purgatory. <sup>67</sup>

- 62 Ricœur, La mémoire, 85; Memory, 71.
- 63 Ricœur, Fallible Man, xxvii, xlix, 110; The Symbolism of Evil, 77, 199.
- 64 Ricœur, La mémoire, 85; Memory, 71.
- 65 Stauffer, Ethical Loneliness, 1.
- 66 Ricœur, La mémoire, 224, 419; Memory, 176, 318.
- 67 A preliminary chart: Force of drives, force of language (representation)

Heaven	Hell	Purgatory
Unconscious	Conscious	Pcs
Work of Memory	Repeating	Working- Through
Work of mourning	Melancholy	Forgetting

In his last interview, Ricœur describes it this way: "What I had myself inadvertently called *the archeological* is 'resistance,' the 'compulsion to repeat.' [...] And the idea of repetition seems to me fundamental. I find it today in the way in which the great losses of the twentieth century are so poorly integrated into our present culture. Psychoanalysis has much to say about the difficulty of mourning, and I would emphasize the importance of bringing together this first piece and the one on 'Mourning and Melancholy,' including the dialectic between resistance, the

### 4 Ricœur's Freud (dialectic)

The dialectic is a way of reading or interpretation that returns to the analytic in order to propose and understand the original line of thought anew. It both negates and preserves. The reading proposed here must examine one chapter of Part II of *Freud and Philosophy* in order to see the method of dialectic at work. The interpretation of *refoulé* (the repressed) towards the *refoulant* (that which represses, the "repressing agent" says the English) assumes the difference between force of drives (*Trieb*, *pulsion*) and force of meaning (*sens*). While there is no term for "agency" here and Ricœur says that it is in desire itself, it is nevertheless double: "the individual's history from infancy to childhood, *and* mankind's history from prehistory to history." Ontogenesis and phylogenesis concern a history of desire and authority. But what is emphasized is rather the threats, or resistances from within. Speaking of anxiety ("menace of the instincts") or guilt ("menace of conscience") as well as external dangers, "the ego is primarily that which is weak in the face of menace." The causes of ethical loneliness come from anxiety and guilt alongside external dangers.

In 1914–1915, across the "Papers on Metapsychology," Freud searches for how the two topographies fit together or if they fit together. As compared to Laplanche and Leclaire, whose Lacanianism was challenged by André Green, the economic and the topographical represent the qualitative and quantitative difference.<sup>70</sup> In comparing instincts (*Trieb*) to representations (*Vorstellung*), the "adjectival unconscious" becomes the "substantival unconscious."<sup>71</sup> The movement should resemble the one just spoken of from repression to that which represses:

compulsion to repeat, and working through [...] Mourning is the 'working through,' and in my opinion, we have not done enough on the work of memory in the work of mourning. Both remain as two concepts belonging to two different regions of psychoanalysis. And I would like to say that the work of mourning is a work of memory against repetition compulsion because suffering is in itself generative of repetition compulsion. Suffering "insists," and it is this insistence that draws it towards melancholy" (Ricœur, "Psychoanalysis and Interpretation," 35).

<sup>68</sup> Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 191 / Freud and Philosophy, 179.

<sup>69</sup> Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 194 / Freud and Philosophy, 182.

**<sup>70</sup>** See Lacan, *L'inconscient 6e colloque de Bonneval*, 95–130, 143–177; for a clear discussion of this context, see Baring, *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy*, 207–211, where he concludes: "The economic understanding of the unconscious refused any absolute rupture between consciousness and the unconscious and it allowed a contamination of the psyche by the somatic, in the form of affect. By inference, one could say that Green refused the absolute separation of the Lacanian Real and Symbolic" (211). See also Earlie, *Derrida and the Legacy of Psychoanalysis*.

<sup>71</sup> Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 122 / Freud and Philosophy, 118.

"It is a matter therefore of a reduction, of an *epochê* in reverse, since what is initially best known, the conscious, is suspended and becomes the least known."<sup>72</sup> It is signs in the consciousness that point to the fact that "memories disappear and [...] reappear." Small miracles and hell are not far off: "in effect, the activity of becoming conscious has in turn two modalities; when it occurs without difficulty, one will speak of the preconscious; when it is forbidden or 'cut off,' one will speak of the unconscious,"73 The papers on metapsychology will speak of "three agencies": Ucs., Pcs., Cs. A seed of the whole, from Freedom and Nature and Fallible Man to the Freud book and Course of Recognition (by way of The Rule of Metaphor, Time and Narrative, Oneself as Another and Memory, History, Forgetting), is latent in "Conscious and the Unconscious." A dialectical reading of Ricœur's Freud involves the working-through of the past as if one's life were a text, a narrative. To show how working-through one's life as if it were a text works, one sentence that could have been written in 1960 or 2000 is the following, exemplifying the capable human (l'homme capable): "to speak is a work. A surrender to whatever comes to mind implies a change in the patient's conscious attitude toward his illness and hence a different sort of attention and courage than is exercised in directed thinking. The great work of 'becoming conscious' is the process of understanding, of remembering, of recognizing the past and of recognizing oneself in that past."74

As in Jill Stauffer's *Ethical Loneliness*, the Levinasian theme behind all "recognition" of an Other breaks our capacity to represent. In Levinas, "the gaze reverses itself and opens itself to the 'gleam of exteriority or of transcendence in the face of the Other." Ricœur's claim concerns Levinas' intentionality as the "ruin of representation." Ruin takes on no other task than the task of remembering, which composes the self. In a fundamental sense, then, the miracle of remembering is the breakdown of an autonomous ego or self by means of a self-in-community in a way that time and the work of mourning reveals. For Freud, 1914 represented the "school of suffering." Ricœur will differentiate his reading of Freud from any of those in the 1960s, not only in the Analytic but particularly in the Dialectic where he differentiates phenomenology from psycho-

<sup>72</sup> Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 122 / Freud and Philosophy, 118.

<sup>73</sup> Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 123 / Freud and Philosophy, 118-119.

**<sup>74</sup>** Ricœur, De l'interprétation, 432 / Freud and Philosophy, 411–412.

<sup>75</sup> Ricœur, The Course of Recognition, 157, quoting Levinas, Totality and Infinity, 24.

**<sup>76</sup>** Ricceur, The Course of Recognition, 59.

analysis, in taking from Levinas a recognition of the other in order to overcome the "state of war."<sup>77</sup>

#### 5 Conclusion

The story about the middle of Ricœur's life that began with the *Colloque sur l'inconscient* in some ways ended in 2005 with his death. Freud's repetition compulsion counters the ability to recall and remember in both senses, episodic and procedural memory, symbolizing the death instinct, and the movement "en deça" or "en arrière," with regards to trauma and history.<sup>78</sup> Lou Andreas-Salomé in 1912 wrote, "Transgression and rebellion take place in the assumption of far more positive and more immediate consequences than in our remote penalties in Hell or in the nearer but somehow more platonic bite of conscience."<sup>79</sup> Despite the complexity of Freudian psychoanalysis and Ricœur's own detour through Freud, from his courses with Roland Dalbiez to *The Course of Recognition*, the ability to recognize and read what was always already implicit in his earliest life and writings concerns the realization of memory as truly a task, an effort, a work towards and through the everyday guilt and anxiety—"the entire psychic mechanism, pleasure principle and all, stands in constant peril of being swept away in a torrent of 'unbound' and thus uncontrollable, energy."

There is a prison, literally or metaphorically, in which our psyches are stuck. The core of Freud's development of *Eros* (libido) vs. *Thanatos* (death-instinct) has no resolution. Even sexual desire can turn our bodies into machines and the division or conflict between these states can be one of the compulsion to repeat. Compulsion exists between the two kinds of memory, procedural and episodic, representing psychology and philosophy. However, the intermediate (mixed) state of reflection or working-through, like the analysis of *thumos* in *Fallible Man*, allows the subject to see outside of the force of the drives. The little

<sup>77</sup> Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 21. Ricœur mentions the importance of Levinas' claim in *Oneself as Another*, 189–190.

**<sup>78</sup>** Lowe, *Mystery*, 130–131, quoting Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 305. In an interview from 2004, he says: "Of the analytic experience itself, we can say that it moves in archeology, certainly, but by bringing a recognition of the meaning of the original trauma teleologically. There is therefore a teleology of treatment, which is, if not a cure, at least an acceptance of the meaning of the originary trauma" (Ricœur, "Psychoanalysis and Interpretation," 35). See also Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela, *Narrating our Healing*, and Dierckxsens, *Paul Ricœur's Moral Anthropology*, 210–221.

<sup>79</sup> Salomé, The Freud Journal, 65.

<sup>80</sup> Lowe, Mystery, 131, quoting Ricœur, Freud and Philosophy, 283.

miracle of memory, as part of the human's capabilities, has the power in every moment of time to overcome even if briefly the compulsion to repeat, so stuck in war and conflict as it is.81

#### **Abbreviations**

SE | Freud, Sigmund (1953-1966): Standard Edition. Volumes I-XXIV. James Strachey (Ed. and Trans.). London: Hogarth Press.

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<sup>81</sup> This paper began in discussions with Gordon Cappelletty, Paul Custer, Devon Fisher, Mindy Makant, Mia Self, and many others in the "Ricœur Reading Group" where from 2008 - 2020 we read through much of Ricœur's work, including Freud and Philosophy. It was first presented in June 2019 in Paris at the atelier of the Fonds Ricœur, and then online for the SRS virtual meeting in October 2020. I wish to thank the organizers and participants of these events, and particularly my co-editors of this volume as well as Stephanie Arel, Narya Deckard, and Stephen Williamson for their help with making this difficult text slightly more readable. For all mistakes that remain, the fault is mine.

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