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Evil and Death in Narrative Identity: Keys to Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Anthropology

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Abstract

This article explores Paul Ricoeur's reflection on death and evil within the framework of the phenomenological hermeneutics of the person, situating them in his notion of narrative identity. Drawing on the anthropology of fallibility*, it shows how finitude and disproportion constitute the structural condition of the human being, whose life story is marked by vulnerability, suffering, and guilt. Death appears as the ultimate limit of narration, while evil emerges as a fracture that challenges the coherence of the story, one that cannot be justified or closed. Ricoeur's proposal is a narrative hermeneutics capable of integrating the wound without neutralizing it, of remembering the other as an act of justice, and of resisting oblivion through living memory. Thus, narrative identity is revealed as a fragile yet fruitful space of reconciliation, where finitude becomes the very condition of hope.*

***Keywords*:** Ricoeur, evil, phenomenological hermeneutics, narrative identity, philosophical anthropology

1. Introduction

Paul Ricoeur's reflection on death is inscribed within a philosophical anthropology that links finitude with narrative identity (Ricoeur 1990:

167; 1985: 355). In this article, I address the problem of evil and death from the perspective of the phenomenological hermeneutics of the person, showing how the experience of suffering can be narrated in order to find meaning within the framework of an "anthropology of disproportion" (Ricoeur 2013).

Based on the distinction between moral evil and suffered evil (*La symbolique du ma*l, 1960), we will analyze how suffering and death challenge the construction of the subject's identity, the "fallible human being" (*L'homme faillible*, 1960). Whereas metaphysical tradition has attempted to inscribe death within a horizon of transcendence, Ricoeur shows that the only way to respond to finitude is through narrative mediation. Identity is not a fixed datum but a construction that unfolds within the temporal dimension of human existence, and death, as its ultimate determination, represents the final limit of this narration.

In Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics, suffering is neither a mere empirical datum nor a passive experience, but rather an internal fracture of identity that, as an excess of meaning, cannot be absorbed without losing its radicality. In contrast, Ricoeur proposes another mode of understanding: a narrative hermeneutics, where personal identity is constructed not as a totalizing synthesis but as a fragile and open reconciliation, capable of accommodating the wound without closing it. Narrative identity thus becomes the scene where evil can be named without being justified, integrated without being denied. And it is precisely in that narrative, which includes suffering without resolving it, that a mode of being emerges: a person who assumes finitude not as failure, but as the very condition of hope.

The suffering subject does not identify with what afflicts them: there is an inner rejection, a dissociation of the self from the experience that traverses it. Suffering, far from arising from an active power of the subject, represents a rupture imposed from without, though lived inwardly. In this fracture, the human being does not fully recognize

themselves in their affliction, for their freedom – though diminished – never entirely disappears. It is revealed at the very core of the "self" (*ipse*), which is not a fixed substance but a narrative figure in constant crisis and reformulation. This vision lies at the heart of Ricoeur's hermeneutical ethics: the person is not simply what endures, but what is told through their story. And this story is marked by suffering, finitude, and the confrontation with evil (Ricoeur 2004).

2. An Anthropology of Fallibility

Human life is autobiographical: we live by telling ourselves (Ricoeur 2013: 357). Identity is not an immutable substance ("sameness", *idem*), but a tension between permanence and instability, between continuity and transformation. Ricoeur distinguishes between *idem* (what remains) and *ipse* (what responds for itself, even as it changes). This dialectic between sameness (*mêmeté*) and selfhood (*ipséité*) is narratively configured (Ricoeur 1995b). The subject is not a point of departure, but the narrative construction of a life that seeks meaning amidst discordance (Ricoeur 1990: 175).

It is within narrative structure that this dialectic unfolds: to narrate is to articulate the heterogeneous. Thus, the life story configures an identity capable of integrating the tragic, the discontinuous, the wound, and evil. There is no identity without narrative, nor narrative without conflict. Hence the human being may be said to be "always the same", though never "the identical", since they are in constant transformation (367–368). Here emerges the central problem of narrative identity. Unlike fictional narratives, where beginning and end are given, human life lacks a fully narrative beginning (our birth belongs to the story of others) and cannot assume its own death as a narrated ending. We always die from within the narrative, unable to close it from without. This unfinished structure of real life makes the mediation of fiction necessary: we need to imagine in order to reorganize experience into

meaningful plots. Fiction allows us to confer retrospective form to our actions and decisions, to bestow meaning upon life episodes that would otherwise remain mere scattered events.

In the face of death, literature acquires a pedagogical value: it can help us imagine death, to domesticate the radical enigma of finitude. As in Christian meditation on Christ's passion, the representation of death can be an act of lucid consolation, a prefiguration of self-mourning that opens toward an anticipated reconciliation. This is not self-deception but rather the search, within symbol, for a way to endure the unbearable (Canullo 2019: 48).

For Ricoeur, the human being is marked by a structure of ontological disproportion. This disproportion traverses all dimensions of existence: knowledge, action, desire, and feeling. More than an external limit, finitude is a constitutive condition: we are finite not only because we die, but because we can never fully coincide with ourselves. The point of departure for this philosophical anthropology founded on fallibility must necessarily be a total vision of the human being. We cannot begin from a simple essence but from the very relation between the finite and the infinite, from the disproportion inherent to human existence. Fallibility, in addition to being an attribute of the human being, presents itself as a structural condition of our experience: the impossibility of attaining absolute fulfillment, the constant search for meaning in a world marked by uncertainty and death. In this sense, "misery", understood not only as suffering but as a form of ontological vulnerability, may be seen as the matrix of every philosophy that addresses human disproportion. The *pathos* of existence – this "misery" that marks our finitude – becomes the fertile ground for a philosophical understanding of the human condition. The French philosopher calls it "the pathetic of misery" (Ricoeur 1960: 26).

From the cognitive standpoint, this disproportion appears as the distance between the finitude of perceiving and the infinitude of

speaking. We perceive from a concrete place – my body, my here and now – yet our desire to communicate, to understand, to reach the totality of meaning, opens to the unlimited. Thus, the body becomes a mediator: it is through it that the subject situates itself in the world, but also through it that it confronts vulnerability. Here emerges a primary form of evil: the non-coincidence between what I see and what I attempt to express, between what I am and what I desire to be.

Moreover, on the ethical-practical plane, finitude manifests itself for Ricoeur as the tension between character and happiness. Character represents what we are as stable orientation, as a set of dispositions, marks, inheritances, and limits. Happiness, by contrast, is the total aspiration to fulfillment, to plenitude. Yet between the desire for totality and the fragmentary concreteness of human action there opens an unbridgeable gap. From this perspective, evil is not only what happens to me or what I suffer, but the impossibility of fully realizing the good I desire. This tension becomes even deeper in the sphere of feelings. Feeling expresses the affective orientation of the human being toward what is considered valuable, desirable, meaningful. But this affectivity is torn between immediate pleasure and transcendent joy. Here arises anxiety, not as an occasional psychological state, but as the very sign of our condition (Ricoeur 1960: 26). Anxiety reveals that life desires more than it can accomplish. That is why the French philosopher speaks of "affective fragility" (97), that is, the way in which disproportion inscribes itself in the very heart of living.

3. The Fragility of Being and the Narrative of the Limit: Death and Evil in Narrative Identity

The ethical experience of evil, as Ricoeur approaches it, is articulated around human fallibility and the human capacity to distinguish between what is valid and what is not (158). This capacity to discern between good and evil, between the just and the unjust, is linked to the very

structure of finitude: the human being is limited, yet also capable of choosing, of acting, of intervening in the world, which places them in constant relation with evil. Ethics is not reduced to the simple observance of rules, but involves an ongoing work of mediation between the aspiration to totality and the contingency of human existence.

Evil is not only a moral category; it is also an ontological category intertwined with suffering, illness, death, and failure. These dimensions of misfortune are not merely consequences of our wrongful actions, but part of our finite experience, of our inability to escape death and decay. It is important to note that in many philosophical and religious traditions, suffering has been understood as a manifestation of punishment for sin, a way of rationalizing the connection between guilt and misfortune. However, criticism of this view leads us to understand that evil cannot be reduced to a mere matter of moral punishment.

> The first mythical narrative explored by Ricoeur situates the beginning of evil in being itself, in the very gods who create the world. Thus, evil does not arise unexpectedly after creation, nor does it stem from a fault without explanation, nor is it the inevitable result of the cosmos's degeneration – it precedes creation. Before there was a world, evil already existed. (García Norro 2010: 220, my translation)

Suffering, pain, and death must therefore be seen in their deepest sense, as phenomena that confront us with our finitude in the most radical way.

In death, narration encounters its most radical limit: the story is interrupted, closed from without. And yet it is precisely the anticipation of death that confers urgency and density upon the life story. Death not only ends the narrative but structures it from within as finite

narrative. For this reason, narrative identity cannot evade death: it is the horizon that compels one to tell a life as a whole, as a sought – though not always attained – meaning.

Evil, in turn, appears in this structure as that which breaks the possibility of narrating coherently, as the irruption of the unjustifiable, the absurd, that which cannot be integrated into the narrative configuration of a life. In its most radical form – moral evil, innocent suffering, senseless violence – evil disfigures the plot. Yet even then, the task of hermeneutics is not to deny evil but to seek ways to narrate it, not to silence it, to assume its negativity without foreclosing meaning.

Thus, in Ricoeur, the person is a narrative synthesis in tension: a disproportionate being who, although not coinciding with themselves, responds for themselves in the midst of suffering, evil, and death. Phenomenological hermeneutics does not eliminate pain, but it makes it possible to think of an identity that is not closed in what is given, but that is constituted in fragility, in ethical response, and in openness to alterity.

As already noted, Ricoeur's anthropology rests on a central conviction: the human being is fallible. This fallibility is not an accident or an exception but a structural condition that traverses human existence in its entirety. According to Ricoeur, the human being never fully coincides with themselves; they are marked by a constitutive disproportion, an internal tension between their infinite aspiration – the ethical desire, the longing for meaning – and their finite rationality, limited by body, time, history, and death. This ontological disproportion grounds an identity that is neither substantial nor fixed, but narrative. The human being is not a closed datum, but a project under construction, a story in process. For Ricoeur, selfhood is unveiled in narration. That is, only through narrative – the interweaving of memory, action, and expectation – can the subject recognize, assume,

and orient themselves in the world.

In this way, narrative identity becomes the hermeneutical mediation through which the subject gives meaning to their life by confronting their own fractures: evil, suffering, guilt, violence, but above all, death. Finitude is not simply a characteristic of the human being: it is their radical limit. Yet it is not a limit that forecloses, but one that demands interpretation.

Ricoeur explicitly distances himself from Heidegger's approach to *Sein zum Tode* (Ricoeur 1990: 357–358), in which death becomes the central figure of authenticity. Instead, he proposes a hermeneutics of finitude, in which death does not define being through its annihilation but through the way in which its anticipation and its presence in the lives of others ethically affect the construction of the self. Finitude is situated not only as the physical limit of death, but as a radical exposure to evil, suffering, and the inexplicable. Narrative identity does not erase these ruptures but incorporates them, surrounds them, and finds in them the terrain for a hermeneutics of consolation without illusion.

In the face of the death of the Other, the subject experiences the loss of the reciprocity that enabled the recognition of their own humanity. I am human to the extent that I recognize myself in the face of the other (Levinas 1972). But what happens when that face becomes impassive, absent? Death introduces a rupture in the ethical mirror of mutual recognition, and with it, in the very constitution of the self. And yet death does not erase the other, but inscribes them in living memory. This is one of the great contributions of Ricoeur's hermeneutics: mourning, as narrative, as shared memory, becomes a form of resistance to forgetting and a mode of narrative ethics. The history of the dead – their words, their gestures, their decisions – continues to shape the living subject. For this reason, death is a matter for the living.

This perspective touches on a deeply ethical dimension: memory as an act of justice. To remember the other is to preserve their face within the common narrative, to resist reification, to affirm that every life, even in its finitude, possesses dignity and meaning. From this follows one of the most powerful political implications of Ricoeur's hermeneutics: there can only be just societies if there is just memory (Ricoeur 2008). Systematic forgetting, indifference to the pain of others, and the trivialization of evil are forms of anticipatory death.

4. Evil as Lived Disproportion: Living Well unto Death

Ricoeur's hermeneutics of evil finds its key in the notion of fallibility. Evil does not appear as something external to the human being, but as a possibility inscribed in their very structure, a possibility actualized in the conflict between the desire for the good and the reality of failed action. This tension is expressed at multiple levels: error, guilt, violence, injustice.

But evil also poses a narrative challenge. How can suffering and guilt be integrated into the story of a life? How can one narrate a story in which meaning is not given but must be reconstructed in the face of fracture? Here narrative identity becomes the hermeneutical space where the human being attempts to reconcile with their own finitude and with their capacity to cause harm – to themselves and to others.

It is within this framework that death reveals its full radicality: not only as a biological term, but as a sign of ethical finitude, as the interruption of the other's story and, therefore, as a site of mourning, responsibility, and expectation. This expectation is not oriented toward reward, as in certain theological versions of judgment, but toward the active memory of God, a God who remembers and forgives.

Every story has its origin in violence. As Hobbes already intuited, the fear of violent death is the very matrix of political order (Ricoeur 1995a: 103). The founding events of a community are often acts of

violence later legitimized by a precarious right (Ricoeur 2000: 96). In every act commemorated by some, the humiliation of others is inscribed. Thus, collective memory becomes a battlefield: excess memory here, structural forgetting there. Historical narrative, when critical, strives to rebalance this asymmetry through a memory oriented toward justice. At this point, narrative identity becomes entangled with evil: not only as the experience of suffering, but as the inheritance of injustice, as a mark inscribed in the flesh of the defeated. Compulsive repetition, this unprocessed return, replaces memory with act, with renewed violence. Only a critical and transformative memory, as an analytical tool, can open a path toward reconciliation —that is, toward a history that does not repeat evil, but narrates it in order to understand and overcome it. Thus, in Ricoeur, hermeneutics is conceived as the modest acknowledgment of the historicity and finitude that condition all understanding (Ricoeur 1986b: 367).

Ricoeur's final proposal is not to live *for* death, but to live *until* death (Ricoeur 2007). This difference is not minor. To live for death is to make of it an absolute, a destiny that defines all meaning. To live until death, by contrast, is to affirm life in its contingency, in its openness, in its ethical vocation. Put differently, to be alive until death is not to renounce what has constituted me, what I have loved, what has narrated me. This properly constitutes "la vie bonne, la *vraie vie*" (the good life, the *true life*) the final stage of the four that constitute praxis (Ricoeur 2010: 74).

The Ricoeurian ethical subject is therefore not the tragic hero of modernity nor the thrown individual of postmodernity. Rather, it is a capable subject: capable of narrating, of acting, of forgiving, of assuming finitude without despair (Beltrán 2013: 234). In this sense, death, far from being the end of identity, can become a threshold for its transformation, an ethical dawn that opens the horizon of living with and for others within just institutions.

5. Narrative Identity in the Face of the Scandal of Evil: From Myth to Responsibility

One of Ricoeur's most suggestive contributions to the reflection on evil is his insistent differentiation between moral evil and suffered evil:

> Every evil committed by one person is an evil suffered by another. To do evil is to make someone suffer. Violence ceaselessly restores the unity between moral evil and suffering. Therefore, whether ethical or political, every action that reduces the amount of violence exercised by some people against others reduces the level of suffering in the world. (Ricoeur 2004: 58–59, my translation)

This distinction, which interrupts mythical thought that unifies both experiences into a single origin story, marks a radical shift toward a phenomenological hermeneutics of evil that no longer seeks to explain it but to confront it ethically. And it is precisely in this shift that the notion of *narrative identity* finds its most demanding place: where suffering and evil erupt, narrative does not seek causal closure or ultimate meaning, but becomes a space of responsibility, memory, and testimony.

Ricoeur emphasizes that while moral evil refers to an imputable agent, a transgressive act, and a possible sanction, suffered evil – the unjust suffering, the wound of the victim – resists the logic of guilt and escapes the juridical category. This asymmetry is central to understanding how the life story cannot reduce the experience of evil to just another episode. On the contrary, evil tears apart the continuity of the story, interrupts the plot, and demands an ethical reconfiguration of identity. As Ricoeur states in *Oneself as Another*, the ethical subject is the one capable of "telling their story" (Ricoeur 1990:

312), but also of answering for it before the alterity of the other and, above all, before the suffering other.

In this way, the life story, more than a simple autobiography that organizes the most significant events chronologically, becomes a hermeneutical practice through which the subject, confronted with finitude and vulnerability, constitutes themselves as interlocutor of a larger story: the story of others, of the forgotten, of the victims of evil who cannot and must not be silenced by a totalizing rationality.

Mythical thought, which seeks to account for the origin of evil, attempts to satisfy the "why" with explanations that end up justifying the unjustifiable – often in the form of retribution or destiny. In contrast, biblical thought (Ricoeur 1986a: 7), as Ricoeur interprets it, shifts the axis: from origin to future, from explanation to action, from judgment to responsibility.

Narrative identity, then, does not seek to resolve the scandal of evil but to welcome it as scandal. This entails an ethical transformation of memory: to remember not in order to condemn eternally, but to assume the wound without foreclosing it. Ricoeur formulates it clearly: "Le mal c'est ce qui est et ne devrait pas être" (evil is what is and should not be) (Ricoeur 1986a: 9), and it can only be confronted within a regime of action, not of theory. In this sense, responsibility lies not only on the side of the guilty agent but also – and perhaps more radically – on the side of the one who listens to the complaint, who welcomes the testimony of the victim.

This hermeneutical movement, which Ricoeur finds exemplarily in the Book of Job, transcends the model of retribution that dominated both myth and much of theological thought (Martínez 2012: 144–146). Job, as a narrative figure, seeks neither explanation nor consolation: he demands justice and refuses to be reduced to a function within a closed story. His identity is constructed precisely in the resistance to imposed meaning, in the radical openness to the Other who addresses

him from suffering. Thus, the person, insofar as they are finite and narratively constituted, besides being able to give an account of their life, is called to respond to the evil that interrupts their story.

From this perspective, death – as the limit figure of finitude – and evil – as the limit figure of responsibility – are intertwined within the very fabric of narrative identity. Both challenge the coherence of the life plot; both demand a reconfiguration of the self from wound, loss, and injustice. Thus, death, in addition to being a biological phenomenon, is the anticipated experience of the end of one's own narration. And evil is not only what is suffered or inflicted but that which, by erupting into history, calls into question the very possibility of narration. In this way, the narrating subject is not the absolute master of their story; they are traversed by foreign voices, by silences, by memories that are not entirely their own. It is in this constitutive heteronomy that responsibility is inscribed. The hermeneutics of the self, therefore, is inseparable from an ethics of alterity: to narrate oneself is, above all, to make oneself responsible for the other, for the evil suffered and the evil caused, even when there are no definitive answers.

As Ricoeur concludes: evil is the category of the "en dépit de…" (in spite of) (Ricoeur 1986a: 9). To believe, to hope, to narrate, in spite of – in spite of evil, of death, of God's silence. In that tense affirmation, without guarantees, without final explanation, lies the tragic dignity of narrative identity: not to explain evil, but to bear it, without ceasing to recount it.

For this reason, narrative identity is not constructed in a vacuum but within the dense fabric of lived, memorized, ritualized, and ultimately also forgotten time. Hence the function of education.

Ricoeur invites us to reflect on how public space, the liturgical or civic calendar, and commemorative acts – whether religious, patriotic, etc. – constitute a fabric of meaning that links subjective,

phenomenological time with objective, cosmological time. Without this symbolic anchoring, could we commemorate anything as a community? Could we resist forgetting?

> For the French philosopher, the key point is that narrativity highlights the impossibility of fully thinking human time, while at the same time serving as the most appropriate medium for approaching human experience. Thus, the central concept of his work is that of *mimesis* (drawn from Aristotle's *Poetics*). For Ricoeur, the mimetic function is not realized solely within a narrative text (whether fictional or historical). It begins in the pre-understanding of the world of action and reaches its culmination only in the "intersection between the world of the text and the world of the reader". This is the Ricoeurian mimetic function. (Ovalle 2013: 171, my translation)

Rituals, by re-enacting founding acts in the form of liturgical or patriotic repetition, establish a kind of "eternal present", a liturgical time that defies the death of individuals and persists in collective memory (Ricoeur 2000: 52). But is not this repetition a desperate gesture to resist the silent destruction wrought by forgetting that process which, as Aristotle already observed, decomposes and consumes time from within?

At the heart of this symbolic resistance lies the function of education, which transmits cultural achievements across generations. This transmission – memorization of texts, recitation of verses, learning of rules, grammars, and formulas – is not a mere technical exercise, but a way of forging a "narrative self" that recognizes itself in what it remembers, repeats, and recites. Here, learning "by heart" is preserving the essential: songs, stories, prayers, dead languages, verses – embodied memory, even when death draws near. There is in

this a gesture of guardianship against the evil of forgetting.

However, not all repetition is living memory. Ricoeur warns that there also exists a "repetition-memory", where the past is not remembered but compulsively acted out. In unprocessed traumas, in ideologized commemorations, in heroic narratives that conceal the humiliation of others, history becomes symbolic violence. It is here that memory must become critical, where remembrance becomes responsibility.

We must not forget that founding violence – present at every historical beginning – leaves open wounds. What is glory for some is affront for others. Every foundational pact contains an exclusion and, often, a death. Hence the ethical task of memory is not simple celebration but the work of mourning: that slow and painful process by which the past reconciles itself through judgment, narration, and, when possible, forgiveness.

Here testimony emerges as a radical gesture. The witness does not recount what they saw from without: they have been part of it, agent or victim. How can one testify to one's own death? How can one speak of Auschwitz, of genocide, of absolute violence? Primo Levi and Jorge Semprún write about it, despite the impossibility of such writing. Where discourse breaks, they narrate the limit of speech, "until one can say: *Literature or death*" (Ricoeur 2007: 62). Their voice cannot be absorbed by historiography or neutralized by the archive: it remains as scandal, as ethical outcry.

After Auschwitz, to testify is not merely to tell: it is to resist incredulity and the social will to forget. The crisis of testimony – Ricoeur tells us – resides at this very point of collision between the demand for judgment and the impossibility of mediation (Ricoeur 2000: 224). And yet testimonies persist and are integrated into public memory through slow and painful processes of recognition. They are stories that cannot be explained, but that must not be ignored.

For this reason, narrative identity is always exposed to evil and to death. There is no story without shadow. There is no memory without wound. Historical narration, even the most rigorous, does not escape finitude: every story is built upon absences, exclusions, silences. Sometimes it even becomes their mask. Confronted with this, it never entirely succeeds. In narration – as in mourning – something always remains unsaid, uncomprehended, unsalvaged. And it is precisely there that the deepest dimension of the hermeneutics of the person opens: where language touches its limit, where evil resists narration, and where identity is also constructed out of those fractures.

At this intersection between one's own death, the death of the other, and unjust death, the true core of human finitude emerges. The task is not to eliminate the anguish of dying, but to articulate it with the desire to live; not to resign oneself to the closure of death, but to understand it as the reverse side of life's narrative openness. In this back-and-forth between lived time and finite time, between pain and promise, narrative identity unfolds as a hermeneutical form of assuming the mortal condition of the person.

Death, in its historical dimension, also confronts us with the finitude of narrative identity. At a profound level, historical narration is not merely a reconstruction of the past, but an attempt to understand how narratives about the past shape our understanding of human existence, finitude, and mortality. Historical narration, therefore, is not a mere exercise in memory, but a reconstruction of collective identity, of living identities projected into the narrative of the past.

History not only deals with the dead but also offers a way to reconstitute what was lost, a symbolic "resurrection" of death that shapes memory and identity. This process becomes a way of "saving" the past through discourse, which not only guarantees memory but enables the living to reconstitute an understanding of their own existence in the face of death.

Memory, history, and forgetting are crucially interwoven in the construction of our narrative being, and our reflection has focused on how human beings, through narration, shape their identity over time. The distinction between memory and history becomes especially relevant when considering the question of death. For example, the death of a loved one is an event that escapes the objective treatment of history, but remains inscribed in the memory of those affected, who transform it into a personal narrative. This connects with Ricoeur's reflection on human finitude, where memory serves as the medium for dealing with the experience of death and forgetting. In this sense, memory not only recalls what was, but also enables us to confront the finitude of our existence. Death, as one of the limits of human existence, is addressed in its irreducible character, showing its close relationship with evil and guilt.

The question of evil, especially evil inflicted upon another, becomes a central theme in Ricoeur's work. The distinction between moral evil, inflicted evil, and the guilt it entails provides a crucial reflection for understanding how memory and history participate in the construction of our identities. Evil, in its most extreme dimensions – violence or murder – not only affects the other but also the agent themselves, who is faced with guilt and the tragedy of their own actions. That is why evil is seen as something that disrupts our capacity to narrate ourselves coherently, destabilizing the relation between the subject and their own story.

In this sense, the notion of "imputability" is essential for understanding the responsibility we bear for our actions (Ricoeur 2000: 596–597). Imputability, as the capacity to assume responsibility for our acts, is tied to the very structure of our finite existence. Only in imputability can we find the space for guilt, forgiveness, and, ultimately, regeneration.

Memory, by preserving the story of what we have done, becomes

a space where the possibility of forgiveness also opens, of restoring our capacity to narrate our life in a different way.

6. Conclusion

At the end of this investigation we may conclude that narrative identity is woven not only in memory, but in the confrontation with our own finitude, with death and evil. Thus, Paul Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics opens a way of understanding that to narrate life is not only to recount what has been lived, but also to give form to what we may come to understand, inhabit, and transform over time. In this way, narrative becomes a profoundly human act: a mode of reconciliation with the irreparable and a wager for hope in the midst of finitude.

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