SOCIETY FOR RICOEUR STUDIES CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 3-4, 2012

ROCHESTER PLAZA HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER

70 STATE STREET, ROCHESTER, NY 14614

ABSTRACTS

**Helplessness and Attestation in Times of Crisis**

Sophie-Jan Arrien

Université Laval

Québec

From the "financial crisis" to the "climate crisis", by way of the "education crisis", the "culture crisis", the "religion crisis", the crisis of "institutions" and ultimately the crisis of "democracy", the contemporary westerner seems to spontaneously understand himself within the horizon of a world and society "in crisis". What do all these manifestations of crisis refer to? The first step is to identify something which could unite these manifestations without obliterating, by way of an abstract concept or generality, their concrete plurality and specificity. More specifically, this common dimension needed to understand the idea of crisis seems to refer less to a content of sense than to a characteristic of the *lived experience* of crisis, or to the *feeling* of "being-in-crisis". But if this lived experience of crisis is proper to individuals, must it only be considered as a psychological phenomenon? We rather believe this issue calls for a proper hermeneutical and phenomenological insight, capable of formalizing the lived experience of "being-in-crisis" without, on the one hand, reducing it to a simple affect nor, on the other hand, dissolving its concreteness through a process of generalization or abstraction. Under these conditions, we shall therefore treat the lived experience of crisis as one of the possible facets of the self's attestation, to employ Paul Ricoeur's terminology.

When an individual defines himself, when he fundamentally lives and tells his life story within a horizon of "crisis", his self-being or selfhood is thereby instituted and attested, albeit in a negative but nonetheless determinant way. We shall elaborate upon this proposition by following in a novel way Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenology of the "capable man". Our guiding hypothesis will be that the lived experience of crisis, as constitutive of contemporary man in his relation to himself and his world, ultimately leads back to a profound feeling of *helplessness*. But this helplessness itself reveals, if not the outright failure, at least the weakening of the "being capable" dimension into which Ricoeur's phenomenology of the self culminates and resolves itself. Therefore, much like a "photographic developer", we will use Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenology of the "capable man" to identify the price to pay in terms of dignity, self-esteem and responsibility when man *attests himself through his helplessness*. In other words, we shall endeavor to understand how the phenomenology of the "capable man" can, *via negationis*, shed light on the helplessness characteristic of our generalized situation of "being-in-crisis", from the point of view of the self's attestation.

**The Text Is Not the Model:**

**Explanation and Understanding in the Human Sciences**

John Arthos

Denison University

Denison, Ohio

 A 1971 issue of *Social Research* published Paul Ricoeur’s essay “The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text.” The essay is a hallmark statement of Ricoeur’s programmatic effort to mediate structuralism and hermeneutics. It was clearly an important text for Ricoeur himself because he republished it, after it had had what he called “a certain success in English,” as the seventh chapter of *Du text à l’action* (*From Text to Action*), a book which he denominated as the successor volume to *The Conflict of Interpretations*. The essay has a complex double structure that (a) articulates the basic tenets of a structural-hermeneutic method, and (b) indicates how that method might serve as a paradigm for the human sciences. Ricoeur hoped that hybridizing structuralism and hermeneutics could avoid the barren positivism and impressionistic subjectivism that characterized opposing tendencies and tensions of human studies in the French academy old and new. By marrying the virtues of objective analysis and interpretive judgment he hoped to suggest a paradigm for work in the human sciences going forward. Ricoeur’s programmatic argument, I will argue, is a mixed success, in some ways not surviving its historical context, and in other ways a lasting achievement.

The first part of the hypothesis is a typical Ricoeurian effort to mediate contending philosophical alternatives. By moderating the objectivist impulse behind the linguistic dream of a science of language with the appreciation for the unique that had traditionally marked off humanistic values, the human sciences would secure the legitimacy of a science but maintain its identity as a humanistic discipline. The scientific ambitions of structuralism had by the late 1960s been under attack for some time, so in this respect Ricoeur’s effort was backward looking. Indeed his continuing engagement with Lévi-Strauss and Greimas must have appeared outdated in light of the post-structuralist sea-change in which the classification of universal deep structure had become a suspect activity. Likewise Ricoeur’s effort of hermeneutic integration of semiotics and semantics must also have sounded out of tune, since at that time the philosophical and literary winds of fashion had an antipathy to the very idea of extra-textual reference. And as we see from the history of the time, Ricoeur’s championing of Benveniste and of the English-language schools of speech-act theory generally fell on deaf ears among his French peers. So we have to see Ricoeur’s hypothesis both as an attempt to stand above the fashions of the moment and as a product of its historical context.

The paradigmatic half of Ricoeur’s hypothesis would have been buoyed by its historical context. By the 1960s, the French academy was an ossified system of entrenched intellectual elites, and the need for change found subversive force in the upstart discipline of linguistics, which had both the mark of scientificity to challenge the stale conventions of classical humanism, and a universalizing potential hungrily exploited by young intellectuals anxious to seize the reigns. Semiotics was not shy to assume the mantel of a universal science, and Ricoeur was really only riding the wave of this totalizing urge. Nevertheless, from the distance of time, we are jarred by the universal ambition of his proposal. What methodological model or theoretical paradigm could hope to encompass the research practices of the human studies in all their variety? We have since become more sensitive to disciplinary and methodological pluralism, so that this part of Ricoeur’s theory sounds anachronistic. Its global ambitions can be set aside as another example of the dream of a unified science for the humanities common to that period.

If the overhanging programmatic hypothesis of the essay falls of its own weight, still much in the essay makes a lasting contribution: Ricoeur’s definition of the text as a hermeneutic object (the only systematic breakdown of its enumerated features that I am aware of in his work); the significance of textual autonomy that he secures by a point-by-point contrast with spoken discourse; the collaborative relation established between the event-structure of speech and its stabilization in the text; and the elaboration on his thesis of textual reference. Of particular value is the description Ricoeur provides for the reintegration of the meanings yielded by structural analysis back into the lived world of subjective and social understanding.

Distinguishing between the strong and weak aspects of Ricoeur’s hypothesis opens up a clearer view of the significance of his turn towards a hermeneutics of the text in the 1970s. The axis between explanation and understanding that undergirds the entire program is located in the autonomy of the fixed text that empowers it to interact with new audiences and occasions. Its fixity yields to explanation, while its appropriation allows subjective and referential dimensions of meaning back in. It is in this essay that Ricoeur outlines how interpretation passes from explanation to understanding, and his specific description of this process here will allow me to assess the strength of the methodological model he proposes for a hermeneutic perspective.

**A Dialogical Challenge to Ricoeur’s Narrative Account of Identity**

Lauren Swayne Barthold

Gordon College

Wenham, Massachusetts

This paper, which is part of a larger project that draws on hermeneutic theory to explain the nature of social identities, assesses the potential of Paul Ricoeur’s narrative theory of personal identity (primarily found in *Time and Narrative,* vol. 3, and *Oneself as Another*) for contributing to a theory of social identities.

I begin by highlighting four components of narrative identity that I take as central to Ricoeur’s own writings and that play a central role in the work of other identity theorists who build on his theory (e.g., Atkins, Mackenzie, and Schechtman). Specifically, I argue that Ricoeur’s narrative approach to identity allows us to 1) construe identity as an answer to a question; 2) incorporate multiple and even competing stories of our lives; 3) affirm the socio-historical embeddedness of identities; and 4) defend the ethical saliency of our lives to the extent that all narrative proves not just descriptive but also evaluative.

Yet while Ricoeur’s theory of narrativity does go some way in fostering an understanding of how we give meaning to our social identities, I go on to argue that a *dialogical* account of identity proves more adequate since it affirms the plurality of our identities without requiring a unity or hierarchy of identities. Drawing on Gadamer’s hermeneutics, I suggest five criteria that define the workings of a good dialogue and show how each fosters a related criterion for thinking about the way our identities interact with each other. I argue that dialogue is superior to narrative as a model for understanding social identities since the former: 1) encourages an openness that allows us to take into account not just the multiple stories we are but the fluid nature of identity formations, i.e., that identities are constantly changing over time; 2) emphasizes the contextual nature of conversationthat reveals a plurality of questions directed at our identities, i.e., it allows us to avoid the tyranny of the single question, “who am I?” and its assumed god’s eye view; 3) incites a willingness to listen and alleviates the need to posit one overarching and imperialistic identity; 4) requires reasoned explanation that provides the constraint needed to discern true from false stories; and 5) sustains a more thorough-going critique of subjectivism to the extent it challenges the myth of the author-as-autonomous agent who is free to create his or her own story.

**Panel**

**The Capable Human Being in an Age of Environmental Violence**

“An Animal among Others: Ricoeur’s Ethics in Environmental Hermeneutics”

Nathan M. Bell, University of North Texas

“Ricoeur in the Wild: Environmental Hermeneutics beyond the Cogito”

David Utsler, University of North Texas

 This panel seeks to explore the relevance of Paul Ricoeur’s philosophy to contemporary environmental problems. We live not only in the age of hermeneutical reason, but also (and increasingly) in the age of unprecedented violence against the natural environment and nonhuman living things. What are we to say about the capable human being in an age of such environmental violence?

 The first paper, “Ricoeur in the Wild: Environmental Hermeneutics beyond the *Cogito*,” seeks to draw on Ricoeur’s philosophy to re-examine the human/nature relationship. The hermeneutics of the self that Ricoeur developed provides a way of framing the human/nature relationship that isn’t trapped in the human/nature dualism of the *cogito*, while at the same time does not require that humans be dissolved into nature via the anti-*cogito* in order to solve the environmental crisis. This paper seeks to trace out both epistemological and ontological aspects of the hermeneutics of the self that will reveal that an underlying problem of the environmental crisis and the response of the environmental movement lies in the immediacy of self-reflection that characterizes the *cogito* as well as the shattered *cogito*. Either alternative leaves the capable human in a relationship with nature characterized by separation and alienation. The hermeneutics of the self places the capable human in the environment through an understanding of nature as one’s self and other than self simultaneously. Through this creative dialectical tension the self is constituted through the detours of reflection upon place and environment.

 The second paper, “An Animal among Others: Ricoeur’s Ethics in Environmental Hermeneutics,” seeks to examine the possibility of ethical consideration of animals. The capable human being can have ethics with animals because we interpret and recognize both our selves and (animal) others. One possibility for animal ethics, in light of Ricoeur’s *Onself as Another*, is when a person interprets the animal other seeing her as able-to-judge, able to act ethically and do otherwise. In such cases this person clearly interprets the animal also, in judging her, as being able to judge. Such an interpretation is potentially possible because going beyond the *cogito* opens us to other ways of thinking about selfhood, agency, and judgment. With Ricoeur’s work we can further explore a openness to both different ideas of the self and therefore to different ideas of others. This brings us to potentially inclusive ideas of animal agency or suffering that open a ground for ethical consideration of animals.

 The goal of this panel, then, is twofold: on the one hand, we want to show how Ricoeur’s philosophy can provide new approaches to the questions faced by environmental philosophers. On the other hand, engaging with environmental philosophy can help us to push the boundaries of the hermeneutical thinking we pursue with Ricoeur scholarship. In applying Ricoeur’s hermeneutics to the environment we can explore how this is an age of both hermeneutical and ecological reason.

**Rethinking the hermeneutical phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur**

Alejandra Bertucci

Universidad Nacional de La Plata

Argentina

The need for a graft of the hemeneutic problem in the phenomenological method was exposed by Ricoeur in the 60s. This is a novel idea since phenomenology and hermeneutics did not seem to be intended to meet. At first sight, they advocate two unconnected ideas of understanding; phenomenology ultimately leads us to the giving intuition, whereas hermeneutics needs the mediation of the interpretative act. Then, when Ricoeur expresses the need for an implant one wonders whether hermeneutic phenomenology is on the side of work by Husserl or of the heresies.

Ricoeur devotes several of his works to advocate the possibility of a “graft”; the key of his position is that the *Auslegung* is not absent from the phenomenological look, for which reason phenomenology and hermeneutics are mutually implied.

Another problem that crosses over the graft is its relation with ontology. On the one hand, there is a rejection to Husserl’s transcendental reduction, and on the other, the questioning of ontology of the undestanding reached by Gadamer and Heidegger by the short way. Which is the relationship of Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology with ontology?

After *The voluntary and the involuntary*, Ricoeur repositions himself regarding the phenomenology and thematizes what he considers its limits and limitations. Although the dimension of the phenomenology corresponding to the intentionality and the reduction as redescription of the problem of being in terms of the sense is deemed fruitful, he questions Husserl’s idealistic version that closes the conscious of the self in the cogito’s apodicticity. Both the transcendence implied in the intentionality and the impossibility of a complete reduction reflect the need of the shift to the ontology that will be given by Heidegger. However, if Ricoeur appreciates the ontologic effort of *Being and Time*, he would rather not opt for *Dasein’s* short way but by the long way through the mediation of the symbols.

This work is meant to revise the shift from the phenomenology of symbols towards the hermeneutics of texts, which is the period of "grafting” into Ricoeur’s philosophy, stressing on the ontologic scope of one moment and another.

Author Session

*Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy: Detour and Return*

Boyd Blundell

Loyola University New Orleans

New Orleans, Louisiana

I would like to propose an author session on Boyd Blundell's book *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy: Detour and Return*, published by Indiana University Press in 2010. His book is significant and unique in that it is not only a sustained treatment of Ricoeur's importance for theology, but it also presents a major reorientation for Ricoeur's relationship to theology, especially for the North American context. Blundell sharply criticizes the way Ricoeur has been conflated with his colleague David Tracy and thus criticized by the so-called Yale School of Hans Frei and George Lindbeck. In fact, Blundell argues that Ricoeur is actually quite compatible with the theology of Karl Barth, a theologian who influence the Yale thinkers and should therefore be a significant ally in their project. Moreover, in a very creative way, Blundell interprets Ricoeur's philosophy as having a Chalcedonian pattern. Blundell also argues that theologians should rely on Ricoeur's philosophical writings and not his occassional theological forays, being so insistent on this point that he does not particularly deal with the latter. Besides these major theses about Ricoeur and theology, Blundell's book is rich in insights into Ricoeur's thought, especially in seeing the “detour and return” pattern and in elucidating *Oneself as Another*.

**“RENONCER À L’IPSEITÉ?”**
**ON THE AMOROUS GIVING UP OF IPSEITY**

Cristina Bucur

Duquesne University

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Ricoeur’s reflections on ipseity in *Vivant jusqu’à la mort* are insightful and uncondescending exercises in phenomenological recollection. Specifically, this is a recollection of the ambiguities of the life of I, of dying and death: ambiguities or, in other words, semantically abyssal phenomena. In *Vivant jusqu’à la mort*, as earlier in *Soi-même comme un autre*, Ricoeur speaks of *ipse* as gratuitously amorous self-giving. However, similar to what one finds in Derrida’s *Donner la mort* and *Politiques de l’amitié*, this amorous self-giving is an ambiguity, a secret really beyond ipseity. Ricoeur even speaks of a “renoncement à l’*ipse* pour une preparation à la mort.” Ricoeur’s question, “renoncer à l’ipseité?” can be asked as follows: How does ipseity intersect the anguish of dying, in a place of *self*-sacrifice, sacrifice of the *ipse*? The sacrifice of the *ipse* does not undo the love one offers even at the “end”; what is undone, rather, is the framework of ipseity, the framework of “subjectification” that is prone to becoming the subject-matter of discussion. By contrast, the silence to which Ricoeur draws us in *Vivant*, is the “place” of remembrance of the *I* in and beyond dying as beyond-*ipse*, but not beyond either life-offering or love. In a nutshell, I will tell (from my own “place,” of course, namely from a phenomenological reading equally re-appropriative and dialogical) Ricoeur’s story of the Passion of *ipse*.

**RICOEURIAN IMPLICATIONS OF MUSICAL IMPROVISATION**

Daniel John Carroll

Boston University

Boston, Massachusetts

In the Sixth Study of *Oneself as Another,* Paul Ricoeur expounds his concept of “discordant concordance” as entailing the simultaneous existence of the conscious manipulation of characters and information in order to form a plot and the sense of order and organization that presides over the work as a whole. In the same study, he explains how the concept of emplotment entails the consideration of the development of a particular plot as a matter of necessity and “inversion” of contingency (or possibility for the action to have taken a different turn) in that the plot itself. Thus, “narrative necessity” is distinguished from “physical necessity” in that the former is manifested within the demarcating boundaries of the narrative which establish it *as* a narrative.

While their application to literary narrative is clear, what implications can these concepts have for the practice of musical improvisation? In this paper, Ricoeur’s thought is applied to this field and the nature of improvisation is revealed as a mode of “discordant concordance” by virtue of the individual musical gestures, while perhaps not sounding as if they are of a particular tonal character, being nonetheless united in an overall harmonic architecture It is further demonstrated how even the most seemingly erratic examples of jazz improvisation—musical moments that might seem to be entirely “random” while hearing it or even observing a written transcription of it—are curious examples of “physical contingency,” “physical necessity,” and “narrative necessity.” A contribution to the philosophy of musical improvisation is thus advanced.

**“Wonder, Eroticism, and Enigma:” Reading Ricoeur and Irigaray on Love and Eros**

Jennifer Lyons Carter

Stony Brook University

Stony Brook, New York

Ricoeur in his 1964 article "Wonder, Eroticism, and Enigma" (*Cross Currents*: Spring 1964) writes, "The difference between sexes cuts across humanity in another way from a difference between species, or a social or spiritual difference. What does that suggest?" (133). This sounds strikingly like some of what Luce Irigaray's writes in her *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* some twenty years later. Irigaray has focused on sexual difference as "the primary difference" understanding sexual difference as expressing a primacy unmatched in any other relation. Ricoeur's position in the 1964 essay seems to presage her sweeping critique of the anti-sexual bias of modern Western philosophy when he introduces the opposing terms of eroticism and tenderness. He argues that were we to adopt an ethic of tenderness as opposed to eroticism, we might be able to "reconstruct a symbol of innocence, to ritualize our dream of innocence, to restore the integrity and integrality of the flesh" (136). Irigaray echoes this sentiment in her essay, "The Fecundity of the Caress," when she calls for "*eros* prior to any *eros* destined or framed as such" (186), an eros that can "arrive at the innocence which has never taken place with the other as other" (187). It is difficult to know whether Ricoeur had in mind Levinas' 1961 essay "e Phenomenology of Eros" when he refers to the tenderness in the ethical relation to the other, but all three figures (Ricoeur, Irigaray, and Levinas) appear at times to be particularly concerned with the enigmatic relationship of sexed existence to the ethical. Ricoeur and Irigaray are not often thought of as having so similar an understanding of the ethical as appears in these two essays, but the connection is long due to be explored. Both think that a refiguring of the sexual relationship could bring about a reintegration of self in the reciprocal relation of self and other. Irigaray is more consistently explicit throughout her work about the role of sexual difference in the ethical relation, but one wonders if Ricoeur isn't working along the same lines, though in a differently focused way. In his *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur, like Irigaray, argues that the relation between the self and other cannot lead to a total dissolution of one person into another. Is it possible that Irigaray and Ricoeur are much more similar in their approach than previously imagined? Both call for a resacralization of the sexual in order to restore the loving aspect of eroticism. Perhaps the significance of the sexual relation is more pervasive in Ricoeur than one might at first think. Could we look to some of Irigaray's work to shed light on Ricoeur's notion of self and other?

**Re-/Productive imagination in the context of intercultural becoming**

 Hsueh-i Chen
National Taiwan Normal University

Taipei, Taiwan

This paper is an attempt to compare different but similar philosophical concepts which derive from different philosophical realms; first, Ricoeur's work on imagination and second, identity theory which involves Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and third, theories of intercultural philosophy developed by some contemporary German philosophers.

Reproductive and productive imaginations are philosophical concepts Ricoeur developed in his unpublished "Lectures on Imaginations" in order to investigate questions concerning definition of image, theory of fiction and their reference to reality. In his analysis he criticized occidental preference for reproductive imagination, which is dependent on the idea of an original. He argued that fiction derives from creativity and new discovery which are based on a different ontology apart from the ontology of the original.

Original, model, copy, and simulacra are terms signifying distinctions in the identification process as conceptualized by Baudrillard in order to unveil the problem of identity and reality in our technology and media-dependent society. Similar to Ricoeur's interpretation of productive imagination, Baudrillard's simulacrum claims to exit from the identity circulation of the original by means of deception and by elevating itself to a reality plane of its own.

Philosophy as academic discipline usually focuses on topics about human nature, world and truth etc., in other words, about questions of universal dimensions. The word "universal" signifies that principles which are explored within philosophy are trans-cultural, meaning that they are applicable in every culture. Philosophy itself is confronted with dilemma of culturality, because philosophy cannot escape from its cultural influence, from its cultural origin. But culturality of philosophy does not only concern philosophical traditions, it is also related to philosophizing person who is influence able by different cultures and who seeks new possibilities of intercultural becoming of incompatible, contradictory philosophical theories.

Although all three issues mentioned above have different philosophical foci, their fundamental questions relate to their common concern of establishing new reference of reality. The aim of this paper is to interrelate and analyze their different approaches.

**Between Literality and Absurdity: Ricoeur and Derrida on Metaphor, Meaning and Imagination**

Kevin W. Clark

Georgetown University

Washington, D.C.

Despite the well-catalogued differences separating hermeneutics and deconstruction, there is nevertheless a profound and surprising resonance in the works of Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida with respect to metaphor—both in their critique of the rhetorical tradition stemming from Aristotle and in their suggestion of a way of reading and writing metaphor that transcends the meaning-as-absent-presence that that tradition implies. This paper argues that by de-centering the word in his theory of metaphor, the hermeneutic philosophy of Ricoeur converges with Derrida’s deconstructive reading of metaphor to open the play of the text as a locus of emergent meaning. Ricoeur transcends the deconstructive critique, however, by a positive treatment of the semantics of metaphor in which he avoids the notion of truth-as-presence and meaning-as- literality without ending in either absurdity or non-meaning. Understanding, for Ricoeur, is rather a work of creative imagination in which the reader appropriates the being-in-the-world of the text disclosed by metaphor.

The paper focuses upon two readings in particular: Derrida’s 1972 essay, “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,” and Ricoeur’s essay of the same year, “Metaphor and the Fundamental Problem of Hermeneutics.” I explore Derrida’s argument that the traditional con- cept of metaphor is precisely the metaphysics of presence at work in the tradition, a system whose logic denies limit and difference, and whose necessity eliminates the possibility of read- ing. His provocative deconstruction of the stability of metaphor so conceived opens room for the interpretive play of the kind of reading he refers to as writing difference. The effect, however, is not merely a critique of a lexical concept of metaphor, but a radical questioning of philosophy. I seek to show in my reading of Ricoeur’s article the resonance with Derrida’s critique of the rhetorical tradition mentioned above. Ricoeur, however, moves beyond critique by developing a semantic theory of metaphor that opens up room for a positive interpretation of the text by means of creative interpretation. In the course of the paper I consult relevant studies from Ricoeur’s 1975 book, *The Rule of Metaphor*, as well as Derrida’s response to that work.

**From Crisis to ‘Loving Struggle’: History and Nonviolence in the early Ricoeur**

Paul Custer

Lenoir-Rhyne University

Hickory, North Carolina

In this essay we trace a fascinating thread in Ricoeur’s early thought, spun through two 1949 articles, ‘Husserl and the Sense of History’ and ‘Non-Violent Man and His Presence to History’. By taking seriously the neglected relationship of history and nonviolence in the early Ricoeur, we believe there is a sketch of, and proposal for, a transcendental subjectivity that grounds nonviolence simultaneously as idea and action: the work of apprehending one’s other, or what amounts to the same thing, the bringing of others into the self. Set against the trauma of the Third Reich, this thesis takes as its foil, on the one hand, a radical scientism that objectifies everything and everyone to the point of emptying both of meaning; and on the other hand, an extreme politicism that channels human striving, past and present, through the state, and therefore into violence. What is needed to overcome both is a turn to a sort of imaginative empathy — a continual refiguring of the self and a striving to thematize one’s other — that can, perhaps, relieve the weight of past violence and bridge the gulf between Self and Other. This “loving struggle” is a maxim for action, Ricoeur argues, and therefore is immanently practical.

On the other hand, the occasion of Ricoeur’s second article is Garry Davis who, after serving as an Allied pilot in WWII, gave up his American citizenship in 1948 to become a world citizen. Davis, ‘the non-violent man’ of the article’s title, believed that peace would be actualised if everyone were to give up nationalism. Ricoeur’s claim is that ‘there is some value to non-violence’, which is not a passive or powerless activity, but actual forms of power. As Ricoeur writes, ‘The *ethical* nature of consciousness is essentially opposed to the *historical* course of events. History says: violence. Consciousness rebounds and says: love’. Like Garry Davis, Gandhi, Jesus, or the nonviolent prophets of the Hebrew scriptures, this loving struggle expresses a prophetic nonviolence, resulting in a victory of consciousness over the harsh law of history.

***Oneself as Another*: The Daring Inversion by Paul Ricœur**

Giovanna D’Aniello

University of Bari

Italy

This paper aims at investigating the notion of love in the philosophical perspective of personal identity drawn by Paul Ricœur. In his work *Oneself as Another* (transl. by K. Blamey. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), based on the Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1986 and entitled “On Selfhood: The Question of Personal Identity”, Ricœur explores the relation between selfhood and otherness as being essential to the construction of personal identity.

First of all, individual identity may be viewed as either *sameness* or *selfhood*, whereby sameness may denote a numerical identity, a qualitative identity, or even an uninterrupted continuity. Selfhood, on the other hand, typically refers to the identity belonging to an individual self, and to the identity belonging to oneself and not another, but it may also refer to the identity belonging to oneself *as* another.

Thus *selfhood* is to be read in conjunction with *otherness*. The hermeneutics of the self, therefore, radically differs from the philosophy of the cogito.

Oneself as another may be a mode of selfhood, rather than sameness. Hereby, the transition from the Same toward the Other is complementary to the transition from the Other toward the Same. Both of them realize a tension of distinctness in unity.

The dialectics of sameness and selfhood flows in the so-called *narrative* identity, which denotes an individual as being an agent of action. Ricœur views narration as a form of transition between description and prescription which implies the question of time – the lived time of consciousness and the cosmic time as well. Thus action (and its narration) inscribes the self in a relational frame of reference.

Ricœur’s *Oneself as Another* constitutes an enlightening examination of how selfhood is related to otherness, and how otherness belongs to the meaning of selfhood. To this extent it may be argued that to see oneself as another is related to seeing another as oneself. Thus, for instance, the suffering of others becomes our own suffering, and the happiness of others becomes important to us if we are to enjoy our own happiness.

By taking this perspective to extremes, we will not guess wrongly if we conclude that Ricœur realizes a daring inversion in the love-commandment, in so far as he rather points out the love of oneself *as* another.

Ricœur’s work is being usually analyzed either in the ethical perspective focusing on obedience, self-esteem, moral precepts and responsibility; or as a phenomenological hermeneutics of the self-construction. Both perspectives, nevertheless, fail to pay appropriate attention to the essential role of neighbor in the perception of selfhood and personal identity as well.

This paper will rather challenge the current interpretation of this work by sharpening the question of the ‘new’ commandment in the light of Ricœur’s conception of personal identity. Thus we will firstly ask which sense is intended neighbor, and which place does he occupy in an ontologically ordered hierarchy of love; secondly, we will examine in which way the term God occurs in the experience of otherness.

**Transcendence in the Age of Hermeneutical Reason: On Paul Ricoeurʼs *Poetics of the Will***

Randolph Thompson Dible II

Stony Brook University

Stony Brook, New York

In interviews with Charles Reagan, in his book *Paul Ricoeur: His Life and His Work (*pp. 122 -125), Paul Ricoeur reflects on the unwritten *Poetics of the Will*, the ambitiously projected third volume of his early *Philosophy of the Will*. The *Poetics of the Will* was intended to reconcile the voluntary and involuntary structures of the will and lead to an ultimate restoration of the innocence of creation through transcendence of bound, ciphered existence. Erazim Kohak gives the examples of “the graceful, effortless movements of the dancer,” and the “unity of understanding and will surpassed in moments of love” as glimpses of poetics. Although Ricoeur said he accomplished a poetics of the will in other modalities, he admits that the recourse to transcendence originally inspired by his reading of Karl Jaspersʼ “Transcendence and Metaphysics” with Mikel Dufrenne during their five years of captivity was never written. Ricoeur admits also that the author is not the best interpreter of his own work, and assigns to the interested reader the continuation of the project. This task is as much for the philosopher of the reflective tradition as it is for the poet who is irrepressible enough to act despite the futility of a finite freedom and who may consent to the speculation inspired by the soul of the existential enigma. The poet must transcend the limit imposed by fault by reading it as a cracking of the enigma of the ground and meaning of being through creation. The philosopher must elaborate existential and anthropological concepts reconciled through critique and interpretation which work with an axiological phenomenology and hermeneutic ontology. But Ricoeurʼs grandest aspiration was to provoke a “second Copernical revolution,” a “second naivete,” whose power is revealed in an eschatological figure that incorporates such a philosopher with such a poet. Like Jaspersʼ secular theology, and Richard Kearneyʼs ʻanatheism,ʼ Ricoeurʼs *Poetics of the Will* embraces the Nietzschean death of God while affirming the hope and promise of salvation.

The *Philosophy* and the *Poetics of the Will* both come from an understanding of primary affirmation as the surplus of meaning, and develop through existential difference as finitude, but while the poetics can give closure to the adventure, philosophy can teach and expand the human world and ready it for transfiguration.

**La sagesse tragique comme herméneutique du tragique de l’action**

André Duhamel

Université de Sherbrooke/Campus de Longueuil

Québec

L’attention à la tragédie et au tragique est récurrente dans l’œuvre de Ricœur. Si elle est d’abord liée au mythe et au mal (1953a, b, 1960), puis au temps et au récit (1984), et enfin à l’action et à la mémoire (1990, 2004), elle écarte toujours l’affirmation d’un tragique de l’être au profit d’un tragique dans l’existence ou dans l’action. Dans la « petite éthique » de *Soi-même comme un autre*, Ricœur intercale entre l’examen de la norme morale et celui de la sagesse pratique un interlude, le seul dans l’ouvrage, consacré au « tragique de l’action ». Cela permet, dit-il, de préparer la thèse selon laquelle les conflits internes à la moralité « renvoie à l’affirmation éthique la plus originaire », à savoir, « la médiation pratique susceptible de surmonter l’antinomie, la sagesse pratique du jugement moral en situation » (p. 318-319). Or, cet interlude insiste aussi lourdement sur l’origine de la tragédie dans les passions et l’anthropologie de la démesure dont elle témoignerait. Dans la tragédie, lit-on, les agissants sont traversés par des « grandeurs spirituelles », des « énergies archaïques et mythiques qui sont aussi les sources immémoriales du malheur », et leurs motivations « plongent dans un fonds ténébreux de motivation » et de « contraintes destinales » qui leur font toucher la « profondeur des arrière-fonds de l’action » et le « fond agonistique de l’épreuve humaine » (p. 281-283). Cette insistance semble orienter l’instruction de l’éthique par le tragique moins du côté de l’action et de la sagesse pratique, que du côté de la mémoire d’un récit primaire et d’un passé intemporel échappant aux ressources de l’agir.

 Nombre de lectures de cet interlude l’ont abordé seulement à partir de l’angle éthique, retenant en particulier la tentative de conciliation entre perspective téléologique et perspective déontologique que représente la sagesse pratique (Nussbaum 2002, Duhamel 2004). Mais ces lectures négligent les passages que nous venons de souligner et par suite ne retiennent guère l’importance de la « sagesse tragique » qu’ils appuient. Nous voudrions défendre ici l’idée que ces passages témoignent de la continuité de la réflexion ricoeurienne sur la tragédie, et ne peuvent apparaître que si l’on convoque son herméneutique de l’action développée ailleurs (1986). D’une part, cette continuité permet de souligner que la « sagesse tragique » puise dans une tradition anthropologique et symbolique, à l’image de la symbolique du mal, et d’autre part, qu’elle ne peut être pensée qu’à la frontière de l’éthique et d’une poétique, comme variation imaginative sur les inévitables apories de l’action. La sagesse tragique peut ainsi être revendiquée par Ricoeur comme ce détour symbolique et poétique qui permet à la sagesse pratique de demeurer critique d’elle-même.

Nussbaum, M.  [2002] “Ricoeur on Tragedy. Teleology, Deontology, and Phronesis”, in J. Wall, W. Schweiker and W. D. Hall (eds.), *Paul Ricoeur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, London, Routledge, p. 264-276.

Ricoeur, P. [1953a], « Sur le tragique », in *Lectures 3*, Paris, Seuil, 1994, p. 187-209.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ [1953b], « Culpabilité tragique et culpabilité biblique », *Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuse*, 33 : 285-307.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ [1960], « Le dieu méchant et la vision “tragique” de l’existence », in *Philosophie de la volonté. 2 : Finitude et culpabilité*, Paris, Aubier, 1988, p. 355-373.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ [1984], « Au-delà du *muthos* tragique », in *Temps et récit. 2*, Paris, Seuil, p. 18-30.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ [1986], *Du texte à l’action. Essai d’herméneutique II*, Paris, Seuil

\_\_\_\_\_\_ [1990], « Le tragique de l’action », in *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris, Seuil, p. 281-90.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ [2004], « Le fonds grec : l’agir et son agent », in *Parcours de la reconnaissance. Trois études*, Paris, Stock, p. 111-126.

**Balancing the Ordinary: The Value of the Hermeneutic Self for an Anthropology of Ethics**

Darryl Ferguson

University of Chicago

Illinois

In recent years, some anthropologists have turned to Wittgensteinian philosophy for assistance in considering the experience of ethics in human life. Veena Das, in particular, by way of Stanley Cavell, interprets Wittgenstein as locating skepticism at the heart of the ordinary. The ordinary life, for Das, is thus one of striving towards the achievement of the ordinary, without particular reference to following rules and obeying norms. In the scenes of violence and trauma with which Das is primarily concerned, the ethical striving thus leads to a disjuncture of the self between what she calls the “eventual everyday” and the “actual everyday.” But such an understanding of the ethical both uncovers a displacement of the possibility of achieving that for which one strives by the reality of uncertainty, and provides an insufficient account of the normative function of ethics. Paul Ricoeur’s philosophical anthropology is here helpful. Hermeneutic self-development, with recourse primarily to narrative, brings into focus the struggle that one faces with discordant experiences. While the possibility of a failed narrative attempt, or a breakdown in the narrative process that might lead to something like the “adjacent self” found in Das is all but absent from Ricoeur’s work, the introduction of the narrative self offers the possibility of holding in mediated tension the two poles of morality identified by Das. Ethics is not only about striving against the skepticism that constantly, and with divergent efficiencies, threatens the ordinary. It is also, at least in many circumstances, about or driven by rules, norms, or expectations whereby one can at least grasp that for which one strives. In this respect, Ricoeur’s philosophical anthropology may bring clarity and richness to an anthropology of ethics.

**"Recognizing Oneself in One's Lineage”:**

**The argentine dictatorship and the problem of mutual recognition.**

Maria Lujan Ferrari

Universidad Nacional de La Plata

Argentina

The concept of recognition has always had an important role in practical philosophy. However we must consider that, except for Hegel, only in recent years political debates and claims of various social movements for recognition have imposed the need to put in the forefront of philosophical reflection the concept of recognition. This is attested by the impact of the precursory essay of Charles Taylor *Multiculturalism and “the politics of recognition”,* the debate between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser on the relationship between recognition and redistribution or the attempts of Seyla Benhabib to offer convincing answers to the challenges of multiculturalism from an ethics of discourse, to mention a few examples.

Our interest will be focused on the contribution of Paul Ricoeur to the debate on the issue of recognition in his latest work *The course of recognition.*

The purpose of this paper will be to reconstruct the terms in which Ricoeur dialogues with the work of Axel Honneth, especially, in relation to the first model of recognition exposed in *The struggle for recognition* that includes under the aegis of love the range of erotic relations, friendship or familiar ties. Although Ricoeur agrees with Honneth, he suggests complementing the dimension of love with two new perspectives: the Simone Weill´s thesis on the reciprocity approbation between lovers and the more interesting thesis, in our view, on the “recognizing oneself in one´s lineage”. We will develop the last thesis and we will show its importance to think the systematic plan of illegal appropriation of children during the last military dictatorship in Argentine.

**The Encounter with Fragility in the light of Ricœur's Pact of Care between a Patient and a Physician.**

Gaëlle Fiasse

McGill University

Montreal, Quebec

I will use the contemporary ethics of Paul Ricœur and his specific articles on medicine in order to focus on the patient-doctor relationship. My goal is to apply his general analysis to a particular case: the relationship between not any patient but a patient in a situation of great fragility, and not a physician in any context but any caring person (e.g. a nurse, a doctor...) situated in the particular institution of a hospital. I will insist on the pact of care in order to highlight this particular encounter that happens in a hospital between a suffering person and a caring person who also has to acknowledge his or her own fragilities.

The first part of my presentation will *recall* Ricœur's Little Ethics and the case of Medicine, namely the encounter between a patient and a doctor in the light of the notions of sollicitude and the golden rule, with a particular insistence on the notion of prudential judgment. I will also recall the precepts and norms in medicine that help in taking care of a person in a situation of great fragility. I will show how Ricœur's particular developments on translation can be applied as a way of respecting the suffering person in which the caring person has to decipher the other as such, and acknowledge his or her limitation of not being able to perfectly communicate with the other person.

The second part of my communication will *develop* the pact of care between the patient and the caring person in light of the other dimension of sollicitude, according to which the caring person has to recognize herself as a fragile person, in order to reverse the power-relationship. I will highlight the consciousness of one's vulnerability and mortality; the loving presence and the ‘attention to reality’ (where the encounter must predominate in spite of other pressures, such as time and budget which can damage the relationship); the learning of another way of being toward the world; the joy and the ‘lâcher prise’; and the acceptance of one's own limits. Finally, I will conclude by showing the importance of narrative medicine in light of the pact of care.

***Et nusquam locus*? Ricoeur’s Readings of Augustine**

David H. Fisher

North Central College

Naperville, Illinois

Ricoeur’s close readings of Augstine’s *Confessions -*  (in *Time and Narrative’s* interveaving of  *distentio animi* and Aristotle’s *muthos,* and subsequently in *Oneself as Another),* and on memory (in *Memory, History, Forgetting,* and *The Couse of Recognition*) are, in one sense, no surprise. Attentive readers of *Freedom and Nature* can discern already the impact of Augustinian texts such as *De libero arbitrio* and *De gratia et libero arbitrio*. Ricoeur’s life-long wrestling with the problem of evil likewise reflects Augustine’s *De natura boni contra Manichaeos* and other anti-Manichean writings, from Ricoeur’s “Original Sin: A Study in Meaning” (in *The Conflict of Interpretations*) through ‘Evil, a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology” (*Figuring the Sacred*).

But Ricoeur’s readings of others are always layered. Readings of the *Confessions* in *Time and Narrative* are undertaken as part of his dispute with Derrida over narrative vs. metaphor as the primary unit of meaning, and in the context of his longer dispute with Hegel and Heidegger over relationships between consciousness, time and identity. What is central, amidst all of these layers, is Ricoeur’s unique combination of historical and theological sensitivities with his philosophical agenda. He shares (with Charles Taylor, in *Sources of the Self¸* and Charles Norris Cochrane in *Christianity and classical culture: A study of thought and action from Augustus to Augustine*) a sense of Augustine’s pivotal place in the history of Western culture and philosophy – and with John S. Dunne (*A Search For God in Time and Memory*) and David Tracy (*The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*) a sense of the importance of Augustine for establishing analogical links between lifetime and story in a pluralistic age.

In the interest of finding a pathway through these sedimented conversations, the following remarks agree with David Tell that the central question of The Confessions is “How then do I seek you, O Lord?” (10.20.29). If this is the central question of The Confessions, the central answer is memory. The sheer facticity of Augustine’s divine recollections assures him that God “abide[s] within” memory: “Truly,

you dwell in my memory, since I have remembered you from the time I learned of you, and I find you there when I call you to mind.” . . .[but] His search for God ends with an emphatic double proclamation that there is no place for God: “There is no place, both backward do we go and forward, and there is no place” (et nusquam locus, et recedimus et accedimus, et nusquam locus) (10.26.37)[[1]](#footnote-1). Tell argues that “For Augustine, Memory is so bound to both Understanding and Love that to remember an object is also to understand and love it. For Memory contains Understanding and Love as essential ingredients even as it is itself ingredient in both: “Since any of the three contains any of the other two, or all of them, they must be equal to any of the others, or to all of them, each to all and all to each—yet these three are one life, one mind, one substance” (1991, 299)”

Ricoeur ends *Oneself as Another* with the observation that “Perhaps the philosopher as philosopher has to admit that one does not know and cannot say whether this Other, the source of the injunction, is another person whom I can look in the face or one who can stare at me, or my ancestors for whom there is noi representation . . . . or God – living God, absent God – or an empty place.” (p. 355) Ricoeur’s way from narrative identity through the storehouse of memory is an attempt to discern a place for God, through love.

**Ricoeur and Hermeneutics: Post-Critique?**

Patrick Gamez

University of Notre Dame

South Bend, Indiana

In this paper, I want to address the question of an age of “hermeneutical reason” and its relation to our present age. I explore Paul Ricoeur’s notion of hermeneutical social science, its relation to philosophical notions of “critique,” and its place in a contemporary philosophical landscape characterized as being, in certain senses, “post-critical.”

 First, I reconstruct the outlines of Ricoeur’s hermeneutical approach to the human sciences, relying heavily on those texts in which he mediates between different theoretical frameworks, or subsumes critical perspectives under his hermeneutic project. In particular, I address his early essays, “Structure and Hermeneutics,” “Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology,” and “Science and Ideology,” as well as his late *opus*, *Memory, History, Forgetting*. In the former, Ricoeur is primarily concerned with softening the ambitions of theoretical programmes with presumptions of “scientific” or “critical” authority, specifically Levi-Strauss’ structural anthropology, Althusser’s “scientific” Marxism, and Habermas’ reworking of ideology-critique. In dealing with these thinkers, Ricoeur delineates a peculiar position. He attacks Althusser for failing to give substance to the claim of “scientificity” on the part of his Marxism, implying that there are epistemic standards that any “scientific” philosophy ought to meet. Indeed, it is *because* structuralism is valuable scientific innnovation that, in “Structure and Hermeneutics,” Ricoeur finds a place for structural analysis in his hermeneutic vision of the human sciences. Rather than debunk its animating spirit, Ricoeur simply wants to restrict the domain of structuralism, draw its legitimate limits, and incorporate its insights into his own project. Similarly, Ricoeur clearly values and wishes to preserve the critical *spirit* of Habermas’ works, while nevertheless rejecting its claim to be “outside” of ideology in a way that hermeneutics fails to be; in short, he wants to preserve critique without the sort of scientific or quasi-scientific *foundations* on which critical thought demands it should rest. The issue, then, is that “scientificity” demands a place in the “hermeneutic” social sciences, but cannot found critique; critique, properly, is not properly a distinctive epistemic endeavour. It is one tradition among others, in which we find ourselves, and is subservient to the hermeneutic goal of making sense of those traditions and ourselves.

 The mature Ricoeur, in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, develops a “critical hermeneutics” of history, a way of making sense of our traditions and our selves that allows room for normative judgment concerning our past and its atrocities. However, even in his late work, the *critical* hermeneutics of history is subservient to the “ontological” hermeneutics of historical being. There is, for Ricoeur, some “deeper” hermeneutic layer, some more primordial way of understanding our selves, which precedes and makes possible any sort of critical hermeneutics.

 I wish to argue for a two-fold claim. On the one hand, insofar as Ricoeur wants both to maintain a critical edge to his hermeneutic project, while denying that critique can itself be “scientific” or indeed an epistemological project at all, he belongs to what David Hoy has called “post-critique,” which seems to be characteristic of our contemporary, 21st century philosophical scene. On the other hand, to the extent that Ricoeur’s thought is essentially post-critical, I suggest that there are reasons to think that he ought not so sharply delineate between what he terms “critical” and “ontological” dimensions of hermeneutics, and that – following, for example, Foucault, Butler, and Castoriadis – for us, here and now, there is a sense in which what remains of critique as a cognitive project is just as much an existential one.

***Corps, histoire, et mortalité : l’herméneutique ricoeurienne de la condition historique* versus *les philosophies du cogito.***

Anne Gléonec

Charles University in Prague

Czech Republic

Dans *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, Paul Ricœur déploie une critique de *Sein und Zeit*, selon trois points principaux, mais qui visent au fond tous un même but : rendre possible une herméneutique de la condition historique qui aille à la rencontre de l’historiographie, pour comprendre son lien et sa différence d’avec le fonctionnement de la mémoire, tant individuelle que collective, et rejouer en amont une philosophie de l’action. C’est par l’absence de la chair que tout s’ouvre, Ricœur regrettant que l’analytique ne fasse pas place au corps animé, au corps mien, alors même que ce dernier semble impliqué dans la méditation sur la mort, et plus encore dans la méditation sur cet intervalle qui fera l’historicité elle-même, l’intervalle entre naissance et mort. La catégorie de chair appelle en ce sens, dira Ricœur, un *franchissement* du gouffre logique creusé par l’herméneutique du *Dasein* entre l’être du souci et tout le reste des étants, qui seraient toujours plus ou moins ramenés, même le corps vivant, à la catégorie de *Vorhandenheit*, car le corps est cette intériorité qui se déploie à même l’extériorité, à la fois être *du* monde et être *dans* le monde, dont l’absence ne peut *in fine* qu’interdire le déploiement des fondements d’une véritable phénoménologiede *l’action*.

Mais tout l’intérêt de la critique ricoeurienne si souvent rejetée, est – nous voudrions le montrer – plus dans la manière dont les trois axes en elle se relient, que dans l’une ou l’autre attaque qu’ils constituent – plus ou moins fidèles au texte de Heidegger –, c’est-à-dire dans la manière dont ce corps absent sera dévoilé comme le corollaire du « mirage de l’authenticité » puis de la négation de la mort des autres.

Au terme autoréférentiel d’authenticité – sur lequel porte la seconde critique –, discours de soi à soi que le lexique de la résolution ne ferait que redoubler, il va en effet s’agir pour Ricœur d’opposer l’idée de l’*originaire comme condition historique*, c’est-à-dire « une condition existentiale de possibilité de toute la suite des discours tenus sur l’historique en général, dans la vie quotidienne, dans la fiction et en histoire ». Or la voie du débat entre le philosophe et l’historien se formulant ainsi dès le niveau de la temporalité profonde, de la futurité, trouvera son lieu privilégié dans la troisième critique adressée à *Sein und Zeit* : la critique de l’être-pour-la-mort. Heidegger, en plaçant la futurité sous le signe de l’être-pour-la-mort, a compris le rapport authentique au temps comme se jouant dans une expérience solitaire, intransférable, et incommunicable, de ma propre finitude. Pourtant, nous dit Ricœur, dès ce niveau où « authenticité » et « originarité » se rencontrent, l’historien a lui aussi déjà quelque chose à dire, et même *contre* le « philosophe de l’authentique ». L’historien est l’avocat du « on meurt », où se consume la rhétorique de l’inauthenticité, et son geste invite à une lecture alternative du sens de la mortalité, ouvrant à une *attribution multiple du mourir* : attribution à soi certes, mais aussi aux proches, et aux autres. Et ici même se retrouve bien la première critique de l’absence du corps propre.

Pourquoi est-ce ici qu’elle réapparaît ? Parce que dans le mouvement qui amène Heidegger à expliciter l’être-pour-la-mort comme souci authentique, il y a un recouvrement du pouvoir-être. Il y a substitution de cette possibilité *in fine* fermée qu’est le pouvoir mourir au pouvoir-être comme possibilité ouverte, dont l’ignorance par Heidegger de la question de la naissance est le symptôme. Reliant la naissance à la chair, au corps comme premier « je peux », sans lequel on ne peut justement penser le pouvoir-être, Ricœur ouvre deux pistes que nous voudrions ainsi dévoiler dans leur jointure même, *versus* les philosophies du *cogito*, et la négation attenante de la pluralité dont le politique et donc l’histoire sont le théâtre : celle du pouvoir-être comme désir, et celle de la mort d’autrui.

**Religion, Meaning, and Justification:**

**Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics of Religion in a Post-Secular Age**

Brian Gregor

Fordham University

New York, New York

Given the theme of this year’s conference, I would like to discuss the promise of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics as a model of thinking about religion in a post-secular age. My essay will argue that Ricoeur is eminently helpful in this context, since he takes religion seriously and seeks to understand it on its own terms. Rather than seeking an abstract essence of religion, Ricoeur maintains that religion is always mediated linguistically, culturally, historically, and textually, and therefore the phenomenology of religion must therefore “run the gauntlet” of a specifically textual or scriptural hermeneutics. Part I will therefore outline Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the religious imagination, which acts as a schematism of hope, since religious discourse (symbols, metaphors, narratives) discloses new possibilities of meaning and action.

Part II will then consider whether the concept of *meaning* is sufficient to deal with religion in all its particularity. Here I draw on Charles Taylor’s recent book *A Secular Age*, which critiques the interpretation of religion in terms of the human search for meaning. Such theories of religion tend to “absolutize the modern predicament.” They also focus attention on meaning as an abstract universal, whereas our lives are not attuned to meaning as such, but on “some specific good or value.” Although Taylor is right to raise these concerns, Ricoeur avoids the brunt of them insofar as his hermeneutical approach attends to the particularity of religious texts.

The more persistent question for Ricoeur, however, is whether his focus on meaning nevertheless does risk compromising certain religious convictions. Part III will focus specifically on the question of meaning in relation to the theology of justification. As Taylor observes, in Luther’s day there was not a lack but an *excess* of meaning: the sense of urgency over one’s salvation or damnation was overbearing. Now, however, we are burdened by a crisis of meaning. According to Ricoeur, for post-Nietzschean humanity the basic existential problem is no longer that of one’s own salvation or damnation, as it was in the Middle Ages and for Luther. We must now confront the question of “sense” and “non-sense,” since the most fundamental question is not sin and forgiveness, but the meaning of existence.

I will argue that the question of one’s justification before God should not be subordinated to the question of meaning. As Eberhard Jüngel argues, such a move locks us within an anthropocentric framework, since meaning concerns how things stand before the self (*coram seipso*) while justification concerns how things ultimately stand before God (*coram Deo*). Justification does address the loss of meaning, but it does not respond to this meaninglessness through a religious *Sinngebung*. Instead, justification transcends the question of sense-giving by relocating the question of meaning *for me* and *for us* within the question of *truth*. The question of meaning is a vital penultimate good, but it is not the ultimate, so it must be teleologically suspended (i.e. *aufgehoben*) by the question of justification. This is my critique of Ricoeur. However, by recognizing the importance of meaning as a penultimate good, there remains a space in which to recognize the role that the plurality of religious traditions play in constituting meaning for their adherents—precisely that area where Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of religion is so insightful.

**Does “New Capitalism” Affect our Moral Capacities?**

**Ricoeur and Sennett on Moral Identity**

Annemie Halsema

 VU-University Amsterdam

Netherlands

The paper investigates whether a notion of the moral self that presumes the self’s narrative capacities still holds in present-day circumstances. It will do so by relating Paul Ricoeur’s work on the narrative and moral self (1992, 2005, 2007) to Richard Sennett’s critical perspective upon identity in, what he calls, “new or flexible capitalism” (1998, 2006). For both, moral capacities are closely related to narrative capacities. While for Sennett, however, recent developments in capitalism endanger the capacities to narrate about our lives and as such affect morality, Ricoeur develops a general philosophical sketch of the relationship between narrative and morality.

Sennett claims that in contrast to earlier forms of capitalism, in the new flexible economy, time has become discontinuous. It’s unstable, fragmentary social conditions make that only certain kinds of human beings can prosper, namely the ones that can meet the challenge of fast changes and short-term relationships, of a meritocracy that values potential abilities instead of achieved skills, and that are able to easily let go of the past and to take on the consumer attitude of valuing the new (2006, pp. 3-5). But according to Sennett, most people are not like this. Most people need a sustaining life narrative, take pride in being good at something and value their abilities and lived through experiences. In short, for Sennett new capitalism makes it impossible to develop a coherent narrative, which has fatal consequences for moral capacities (such as trust, loyalty).

In the paper, I will analyze Sennett’s claims with the help of Ricoeur, by addressing the following issues:

* The relationship between narrative and time;
* The capacity to deal with breaks in one’s life: Sennett claims that narratives imply continuity, but Ricoeur holds that narrative identity intermediates between continuity and discontinuity; also the notions of concordance and discordance are relevant in this respect.
* The importance of authorship and mastery over the self.

With the help of Ricoeur’s analysis, I will put Sennett’s unambiguous critique of new capitalism into perspective, without losing sight of the problems that the new forms of capitalism bring about. Yet, the confrontation with Sennett will also allow me to reflect upon Ricoeur’s connection between the narrative and moral self. In what respects do the working conditions in the new flexible economy affect our abilities to narrate about our selves and what are the effects upon our moral capacities?

**Literature**

Ricoeur, Paul (1992).*Oneself as Another*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.

- (2005). “Becoming Capable, Being Recognized”, Text Kluge Prize, Washington 2005. URL: <http://www.filosofiayliteratura.org/lengua/segundo/06-07/volversecapazingles.pdf>

- (2007) *Reflections on The Just.* Translated by David Pellauer. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

Sennett, Richard (1998). *The Corrosion of Character*. *The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company.

- (2006). *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

**From Renouncement to Recognition: Ricoeur’s Hegel**

Timo Helenius

Boston College

Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Ricoeur situates himself “after Hegel.” Ricoeur’s problem, however, is Hegel’s “monological approach,” that the Spirit itself is “set over against itself in differentiating itself.” In particular, Hegel’s model of absolute history is for Ricoeur an impossible totalization. In this sense “after Hegel” means for him – as argued in Time and Narrative III – an “exodus from Hegelianism,” leaving Hegel behind, “quitting Hegelianism.” It appears, nevertheless, that la tentation hégélienne is renounced far too hastily – perhaps just to deny its seducing power and its irresistible call. Some twenty years later the whole third study of The Course of Recognition, which focuses on mutual recognition, grounds itself in Hegel’s concept of recognition, Anerkennung.

I argue that in his analysis on mutuality Ricoeur draws very close to Hegel’s notion of love as the source of true recognition – an idea that can be found, for example, in the Phenomenology as “ein Anerkennen der Liebe.” While searching for the “clearings” of good will under the aegis of agape, Ricoeur revitalizes Hegel by the very “broadening” of the scope of Sittlichkeit. I claim that another way of seeing this “broadening” is to maintain that Ricoeur returns to Hegel’s initial insight rather than that of Honneth. The System of Ethical Life, for example, pushes forward the ideas that mutual trust overcomes servitude, and that in ethical life “the individual exists in an eternal mode.” This ethical reality surpasses the individual in its systems of need, administration of justice, and disciplining cultivation, all of which – despite certain “empirical oscillation” – highlight ethicality beyond mere calculative reciprocity. From this point of view Hegel appears to confirm rather than to denounce that the moral motivation Ricoeur searches for is indeed real and not illusory at all.

**“Poetic Justice”: Paul Ricoeur and a Theory of Narrative Jurisprudence**

Samia Hesni

Amherst College

Amherst, Massachusetts

 This paper explores Paul Ricoeur’s intervention into legal interpretation by way of a twofold investigation. I argue primarily that Ricoeur’s theory of narrative offers a singularly rigorous account of the relationship between hermeneutics and law. Second, I hope to demonstrate that to understand his contribution, we must read and evaluate his two texts on justice – *The Just (Le Juste,* 1995) and *Reflections on the Just* (*Le Juste II*, 2002) – as both the continuation and the culmination of his philosophic and academic writings. In his works on language, identity, and time, Ricoeur began to develop a narrative theory that remains central to his last two academic works: *The Just* and *Reflections on the Just*.[[2]](#footnote-2)
 Stepping outside of the nominal and categorical constraints to embrace the interdisciplinarity and breadth of Ricoeur’s thought gives rise to a radically different understanding of his writings on justice – an understanding that allows for the bridging of his works and their contribution to the ongoing “law and literature” debate as it encompasses the relationship between law and narrative. To understand Ricoeur’s writings on justice as both a continuation and the culmination of his vast body of scholarship gives us a fuller appreciation of the scope and depth of his own writing, and also provides a new perspective from which to approach the relationship between law and literature.
 Ricoeur crosses paths with a variety of philosophers and political theorists – three of whom prove especially relevant to the enterprise of discerning a relationship between narrative and justice. Ronald Dworkin, John Rawls, and Martha Nussbaum evoke literary thought in an attempt to rethink judicial liberalism. In exploring issues and themes that relate Ricoeur’s thought to their own, I will show how a specific aspect of Ricoeur’s narrative theory connects with and challenges each of his interlocutors and contributes to an overarching theory I will call “narrative jurisprudence.”

**From Re-con-naissance to Méconnaissance**

Cristal Huang

Soochow University

Taipei, Taiwan

In Ricoeur's *The Course of Recognition*, he addresses that the dictionary definition of the term recognition encompasses both cognition to recognition. I want to explore Ricoeur’s development of the distance between and the process between cognition and recognition. After we allocate meaning to a sign from a dictionary, we put a meaning into our heart through recognition. Ricoeur uses deviation – in the Chinese translation of the text the term is “distance” – as the chance for the subject to locate and then to re-locate the meaning that he or she recognizes in one’s heart. I analyze the meaning of marking a deviation between the “re-“ and the “con-“ in re-con-naissance and also explore the relation of the term to méconnaissance. I also independently offer the insights of semiology to support Ricoeur’s argument about the process from cognition to recognition and the understanding that the process is not totally free but involves a cultural horizon behind our interpretation.

**Using our Hermeneutical Powers to Find a Symbolism of Good:**

**Building on the Thought of Paul Ricoeur**

Rebecca Huskey

University of Oklahoma

If there is a way to use our hermeneutical powers to alleviate human suffering and to understand human capability better, it may be in inquiring after a symbolism of good.[[3]](#footnote-3) Paul Ricoeur’s writing leads the way in developing such a symbolism. Most relevant to this particular study are Ricoeur’s *The Symbolism of Evil*, his *Oneself as Another*, and his discussion of interpretation of biblical parables.

Finding stories of the primordial good in human beings is challenging; this dimension of human existence indeed seems altogether lost to us, having receded into the mists of a collective forgetting. We can nevertheless gather hints that point us towards such goodness. Ricoeur argues that the creation narrative at the beginning of Genesis, and the casting out of humans from the garden, is a myth of radical disconnect.[[4]](#footnote-4) While we cannot ‘get ourselves back to the garden,’ literally or metaphorically, we can conceive of instances of the opposite of radical disconnect, of profound belonging and union with the other. These experiences, too, are part of the narrative of our existence.[[5]](#footnote-5) Human existence is replete with moments of what Ricoeur calls a “philosophical re-enactment of confession,” i.e., rational attempts to understand the wrong that we do. The inverse of this moment might be described as laudatory, one in which the human self is able to attest to itself. Ricoeur further reminds his readers that while much religious teaching (and indeed human history) indicates that we are sinful in the presence of God, we are nevertheless still in God’s presence. That is, the human race is still in relationship with something greater than itself, something infinite and profound, however tenuous that relationship may be.

Next, we must ask what stories provide a construct for a symbolism of good. Following Ricoeur’s lead, turning to stories from antiquity, we find images such as those of the suffering servant[[6]](#footnote-6), and the dictate to show hospitality to the stranger.[[7]](#footnote-7) Modern-day archetypes, such as that of the non-violent resister, may also prove to be fruitful. Ricoeur’s “Listening to the Parables of Jesus” provides a beneficial interpretive model for application to these stories and symbols.[[8]](#footnote-8) He directs readers not necessarily towards imitation of the figures in the stories, but towards the surprise, challenge, and work required to achieve understanding.

Attention to such tales may not be an obvious choice for an attempt as easing suffering, but it may still be helpful. With this approach we open the possibility for compassion for those who inflict suffering on others, for we contemplate the possibility that goodness is indeed more primordial than evil. The example of the suffering servant teaches patience as we attempt to serve one another, in religious or secular settings. Furthermore, we are reminded to look for examples of goodness in places we might not expect (opposing political parties, or strange cultures, e.g.). Finally, we recall what it is like to be the other ourselves, so that we may treat those others all the better.

**Ricoeur and Arendt on Kant and Judgement**

Morny Joy

University of Calgary

Alberta

Paul Ricoeur’s essay “Aesthetic Judgment and Political Judgment According to Hannah Arendt” (*The Just* 2000 [1995]) was originally published in French in 1994. Here Ricoeur expresses certain reservations about Arendt’s attempt to extrapolate Kant’s ideas in the *Critique of Judgment* so as to “aestheticize political judgment.” This echoes Ricoeur’s own dissatisfaction with Kant’s agenda in the Third Critique, for which he supplies his own amendments in the same essay. Ricoeur assumes that Arendt is simply following Kant and has similar problems in adapting aesthetic judgment to a framework that sustains political judgment. Although he acknowledges Arendt’s work on judgment was incomplete when she died in 1995, Ricoeur remains troubled on a number of counts. In particular, he would prefer that she include a teleological perspective because he implies her emphasis on plurality and toleration does not hold sufficient weight to sustain a just society – his own teleological ideal. Nor does he want the judgment of a single onlooker or spectator – now of an historical event, rather than of a beautiful work of art – to be hypostasized (2000: 108). Yet Ricoeur was basing his assessment of Arendt’s work on quite sketchy explorations of judgment. These appeared as an Appendix of only eighteen pages at the conclusion of *Life of the Mind* (1971: 255–72) and equally limited reflections in the closing sections of her *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* (1982, 50–85). The latter lectures were originally given at the New School in 1970. Arendt’s sudden death in 1995 halted any further work on judgment. In 2003, however, another series of Arendt’s essays, *Responsibility and Judgment* (from lectures in 1965 and 1966) appeared – edited by Jerome Kohn. In two essays, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” and “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” Arendt expanded in detail on specific Kantian ideas concerning judgment. These works demonstrate quite clearly that Arendt was not simply blindly following Kant, and so only reiterating his positions – specifically on the topics of universality, commonsense, and communicability – as alleged by Ricoeur. In her work, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* (1994), Lisa Jean Disch, who had access to all of Arendt’s work in the Library of Congress archives, provides a substantially different reading of Arendt’s notions of the above three crucial terms. According to Disch, judgment is inherently an intersubjective process for Arendt and not simply confined to the private world. Arendt thus reveals she regards judging in an entirely new way. This involves communicability as a mode of imaginatively entertaining the views of others and exploring many variations, rather than simply imputing one viewpoint to others, as Ricoeur implies. Imagination is key to this development. As a result, Arendt can reject the view of “the spectator” as a solitary thinker. This allows Arendt to demonstrate that exploring such a plurality of views is in keeping with a notion of common sense as referring more to “generally accepted ideas,” and not as something related to the formation of a universal concept. All of these emendations of Kant establish that, although Arendt herself still credited Kant for her insights, in Disch’s view, Arendt had substantially revised Kant’s positions, so that her understanding of political judgment had become an original and constructive contribution to contemporary political thinking. My intention in this paper is to examine both Ricoeur’s and Disch’s arguments, so as to evaluate their respective readings. My further aim is to establish if and how Arendt’s insights could be innovative in appreciating how imagination might contribute to a reading of political judgment that can accommodate freedom in a way that subverts imposed regulations or concepts yet avoids relativism.

**Can the attestation of the self be a right to require? On the political implications of a hermeneutical concept**

Sebastián Kaufmann

Universidad Alberto Hurtado

Santiago, Chile

Ricoeur defines attestation as the “assurance of being oneself acting and suffering” or as the “assurance – the credence and the trust – of existing in the mode of selfhood.” Ricoeur believes that it is possible to have some certainty about the cogito, not an absolute certainty, but a certainty nonetheless that Ricoeur calls “attestation.” This certainty is less than the unshakable certainty Descartes wanted but is more than the skepticism of Nietzsche. Thus, attestation is a concept that appears in the context of the hermeneutic of the self as an alternative to the Cartesian idea of the cogito and to the dissolution of the cogito of the Nietzschean tradition.

However, Ricoeur affirms in *The Course of Recognition* that “attestation has become a demand, a right to require, under the rubric of the idea of social justice.” Thus, in this statement we find that the concept of attestation, which is first developed in the context of a hermeneutics of the self, is presented here in the context of political philosophy as a demand, as a right to require.

This paper tries to make sense of this statement. In the first part, I present the concept of attestation as appears in *Oneself as Another*. In the second part, I discuss the social conditions that make possible the attestation of the self. In order to do it, I present how the concept of attestation must be understood in connection with the vulnerability of the self. As a consequence of that vulnerability, I will show that attestation, in order to be possible, needs specific social conditions. These social conditions are related, among others things, to the idea of the recognition of the capacities.

In the third part of my paper, as a conclusion, I will present the following thesis: we can make sense of the idea of attestation as a right if we understand attestation as not only something that can be achieved by the self but also as something that can be frustrated. The self, in this sense, can fail to attest. If that is the case, then society has the responsibility of making possible the attestation of the self.

**Created Truth and Remade Reality in Painting:**

**From Jin Hao (833-917) to Ricoeur (1913-2005)**

Katia Ho Lenehan

Fu Jen University

Taipei, Taiwan

This paper compares Jin Hao and Ricoeur on the topic of whether truth and reality is remade in painting. In my study of Ricoeur, I draw on his unpublished Lectures on Imagination. Lecture 17, on “The Pictorial Aspect of Reference,” is especially dedicated to the topic of painting. It seems that Ricoeur approached the topic of painting as a bridge between the poetic imagination and the epistemological imagination. His discourse on painting coincides with his theory of productive imagination, an insight I found akin to Jin Hao.

Ricoeur claims that what occurs in painting is the transfiguration of reality through an iconographic device. He adopts François Dagognet’s idea of “iconic augmentation” to elaborate his theory of fiction in painting. Fiction, thanks to its negativity, “discloses new dimensions of reality.” The idea of “iconic augmentation” thus expresses the “power of both condensing and expanding reality.” Dagognet’s argument is carried out by opposing iconic augmentation to the mere reduplicative function of the shadowy image. He criticized the platonic tendency in painting to advocate the principle that the copy is always less than the original, and accordingly “writing and pictures in general impoverish reality, because they are themselves less than real, are mere shadows as compared to real things.”

Dagognet’s perspective perfectly echoes Ricoeur’s idea of fiction, since fiction “seems to be non-referential in the sense that it has no object, that a new kind of reference may be opened thanks to the absence of a real referent, of an original. Whereas the reproductive image is marginal as regards reality, it’s the function of productive imagination – of the fictional – to open and change reality.” Painting, when it breaks itself away from the function of copying the already existent object, creates its own original.

**Feeling the History of Philosophy:**

**Applying Ricoeur’s Conception of Feeling to the Analytic and Continental Divide**

Todd Mei

University of Dundee

United Kingdom

The relation between analytic and Continental philosophy has been described in various terms—according to differences in style, methodology, philosophical aims, and cultural roots. Whatever may be the case, the criteria used to assess relation and difference inevitably fall to an interpretation of the history of philosophy—in this case, looking at the shared point of origin or the moment of divergence between the two traditions. In other words, it appears that in order to make sense of the distinction between the two traditions, one must understand how the philosophical and conceptual lineages respective to each tradition have emerged. Michael Dummett’s (1994) study of the competing theories of meaning in Frege and Husserl is perhaps the most well-known in this respect.

Yet no matter how erudite and convincing these analyses may be [see also, Buckle (2004), Critchley (1998) and Glendinning (2006)], there is something troubling about the rigidity of their historical reconstructions. Ricoeur expresses this concern in his early writing in terms of the “contradiction of all historicity” (1965: 73), where interpretation of the history of philosophy is split by the two poles of singularity and unity—that is, respectively, the history of philosophy as a plurality of philosophers in which each philosopher is irreducibly singular *and* the history of philosophy as a unified whole, directed towards universal questions and answers. Ricoeur briefly explains that the two are derived from two irreconcilable “feelings” (1965: 74). This is an astonishing move given that what Ricoeur seems to be saying is that the philosophical drive to understand the history of philosophy is essentially non-philosophical. However, this identification of historicity with feeling is not developed in any more detail.

If one is to take seriously Ricoeur’s assessment of historicity and feeling, then two questions arise. First, how are we to view attempts to understand the relation between analytic and Continental philosophy when they deliberately make use of a reconstruction of philosophical lineages? Second, can an analysis of feeling be helpful in understanding the relation between analytic and Continental philosophy?

In this paper, I develop Ricoeur’s truncated comments on historicity and feeling in relation to his analysis of emotion in *Freedom and Nature* (1966). I apply this analysis to respond generally to the first question by showing how each pole can be identified with the emotion of *distrust*, or what is in Ricoeur’s parlance, a lack of “confidence” in the “stability” of being (cf. 2005: 63 ). To the second question, I argue that we can view the distinction between the analytic and Continental traditions in relation to distrust. As twentieth-century phenomena, the two traditions can be seen to follow distinct trajectories emerging from distrust. I will briefly describe these trajectories in terms of doubt and suspicion, respectively.

**Sources Cited**

Buckle, Stephen (2004). “Analytic Philosophy and Continental Philosophy: The Campbell Thesis Revised,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 12:1, 111–150.

Critchley, Simon (1998). “Introduction,” in *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, Simon Critchley and William R. Schroeder (eds.). Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 1–17

Glendinning, Simon (2006). *The Idea of Continental Philosophy: A Philosophical Chronicle*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Dummett, Michael (1994). *The Origins of Analytic Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ricoeur, Paul (2005). *The Course of Recognition*, trans. D. Pellauer. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

---------- (1966). *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

---------- (1965). *History and Truth*, trans. C. Kelbley. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

**Seeing the many in the one: a Ricoeurian reading of the authobiographical writings of the Tibetan Buddhist lama and mediator, Tsewang Norbu.**

Michael Monhart

Union Theological Seminary

New York, New York

The central aporias of this paper were generated by a couple of notes made by Ricoeur collected in *Living Up to Death.* There Ricoeur considers “detachment” conceived not as a negativity, but rather as an inner dynamic that opens oneself up to the other. Writing of the Rhineland mystics, he proposes that their “detachment” was not a loss; rather it was a gain that made “themselves available to the essential” and suggests that, in their active lives of teaching and traveling, they were “open to the fundamental through their detachment.” Going further he states that “It is openness to the essential, to the fundamental that motivates the transfer of the love of life to the other.” A few pages later he writes, almost as an aside, that perhaps Buddhism might be of help as attestation can conceal a resistance to such detachment.

Little work has been done placing Ricoeur in dialogue with Buddhist philosophy especially with regard to conflict mediation and the nature of ethical action. In this paper I read through autobiographical writings of the 18th century Tibetan Buddhist lama and diplomat Tsewang Norbu and provide an anthropological (and ultimately ontological) perspective on non-Western based issues of crisis and conflict resolution. Tsewang Norbu was known as a successful mediator of disputes between gods and demons, as well as human communities and governments. I examine the nature of his broad recognition of the other and situate the nature of this recognition in his particular conception of the self as constructed through a life narrative of promises kept, that is, religious vows observed.

Tsewang Norbu’s mediations of conflicts and disagreements are rooted in a specific ontology confirming, yet also complicating, Ricoeur’s rejection of Parfit’s “quasi-Buddhist erasure of identity.” Tsewang Norbu takes the view that ultimately nothing possesses a self-existing nature but nevertheless there are differences to be investigated (as in disagreements and conflicts). He retains the paradox maintained by Ricouer (in “Narrative Identity”) as “I am nothing.” We see, though, in Tsewang Norbu’s autobiographical writings a bridge deeper into this paradox through the authorship of his actions in resolving conflicts. He broadens the horizons of Ricoeur’s hermeneutic of self rooted in attestation and leads us back to a detachment cognizant of the fundamental which is open in wide frame to the other, and motivated, in Tsewang Norbu’s case, towards mediating action.

**The Hermeneutics of Re-enactment:**

**Rethinking Ricoeur’s Criteriology of Symbols**

John Montani

Stony Brook University

Stony Brook, New York

This paper takes as its starting point Ricoeur’s “Criteriology of Symbols” found in section two of the introduction of Symbolism of Evil. Through carefully examining Ricoeur’s intentional analysis of the symbol it is shown how the symbol’s inexhaustible meaning derives from the ineradicable relation between psyche and cosmos. The ‘double expressivity’ of psyche and cosmos, which constitute symbolic discourse, can only be understood through a fuller understanding of the poetic imagination’s active role in ‘sympathetic re-enactment’. With reference to Gaston’s Bachelard’s theory of material and dynamic imagination, as well as Ricoeur’s criteriology of symbols it is argued that the cosmic resonances and inexhaustibility of the symbol can be understood only if the role of the imagination becomes more clarified. In suggesting that reading Bachelard’s theory of imagination next to Ricouer’s criteriology of symbols the ‘re-enactment’ of symbolic expression becomes more robust and helps to amplify the language of confession, thus providing a more productive reading of Symbolism of Evil as a whole.

 In drawing from Bachelard’s writings on reverie, childhood, and the “cogito” of the dreamer it is also possible to bring forth a better understanding of the oneric dimensions of the symbol and the possibility of engaging a text through a second naïveté. The ineradicable relation between psyche and cosmos along with the double expressivity of the symbol are seen to be central to following out Ricoeur’s maxim that the symbol give rise to thought. In beginning from the fullness of language, what must be achieved is a clarification of the imagination to help actively engage the believing soul in symbolic expression. The opacity of the symbol may contribute to understanding only if the emotions of the confessional soul are rendered properly through an imaginal participation in the symbol, which come to express us more than our mere reading of its expression. The paper is thus an attempt to reread Ricoeur’s intentional analysis of symbols in light of Bachelard’s writings on imagination, reverie, childhood, and the dream-soul, in hopes to supplement a richer engagement with the primary symbols we find in myth.

**P.Ricoeur: “the memory work” question and the hermeneutic truth of history**

Sergey Panov, National Research Technologic University MISiS

Sergey Ivashkin, Central Library System №3

Moscow

For P.Ricoeur the philosophy of memory determines a poetics of history. The memory is not only a «mourning work», this is a work on all consequences of a individual and collective traumatism, on a painful experiences, this work is to open an ability to express, which inevitably turns for P.Ricoeur to a «memory work» as a sphere of development of public judgement, of the collective relation to an impossible event in order to share together its substantial moments and to accept our common responsibility for its consequences.

The politics of judgement in the “memory work”, the work of judgement and the self-judgement of individual and collective history`s subjects in the tradition remove a cognitive, intellectual and practical autism which is interfered with an expression of the unity of perception, of thought and of will-to-action in an estimation of existence`s objective conditions. The experience of the intolerable trauma connects with the metaphysics of horror, which is for P.Ricoeur a symmetric negation of the sublime – this concept reflecting a special spiritual mood in its relation to something exceeding imaginative frameworks, to the Idea shown in the dissonance of subject`s cognitive capacities.

The horror of any casual consciousness before the indifferent Absolute forbids a subject to express himself, to speak about his existential experience, to become a witness. This horror ontologizes the event of Holocaust, imitating a nazi ontologization of Jews as «guilty on the fact of a birth». That is why in the politics of judgement it is absolutely necessary for the ethics of witness to divide concepts of person, of person condemned and of criminal: the history is not a linear embodiment of damnation and of compensation in any event violence`s series, it is an experience of self-knowledge, a dialogue and a pardon, that doesn't at all exclude for P.Ricoeur a necessity of historical and legal justice which is to be recognized collectively.

But what bases a hermeneutics of this historical memory? It is an unconditional impulse to search a self`s truth, an authenticity which should be incarnated always and equally in any experience, it expresses always the same desire of the modern subject – the desire of moral self-control in a magic appeal of a self(mis)understanding in any thought. The hermeneutic magic of self-understanding proceeding from the pure immediate fact of understanding is based on the Judaic magic of a creating word which produces both a context reality and conditions of its perception proceeding from the unique fact of pronouncing which transforms any individual or collective life into the judgement, that is necessarily subordinated to the logics of the common blind consent.

**A Pragmatic Ricoeur?**

Robert Piercey

Campion College at the University of Regina

Saskatchewan

Much has been written about the links between classical American pragmatism and recent French philosophy. This work, however, has largely ignored Ricoeur. This is not surprising, since Ricoeur says little about the pragmatists, and what he does say deals with aspects of their work other than their pragmatism. But this lack of attention might lead us to overlook some striking affinities between Ricoeur and the pragmatists. This essay explores these affinities, and tries to determine the precise sense in which Ricoeur is, and is not, sympathetic to pragmatism.

I focus on three affinities between Ricoeur and the classical pragmatists. The first is a belief that *hope* is an important epistemological concept. Ricoeur expresses this belief in essays such as “Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems,” claiming that “[h]ope may concern philosophy not so much by proposing an object… but by requiring a change in the organization of philosophical systems.”[[9]](#footnote-9) This echoes a claim made by Peirce, who clarifies his conception of truth as the projected end of inquiry in terms of “a *hope* that [a] conclusion may be substantially reached concerning the particular questions with which our inquiries are busied.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Second, Ricoeur attaches great importance to the *mediating* functions of philosophy. He approaches problems dialectically, trying to overcome dualisms by thinking their poles dynamically. A similar impulse animates the work of William James, who calls pragmatism “a mediator and reconciler [that] ‘unstiffens’ our theories,”[[11]](#footnote-11) bridging the gulfs between rationalism and empiricism or idealism and materialism. Third, Ricoeur’s *metaphilosophy* is strikingly similar to that of the pragmatists. He insists that some problems that cannot be solved by armchair theorizing do admit of a sort of resolution in the practical sphere. (*Oneself as Another* cites tragic conflict as an example.) Ricoeur’s view echoes Peirce’s attempts to adjudicate theories of force and transubstantiation by looking to their practical effects alone.

Having explored these affinities, I ask whether they entitle us to call Ricoeur a pragmatic thinker. I argue that Ricoeur could not accept the most common form of pragmatism: namely, *meaning pragmatism*. He does not think differences in meaning just *are* differences in practice, such that our conception of an object’s practical effects “is the *whole* of our conception of the object.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Nevertheless, Ricoeur shares something important with pragmatism: his philosophical impulses are usually *prospective* rather than *retrospective*. Retrospective thinking, as I use the term, evaluates positions by tracing them back to something prior: first principles, constituting acts of consciousness, and so on. Retrospection, in Ricoeur’s words, “reabsorbs all rationality in the already happened meaning.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Prospective thinking evaluates positions by looking forward to something that arises out of them. Pragmatism is a prospective philosophy in that it evaluates positions by looking ahead to their practical consequences. Ricoeur’s thought is prospective in its privileging of “emerging meanings”[[14]](#footnote-14) over completed ones. To Ricoeur, what justifies a position is its ability to *give rise* to thought: not its retrieval of a “sunken Atlantis,” buts its promise of a “re-creation of language.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

**The Evolution of Recognition: A Research Proposal**

Kenneth A. Reynhout

The College of New Jersey

Ewing Township, New Jersey

In this paper I outline the contours of an interdisciplinary research program seeking to connect Ricoeur’s anthropology of recognition with the evolutionary sciences. Some of the most interesting and provocative theories in paleoanthropology concern the evolution of human morality and religion. Such theories are typically intellectualist (focusing on epistemic tendencies, i.e. belief formation), reductionist (questioning the veracity of moral and religious beliefs), and individualistic (methodologically prioritizing the individual over the social). To counter these trends I am proposing to apply the concept of recognition to human evolution. My working hypothesis is that developing capacities for recognition—of things, self, others, the good, the sacred, etc.—were key milestones in evolutionary history, ultimately allowing humans to be a specific kind of social, moral, and religious animal. This hypothesis is inspired in part by the structure of Ricoeur’s last complete monograph, *The Course of Recognition*, which traces a path from recognition as identification to recognizing oneself and finally to mutual recognition. It is doubtful Ricoeur understood this sequence in evolutionary or even developmental terms, but I am making the hermeneutical wager that human evolution followed a similar course of recognition. My wager is informed by the fact that recognition already appears in numerous places in evolutionary science, including animal cognition, mirror recognition in primatology, kin recognition, and theories of speciation. In this research project I hope to demonstrate that an emphasis on the evolutionary dynamics of recognition promises to better capture the interpersonal, social, ethical, and political aspects of the capable human.

**Paul Ricoeur and Marjorie Suchocki: The Individual Act of Violence**

Stephanie Riley

Boston University

Boston, Massachusetts

In “Violence and Language,” Paul Ricoeur claims, “that the philosopher's task…is to take the largest view of the realm of violence, from its exterior nature against which we fight, through the nature within that overwhelms us, to, finally, the will to murder that, it is said, is nourished by each consciousness in its encounter with another.”[[16]](#footnote-16) This paper will take as its aim recognizing the root of violence in the individual and, thus, reinforcing the individual’s responsibility in attending to the potential for violent acts.

In “Violence and Language” Ricoeur mentions that some might argue that he stretches the notion of violence too far. The same criticism is made of Process Theologian’s Marjorie Suchocki’s conception of sin as violence in *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in a Relational Theology*. Both Ricoeur and Suchocki locate violence within the individual’s capacity to act. For Ricoeur, violence emerges in individual speech, even in (and perhaps especially in) the speech-act of identity claiming. For Suchocki, violence is sin or “participation through intent or act in unnecessary violence that contributes to the ill-being of any aspect of earth or its inhabitants.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Both scholars recognize that violence begins with some sense of division between one and another.

The dialectic approach, putting Ricoeur in conversation with Suchocki, allows a textured exploration of how violence profoundly affects relationships, relationships with one’s self as well as relationships with others. Although the main theme will be violence, the assertion of violence as sin by Suchocki ushers in a consideration of Ricoeur’s analysis of sin, especially as expressed in *The Symbolism of Evil,* as an experience of being oneself, alienated from oneself. A sense of alienation characterizes Suchocki’s notion of sin as well, of sin perpetuated by violence. The assertion in this paper that all forms of violence start as internal, individual acts is supported by both Ricoeur’s notion of violence as originating in language and by Suchocki’s conception of sin as violence against creation. This conception of violence as sin, manifests in evil, which Ricoeur claims in *The Symbolism of Evil* obliterates the good, eradicates virtue, and systematically takes possession of an individual.

A possible resolution to the critical problem of violence that inhibits agency and relationality, for both Ricoeur and Suchocki, is forgiveness. For Ricoeur, forgiveness should unbind the agent from its act, originating in language, and thus, help him or her recognize plurality. For Suchocki, forgiveness equally lies in a transformation of the violence act itself. The paper will conclude by asserting that both the cause and the probable solution of violence rest within individual agency.

**A Comparison of the Hermeneutic Strategies of Ricoeur and Rawls on Global Justice**

Rajesh Sampath

Brandeis University

Waltham, Massachusetts

My paper will explore the hermeneutical strategies in Ricoeur’s *The Just* (1995) while comparing and contrasting it with the philosophical conceptions of Rawls’ influential corpus. Among other major Anglo-American moral and political philosophers, Ricoeur treats Rawls in particular detail in his own fascinating work on justice. However, at the time of Ricoeur’s publication, Rawls had yet to publish his statement on international justice, namely *The* *Law of Peoples* (1999), which is a compilation of previous lectures that spans the time-frame of *A Theory of Justice* (1971) to *Political Liberalism* (1993) and beyond. In particular I want to examine the modes of logic and argumentation in Ricoeur’s work to see if some of the concepts in *The Law of Peoples* can respond in kind to the challenges Ricoeur poses. In chapters three and four of *The Just*, namely “Is a Purely Procedural Theory of Justice Possible?” and “After Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice*,” Ricoeur analyzes two of Rawls’ major works prior to the publication of *The Law of Peoples*. Ricoeur’s critical analysis of Rawls’ first and second principles of justice will be evaluated while attempting responses to Ricoeur by way of reformulations of those principles within the broader international context that Rawls’ *The Law of Peoples* affords. It is obvious that Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* points to the domestic case of a constitutional legal-procedural democracy and in particular the United States and its reliance on Anglo-American moral and legal philosophy. Ricoeur however comes out of a 20th century European context, which itself is the culmination of a long, broad history of Western philosophy. This indicates the underlying variance in hermeneutical strategies of perhaps an ‘American’ political philosophical mindset in Rawls (who readily admits distant European forbearers such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hume, Kant, Hegel and Mills) and Ricoeur’s more contemporary continental European philosophical context spanning the 1940s to the time of his death. I believe the paper falls under one of the sub-themes of the meeting, namely “Politics, History and the Hermeneutics of Historical Consciousness.’ It compares and contrasts the hermeneutic contexts of two different socio-cultural-political-economic structures—American and continental European—which has yielded two different types of philosophical expression. Technically speaking I will focus on Ricoeur’s questioning of the second principle in Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice*, namely the ‘difference principle.’ Here Rawls tries to justify income inequalities—first part of the second principle—in terms of fairness for the least advantaged and ‘authority and responsibility’—as Ricoeur puts it in *The Just*—in the second part of the second principle on ‘offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.’ (*A Theory of Justice*)[[18]](#footnote-18) How can the import of Ricoeur’s hermeneutic strategies on a theory of global economic distributive justice be met by proposals that Rawls offers on the topic of economic fairness and international justice in *The Law of Peoples*? I hope to show that a comparison of the hermeneutic mechanisms that underlie the philosophical-historical consciousness of Rawls’ theories of justice (from *A Theory of Justice to The Law of Peoples*) and Ricoeur’s critical analysis of Rawls in *The Just* can help advance a new philosophical theory of international justice, particular on the issue of resolving global economic inequalities. Ultimately, I will attempt a synthesis of Ricoeur’s ‘hermeneutic reason’ with Rawls’ idea of ‘public reason.’

**Religious Aesthetics and the “Glory of the Infinite”**

Roger W. H. Savage

University of California, Los Angeles

Johann Sebastian Bach’s declaration that the sole purpose of music was to be for the glory of God alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*) tasked music with a sublime vocation. In Bach’s music, the feeling of height that Paul Ricoeur pairs with the avowal of the feeling of absolute dependence thus acquires an inimitable form of expression. For Ricoeur, the avowal of this feeling of absolute dependence lies at the root of all religious attitudes. Religious feelings thus incline the

heart toward the object of its ultimate concern. Bach’s music, Ricoeur claims, marks out the threshold of religious aesthetics. For the “glory of the infinite”[[19]](#footnote-19)—the name for height in philosophies of testimony—appears in Bach’s music without injunction or constraint.

By relating the “glory of the infinite” as figured in Bach’s music to the hermeneutics of testimony, I intend to draw out the distinctions and intersections between religious aesthetics and the ethico-moral power of exemplary acts. The irruption of the religious meaning of the term in the hermeneutics of testimony invites this complementary reading. The new dimensions that this religious meaning opens up witness to the absolute. The hermeneutics of testimony is inseparable from a project of liberation, in this respect. Here the originary affirmation that Ricoeur opposes to the claim to absolute knowledge opens the way to the feeling of exteriority of height via the testimony of exemplary acts and lives, from which the injunction to follow after issues.

The hermeneutics of testimony thus provides a critical corrective to the aesthetic gnosticism that dominated Romantic sensibilities. Jaroslav Pelikan argues that the Romanticism with which Pietism displayed so many affinities “believed in the redemptive power of tears.”[[20]](#footnote-20) Religious aesthetics invariably runs the risk of confusing poetic expressions of anguish and joy with the confession of faith. (Augustine’s acknowledgement of the difficulty of assigning music its proper devotional place attests to this risk.) Music’s power to redescribe affective dimensions of experience through sublimating the difference between being and our part in it prepares the heart for its conversion. In this regard, the aesthetic experience of exteriority and height stands in a complex relation to the call to consciousness that enjoins us to live according to the testimony of the absolute.

**The Religious Sisters of the LCWR: Prophets of an Age of Hermeneutical Reason**

Joél Z. Schmidt

Salve Regina University

Newport, Rhode Island

On April 18, 2012, the Roman Catholic Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) released a document ordering the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in the United States to reform its statutes, programs and affiliations to conform more closely to “the teachings and discipline of the Church.” In this document the CDF drew particular attention to several issues including a policy of corporate dissent by the LCWR with respect to the church’s teaching that homosexuality is sinful, and that women should not be ordained priests. Undergirding these particular positions, the CDF averred, lay a mistaken understanding of the dynamic of prophecy in the church, which justifies dissent by positing the possibility of divergence between a legitimate theological intuition by some of the faithful, and the official teaching of the church’s magisterium. In contrast to such a view the CDF suggested that the magisterium acts as “the guarantor of the authentic interpretation of the Church’s faith.”

Ricoeur’s philosophical and religious writings can help us to analyze this situation, and discover how at its heart lies a respective embrace (LCWR) and substantial rejection (CDF) of an age of hermeneutical reason; operating within their own particular tradition the religious sisters of the LCWR prophetically model what it might mean for each of us to live a deeply committed life, inflected by an awareness of hermeneutical concerns. The aspects of Ricoeur’s work that help to illuminate this situation are multiple: i. the apparent appeal for “recognition” by the sisters of their “capacity” to interpret the church’s faith in relation to their context; ii. a contrast between an approach that begins with a self-founding Archimedean point (the magisterium’s assured correctness of interpretation), versus the vulnerable wager of a hermeneutical approach incorporating not only belonging/recollection but also self-critique; iii. the recognition that without critique hermeneutics becomes ideological, in the sense of a self-serving legitimation of authority; iv. the need for any tradition to integrate in the sense of a healthy ideology, and uproot in the sense of a healthy utopia, projecting toward the future in the mode of a “creative repetition” of the past; and v. the congruence between this pattern and Ricoeur’s analysis of a three-step dialectic of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. What we find at the end of this itinerary, *pace* the negative judgment of the hierarchy on this issue, is that it is in fact precisely the sisters who are acting prophetically in this situation: beginning from a position of deep “belonging” to their tradition they are not afraid to submit their tradition to “critique,” and in so doing they project toward the future in the mode of a creative repetition of the past that is the mark of the Israelite “prophets of salvation.” Moreover, in this they are also prophets for all of us of what it means to embrace an age of hermeneutical reason, without shying away from necessary, risky wager of particular commitments.

**Appartenance et distanciation: Lire ensemble Gadamer et Ricoeur**

Mathieu Scraire

Collège Édouard-Montpetit

Longueuil, Québec

Dans sa conférence au Congrès de la *Society for Ricoeur Studies* à Montréal, en 2010, Jean Grondin assignait à l’herméneutique la tâche de lire ensemble Gadamer et Ricoeur. Ma communication veut répondre à cette injonction, en ceci qu’elle va essayer de décrire les deux herméneutiques en fonction de leur appropriation, usage et critique des deux concept-clés que sont l’*appartenance* et la *distanciation.*

Le thème de la relation entre appartenance et distanciation est un thème récurrent dans *Du texte à l’action*, notamment. Il provient, comme on sait, de Heidegger, mais Ricoeur le reconduit surtout à Gadamer. Dans « La tâche de l'herméneutique », Ricoeur reconnaît que le concept d’appartenance traverse tout *Vérité et méthode*; je dirais, à un point tel que, si l’on voulait décrire l’herméneutique de Gadamer en un mot, ce pourrait être « appartenance » (*Zugehörigkeit*). Cela, même si le concept de distanciation apparaît aussi dans son œuvre (ce que Ricoeur reconnaît par ailleurs), peut-être de façon moins marquée. Le concept d'appartenance peut en effet à bon droit être considéré comme l’idée maîtresse du « tournant ontologique de l'herméneutique », que Ricoeur s'approprie en le décrivant comme « ce déplacement de la problématique herméneutique, qui met désormais l'accent sur l'être-au-monde et sur l'appartenance participative qui précède toute relation d'un sujet à un objet qui lui fait face »[[21]](#footnote-21). De fait, Gadamer caractérise principalement l’appartenance comme l’ « insertion de la connaissance dans l'être »[[22]](#footnote-22), ce qui l’amènera à résister à la scission moderne entre le sujet et son objet, pôles hernéneutiques qu’il pense plutôt en termes d’*appartenance mutuelle du subjectif et de l'objectif*, appartenance qui précède toute distanciation et la rend possible: c'est en raison du lien qui m'unit à la chose (dans le langage) que je peux notamment confronter mes préjugés et les réviser au besoin, à la lumière de la chose même.

Or selon Ricoeur il faut donc penser *ensemble* appartenance et distanciation. Non pas répudier mais assumer la distanciation, ce qui est un peu une critique de Gadamer. Ainsi, par exemple, John Arthos rappelait, toujours au congrès de 2010, que le moment gadamérien, qui insiste sur l'appartenance, est nécessaire pour décentrer le sujet absolu, mais il faut maintenant *retrouver* ce sujet *à l'intérieur* de l'appartenance. C'est dans cette perspective que Ricoeur reprend le thème de la dialectique de la participation et de la distanciation, qui trouve un équivalent pratique dans la dialectique entre *appartenance historique*, ou l’être-affecté par l’histoire, et *initiative*, soit la capacité d’agir et d’initier soi-même un cours historique.

Je vais essayer ici de rendre ce couple de concepts le plus évident possible, de manière à montrer que si l’herméneutique de Gadamer insiste sur l’appartenance participative, celle de Ricoeur insiste plus sur le moment de distanciation à l’intérieur de l’appartenance, sans répudier celle-ci. C’est pourquoi, s’il est certes possible de « résumer », en un sens, l’herméneutique de Gadamer sous le titre *appartenance*, celle de Ricoeur pourrait l’être sous le titre *appartenance et distanciation.* À mon avis, cette dialectique est la raison même pour lire ensemble Gadamer et Ricoeur : nous nous retrouvons par là au cœur même de l’herméneutique.

***Oneself as Another,* Narcissism, and the Redemption of Empathy**

Jim Sisson

Macon State College

Macon, Georgia

In his seventh study in *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur states, “It is in connection with the notions of capacity and realization—that is, finally of *power* and *act*—that a place is make for *lack* and, through the mediation of lack, for *others*. The famous aporia, consisting in determining whether one must love oneself in order to love someone else, must not blind us. In fact, this aporia leads directly to the heart of the problematic of the self and the other than self” (*OA* 182). To me, the elucidation of this “blindness” of self-love points to the problem of narcissism, namely an excessive, yet shallow, preoccupation with the self at the expense of others. The answer to a narcissistic self-love must come in the form of empathy with the other. To examine this relationship between the self, narcissism, and empathy, I will place Ricoeur’s *Oneself as Another* in dialogue with Paul Tillich’s *The Courage to Be* (1952). One specific point of consideration to bring into conversation is Tillich’s discussion of neurotic “unrealistic self-affirmation” (*CB* 68ff). The “courage to be” is Tillich’s answer to a pathological self-absorption or preoccupation. In a phrase very suggestive of Ricoeur’s “oneself as another,” Tillich stipulates that his “courage to be” “is not the courage to be as oneself” (131), but instead opens to the other, a larger scheme of things beyond the self: “an embracing whole,” “the heavenly realm,” etc (131). Ricoeur briefly couches his idea of “oneself as another” in theological terms (despite his preference to remain philosophical and “agnostic” [*OA* 24]): “the idea of myself appears profoundly transformed, due solely to my recognizing this Other, who causes the presence in me of its own representation” (*OA* 9). Tillich’s “courage to be” “transcends . . . the courage to be as oneself” (131) and anticipates Ricoeur who promotes empathy with the other: “the other is not condemned to remain a stranger but can become *my counterpart*, that is, someone who, *like* me, says ‘I.’ The resemblance based on the pairing of flesh with flesh works to reduce a distance, to bridge a gap, in the very place where it creates a dissymmetry. That is what is signified by the adverb ‘like’: like me, the other thinks, desires, enjoys, suffers” (*OA* 335). In the pathological, narcissistic personality, this empathy is subverted by unrealistic self-love. A “dissymmetry” of the other must be recognized and empathized with to overcome a narcissistic self-preoccupation. Ricoeur illuminates how the other opens us to a fuller, healthier self.

**Paul Ricœur and the Hermeneutics of Christian Tradition**

Michael Sohn

The University of Chicago

Illinois

While there are already a number of excellent studies that rightly detect the rich import and relevance of Paul Ricœur’s thought for understanding the nature and task of theology, they are often restricted to an analysis of his philosophical writings, and so confined that contribution to his philosophy. Ricœur’s work was first appropriated in theology by his colleagues at Chicago, such as Langdon Gilkey and David Tracy, who found in his thought a general philosophical hermeneutical foundation on which to ground and apply regional biblical hermeneutics. Propelled by the pioneering work of Mark Wallace and pursued more recently by Dan Stiver and Boyd Blundell, current scholarship argues that Ricœur’s thought, especially on narrative, holds an affinity with postliberal theology. The terms of this debate, however, have been largely defined by and restricted to Ricœur’s *philosophical* contribution to the task of theology. Yet in the 1960s, precisely at a time when he was reflecting on and formulating his philosophical hermeneutics, he devoted a number of articles to theology and theological hermeneutics. Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, but also Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Gerhard Ebeling, and Jurgen Moltmann are frequently cited in his writings during this period of intellectual ferment. By focusing on these untranslated and less well-known articles, I argue that Ricœur’s understanding of the nature and task of theology most closely aligns with what Gerhard Ebeling called *Wortgeschehen* or as Ricœur translates into French, *le procès de la parole*. The ‘process of the Word,’ understood by Ricœur, offers a hermeneutics of Christian tradition that affirms the priority of the Word of God, acknowledges its embeddedness in language and narrative, recognizes the necessity for hermeneutics in interpreting Christian symbols and narratives, and re-interprets them in light of Christian praxis. This paper aims to present not only a broader and deeper appreciation of Ricœur’s distinct contribution to theology, but also suggests that his contribution uniquely offers an understanding of the nature and task of theology that is sensitive to the ‘linguistic’ and ‘cultural turn’ that characterizes much contemporary thought and is responsive to a ‘post-secular age’ that is enjoying the so-called return of religion.

**Human Time and The Unreality of Time: Ricoeur and McTaggert in Conversation**

Joseph Spencer

Bridgewater State University

Bridgewater, Massachusetts

J.M.E. McTaggart’s 1908 essay, *The Unreality of Time*, develops the theory that time, and the assumptions one typically makes about time, are mere illusions. According to McTaggart, time is not a thing in which someone exists or events occur; what we call time is merely a series of events in relation to one another, where you can say that something happened before or after, or you can talk about some event as past, present, or future. The series of positions “in time,” then, are the only ways we can accurately speak about events happening at one “time” or another. From these preliminary claims, McTaggart is able to argue that “time” cannot be some all-encompassing entity, and is, instead, merely these sets of relations as positions along a timeline.

Now, in his three volume work, *Time and Narrative*, Paul Ricoeur develops and explains ideas of time that come into contact with some of McTaggart’s arguments and may, in fact, have much in common with McTaggart’s ideas. Ricoeur writes about three sense of time: cosmological time, which is the sequence of daily events that we observe, phenomenological time, which is the progression past, present, and future, and human time, which Ricoeur claims is a composite of the other two. Ricoeur’s idea that human time is how we all see events and time, namely, the ability to view both cosmological passing of “time,” as well as the phenomenological experience of time moving from past to present, is one where we can find room for dialogue between Ricoeur and McTaggart on our perceptions of time. Ricoeur’s ideas, in fact, may even allow room for McTaggart’s claim that time is not real.

In this paper, I set both of these great thinkers in dialogue on the issue of the unreality of time, so as to shed light on how the work of each compliments the other in a way that may, at first, be missed by the average reader. Both Ricoeur and McTaggart stand as giants of their respective eras, and they should both be given their due when it comes to discussions about time. In the end, I hope that it may be clear how important a question this is, as well as how both these great men may assist us in our search for an understanding of time.

**Ricoeur, Aristotle, God, & Being in 1953-1954**

John Starkey

Oklahoma City University

Oklahoma

 In 1953-4 academic year Paul Ricoeur delivered a course of lectures entitled *Être, Essence, et Substance chez Platon et Aristote*, thereafter circulated in several mimeographed and printed forms before its recent and definitive French edition in 2011, soon to be followed by the work’s first English translation. The work is significant for the philosopher of religion and the philosopher of God for at least three reasons. One, it presents how Ricoeur interpreted several successive notions of “the divine” and allied topics as they developed in pre-Socratic, Platonic, and Aristotelian thought (with side glances at the later neo-Platonic tradition). Two, it offers intriguing contrasts and comparisons with regard to Ricoeur’s interpretations of Marcel and Jaspers on related issues in two books in the preceding seven years. Three, it offers a suggestive lead-in to his own constructive approaches to related ideas in the 1950s and 1960s, first in the articles collected in *History and Truth* and then more thoroughly in his separate but thematically connected studies in *Fallible Man*, *The Symbolism of Evil*, *Freud and Philosophy*, as well as several contemporary but shorter publications.

 My overall thesis is that in these lectures Ricoeur was beginning to combine his vision of mystery as an inherent feature of any Reality worthy of the name of ‘God’ with a strictly limited but nonetheless affirmative approach to the tradition of God as Being-Itself. In this paper I propose to develop the second half of that thesis by analyses of the lectures’ presentation of both the advances and the aporias in Aristotle’s developing reflections as Ricoeur understood them in 1953-1954. My more particular position, particularly in view of the conference focus on “Paul Ricoeur and the Age of Hermeneutical Reason” will be that appropriate enthusiasm for Ricoeur’s insistence on hermeneutics in philosophy of religion ought to be balanced by his abiding concern for constructive rational thought. My more specific insistence will be that Ricoeur presents the internal development of Aristotle’s thought about Being as not only a cautionary tale with respect to the excesses of reason but also as a signal instance of the propriety and indeed necessity of rational and even systematic inquiry if philosophy is to accept its obligation to think perennial questions in depth and in as coherent a form as possible.

**HERMENEUTICAL REASON AND FORMS OF LIFE: RICOEUR AND**

**WITTGENSTEIN IN A POST-SECULAR AGE**

# Dan Stiver

# Hardin-Simmons University

Abilene, Texas

 In the movement towards a post-secular society, one of the issues that drove “a secular age,” in Charles Taylor's terms, was the divide in epistemology between religion and epistemology in general. Religion typically came up short in light of the demands of modernity. This led to one extreme in Christian theology in particular of trying to meet those standards and make faith as rational and scientific as possible, with deism as an example on the liberal end and the impact of Scottish Common Sense Realism in evangelical theology on the other. Another extreme at the other end of the spectrum was to move to a fideistic stance that also had more liberal and conservative forms. As the high standards of modernity for epistemology, for example, Cartesian demands for clarity and distinctness, have broken down and religions have experienced resurgence, we are entering both a post-secular age and an age of hermeneutical reason. As one of the premier hermeneutical philosophers, along with Hans Georg-Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical arc is well-known. One facet of the movement of the arc, however, has not been particularly re-evaluated in terms of his later thought, namely, the movement from the middle moment of “explanation” or critique to “appropriation.” As Ricoeur points out, there is often a short-circuit in the movement from critique to conviction I propose to draw on the notion of “practical wisdom” (*phronesis*) in Ricoeur as well as themes of unavoidable tragedy in ethics and linguistic translation and hospitality to indicate ways to traverse the fragile movement from criticism and to conviction. A major source, of course, will be the well-known book of interviews with Ricoeur entitled *Critique and Conviction*. The dynamics of the movement to conviction apply to reason in general but also to religious belief. This coming together or “interweaving,” to use the term Ricoeur applied to the relationship of historiography and fiction, is significant for the role of religion in a postsecular context. As Ricoeur said, it avoids the extremes of the “cogito exalted by Descartes and from the cogito that Nietzsche proclaimed forfeit.” (*Oneself as Another*, p. 23) I will compare then Ricoeur's notion of hermeneutical reason to another major candidate, the epistemology of the later Wittgenstein, especially in *On Certainty*, a comparison that is relatively infrequent both to measure the relative contributions of each but also to see where they complement each other.

**Panel**

**The Capable Human Being in an Age of Environmental Violence**

“Ricoeur in the Wild: Environmental Hermeneutics beyond the Cogito”

David Utsler, University of North Texas

“An Animal among Others: Ricoeur’s Ethics in Environmental Hermeneutics”

Nathan M. Bell, University of North Texas

 This panel seeks to explore the relevance of Paul Ricoeur’s philosophy to contemporary environmental problems. We live not only in the age of hermeneutical reason, but also (and increasingly) in the age of unprecedented violence against the natural environment and nonhuman living things. What are we to say about the capable human being in an age of such environmental violence?

 The first paper, “Ricoeur in the Wild: Environmental Hermeneutics beyond the *Cogito*,” seeks to draw on Ricoeur’s philosophy to re-examine the human/nature relationship. The hermeneutics of the self that Ricoeur developed provides a way of framing the human/nature relationship that isn’t trapped in the human/nature dualism of the *cogito*, while at the same time does not require that humans be dissolved into nature via the anti-*cogito* in order to solve the environmental crisis. This paper seeks to trace out both epistemological and ontological aspects of the hermeneutics of the self that will reveal that an underlying problem of the environmental crisis and the response of the environmental movement lies in the immediacy of self-reflection that characterizes the *cogito* as well as the shattered *cogito*. Either alternative leaves the capable human in a relationship with nature characterized by separation and alienation. The hermeneutics of the self places the capable human in the environment through an understanding of nature as one’s self and other than self simultaneously. Through this creative dialectical tension the self is constituted through the detours of reflection upon place and environment.

 The second paper, “An Animal among Others: Ricoeur’s Ethics in Environmental Hermeneutics,” seeks to examine the possibility of ethical consideration of animals. The capable human being can have ethics with animals because we interpret and recognize both our selves and (animal) others. One possibility for animal ethics, in light of Ricoeur’s *Onself as Another*, is when a person interprets the animal other seeing her as able-to-judge, able to act ethically and do otherwise. In such cases this person clearly interprets the animal also, in judging her, as being able to judge. Such an interpretation is potentially possible because going beyond the *cogito* opens us to other ways of thinking about selfhood, agency, and judgment. With Ricoeur’s work we can further explore a openness to both different ideas of the self and therefore to different ideas of others. This brings us to potentially inclusive ideas of animal agency or suffering that open a ground for ethical consideration of animals.

 The goal of this panel, then, is twofold: on the one hand, we want to show how Ricoeur’s philosophy can provide new approaches to the questions faced by environmental philosophers. On the other hand, engaging with environmental philosophy can help us to push the boundaries of the hermeneutical thinking we pursue with Ricoeur scholarship. In applying Ricoeur’s hermeneutics to the environment we can explore how this is an age of both hermeneutical and ecological reason.

**RICŒUR’S ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORICAL PAST**

Friedrich von Petersdorff

Independent Scholar

Germany

In 1984 Ricœur presented the Annual St. Thomas Aquinas Lecture at Marquette University in which he discussed “The Reality of the Historical Past” (published 1984). In his lecture Ricœur distinguishes three approaches of how to grasp the historical past. He analyses the past “under the sign of the Same, […] of the Other, and […] of the Analogue”. In this short lecture, nonetheless concise and precise, Ricœur presents and studies various ways how in the present it is possible to talk about history and how to address the quest for a true representation of the past. Apparently, Ricœur, in his lecture, discusses the topic of history (i.e. the hermeneutical and epistemological questions involved) in a manner different from his proceedings in “Time and Narrative” or in “Memory, History, Forgetting”, where history is being viewed in its interwovenness with and in its relatedness to other concepts such as time, memory and forgetting. In contrast, Ricœur’s analysis in his lecture (of history and of the related hermeneutical and epistemological questions) appears to be focussed on the topic of history itself. In my paper I, therefore, intend to present a detailed analysis of the three historical approaches Ricœur discusses in his lecture, in order to see how the concept of history is viewed differently in “The Reality of the Historical Past” as compared with the discussion of historical questions in “Time and Narrative” and “Memory, History, Forgetting”. I, further, argue that as Ricœur’s analysis of history in his lecture offers a detailed examination of the hermeneutical and epistemological questions regarding historical research mainly within the context of historical research itself it is worthwhile to re-read today his lecture, i.e. with Ricœur’s philosophical results of “Time and Narrative” and “Memory, History, Forgetting” in mind. I argue that such a reading will contribute in gaining a better understanding and appreciation of Ricœur’s contribution to the philosophical questions of history.

**Interpreting Recognition and Politics. Ricoeur and Bedorf**

Ernst Wolff

University of Pretoria

South Africa

Ricoeur studies will always benefit from confronting his work with the continuous debate on issues that were of concern to him. In my paper, I shall set up an encounter between Ricoeur’s later practical philosophy with one of the most significant recent publications on recognition, Thomas Bedorf’s *Verkennende Anerkennung* [Disregarding recognition], 2010. In this book, Bedorf formulates an immanent critique of the main trends of recognition theory (intercultural, intersubjective and subjectivising) and develops a new theory of recognition, in which attention to the asymmetrical and triadic nature of social relations prepares a conflict theory of identity claims as origin of the political.

 Bedorf’s use of Ricoeur is limited to commentary on *Parcours de la reconnaissance* – he explores the difficulties in the relation between knowledge and recognition. Yet, this hardly represents the basis for a dialogue; Ricoeur seems to be simply surpassed by Bedorf.

 However, taking the subtitle of Bedorf’s book *Über Identität und Politik* [On identity and politics] as lead, a fertile dialogue can reconstructed by following a detour through Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the capable human. Here Ricoeur examines the identity of the self, the ethico-political import of which is of primary significance for my paper. The comparison now reveals two much more equal partners in discussion, with similar concerns and methodological orientations. Both authors situate their practical thought in the tension between Aristotle and Kant, both work with a notion of the historical constitution of identity, for both the relation to the third is as constitutive of identity as are the relations with the close-by other. Compared to Bedorf’s immanent critique of the three forms of recognition theory, Ricoeur fares well in avoiding the dyadic simplification of the structure of recognition (cf. institutional alterity), but can also offer valuable insights into the way identity is informed by alterity. Furthermore, when Bedorf describes the “struggle for recognition” as a “Widerstreit von Interpretationen” (12), he invites discussion on the conflict of interpretations.

 Ricoeur should thus be considered of more interest to Bedorf’s project than initial impressions would suggest. Two major points of dialogue can be established.

1. The apparent irresolvable contradiction between Bedorf’s conflict model of recognition and Ricoeur’s exploration of pacified recognition is a misreading by Bedorf. After clarifying the relation between these two positions, Ricoeur’s thought on mutual recognition can be complemented by selectively importing Bedorf’s key analyses on identity, the form of recognition, alterity, risk and the gift – thus giving impetus to further developments of Ricoeur’s social philosophy.
2. But this dialogue is of mutual benefit. Bedorf’s articulation of politics and the political, derived from his theory of recognition, can be argued to have been anticipated by Ricoeur’s “political paradox”. The development of this central notion of Ricoeur’s political thought in the 1990s (as I have analysed elsewhere), is of greater sophistication than Bedorf’s attempt: (i) in articulating normative considerations with politics, (ii) by acknowledging the limits imposed on political action and responsibility by the tragic nature of action and (iii) in the array of strengths associated with approaching identity via capabilities.

**The Changeux-Ricoeur Dialogue - how a ‘third discourse’ may bridge philosophy, science and religion**

Michael Wong

Monash University

Melbourne, Australia

In the Changeux-Ricoeur dialogue, *What makes us think?* , which explores where science and philosophy meet, and whether there is a place for religion in contemporary society, Ricoeur hints at a ‘third discourse’ which may bridge the ordinary language (‘first discourse’) and the ‘specialist’ languages (‘second discourse’) of philosophy, neuroscience, religion and theology.

This paper examines the relevance of this notion of a ‘third discourse’ suggested by Ricoeur in Changeux-Ricoeur dialogue to the problems of dualism, reductionism and secularization.

In the dialogue Changuex the neuroscientist argues against mind-brain dualism, advocates a scientific/materialist reductionism and calls for the replacement of religion with ethics, art and music. In response Ricoeur prefers to address ontological dualism with semantic dualism rather than eliminative reductionism and proposes correctives rather than elimination of the religious.

This paper argues that a ‘third discourse’ in the possible form of a multilayered personal discourse that uses ordinary language and ‘specialist’ languages in a correlative but non-reductive way has the potential to promote explanation and understanding of human experience and overcome the problem of fragmentation of the person. It employs the notions of semantic dualism, methodological reductionism and three correctives for the religious and dialogues with a critical realist theological anthropology to address the challenges of ontological dualism, eliminative reductionism and secularization of culture.

Reference

Changeux J-P, Ricoeur P (2000) *What Makes Us Think? A Neuroscientist and a Philosopher Argue about Ethics, Human Nature, and the Brain* (Translated by M.B. Debevoise). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

1. David Tell, “Beyond Mnemotechnics: Confession and Memory in Augustine,” Philosophy and Rhetoric, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I do not include his final book, *Living Up to Death* (2009), published posthumously and comprised of drafts and fragments. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This paper builds on the work of Rebecca Huskey in *Paul Ricoeur on Hope: Expecting the Good*. (Peter Lang, 2009) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *The Symbolism of Evil*. (Beacon Press, 1967) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See in particular “The Self and Narrative Identity” in Ricoeur’s *Oneself as Another*. (University of Chicago Press, 1992) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Isaiah 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Leviticus 19, Exodus 12, and Hebrews 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This essay is found in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, Charles Reagan and David Stewart, editors. (Beacon Press, 1978) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Paul Ricoeur, “Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems,” in *Figuring the Sacred*, trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark Wallace (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. C.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshone, Paul Weiss, and Arthur Burks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 6: 610. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. William James, *Pragmatism*, in *William James: Writings 1902-1910*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (New York: Library of America, 1987), 521. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. C.S. Peirce, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” in *The Essential Peirce, Volume 1 (1867-1893)*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 132. My emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Paul Ricoeur, “Freedom in the Light of Hope,” trans. Denis Savage, in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 414. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Paul Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutics of Symbols: I,” trans. Denis Savage, in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Paul Ricoeur, “Violence and Language,” *Political and Social Essays*, eds. David Stewart and Joseph Bien, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Marjorie Suchocki, *Fall to Violence: Original Sin in a Relational Theology*. New York: Continuum Publishing,12. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Actually, in *A Theory of Justice* ‘economic inequality’ is the second part of the second principle and ‘offices and positions’ are the first part because just as the first principle (‘each person has an equal right to extensive total system of equal basic liberties’) takes precedent over the second principle, the first part of the second principle takes priority over the second part of the second principle. The consequences for this are enormous in explaining how Rawls responds to Marxism and utilitarianism at the same time, and for that matter any other existing school of thought or paradigm at the time he composed his major treatise. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Bach Among the Theologians* Eugene, Oregan: Sipf & Stock, 1986), 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. « De l'interprétation », *in* *Du texte à l’action,* pp. 33-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Gesammelte Werke* 1, p. 462. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)