

The Ricœur Centenary (1913-2013)

A Congress organized by the Fonds Ricœur
in collaboration with the Society for Ricœur Studies,
the Asociación Iberoamericana de Estudios sobre Paul Ricœur,
and the University of Marbourg (RFA).
November 18-20, 2013

Paul Ricœur and Contemporary English Language Philosophy

Call for Papers/Appel à propositions

In France, Ricoeur was a pioneer in the reception of Anglo-Analytic philosophy. It is remarkable that he was much less concerned with other American philosophical traditions, be that pragmatism or the perfectionism of Emerson, as though he was searching for the "hardest cases" in the thinkers he discovered, those who were most different from him. It is in the central trilogy of Ricoeur's work – *The Rule of Metaphor, Time and Narrative*, and *Oneself as Another* – that the reception and discussion of Anglo-Analytic philosophy are the most present (works to which the collected essays of *La sémantique de l'action* must be added). Hardly mentioned in the prior books and articles, Anglo-Analytic philosophy once again makes its presence felt in *Memory, History, Forgetting* and *The Course of Recognition*, but remains very present in the articles collected for both collections of *the Just*, not to mention those collected in *Lectures I: Autour du Politique* (at least regarding the discussion of *A Theory of Justice*). The November 2013 Congress of the Fonds Ricoeur will be dedicated to the different facets of Ricoeur's dialogue with contemporary English language philosophy. Although the reception and discussion of the analytic tradition will be the central theme, the other aspects of this theme will not be neglected, particularly questions concerning ethical, political, and juridical reflection (see part 4).

Five areas of research can be identified in which Ricoeur was confronted with contemporary English language philosophy.

1. Analytic Philosophy, Structuralism, and Language

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur's recourse to Analytic philosophy (particularly Frege, Strawson, and Goodman) was above all for the purpose of clarifying the problem of reference. For Ricoeur, it was about finding in Anglo-Analytic philosophy the means of sharpening his objections to structuralism (especially Jakobson) and to reclaim the semantic dimension of language. This reclamation characteristically occurs through an expansion of the truthful (and thus referential) dimension of poetic language, which Frege explicitly excluded from the domain of reference. More broadly, how does Ricoeur bring analytic philosophy and structuralism into dialogue? What role does the discussion of analytic philosophy play in Ricoeur's argumentative strategies? How does he situate himself within the debates of analytic philosophy? Does Ricoeur's reception rely upon an original approach to the analytical philosophy of language? It would be interesting in this context to compare the manner in which Ricoeur reads analytic philosopher with the manner in which they read one another.

2. Semantics, Pragmatics, and Phenomenology

In *La sémantique de l'action*, *From Text to Action*, and *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur enters the debate with the analytic philosophy of action: semantics (Strawson), pragmatics (Austin and Searle), the theory of action (Kenny, Wright, Anscombe, Davidson), and finally the question of personal identity in the discussion with Parfit. Might we say that it takes the place of phenomenology, that is, demonstrates the impossibility of a direct access to things, and the necessity of detour through symbolic and cultural mediation? Or, conversely, is it not in phenomenology that Ricoeur finds the means to resist the radicality of the propositions of the analytic philosophy of action? What role does this play in the dialogue that Ricoeur calls the "poetic resolution"? How does Ricoeur manage to bring these two traditions into dialogue, to find perspectives within which the two traditions can enlighten each other? In Ricoeur's use of them, are they complementary or antagonistic? Did Ricoeur's reception and discussion of analytic philosophy modify his conception of philosophy, of its method and task? This series of questions open to the fundamental problem of what philosophy is, of philosophy's methods and tasks.

3. Epistemology, Historical Ontology, and Narrative Theories

In *Time and Narrative*, Anglo-American analytic philosophy (Dray, Danto, von Wright, Mink, Gallie, etc.) plays a fundamental role in the construction of a narrative model of historiography. Ricoeur's position opens up a discussion between the *Annales* school and the nomological model of analytic philosophy (Hempel). These models are set against the positions of Dray, von Wright, Danto, Gallie, and Mink, who allow the narrative character of history to be re-established on a new systematic basis, and to gain some of the basic concepts of the whole work. Here is raised the problem of connecting three epistemological traditions in history: the German historical school and its extension through to Max Weber, the English narrativist and historiographic tradition (notably Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra), and the French historical schools (historical positivism, New history). Ricoeur's wager in connecting these traditions deserves to be examined both from an epistemological (constitution of a historical science) and ontological (restoration of being and having-been) point of view. Among the issues worthy of deeper discussion: the overcoming of the explanation/understanding dichotomy in the extension of the work of Weber and von Wright, as well as the ethical perspective within which Ricoeur seeks a solution to the ontological problem. On this last point it would be interesting and instructive to put Ricoeur's positions in dialogue with other analytical attempts to resolve the question of historiographical reference (e.g., Michael Dummett).

4. Ethics and Politics

A fourth area of research revolves around ethics, the philosophy of rights, and politics. Even though the three ethical and political studies of *Oneself as Another* mainly address the great classical thinkers of the tradition (Aristotle, Kant, Hegel), references to American philosophers are not absent. In particular, there is the role played by John Rawls, Michael Walzer, Ronald Dworkin, Martha Nussbaum, or even Alastair MacIntyre; in this framework, a proposal regarding the impact of Hannah Arendt would also be welcome, even though it would be a special case, as Arendt belongs also in the phenomenological tradition. The perspectives developed by Ricoeur in his "little ethics" resonate with an important stream of Anglo-Saxon ethical reflection (as well as the authors already mentioned, there is Charles Taylor, Charles Larmore, or John McDowell). This holds on one side for the Aristotelian roots shared by these thinkers, and on the other for the certain reservations they have regarding Kantian deontology and the contractualist tradition. Rather than an opposition between two styles of philosophy ("analytic" or "continental"), is there not here a tension between

two types of ethics that Ricoeur endeavors to bring once again into dialogue? To what extent are Ricoeur's objections against the deontological and contractualist tradition convincing? Does the orientation toward the "good life" provide a sufficiently integrated perspective for ethics? Does Ricoeur's systematic framework manage to satisfactorily both link up and distinguish between ethics and the philosophy of right (*c.f.*, on this last point, the two volumes of *The Just*).

5. Literary Criticism and Theology

One final aspect is worth consideration: the reception of Ricoeur by American literary critics, especially in the field of narrative theory, but also metaphor, and the use he makes of these in his conception of the Bible, and through this in what could be called his phenomenology of the summoned subject (which serves as Ricoeur's phenomenology of religious consciousness). It is in fact remarkable that if, in the sixties and seventies, Ricoeur addresses the narrative dimension of the Bible with reference to Gerhard von Rad and his great *Old Testament Theology*, from the beginning of the eighties, the works of Northrop Frye and Frank Kermode become increasingly important for Ricoeur's biblical hermeneutics. One might investigate the intersection between the literary theory of narrative, the phenomenology of religion and the hermeneutics of the call, but also the role of a deliberately literary conception of the Bible for Ricoeur's biblical hermeneutics, as well as for the conception of religious discourse (or: speaking about God) it implies.

Written in French or English only, proposals of approximately one page (400 words maximum) should be positioned within one or more of these areas of research. Proposals will indicate which area(s) they work within, and will be accompanied by a separate file with a brief biography and bibliography of the author. The selections will be made according to the academic quality of the proposals, with a necessary balance among the five proposed areas of research. Those responding to this call will be informed of the results of the selection by May 31, 2013. The anticipated length of presentations will be 25 minutes.

**Proposals for paper should be received before March 31, 2013 at:
colloquericoeur2013@iptheologie.fr**

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