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Paul Ricoeur, who died in May 2005, was a unique philosopher in that he combined the post-Hegelian sweep of continental European philosophy with the analytic rigour of the Anglophone tradition. The breadth of his scholarship combined with the depth of his insights make all his many works rewarding to read. The present work, published in French in 2004, is no exception, although it does suffer from a somewhat artificial structure. It comprises three lectures bookended with an introduction and a conclusion.

The introduction offers a survey taken from French dictionaries of the word ‘recognise’ and discovers an evolving series of some sixteen meanings ranging from a purely cognitive act of recognising something for what it is, an existential stance of recognising and attesting to what one is capable of, and the social relation of being recognised with gratitude. This range of meanings provides the ground plan for the three chapters that make up the bulk of the book. The first of these describes a trajectory of thought from Descartes, through Kant, to Heidegger, in which the subject of experience moves from being a substance, to being an unattainable transcendence, and to no longer being present as the locus of representations of the world. The interest in this chapter is largely epistemological.

The second chapter takes up some themes earlier explored in Ricoeur’s *Oneself as Another*. While it could be seen as an essay in the philosophy of action, the focus is upon the conditions under which an agent can accept responsibility for his actions and thus recognise him or herself as an agent in the world. Central to this project will be the statement, ‘I can’. This statement not only expresses an existential self-recognition, but also an attestation of agency. Attestation is an important concept for Ricoeur in that it captures a form of subjectivity which is more engaged with the world than, for example, the Cartesian *cogito*. Central to a person’s identity is what that person attests to, the stances she takes, or the actions she undertakes. Ricoeur calls this ‘ipseity’ and contrasts it with ‘sameness’. The clearest marker of identity as sameness is one’s genealogy. Who I am is established by whose son I am, and my identity documents are evidence of this. If, perchance, there was a doubt about my identity, establishing my parentage would allow others to say that I was the same person as that son. Ipseity, in contrast, is established by me in the course of my commitments and projects. It is what I attest to. I establish it by reference to my memories (which were criteria that Locke used to establish identity in the sense of sameness) in that I own them, and I establish it through the promises I make and project I undertake. How I recognise myself is established by these existential criteria rather than by my identification papers. My memories and my commitments constitute the narrative of my life, and this narrative constitutes my identity in the sense of ipseity.

The third chapter extends the analysis to our relationships with others and with the need for mutuality in recognition. While Ricoeur mentions the politics of recognition and social struggles surrounding multiculturalism, his main focus is upon the constitution of subjectivity in an intersubjective context. He traces a development of
ideas from Hobbes, for whom the basic nature of intersubjectivity was mistrust and conflict, through to Hegel in whose early writings he detects a conception of a shared mentality and collective identity which makes mutual recognition possible. The chapter also contains interesting reflections on the nature of gift giving and how this practice differs from commercial exchanges. Central to the giving of gifts, despite the social expectation of reciprocity, is a moment of \textit{agape}: a moment of pure recognition of the other. This moment of \textit{agape} also lifts the social project of mutual recognition out of the sphere of juridical justice with its stress on reciprocity and into a sphere of giving. The struggle for justice cannot avoid conflict. Peace will only arise from an act of pure gift.

I suggested above that the structure of the book is as artificial as the links between the various senses of the word ‘recognise’. It is not clear what the overall thesis of the book might be. Moreover, it sometimes reads as notes taken while reading other texts and intended for further development. Ricoeur’s knowledge of the philosophical classics is profound and he also cites liberally from recent French scholars. At no point does he offer any explications for the uninitiated, however, and this makes the book less accessible than it could be. Possibly the last book published in his lifetime, this is not where you would start your study of Ricoeur. But for those steeped in the philosophical tradition this book is like a smorgasbord. While it lacks coherence, it offers a rich array of insights.

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