

**BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY  
CLUJ-NAPOCA  
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DOCTORAL SCHOOL IN PHILOSOPHY**

***The Connection Between Narratives and Identity in the  
Process of Communication***

**An Interdisciplinary and Philosophical Approach**

**PHD THESIS**

**SUMMARY**

**Doctoral supervisor:  
Prof. univ. dr. Veress Carol**

**PhD candidate:  
SzávaCsanád**

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## Keywords

*identity, life story, experience, narrative identity, story, narration, event, interpretation, memory, communication*

## *The Connection Between Narratives and Identity in the Process of Communication*

### Summary

The topic of the work is the analysis of the question of identity from the perspective of narratives, communication and the historiography.

The nature of identity represented such a philosophical problem in the history of thought, which has resulted in a variety of approaches, but in all cases thinkers dealing with the issue have tried to break away from the reduction to the problem of sameness. Self-identity, as a concept tied to one person's life story, appeared in the philosophical thought only in the recent times, together with Paul Ricœur's theory of narrative identity, although antecedents date back to the Ancient Greeks.

I primarily considered it important to study the issue of identity, because this concept appears in a number of scientific fields, but the theoretical background of the term raises important issues that are appropriate for questioning related to philosophical, especially hermeneutical and phenomenological inquiries.

I have assumed that the various social sciences are working with very different definitions of identity notions, so it would be useful to find the theoretical links that connect

different identity notions to the important issues of hermeneutics and phenomenology. As the interpretation of the *narrative structure* it is possible primarily from hermeneutical and phenomenological approaches.

In society individuals and groups create events and experiences as they perform actions and these result in the reality of life lived. The life and the events experienced could not be interpretable by themselves, they would not appear in a meaningful way, as a *meaningful whole*, but through some abstraction capabilities the narrated stories would come to existence, which are always carriers of a self-identity, of an *identity as whole stories*. Thus, the *narrative structure* so interpreted always creates an identity.

The *central thesis* may be formulated through two interrelated thoughts. Firstly, it is necessary to examine the connection between the experience of real life and the story narrated, because the life experienced would not be meaningful by itself, but the story narrated is only considered a life history or collective story, if it is not purely fictitious, but is related to a real person with self-identity, or is related groups of persons. Secondly, individual identities certainly include a communication process as well. Stories of identity formation can only fulfill their function if, when embedded in certain communication mechanisms, not only they tell the story of themselves, but they work in a reference system, thereby validating the identity they have created. In my work I research the connections through the trace of these statements. To make this I have to clarify the place of *identity* in theoretical thinking, as well as an approach of *the philosophical term of life story*, that is relevant considering *narrative identity*.

My work is divided into four main chapters.

In the *first chapter* I try to introduce the concept of identity in order to reveal the aspects that interested me in relation to the research. I see through the concept of identity starting from its ordinary sense to its scientific use. This is necessary, because in my experience, the concept of identity in the ordinary use is very different from the one defined in theoretical texts.

Here I present the concept of *experience* in the thinking of Hegel and Gadamer, in connection with the role of it in generating the identity. In principle this is an experiment that is new, and it will totally reconstruct the previous experiences. Openness, limits and historical facts are playing a part in this, which can be spotted by a hermeneutical method.

The *second chapter* is organized around the concept of *life story*. Life stories are not only the subject of empirical researches, but also play an important role in the theory of narrative identity as well. Life story and identity is strongly connected to the concept of *life*,

and *experience* or *treat* which are based on the thoughts of Dilthey, Husserl, Gadamer, MacIntyre, Tengelyi. There is in question the relationship between the lived life and the *story*, which is helped by fiction. There is a critical approach, and according to that, we can separate the life story or variation of life stories – from the lived life, on the other hand we consider that they are in unity. So what are the basis or the terms of this unity?

As long as identity examined in the context of communication can be defined in relation to community and to self-expression, life story carries the possibility of definition in connection with language, text, image, fiction and imagination. The lived life will be according to those a life story.

In the *third chapter* of my work I write about the communicative dimension of narratives. Thus, the central concept of the chapter is the idea of historicity. Issues related to memory are arranged around this idea, in particular that of collective memory. Collective memory plays an important role in the creation of individual identity, but it also reveals important lessons for the structure of individual identity, especially with regard to the ability of making abstractions, *oral history*, and the differences between communicative and cultural memory (Jan Assmann). I also refer to the notion of forgetting, since this approach is largely left out of the line of thought of *memory* and of its conceptual surrounding. In connection with *forgetting*, I assume that it is based on abstraction ability and even on necessity that allows the entire memory to exist, based on the works of Nietzsche.

In the *last chapter* of my work I would like to point out the importance of the *narrative structure in the making of an identity*. My investigations are organized around the idea that the question of identity implies the problem of self-identity and otherness, namely because the process of recollection is similar to the experiencing of the stranger, of the other. The narrative identity defined by Ricœur is based on the outlining of *idem-ipse*, respectively the difference between sameness and selfness. The narrated identity establishes a relation between the two. Due to the nature of the formation the story carries the identity of the character and at this level is consistent with it. However, the variability of narration, and even the almost necessarily created diversity of variants arising from the recurrent adjustments is in contrast with a supposedly real life, which is actually bringing the issue of identity into the trap of opposition of self-identity and otherness. So the question arises: in what kind of dialectics can we project the story connected to life in the context of conceptual separation and structural interconnection.

The structure of my work is organized around the problematic of priority considering the lived life and the life story, and my personal position is focused on two arguments: a) one

of them is that life story it is not possible without the imaginary, the need of abstraction is essential; b) the other is that the unity of story can be found in the narrative form, rather than in the lived life. Both are considering the force of abstraction which can be studied on the historical and cultural experiences, which is the basis for seeing something in unity, and this is the basis of communication, the medium for the constitution of identity.

I consider my investigation an *interdisciplinary* research, which, on the one hand, examines the problems of identity outlined above from *phenomenological* and *hermeneutical* perspective, on the other hand, studies the possibilities of connectivity of the identity concepts of narratives. All this is done from the point of view of communication also, the research remains in the field of philosophy, but it investigates the communication also, and is outlines other social sciences, such as history of literature, history, literary studies, anthropology, communication theory, cultural theory, and, in the context of the aforementioned *philosophical issues*.

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