

**5th INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY
SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL SCIENCES AND ARTS**

SGEM 2018

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

VOLUME 5



ANCIENT SCIENCE

ISSUE 2.2

**ANTHROPOLOGY, ARCHAEOLOGY,
HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY,
MEDIÆVAL & RENAISSANCE STUDIES**

26 August – 01 September, 2018

Albena Co., Bulgaria

DISCLAIMER

This book contains abstracts and complete papers approved by the Conference Review Committee. Authors are responsible for the content and accuracy.

Opinions expressed may not necessarily reflect the position of the International Scientific Council of SGEM.

Information in the SGEM 2018 Conference Proceedings is subject to change without notice. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose, without the express written permission of the International Scientific Council of SGEM.

Copyright © SGEM2018

All Rights Reserved by the SGEM International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on SOCIAL SCIENCES and ARTS

Published by STEF92 Technology Ltd., 51 "Alexander Malinov" Blvd., 1712 Sofia, Bulgaria

Total print: 5000

ISBN 978-619-7408-53-9

ISSN 2367-5659

DOI: 10.5593/sgemsocial2018/2.2

**SGEM INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON
SOCIAL SCIENCES AND ARTS
Secretariat Bureau**

E-mail: sgem@sgemsocial.org
URL: www.sgemsocial.org

ON PERSONAL IDENTITY AND IMAGINATION

Assoc. Prof. Vinicio Busacchi
University of Cagliari, Italy

ABSTRACT

A speculative study concerning the role of imagination in representing and constructing the subjective of self meaningfully involves the intertwining between the theme of the image with that of the imagination as a common speculative practice. In this paper, the author will proceed from a philosophical overview around the question of personal identity to an exploration onto certain current uses of imagination in the most recent research on human sciences and neurosciences. The aim is to summarise the consequences of these uses by determining which theoretical-speculative anthropological model must be considered as better mirroring the current scientific advancements in implementing the function of imagination in self representation and personal identity realisation. The author proposes here that Paul Ricoeur's anthropological theory does not simply pose a fruitful problematic approach to the dialectic of image and imagination in the human identity development, but rather, in an original way, it summarises a significant part of the speculative and scientific dilemmas on the formation and constitution of personal identity. This formation and constitution forms a process takes place between the mind and body, reality and imagination, self-representation and social interaction, relation and recognition.

Keywords: Personal identity, imagine, imagination, neuroscience, hermeneutics

INTRODUCTION

How is human identity formed? Are there any differences between individuality and personality? What is the difference between identity and personal identity? What makes someone a person? What is a person? What makes a person *linger (as it is) in change*? What determines that a subject stays unified and the same, despite the plurality and variety in experiences, feelings, knowledge and degrees of awareness? What remains as recognisable for a person being 'the same person' after different phases of physical, mental, social and moral changes? When and how are the self-identity and one self's understanding of being a person formed? To what extent can we speak of a 'root' or of a unitary 'nucleus' in terms of an ego, soul, consciousness or personal memory, rather than of a non-unitarian essence, a heterogeneous (moving) totality or a disintegrated (complex) subjectivity? And what about the 'dialectics' with values, history and culture? Which are the connections between personal identity developments and social and cultural values? How much our personal identity is *culturally*-depending?

Far from solving the enigmas of identity, nowadays strong differentiation of knowledge brings further complexifying elements. Thus, the idea of inconsistency and precariousness of the self finds not only incisive reasons (for example) in the Lacanian analytic. Yet, it can also avail itself from the ever richer and more detailed framework that the mental and brain's sciences are defining around the mechanisms, dynamics and

functions. Without a doubt, the risk of reversal of perspective in the most radical simplification lies here, as happens in Jean-Pierre Changeux's work. [1] We need a lot of attention in this work of revision, which is connected to the growth of our knowledge concerning the ego, conscience and person – particularly in reference to the conclusive evaluations around what must be understood by the terms 'ego', 'conscience' and 'person'.

On the one hand, how can the new progress in neuroscience refute or rebut that unifying property that causes one to recognise oneself as that person 'who he is', 'whose relative one is' and so on? On the other hand, what is the relationship between the multidimensional spheres of psychic and personal life and the unitary expression and representation of the identity in relation to the self and inter-relational practices?

IMAGINATION BETWEEN SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

The most recent research on imagination go along the triple thematic line of *Imagination, mental imagery* and *self-representation*, with a persistent, critical-reflective and sceptical (Humean) anchoring. But, there is also a wider debate in the practical sphere – on the role that imagination plays in developing our moral competence and on the relationship between the imaginative functions and the moral training. In connection to this, we may refer to Martha Nussbaum's idea that a distortion of personal interests can lead to a distorted exercise of moral judgement on an emotional basis (that is, to provide false representations, self-justifying ideas, false motivational arguments and the like; [2]).

Currently, the theme of imagination is prevalently discussed in those branches of philosophy that are placed in the framework of cognitive science: namely, philosophy of mind and neurophilosophy (neuro-phenomenology). Above all, the investigation concerns the relationship between imagination and memory; the role of imagination in the mental prefiguration of action and behaviour; the role of imagination in the functioning of the mechanisms of empathy and interaction, and the role of imagination in counterfactual reasoning and in the prefiguration of a future action or experience. A certain number of research initiatives develop studies on a subject closer to the areas of philosophical anthropology, which is consistently sensitive to the psychological, psychopathological and psychiatric implications of the question concerning imagination and identity. Here, there are two major investigative grounds: (1) the one in which the question of imagination correlates to the problem of autism; and (2) the other in which the implications of the imagination are investigated in the phenomenon of pathological frustration. (1) Regarding autism, one of the damaged areas of the so-called *Wing's triad* concerns imaginative skills. [3] Scientists, such as Gregory Currie and Ian Ravenscroft, even judge autism as a substantial deficit of imaginative capacity, which must thus be considered as a 'disorder of imagination'. [4] (2) The pathological aspects of frustration concern different levels of imaginative life because frustration, understood as the destruction of a belief, reveals implications both on the level of a representation of the others and the world, and on the level of self-representation and the recognition of others. This is the destruction of a false self-representation, a false representation of a relationship or of the other (for example, the collapse of the illusion of being a person with a great charm or the disillusion of the myth of a great friend and the like). Even the pathologies connected to frustration have been interpreted as a disorder of the

imagination. The imaginative processing of a certain belief would disappear because of the impact of the representative and affective interior needs feed into a testbed of the 'reality' and of experience. However, there are also those who oppose this thesis by distinguishing between imagination and belief, and, at the same time, reveal the dense interweaving of imagination and belief (pathological or not-pathologically) experiencing frustration. [5]

TOWARDS A NARRATIVE APPROACH

The two discourses on the image and imagination may be significantly different as well as closely linked, particularly when the speculative interests are bound to an anthropological-philosophical research. Behind the idea of the human being as an 'imagining animal' or 'animal of imagination' there is the speculative anchoring on the pervasive factuality of imagine and imagination both within psychic and experiential daily human life. But, what kind of reality does the image form? And, how do we have awareness or intuition of the different uses of this reality or of the participation of it in the representative, cognitive and experiential reconstruction of ourselves and the wider world? For a philosopher like Carlo Sini, the image is the heart of the 'strategy of the soul'. [6] Sini's reference to Sartre's philosophy and phenomenological approach is very strong here. In particular, he considers his *L'imaginaire. Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination* (1940). Actually, it is Sartre who realises some of the most important and in-depth philosophical studies on the imagination (1936) and the imaginary (1940). The Italian philosopher underlines how images exist in a different way compared to other things. In effect, they reproduce the essence in a phenomenological (Husserlian) sense that is the essence connected to concrete individuality, having at the same time their effective existence via consciousness and not via the external world. [7] In the second chapter of Sini's book image is not intended as a natural production of the psychic but as acquisition, as a way with which we have learned to recognise and understand ourselves and the world. On the one hand, this enriches our self-knowledge and self-understanding and, on the other hand, it lets a cultural prejudice operate. It is an acquisition that can be traced back to Descartes, and further to Plato. It is an acquisition that reveals the reflection of an orientation to the opaque, to the dissimulated, to the illusory behind a path of interiorisation or uses turned to the interiority of the images. It is significant that Plato, the creator of the allegory of the Cave, never attributes images and shadows to the work of the mind. His allegory of the cave shows a kingdom in which images are the world. And, even outside the cave, at a level of a general 'enlightenment', the world remains the image of ideas, albeit something exterior. However, after Plato the interiorisation of the culture of images has somehow produced an effect of self-dissimulation. What Sini emphasises is that 'the question of imagination ... is the pivotal question and the underlying problem of all Platonism. It is the very core on which the operation of the 'strategy of the soul' is implanted'. [8] This is the formation of the human person, of the political man, of the epistemic subject, of the creative innovation of the self.

With Sini's analysis we take one step away from the opening of the hermeneutic-narrative path, the one with which we can rethink the representative and imaginative functions as not only ways to penetrate, know and tell about ourselves and the world, but also, the ways in which we reconstruct and remanufacture the world and ourselves,

that is, the ways through which we realise ourselves, and how we participate to the realisation of the world as such. As for Sini, we find ourselves one step away from entering the hermeneutic-narrative pathway but as yet, at the same time, we remain closed on the sole dimension of a phenomenological analysis.

TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO IMAGINATION AND NARRATIVE IDENTITY

Another Italian philosopher, Virgilio Melchiorre, is bound to the tradition of French phenomenology, from which he develops a research referred to imagination through the problematic field concerning utopian construction or the construction of the utopian consciousness. Partial in ideology and radical in utopia, imagination can reach the point of denial and passing of the reality. This can happen in close correlation with the function that imagination exercises in representing and reconfiguring the self. Imagination is a function of the liberty. It is the 'organ' of the possible, an 'instrument' of historical construction and of making of history. [9] In fact, it is via the imaginative expression and realisation that the concrete possibility of realisation and transformation of the world is given.

Melchiorre thinks that every historical progress draws strength from the work of utopia. Hence the idea that history needs imagination. However, his speculative itinerary, which certainly has a strong historical-critical and aesthetic interest, tends to anchor the theme of the imaginative function on the anthropological discourse. The transformation of time by virtue of utopia coincides with the emancipatory liberation of symbolic in the inner life. It is something that impacts beyond the stringent bridles of rational realism, of customs and of cultural conformations of personalities. For Melchiorre, if the absent is the object of the work of imagination, then imagination in itself is the 'organ' of the future.

Certainly, the liberation of the imaginary is understood as an essential part of an individual's development, that much of normal development is intended to play precisely on the valorisation and correct harmonisation of representational functions, imaginative satisfaction, creative productions, abstract elaborations, prefigurations, refigurations, symbolisations and the like. Melchiorre is aware of the contemporary paradox correlated to the emptying the creative productions from their symbolic charge. This is certainly due for the counter-attack of spiritual desertification that our society of thought, pleasure and matter produces. In some way, that duplicity in human's vision and work of imagination is recomposed in a kind of anthropological re-elaboration, which psychoanalysis had managed to express distinctly between the Freudian and Jungian modelling.

On the one hand, Freud observes that even an artist is an introverted *in nuce*, not very far from neurosis. In fact, 'he is one who is urged on by instinctual needs which are too clamorous; he longs to attain honour, power, riches, fame and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications. So like any other unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and all his libido too, onto the creation of his wishes in the life of phantasy'. [10] On the other hand, reflecting on the scarce symbolic significance of today's life, Jung points out that, in general, 'one half of humanity batters and grows strong on a doctrine fabricated by

human ratiocination; the other half sickens from the lack of a myth commensurate with the situation'. [11]

To summarise, imagination has to be considered, on the one hand, as a substitutive, compensatory and sublimatory operation and, on the other, as a landing place to reality and an individual 'fullness' or 'truth'. These are not the only two schools or interpretative approaches but the expressions of the possible alternative functioning of the deep and influencing work of imagination. As for Freud, we can ponder of a range of expressions of the self that varies from phantasmal production to oneiric manifestations or from symptomatic manifestations to the alienating sublimation. As for Jung, we can ponder of a range of issues that range from the expressive and emancipatory research of a more mature personhood (via individuation) to the mythical-symbolic-religious project of a new (spiritual) vision of life.

In many ways, we are brought closer to the perspective of Ricoeur, manifesting itself by virtue of a greater anthropological-philosophical proximity (at least compared to Sini).

ON PERSONAL IDENTITY AS A DIALECTIC BETWEEN NARRATION AND RECOGNITION

The theoretical relevance of imagination in Ricoeur's anthropology has its roots in his trilogy *Time and Narration* (1983-1985), particularly in connection with the role played by the triple mimesis in the framework of narrative theory. As Domenico Jervolino underlines, 'if viewed retrospectively, the magnificent trilogy of *Temps et récit* appears as a great and successful attempt to bring to light of thought the ability of the human beings, to tell in many forms the history of their lives, acquiring in this way a 'narrative identity' and deepening the sense of their temporal condition'. [12] The key term of this work 'is certainly *mimesis* in all its dialectical richness, ... [for it] presides over the complex architecture of the trilogy, that is, the power of language to prefigure the action, which itself is readable as a text and inserted into the symbolic plot of a given cultural universe, that is the power of language to configure the human and temporal world of praxis in the two different but converging modes of historical and fictional narration. Finally, the power of language of re-figuring, of saying a new praxis, of shaping in a new way and of preserving and renewing the sense of human action and suffering'. [13]

In a sort of mutual determination and re-determination, the whole work is based on the hermeneutic circle formed by time, understood here as the time of human experience and by way of narration. If all that is narrated takes place temporally, there is no temporality without narration. The process of time exists only in a narrated form or only as it can be told. *Time and Narration* can be read as a hermeneutic research on the historicity of existence. We are historical beings, in fact. And, through the conscience, and with effect on the individual personality, narration is precisely the modality that makes this dimension of historical individuality possible and effective. Thus, the personalities flourish and mature, placing themselves in a time and within a determined tradition, according to a modality (the narrative one) that makes the identity can be constituted through those texts, the stories and the works which are matrix, expression and testimony of a determined traditional identity and culture. In this sense, the formation of identity and its representative and expressive modalities pass through a 'filter', through the symbolic mediation, of the determined comprehensive, experiential

and representative heritage of that certain tradition. In the general conclusion of *Time and Narration*, Ricoeur introduce the concept of narrative identity, a concept that he will largely develop and deepen later in his *Oneself as Another* (1990). In it, the narrative identity is carried out starting from the comparison with the positions of modern criticism on personal identity as developed by John Locke and David Hume, the demystifying philosophers of the subject. It is in response to this that Ricoeur develops his philosophy of the capable human being, which matures in a philosophy of personal identity understood as an emancipatory process and dialectical-emancipatory process of self- and mutual- recognition. The philosophy of the capable human being outlines a hermeneutics of personal identity founded on the dynamism of power and act according (1) to the four fundamental moments of being able to talk, act, narrate and act feel responsible, and according (2) the inter-relational dialectics of mutual recognition. The narrative function, which is variously and structurally connected to the imaginative functions, plays a pivotal role here. Ricoeur subsumes it from his vast interdisciplinary research on time and narration which is articulated between narratology and hermeneutics, while the second speculative pillar, that is, the concept of recognition, is analysed for the first time in his 1965 *Freud and Philosophy*, in which he intertwines Hegel's dialectical phenomenology with Freud's psychoanalysis. [14] In particular, he connects Hegel's master-slave dialectics with Freud's analyst-patient therapeutic relationship. The latter is understood as the search for authenticity through the excavation of the past, while the first is understood as research into realisation of meaning in the progressive effort. Both symbolise the two polarities of the individual dialectic of recognition, which is perpetually tensed between regressive and progressive pushes, closure and opening and recognition and misrecognition. This anthropological model seems to suggest the idea that both, the realisation or maturation of personal identity and personal psychic harmonious equilibrium or health, are not only dependent from the possibilities of expression and action, but on the success and advancement in the (many) dialectics of emancipation and (mutual) recognition.

According to this dialectical-emancipatory view, what is the level of relevance of the imaginative-narrative functions? And, when and how does it come into play? To provide an answer to this, it requires first to hold the fact that Ricoeur does not accept a unitary and substantial conception of identity. In his vision, in fact, one part or dimension of our identity, which he calls *identity-ipse*, is mobile, experiential and historical, while another part or this dimension, which he calls *identity-idem*, is fixed, structural and coincides with our biological being. The latter structural dimension provides the support of the neuronal, psychological and mnemonic functions which are necessary for the maintenance, development and realisation of the historical identity. And precisely because we develop such a historical identity, the components of the theory of narration (starting from the triple mimesis and the imaginative, representative and narrative functions) become the fundamental pillars of the development of personal identity. In fact, without the functioning of these components, no virtuous dialectics of recognition would produce effects of maturation, emancipation and realisation on identity and subjective personality. Ricoeur persistently comes back on the mechanism of narrative mediation (through symbolic and linguistic representation) with which a sort of circular dialectic between *identity-idem* and *identity-ipse*, and between psycho-biological (deterministic) mechanisms and experiential (meaningful) contents, is at work. In some ways, we can say that narrative mediation is the *functional* fulcrum of the development of identity and personality, where the dialectics of recognition can be called its *existential* fulcrum. [15]

CONCLUSIONS

If considered as a referential model, Ricoeur's philosophy of the human being contains a remarkable synthetic function, capable of reabsorbing in an interdisciplinary and comprehensive formulation the speculative and scientific problematic of the dialectical relationship between imagination and personal identity. In fact, his anthropological model is not a simple interdisciplinary hybrid, that is, the result of an amalgamation of extra-philosophical acquaintances. Ricoeur's method itself has an interdisciplinary conformation: it is not a hermeneutics, nor a phenomenology or an analytical or dialectical procedure. To put it schematically, it is an epistemological-hermeneutical model whose procedure is available according to the explanatory functions of the descriptive sciences and the comprehensive functions of the human and social sciences. And, there is a close interweaving of method and anthropological research. This emerges with particular and immediate evidence in the book-dialogue with the neurobiologist Jean-Pierre Changeux, in his work *What Makes Us Think?* (1998). As for Changeux, Ricoeur approaches the question of personal identity via the ontological and scientific issues of the mind-brain relationship in a way that he will full develop in a subsequent philosophical work, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2000). By dialoguing with Changeux, Ricoeur declares the thesis that a subtle 'semantic dualism' insinuates itself between the experiences organised at a prelinguistic level and the objectified formal forms of the mental. To him, it is no exaggeration to say that the semantic gap is so great between the cognitive sciences and philosophy as between the neuronal sciences and philosophy. The gap between the experienced phenomenological and the known object runs along the dividing lines between the two approaches of the human phenomenon. However, this semantic dualism, in which a true asceticism of the reflective thought is expressed, can only form a starting point. The multiple, broad and complete experience is made in such a way that the two discourses do not stop being linked by multiple points of intersection. In a certain way, it is the body itself that is lived and known. And, it is the same mind that is lived and known; it is the same human being who is 'mental' and 'bodily' at the same time. From this ontological identity may depend on a third discourse that goes beyond both phenomenological philosophy and science (see J.-P. Changeux and P. Ricoeur, *What Makes Us Think? A Neuroscientist and a Philosopher Argue about Ethics*, Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 14). Here, Ricoeur distinguishes a connection to the study of personal identity: the objective discourse of explanatory disciplines, the critical-intuitive and ethical-practical discourse of the understanding and speculative knowledge, the over-philosophical discourse of the poetic and the religious. It is by considering this that his theory of the capable human being cannot only be understood as a new and far-reaching anthropological synthesis. It puts at its centre element the fulcrum of the instability and problematic of personal identity, that is, imagination. And, it recognises the dialectical process as the key to a new design that justifies and explicates the 'substance' of personal identity. Together with the narrative function, imagination plays a pivotal role in Ricoeur's philosophy of the capable human being, which is in turn founded on the dynamism of power and act according (1) to the four fundamental moments of being able to talk, to act, to narrate and to feel responsible, and according (2) the inter-relational dialectics of mutual recognition. All of those moments are 'prefigurative

moments', that is, moments in which imagination variously 'anticipates', 'prepares' and even 'determines' certain actions and reality.

REFERENCES

- [1] Changeux, J.-P., *L'homme neuronal*, Paris: Libraire Arthème Fayard, 1983.
- [2] See Nussbaum, M., *Love's Knowledge*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. See also Johnson, M., *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- [3] Wing, L., Gould J., Severe Impairments of Social Interaction and Associated Abnormalities in Children: Epidemiology and Classification, *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, vol. 9, n. 1, 1979, pp. 11-29.
- [4] Currie, G., Ravenscroft, I., *Recreative Minds: Imagination in Philosophy and Psychology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. See also Baron-Cohen, S., Leslie, A., Frith, U., Does the Autistic Child Have a 'Theory of Mind'?, *Cognition*, vol. 21, 1985, pp. 37-46; Carpenter, M., Tomasello, M., Striano T., Role Reversal Imitation and Language in Typically-Developing Infants and Children with Autism, *Infancy*, vol. 8, 2005, pp. 253-278.
- [5] See Gendler, T. S., *Self-Deception as Pretense, Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 21, n. 1, 2007, pp. 231-258.
- [6] See Sini, C., *I segni dell'anima. Saggio sull'immagine*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1989, p. VIII.
- [7] See Sini, C., *I segni dell'anima. Saggio sull'immagine*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1989, p. 6.
- [8] Sini, C., *I segni dell'anima. Saggio sull'immagine*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1989, p. 67; the trans. is mine.
- [9] see Melchiorre, V., *L'immaginazione simbolica*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1972, p. 81 nad p. 85.
- [10] Freud, S., *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. Washington: Washington Square Press Inc. 1967, p. 384.
- [11] Jung, C. G., *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffe. New York: Vintage Books, 1965, p. 331.
- [12] Jervolino, D., *Il cogito e l'ermeneutica. La questione del soggetto in Ricoeur*, Marietti, Genova, 1993², p. 157; the trans. is mine.
- [13] Jervolino, D., *Il cogito e l'ermeneutica. La questione del soggetto in Ricoeur*, Marietti, Genova, 1993², pp. 157-158; the trans. is mine.
- [14] See Busacchi, V., *Habermas and Ricoeur's Depth Hermeneutics: From Psychoanalysis to a Critical Human Science*, Cham (Switzerland): Springer International Publishing, 2016.
- [15] See Busacchi, V., *The Ricoeurian Way: Towards A Critical Hermeneutics for the Human and Social Sciences*, *American International Journal of Social Science (AIJSS)*, vol. 4, n. 6, 2015, pp. 82-88.