

"Eric Voegelin and Paul Ricoeur on Memory and History"

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I experienced the defeat in 1940 against the backdrop of personal guilt. . . . I could not help but say to myself: "So here is what I have brought about through political mistakes, through passivity, for not having understood that, in the face of Hitlerism , France should not have been disarmed." This reproach has stayed with me and has led me always to be wary of my political judgment.

Paul Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction*

*We are not equal within language. There are inequalities. Take now the ability to act. It is greater among people with power. . . . There are degrees of ability, therefore. For example--and we may have to reconcile ourselves with this, including with Hayden White--this marvelous ability to narrate. Because it is universal: everybody has narrated. We are trying to narrate a path . . . And one must be able to narrate in order to have this next, fourth ability: accountability. That is to say that I can feel, as one says in English, **accountable**. For this, one must be able **to give an account**.*

Paul Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue Between Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi

It is usually the commonalities that draws scholars to compare Eric Voegelin and Paul Ricoeur, for they share many philosophic traits and, as I have argued elsewhere, the shared goal of establishing limits to philosophy and politics without lapsing into dogmatism.¹ [1] Despite the many similarities, an examination of Eric Voegelin and Paul Ricoeur on memory and history reveals stark differences. First, their inquiries were driven by very different motivations. Ultimately, Eric Voegelin's work was designed to recover an authentic understanding of consciousness.² [2] Memory and history are key paths and although navigated using different methods of inquiry, the goal remains the same. History, for Voegelin, is not a collection of facts and events but rather the trail of symbolizations communicating experiences of order, which, when explored by a thinker with an open soul, reveals the quaternarian structure of existence: "God and man, world and society." It is through the trail of symbols that we are able to overcome the modern philosophical derailment, what some have identified as a secularized

1 [1] Eugene Webb's excellent work *Philosopher's of Consciousness: Polanyi, Lonergan, Voegelin, Ricoeur, Girard, Kierkegaard*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), is in many ways the best comparison but many scholars have been drawn to similarities. Even when explicit references are not made, many scholars see Ricoeur and Voegelin working in the same philosophic tradition. Indeed, Gilbert Weiss argues that Voegelin is "indeed a phenomenologist" and that his work "stands in the post-Husserlian phenomenological tradition" in "Between Gnosis and Anamnesis: European Perspectives on Eric Voegelin," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 4, 2000, 764-765. My article "Voegelin and Ricoeur: Recovering Science and Subjectivity through Representation," makes the argument that both men wanted to create foundations without foundationalism. It is included in *Eric Voegelin's Dialogue with the Postmoderns*, co-edited Peter A. Petrakis and Cecil L. Eubanks, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004).

2 [2] It is not too much to say that this has become orthodoxy among serious students of Voegelin. Indeed, so much has been written about the centrality of Voegelin's theory of consciousness to his thought that, to paraphrase Thomas Heilke, "it is no longer news." See "Anamnestic Tales: The Place of Narrative in Eric Voegelin's Account of Consciousness," *The Review of Politics*, vol. 58, No. 4, 1996.

eschatology, and become aware of other experiences of transcendence.³ [3] Put in other language, Voegelin's history is an effort to restore a balanced eschatology by again recognizing transcendence. Noetic philosophy's purpose, then, is to penetrate the symbols to the extent possible and participate in the experience of order or, more straightforwardly, recover the divine ground of being. Memory, properly understood as anamnesis, is central to this recovery because it allows for verification through one's consciousness; one authenticates the experience of a "larger horizon" by means of recollection. Memory is crucial, then, because as Voegelin explains in *Anamnesis*: "An analysis of consciousness . . . has no instrument other than the concrete consciousness of the analyst."⁴ [4] In the sense that memory is crucial to the process by which the authentic character of human consciousness as participatory or tensional is experienced and authenticated, it is fair to say that Voegelin's mature work begins and ends with memory. It is important to note that memory, history, and human consciousness, are not to be taken as distinct realities but rather as different means of participating in consciousness. The recovery of a balanced consciousness is only possible through this participatory experience. The recovery of balance is the first order of business for the philosopher and for philosophy. Indeed, Voegelin's recovery of a balanced consciousness is what fortifies the less esoteric aspects of his thought, such as his diagnosis of philosophical, historical, and political derailments. Thus, the most recognizable aspect of Voegelin's thought, his diagnoses of fascism, communism, and

3 [3] See Gilbert Weiss' discussion, "Between Gnosis and Anamnesis: European Perspectives on Eric Voegelin," *The Review of Politics*, vol. 62, No. 4 (2000) for a discussion of the different responses to modern eschatology.

4 [4] Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, trans. Gerhart Niemeyer, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978), 4.

positivism, hinge on the restoration of a balanced consciousness, which is attained through the experience of history and memory.

Paul Ricoeur's work on memory and history, which encompasses forgetting and forgiveness, was motivated by a desire to overcome specific philosophic aporias in order to extend phenomenology to the social sphere. In many ways, Ricoeur was continuing Husserl's work of scientific revolution via phenomenology. Put in less inflammatory language, Ricoeur believed that once phenomenology was rescued from its primary failing--the problem of solipsism--it could fruitfully be applied to less abstract philosophic questions, such as whether and why history "over remembers" some events to the detriment of others. In other words, despite his philosophic rigor, Ricoeur's inquiry into memory was driven by practical concerns.

The second difference between Voegelin and Ricoeur, at least as pertaining to their work on memory and history, is that they operated on what might be called distinct levels. Whereas Voegelin's thought, in the sense that he persistently sought to reveal the divine ground of being or recover the experience of transcendence, is theoretical, Ricoeur's work struggles to justify an applied dimension. If Ricoeur is successful, without violating Voegelin's criteria of a balanced consciousness, his work might be an important complement to Voegelin. Before exploring those possibilities, however, a bit more on the different levels of their inquiries.

There is a profound consistency to Voegelin's philosophy. Throughout his work, he struggled to recover the experience of the divine ground. As such, his treatment of memory was undertaken to point out how the searching of one's consciousness reveals the structure of human consciousness. A full accounting of memory, exploring nuances such as different capacities of memory or how memory works, was not his focus. The key for Voegelin was that a specific

kind of memory, anamnestic reflection, is crucial to the recovery of balanced consciousness. The same holds true for Voegelin's monumental achievement, *Order and History*. The reason he had to abandon the history of ideas was that ideas, a secondary modern construct, obscured the true nature of consciousness, especially regarding our participatory nature. It is too easy to fall prey to the illusion that ideas can be ripped from their context and manipulated by humans. "The perspective of participation must be understood in the fullness of its disturbing quality. It does not mean that man, more or less comfortably located in the landscape of being, can look around and take stock of what he sees as far as he can see it. . . . There is no vantage point outside existence from which its meaning can be viewed and a course of action charted."⁵ [5] The search for order and history (the two refer to the same reality) is another demonstration of the experience of the divine ground but, and this is of the utmost importance, Voegelin's insight cannot be explained, it must be *experienced*, much like the Socratic invitation, one must "look and see if it is not so." In this sense, Voegelin's philosophy can be seen as exhortations--this, in turn, might be why his language is often so stark, to cast off the profoundly mistaken perspectives (ranging from relativism to fundamentalism) and experience the truth of being.

Voegelin's tight focus is essential because, from his perspective, nothing else can be considered until this ontological fact is recovered. In the strict sense, no "dialogue" can take place until the discussants remember reality or, in different language, come to experience the true nature of human existence as participatory. Thus, there is a philosophic justification for Voegelin's dismissive attitude toward specific thinkers. There is no use exploring practical

⁵ [5] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History: Israel and Revelation*, volume I, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 3.

insights--like Marx's analysis of the deleterious effects of capitalism--of thinkers unwilling to recognize the ground of being and consciousness.

There is no denying the importance of Voegelin's work. Yet, his tight focus presents certain difficulties for the practical application of his thought. For while Voegelin could diagnose and condemn modern derailments (perhaps the crucial task of the 20th century), he had little to say about the more prosaic realms of social and political reality, such as the disruptive consequences of poverty or industrialization. Voegelin's fidelity to his philosophic mission is often misunderstood. His unwillingness to be drawn into lengthy or careful discussion of the practicalities and problems of social society drew accusations of quietism.⁶ [6] Although such accusations are mistaken, it is true that his thought does not provide much guidance concerning the mechanics of political theory.

Paul Ricoeur's thought is less coherent and, in part, this is because he operates on different levels.⁷ [7] Some of his writings are designed to clarify the work of other thinkers; his

6 [6] Accusations have come in a myriad of forms, ranging from Leo Strauss' historicism to John Gunnell's metatheoretical discourse, and have prompted several trenchant responses. Some good examples include Barry Cooper's *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*, Ellis Sandoz's *The Politics of Truth and Other Untimely Essays: the Crisis of Civic Consciousness*, Glenn Hughes' *The Politics of the Soul: Eric Voegelin on Religious Experience*, and David Walsh's *Guarded by Mystery: Meaning in a Postmodern Age*. Given that these four fine refutations all were published in 1999, an exhaustive list seems diversionary.

7 [7] Ricoeur's lack of consistency is due, in large part, to the fact that he pursued a variety of themes and problems, usually by synthesizing very different philosophic traditions (e.g., phenomenology and hermeneutics). He uses different modes of analysis depending on his topic or problem. His catholic interests and methods have led to misunderstandings. Indeed, some critics have labeled him a *passeur* or someone who disseminates the ideas of others rather than original thinking. Anyone who has read Ricoeur rather than read about him realizes this is a mistake.

excellent exegeses of Husserl or Freud are two good examples.⁸ [8] Other works take on contemporary problems, like his running debate with Derrida concerning questions of language.⁹ [9] His late work *Memory, History, Forgetting*, is an effort to apply phenomenology to the social sphere, to make it applicable to practical social and political problems. This thesis is buttressed by Ricoeur's practical insights, such as the role of history, which we will see is to give voice to the silenced, and his understanding of what he calls "Difficult Forgiveness." Ricoeur tries to lay the philosophic groundwork to address practical problems, such as whether amnesty is an appropriate response to ethical violations. However, before the practical applications can be discussed, Ricoeur must first resolve highly abstruse philosophic quandaries.

Ricoeur On Memory

Paul Ricoeur approaches memory from a traditional phenomenological standpoint, with one important distinction. Instead of beginning with the question of "whose" memory is being explored, Ricoeur starts with the question of "What" constitutes memory. This shift is important

8 [8] See Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967) and *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

9 [9] Derrida and Ricoeur engaged in a published debate over language. The debate began with Derrida's *White Mythology* (1971), which was countered by Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975), followed by Derrida's "The Retrait of Metaphor" (1978). In addition to these primary sources, a lively debate exists within the secondary literature. See Patrick Bouegeois and Frank Schalow, "Hermeneutics of Existence: Conflict and Resolution," *Philosophy Today*, v. 31, Spring 1987; Morny Joy, "Derrida and Ricoeur: A Case of Mistaken Identity (and Difference)," *Journal of Religion*, v. 68, #1, 1988; Douglas McGaughey, "Ricoeur's Metaphor and Narrative Theories as a Foundation for a Theory of Symbol," *Religious Studies*, 1988; Leonard Lawlor, "Dialectic and Iterability: The Confrontation Between Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida," *Philosophy Today*, v. 32, Spring 1988 and *Imagination and Chance: The Difference Between the Thought of Ricoeur and Derrida*. Albany : State University of New York Press, 1992.

in order to avoid a troubling aporia in Husserl's thought--the problem of solipsism or how consciousness accounts for others. According to Ricoeur, his approach is not so much a departure from phenomenology than a correction. Indeed, "in accordance with solid phenomenological doctrine, the egological question--whatever the *ego* may signify--should come after the intentional question, which is imperatively that of the correlation between the act (the noesis) and the intentional correlate (the noema)." Ricoeur contends that "What" must be broken down into its cognitive and practical side, *mneme* and *anamnesis* in Greek, in order account for the process or the question of "How." This analysis of the process of *anamnesis* is important because it will allow the establishment of a typology of uses and abuses of memory, which is one of Ricoeur's primary aims. Ricoeur describes his philosophic path as moving from "❖What?" to ❖Who?" passing by way of ❖How? From memories to reflective memory, passing by way of reflection." 10 [10]


Approaching the question of "What" is not without its own difficulties. First, ordinary language suggests that representations of the past are cast as images, which has the unfortunate effect of essentially constricting memory to a limited recall function. "Memory, reduced to recall, thus operates in the wake of imagination" . . . which "is located at the lowest rung of the ladder of modes of knowledge."11 [11] This connection to imagination has resulted in a denigration of memory in the philosophic tradition and forces Ricoeur to "decouple" imagination

10 [10] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2004), 3.

11 [11] Ibid., 5.

and memory. This linguistic resuscitation must begin by going back to the Greeks, specifically Plato and Aristotle's competing traditions.


Going back to Plato's *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, Ricoeur reviews the solution to the platonic problem regarding memory--how to resolve the present representation of an absent thing. In the *Theaetetus*, the *eikon* (image) is used in association with *phantasma* (imagination) and memory is understood through the metaphor of wax or *tupos* (imprint). Countering the theory that knowledge is merely perception, Socrates contends that memories are created in a manner similar to making indentations in wax. "Whatever is so imprinted we remember and know so long as the image remains; whatever is rubbed out or has not succeeded in leaving an impression we have forgotten and do not know"(191d).¹² [12] Although this resolved the problem, it also illustrates, according to Ricoeur, that Plato was really interested in establishing an epistemic theory concerning false opinion and judgment rather than theorizing about memory.

Unfortunately, "[t]his hypothesis--or better, admission--of the imprint has, over the course of the history of ideas, produced a procession of difficulties that continued to overwhelm not only the theory of memory, but also the theory of history, under another name--the trace."¹³ [13]

Ricoeur contends that there are different types of traces that interest historians. First, are written traces, which Plato famously confronts in the *Phaedrus*. Second, are impressions resulting from experience, which Plato takes up in the *Philebus*. Likening the soul to a book, Socrates explains that "if memory and perceptions concur with other impressions [*pathemata*] at a particular occasion, then they seem to inscribe [*graphein*] words in our soul, as it were. And if what [the

12 [12] Plato, *The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairnes, (New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1961.

13 [13] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 13.

experience, *pathema*] is written is true, then we form a true judgment and a true account of the matter. But if what our scribe [*grammateus*] writes is false, then the result will be the opposite of truth" (39a). Socrates maintains that there is another craftsman, "a painter [*zographos*], who follows the scribe and provides illustrations [*graphei*] to his words" (39b). "The question posed by this affection-impression is therefore twofold: on the one hand, how is it preserved, how does it persist, whether or not it is recalled? On the other, what meaningful relation does it have to the marking event (what Plato calls *eidolon* to avoid confusion with the present *eikon* of the absent mark. . ." There is an "ineluctable difficulty attached to the status of the  imprint in the soul' as in a block of wax.," argues Ricoeur, and he "hope[s] to show that this problem, inherited from the old debate over the relations between the soul and the body, and a problem audaciously assumed by Bergson in *Matter and Memory*, can be posed in terms other than those opposing materialism to spiritualism." 14 [14] But before he draws on contemporary thinkers, Ricoeur first examines Aristotle's treatment of memory.

In sharp contrast to his mentor, Aristotle explicitly distinguished memory, as simple recall from recollection as constituted by a search, in his *De Memoira et Reminiscentia* (On Memory and Reminiscence). Dividing his treatise into two chapters, the first as an exploration of *mneme* and the second on *anamnesis*, Aristotle argued that *mneme* derives from an affection whereas *anamnesis* involves an active search. Additionally, simple memory (*mneme*) differs from recollection because the former is attributed to an imprint whereas the latter involves changes in us. Temporality, however, binds the two processes--"the act of remembrance (*mnemoneuein*) is produced when time has elapsed (*prin klronisthenai*) (451a30). And it is the

14 [14] Ibid., 14-15.

interval of time, between the initial impression and its return, that recollection traverses."15 [15]

This temporal dimension is significant, according to Ricoeur, because it lays the groundwork for distinguishing memory and imagination. In Aristotle, recollection requires keeping track of proportions. "For it is not by the mind's reaching out towards them, as some say a visual ray from the eye does [in seeing], that one thinks of large things at a distance in space. . . but one does so by a proportional mental movement. . . . When, therefore, the movement corresponding to its time concur, then one actually remembers" (452b11-24).16 [16] The "role played by the estimation of lapses of time underscores the rational side of recollection: this search' constitutes a sort of reasoning [*syllogismos*]"17 [17] Aristotle's contribution to a phenomenology of memory, then, lies in differentiating *mneme* from *anamnesis*, which Ricoeur re-phrases "simple evocation" and, adopting Bergson's term, "the effort to recall."

With these points established, Ricoeur argues that a phenomenological sketch will complete the decoupling of memory and imagination. He starts off by making two important points. First, unlike most authors, he approaches memory not from its deficiencies but focuses rather on "good memory." His justification for this approach is an assertion--"that we have no other resource, concerning our reference to the past, except memory itself." Therefore, the failings of memory, chiefly encompassed in the term forgetting, "should not be treated straight away as pathological forms, but as the shadowy underside of the bright region of memory." 18

15 [15] Ibid., 18.

16 [16] Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, (New York: Random House, 1941), 615.

17 [17] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 18.

18 [18] Ibid., 21.

[18] Put in more conventional language, the mistake thinkers make--by focusing on the deficiencies of memory--is to ignore a shared conviction that we are driven by a "truthful ambition of memory." No one has this expectation of veracity for other mental activities, such as imagination. In short, the uses and abuses of memory do not eliminate the existence of "good" memory. Second, in order to deal with the many types and philosophies of memory, what Ricoeur calls the polysemy of memory, he proposes a series of oppositional pairs. He adopts this technique for epistemological reasons for "the phenomena of memory, so closely connected to what we are, oppose the most obstinate of resistances to the *hubris* of total reflection."¹⁹ [19] The indeterminacy has to do with problems of representing preverbal experience, what Ricoeur calls "lived experience," in linguistic terms, what he refers to as the interpretative path of phenomenology through hermeneutics.²⁰ [20]

Following Bergson in *Matter and Memory*, the first pair of oppositions presented by Ricoeur is habit and memory. Habit and memory should not be thought of as dichotomous but rather as indices forming two poles of a range of mnemonic events. The binding thread, again, is temporality. Habit-memory is a form of memory where memory is "part of my present" in the sense that is lived rather than represented. For example, memorization of a lesson learned has a primacy or immediacy that makes it like the "habit of walking or writing." In contrast, a

¹⁹ [19] Ibid., 24.

²⁰ [20] Those familiar with Ricoeur's work will not be confused by this detour. Indeed, one of his main contributions to philosophy is his subtle blending of various traditions in order to avoid philosophic paradoxes. See, for example, his dispute with Heideggerian ontology, which he criticized for its immediacy. *Traces of Understanding: A Profile of Heidegger's and Ricoeur's Hermeneutics* by Patrick L. Bourgeois and Frank Schalow, 1990 is an excellent explication of this issue.

memory of an event, like the reading of a particular book, requires a secondary mental event, a representation.

Ricoeur's second set of opposites is evocation/search. Evocation is the unexpected appearance of a memory, what Aristotle termed *mneme*, whereas a search requires effort. Aristotle defined *mneme* as a *pathos*, thereby making it an affection. *Anamnesis*, according to Plato, transcended the individual life. As Ricoeur states, "Plato turned *anamnesis* into a myth by tying it to prenatal knowledge from which we are said to have been separated by a forgetting that occurs when the life of the soul is infused into a body. . . a forgetting from birth, which is held to make the search a relearning of what has been forgotten."²¹ [21] This relearning requires work, which is accompanied by anxiousness. "One searches for what one fears having forgotten temporarily or for good."²² [22] Ricoeur relies on Bergson to give a "modern echo" to this analysis by distinguishing laborious from spontaneous recollection. The differences involve "planes of consciousness" in that voluntary memory requires a different kind of learning, what Bergson referred to as a dynamic scheme. The "♦effort of recall consists in converting a schematic idea, whose elements interpenetrate, into an imaged idea, the parts of which are juxtaposed."²³ [23] This process, however, is complicated by the fact that "longstanding combinations" resist this conversion. In a similar manner to the way habits are hard to change, searching memory causes uneasiness, a "disquietude of the body." Put back in Greek

²¹ [21] Ibid., 26.

²² [22] Ibid., 27.

²³ [23] Ibid., 29.

terminology, "there is *pathos* in *zetesis*," or, put in Ricoeur's words, "the intellectual and affective dimensions of the effort to recall intersect."²⁴ [24]

Ricoeur considers his next polarity, that of reflexivity and worldliness, in order to emphasize that "one does not remember oneself" but rather in context, complete with other people, specific places, sights and smells, in short a "lived space." Reflexivity refers to the undeniable interiority of memory, its inwardness. Yet memory must avoid "the interpretive surplus of subjectivist idealism that prevents this moment of reflexivity from entering into a dialectical relation with the pole of worldliness."²⁵ [25] In short, worldliness represents the other end of the spectrum, the fact that there is not just memory but memories. Indeed, when the tensional character of reflexivity and worldliness is kept in mind, a path from individual to collective memory is revealed.

Ricoeur, then, believing that the "What" question is resolved, shifts his analysis to "Who" remembers. The tradition has been divided by two problems that complicates the inquiry. On one side, the study of memory is distorted by an egoistic mode of subjectivity, best exemplified in Husserlian phenomenology. On the other hand, the emergence of the modern social scientific notion of "collective consciousness" has turned memory into a positivist construct. In typical fashion, Ricoeur attempts to synthesize these two traditions or, in his words, "to identify the linguistic region where the two discourses may be made to intersect."²⁶ [26] After succinctly summarizing the "tradition of inwardness" in western philosophy, from Augustine's magisterial

²⁴ [24] Ibid., 30.

²⁵ [25] Ibid., 36.

²⁶ [26] Ibid., 124.

Confessions, to John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, to Husserl's "Fifth Cartesian Meditation" and *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, Ricoeur ends with an important question. "[M]ust we begin with the idea of ownness, pass through the experience of the other, and finally proceed to a third operation, said to be the communalization of subjective experience? Is this chain truly irreversible?"²⁷ [27] He notes that Husserl's final work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy*, takes a different tack and presents the "life-world" or communal form from the outset. Moreover, Alfred Schutz's avoids the tedious machinations that plagued Husserl altogether by presenting the experience of others as primal as the experience of the self. This simple solution has important ramifications.

Its immediacy is less that of cognitive evidence than that of practical faith. We believe in the existence of others because we act with them and on them and are affected by their actions. The phenomenology of the social world, in this way, penetrates directly into the order of life in common, of living-together in which acting and suffering subjects are from the outset members of a community or collectivity. A phenomenology of belonging is then free to provide itself with its own conceptual system without any concern from deriving it from an egological side.²⁸ [28]

Ricoeur relies on Maurice Halbwachs' *The Collective Memory* to present the language of positivist sociology. Inverting the subjectivist approach, Halbwachs maintains that we need others to remember. It is only by the individual experience of belonging to a group that we have memories. Childhood memories, for example, take place in "socially marked places: the garden, the house, the basement, and so on."²⁹ [29] The world is never "empty" of human beings.

²⁷ [27] Ibid., 119.

²⁸ [28] Ibid., 130.

²⁹ [29] Ibid., 121-122.

More fundamentally, the social network is imperceptible most of the time and it "ceases to be an objective notion and becomes a dimension inherent in the work of recollection." Adult memories, in short, work just like childhood memories. A photo transports us back to a specific context and "[w]hat proves to be impossible to find . . . is the idea of a unified ♦internal series' in which some ♦internal, or subjective, connection,' (*La Memoire collective*, 82-83)" to explain the existence of a memory.³⁰ [30]

From Halbwachs' perspective, "there are only two principles of connection: that of the ♦facts and material phenomena' and that of collective memory."³¹ [31] The facts are always in the present and, therefore, reflection can only be explained by collective memory. It provides the logic and structure of memory. This is the critical move for it essentially eliminates the individual component of memory and reduces history to contextual social networks. Ricoeur calls this sort of thinking by its correct name--dogmatism. After all, the individual psyche is not an illusion but rather the site of recollection.

Nonetheless, "[a] phenomenology of memory. . . can draw from the competition presented to it by the sociology of memory an incitement to develop in the direction of a direct phenomenology applied to social reality" and the key to this development is language. It is in and through a common language that the individual remembers with others. The work of memory is aided, often, by the assistance of a third party, like an analyst. The traumatic experiences of a patient, for example, are brought to light in the process of reconstructing "a comprehensible mnemonic chain, acceptable to him or to her. Set on the path of orality in this

³⁰ [30] Ibid., 122.

³¹ [31] Ibid., 123.

way, remembering is also a narrative, whose public structure is obvious."³² [32] Ricoeur concludes by pointing to his notion of the "transgenerational phenomenon" as a clear link to history. The replacement of generations is biological but the "succession" of generations, if viewed from a phenomenology of social sphere, elucidates a social bond. Alfred Schutz discusses this in terms of periods of contemporaries, predecessors, and successors.³³ [33] Schutz's importance to Voegelin's thought is well known and, Ricoeur makes clear, he profoundly influences his thought as well. Indeed, it is this extension of phenomenology to the social sphere--which has clear implications for the social sciences, history, and political philosophy--that motivated his work on memory and history, and Schutz provided the link.


Before turning to forgetfulness, it is important to address Ricoeur's typology of the abuses of memory because, he argues, the ailments are similar for individual and collective memory. He discusses the abuses of memory under three general headings: blocked memory; manipulated memory; and abusively controlled memory. Understanding the abuses and appropriate therapies at the individual level offers guidelines for how such abuses can be combated in collective memory.

Blocked memory refers to a wounded or sick memory caused by a severe trauma. Accordingly, Ricoeur turns to psychology in general and Freud in particular for therapeutic solutions. Blocked memories are difficult to recover, to remember, because of resistances due to repression. Rather than remember, we compulsively repeat or act out. This substitute behavior

³² [32] Ibid., 128-129.

³³ [33] Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, trans. by George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 139-214.

is unconscious and is best resolved, according to Freud, by two approaches. At the clinical level, therapists must set the conditions for the repetitions to occur "under the cover of transference" which serves as "an intermediary domain between illness and real life."³⁴ [34] It is this almost total freedom that allows for the recovery of the memory or root cause, but the patient must contribute as well in that the courage to face one's illness, to avoid feelings of contempt and embarrassment is also necessary. It is only when the patient demonstrates the courage to accept the trauma, to remember and incorporate the event as constitutive of one's identity, is reconciliation possible. This two-fold process is emblematic of the "work" involved in remembering and Ricoeur applies it to collective memory by discussing the trauma that haunts political order--that is the fundamental relationship between history and violence. Boldly stating that Hobbes was not wrong, Ricoeur argues that

there exists no historical community that has not been born out of a relation that can, without hesitation, best be likened to war. What we celebrate under the title of founding events are, essentially, acts of violence legitimated after the fact by a precarious state of right. What was glory for some was humiliation for others. To celebration on one side corresponds execration on the other. In this way, symbolic wounds calling for healing are stored in the archives of the collective memory. More precisely, what, in historical experience the form of paradox--namely, *too much* memory here, *not enough* memory there--can be reinterpreted in terms of the categories of resistance and the compulsion to repeat. . . . Too much memory recalls especially the compulsion to repeat, which, Freud said, leads us to substitute acting out for the true recollection by which the present would be reconciled with the past: how much violence in the world stands as acting out  in place of remembering!³⁵ [35]

34 [34] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 70.

35 [35] Ibid., 79.

The work of remembering, when extrapolated to collective memory, requires a more equitable distribution of memory and forgetting, something that only critical history can accomplish.

Whereas pathological abuse is passive, problems associated from manipulated memory derive from "a concerted manipulation of memory and forgetting by those who hold power."³⁶ [36] Nation-states engage in manipulated memory in order to constrain problems associated with the fragility of identity. The primary cause of the fragility of identity centers on the temporal aspects of memory. After all, what does it mean to say: "I remain the same?" Relying on some of his previous work, Ricoeur notes that there are two senses of identical or "self-constancy over time rest on a complex interplay of sameness and ipseity."³⁷ [37] The confrontation with others is the second cause of fragility in that the other is truly different, and this difference is a threat to collective identity as well as individual identity. Drastic immigration changes would be a case-in-point. The third cause of fragile identity is the legacy of the founding violence in the origin of the political. Public ceremonies and rituals are necessary but, as mentioned before, they evoke suffering as well as celebration. The abuse of manipulated memory takes place precisely between the demand for identity and public expressions of memory. This ideological process is difficult to discern because it remains hidden or unacknowledged and it is complicated. He suggests that manipulated memory takes place on three different levels: distortions of reality; the legitimization of power; and the presentation of a "common world" by means of symbols. Analyzing them in reverse order, Ricoeur notes that there is nothing, in itself, manipulative about the construction of narrated identities or the

36 [36] Ibid., 80.

37 [37] Ibid., 81

common world. Yet when these tropes are connected to the second function, the legitimization of power, in order to "fill the gap of credibility opened by all systems of authority," then the inextricable character of ideology is revealed: it all revolves around power. Ricoeur cites Tzvetan Todorov's 1995 essay "*Les Abus de la memoire*," as evidence that it is not just totalitarian regimes that engage in a frenzied worship of memory; "it is the apanage of all those who are enamored of glory."³⁸ [38] Obligated memory is the third form of abusing memory and the problem stems from using memory to short-circuit critical history. Commanded memories lack the important dimensions of the "effort to recall" and the "duty to remember." "More precisely, what is absent is the twofold aspect of duty, as imposing itself on desire from outside and as exerting a constraint experienced subjectively as obligation." Moreover, commanded memories are often extracted from traumatic experiences and "it is justice that turns memory into a project."³⁹ [39] Like the previous discussions, there are appropriate uses of commanded memory or the grafting of justice onto the duty to remember. But abuses can occur if justice is mishandled. "It is here that a certain demand raised by impassioned memories, wounded memories, against the vaster and more critical aim of history, lends a threatening tone to the proclamation of the duty of memory, which finds its most blatant expression in the exhortation to commemorate now and always."⁴⁰ [40]

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³⁸ [38] Ibid., 84-85.

³⁹ [39] Ibid., 87-88.

⁴⁰ [40] Ibid., 89.

The second part of Ricoeur's work focuses on the epistemology of history and he divides his discussion into three phases: archival memory; explanation/understanding; and the historian's representation. These phases should not be seen as chronological but as methodological perspectives or moments interwoven throughout the historical exercise.

As suggested at the close of the last section, history provides an important corrective or defense against abuses of memory (and subsequently of forgetting) but, as we shall see, it is what Ricoeur calls "critical history" that allows for the appropriate relation between memory and history. Yet, in order to emphasize the uneasy connections between memory and history, Ricoeur starts his discussion by returning to Plato's question in the *Phaedrus* and the mythic birth of writing or *pharmakon*: is history remedy or poison?

The suspicion about history hinges on the secondary quality of writing or, as Ricoeur puts it, "everything starts, not from the archives, but from testimony."⁴¹ [41] What is lost in the writing? "Historians work with documents, and a document is already a rupture with memory, since it is written and since the voices have already turned silent . . . historians begin with mute voices and proceed to make them speak."⁴² [42] But how does one determine the veracity of these voices? In standard fashion, Ricoeur opts for contesting interpretations or what he calls "fulfillment in documentary proof." The move from testimony to archive has several ramifications. Unlike testimony, written discourses housed in archives have no intended audience, no interlocutor. Moreover, documents stowed in archives tend to become "orphans" in

⁴¹ [41] Ibid., 147.

⁴² [42] Paul Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue Between Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi," <http://www.janushead.org/8-1/Ricoeur.pdf>, (Trivium Publications, Amherst: New York , 2005) 11-12.

that they become detached from the author. This detachment is not all bad because "the change . . . that turns an orphan text into one having authority is tied to the pairing of testimony with a heuristics of evidentiary proof."⁴³ [43] This process is analogous to a court where witnesses submit to examination and, in a similar fashion, requires procedural rules. Ricoeur details the development of critical history by examining Marc Bloch, Carlo Ginzburg, and others. For our purposes, the important point is that historians recognized that there are a myriad of reasons for falsity, from intentional fraud and fabrication to unconscious bias and pathological disorders, and therefore the need to develop strategies for evaluation. The historian, like the judge, must be suspicious and demand proof. Yet some testimonies prove exceptional; "it poses a problem of reception" in that some experiences exceed "common understanding." For example, "the testimonies of those who survived the extermination camps of the Shoah, called the Holocaust in English-speaking countries" is too inhuman. In order for testimony to be received, "it must be appropriated, that is, divested as much as possible of the absolute foreignness that horror engenders. This drastic condition is not satisfied in the case of survivors testimony." Ricoeur is not suggesting that these testimonies be excluded but rather that despite "the impossibility of communicating. . . they do testify."⁴⁴ [44] Ricoeur calls such testimonies "direct narratives" and notes that they pose an important problematic.

Ricoeur then turns to "documentary proof," which is the observation that historians must pose a hypothesis or infuse their studies with an idea. It is an epistemological mistake of the first order to suppose, like the positive historians, that there are distinct phases where documents are

⁴³ [43] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 168-169.

⁴⁴ [44] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 175-176.

gathered and read, then weighed and authenticated, and then written-up. "The documents do not speak unless someone asks them to verify, that is, to make true, some hypothesis. Therefore, there is an interdependence among facts, documents, and questions."⁴⁵ [45] For historians, no document is merely given; documents must be sought.

Ricoeur then takes up the issue of validation and notes that one must guard against "the illusion of believing that what we call a fact coincides with what really happened. . . . The fact is not the event, itself given to the conscious life of a witness, but the contents of a statement meant to represent it." This is not to say that historical facts are arbitrary but rather that they are constructed "through the procedure that disengages it from a series of documents . . . which in return . . . they establish."⁴⁶ [46] In other words, an historical fact is established when a document answers, supports, a question that was sought. Facts are not discrete but put forth in a document, which, is in turn subject to verification. This is termed explanation/understanding.

The historian's representation marks the third phase presented but "the three phases of the historiographical operation, let us recall, do not constitute successive phases, but rather intermingled levels where only our didactic concern gives them the appearance of chronological succession." The key to this section is Ricoeur's belief that history is represented in a similar manner as memory. "It is in terms of representation that the phenomenology of memory, following Plato and Aristotle, described the mnemonic phenomenon in that what is remembered . . . [I]t is in terms of representation that what memory intends can be formulated insofar as it is

⁴⁵ [45] Ibid., 177.

⁴⁶ [46] Ibid., 178-179.

said to be about the past."⁴⁷ [47] Despite this straightforward point, Ricoeur feels compelled to wind through various philosophic issues before addressing how history is represented as an image. Harkening back to themes explored in *Time and Narrative*, as well as some select essays, Ricoeur discusses fictional and historical narratives. Obviously, fiction differs from history in that readers are willing to suspend belief in order to follow the story. One approaches history with caution and a critical eye. This difference in expectation or, in Ricoeur's words, the implied contract, does not negate the fact that both novels and history are forms of narrative and as such involve characters that are emplotted. The plausible story, then, requires the unfolding of a space, time, context, and characters. In short, representation is achieved by means of breathing so much life into the story that it becomes "visible." This ability to construct historical scenes that are in Aristotle's words, "before our eyes," is crucial to the persuasiveness of narratives.⁴⁸ [48]

The third section of Ricoeur's work deals with critical history and temporality before moving to forgetting. The detour through critical history and temporality is necessary to restore humility, for the residuals of modernity left a tradition believing that history could be absolute, complete, and conclusive. This is an illusion and Ricoeur relies on Nietzsche's attack on history, progress, and modernity as illustrated in *Unfashionable Observations*, for guidance. In particular, Ricoeur examines three "types" of history put forth by Nietzsche, monumental, antiquarian, and critical, but these are not to be taken as epistemological categories but emblematic of historical culture. The historical culture that Nietzsche railed against shared a

⁴⁷ [47] Ibid., 235.

⁴⁸ [48] Ibid., 263. See, also, Ricoeur's footnote # 49, 559-560, for a recapitulation of conclusions reached in *Time and Narrative*.

belief "that the meaning of existence will come ever more to light in the course of a *process*; they look backward only to understand the present by observation of the prior process and to learn to desire the future more keenly."⁴⁹ [49] In other words, they are profoundly ahistorical.

Monumental history is driven by the desire to emulate and improve and as such it focuses on "great moments" in history. These great moments are seen as linked, part of a chain of events that, if venerated, will show the path to a better future. History becomes a few embellishments as the bulk of history is swept away, forgotten. Obviously, this is a disservice to the past but it harms the present as well as "the unbounded admiration of the great and powerful figures of the past becomes the travesty behind which the hatred of the great and powerful of the present is concealed."⁵⁰ [50] A similar concealment takes place with antiquarian history, which involves the reverence of tradition and custom. There is obvious merit in relying on the wisdom of tradition and custom but in excess this perspective becomes hostile to innovation and creativity. Its zealousness to conserve becomes stifling. Critical history also has its place in that the past deserves to be judged and the condemned parts are deservedly historically evaluated. Yet when critical history is taken to the extreme, as it is during modernity, it amounts to the exclusion of the past and a desire to begin anew, *ex nihilo* as it were. This loss of historical balance must be overcome before Ricoeur can apply his phenomenology of memory to forgetting which, in turn, will allow him to address forgiving.

Ricoeur juxtaposes the role of the judge to that of the historian to demonstrate the differences between juridical and historical assessment. Historians and judges have similarities,

⁴⁹ [49] Ibid., 289.

⁵⁰ [50] Ibid., 290.

not least of which is that they are "masters at exposing fakes and, in this sense, both masters in the manipulation of suspicion."⁵¹ [51] Relying on evidence, witnesses, and testimony, judges and historians are arbitrators; they are often seen as neutral third-party evaluators. Yet the judge's role is to distribute justice whereas the historian's job is to present true representations of the past. The verdict determines individual guilt or exoneration; usually, historians concern themselves with broader assessments. Moreover, unlike the judge, whose verdict has a degree of finality, historical judgment is never conclusive. Such differences would be largely academic except that the great crimes of the 20th century forced judges and historians' roles to overlap. "So on the one side we have the courts and the judges penetrating *volens nolens* into the territory of the historians before their verdicts are carved into the flesh of history as it is being made--on the other, historians who are attempting to do their job of historian under the pressure of a moral, legal, and political condemnation."⁵² [52] This intermingling has numerous deleterious consequences, one involving an important controversy in Germany known as "the historian's debate," or *Historikerstreit*; this debate dramatically demonstrates dangers of such commingling or, as Ricoeur puts it, the "tie between explanation and exculpation." The debate hinges on the important question of the Holocaust and responsibility. Traditionally, scholarship had broken down into two basic camps, the intentionalist school focused on the acts of the leaders whereas the functionalists centered their attention on institutions and social structures. But some scholars, such as Ernst Nolte, went further by arguing the Nazi's were not the aggressors but rather reacting to external (Bosheviks) and internal (Jewish) threats. Nolte's revision hinges on the widening of the context, placing the Holocaust at the end of an "exterminationist

⁵¹ [51] *Ibid.*, 316.

⁵² [52] *Ibid.*, 322.

antecedents." Arguing that the Gulag was the original and Auschwitz the copy, Nolte admits only one difference: "the sole exception [being] the technique of gassing."⁵³ [53] Nolte's explanation was indeed intended to be exculpatory but it did not go unchallenged. Jürgen Habermas joined the fray, decrying revision as revisionist and denouncing the "apologetic tendencies" of such histories. Ricoeur praises Habermas' contributions but adds that it is "the perverse slippage from similarity to exoneration is made possible by assimilating the equivalence of crimes to the compensation of one to the other." In short, revisionist arguments are tautological, no more persuasive than "*tu quoque!*"⁵⁴ [54]

The other dimension to this debate is Nolte's ambition. His inflammatory essay is entitled "A Past That Will Not Go Away" but it is intended to pave the way for precisely that-- the fading away or forgetting. This is exactly the sort of practical issue that Ricoeur is attempting to address. Indeed, as he puts it "[f]orgetting and forgiveness, separately and together, designate the horizon of our entire investigation." Separately, they involve distinct problems. Forgetting concerns the memory, the duty to be faithful to the past. Forgiveness, on the other hand, involves guilt and reconciliation with the past. It is "[t]ogether, inasmuch as their respective itineraries intersect at a place that is not a place and which is best indicated by the term 'horizon': Horizon of memory appeased, even of a happy forgetting."⁵⁵ [55] In this way, Ricoeur must take one last detour, this one through forgetting, before a reconsideration of individual and collective forgiveness can be described.

⁵³ [53] Ibid., 328.

⁵⁴ [54] Ibid., 331.

⁵⁵ [55] Ibid., 412.

Ricoeur notes that balance must be restored to memory for while forgetting is the enemy of memory, it is also constitutive. Indeed, "we shun the specter of a memory that would never forget anything. We even consider it to be monstrous."⁵⁶ [56] There must be a measure between memory and forgetting but this requires an understanding of forgetting. Forgetting, however, constitutes two poles, what Ricoeur calls the two great figures of profound forgetting. The first he calls forgetting through the erasing of traces and the second is a backup forgetting, a forgetting kept in reserve.

Ricoeur distinguishes three types of traces: written, psychical, and cerebral. Written traces involve documentary historiography and cerebral traces are examined by neuroscience. Both of these traces are "external" marks whereas psychical traces stem from "the passive persistence of first impressions: an event has struck us, touched us, affected us, and the affective mark remains in our mind."⁵⁷ [57] Psychical traces are important for forgetting because

The access to the presumed psychical traces is entirely different. It is much more deeply concealed. One speaks of it only retrospectively on the basis of precise experiences which have as their model the *recognition* of images of the past. These experiences make us think, after the fact, that many memories, perhaps among the most precious, childhood memories, have not be definitively erased but simply rendered inaccessible, unavailable, which makes us say that one forgets less than one thinks or fears.⁵⁸ [58]

The key to remembering is what Ricoeur calls the "minor miracle of recognition" and it has several forms. It takes place in perception in that "a being was presented once; it went away; it

⁵⁶ [56] Ibid., 413. Ricoeur does not discuss this in detail but, instead, cites the fable of Jorge Luis Borges in the figure of "*Funes the Memorious*," *Ficciones*, trans. Anthony Kerrigan (New York Grove Press, 1962).

⁵⁷ [57] Ibid., 427.

⁵⁸ [58] Ibid., 416, emphasis mine.

came back. Appearing, disappearing, reappearing." But there is also what is properly known as "mnemonic recognition, ordinarily called recollection, outside the context of perception and without support in representation."⁵⁹ [59] This means that if a memory returns it is because an image survived. In the context of psychical remembering, the image was not ready-at-hand and available to recall but "the memory of the first impression in a latent state." Prior to recollection, the images enduring in this latent state are what Ricoeur calls the reserve of forgetting and retrieval is achieved by existential means. In this way, the reserve of forgetting "also provides the resource to memory to combat forgetting: Platonic reminiscence . . . proceeds from the second form of forgetting, which birth could not erase, and which nourishes recollection, reminiscence: it is thus possible to learn what in a certain fashion we have never ceased to know."⁶⁰ [60]

After delving into profound forgetfulness, Ricoeur addresses the mechanisms of forgetting. Harkening back to his previous typology of uses and abuses of memory, he first explores blocked memory. Psychoanalysis demonstrated that while repetition amounts to forgetting, the trauma remains and can be recovered. Memories might be repressed and stored in the unconscious, but they endure. Manipulated memory is a byproduct of the limitation of memory and narration. Just as one cannot remember everything, no narrative can be complete. Narratives, by their nature, are selective and it is precisely when strategies of forgetting are grafted onto narratives that ideological manipulation occurs. "One can always recount differently, by eliminating, by shifting the emphasis, by recasting the protagonists of the action

⁵⁹ [59] Ibid., 429-430.

⁶⁰ [60] Ibid., 442.

in a different light" but the "prime danger, at the end of this path, lies in the handling of authorized, imposed, celebrated, commemorated history--of official history." In this way, narration "becomes the trap, when higher powers take over this emplotment and impose a canonical narrative by means of intimidation or seduction, fear or flattery." This is a devious form of forgetting because there is a secret complicity. Manipulated memory involves semi-active and semi-passive elements "as is seen in forgetting by avoidance, the expression of bad faith and its strategy of evasion motivated by an obscure will not to inform oneself, not to investigate the harm done by the citizen's environment, in short by wanting-not-to-know." In other words, the citizen's relinquish control over the narrative construction during ideological manipulations of memory. Put in plain language, "the responsibility of blindness falls on each one," or, in Ricoeur's words, "dare to give an account yourself!"⁶¹ [61] Ricoeur concludes with a discussion of commanded forgetting, which is when forgetting and forgiveness are infused with an institutional act of the state or amnesty. Amnesty "touches the very roots of the political, and through it, the most profound and most deeply concealed relations to a past that is placed under an interdict. The proximity, which is more than phonetic, or even semantic, between amnesty and amnesia signals the existence of a secret pact with the denial of memory."⁶² [62]

Ricoeur believes that the tortuous journey through memory, history, and forgetting, paves the way for an analysis of forgiveness. Following Karl Jaspers delineation of guilt into criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical, Ricoeur explores the difference between justice and forgiveness. "Justice rests essentially on a relation of equivalence. Forgiveness, on the other

61 [61] Ibid., 448-449.

62 [62] Ibid., 452.

hand, rests on a relation of excess, of over-abundance."⁶³ [63] Given such differences, can forgiveness penetrate justice? This question is interrogated by examining how the great crimes of the 20th and 21st centuries ushered in special criminal legislation, both internationally and in numerous nation-states, defining crimes against humanity as imprescriptible. It is precisely the abolishment of a temporal limit that makes these laws special for "prescription exists in the law for all (other) violations and crimes." Prescription is a consequence of time and unlike amnesty "the traces are not erased: it is the path back to them that is forbidden." Prescription hinges on the tacit acceptance of public inaction and it is motivated by utilitarian logic. It is not that the crime is forgotten or forgiven but rather that there need to be time limits on litigation for the taking of property, presentation of witnesses, etc. Crimes against humanity and genocide, in contrast, abide by no such utilitarian logic; imprescriptibility "authorizes the indefinite pursuit of the authors of these immense crimes. . . . Such circumstances justify a particular zeal in tracking criminals, taking into account the impossibility of rapid judgment."⁶⁴ [64] Ricoeur points out that the magnitude of crimes against humanity caused the criminal code to break with the notion of proportionality. There is no punishment for a disproportionate crime and, in this sense, it is unforgivable. Yet forgiveness creeps back into the equation in that "something is owed to the guilty"; it is a sort of consideration rather than contempt. This consideration manifests itself through the process and includes presumption of innocence, certain due process rights, and, at least as regards the trial, the ability to speak on their behalf.

63 [63] Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue Between Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi," 9.

64 [64] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 471-472.

Ricoeur concurs with Jaspers notion that criminal guilt must be distinguished from the political guilt of citizens and politicians. In contrast, political guilt stems from belonging to a political community and, in this sense, it is collective, and for precisely this reason it is not criminal. There is no such thing as a criminal people. Political guilt is broad and does not require overt support or action. "Whoever has taken advantage of the benefits of the public order must in some way answer to the evils created by the state to which he or she belongs." Political guilt is punishable and can include punitive sanction and long-term obligations to make reparations. More important than punishment, however, is the fact that the demand of justice "establishes the public responsibilities of each of the protagonists and designates the respective places of aggressor and victim in a relation of appropriate distance." Unlike amnesty, there is no forgetting; unlike exoneration, there is no forgiveness. "We are always in the domain of guilt" and a "long-honored form of exoneration has to be denounced, the one invoked by the citizen who considers himself not concerned with the life of the body politic."⁶⁵ [65]

In order to deal with moral guilt, Ricoeur examines the different dimensions of forgiveness. At the theoretical level, Ricoeur agrees with Derrida that forgiveness cannot be contingent upon a request; forgiveness knows no bounds. The irreducibility of forgiveness is best encapsulated in the Christian maxim to love our enemies unconditionally. Yet, at the practical level, forgiveness seems to have a dimension of reciprocity and Ricoeur explores this by examining the spirit of forgiveness in the sense of an exchange; in particular he investigated traditional connections between gift giving and forgiveness. There is much linguistic and cultural evidence denoting the connections between gift giving and forgiveness, thereby

65 [65] Ibid., 475.

suggesting a form of exchange. Yet, what distinguishes forgiveness is precisely the unconditional quality of forgiveness. Any request for forgiveness must be prepared for rejection and the model of reciprocity does not take this into account. This is what is referred to as the vertical aspect of forgiveness and this "asymmetry accompanies us like an enigma that can never be fully plumbed."⁶⁶ [66]

But does this enigma, in the end, cut off an application of memory, history, and forgetting? Ricoeur answers by pointing to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which met from 1996 to 1998 and produced a five-volume report. The commission was authorized to collect testimony, identify victims, and provide amnesty to those who confessed to political crimes. Inspired by the motto of "understanding not revenge," it was a very different process than the punitive trials of Nuremberg and Tokyo . It is too early to determine whether it will accomplish its express goal of reconciliation but there were clear therapeutic benefits to the victims. Long hearings afforded families' time to vent, describe and detail, and to name names. "In this sense, the hearings truly permitted the public exercise of the work of memory and mourning, guided by an appropriate process of cross examination. In offering a public space for complaints and the recounting of suffering, the commission certainly gave rise to a shared *katharsis*."⁶⁷ [67]

Conclusion

⁶⁶ [66] Ibid., 483.

⁶⁷ [67] Ibid., 483-484.

Ricoeur's application of phenomenology to memory, history, and forgetting is designed to avoid excesses, ranging from claims of collective criminality to juridical solutions such as amnesty. Fidelity to limits will prevent abuses and pave the way for appropriate, albeit equivocal, measures, such as the cathartic Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Most important, however, is not to confuse justice with forgiveness. "Forgiveness is a personal act, an act from person to person that does not concern juridical institutions," and the only way for the over abundance of forgiveness to fuse with justice is symbolically. "Take for example the gesture of Chancellor Willy Brandt who went to kneel in Warsaw at the feet of the monument commemorating the persecution of the Jews and the Warsaw Ghetto. This was a symbolic gesture that created no institution, but indicated that a common path may be forged beyond the refusal of mutual recognition."⁶⁸ [68]

Voegelin would have been comfortable with most of Ricoeur's long detour. He would have praised the process of recovering psychical traces, the forgetting kept in reserve, or a return to Plato's reminiscence. He would be appreciative of the careful nature of Ricoeur's thought, his diagnosis of modernity, and his desire to avoid dichotomous thinking via polarities or, put in other language, a desire to recover balance. Ricoeur's diagnoses of the excesses of memory, history, and forgetting, both in terms of theory and application, would be equally applauded, as would his cautiousness about human potentiality. His lone criticism, I venture, would nonetheless be a profound one. Ricoeur does not appear to make the final step of authenticating the quaternarian structure of being via his own consciousness. Ricoeur's reticence to adopt anmentic experiments for such purposes might have been a prejudicial holdover from his escape

⁶⁸ [68] Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue Between Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi," 9.

from Husserlian solipsism or, it might have stemmed from his conviction to keep religion and philosophy separated. This would not, I believe, have prevented a dialogue between the two thinkers. Nor, is this to say that Voegelin would not have recognized Ricoeur as a fellow philosopher. After all, Ricoeur notes that the two traps of old age are sadness and boredom. "To assent to sadness is what the old monks would call *acedia*. There is no modern word for *acedia*: it is a kind of melancholia, which is not Freud's And the remedy is the pleasure of an encounter, the pleasure of always seeing something new, of rejoicing." The remedy for boredom is similar--"continue to be astonished."⁶⁹ [69] Such openness, combined with philosophic rigor and an awareness of human fallibility, are the marks of a political philosopher, and Voegelin would recognize them as such.

⁶⁹ [69] Ibid., 21.