

Power, ideology, explanation

Ricœur reading Weber

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This chapter offers an encompassing interpretation of Paul Ricœur's reception of Max Weber's sociology. First, the chapter provides an account of the places in Ricœur's work where he engages with Weber and identifies which of Weber's texts he used. Thereafter follows an exposition of the three main domains in which Ricœur redeployed insights from Weber: (1) political responsibility and the definition of the state, (2) significant categories for understanding action (notably ideology and authority) and the social ontology implied by this view on action and, finally, (3) the role of explanation in the interpretive social sciences. As a whole, this chapter profiles Weber as a significant interlocutor of Ricœur on a number of significant themes in the philosopher's work and specifically in his social and political philosophy.

1. Introduction

It has often been remarked that throughout his writing career Paul Ricœur (1913–2005) engaged with theorists and scientists from a wide range of social sciences. One of these figures is the German sociologist Max Weber. There are many reasons why scholars of Ricœur and of Weber might want to explore the relation between the work of these two authors. Both ruminated on questions of mod-

ernity and rationalization; both reflected on the state and the means of authority and power; both developed a view on responsibility in the face of real-life politics and the intellectual challenges of their time (most notably those of Nietzsche); both sought to clarify the interpretive methodology in social sciences, both had a keen interest in the history of religion, etc. Such an encompassing comparison holds the promise of a clarification of their shared scholarly interests, but also of the work of each author separately. But this would be an enormous project. In this chapter, I restrict my view to Ricœur's reception of Weber to complete two essential preparatory steps towards such a study: I argue *that* Ricœur developed significant components of his sociopolitical thought through critical engagement with aspects of Weber's social theory and I will demonstrate *how* this appropriation of Weberian ideas took place. The current state of scholarship still lacks such a synthetic overview.¹

Since only Ricœur's childhood overlapped with the lifetime of Max Weber (1864–1920), Ricœur's encounter with the sociologist occurred exclusively mediated by texts.² A cursory look at Ricœur's *monographs* reveals that in the philosopher's early publications, he apparently showed no interest in Weber, to whom Ricœur referred at most in passing. This is already a significant finding, since one has to conclude that Weber's interpretive theory of action did not play a role in Ricœur's phenomenology of the will (in *The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, 1950), nor did Weber's works on the world religions have an impact on Ricœur's interpretation of the symbolism of evil (in *Symbolism of Evil*, 1960). This scenario changed only when Ricœur devoted a discussion to Weber's understanding of singular causal imputation in the first volume of *Time and Narrative* (1983).

1 G. Marmasse, R. Picardi, *Ricœur et la pensée allemande. De Kant à Dilthey*, Paris 2019, does not have a chapter on Weber but the subtitle holds the promise of a follow-up which might include Weber.

2 A general survey of Ricœur's use of sociology and engagement with major sociological themes is offered by S. Deprez, *Ricœur and Sociology*, in: *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 113, no. 4 (2015), 619–643. J. Michel, *L'anthropologie fondamentale de Paul Ricœur dans le miroir des sciences sociales*, in: *Social Science Information* 47, no. 1 (2008), 31–54, situates Ricœur in relation to Bourdieu and Boltanski and Thévenot. See also the account of Ricœur's own reception in French sociology in F. Dosse, *Une philosophie de l'agir: Paul Ricœur*, in: *L'empire du sens. L'humanisation des sciences humaines*, Paris 1995, chapter 14, 170–179.

As we will see, there are a handful of references to Weber, mainly on the state, in Ricœur's major book of 1990, *Oneself as Another*, and a few further disparate references in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2000), but he seems to disappear from view again in Ricœur's last book, *The Course of Recognition* (2004). However, I would argue that the philosopher's encounter with Weber was more significant than this preliminary bibliometric survey suggests. In order to argue my case, Ricœur's *essays* (in collected volumes and outside) need to be granted their full importance. This allows a substantially different view.

In this chapter, I first correct the initial cursory view of Ricœur's reception of Weber by providing a more accurate account of that reception and indicating which of Weber's texts he used (§2). Thereafter, I describe three main domains in which Ricœur redeployed insights from Weber: political responsibility and the definition of the state (§3), significant categories for understanding social interaction, notably ideology and authority, and the social ontology implied by this view on action (§4) and, finally, the role of explanation in the interpretive social sciences (§5).

2. Profile of Ricœur's Weber reception

It is not possible to establish with certainty where Ricœur was first exposed to Weber's oeuvre and to which parts of it.³ Mere bibliographical references to Weber in Ricœur's earliest works allow no clear conclusions.⁴ One might also explore the significance of Ricœur's readings of authors who engaged seriously with Weber.

3 F. Dosse's biography, *Paul Ricœur. Les sens d'une vie (1913–2005)*, Paris 2018, does not contain any precise indication in this respect.

4 P. Ricœur, *Méthode réflexive appliquée au problème de Dieu chez Lachelier et Lagneau* [1934], Paris 2017, 45; M. Dufrenne, P. Ricœur, *Karl Jaspers et la philosophie de l'existence*, Paris 1947, 14, 50; P. Ricœur, *Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers: philosophie du mystère et philosophie du paradoxe*, Paris 1947, 442. Only later did Ricœur write a review on Jasper's *Max Weber. Politiker, Forscher, Philosoph* of 1932 for *Les Études philosophiques* 13, no. 4 (1958), 551–552. For the importance of Weber for Jaspers, see K. Jaspers, *Max Weber. Gesammelte Schriften*, München, Zürich 1988.

This holds true for Landsberg,⁵ Merleau-Ponty,⁶ or Aron⁷. The first real deployment of Weber in Ricœur's writings is in »The Political Paradox« (discussed below, §3), which is significant because it echoes Ricœur's engagement of the three previously mentioned authors. His first text dealing exclusively with Weber is *Ethics and Politics* (1959).⁸ From that point onward, and until the early 1970s, Ricœur's reception of Weber focuses on the question of two competing forms of ethics and the definition of the state. From the early 1970s onwards, Ricœur draws Weber into a series of studies concerning the question of ideology, authority and legitimacy. Of these studies, two of the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1975)⁹ are devoted exclusively to Weber (see §4.b, below). Later in the 1970s, Weber slowly takes a place in Ricœur's understanding of social ontology, in a manner close to that of Alfred Schütz (see especially *Hegel and Husserl on Intersubjectivity*, 1977¹⁰), as expressed clearly in *Time and Narrative* 3.¹¹ The political Weber finds his way into *Oneself as Another* and in several places of *The Just* and *Reflections on the Just*. Finally, Ricœur's last essay exclusively devoted to Weber is found in *Reflections on the Just: The Fundamental Categories in Max Weber's Sociology* (2000)¹².

5 Cf. P. L. Landsberg, *Le sens de l'action*, in: *Esprit* 7, no. 10 (1938), 81–103, here: 83.

6 Cf. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Humanisme et terreur: Essai sur le problème communiste*, Paris 1947, 31–32/*Humanism and Terror: The Communist Problem* [1947], New Brunswick 2000, xl.

7 R. Aron, *La sociologie allemande contemporaine*, Paris 1935/*German Sociology*, London 1957.

8 P. Ricœur, *Ethique et politique* [1959], in: *Lectures I. Autour du politique*, Paris 1991 [=L1], 235–240 (not to be confused with the article with the same name in *From Text to Action*).

9 However, note that these lectures were not published before 1986.

10 P. Ricœur, *Hegel et Husserl sur l'intersubjectivité* [1977], in: *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique II*, Paris 1986 [=TA], 311–334/*Hegel and Husserl on Intersubjectivity*, in: *From Text to Action. Essays in Hermeneutics II*, London 1991 [=FTA], 227–245.

11 P. Ricœur, *Temps et récit III. Le temps raconté*, Paris 1985, 203–209 [=TRIII]/*Time and Narrative*. Vol. 3, Chicago, London 1988, 112–116.

12 P. Ricœur, *Les catégories fondamentales de la sociologie de Max Weber*, in: *Le juste* 2, Paris 2001 [=LJ2], 155–171/*The Fundamental Categories in Max Weber's Sociology*, in: *Reflections on the Just*, Chicago 2007, 133–148.

One can identify several texts by Weber used by Ricœur. First, *Politics as a Vocation*, which is most cited from the mid-1950s to the beginning of the 1970s but is also evoked in *Oneself as Another*. Second, during the 1970s, the basic concepts of sociology and the understanding of domination and legitimation (from Chapters 1 and 3 of *Economy and Society* respectively¹³) play a major role, as can be seen most clearly in some of the essays in *From Text to Action* and in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*.¹⁴ In the late article *The Fundamental Categories in Max Weber's Sociology*, Ricœur again discusses these concepts explicitly. Third, Weber's understanding of singular causal attribution is a central point of orientation in Ricœur's ruminations on the epistemology of historiography in *Time and Narrative I*. Fourth, Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is briefly presented in isolated instances.¹⁵ Fifth, Weber's idea of value-neutral (*wertfreie*) science is sometimes referenced.¹⁶ Finally, we find numerous evocations of Weber's notion of »ideal types«. It seems, then, that Ricœur never read Weber's entire oeuvre or rather, if he did, that the rest of Weber's work did not have a clearly demonstrable impact on his published thought.

Having dealt with Ricœur's reception of Weber on a formal level, I can now explore the substance of this reception.

13 M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* [1922], Paderborn 2006/*Economy and Society: A New Translation*, Cambridge/MA 2019.

14 However, note that these lectures were not published before 1986.

15 E.g., P. Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, New York 1986, 213 [=LIU]; P. Ricœur, *Urbanisation et sécularisation* [1968], in: *Autres Temps. Cahiers d'éthique sociale et politique* 76–77 (2003), 113–126, here: 122–123/*Urbanization and Secularization*, in: *Political and Social Essays*, ed. D. Steward, J. Bien, Athens 1974, 176–197, here: 191–192.

16 TA, 360/FTA, 264; *Ideologie und Ideologiekritik*, in: B. Waldenfels, J. Broekman, & A. Pazanin (eds.), *Phänomenologie und Marxismus Bd. 1: Konzepte und Methoden*, Frankfurt/M 1977, 197–233, here: 213, 216/*Ideology and Ideology Critique*, in: B. Waldenfels, et al. (eds.), *Phenomenology and Marxism I*, London 1984, 134–164, here: 148, 150; LJ2, 167, 176, 179/*Reflections on the just*, 144, 152, 154; *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, Paris 2004, 373 [=PR]/*The Course of Recognition*, Cambridge/MA 2005, 241. In other places, the term »wertfrei« is used without explicit reference to Weber.

3. The state and political responsibility

From Merleau-Ponty (and arguably also from Landsberg and Aron) Ricœur received some impetus¹⁷ to reflect on the author of *Politics as a Vocation*.¹⁸ In this seminal paper Weber sees responsibility as intertwined with the complexity of history without promises, the need to think about the means of action, and finally, the internal tensions of ethics itself. At least, such are the main points of a first reception of *Politics as a Vocation* by Ricœur in *Non-violent Man and his Presence to History* (1947).¹⁹ Since nothing guarantees a good outcome of actions undertaken even with good intentions,²⁰ Ricœur maintains that a principled ethics of pacifism cannot stand the test of critical scrutiny – the form of peace-oriented political action that he still supports has to engage with the requirement of historical efficacy²¹ and affirm itself in relation to »progressive violence«. Weber is not mentioned here, but through his debate with Merleau-Ponty, Ricœur responds implicitly to Weber.²²

In *The Political Paradox* (1957),²³ Ricœur first articulates his general view on political philosophy.²⁴ The main findings of this

17 See references to these author's texts above.

18 M. Weber, *Politik als Beruf* [1919], in: *Max Weber-Studienausgabe*. Bd. I/17: *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (1917/19). *Politik als Beruf* (1919), eds. W. Mommsen, et al., Tübingen 1994, 35–88/*Politics as a Vocation*, in: *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, London 1991, 77–128.

19 P. Ricœur, *L'homme non-violent et sa présence à l'histoire* [1949], in: *Histoire et vérité*, Paris 1964 [=HV], 265–277/*Non-violent Man and his Presence to History*, in: *History and Truth*, Evanston 1965, 223–233.

20 See my commentary on his early developments in the philosophy of history in *Lire Ricœur depuis la périphérie. Décolonisation, modernité, herméneutique*, Brussels 2021, chapter 3, §1.

21 On the question of efficacy see E. Wolff, *Ricœur's philosophy of technology and its reception* in this volume.

22 See Wolff, *Lire Ricœur depuis la périphérie*, 52–54; *Between daily routine and violent protest*, Berlin 2021, 9–12.

23 Ricœur, *Le paradoxe politique* [1957], in: HV, 294–321/*The Political Paradox*, in: *History and Truth*, 247–270.

24 Important discussions of Ricœur's view of the »political paradox« throughout his work are B. Dauenhauer, *Paul Ricœur: The Promise and Risk of Politics*, Lanham 1998, 67–72; J. Michel, *Paul Ricœur. Une philosophie de l'agir*, Paris 2006, 351–382; P.-O. Monteil, *Ricœur politique*, Rennes 2013, 27–68; and D.

chapter were to accompany Ricœur even into his late philosophy.²⁵ This chapter is first of all preoccupied with defining »the political«: there is something in human coexistence which is to be called »political« and which cannot be reduced to economics (this point is as much directed against a liberalist view of the state as handmaiden of the economy as it is against a Marxist critique of the state as nothing but an instrument of violence). The political in human existence has been attested by a long tradition of Western philosophers, from Aristotle to Rousseau and Hegel, and it consists of the possibility to advance the quality of human existence collectively. What is »political« is first of all human beings interacting as citizens. However, speaking in this way, we still remain on the level of the »virtual« or the »reality of ideality«.²⁶ The political also has to be enacted and this requires political institutions and the kind of interaction made possible by institutions. This interaction is called »politics«. The political paradox is derived from the relation between *the political* and *politics*: people can thrive collectively only if they give expression to the political by means of politics, yet, at the same time, politics lends itself to pathologies of its own. The rationality of the political requires the institutional means of politics, but exactly those means can degenerate and can be turned against the citizens.

In this view of the political, the state takes a key role: the state is that entity by which a historical community accords itself the capacity to make decisions, as Ricœur says, following Eric Weil.²⁷ But the state acquires a considerable measure of ambiguity, since it is simultaneously to be understood, in Weberian terms, as »the authority which holds a monopoly over lawful physical constraint« (according

Deweere, *Ricœur's Personalist Republicanism. On Personhood and Citizenship*, Lanham 2017, 75–82.

25 E. Wolff, *Ricœur's contribution to a notion of political responsibility for a globalised world*, in: *Political Responsibility for a Globalised World. After Levinas' Humanism*, Bielefeld 2011, 221–266, examines the continuities between this article and the political philosophy in *Oneself as Another*. This does not exclude changes of emphasis and further developments.

26 Ricœur, *Le paradoxe politique*, 301 and 300 respectively/*The Political Paradox*, 253 and 252 respectively.

27 Cf. *Le paradoxe politique*, 303/*The Political Paradox*, 254–255; and *La philosophie politique* d'Eric Weil [1957], in: LI, 95–114, here: 106.

to Ricœur's paraphrase²⁸). This amalgamation of Weil and Weber was maintained in Ricœur's understanding of the state for years to come.²⁹

In Ricœur's view, the most appropriate response to this understanding of the political and of the state is not to dream of the withering away of the state, as in Marxism, nor the minimalist state (as in radical liberalism). This limitation is a technology because of the Weberian understanding of the state in terms of its powerful means: citizens should not counter the state with principles (alone), but with performative mechanisms which would allow people to exercise politics both through and against the state.

Whereas Weber's theme of responsibility is present in *The Political Paradox* only in the shadow of Ricœur's borrowing from *Politics as a Vocation*, it is explicitly thematized in *Ethics and Politics* (1959).³⁰ This essay was intended as an introduction and interpretation of a part of »Politics as a Vocation« published in the same edition of *Esprit* and taken from Julien Freund's then recent French translation of *Politics as a Vocation* and *Science as a Vocation*.³¹ Accordingly, Ricœur's article does not even touch on *Science as a Vocation*; in fact, this text is virtually absent from Ricœur's reception of Weber in general. In his review, Ricœur merely introduces the main themes of *Politics as a Vocation*: the state and legitimate violence, which already refers obliquely to the ethic of conviction and the ethic of responsibility, the machinery of the big political parties, and charismatic leadership. But quite decisive for Ricœur's reading of *Politics as a Vocation* is what he calls the »paradox of two ethics«. ³² According to Ricœur, Weber juxtaposes an »absolute ethics« (exemplified by the ethics of the Gospel) and the »law of action« (*loi de l'action*), which recognizes the futility of the pursuit

28 Ricœur, *Le paradoxe politique*, 303/*The Political Paradox*, 255.

29 It is already found in a text which must have been written more or less contemporaneously with *The Political Paradox*, namely P. Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté. Tome II: Finitude et culpabilité 1. L'homme faillible* [1960], Paris 2009, 167/*Fallible Man*, New York 1986, 118; but see also P. Ricœur, *Réflexion faite. Autobiographie intellectuelle*, Paris 1995, 54.

30 One should not miss the importance accorded to this text by Ricœur, as it was selected for the volume of republished essays, *Lectures 1*.

31 M. Weber, *Le savant et le politique*, Paris 1959.

32 Ricœur, *Ethique et politique*, 239.

of purity and engages with the consequences of action. Since a paradox maintains two contradictory theses, Ricœur's reading of the difficult conclusion of *Politics as a Vocation* is that Weber holds on to both *Gesinnungsethik* and *Verantwortungsethik*. Moreover, Ricœur accords an *affirmative* function to responsibility and a *negating* function to conviction. The negating function amounts to setting limits, as can be deduced from Ricœur's rendering of words attributed to Luther and cited by Weber: »This far, but no further« (*Jusqu'ici, mais pas plus loin*).³³ Finally, Ricœur sees this paradoxical tension between affirmation and negation as a test (*épreuve*)³⁴ to which one has to respond with a choice in order to get beyond a dilemma that cannot be solved by knowledge but must be solved by passion, a sense of proportion and responsibility.³⁵

As a reading of Weber, this is very modest in size and quite debatable in content; yet it is very instructive for Ricœur's own understanding of (1) the conflictual composition of ethics, the *yes* and the *no*, requiring to be overcome in ways which no science can prescribe; (2) the relation between ethics and politics, as domains of uncertainty, but also as domains of real force, where the stakes in history are generated.³⁶ Or, as Ricœur would articulate it in a later publication: »My deep conviction is that we cannot have a unified conception of morality. We cannot unify ourselves morally, because we are pursuing incompatible things: on the one hand, a certain purity of ends and intentions, on the other hand, a certain efficiency of means. These two words, purity and efficiency, can, moreover, deteriorate one into another: purity-purism, efficiency-Machiavellianism. But precisely moral life is based on a dialectic of the absolutely desirable and the achievable optimum. One cannot escape this tension. On the contrary, the more this tension is recognized, the more

33 I commented in detail on the peculiarity of this rendering in Wolff, *Political Responsibility for a Globalised World*, 229–233.

34 Ricœur, *Ethique et politique*, 240.

35 Cf. Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, 73–74/*Politics as a vocation*, 435.

36 It has to be mentioned that sometimes Ricœur refers very briefly to another point of *Politics as a Vocation*, namely the question of attribution of guilt after the War. See P. Ricœur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris 2000, 617, n1 [=MHO]/*Memory, history, forgetting*, Chicago 2006, 598, n20.

it is a sign of moral health.«³⁷ In the same passage Ricœur explicitly attributes this insight to Weber.³⁸

How significant this appropriation (or innovation) from Weber is can be seen, for instance, when Ricœur, without even mentioning Weber, explains how in politics, ethics breaks up into two opposing »ethics of distress (*éthiques de détresse*)«.³⁹ This conflict inherent to ethics is taken up explicitly in *Tasks of the Political Educator* (1965)⁴⁰ where Ricœur considers the two ethics not only as a tension in the heart of individuals, but as representative of social roles: politics (as the exercise of responsibility) *versus* the Church and some other entities of civil society (embodying conviction). One cannot miss how clearly Ricœur demarcates and limits the role he sees particularly for the Church in politics, as he does again in *Plaidoyer pour l'utopie ecclésiale*. In both of these texts, he associates the possibility of utopian thought with the negative leg of the ethical dialectic. This in turn formed the structure of his studies on the social imaginary in the 1970s in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*.⁴¹ But perhaps most plainly, this model of thinking through ethical dilemmas forms the structure of the »little ethics« of *Oneself as Another*⁴² where the ethical desire to live the good life with and for others in just institutions is constantly at odds with the moral elimination of what cannot be accepted as a universalizable principle. This irresolvable tension, however, has to be solved in practice. Therefore, a third leg to this ethics is needed, and Ricœur calls this leg prudence (a reinterpretation of Aristotle's *phrónesis*). What Ricœur thinks about prudence amounts to a large degree to his view

37 P. Ricœur, *Plaidoyer pour l'utopie ecclésiale. Conférence de Paul Ricœur* (1967), Genève 2016, 46–47 (my translation).

38 Cf. Ricœur, *Plaidoyer pour l'utopie ecclésiale*, 51.

39 Ricœur, *Etat et violence* [1957], in: HV, 278–293, here: 291–293/*History and Truth*, 234–246, here: 245–246.

40 Ricœur, *Tâches de l'éducateur politique*, in: LI, 241–257/*The tasks of the political educator*, in: *Political and Social Essays*, ed. D. Steward, J. Bien, Athens 1974, 271–293.

41 And parallel texts, of which the most important is Ricœur, *L'idéologie et l'utopie: deux expressions de l'imaginaire social*, in: TA, 417–431/*Ideology and Utopia*, in: FTA, 308–324.

42 P. Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris 1990, studies 7–9 [=Sca]/*Oneself as Another*, Chicago 1992, studies 7–9 [=OaA].

on responsibility.⁴³ Finally, even though Weber is not mentioned in *The Course of Recognition*, the pattern of conflictual ethics is still easily visible in the way Ricœur sets up the tension between the struggle for recognition and states of peace.⁴⁴

4. Understanding action: ideology, authority, social ontology

From the early 1970s onwards, Ricœur intensified his research into the linguistic and symbolic mediation of action.⁴⁵ This élan, which would eventually be fully consolidated in the narrative mediation of action in *Time and Narrative 3* (1985) and the linguistic and narrative mediation of action in the hermeneutics of human capabilities in *Oneself as Another* (1990), finds its first provisional expression in important essays of the 1970s, such as *The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text* (1971),⁴⁶ *Le discours de l'action* (1977)⁴⁷ and *The Symbolic Structure of Action* (1977).⁴⁸

However, this significant aspect of Ricœur's movement from text to action as a theme of hermeneutics has to be understood as part of Ricœur's long-standing engagement with practical philosophy.

43 And even after *Oneself as Another*, he can still articulate these tensions with explicit reference to Weber: see Ricœur, *Postface au Temps de la responsabilité* [1991], in: LI, 271–294, here: 287–288.

44 As I have argued in Wolff, *Responsibility to Struggle – Responsibility for Peace: Course of Recognition and a Recurrent Pattern in Ricœur's Political Thought*, in: *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 41, no. 8 (2015), 771–790.

45 This is evidenced, for instance, in the lecture series *Sémantique de l'action* (1971) or *Le discours de l'action* (1971/1972), following the references of F. Vansina, P. Vandecasteele, *Paul Ricœur. Bibliographie primaire et secondaire. Primary and secondary bibliography. 1935–2008*, Leuven 2008, 139. Note that this theme is present in his work at least since Ricœur, *Travail et parole* [1953], in: HV, 238–264/*Work and the Word*, in: *History and Truth*, 197–222.

46 Ricœur, *Le modèle du texte: l'action sensée considérée comme un texte* [1971], in: TA, 205–236/*The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text*, in: FTA, 144–167.

47 P. Ricœur, *Le discours de l'action*, in: *La sémantique de l'action*, Paris 1977, 1–137.

48 P. Ricœur, *La structure symbolique de l'action* [1977], in: *Anthropologie Philosophique. Ecrits et conférences 3*, Paris 2013, 277–304/*The Symbolic Structure of Action*, in: *Philosophical Anthropology: Writings and Lectures. Vol. 3*, Cambridge/MA 2016, 176–194.

The question of the intertwinement of action with language could be seen as a necessary prerequisite for thinking ethics, as Ricœur comments retrospectively.⁴⁹ And ethics, as we have already seen, is integrated by Ricœur in a complex way into the reality of society and politics.

It is in this complex web of philosophical concerns that a new interest in Weber emerged for Ricœur. Now Weber's exposition of the basic concepts of sociology drew Ricœur's attention. However, instead of the entire *Economy and Society*, it is the general framework of an understanding approach to action and, in particular, a number of key notions that stimulated Ricœur's thought. Of these, acting in anticipation of other's expectations, domination, authority and legitimacy are the most important. In this respect, three interrelated aspects of Ricœur's reception could be identified.

4.1 Weber in relation to ideology

This turn in Ricœur's reception of Weber is performed in *Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology* (1973), Ricœur's response to the Gadamer-Habermas debate. Recognising that this debate concerns not only the foundations of social sciences, but the »fundamental gesture of philosophy«,⁵⁰ Ricœur attempts to overturn the idea that hermeneutics and critique of ideologies represent mutually exclusive alternatives.

First, Ricœur explores Gadamer's central idea of the »rehabilitation« of prejudice. This »rehabilitation« has to be undertaken in the face of the Enlightenment condemnation of authority, as instrument of domination and violence.⁵¹ However, instead of turning directly to Gadamer's understanding of authority, as based on recognition, Ricœur inserts a note, as if to remind himself of something which he subsequently omits to develop: »Let us not forget that this concept [authority – EW] is also at the centre of Max Weber's political

49 Cf. P. Ricœur, *Herméneutique. Ecrits et conférences 2*, Paris 2010, 47/*Hermeneutics: Writings and Lectures. Vol. 2*, Cambridge/MA 2013, 18.

50 Ricœur, *Herméneutique et critique des ideologies*, in: TA, 367–416, here: 367/*Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology*, in: FTA, 270–303, here: 270.

51 Cf. *Herméneutique et critique*, 378/*Hermeneutics and the Critique*, 278.

sociology: the State is the institution par excellence that rests on the belief [*croyance*] in the legitimacy of its authority and its right to use violence in the last instance.⁵² This note, which, strictly speaking, has nothing to do with the rest of his argument, is significant for three reasons: (1) It establishes a two-way bridge between hermeneutics and sociology, allowing the concerns raised by the most critical theorists to pass from the one side to the other. (2) It takes up the classic definition of the state proposed by Weber in *Politics as a Vocation*, insisting this time on the fact that the legitimacy of the power of the state depends on *belief* in its legitimacy (which would be Weber's equivalent of authority based on recognition). Whereas Ricœur's reference to the same definition of the state in *The Political Paradox* was not concerned with this dimension of »belief in legitimacy«, this belief did become central in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1975). (3) The reference to this definition may well have been inserted in Ricœur's presentation of Gadamer, but what is at issue in this quotation – namely authority – is presented just as much as a question for Habermas. We will see that Ricœur often made Weber a partner in debates with Habermas or the broader Marxist tradition.

Thus, later in the same essay, Ricœur turns to Habermas, amongst other things to review Habermas's idea of modern ideology. According to Habermas,⁵³ the modern state serves primarily to compensate for malfunctionings of the industrial system. Science and technology legitimate the growth and flourishing of this system, rather than promote the interests of the dominant class.⁵⁴ This means that »the subsystem of instrumental action has ceased to be a subsystem, and that its categories have overrun [*envahi*] the sphere of communicative action«, on which Ricœur comments: »Therein consists the famous ›rationalization‹ of which Max Weber spoke: not only does rationality conquer new domains of instrumental action, but it subjugates the domain of communicative action. Weber

52 *Herméneutique et critique*, 379/*Hermeneutics and the Critique*, 278 (translation modified).

53 J. Habermas, *Technik und Wissenschaft als ›Ideologie‹*, in: *Technik und Wissenschaft als Ideologie*, Frankfurt/M. 1968, 48–103/*Technology and Science as ›Ideology‹*, in: *Toward a Rational Society. Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, London 1972, 81–121.

54 Cf. *Herméneutique et critique*, 413–414/*Hermeneutics and the Critique*, 304–305.

described this phenomenon in terms of ›disenchantment‹ and ›secularization‹ [*dédivination*]; Habermas describes it as the obliteration of the difference between the plane of instrumental action, which is also that of labor, and the plane of communicative action, which is also that of agreed norms, symbolic exchanges, personality structures, and rational [*raisonnable*] decision-making procedures.⁵⁵ It is precisely this dominance of (and domination by) instrumental action that is vested with authority and legitimized by the science and technology of the contemporary industrial system. This insertion, drawing on Weber's sociology of religion and »Science as a vocation«⁵⁶ (via Habermas's *Technology and Science as ›Ideology‹*), is significant for a number of reasons:

- Ricœur subsequently continued to enter into debate with Habermas. However, instead of designating such an important place to a diagnosis of modernity, Ricœur rather emphasises the philosophical anthropological aspect of action.⁵⁷ Moreover, while Habermas's theory of action is used as a term of reference in this citation, Ricœur launches into questions of political philosophy with his own approach to action, which places the »composition« of action at the centre.⁵⁸
- Nevertheless, the similarities in the diagnosis of modernity by Weber and Habermas open the door for Weber to enter whenever Ricœur enters into a debate with Habermas.
- As with the reference to Weber in the context of Ricœur's reading of Gadamer (above), Weber is invoked in reflection on themes that would henceforth grow in importance in Ricœur's writings, notably ideology and authority. A main direction of his appropriation of Weber is thereby established.

55 *Herméneutique et critique des ideologies*, 414/*Hermeneutics and the Critique*, 305. Weber's thesis of the »disenchantment of the world« is evoked again in Ricœur's discussions of Pierre Bouretz and Charles Taylor in: LJ2/*Reflections on the just*.

56 See M. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Vol. 1, Tübingen 1922, 94, 114, 156, 165, 263, 513; and *Wissenschaft als Beruf*, 425–555.

57 Cf. *Herméneutique et critique*, 410/*Hermeneutics and the Critique*, 302. For Ricœur's view on the possibility of a diagnosis of modernity see TRIII, 374–390/*Time* 3, 207–216; and MHO, 385–448/*Memory, history*, 293–342.

58 Cf. Ricœur, *La raison pratique* [1979], in: TA, 263–288, here: 263/*Practical Reason*, in: FTA, 188–207, here: 188.

One can measure the importance of these first new steps simply by turning to the 1974 article *Science and Ideology*. Speaking now much more clearly in his own name, Ricœur searches for a fuller understanding of ideology, namely as »the broader phenomenon of social integration, of which domination is a dimension but not the unique and essential condition«. ⁵⁹ In fact, he proposes three integrated notions of ideology, according to three functions of ideology: integration, domination and distortion or concealment [*dissimulation*] (terms which he uses again in *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* and in *Ideology and Utopia* [1983]).

The most general and wide spreading function of ideology – *integration* – is an attribute of social relations and interaction, the understanding of which Ricœur explicitly derives from Weber but without citing *Economy and Society*, from which he derives it. ⁶⁰ In fact, Ricœur simply takes over the basic principles of Weber's interpretive sociology: (a) for human agents actions have meaning; (b) in social action such meaningful actions are mutually oriented; (c) these two facts confer a degree of predictability and thus stability on the system of meanings (or meaningful actions). It is, following Ricœur, »at this level of the meaningful, mutually oriented, and socially integrated character of action that the ideological phenomenon appears in all its originality. It is linked to the necessity for a social group to give itself an image of itself, to represent and to realize itself, in the theatrical sense of the word.« ⁶¹ Ricœur explains this claim in five points ⁶² – ideology as self-presentation serves (i) as the anchoring of every society in a memory of its foundational event (ideology as its justification for existence), (ii) as a kind of motivation for collective action and institutions, (iii) as a simplified interpretation of each social group, its history and world, (iv) as an idealised rationalization of collective ideas and, finally, (v) as a greater or lesser conservative inertia. Since these five workings of ideology are mostly unconscious and cannot be exhaustively them-

59 Ricœur, *Science et idéologie* [1974], in: TA, 335–366, here: 336/*Science and Ideology*, in: FTA, 246–269, here: 247.

60 Cf. *Science et idéologie*, 339/*Science and ideology*, 249; and likewise Ricœur, *La structure symbolique de l'action*, 283–284/*The Symbolic Structure of Action*, 180.

61 *Science et idéologie*, 339/*Science and Ideology*, 249.

62 Ricœur derived these from J. Ellul, *Le rôle médiateur de l'idéologie*, in: E. Castelli (éd.), *Démythisation et idéologie*, Paris 1973, 335–354.

atized, the ideas transmitted through ideology cannot be critical.⁶³ Hence the function of dissimulation can be demonstrated to emerge gradually from the integrating ideological fibre of society, without its ever being possible to purge society from ideology as integrator.

But the dissimulating function would hardly make sense if it were not for the second function of ideology, namely for *domination*. Indeed, the primary beneficiary of the five roles of the integrative function is the system of rule or authority. Again, Weber is used to clarify. All forms of rule require legitimation (as Ricœur reminds us in line with his note on Weber in 1973), of which Weber gave a well-known fourfold typology. Now Ricœur elaborates: »[...] it appears that if every claim to legitimacy is correlative with a belief [*croyance*] on the part of individuals in this legitimacy, the relation between the claim issued by the authority and the belief that responds to it is essentially asymmetrical. I shall say that there is always more in the claim that comes from the authority than in the belief that is returned to it. I see therein an irreducible phenomenon of surplus value, if by that we understand the excess of the demand for legitimation in relation to the offer of belief. Perhaps this is the real surplus value: all authority demands more than our belief can bear, in the double sense of supplying and supporting. Ideology asserts itself as the transmitter of surplus value and, at the same time, as the justificatory system of domination.«⁶⁴ I cite in full, because the passage perfectly renders a central idea of Ricœur's later writings on ideology. It also explains how Ricœur learned from Weber that all forms of legitimation of authority depend on ideology-integration,

63 Cf. *Science et idéologie*, 342/*Science and Ideology*, 251.

64 *Science et idéologie*, 343–344/*Science and Ideology*, 252; and similarly in Ricœur, *L'idéologie et l'utopie*, 422–423/*Ideology and Utopia*, 315. The discrepancies of the translation need not detain us here. In a different context (a discussion of Parsons's Hobbesian problem), Ricœur follows Yves-Charles Zarka in depicting the establishment of a sovereign by means of a social contract as an act by which the citizens let themselves be represented by the sovereign. Correspondingly, the sovereign is mandated or »authorized« to represent the multitude – cf. PR, 267/*The Course of Recognition*, 169. Thus, whereas, in the 1970s, Ricœur kept the problematics of Hobbes still clearly on the level of ideology-domination (as the coordination of Weber, Marx and Hobbes in Ricœur, *L'idéologie et l'utopie*, 422–423/*Ideology and Utopia*, 315, suggests), this later book connects the first and second functions of ideology more closely.

and no legitimation of authority can be a purely transparent rational procedure.⁶⁵

If one looks closely, Ricœur uses Weber, on the one hand, to identify two meanings of ideology, corresponding to social integration and the legitimization of authority, and, on the other hand, to identify the difference between the two. It is only at this point that Ricœur can introduce a third notion of ideology, which is Marxist: ideology as *distortion* or *concealment*, whereby people misunderstand the image for the real as much in idea as in practice.⁶⁶ In terms of such an understanding, the Marxist notion of ideology is not *the* notion of ideology, but a description of one specific dimension of a broader phenomenon called ideology: »What Marx offers that is new stands out against this prior backcloth of a symbolic constitution of the social bond in general and the authority relation in particular; and what he adds is the idea that the justificatory function of ideology is preferentially applied to the relation of domination stemming from the division into social classes and the class struggle.«⁶⁷ Thus Ricœur connects the critique of the distorting functioning of ideology to the integrating function of ideology. The way in which he coordinates them has the effect that this critique is not possible without granting the premise of the prevalent social reality of ideology-integration. And by coordinating these two meanings of ideology, Ricœur already gives a sense of his own coordination of Marx and Weber.

Weber is called on a third time in this chapter, now on a methodological level, when Ricœur reflects on the possibility of a *science* of ideologies which would itself be situated outside of ideology. Does it suffice if, in view of the need to explain social realities, scientists focus on the unconscious forces of reality, to escape the power of ideology? Ricœur's response includes a strong endorsement of Weber: »[...] if we compare the Marxism of Althusser with the soci-

65 Later in the article (*Science et idéologie*, 356–357/*Science and Ideology*, 262) but related to this point, Ricœur critiques the tension between a comprehending sociology and value neutrality in Weber – a rare reference to another text by Weber, *Der Sinn der »Wertfreiheit« der soziologischen und ökonomischen Wissenschaften*, in: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen 1922, 451–502.

66 Cf. *Science et idéologie*, 345/*Science and Ideology*, 253.

67 *Science et idéologie*, 346/*Science and Ideology*, 254.

ology of Weber, we see that explanation in terms of the subjective motivations of social agents is replaced by the consideration of structural totalities in which subjectivity has been eliminated. But this elimination of subjectivity on the side of historical agents in no way guarantees that the practicing sociologist has himself risen to a subjectless discourse. The epistemological trap is set therein. By a semantic confusion, which is a veritable sophism, explanation in terms of structures rather than subjectivities is construed as a discourse that would be conducted by no specific subject. At the same time, vigilance in the order of verification and falsification is weakened. The trap is all the more formidable in that ultimately the satisfaction obtained in the sphere of rationalization operates as an obstacle and a mask with respect to the demand for verification. Yet it is precisely that which the theory denounces as ideology: a rationalization that screens reality.⁶⁸ This passage provides a good summary of Ricœur's own view on the limits of critique and the position of scientific or philosophical work that his broader understanding of hermeneutics and action can accommodate.⁶⁹

Let us now turn to Ricœur's consolidation of this reading of Weber in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*.

4.2 From *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* to *The Just*

The basic structure of Ricœur's reception of Weber in the 1970s had already been established when he gave his 1975 lectures on ideology and utopia (edited and published only in 1986). Building on the two articles we examined in §4.1, the aim of these lectures is to examine ideology and utopia as two opposing but complementary functions of »social and cultural *imagination*« (LIU, 1) and, as one can by now expect, the whole series is a debate with Marx, Marxism and the broader socialist tradition on these two key phenomena.⁷⁰ Just as in

68 *Science et idéologie*, 350/*Science and Ideology*, 257.

69 This position is further supported in subsequent writings from the same period, such as Ricœur, *Hegel et Husserl sur l'intersubjectivité/Hegel and Husserl on Intersubjectivity* and *La raison pratique/Practical Reason*.

70 This is a continuation of a fluctuating interest in Marx and Marxism stretching back as far as Ricœur's early pre-World War II articles. The authors engaged in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* do not exhaust Ricœur's work on contem-

Science and ideology, Ricœur takes over Marx's view of ideology as distortion but inserts it in a broader view of the »symbolic structure of social life«. ⁷¹ Again Weber serves as an ally in explaining how domination exercises its authority by means other than force or violence (LIU, 13). However, Ricœur now explores the foundational function of ideology as integration with the help of Clifford Geertz, to whom Lecture 15 is devoted. ⁷²

Lectures 11 and 12 of the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* are the longest discussion of Weber in Ricœur's published work. Whatever elaborations on Weber Ricœur undertakes here, the overall theme remains the question of the legitimation of authority. ⁷³ At the same time, in *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, Ricœur reveals more of the game he plays in reading Weber. First, Weber is used to overcome a mechanistic or causal understanding of the relation between the social basis and superstructure: »My own question, building on Weber, is whether we can put the question of legitimation in terms of causation – the causality of the infrastructure on the superstructure – or [whether we must] express it through another conceptual framework, that of motivation. Is not a system of legitimation a form of motivation and not causation?« ⁷⁴

Ricœur accords a specific place to this question in the overall exploration of ideology in these lectures. ⁷⁵ (a) Since it is impossible to assume a scientific, nonevaluative view on ideology, both social scientist and cultural imaginary has to understand itself in the evaluative tension between ideology and utopia (LIU, 181). (b) Ricœur takes over Marx's idea that »the ruling ideas of an epoch are the ideas of a ruling class« (LIU, 181), however, if we want to understand

porary Marx-literature – see also Ricœur's review, *Le Marx de Michel Henry* [1978], in: *Lectures 2. La contrée des philosophes*, Paris 1992 [=L2]), 265–293. However, there is no reference to Weber in this text.

71 LIU, 8, cf. 181, 198.

72 Cf. »What kind of function can precede distortion? On this question I must say I am very impressed with an essay by Clifford Geertz, »Ideology as a Cultural System«, which appears in his book, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. I first read this essay after having written on ideology myself« (LIU, 10, with a footnote, [presumably by the editor] referring to *Science and Ideology*; similarly, LIU, 182).

73 Cf. LIU, 14, 68, 157, 179.

74 LIU, 89 (text corrected), similarly 106–107, 154, 198, 254.

75 See LIU, 181–182.

this claim, it is Weber, not Marx, who can help us to do so,⁷⁶ despite the fact that Weber does not deal with the question of ideology as such (cf. LIU, 200). (c) Only when this has been done does Ricœur clarify the relation between critique and ideology in debate with Habermas and (d) defends the thesis that ideological distortion depends on society's fundamental symbolic structure (cf. LIU, 182), an argument for which he mobilizes Clifford Geertz as his interlocutory partner.

If then ideology as distortion can be understood only in a context of domination or authority, how is authority to be understood? Not mechanistically, but in terms of the motivation of action. This motivation is required to fill the »credibility gap« that opens between the recognition of legitimacy that people willingly give authority and the greater claim to legitimacy made by that authority (as Ricœur maintains in the 1974 article). Of this view Ricœur says: »This interpretation is my own and not available in Weber, so it is a footnote to Weber, but perhaps a footnote that makes its own contribution to Weber's model.«⁷⁷ Let us look more closely at this »contribution«.

In the framework of the lecture, Ricœur builds up this reading of Weber by situating it within the interpretive sociology of *Economy and Society*. Social action is approached as interaction, as informed by mutual expectations, and subject to different types of motivation (instrumental rational, value rational, effectual and traditional), all four of which play divergent roles in relations of rule or authority (cf. LIU, 186).

From this most general action-theoretical starting point, Ricœur explains a number of intermediary concepts to work his way toward an understanding of the exercise of power. Action takes place within a social ordering (cf. Cf. LIU, 188), which already presupposes legitimation (which in turn depends on the forms of meaningful action of social agents) and which is presupposed in the exercise of power. Of this social order, each agent has a representation

76 Ricœur's real opponent is a certain Marxist orthodoxy. His reading of Marx in the first lectures of this series attempts to point to the compatibility of some of Marx's texts with the idea of social symbolism that Ricœur will subsequently elaborate on with Weber and Geertz (cf. LIU, 183).

77 LIU, 183; likewise: »We are looking for something that is *not in the text*, and so must read between the lines«, LIU 202 (my emphasis).

(»*Vorstellung*«⁷⁸). The most salient variables of this order are (a) integrative or associative social ties (cf. LIU, 189), (b) the degree of group closure or identity, and (c) the distinction between rulers and ruled which creates a social hierarchy and power relations (cf. LIU, 191). The »rulers« could evidently also be a ruling body, a variety of which is to be found in different institutions of society and which can enforce a specific social order.⁷⁹ From this power hierarchy results the fact that social action in the form of obedience can be directed at the system of rule or formalized authority (rather than to other individual agents; cf. LIU, 192).

These intermediary categories describe the social framework through which *motivation* and hence also *legitimation* infuse social action. There is no reason to assume that spontaneous motivation of agents to obey would provide sufficient legitimation for all the command exercised by formalized authority. Of course, the formalized system of authority, and the state in particular, can back up its authority to command by taking recourse to violence (the instrumental ability of the state being one of its defining moments, as Ricœur affirmed with »Politics as a Vocation« in »The Political Paradox«, as we saw in §3, above). However, this does not mean that violent means are the foundation of the power of the state; authority is rather based on the belief or credence accorded by the citizens to its claim⁸⁰ to the legitimate issuing of commands. That is why politics occupies itself with issuing this claim to authority and generating buy-in for it, or belief in it (which is more specifically the theme of Ricœur's second Weber-lecture). However, even without a state, there would be social hierarchies, which would equally pose the question of the legitimacy of their exercise of power. In all these cases, legitimacy depends on the motivational aspect of social interaction.⁸¹

78 LIU, 199. This is a notable divergence from the idea of »self-presentation« of society used in the same argumentative context in the earlier essay, cf. citation (above) of Ricœur, *Science et idéologie*, 339/*Science and Ideology*, 249.

79 Cf. LIU, 199. One notices the similarity to a theme already found in *The Political Paradox*.

80 On claims: there are »three stages in the concept of claim: the claim of an order in general, the claim of a ruling group within an organization, and the claim of those in power to have the capacity to implement order by the use of force« (LIU, 199).

The motivation to believe the claims to legitimate rule has various bases and corresponds, as we have seen, with a typology of claims of legitimate rule. Still, Ricœur knows that when he uses this Weberian framework as a starting point for an exploration of the question of ideology, and specifically ideology as compensation for the deficit in belief accorded to legitimate authority, that he is gradually going beyond Weber's explicit ideas and making his own contribution (cf. LIU, 201). This compensation – what Ricœur calls, using the Marxian term, surplus-value (*Mehrwert*) – is ideology's supplement to what the spontaneous motivation of action cannot sufficiently account for, and that cannot simply be caused by force. Just as Marxist theories explain how capital appears to generate value, while in fact that surplus-value is generated by labour, so – Ricœur argues – power makes the belief in its legitimacy appear to come from its own legitimacy, while it is in fact accorded by the surplus of belief of the ruled. Or, more formally put, »there is always more in the claim of a given system of authority than the normal course of motivation can satisfy, and therefore there is always a supplement of belief provided by an ideological system« (LIU, 202). And this provision can be achieved (following Weber again) by rational, traditional or charismatic means, often in combination with each other (cf. LIU, 209). There is nothing which says whether such surplus value of legitimacy corresponds to *real* legitimacy or not. It is, in fact, from this ambiguity that the distortive function of ideology emerges – the distortive function that justifies misuse of power or social »diseases«,⁸² a point Ricœur develops (throughout the second half of the lecture), while, however, considering that Habermas has dealt with it much better.⁸³ Among these degenerative developments is the freezing or

81 Cf. LIU, 195. This point is implicitly directed at the Marxist thesis of the withering away of the state, a thesis already critiqued in *The Political Paradox*.

82 LIU, 208. Such diagnostic parlance, which nowadays is promoted by authors such as Axel Honneth, is rather rare in Ricœur's socio-political philosophy.

83 For his reading of Habermas, see LIU, lectures 13 and 14. See also Ricœur, LIU, 214: »Weber's conceptual framework allows us to see the gap between claim and belief, but the reasons for and the significance of this discrepancy are factors Weber himself does not attend [to].«

reification⁸⁴ of symbolic relations which make the relation between structures of domination and the dominated appear deterministic.⁸⁵

But for ideology to create surplus-value of belief in legitimacy, a system of social ideas has to be in place. This is the non-pejorative notion of ideology that Ricœur explores, after his lectures on Weber, in a lecture devoted to Geertz.⁸⁶

In conclusion, we may again come back to Marx since it gives us a good idea both of some further developments of Ricœur and of his self-limitation in this lecture series. Whereas the Marxist emphasis on class is based upon an insistence on a historical view of society, Weber, according to Ricœur, »advances an a-temporal analysis of some fundamental questions; his typology attempts to be transhistorical« (LIU, 195). Ricœur defends this position against those who would reproach Weber for overly general theorization or theorizing without sufficient critical impulse: neither detailed description nor critique can be undertaken without proper concepts of description by which comparisons between different social contexts and political philosophers from different eras are made possible (cf. LIU, 196). In fact, the step from Ricœur's reading of Weber to his own view becomes quite small when he asserts that »to justify the lack of a historical dimension in Max Weber, I would say that he addresses himself to what is the less historical in the structure of human societies because he relies on a certain identity of motives« (LIU, 197). This does not exclude the possibility of identifying biases in Weber's proposal of concepts.⁸⁷ While Ricœur remains profoundly engaged with questions of temporality (his *Time and Narrative* is published in three volumes), he retains a substantial loyalty to this transhistorical approach of Weber's, for instance in the form of the general anthropology in *Oneself as Another* (without ever denying the significance of era-specific social phenomena; LIU, 196).

84 The question of liveliness vs freezing is evoked again in his book of the same period, P. Ricœur, *La métaphore vive*, Paris 1975/*The Rule of Metaphor : Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, London 1986. Both have in common the question of creativity or stagnation in the symbolic mediation of action and our understanding of the world. The issue was again raised in the last chapter of *Time and Narrative* 3.

85 Cf. LIU, 213–214.

86 LIU, lecture 15.

87 Cf. LIU, 197 and 211 on his bias against a certain understanding of rationality.

At the same time, Ricœur willingly acknowledges the freedom of his interpretation of Weber. He concludes his second Weber lecture as follows: »Some may claim that my reading of Weber, just as my reading of Marx, does violence to his text. By doing apparent violence to Marx, though, I think that I actually succeeded in reading *The German Ideology* better.⁸⁸ Marx does say that the class is not a given but a result of action, of interaction, a result that we do not recognize to be a consequence of our action. While orthodox Marxists may contend that my reading does violence to *The German Ideology*, my own stance is that this reading recognizes a dimension of the text. In fact, I would claim to have done more violence to Weber than to Marx. I forced Weber, I compelled him to say what he did not want to say: that it is through some ideological process that we take hold of our own motivation in relation to power. In Weber we never have the idea that something is repressed in this experience, that our communicative competence, to use Habermas' vocabulary, is lost. Weber does not see that it is because this competence is lost that we can only describe types or structures«.⁸⁹

A few years later, Ricœur renders the general argument of the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* again in compact form in *Ideology and Utopia* (1983).⁹⁰ The paper *The Fundamental Categories in Max Weber's Sociology* (2000),⁹¹ republished in *Reflections on the Just*, contains a few new references but remains, in content and argument, quite close to the exposition we have just explored, and I thus do not discuss it any further. It is of more interest how many of the themes explored above find their way back in the two volumes of essays, *The Just* and *Reflections on the Just*: see, for instance, the themes of legitimation in the study of Boltanski and Thévenot's *On*

88 It is not clear whether Ricœur means »better than Marx articulated his arguments« or »better than scholars have done thus far«.

89 Ricœur, LIU, 214–215.

90 Cf. *L'idéologie et l'utopie/Ideology and Utopia*. The earlier text, *Ideologie und Ideologiekritik* (1977) consists almost completely of *Science and Ideology* (1974) with an insertion of two sections from *Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology* (1973).

91 Ricœur, *Les catégories fondamentales de la sociologie de Max Weber* [2000], in: LJ2, 155–171/*The Fundamental Categories in Max Weber's Sociology*, in: *Reflections on the Just*, 133–148.

Justification, The Plurality of Instances of Justice,⁹² of the symbolic order of society in *Autonomy and Vulnerability*,⁹³ and of authority in *The Paradox of Authority*⁹⁴ and in Antoine Garapon's *Le Gardien des Promesses*.⁹⁵

However, Weber is also directly discussed in *Reflections on the Just*, particularly in Ricœur's review of Bouretz on Weber.⁹⁶ Here Ricœur comments on the point Pierre Bouretz focused on: the question of disenchantment of the world (touched on in a commentary on Habermas in 1973, as discussed above). Buying into Weber's description of modern rationality, Bouretz nonetheless searches for a way to escape the nihilist axiological consequences drawn by Weber.⁹⁷ Bouretz takes up this task by examining the history of religions and the way rationality comes to oppose itself most clearly in modernity.⁹⁸ Consequently, aspects of this process of rationalization have to be examined, such as the tension between the aspiration towards value-free science and Weber's own assessment of his era, the formation of spheres of rationalized activity (economics, politics, law). In this context, an array of Weberian notions is touched upon by Ricœur in a way unlike any of his previous discussions of Weber, yet, as one would expect from this text, which is an introduction to a book, it is Bouretz's reading of Weber which enjoys centre stage, and one does not learn much more about Ricœur in this respect.

92 Ricœur, *La pluralité des instances de justice*, in: *Le Juste*, Paris 1995 [=LJ], 121–142/*The Plurality of Instances of Justice*, in: *The Just*, Chicago 2000, 76–93.

93 Ricœur, *Autonomie et vulnérabilité*, in: LJ2, 85–105/*Autonomy and Vulnerability*, in: *Reflections on the Just*, 72–90.

94 Ricœur, *Le paradoxe de l'autorité*, in: LJ2, 107–23/*The Paradox of Authority*, in: *Reflections on the Just*, 91–105.

95 Ricœur, *Le gardien des promesses d'Antoine Garapon* [1996], in: LJ2, 181–192/*Antoine Garapon's Le Gardien des Promesses*, in: *Reflections on the Just*, 156–167.

96 Ricœur, *Les promesses du monde: philosophie de Max Weber de Pierre Bouretz* [1996], in: LJ2, 173–180/*Bouretz on Weber*, in: *Reflections on the Just*, 149–155.

97 Ricœur, *Les promesses du monde*, 174/*Bouretz on Weber*, 150.

98 *Les promesses du monde*, 175/*Bouretz on Weber*, 150–151.

4.3 Intersubjectivity, social ontology and critique

In the previous two sections I have demonstrated the position of Weber's basic concepts of social action in a context of politically relevant themes. However, as indicated above, Ricœur also developed his general view on action and social ontology in a more general register, and here too, Weber played a role. The essay from which I illustrate this point – *Hegel and Husserl on Intersubjectivity* (1977)⁹⁹ – may seem a poor choice: a scholarly article on the relation between two phenomenologies on a narrowly demarcated question: »[D]oes Husserlian phenomenology succeed in doing without the concept of spirit (*Geist*) and, more precisely, in doing without that modality of *Geist* which, in the *Encyclopedia*, is called ›objective spirit‹?»¹⁰⁰ How does this lead to Weber?

Skipping Ricœur's presentation of Hegel's objective spirit, we find a reading of its equivalent in the form of Husserl's explication of the constitution of the other in the fifth of the *Cartesian Meditations*. This explication takes the object of its study as a starting point, from whence it proceeds by means of a »backward questioning« (*questionnement à rebours* or *Rückfrage*) in order to explore how that object has been passively constituted – »[w]hat is self-evident, [...] is transformed into an enigma«.¹⁰¹ In the case that concerns us, that which »is self-evident« is the other with whom I interact meaningfully (or who precedes me or comes after me) as other I's or as analogical I's. From the »analogical apperception« of the other, Husserl advances by describing how the constitution of the other involves reciprocity between an I and another. Subsequently, the constitution of a world common to the I and the other can be explored. In the same movement, the constitution of higher entities (*personnalités d'ordre supérieurs*; i.e. institutions) is explored without ever according these entities a reality independent of the interaction between I's and others (as is the case with Hegel's objective spirit).¹⁰² These elements of Husserl's view on intersubjective constitution »outline the a priori

99 Ricœur, *Hegel et Husserl sur l'intersubjectivité*, in: TA, 311–334/*Hegel and Husserl on Intersubjectivity*, in: FTA, 227–245.

100 *Hegel et Husserl*, 311/*Hegel and Husserl*, 227.

101 *Hegel et Husserl*, 321/*Hegel and Husserl*, 235.

102 Cf. *Hegel et Husserl*, 327–328/*Hegel and Husserl*, 240.

network of interpretive sociology»,¹⁰³ according to Ricœur. Or even more explicitly: »[...] one understands the end of the fifth *Cartesian Meditation* concerning higher-order communities by pairing them up with a Weberian type of *interpretive sociology* (*verstehende Soziologie*), which, precisely, does without Hegelian spirit. Husserl and Max Weber have to be thought together, interpretive sociology filling [*offrant un remplissement*] in this transcendental void with empirical data.«¹⁰⁴ And Ricœur goes further: as if to recognize that his initial problem statement was incorrect, he makes it plain that only Husserl *coupled with Weber* could provide a response to Hegel.¹⁰⁵

So significant is Weber to this task that Ricœur then again reviews the basic constitution of social action as he finds it in *Economy and Society*: action is action in as far as it is meaningful; it is social in as far as it is directed at others. We have seen how he has commented on this already in earlier texts. Now Ricœur insists on the individual as »bearer of meaning« and claims that »there is no foundation other than singularities«.¹⁰⁶ Everything that seems to be a collective agent is really only action *with* others, motivated as they are by goal rationality, tradition or affect.¹⁰⁷ What is all too easily reified into collective entities is rather the effect of foreseeable probability in the action of others.¹⁰⁸

103 *Hegel et Husserl*, 327/*Hegel and Husserl*, 240.

104 *Hegel et Husserl*, 327/*Hegel and Husserl*, 240. In LIU, 191, Ricœur claimed: »I am interested more in Weber's *conceptual* framework than in his *content*« (my emphases). This is not a contradiction: this citation refers to the liberty with which Ricœur interprets Weber in the *Lectures*, which does not have any bearing on the coordination of Husserl's phenomenology and Weber's interpretive sociology undertaken by Ricœur in *Hegel and Husserl on Intersubjectivity*.

105 Cf. *Hegel et Husserl*, 328/*Hegel and Husserl*, 240–241. This coordination of Husserl with Weber clearly corresponds to the social theoretic project of Alfred Schütz (as is recognized by Ricœur *en passant* in *Hegel et Husserl*, 326/*Hegel and Husserl*, 239). However, one should not be fooled by this understatement – we have seen the importance of Schütz for Ricœur in §2 (above).

106 *Hegel et Husserl*, 329/*Hegel and Husserl*, 241. If one considers the energy with which Ricœur defends this Weberian position, one can only be surprised to see how it is first questioned, then summarily set aside. See respectively P. Ricœur, *Temps et récit I. L'intrigue et le récit historique historique*, Paris 1983, 350–351, n1 [=TRI]/*Time and Narrative. Vol. 1*, Chicago 1984, 261, n17; ScA, 234/OaA, 200; and LJ, 83/*The Just*, 45.

107 Cf. *Hegel et Husserl*, 330/*Hegel and Husserl*, 242.

A major significance of this study has to be highlighted – this relates to Husserl's »uncompromising refusal to hypostatize collective entities and [...] his tenacious will to reduce them in every instance to a network of interactions«.¹⁰⁹ What seems initially to be a study of general theoretical concerns now reveals its critical import. It amounts to a disruptive interpretation of social monoliths of power and of the distortive communication which makes their power possible (Ricœur does not use the term ideology-distortion, but the point is made). Ricœur draws egalitarian conclusions from

108 Cf. *Hegel et Husserl*, 331/*Hegel and Husserl*, 242. At this point one can just mention the complete absence of Durkheim in this essay – as is largely the case throughout Ricœur. In *La structure symbolique de l'action* [1977]/*The symbolic structure of action*, Ricœur approaches this question slightly differently. Supposing that in simple cases action could be referred back to an agent who originated it, Ricœur ponders complex actions where it is not simple to establish to which degree different agents participated in enacting them. Even in such cases the »language game of action« requires that we ask about the capabilities and motives of action and thus to attribute meaning to action (cf. *La structure symbolique de l'action*, 282/*The symbolic structure of action*, 180). At this point Weber is called on in support. Meaningful action (the domain of interpretive sociology) covers action that is aimed at by agents (and not merely undergone), and action that is oriented to others (rather than random contact between them). Admittedly, »[o]nly a small part of this sphere of mutual action is personalized. The orientation in relation to others thus covers every sort of coordination among social roles, routines, prestige, cooperation and competition, struggle and violence« (*La structure symbolique de l'action*, 283/*The symbolic structure of action*, 180). This understanding of social action does not allow »hypothesizing the social above this field of significations and motivations« (*La structure symbolique*, 284/*The symbolic structure*, 180). What one may be tempted to identify as a social »substance«, is nothing other than the »probability (*chance*) that a certain course of social action will be produced in some intelligible way capable of being understood« (*La structure symbolique*, 284/*The symbolic structure*, 180). Ricœur's essay *La raison pratique* [1979]/*Practical Reason*, follows a similar argument. Some of the same basic concepts of Weber are again referred to in *ScA*, 184–185, 227/OaA, 155–156, 194.

109 *Hegel et Husserl*, 334/*Hegel and Husserl*, 244. Here Ricœur gives himself the sophisticated philosophical and socio-theoretic means by which to head his own critical call: »...on the contrary, are we not forced to say that things are much more complicated and confused? The Manichaeism in history is foolish and wicked« [*complications, compliquons tout; brouillons leurs cartes; le manichéisme en histoire est bête et méchant.*] (HV, III/*History and Truth*, 96). Note that this does not mean that Ricœur assumed an a priori anti-institutional stance.

the fact of mutual constitution, but we have every reason to think that the empirical filling of such relations is often more violent.

This critical potential of genetic phenomenology into which Ricœur binds Weber recalls the context of the relation between hermeneutics and the critique of ideology in the 1973 article (discussed above). It is also pursued in a number of essays in which Ricœur thematizes the »backward questioning« (*Rückfrage*). In *Rückfrage und Reduktion der Idealitäten in Husserls Krisis und Marx Deutsche Ideologie*¹¹⁰ Ricœur explores in Husserl and Marx the »reduction of the sphere of idealities to that of reality, whereby the latter is partially or completely equated with *practice*«. ¹¹¹ Here, Weber plays only a minor role. Ricœur explores, following Marx, how an ideal notion such as universality emerges from praxis, only increasingly to gain autonomy from praxis.¹¹² This autonomisation occurs in the service of the interests of the dominant class, a social phenomenon which, Ricœur argues, Weber also had in mind. Weber demonstrates how an instance of domination claims legitimacy but also requires belief in this legitimacy, which can be given only through motivated belief of those who are dominated. Hence, exactly as we have seen in §§4.1 and 4.2, this credibility deficit has to be overcome with a motivational theory which corrects the causal model offered by Marx.¹¹³

Ricœur's linking of Husserl with Weber in *Hegel and Husserl on Intersubjectivity* thus points to a similar link between Husserl and

110 P. Ricœur, *Rückfrage und Reduktion der Idealitäten in Husserls ›Krisis‹ und Marx' ›Deutscher Ideologie‹*, in: B. Waldenfels, J.-M. Broekman & A. Pazanin (Hg.), *Phänomenologie und Marxismus*, Bd. 3, Frankfurt/M. 1978, 207–239/Le »questionnement à rebours« (*die Rückfrage*) et la réduction des idéalités dans la ›Krisis‹ de Husserl et ›L'idéologie allemande‹ de Marx, in: *Alter. Revue de phénoménologie* 5 (1997), 315–330.

111 Ricœur, *Rückfrage und Reduktion*, 207/Le »questionnement à rebours«, 315.

112 *Rückfrage und Reduktion*, 232/Le »questionnement à rebours«, 326.

113 In a way similar to the article under discussion, *L'originnaire et la question-en-retour dans la Krisis de Husserl* [1980], in: *A l'école de la phénoménologie*, Paris 1986, 285–295, here: 286; Ricœur compares Husserl (*Krisis*) and Marx (*German Ideology*) on the reduction of idealities and ideologies to praxis. The procedure of *Rückfrage* is thus tied back from the general questions of social ontology we have just explored into the matrix of the question of ideology from which we started to examine Ricœur's reception of Weber in this section. However, whereas the themes of science, ideology and legitimacy are there, Max Weber is absent.

Marx – however, Ricœur never develops this link further. That is, unless one considers this project to be accomplished and incorporated as one of the objectives of his hermeneutics of human capabilities (in *Oneself as Another*) without its ever being stated in these terms.¹¹⁴

5. Social scientific understanding requires explanation

A last domain in which Ricœur accords a significant role to Weber is social theoretic epistemology. Ricœur had, for a long time, been engaged with the question of the relation between understanding and explanation,¹¹⁵ to which I refer again at the end of this section. However, let us first go directly to an instantiation of this engagement in the relevant section of *Time and Narrative 1* (second part), where Ricœur deals with this difficult relation in the context of the narrative character of historiography.

In the section *Historical Intentionality*, Ricœur is concerned with »the *indirect* derivation of historical knowledge, beginning from narrative understanding [*l'intelligence narrative*]«¹¹⁶ by which to coordinate historical *explanation* with narrative *understanding*.¹¹⁷ To bring about this coordination successfully, one has to recognize both a fundamental *correspondence* between stories and historiography (see the first part of *Time and Narrative 1*), and a three-fold epistemic »break [*coupure*]« of historiography in respect of narratives in general,¹¹⁸ by which historiography gains an explicative function over and above the explanation already contained in narratives. This epistemic »break« consists, then, of »the autonomy

114 Elsewhere I have demonstrated how the hermeneutics of human capabilities can be used as a heuristic for human suffering by reducing the suffering back to the praxis or actional context which results in de-capabilisation – see *Between daily routine and violent protest*, 255–259.

115 As in P. Ricœur, *Le conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique* [1969], Paris 2013/*The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Evanston 1996.

116 TRI, 168, similarly 311/*Time and Narrative 1*, Chicago 1984, 93, similarly 175.

117 Cf. TRI, 169/*Time and Narrative 1*, 93.

118 Cf. TRI, 312–315/*Time and Narrative 1*, 175–177.

of explanatory *procedures*, the autonomy of the *entities* referred to, and the autonomy of the *time* – or rather of the *times* – of history.¹¹⁹

Ricœur aims at clarifying the first of these three elements by revisiting the question of causality in history. The specificity of historical explanation resides in the »singular causal attribution or imputation [*imputation causale singulière*]¹²⁰, in which Ricœur identifies a mediation between explanation in the nomological sense, and explanation by »emplotment [*mise en intrigue*]¹²¹, in the form of what he calls a »quasi-plot [*quasi-intrigue*]¹²². Weber's essay *Critical Studies in the Logic of the Cultural Sciences*¹²³ is, according to Ricœur, the most insightful study on this issue (but requires some completion from Aron,¹²⁴ which I do not examine here). The core of this form of imputation consists of a »what if?« argumentation or, more elaborately formulated »the constructing [a] *by our imagination* of a different course of events, [b] then of weighing the probable consequences of this unreal course of events, and, [c] finally, in *comparing* these consequences with the real course of events«.¹²⁴

This counterfactual reasoning enables the historian to isolate from a myriad of causal factors, which culminate in a specific event, the causal difference that it would have made if a specific, individual event had been different. It subsequently enables the historian to establish a necessary, or at least a probable, connection between that individual event and its consequence. And since this connection is understood to be causal (in other words, causality is attributed to it), it finally leads to an explanation of the historical meaning of the event.

119 TRI, 320/*Time and Narrative 1*, 181.

120 On causal explanation in Weber, see F. Ringer, *Max Weber on Causal Analysis, Interpretation, and Comparison*, in: *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002), 163–78.

121 TRI, 320–321/*Time and Narrative 1*, 181.

122 M. Weber, *Kritische Studien auf dem Gebiet der kulturwissenschaftlichen Logik*, in: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen 1922, 215–290/*Critical Studies in the Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, in: *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Glencoe 1949, 113–188.

123 Ricœur's reference is Aron's *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire. Essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique*, Paris 1938/*Introduction to the Philosophy of History: An Essay on the Limits of Historical Objectivity*, Westport 1976.

124 TRI, 324/*Time and Narrative 1*, 184 (my numbering).

As I have already shown, for Ricœur it is important to situate this procedure of singular causal imputation between two kinds of explanation: explanation by emplotment and nomological explanation (in the sense common to science).

While Weber did not develop the idea of explanation by emplotment, Ricœur identifies it as being implied in the weighing of alternative scenarios in the estimation of probability. Clearly, this procedure by imagination leans in the direction of emplotment. Besides, all causal relations have to make sense in a plot-like form.

On the other hand, identifying factors that lead to an event, weighing their relative importance and having knowledge of how people are disposed to act under certain typical circumstances belong rather to the scientific side of reasoning. Although the grading of probabilities is not, in this case, quantifiable, this still represents the closest point of singular causal imputation to scientific explanation.¹²⁵ It also accords this explanation the status of being objective, as far as this is possible.¹²⁶ Or to put it differently, a causal succession of events narrated in fiction lacks this disciplined and argued effort to establish probability.¹²⁷

This principle of the quasi-plot based on singular individual imputation also holds when the place of collective entities in historical explanation is considered¹²⁸ (and the subsequent discussion in *Time and Narrative 1* clarifies the nature of such collective agents or »quasi-characters«). According to Ricœur, Weber establishes, for instance, a link of singular causal imputation between aspects of Protestant ethics and capitalism.¹²⁹

By according a specific place to historical explanation in the broader framework of a hermeneutics of narrative understanding, Ricœur works out in detail one of his standing hermeneutic concerns, namely to find an appropriate coordination of the mistakenly opposed intellectual pursuits of explanation and understanding. A classical formulation of Ricœur's stance is *Explanation and Under-*

125 Cf. TRI, 327–328/*Time and Narrative 1*, 185.

126 Cf. TRI, 328/*Time and Narrative 1*, 186.

127 Cf. TRI, 329/*Time and Narrative 1*, 186.

128 Cf. »Causal explanation is not restricted to an individual point of view, although it remains singular, since this type of behavior can in its turn be integrated into a causal ensemble« (TRI, 335/*Time and Narrative 1*, 190).

129 Cf. TRI, 337–338/*Time and Narrative 1*, 191–192.

standing (1977).¹³⁰ The principle, as applied to historiography, is found as far back in his work as the 1952 article, *Objectivity and subjectivity in history*,¹³¹ but in this early text there is no mention of Weber or his »understanding explanation [*explication compréhensive*]«.¹³² At the other end of his oeuvre, in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Ricœur refers to Weber's understanding of singular causal imputation,¹³³ but he simply takes over his own findings from *Time and Narrative 1* and does not explicitly take his discussion of, or debate with, Weber any further in the section *Explanation/Understanding*.¹³⁴

Whereas Ricœur's appropriation of Weber is set here in contexts where the methodology of historiography is the direct theme, one should note how the significance of these findings transcends the limits of this framework. Ricœur's conclusion has a bearing on all social scientific methodology in as far as these (a) work with quasi-characters (i.e. entities bigger than individuals) and (b) coordinate the understanding of human action by means of a detour through explanation by means of emplotment and singular causal imputation.¹³⁵

While this section deals with issues of epistemology and of methodological procedure, it is possible to relate the issue of singular causal imputation back to a concept of everyday action, by which an agent (individual or collective) identifies him-/herself as capable of acting, namely through attestation.¹³⁶ Without attestation to one's ability to act, no responsibility is possible, and in this way, one may say that at least this methodological point is not entirely unrelated to the questions of practical philosophy. Finally, one may well

130 Ricœur, *Expliquer et comprendre*, in: TA, 179–204/*Explanation and Understanding*, in: FTA, 125–143.

131 Ricœur, *Objectivité et subjectivité en histoire*, in: HV, 27–92/*Objectivity and subjectivity in history*, in: *History and Truth*, 21–40.

132 Ricœur, *Les promesses du monde*, 173/Bouretz on Weber, 149 (the translation reads: »interpretive understanding«).

133 Cf. MHO, 231, 497/*Memory*, 182 (incorrectly translated) and 382.

134 MHO, 231–301/*Memory*, 182–233.

135 Cf. Johann Michel devoted a substantial part of his *Homo interpretans*, Paris 2017, to the relation of explanation and interpretation; Ricœur's use of Weber in this regard is discussed in the section *La sociologie et l'interprétation objective* 308–320, here: 311–313.

136 Cf. ScA, 33–35/OaA, 21–23.

ask whether this acceptable form of causal explanation in social science cannot be reintroduced into Marx's understanding of ideology, where Ricœur explicitly rejects it as mechanistic. However, it would require a separate study to answer this question.

6. Conclusion

Nothing in this chapter suggests that Ricœur's writings contain a substantial contribution to Weber scholarship; however, that was clearly never Ricœur's ambition. The value of examining Weber's place in Ricœur's oeuvre has to be sought in Ricœur's own reception of Weber. The significance attributed to Weber by Ricœur outweighs the relatively sparse bibliometrical references. In this chapter I have reconstructed the ways in which Ricœur appropriated Weber, particularly in respect of Ricœur's political philosophy, but also in his social theory and, to a smaller degree, in his philosophy of historiography.

We saw that Weber contributed to Ricœur's understanding of the dilemmas of responsible action as early as his post-World War II essays. Later, Weber's instrumentalist view of the state became a standard component of Ricœur's own understanding of the state, even when he always relativized Weber's view by connecting it to that of Weil. In both of these forms *Politics as a Vocation* became a remaining reference for Ricœur.

Following Ricœur's intensified attention to the symbolic nature of action in the 1970s, Weber's basic concepts of meaningful social interaction, of *Economy and Society*, drew Ricœur's attention. This path of reflection starts in the difficult Gadamer-Habermas debate in which the status of critique is at stake. Weber helps Ricœur to develop an understanding of ideology which fans out from an insurmountable social given, through the creation of belief in political power, to the distortion of reality. This work with Weberian concepts helps Ricœur to appropriate aspects of the Marxist critique of ideology, while qualifying its status. At the end of this period, Ricœur coupled Weber with Husserl in a very Schützian social ontology. But even in this more detached reflection the critical objectives of theorizing meaningful action remain apparent in the suspicious desubstantialising interpretation of social entities.

Finally, we see the value Ricœur attaches in *Time and Narrative* to the possibility of explanation in historiography and the social sciences – a form of explanation which he would keep in balance with the vocation of the same sciences to interpret and understand. The idea of »singular causal attribution« is the key to this problem, in that it is a form of causal explanation which allows for coordination with narrative understanding.

All three major themes, once worked out, were carried over by Ricœur into his later work, with almost no further changes.

One could, and should, certainly take this study further by reflecting on the ways in which Ricœur's own hermeneutics (in all its variants), his views on religion, modernity, politics and action, could be deployed in a critical rereading of Weber. And likewise, one could remobilize the whole of Weber's oeuvre in a critical scrutiny of Ricœur's work. I hope that someone will do so in the future. For such studies one would first need to understand Ricœur's reception of Weber, and that was the aim to which this chapter had been conceptualized.¹³⁷

137 A shorter version of this chapter has been published as *The Place of Max Weber in Ricœur's Philosophy*, in: *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy – Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française* XXVIII, no. 2 (2020), 70–93.

