Architecture and Narrativity
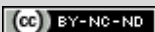
Paul Ricœur

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Since it is the theme of memory on which I have been charged with speaking, I am going to begin by explaining how I relate memory and narrativity. I adopt the most general definition of memory – the one which we find in a small work of Aristotle precisely called *Of Memory and Recollection*, and which moreover adapts some observations, in particular by Plato in the *Theaetetus*, concerning *eikōn*, likeness: 'making the absence present,' 'making the absent thing present'; as well as the observation that we may distinguish two kinds of absence: the absent as simply the unreal, which would then be the imaginary, and the absent-which-once-was, the previous, the before, the *proteron*.[1] The latter is, for Aristotle, the distinctive feature of memory when it comes to absence: the matter is therefore one of making the absent-which-once-was, present. I have found a great complicity of thought at the two extremes of our history of the West, between the Ancients – with this idea of absence made present and of preceding in time – and an idea of Heidegger's, of which I am very fond, whatever my aversion to his idea of being-toward-death: the doctrine that we must split our concept of the past into what he calls the bygone, the *vergangen*, and that-which-was, the *gewesen*.[2] At the same time, we honor the definition of the Ancients, because the previous-made-present is grammatically distinctive in two ways: it is no longer, but it was. And it seems to me that the glory of architecture is to make present not what is no longer but what was by means of what is no longer.

Narrativity

What about narrativity? It had struck me, while working a decade ago on *Time and Narrative* that memory was brought to both language and works by means of narrative, by the act of putting things into narrative.[3] The transition from memory to narrative is necessary in that sense: to recollect, in a private way as in a public way, is to declare that 'I was there.' The witness says: 'I was there.' And this declarative nature of memory fits in with accounts, testimonies, but also with a narrative through which I say to others what I have experienced.

I therefore adopt, in my reflection, two presuppositions: on the one hand, to make present the preceding in time of what once was, and on the other, to put it into works via discourse but also via a basic process of putting into narrative form, which I identify as 'configuration.'

To begin with, I would like to put an analogy in place, or rather something that appears at first sight to be only an analogy: a narrow parallelism between architecture and narrativity, in that architecture would be to space what narrative is to time, namely a 'configurative' process; a parallelism between on the one hand constructing, that is, building in space, and on the other hand recounting, emplotment in time. In the course of this analysis, I will ask myself if one ought not to push this analogy much further, to the point of a genuine intertwining, an entanglement between the architectural configuring of space and the narrative configuring of time. In other

words, it is really a matter of crossing space and time through *building* and *recounting*. Such is the horizon of this investigation: to entangle the spatiality of the narrative and temporality of the architectural act by the exchange, as it were, of space-time in both directions. We will also be able to find, in time, as we are led by the architectural act's temporality, the dialectic of memory and project at the very heart of this activity. And I will show above all, in the last section of my presentation, how much putting into narrative form projects the remembered past onto the future.

Recounted Time and Built Space

Let us return to the point of the simple analogy. Nothing is obvious, because a gulf appears to separate the architectural project inscribed in stone, or any other hard material, from the literary narrativity inscribed in language: one would be located in space, the other in time. On the one hand, the narrative given for reading; on the other, the construction between sky and earth given to visibility, given to be seen. At first, the gap or 'logical gulf' seems wide between recounted time and built space, but we can gradually reduce it, while still remaining in the 'parallelism,' by remarking that the time of the narrative and the space of architecture are not limited to simple parts of universal time and geometrical space.

The time of the narrative comes into play at the point of rupture and suture between physical time and psychological time, the latter described by Augustine in the *Confessions* as "distended," a distention of the soul between what he called the present of the past – memory –, the present of the future – expectation –, and the present of the present – attention.[4] The time of the narrative is therefore a mixture of this experienced time and of that of clocks, chronological time framed by calendar time, with all astronomy behind it. At the root of narrative time, there is this mixture of simple 'instant,' which is a break in universal time and of the living present where there is only one present: now.

Similarly, built space is a sort of mixture between *places of life* that surround the living body, and a three dimensional geometrical space in which each point is some place. Such space is also, one might say, simultaneously measured in Cartesian space, geometrical space, all the points may be, thanks to Cartesian coordinates, deduced from other points, and place of life, *site*. Following the example of the present, which is the node of narrative time, the site is the node of space that we create, that we build.

It is on this double implanting, this parallel inscription in a mixed time and a mixed space that I would like to rely. I place all my analysis under the three successive headings that I covered in *Time and Narrative*,[5] which I placed under the very ancient title of *mimesis* – that is, of recreation, of creative representation – while coming from the stage of 'prefiguration' in which the narrative is tied up in everyday life, in conversation, still without detaching itself to produce literary forms. I will pass next onto the stage of a truly built time, of a recounted time, which will be the second logical step: 'configuration.' And I will end with what I called, in the context of reading and rereading, 'refiguration.'

I will follow a parallel movement on the side of building in order to show that we can also pass from a step, from a stage of 'prefiguration,' which will be linked to the idea, to the act of *inhabiting* – there, there is a Heideggerian resonance (dwelling and building)[6] – to a second stage,

more overtly interventionist, of the act of *building*, to reach a third and final stage of 'refiguration': the rereading of our towns and of all our dwelling places. We might therefore say, firstly, that inhabiting is the presupposition of building, and, secondly, that building actually takes charge of inhabiting, so that the last word is given to a thoughtful inhabiting, an inhabiting that remakes memory from construction. Such is to be the progression of my itinerary of thinking.

'Prefiguration'

The narrative, at the 'prefiguration' stage, is practiced well before it is put into literary form, whether by the history of historians, or by literary fiction, all the way from the epic, the tragedy, up to the modern novel. 'Prefiguration' is therefore the 'burying' of the narrative in life, in the form of ordinary conversation. At this stage, the narrative is genuinely involved in our own most immediate awareness. Hannah Arendt proposed a very simple definition of it in *The Human Condition*: the narrative's function is to give "the 'who' of the action."[7] Indeed, when you want to introduce yourself to a friend, you start by telling him a little story: 'I have lived like such-and-such,' in such a way as to identify yourself, in the sense of making yourself known for who you are, or believe yourself to be. In sum, the first step of living in a community starts with the narratives of life that we exchange. These narratives only make sense in this exchange of memories, of experiences and of projects.

The parallelism, at this level of pre-comprehension, between the practice of time and that of space is quite remarkable. Before any architectural project, humankind has built because it has inhabited. In this respect, it is pointless to ask oneself if inhabiting precedes building. At first there is a need for building, we might say, which comes hand-in-hand with the vital need to inhabit. It is therefore from the inhabiting-building complex that we must begin, even if we must later give priority to construction, at the level of 'configuration,' and perhaps inhabit it again, at the level of 'refiguration.' Because it is *inhabiting* which the architectural project redesigns and which we are going to reread.

Some authors, marked by the psychoanalytic approach, see the origins of the architectural act in 'surrounding' and the original function of architectural space as 'encompassing': paradise lost, the maternal matrix's protective covering becomes the object of human desire, but precisely as paradise lost. From the cradle, to the bedroom, to the district, to the town, we could follow the umbilical cord cut by the tearing-apart of birth. But it is only nostalgia that would prevent us from living instead. Openings and distances, from the moment of access to open air, broke the spell, and it is with this open air that we must now deal. Nevertheless, one does not leave the vital and, in this sense, pre-architectural stage, in the sense that we characterize inhabiting-building as relevant to the world of life – to the *Lebenswelt* – by a variety of operations that call for the architectural artifice: protecting the dwelling with a roof; demarcating with walls; controlling the relation of the outside and the inside by an interplay of openings and closings; signifying by means of a threshold the crossing of boundaries; sketching, by a specialization of the parts of the dwelling, horizontally and vertically, the assignment of distinct places for living, and hence of different activities of daily life, and first of all the rhythm of waking and sleeping by a fitting treatment – though let this also be cursory – of the interplay of shade and light.

That is not all. We have still scarcely underlined the construction processes that encompass the act of staying, of stopping and of fixing oneself, of which even the nomads themselves are not ignorant, an act of a living thing already born, far from the matrix, and in search of a site in open air. We still have not named the processes of flow, of going and coming, that give rise to the supplementary achievements of those aiming to fix the shelter: the path, the road, the street, the square are also related to building, insofar as the acts that they guide themselves make up an integral part of the inhabiter's act. Inhabiting is made of rhythms, stops and starts, settlement and movements. The *place* is not only the *hollow where* we fix ourselves, as Aristotle defined it (the inside wall of the protective covering), but also the distance to cover.[8] The town is the first arena of this dialectic of shelter and movement.

We also see the demands of architecture and the demands of urbanism being born simultaneously; so much so that the house and the town are contemporary in essential inhabiting-building. In the same way that the interior space of a dwelling tends to differentiate itself, the exterior space of coming and going tends to specialize according to different social activities; in this regard, a 'natural' human condition is unobtainable: it is always already along the way to a fracture and a suture between nature and culture that the so-called 'primitive' humankind allows itself to come across. What about the parallelism between narrativity and architecture at this level of 'prefiguration'? What signs of referring the pre-literary story to the inhabited space can be discerned? First of all, every *biography* takes place in a *life space*. The inscription of action in the course of things consists in marking the event space, which affects the spatial arrangement of things. Then, and above all, the conversational narrative is not limited to an exchange of memories, but is coextensive with journeys from place to place. We have previously mentioned Proust: the church of Combray is, as it were, the monument of memory.[9] What Hannah Arendt called the 'public space of appearance' is not only a metaphorical space of exchanged words, but a material and earthen space.[10] Conversely, whether it is a space for settlement or for flow, the constructed space consists in a system of gestures, of rituals for the major interactions of life. Places are points where something happens, where something comes to be, where temporal changes follow actual paths along the intervals that separate and reconnect the places. I kept in mind the idea of the *chronotope*, devised by Bakhtin, with *topos*, place, site, and *chronos*, time.[11] With this, I would like to show that what is being constructed in my presentation and in our history, is just this space-time recounted and constructed. The idea developed by Evelina Calvi in her essay *Time and Plan: Architecture as Narration* is the one that I have adopted here.[12]

'Configuration'

The second phase of narrative, which I call 'configuration,' is the one in which the act of recounting frees itself from the context of daily life and penetrates the literary sphere. There is first of all an inscription through writing, then through narrative technique. We are going to see what kind of emancipation corresponds, on the building side, to this elevation of the narrative from daily life to a literary level. But I will first focus on the main features of the literary narrative, of which I will seek the equivalent. I have retained three ideas, which moreover constitute a progression in the act of recounting. The first one, which I had put at the centre of a previous analysis, is *emplotment* (what Aristotle named *muthos*, where the ordered side is

emphasized over the fantastical).[13] This consists in making a story with events, thus to gather in a framework – in Italian, there is a very apt word: *intreccio*, plait. This plait, this plot does not only allow us to bring together events, but also aspects of the action, and, in particular, ways of producing it, with causes, reasons to act, and also chance occurrences. It is Paul Veyne who, in his description of history, groups together these three notions: cause, motive or reason, and chance occurrence.[14] All of that is contained in the act of making a narrative. It is hence a matter of regulated transformations. Indeed, we might say that a narrative will transform an initial situation into a terminal situation through episodes. There, a dialectic comes into play – of which we will see shortly the interesting parallelism with building – between the discontinuity of something that happens suddenly, and the continuity of the story that goes on through this discontinuity. So I have adopted the idea of a relation of concordance and discordance. All narrative contains a sort of concordance-discordance, the modern narrative perhaps stressing the discordance at the expense of the concordance, but always within a certain unity – even if only by the fact that there is a first and last page to a novel, even if it is also as deconstructed as the modern novel; there is always a first word and a last word.

The second idea after emplotment is: *intelligibility*, the conquest of intelligibility, because narratives of life are naturally unclear. I have retained the analysis of a German judge establishing, when he is faced with clients, plaintiffs, defendants, the essential character of stories. He had given his book the title *In Geschichten verstrickt*, which my friend Jean Greisch translated as *Entangled in Stories*.[15]

Narrativity is therefore very much an attempt to clarify the inextricable; this is the whole function of narrative modes, of types of plot. As a result, all that will be of the order of the process, of the artifice of the tale is the subject of narratology. This science of the narrative is only possible insofar as a first reflexive work is carried out on what happens, on the events, by the emplotment but also by the archetypes of emplotment that are the narrative patterns.

The third idea that I keep is that of *intertextuality*. Literature consists precisely in juxtaposing, in confronting texts that are distinct from one another, but which maintain relations that may be very complicated in time – influences, etc., but also distance taking – in a genealogy of writing as in contemporaneity. On the shelves of a library, the most striking thing, in the alphabetical arrangement, is the clashing character of the vicinity of two books. We shall see that the town is often of that nature: a great intertextuality, which can sometimes become a cry of opposition.

I think that it is onto this intertextuality that all sorts of increasingly refined processes graft themselves in the modern narrative. The introduction of those things we call tropes – that is, figures of speech, irony, mockery, provocation, and hence the possibility not only of constructing, but of deconstructing – is ultimately a type of purely playful use of language that *celebrates* itself, far removed from 'things.' The Nouveau Roman, in particular, was a sort of experimental laboratory, which, in distancing itself – perhaps too much – from the classic invariants of narrative, was exploratory.

To summarize, the act of 'configuration' has three parts : first, *emplotment*, which I called the 'synthesis of the heterogeneous'; secondly, *intelligibility*, the attempt to clarify the inextricable; and finally, the confrontation of several narratives next to each other, against or after others, that is, *intertextuality*.

This 'configuration' of time by the literary narrative is a good guide to the interpretation of the 'configuration' of space by the architectural project. More than just a simple parallelism between the two poetic acts, it is a question of a display of the temporal and narrative dimension of the architectural project. On the horizon of this investigation, we find, as we suggested above, the manifestation of a space-time in which the narrative and architectural values are exchanged for one another. For dialectical clarity, I have kept the progression of the previous analysis, from the first level of the narrative-making by the plot up to the reflexive level of the *logos* and its celebration of itself, of the poetic act in the playful, while passing through the levels of intertextuality and narratological rationality. Along this vertical axis, we are going to see the parallelism tighten itself, to the point that it will become legitimate to speak of architectural narrativity.

On the first level, that of architectural *making*, hence parallel to emplotment, the major feature of the act of 'configuring,' that is the *temporal synthesis of the heterogeneous*, has its equivalent in what I propose to call a spatial synthesis of the heterogeneous. We have observed that the materials of the building compose between them several relatively independent variables: units of space, massive forms, and the boundary surfaces. The architectural project aims also to create objects in which these diverse aspects find an adequate unity. Even the idea of discordant concordance finds its answer in the 'irregular regularities' which, in a way, put the order on hold. An architectural work is also a polyphonic message given to a reading that is both encompassing and analytical. The same holds for the architectural work as for emplotment, which, as we have seen, does not only bring together events, but points of view, as causes, motives and chance occurrences. Emplotment was also on the way to its transposition of time onto space by the production of a quasi-simultaneity of its components. The reciprocity between the whole and the part, and the hermeneutical circularity of interpretation, which resulted from it, has its exact response in the mutual implications of the components of the architecture.

On the other hand, narrative lends its exemplary temporality to the act of building, of configuring space. It is indeed little to say that the process of building takes time. We must add that each new building presents in its construction (both the act and its result) the frozen memory of the structure being built. Constructed space is condensed time. This incorporation of time into space becomes still more manifest if we consider the simultaneous work of the 'configuration' of the act of building and that of the act of inhabiting: the functions of inhabiting are continually 'invented,' in both senses of the word (to discover and to create), at the same time that the processes of construction are inscribed in the design of the architectural space. We might say that the act of inhabiting, and the building resulting from the construction, shape one another at the same time. The return of one to the other of the functions of inhabiting and constructive formation consists in a movement and a sequence of movements of the architectural intelligence invested in the mobility of the gaze *running* throughout the structure. From the narrative to the structure, it is the same intention of discordant coherence that inhabits the intelligence of the narrator and the builder, which – we will go farther – appeals to the reader of 'inscribed' signs. The second parallel on the level of configuration: what I had called intelligibility, the passage of the inextricable to the comprehensible. It is the same inscription that conveys to space the 'configurative' act of the narrative, the inscription in an object that lasts thanks to its cohesion, its coherence (whether narrative or architectural). If writing confers duration on the literary thing, it is the durability of the material that assures the durability of the built thing. Duration, durability:

this assonance has been remarked and commented upon time and time again. From there, we can move on to a second level, already reflexive with regards to a glimpsed productive act, to take the measure of the provisional victory over the ephemeral, marked by the act of edifying.

On the first level of reflexivity, temporality concerns the history of architectural composition. However, I do not want to talk here about the history of architecture written afterwards, but of the *historicity* conferring to the configurative act the fact that each new edifice springs up in the midst of buildings already built, which have the same character of sedimentation as 'literary' space. In the same way that the narrative has its equivalent in the structure, the phenomenon of intertextuality has its own in the network of already-there buildings that contextualize the new building. The historicity proper to this contextualization must be, yet again, well-distinguished from a learned, retrospective history. It is a matter of the historicity of the very act of inscribing a new building in an already built space, which coincides broadly with the phenomenon of the town, which is a relatively distinct 'configurative' act based on the differentiation between architecture and town planning.

It is at the heart of this act of inscription that the relation between innovation and tradition comes into play. In the same way that every writer writes 'after,' 'according to' or 'against,' every architect makes up his mind with regards to an established tradition. And, insofar as the built environment keeps *track* of all life stories, which have punctuated the act of inhabiting of yesteryear's city dwellers, the new 'configurative' act plans new ways to inhabit, which will be inserted in the tangle of these already past life stories. A new dimension is thus given to the fight against the ephemeral: it is no longer contained in each building but in their relation to one another.

We must also talk about destruction and rebuilding. We have not only destroyed the symbols of a culture through hatred, but also through carelessness, through contempt and through ignorance, in order to replace what has ceased to please with whatever the new taste suggests or demands. But we have equally piously repaired, maintained and reconstructed, sometimes identically, and principally in Eastern Europe, after the great destructions of the wars of the 20th-Century – I am thinking of Dresden. The ephemeral is therefore not only on the side of nature, on which art superimposes its duration and durability; it is also on the side of the violence of history, and threatens from within the architectural project considered in its 'historical' dimension, notably at the end of this horrific 20th-Century, with all these ruins that are to be integrated into the history in progress – we find, moreover, striking thoughts from Heidegger, from before the Second World War, on the ruin, in the line of German romanticism.[16] Other reflections, conducted by certain interpreters, on the minor mode of the architectural project, bringing together ideas of trace, residue, ruin, can allow themselves the spectacle offered to all eyes of the new *precariousness*, which history adds to the vulnerability common to all the things of this world. At the highest level of reflexivity to which we now pass – the one where I had led the narrative towards the playful – architecture presents a level of theorization completely comparable to the one in which, on the side of narrative, rationality changes into a reasonable game. We can even say that architectural composition has never ceased to excite speculation, history intervening now on the level of the formal values opposing styles with styles. What gives these conflicts of school in architectural matters a particularly dramatic turn is the fact that theorization is not purely about the act of building, but also its presumed link to the act of

inhabiting and to the needs supposed to govern the latter. We can thus read the competing doctrines in two different ways.

First reading: the formal preoccupations prevailing in such-a-style, from such-a-school, are to be compared to structuralism in narratology, thus to formalism. So the risk is that the ideological preoccupations of the builder outweigh the expectations and the needs stemming from the act of inhabiting. It is mainly in the 'configuration' of the city, through its space organized in a representative way that the history sedimented in cultural forms can be read. Monumentality then assumes its major etymological meaning, which brings monument closer to document. Now, this first reading is not only limited to the interpretation of 'configuration' sedimented in the past: it also projects itself towards the future of the art of building, in what precisely deserves the title of architectural project. There is also the fact that, in a still recent past, from which current builders endeavor to distance themselves, the members of the Bauhaus school, those loyal to Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, thought their art of building in connection with the values of civilization to which they adhered, according to the place they assigned to their art in the history of culture.

Second reading: conceptual formalism finds its limit in the representations that the theorists make of the needs of the populations. In one sense, this concern has never been absent but, in a still-close past, only the expectations of a category of inhabitants (princes, religious dignitaries, later the wealthy) and the need for glorious visibility of dominant institutions was taken into account. The contemporary age is undoubtedly marked by support for the human masses, the crowd, which in their turn gain visibility, under the sign of dignity rather than glory; but we must not conclude that this approach to the architectural project is less ideological than the previous one, insofar as it is too often the representation of the "competent authorities" regarding the inhabiting needs of those masses, which influences the speculation about the destination of architecture – and the great towers, alas!, are the sign of it. That explains the reaction in the opposite direction of those who advocate a return to pure architecture, disconnected from all sociology and all social psychology, that is, from all ideology. We are then faced with a claim quite comparable to that which the theorists of the *Nouveau Roman* have raised, in the celebration of language, for its own glory, the 'words' having dissociated themselves irrevocably from 'things' and representation giving place to game. Thus, narrativity and architecture follow similar historical courses.

'Refiguration'

I will end with some reflections on what, in my literary categories, I called 'refiguration,' and of which I would like to show the parallel on the side of architecture. With this third step (which is the reading on the side of the narrative), the rapprochement between narrative and architecture is narrower, to the point that recounted time and constructed space exchange their meanings.

Let us take first the part of the narrative. It must be said that it does not complete its journey within the enclosure of the text, but in its counterpart: the *reader*, this forgotten protagonist of structuralism. It is to the aesthetics of reception, established by H. R. Jauss and the Constance School, that we owe this shift of emphasis from writing to reading.[17] The denial of

referentiality by the theorists instructed by Saussure is thus compensated for by the recognition of the dialectic between writing and reading. For it is very much a matter of dialectic: taken up again and assumed in the act of reading, the text unfolds its capacity to illuminate or clarify the life of the reader; it has both the power of discovering, of revealing the *hidden*, the unsaid of a life shielded from Socratic scrutiny, and that of transforming the banal interpretation that the reader makes according to the bent of day-to-day life. To *reveal* (in a sense of truth to which Heidegger made us sensitive), but also to *transform*, that is what carries the text outside itself.

But this dialectic has a double input, because the reader comes to the text with his own *expectations*, and these expectations are confronted, in the reading, by the text's propositions of meaning, which can go through all phases, from passive, even captive reception (Madam Bovary, the reader of bad novels!), to the reluctant, hostile, angry reading, close to scandalized rejection, passing through actively complicit reading. I would like to say that it is thanks to this agonistic reading that the intertextuality is itself encountered as a great challenge: what was a problem of positioning in relation to his peers, for the creator, becomes a problem of plural, polemical reading, for the art lover. We already see what opening is also made on the side of the *possible*, in the understanding of the self.

What we have met here at the same time, is, as far as the constructed is concerned, the possibility of reading and rereading our places of life from the point of view of our way of inhabiting. I will say straight away that the force of the model of reading is excellent for reevaluating the act of *inhabiting*. Under the title of 'prefiguration,' inhabiting and building were equally matched, without it being possible to say which one precedes the other. Under the title of 'configuration,' it is the act of constructing that has taken the upper hand under the form of the architectural project, which has been accused of being inclined to disregard the inhabitants' needs or of projecting these needs over their heads.

From now on it is time to talk of inhabiting as a response, even as an *answer* to building, on the model of the agonistic act of reading, because it will not suffice for an architectural project to be well thought-out, or even for it to be held to be rational for it to be understood and accepted. All planners ought to learn that an abyss can separate the rules of the rationality of a project – that is true for all politics, moreover – from the rules of acceptability to a public. We must therefore learn to consider the act of inhabiting as a focus not only of needs, but of expectations. And the same palette of responses as earlier can be traveled, from passive reception, subdued, indifferent reception, to hostile and angry reception – even that of the Eiffel Tower in its day!

Inhabiting as a rejoinder to building. And just as the reception of the literary text inaugurates the test of a plural reading, of a patient welcome given to intertextuality, so too does receptive and active inhabiting imply a careful rereading of the urban environment, a continuous relearning of the juxtaposition of styles, and thus also of life stories of which the monuments and all the buildings carry the trace. To make these *traces* not only residues, but testimonies of the past that is no longer but which-once-was, to save the having-been of the past in spite of its being-no-longer, this is what the 'rock' that endures can do.

In conclusion, I will say that what we have rebuilt is the now rather banal idea of 'place of memory,' but as a reasoned, reflected composition of space and time. These are in effect memories of different times, which are recaptured and held in reserve in the places where they

are inscribed. And these places of memory call for a work of memory, in the sense in which Freud opposes such a work to the obsessional repetition that he calls repetitive compulsion, where plural reading of the past is annihilated, and the spatial equivalent of intertextuality is rendered impossible.[18] So it is with the constructed thing as with the literary text. In both cases, there is competition between the two types of memory. For the repetition-memory, nothing is worth anything except the well-known, and the new is odious; for the reconstruction-memory, the new must be welcomed with curiosity and with the desire to reorganize the old with a view to making room for this newcomer. It is no less a question of de-familiarizing the familiar than of familiarizing the unfamiliar. It is on this plural reading of our towns that I want to end, but not without having said that the work of memory – I prefer, by far, the expression 'work of memory' to 'duty of memory,' because I do not see why memory would be a duty, while the work of memory is a requirement of life – is not possible without a work of mourning.

I have alluded to the great ruins of Europe in the middle of the century; these are not simply lost monuments, nor even lost lives, these are also eras; and what is lost, is the way of understanding from the past. We must therefore mourn the total understanding and admit that there is something inextricable in the reading of our towns. They alternate between glory and humiliation, life and death, the most violent foundational events and the gentleness of living. It is this great recapitulation that we make in their reading.

I leave the last word to a thinker whom I admire deeply, Walter Benjamin. In *Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, he writes: "The flâneurs *(wanderers)* seeks refuge in the crowd. The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city moves itself for the flâneur in phantasmagoria."[19] Let us be the flâneurs of the places of memory.

Paul Ricœur

Translated from French by Eileen Brennan, Robbie Carney and Samuel Lelièvre.

(Endnotes below are taken back from the French version of Ricœur's text.)

[1] *Editor's note*: Aristote, *De la mémoire et de la réminiscence* in *Petits traités d'histoire naturelle*, (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1953), 449a-453b; Platon, *Théétète*, (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1923), 191d-194a.

[2] *Editor's note*: Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1984 [1927]), § 65, 326-9.

[3] *Editor's note*: Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit 1. L'intrigue et le récit historique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983); Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit 2. La configuration dans le récit de fiction* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984); Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit 3. Le temps raconté* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1985).

[4] *Editor's note*: Augustin d'Hippone, *Les Confessions* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, Bibliothèque Augustinienne, 1962), Livre XI.

[5] *Editor's note*: Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit 1. L'intrigue et le récit historique*, 105-62.

[6] *Editor's note*: Martin Heidegger, "Bâtir, habiter, penser," in *Essais et conférences* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958 [1951]), 170-193.

[7] *Editor's note*: Hannah Arendt, *Condition de l'homme moderne* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1983 [1958]), 235 et sq.

[8] *Editor's note*: Aristote, *Physique*, (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1952), livre IV.

[9] *Editor's note*: Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu* (Paris: Gallimard, La Pléiade, vol. I, 1987 [1913-27]).

[10] *Editor's note*: Hannah Arendt, *Condition de l'homme moderne*, especially 259-73.

[11] *Editor's note*: Mikhaïl Bakhtine, *Esthétique et théorie du roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).

[12] *Editor's note*: Evelina Calvi, *Tempo e progetto. L'Architettura come narrazione* (Milan: Guerini Studio, 1991).

[13] *Editor's note*: Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit 1. L'intrigue et le récit historique*, 66-104.

[14] *Editor's note*: Paul Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire. Essai d'épistémologie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971).

[15] *Editor's note*: Wilhelm Schapp, *In Geschichten verstrickt. Zum Sein von Ding und Mensch* (Wiesbaden: B. Heymann Verlag, 1976 [1953]), French translation by Jean Greisch: *Empêtrés dans des histoires. L'être de l'homme et de la chose* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992).

[16] *Editor's note*: Ricœur might here refer to Martin Heidegger, (1936) "L'origine de l'œuvre d'art," in *Chemins qui ne mènent nulle part* (Paris, Gallimard, 1962), 44, after *Sein und Zeit*, § 73, 378, and developments for lectures in 1921-1922 (*Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994).

[17] *Editor's note*: Hans Robert Jauss, *Pour une esthétique de la réception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978); Wolfgang Iser, *L'acte de lecture. Théorie de l'effet esthétique* (Bruxelles: Mardaga, 1985 [1976]).

[18] *Editor's note*: Sigmund Freud, "Remémoration, répétition, perlaboration," in *La technique psychanalytique* (Paris: PUF, 1970 [1914]), 105-15.

[19] Walter Benjamin, (1939) "Paris, capitale du XIXᵉ siècle" (Paris: Éditions Allia, 2012), 31. (Our translation.)