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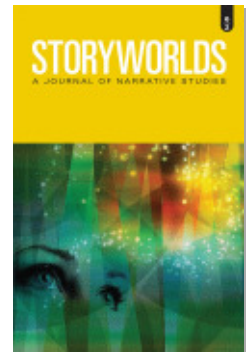
## Narrative, Mimesis, and Phronetical Deliberation

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# Narrative, Mimesis, and Phronetical Deliberation

Fernando Nascimento

One of the distinguishing aspects of the *phronimos* (the person who acts according to *phronesis*, practical wisdom) is the ability to deliberate well.<sup>1</sup> In this article I will explore what it means to deliberate, taking as a starting point Paul Ricoeur's ethical theory and reflections on narratives. I will investigate the reasonability and possible advantages of looking at deliberation as a form of narrative. This path of investigation will highlight the intrinsic relation between saying and doing in the context of deliberation. It will also shed light on the aspirational aspect of the *phronimos*'s activity, which is constantly trying to extend narratives in order to tell a story that makes sense to a community. In other words, the *phronimos* is elaborating narratives in order to propose and promote a common good life within just institutions (Ricoeur 1995: 172).

I take the concept of deliberation from the Aristotelian tradition, as Ricoeur does in his "little ethics."<sup>2</sup> However, in the context of this discussion I will not explore how Ricoeur's appropriation departs from Ar-

istotle's own use of the word. I will keep the notion that deliberation is a practical rational process, therefore linked to the rational virtue of phronesis, which is the basis for the phronimos to choose the line of action he shall take and suggest to be taken in practical situations. I am also assuming the contemporary solutions Ricoeur sketched in *Oneself as Another* about the famous difficulties on the application of deliberation to means or ends derived from the apparently contradictory definitions on Aristotle's work.

Ricoeur takes the concept of life plan and practices from Alasdair McIntyre and suggests that phronesis escapes the means-ends model as it shapes the "action-configurations that we are calling life plan . . . when we move back and forth between far-off ideals, which have to be made more precise, and the weighting of the advantages and disadvantages of the choice of a given life plan on the level of practices" (1995: 177). Along with Ricoeur and McIntyre, we will also emphasize the political or institutional aspect of deliberation. The phronimos deliberates not only what is good for himself egoistically, but what actions and course of events are most likely to bring a good life for the persons involved in the actions that will spring from his deliberation and decision.<sup>3</sup> We will also highlight, with Gaëlle Fiasse (2008), that one of the key factors for Ricoeur's attention to phronesis is that it is strictly bound to individual situations and persons, which is directly related to his attention to the alterity of those involved in the deliberation.

I will use the concept "phronetical narrative" as an extension of Ricoeur's broader studies on narrative to consider a possible ethical applicability of narratives to deliberation. Ricoeur recognized the ethical dimension of narratives: "narrativity is not denuded of every normative, evaluative and prescriptive dimension . . . [and, as a configured action, it] is never ethically neutral for it imposes on the reader a vision of the world which implicitly or explicitly induces a new evaluation of the world and of the reader as well" (1990: 3.249). Therefore, in a certain sense, every narrative is already an ethical one. Nevertheless, with the qualification "phronetical" I want to emphasize the specific usage of narratives in the context of an ethical deliberation guided by phronesis.

Assuming these rough definitions and for the sake of these reflections, I would like to suggest a three-point model of phronetical narra-

tive. In this model, in a phronetical narrative that has its start at point A, deliberation always takes place at a given moment in time that we could call point B. The phronimos is called upon at point B because something is still amiss and there is a need for deliberating the next steps that will lead the phronetical narrative to a point C in the future. Typically, if not always, the phronetical narrative arc from A to B is not concordant; it does not follow logically. That is exactly why the phronimos is called upon. His task as a good deliberator is to propose a phronetical narrative through an arc from B to C that may restore or create a “concordant discordance” (Ricoeur 1990: 1.66) between A and C in such a way that everyone involved in the phronetical narrative may have a good life in just institutions from point C onward.

We may then take the deliberation moment (point B) as the considered present of the phronetical narrative. The narrated time that has passed from A to B is the past being considered through a retrospective narrative. The narrated time between B and C is the future to be proposed and chosen by the phronimos through a prospective narrative.

Let us go through some examples that may help to clarify in which sense we shall take these concepts. First, we could think of a quarrel between two young brothers in which the mother is called upon to moderate and propose a solution. Second, we could think about a person who needs to decide whether or not to accept a job opportunity that may interfere in his personal life. Third, we could consider a judge who needs to pronounce a verdict on a legal trial. And fourth, we could consider the chair of a medical committee that will conduct the deliberation process and propose a line of action regarding the medical treatment to be applied to a given patient.

In all of these cases there is the time of deliberation and decision (at point B): the moment when the mother intervenes in the quarrel to propose a solution; the moment to accept or not accept the job; the moment when the judge promulgates a sentence; and the moment when the medical committee has to meet and make a decision. In each of the cases, deliberation is looking back and trying to put events, actions, conflicting stories together. It may be the partial views of an issue provided by each brother, or the personal and professional feelings, or the claims of accusation and defense attorneys in a trial, or the medical, personal, and family

history of a certain patient. In each of the cases, the deliberation process will look backward in time until a point in which the stories' threads will begin to be considered. That much more fluid temporal reference is what we are calling point A of the phronetical narrative.

Each of these paradigmatic situations also projects a future condition, a point in the future to which a certain chain of actions may lead: two young adults living together in harmony; a bright professional situation with certain personal achievements; a particular individual reintegrated into a peaceful community; and the recovery from a medical condition. Underlying all these prospective views there is the intent of the good life that projects a point in the future (point C) in which the extended phronetical narrative promotes the transformation of a story that is not acceptable or meaningful at point B to an integrated discordant concordance at point C.

These examples show that phronetical deliberation may happen in very common situations in daily life as well as in specific contexts with well-established institutional protocols. The phronimos is not a superhero, a *rara avis* surrounded by a mythical mist. Quite the opposite, the phronimos is just someone who was able to refigure himself throughout his life and who is capable of finding new ways to deal with daily ethical challenges. Phronetical deliberation is in most cases, if not always, linked to conflict. As Richard Kearney mentions, Ricoeur puts an emphasis on the "critical importance of deliberation and discussion emerging from conflict rather than consensus" (1996: 105). As such, deliberation will always be considered an open process. Even if there is a moment when the decision is made, the prospective narrative is told, the deliberative task of the phronimos does not end, as he remains committed to follow up on the flow of actions that result from his decision. The initial three-point framework I proposed, with fixed temporal markers, operates in the context of a much more fluid and constantly evolving deliberative process.

## Retrospective Narrative

When the phronimos looks back from point B to point A, he is trying to configure a retrospective narrative with two main characteristics. First, it

should be as complete as possible, that is, capture all of the events that are relevant. Second, it should be as accurate as possible, which is obviously a fraught notion. One of the advantages of looking at deliberation as a form of phronetical narrative is that we can explore some aspects of good deliberation from different angles. Let us examine the completeness criterion, for instance. In terms of phronetical narrative, we could say that it means to place point A as far as possible back in time so that all relevant aspects of the story are taken into consideration for the right decision. Here we have also the problem of determining when to stop going back with point A, and that is one of the challenges the phronimos has to face. Ideally, it should be far enough back to encompass all relevant aspects of the phronetical narrative that are necessary for a good analysis. But theoretically, this task risks becoming endless, as one may always connect facts, intents, and actions in the past with older ones in an infinite network of causes and motives. Determining the appropriate period of time between points A and B is therefore the first task of the phronimos in assembling a good retrospective narrative, as it involves a practical and situational decision with important ethical implications.

Making sense of a set of actions and events that may span a long period of time is not a simple task. The temporal duration between A and B may pose a real challenge to the phronimos's ability to create a retrospective narrative. But it is not only the temporal distance from A to B that the phronimos has to face. He also needs to narrate a story that takes into account the maximum number of possible points of view and events from A to B. The number of parallel threads that the phronimos considers and pulls together in the final instance of the deliberative narrative is what we could call "narrative density." Narrative density is therefore the sum of voices and points of view that are entangled in the narrative. The more they are considered and coherently correlated, the more complete the retrospective narrative tends to become. The ability to consider the multiple threads of the phronetical narrative and to find its touching points demands a kind of multidimensional competence that characterizes phronetical intelligence.

The phronimos's tasks of searching for stories and putting together new storylines can be approached in terms of Ricoeur's *mimesis II*, which is the configuration of the narrative whole by entangling many parallel

“narrative threads.”<sup>4</sup> There are similar features between this phase of the deliberation and mimesis II, such as a certain interest in others’ narratives that inspires the creation of a fictional or historical narrative, a certain empathy with others that seems crucial in fostering the search for these narratives, and the patience to go through the details and possible alternate intentions and motivations of long descriptions.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, there are important differences between the moment of configuration when one is writing a fictional or historical text and the gathering of narratives to understand the entanglement of facts and events during a deliberation. First, in the case of fiction the spectrum of possibilities is almost endless, and there are no factual constraints to the narratives being told. The second difference is the time period available for analyzing the set of narratives. While reading and writing tend not to be extremely time constrained—they can be interrupted for deeper reflection, or intertwined with other activities—deliberation is, in many cases, a much more intense activity and temporally constrained. The third one is the emotional aspect of both activities. Although reading and writing can be envisioned as a task performed in a calm environment without much external emotional pressure, deliberation very often occurs in a stressful environment, replete with agitated contenders and significant institutional pressure. The fourth and possibly the most challenging difference is that while fictional and historical narratives are mainly directly related to texts, deliberation typically involves decisions about actions that are directly related to actual lives.

But are these differences enough to invalidate the proposed comparison between mimesis II and deliberation? The fact that fictional narratives are not constrained by actually existing events and actions should not be an insurmountable problem, because, as Ricoeur mentions, fictional narrative is a kind of laboratory for thought experiments—for exploring what *could* be.<sup>6</sup> There is an affinity between fiction and deliberation both in the object and in the procedure. And if we consider historical narratives, then we would be moving closer to the intent of deliberation, in which besides the entanglement itself there is a will to take the narrative as close as possible to the actual events and actions following what Ricoeur would call paradigms of emplotment.<sup>7</sup> Never-

theless, as Kearney highlights (1996: 185), Ricoeur is right to impose the ethical limit of responsible action to the power of narrative imagination applied to deliberation. There is no poetic license for actions in the ethical world of real life.

Regarding the time constraints of real-life deliberation compared to the act of reading a narrative, the difference seems to result from the specificity of both activities. Nevertheless, it does not seem to invalidate the similarity between the two, as the essence of the mimetic moment is the same. This difference only highlights another aspect of the phronetical decision: the phronimos is capable of working through these mimetic moments with an agility that may not be common to everyone. There is also the need for a delicate balance regarding when to stop considering the narrative threads to avoid compromising the prospective narrative due to the analytical delay. The challenge is to search for a golden mean between the completeness of the retrospective narrative and the urgency for action.

I believe the same applies to the third difference, the emotional pressure of deliberation compared to composition. The core characteristics of the mimetic activities are preserved even if there is a new emotional component that may not be present in other forms of narratives. It also highlights another characteristic of the phronimos: he is able to compose these living narratives (many times very dramatic ones) with the mental clarity of a writer who is working in the solitude of an office or studio.

With regard to the gap between the textual nature of historical and fictional narratives and the often nontextual nature of deliberation, I suggest that the phronimos can be recognized exactly because he is able to “read” real-life narrative threads and put them together in a new composed phronetical narrative as if he was reading and writing an instant historical narrative.

These initial arguments may allow us to consider a rapprochement between mimesis and phronetical deliberation. However, since practical deliberation was first proposed, it has always been thought of as a process involving a *particular* case and a basic principle that would guide the deliberation.<sup>8</sup> My previous arguments are no exception, so how do we integrate those particular principles into the proposed general relation between phronesis and mimesis?<sup>9</sup>



For Ricoeur, deliberation takes into consideration those principles that constitute the source for practical judgment (either in the form of rational laws, juridical laws, or traditional ethical values within a community), along with the grasping of the particular situation at hand. Once again, we can apply the mimetic process to the *phronimos* as he comprehends these values, either from founding ethical texts or through his communitarian experiences, and refigures himself in a way that makes him a proper representative of those values.

The *phronimos* is able to refigure himself to reflect the ethos of the community, and that enables him to deliberate consistent with the community ethos. That is the point at which mimesis and tradition work together in the transmission of ethical principles and behaviors, through oral or written tradition, that are expected to refigure the lives of those participating in that community. Kearney offered an important insight about this relation of mimesis III to *phronesis*, explaining that “Aristotle already addresses this question of ethical criteria when he says that if you wish to communicate the meaning of a virtue you recount the story of someone who embodies it—e.g., Achilles for courage, Penelope for constancy, Tiresius for wisdom. Such narratives provide *phronesis* with exemplary models—fictional or historical—by which to measure, judge, and act” (2013: 82). In other words, narratives depict exemplary *phronimoi* toward whom one may refigure one’s self. This refiguration, as it relates to the world of text, may therefore be a seminal field of inquiry into the phronetical identity.

The movement from the “world of text” to the “world of action” was well captured by Brian Treanor in his article about the virtue narrative: “Indeed, upon reflection, the narrative structure of the acquisition of virtues applies much more broadly than the hearing of stories and the reading of texts. Take, for example, the situation of someone who happily, finds herself in close association with a *phronimos*” (2010: 187). The underlying idea here is that the moment of refiguration can happen when one “reads” the actions of the *phronimos* and puts them in perspective within one’s own life. Treanor also highlights that the refiguration model is not simply imitative and that this characteristic is also applicable to the tradition of practical wisdom. Becoming a *phronimos* is not copying others’ actions, as phronetical actions must take into ac-

count an agent's conditions, not only the objective situation. Refiguration is not about mimicking actions, but about rethinking one's own actions while taking another existential horizon as reference.

Furthermore, refiguration as suggested by Ricoeur helps us to understand also how deliberation takes place in a *hic et nunc* situation. The phronimos is capable of knowing the particular and "putting it together" with general ethical standards because he is able to gradually refigure his own view of the matter based on the retrospective narrative that he creates to capture the particular situation. This refiguration is in a certain sense a continuous effort to recognize oneself as another—oneself as the others implied by the retrospective narrative that are striving for the good life. Regarding juridical law, Ricoeur discussed this extensively in his works about justice. One crucial lesson from those reflections concerns the intrinsic tie between juridical laws and the ideal of the good life (Ricoeur 1991b). If we follow this suggestion and abstract the various complications involved in the move from the ideal of a common good life to specific juridical laws and procedures, we could also suggest the same kind of mimetic appropriation of the phronimos via her constant refiguration in face of the legal institutions that represent a form of living a good life in her community. And finally, the Kantian deontological approach can be integrated into the phronetical narrative process similar to the way Ricoeur integrates it into his ethics (1995). It is a test of the ethical aim of the phronetical narrative. In this sense, it works as a limit to the possible configurations of the narrative. Deliberation itself is not any kind of narrative, as it cannot say just anything, but it does propose a prospective narrative that is guided by this aim of a good life, which can be subverted by egoism and violence and, therefore, has to pass through the deontological moment.

So the phronimos has not only to compose the phronetical narrative about what has already happened in the conflict at hand, but he also has to know and, indeed, represent the ideal narrative for a particular ethical community in order to deliberate well. It involves a deep pre-understanding of the world of action; a capacity to constantly refigure oneself based on reading both written and "lived" narratives in order to comprehend, actualize, and expand the ethical dimension of those sources; and the ability to configure an emplotment of the multiple nar-

rative threads of the particular question with an eye toward the prospective moment, in which the decision shall be proposed in the form of a prospective narrative.

## The Prospective Narrative

Let us now move the focus of our analysis from the narrative past to the narrative future, from the analysis of the period between points A and B to the analysis from B to C, and from the retrospective narrative to the prospective narrative of phronetical deliberation. Prospective identity is part of a community or individual identity that highlights the possibility of changing a current narrative identity in order to face new challenges and demands brought by ever-changing social, cultural, and economic situations. Ricoeur adds that “what we call ourselves is also what we expect and yet what we are not” (1986: 311). George Taylor suggests that an analysis of Ricoeur’s works may reveal that “aspects of the notion of prospective identity become diminished when Ricoeur moves from an emphasis in the earlier work on productive reference to *Time and Narrative*’s three-fold model of mimesis: prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration.” The emphasis of *Time and Narrative* is on the *continuity* between past and future rather than possible ruptures with that past that could lead to innovative possibilities. As Taylor puts it, “There is an aspirational side to prospective identity, a sense of what we are not yet and are striving for beyond our current boundaries. . . . There is a need for productive imagination in order to transform existing identities. Productive imagination can involve the creation of new models, whether through ‘new encounters’ with an existing tradition that reinvigorate and transpose it or through ‘new encounters’ with other existing or proposed models of governance that allow transposition as well” (2013: 70; my translation).

The second moment of deliberation is deeply related to this prospective dimension of the narrative identity. It is focused not on what was but on what can be. The focus changes from an attempt to properly grasp the actions and events that led to the current situation by putting together as many narratives as possible, to the task of proposing an extension to the existing phronetical narrative that can promote a good

life for the ones involved in that “mythos.” Nevertheless, the mark of extension is not simply continuity with the retrospective narrative; it can be a rupture with it, as Taylor highlights. Even a rupture must take into account the retrospective narrative.

Another fundamental aspect of Ricoeur’s work related to the theme of prospective identity is that it involves the productive imagination, in the Kantian sense, to create a new possible symbolic order that is able to open new alternatives to the current narratives. The productive imagination is also at work in retrospective narratives. In both cases, Ricoeur highlights the intense work of productive imagination in creating new sense, a new schema (1977: 351), by the emplotment of different events, actions, intentions, and so forth. In his essay “Imagination in Discourse and Action” (1991a), Ricoeur identifies three main levels where imagination grounds actions: project, motivation, and power to act. The prospective narrative is, in a certain sense, the narrative and project intertwined in a mutual exchange, structuring and anticipating the schemata. It is plausible that productive imagination is the distinctive capacity of the phronimos that enables him to figure out new narrative proposals from retrospective narratives that are typically presented as aporias.

In the context of phronetical deliberation, it is also possible to reflect on the contribution of productive imagination for the mimetic circle itself. The phronimos has the task of finding possible continuations for the retrospective narrative at point B by using the productive imagination to suggest a prospective narrative. The model of narrative is rich here, as it allows us to highlight the possible rupture at point B that is both integrated and promotes sense in the broader entanglement of facts from points A to C. The narrative perspective allows us to clearly envision the two sides of deliberation that may turn it into an extremely complex task. On the one hand, deliberation always stems from the retrospective narrative, which is anchored in the realm of “what it is.” On the other hand, the deliberator cannot simply derive the decision from the two premises of a possible practical syllogism or any other kind of logical procedure, as it demands creative and imaginative solutions to face the tragic element of action (Ricoeur 1995: 241). He shall propose the interconnection between what happened and what can happen *given* what happened. Good deliberation not only adds a segment to the current narrative, but actu-

ally coherently extends the narrative to turn it into a good concordant discordance as the phronetical narrative progresses.

We can again approach deliberation by taking mimesis II, narrative configuration, as our reference. The major difference in the prospective moment is that the phronimos will not be trying to capture threads of narratives; instead, he will be exercising possible continuations to the current narrative. This approach helps us to grasp two additional important aspects of deliberation: the epistemological and the poetical. Both exist along with the ethical aim, which remains the basis of good deliberation (Ricoeur 1975: 180). Similarly, complexity remains a challenge for the prospective moment, as an infinite number of variations for extending the phronetical narrative are possible. The prospective narrative, then, should think through as many alternative threads as possible and its implications for the individuals and for the community involved, as in the end, what really matters is that each thread is tied to people's lives.

From an epistemological point of view, this multidimensional ability of putting things together is typical of other forms of practical intelligence. For instance, chess players become proficient not only because they master the possible movements of each piece on the board but because they are able to think about a large number of possible movements they and their opponents are likely to perform several moves ahead. It is also the case of a composer who is able to put together a symphony with multiple instruments and sounds and anticipate how they will mix together and the harmony created by the ensemble.

The second aspect touches the relation between phronesis and poesis. This relation departs from the tradition differentiation proposed by Aristotle between phronesis and *techné* (2009), as it suggests cooperation between these rational capabilities rather than a disjunction. John Wall argues that "phronesis *begins* in history, but its poetic task is to interpret history in new directions capable of creatively accounting for otherness" (2003: 336). His analysis stresses the poetical creativity tied to phronesis, as there is no pre-made response already available to particular ethical demands. As Ricoeur highlights in the section "The Tragic of Action" in *Oneself as Another*, the action is tragic because just demands can be conflicting.<sup>10</sup> This aspect of deliberation as a prospec-

tive narrative is profoundly tied to productive imagination. The phronimos is called upon to deliberate precisely because there was no simple and clear possible narrative to transform the existing situation into a good narrative. Even in trivial examples, phronetical deliberation takes place either because there is difficulty applying a given rule or because no such rule exists to cover a new and unexpected situation, such as the dramatic situation in the Tacloban region of the Philippines after the 2013 typhoon Haiyan.

Point B of the phronetical narrative is the point in which an aporia seems to threaten the phronetical narrative with an undesirable end, one that does not promote the good life. The phronimos's task is to find not-yet-explored alternatives to extend the phronetical narrative, and that is an intense task of creative imagination. What seems especially interesting about this approach is that it shows a kind of poetical semantic innovation in the ethical discourse that not only proposes new senses but also has to mix in itself everything that was said in the retrospective narrative. It is not simply a creation *ex nihilo*; it is an innovation that is constrained by narratives and moral principles that demand to be taken into account in order to reach a meaningful concordant discordance as an ever-open-ended, broader phronetical narrative.

Along with creative imagination, there is another important aspect of deliberation that is connected to its ethical dimension. My suggestion is that the phronimos is recognized as a phronimos not only because he narrates well but also because he is committed to make his best effort to make the prospective narrative a reality through his actions. Saying and doing are intimately tied in phronetical deliberation. And this tight relationship between saying and doing, language and action, takes us to the well-known discussions on speech act theory as proposed by John Searle.<sup>11</sup>

It seems opportune briefly to recall Ricoeur's remarks about the relation of the speech acts theory to selfhood. Ricoeur explains that speech acts make clear the "I" and the "you" behind statements, which draws our attention to the complex situation of interlocution involved in speech acts. It also shows that "every advance made in the direction of the selfhood of the speaker or the agent has as its counterpart a comparable advance in the otherness of the partner" (1995: 44). He even suggests the concept of the interlocutionary act to stress the fact that every speech act

points toward otherness (1976: 14–15). It implicitly means that even explicit assertions include an expectation of agreement from the other.

There is obviously a difference between a promise uttered in the first person and a deliberation that normally affects and is dependent on other people's actions. Nevertheless, instead of the "I promise I will do this," if we try to make explicit the illocutionary act of deliberation we may say something like "I commit myself to turn this deliberation into a reality."

This means that the task of the phronimos does not end with the deliberation. The phronimos is not an oracle. Rather, he suggests a possible future narrative and works to make that happen. His task is not simply narrating; instead, he is reaffirming his deliberation by following up on his decision, acting as he was supposed to act and doing his best to make sure others implied and committed in the prospective narrative are doing so, as well.

Also, it is fundamental to remember what Ricoeur says about the ethical dimension of promises (1995:165–68). A promise is not maintained because of a stoic ideal for keeping one's word but because another person is expecting me to maintain my promise, to remain the same self I promised to be (or to become). In a similar way, the phronimos is not committed to the prospective narrative of deliberation because of a stoic will, but because he believes that the prospective narrative he has chosen as the outcome of deliberation is the best way to promote a good life and construct just institutions for his ethical community. So the illocutionary force of deliberation seems to indeed have some important similarities with the illocutionary act of promising. However, it may be even more fragile, as it typically proposes actions that are to be lived by others. It may lead us to recognize another important aspect of phronetical deliberation that we may call the phronetical aspiration. When the phronimos deliberates at point B, he has an aspiration to promote the good life for all people involved in the plot. In many cases, he is actually recognized as a phronimos by the community because his past deliberations led to decisions that promoted actions and relationships that were perceived by the community as just and good.

But the phronimos's aspiration alone is not enough. Phronetical aspiration is mainly connected to the persons involved in the prospective narrative. One of the tasks of the phronimos is by promoting a good delib-

eration is to propose possibilities that can trigger this phronetical aspiration for all involved parties. This aspiration lies at the heart of the deliberators' ethical intention. There shall be a will to live a good life together by taking part in and constructing a phronetical narrative that will take the community to the desired point C in the future. So the phronimos's aspiration shall also be *inspirational*. He is not only proposing a logical and sensible phronetical narrative; rather, he is proposing a phronetical narrative that shall inspire its participants to aspire to act in such a way as to bring the proposed prospective narrative into being. It also reminds us of the analysis done from another perspective by Walter Benjamin (1968) when he reflects on the relation between counsel, tradition, and narrative in his work "The Storyteller." As Jeanne Marie Ganegbin (1994) points out, the narratives from the traditional storyteller are not only to be read and heard; they are supposed to be listened and followed, as they shall promote a truth formation (*Bildung*) in the community.

Once again, we can turn to the mimetical model. Deliberation can be the configuration of a phronetical narrative that is born from the prefiguration of the community's ethical convictions, along with a retrospective configuration of the narrative from point A to point B. At point B, the configuration turns to the future and gains a prospective aspect. It becomes closer to the model of a fictional narrative in the sense that what is being narrated is not what it is, but what could and shall be. The point of this model is that the prospective configuration only turns into reality if the "living characters," the "readers" of the decision, who shall take part and act in real life, are able to refigure themselves based on the proposed phronetical narrative. The effect of such a phronetical narrative is dependent on the refiguration of the people involved based on the decision suggested by the phronimos (Ricoeur 1990: 3.249).

In this sense, the illocutionary force of deliberation is different from a promise, because saying "I deliberate this or that decision" typically implies that others' actions shall take place in order to turn the decision made into an actual phronetical narrative. "I deliberate" implies that "we will do," if not even more distant from the first person; "you will do" these actions that we have just deliberated. So it seems clear that the illocutionary force of deliberation is different from that of the promise. It points toward the relation between aspiration, commitment, and in-



spiration in phronetical deliberation. In terms of speech act theory, this difference invites us to think about the relationship between the illocutionary and perlocutionary forces of deliberation.

In practical terms, a given society typically has a mechanism to make sure that deliberation turns into reality by the use of force. The tribunal deliberates, and the law-enforcement entity is normally projected to make sure that everyone involved in the sentence will act according to what has been decided. That is certainly true, but what I am looking for in this inquiry is something more original than law, as Ricoeur says (1991b). I am focusing on the ethical intention to live together in just institutions, so I am assuming for this discussion that the first hypothesis of Ricoeur's "little ethics" (1995) is correct and that an ethical aim shall precede the norm when it comes to deliberation.

However, I also recognize the need for deontological mediation. Because there is evil and violence, deliberation also needs to be thought of in a broader context, as described in Ricoeur's ethics. It must take into account the norm, the moral principles, but it cannot stop there. Because deliberation is about particular situations, the norm and universal laws are not enough. And in that sense, the narrative model seems to aid our understanding of deliberation as a plot with a variety of competing sources and demands, as well as narrative constraints imposed by moral principles.

I also agree with Ricoeur in the third part of his ethics—that real deliberation is related to a practical wisdom matured by the recognition of evil and violence. This practical wisdom incorporates the deontological moment but is also capable of going beyond its limitation by proposing a prospective narrative, which offers an alternative to dilemmas attached to the several levels of the tragic action by means of productive imagination and the aspiration of a good life in common. And when we expand the limits of deliberation beyond the simple execution of decisions by the use of institutionalized force, we not only regain the original perspective of the will to build a good life within communities united by a certain ethos, but we also may find the role of the phronimos even more interesting. It also brings us again to the question of the illocutionary force of deliberation.

That is probably one of the key points of this investigation: the phronimos's decision is effective because it has a perlocutionary force different from that of a simple affirmation and that is given by his community's recognition that he is able to make decisions that promote their good life. In doing so, all elements of retrospective and prospective narratives play an important role.

Before concluding this brief investigation, I will consider two major difficulties of this model of deliberation as a phronetical narrative. First, if it is true that the phronimos aspires to propose a prospective narrative that is good, his words shall have different illocutionary strength because he is committed to that prospective narrative. Deliberation is a phronetical narrative, and that implies that the phronimos is not only a good storyteller or rhetorician but that he really aspires toward and is committed to his decisions—to the prospective narrative. The phronimos is committed to taking part in the phronetical narrative, even if not as a "protagonist in action." The chair of a bioethical committee may be someone different from the nurse applying the medical care deliberated by the committee, but he still has to be committed to supporting the decision taken. He has to understand the challenges of its applicability and he also needs to be committed to action and to suggesting adjustments if the course of the prospective narrative is diverting from the proposition made at point B. It may lead us to a much more fluid process in which the prospective narrative is constantly being evaluated and, sometimes, re-proposed.

Second, as Ricoeur already pointed out, "[the] decision maker . . . has taken the counsel of men and women reputed to be the most competent and the wisest. The conviction that seals decision then benefits from the plural character of debate. The phronimos does not need to be a single person alone" (1995: 273). That is related to the approximation Ricoeur suggested between the practical wisdom and Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* (1995: 240–96) that points to the effectuation of the practical wisdom within institutional contexts. My underlying hypothesis is not only that the phronimos can be more than one person, but in a certain sense, the phronimos is always recognized as a phronimos because he deliberates as if he was more than a single person.

## Final Remarks

The model of the threefold mimesis seems a rich source for exploring other aspects of phronesis, and especially of how the phronimos acts. To deliberate well involves the capacity of configuring good retrospective and prospective phronetical narratives, and this configuration is closely related to a prefiguration of life and to a capacity for the deliberator to constantly refigure himself. If we view deliberation as a form of phronetical narrative, our attention is drawn to the aspirational side of the phronimos's activity. The phronimos proposes a prospective narrative because he hopes that the long-term narrative of an ethical community may promote a good life. He aspires to find a discordant concordance, a sense to this "living plot," by proposing a phronetical narrative that is capable of refiguring community life. This aspirational aspect simultaneously highlights the *innovative* aspect of phronetical deliberation and is tied to the productive imagination—to what is not yet, to new possible configurations, to a deep belief that human beings are capable of building new forms of living together in a constantly new environment marked by the tragedy of life.

I briefly touched on the possible relation between deliberation and promise by looking at them from the perspective of speech act theory. The aspirational aspect of deliberation demands a response from the phronimos via his commitment to turn his decision into a reality. Being a phronimos is not being a poet, as he is not proposing *any* kind of prospective narrative, but a phronetical one. It implies a different illocutionary force of deliberation, similar to the illocutionary force of a promise, as it urges for a commitment to others involved in the phronetical decision, a commitment that goes beyond the decision utterance and extends itself through the entire, and potentially endless, prospective narrative of the community.

## Notes

1. "If, then, it is characteristic of practical wisdom to have deliberated well, excellence in deliberation will be correctness with regard to what conduces to the end which practical wisdom apprehends truly" (Aristotle 2009: 1142b, 30–35).
2. "Here [in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* book 6], deliberation is the path fol-

- lowed by phronesis, practical wisdom . . . and, more precisely, the path that the man of phronesis—the phronimos—follows to guide his life” (Ricoeur 1995: 174–75).
3. “On the basis of the single predicate “good,” we then constructed three phases of a discourse extending from the aim of the good life to the sense of justice, passing by way of solicitude” (Ricoeur 1995: 203).
  4. “This configurational act [of a story] consists of ‘grasping together’ the detailed actions or what I have called the story’s incidents. It draws from this manifold of events the unity of one temporal whole” (Ricoeur 1990: 1.66).
  5. “A story, too, must be more than just an enumeration of events in serial order; it must organize them into an intelligible whole, of a sort such that we can always ask what is the ‘thought’ of this story. In short, emplotment is the operation that draws a configuration out of a simple succession. Furthermore, emplotment brings together factors as heterogeneous as agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results” (Ricoeur 1990: 1.65).
  6. “But, at the same time, does not such ethical neutrality of the artist suppress one of the oldest functions of art, that it constitutes an ethical laboratory where the artist pursues through the mode of fiction experimentation with values?” (Ricoeur 1990: 1.59).
  7. “Max Weber also notes that historians both resemble criminologists and differ from them. By investigating guilt they also investigate causality, although to causal imputation they add ethical imputation. But what is this causal imputation divested of any ethical imputation if not the testing of different plot schemata?” (Ricoeur 1990: 1.184).
  8. For Aristotle, deliberation should always be considered in the context of a certain kind of logical thinking, the practical syllogism, which implies that deliberation involves not only understanding very well the situation at hand, the particular case, but also, as Aristotle says, the universal that the phronimos knows, which is presented by the *orthos logos*.
  9. Ricoeur’s approach to this question has been discussed by Peter Kemp on the broader scope of the ethical narratives in several of his studies, but especially in *Sagesse pratique de Paul Ricoeur*.
  10. “ces conflits s’enracinent dans la pluralité des visées et des narrations et redoublent d’intensité du fait de leur prétention à l’universalité” (Abel 1996: 92).
  11. For a general introduction of speech act theory (Searle 1969) in the context of this discussion, see Ricoeur (1995: 42–43).

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