

Ethics of memory, Peace and Management. A Ricoeurian perspective about the importance of history and memory in organizations.

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Abstract:

If the “historic turn” (Suddaby, 2016) in management thought has shown a renewed interest for history in organization and management (Anteby & Molnar, 2012 ; Mena & al., 2016 ; Suddaby & Foster, 2017), very few references to the important works of Paul Ricoeur have been made so far (Mena & al.2016), and especially in the field of the ethics of memory. Or this question is central when we try to understand the links between peace and management, specially when companies have experienced strong relations with non democratic power systems.

Ricoeur’s theory on time, started in the 1980s (Ricoeur, 1983), culminates in his last great work, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2000- 2004), in which Paul Ricoeur questions the possibilities of history, and the place of memory in society. His approach uses concepts that can be useful to rethink the stakes of memory in organizations.

First of all, before defining history, one must go through "what makes a memory": there can be no history without facts, data, or narrative that relates what happened in the past. For Ricoeur, history is the “learned heiress of memory” (Ricoeur, 2000), and history is always a narrative in charge of giving meaning to the past, through a configuration, and narrative choices (Ricoeur, 1983) . A thought on history thus begins with a reflection on memory and Ricoeur makes the distinction here between *Mneme* and *Anamnesis*, between the memory that arises and the effort to remember. Within the framework of organizations, history is seen as something to be mastered: the revelation of something shameful in the past, in spite of management efforts, can cause the organization painful challenges (Anteby & Molnar, 2012). The organization thus prefers *anamnesis* and distrusts *mneme* : it is all the issue of rhetorical history (Suddaby et al., 2010) to try to derive a competitive advantage from this history.

But it is on the ethics of memory and history that Ricoeur's point of view is perhaps the most interesting for managerial reflection. Ricoeur points out that *de facto* the historical gaze can become an ethical glance, for historian and judge have a presumption of impartiality and the

historian, like the judge, occupies a third position, and indeed aspires to impartiality. But this is a necessarily unfulfilled aspiration, in the sense that the historian does not have the means to write a global history that would nullify differences between points of view, a unique history that would embrace that of the performers, those of the victims and those of the witnesses. The phenomenon of interpretation is present from one end to the other of historiographical operations, and it is always possible to interpret something differently. Controversy therefore seems inevitable, and history is therefore destined for perpetual revisionism.

Hence history presupposes a policy of "just memory", that is, an ethics of memory. Ricoeur distinguishes three types of abuse: memory hindered, memory manipulated, and memory obliged. By relying on the contributions of psychoanalytic theories, he understands by memory the difficulty of remembering a trauma. In the case of manipulated memory, the author refers to the ideological manipulations of memory. This is due to the narrative dimension of the narrative, which, by definition, is selected and made coherent. It is thus from the narrativity of the narrative that the strategies of forgetting and remembering relate. With the obligatory memory, the author evokes the question of the "duty of memory". The notion of duty of memory necessarily involves the notion of debt, insofar as it places contemporaries in the position of debtors with respect to those who preceded them - here the questions of repentance and reconciliation, which many countries that have experienced a democratic transition after periods of dictatorship have explored.

From the perspective of Ricoeur and some examples of companies that have had to face ethical issues in their own history (Hugo Boss with Nazism, etc.), we will try to articulate the ethics of truth in the case of organizations (Bouilloud et al. , 2017) and ethics of memory, and we will explore the questions that raises for leaders when they have to cope with unethical events of the past of organizations.

Key words: Memory; History; Ethics; Ricoeur