

**CROSSING BOUNDARIES: RICOEUR IN A GLOBAL AGE**  
**2016 SRS Conference Abstracts**  
**Chicago, IL**

**3. PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND ABSTRACTS**

Panels at a Glance

- *Feminist Explorations of Paul Ricoeur's Philosophy*
- *The Future of Ricoeur Studies*
- *Graduate Roundtable 1: Symbol, History, and Literature*
- *Graduate Roundtable 2: Theology, Modernity, and Forgiveness*
- *A Jewish-Christian Dialogue—Authenticity in the Ricoeurian Project*
- *The "More" of Life: Forms of Transcendence in Ricoeur*
- *Thinking through Christian Religious Identity with Paul Ricoeur*

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***Feminist Explorations of Paul Ricoeur's Philosophy***

Convenor: Annemie Halsema (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

Panelists

Stephanie Arel (Boston University, USA)

Scott Davidson (Oklahoma City University, USA)

Damien Tissot (Cornell University, USA)

This panel presents the volume *Feminist Explorations of Paul Ricoeur's Philosophy* (edited by Annemie Halsema and Fernanda Henriques) that will appear in the Ricoeur Studies Series of publisher Lexington/Rowman and Littlefield in June 2016. This book for the first time brings together considerations upon the feminine in relation to Paul Ricoeur's thinking. It aims at showing the rich potential of his thought for feminist theory. Even though Ricoeur himself did not pay attention to questions pertaining to gender, the volume shows that it not only makes sense to approach his philosophical thought from a feminist point of view, but also that this exploration of his thought leads to new philosophical insights. Addressing the development of an intersectional hermeneutics, the notion of the universal, and feminist theology, the papers in the panel give a good impression of the rich contents of the possible intersections between Ricoeur's philosophy and feminist theory.

*Hermeneutics of A Subtlety: Paul Ricœur, Kara Walker, and Intersectional Hermeneutics*  
**Scott Davidson** (in absentia Maria del Guadalupe Davidson)

In this paper, the authors examine artist Kara Walker's 2014 installation "A Subtlety." Walker greeted visitors to Brooklyn's former Domino Sugar Factor with a massive sphinx-like sculpture with black female features that was over seventy-five feet in length and covered with an estimated forty tons of white sugar. The paper makes use of Ricœur's hermeneutic circle to evaluate audience responses to this work. Ricœur rejects the short route of interpretation, which is the path taken by viewers who misunderstand or misappropriate Walker's work through stereotypical responses to the work. By emphasizing the need to take the long detour, Ricœur's hermeneutics opens up a critical distance from the established ideology, beliefs and

practices of the audience and the established culture. Yet, the confrontation with Walker does not leave Ricœur's hermeneutics unaltered either. It demonstrates the need for an important correction of his hermeneutics through the development of an "intersectional hermeneutics." Drawing from the resources of intersectionality, the paper shows how such an approach can uncover the multiple axes of meaning that intersect in a complex work like Walker's "A Subtlety."

*Paul Ricœur, Mary Daly, Attestation and the Dis-discovery of Feminine Religious Symbols*  
**Stephanie Arel**

This paper explores how the philosophical and methodological insights in Paul Ricœur's work both intersect with Mary Daly's radical feminism and elucidate a reading of feminist religious symbols. By tracing the intellectual and feminist history that reflects Paul Ricœur's commitment to hermeneutics, the paper shows that Ricœur's work shares with Daly's a liberatory feminist framework. With this assertion, explores Ricœur's work on symbols, including his application of hermeneutics their interpretation. This essay suggests that both his method, from knowledge to being in the act of interpretation, and his conception that in the assertion of self-hood no symbol can be static concur with Daly's insistence that women, as she would say, "Dis-cover" themselves apart from patriarchal systems. In the end, Arel offers a reading of Ricœur that furthers the feminist resonance in Daly's work that beauty of self-understanding emerges in relationship, with the world and with the other.

*The Universal and Feminist Politics of Translation*  
**Damien Tissot**

This paper will focus on the relevance of Ricoeur's definition of universalism for feminist theory. In the last decades, postmodern and postcolonial feminist critiques have consistently challenged the idea of universalism that has been inherited from the Enlightenment. Whether criticized for its Eurocentrism or for its patriarchal foundations, universalism has been accused of excluding non-white, -heterosexual, -European or -bourgeois women. However, in the last few years, many theorists and feminists have been increasingly invested in trying to renew the idea of universalism instead of dismissing it. Judith Butler, for instance, believes that it is possible to conceive of a more inclusive and dynamic concept of universalism characterized by a constant confrontation and negotiation of other ways of understanding life. It would require a deep process of cultural translation to help us keep what is open and undefined in the idea of universalism. Here, I want to specifically explore one of Paul Ricoeur's three propositions to conceive of universalism based on the paradigm of translation. I will specifically address the consequences of this definition for feminist ethics, in particular as regard with today's transnational solidarities among feminists.

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### ***The Future of Ricoeur Studies***

Convenor: George Taylor (University of Pittsburgh, USA)

#### Panelists

Leovino Garcia (Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines; organizer of 2015 Asia-Pacific Rim conference in Manila)

Cristal Huang (Soochow University, Taiwan; organizer of 2014 Asia-Pacific Rim conference in Taipei)

Gonçalo Marcelo (CECH, Univ. de Coimbra / Univ. Católica Porto, Portugal; organizer of 2010 European conference in Lisbon)

Todd Mei (University of Kent, UK; organizer of 2009 European conference in Kent)

Johann Michel (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales / Fonds Ricoeur, France)

Over the past ten years, Ricoeur studies has increased dramatically throughout the world. The Fonds Ricoeur continues to host seminars and draw students. Annual Ricoeur conferences occur in North America and Europe and biannually in Ibero-American countries and in Asia. Future conferences are being planned for Turkey and South Africa. Organizationally the years have seen the rise of the Association Paul Ricoeur, the Society for Ricoeur Studies, and the Associacao Ibero-Americano de Estudos Ricoeurianos (ASIER). The journal, *Études Ricoeuriennes/Ricoeur Studies*, has published authors from over 20 countries, and the Lexington Books series of books on Ricoeur has a thriving number of publications.

At the same time, the humanities face the threat of loss at many universities internationally due to economic pressures, a number of junior Ricoeur scholars are finding it difficult to obtain permanent faculty positions, and it is uncertain how much the work of Ricoeur (or more broadly that of hermeneutics) continues to be taught. All of these factors are vital for the spreading of Ricoeur's work and for the development of future generations of Ricoeur scholars.

The panel is composed of leading organizers in Ricoeur studies from around the world. They will discuss the strengths and challenges of Ricoeur studies in their regions and open a dialogue, with audience participation, on how Ricoeur studies should move forward.

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### **Graduate Roundtable 1: Symbol, History, and Literature**

Organiser: Michael Sohn

Moderator: Roger Savage

#### Panelists

Marius-Daniel Ban (Heythrop College, UK)

Maria Beatriz Delpech (Universidad Nacional de San Martín / Universidad de Buenos Aires,  
Argentina)

Leen Verheyen (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

#### *Ricoeur and Eliade on the Openness of Symbol and Its Contribution to a Global Re-Positioning of Being*

**Marius-Daniel Ban**

In this paper the discussion centres on the cohesive relation between the primary symbolic structures and ontology in the works of Ricoeur and Eliade. Current research seems to validate the view that both scholars employ the symbolic language in relation to the 'ontological function' of symbol. However, it is the 'double intentionality' of symbol, which speaks of the ambiguities of being in a vast way that underlines the concern of reading ontology into a purely arbitrary framework.

As such, the question under consideration is how does the hermeneutics of pre-reflective language of Ricoeur and Eliade attest to the fact that what the symbol reveals is ultimately a reliable apprehension of human being?

In clarifying the relation between hermeneutics and verification it is the presenter's hope that new points of contact between the two scholars will be mapped out. Further research on the symbolic structure and its power to reveal something that is constitutive of being places the ontological function of symbol within Eliade's quest for a 'new' philosophical anthropology and Ricoeur's search for a 'total' understanding of being. Finally, if the prospect of a new anthropology - that overcomes the modern fragmentation of being - is to be acquired in dialogue with the inexhaustible meaning of symbol, philosophy must be reassured that a certain level of objectivity is in reach of a creative hermeneutics of symbols.

#### *El historiador en contexto*

**Maria Beatriz Delpech**

En el segundo estudio de *Caminos de reconocimiento*, las representaciones simbolizan las identidades en las que se entretajan los vínculos sociales en proceso de instauración. Ricoeur introduce la idea de una reflexión de segundo grado que es más bien una "reconstrucción" a cargo del filósofo para dar lugar a la identidad social al articular retroactivamente la reflexión espontánea de los agentes sociales. Sin embargo, al ser el marco general del desarrollo del análisis el de la disciplina historiográfica, el contexto admitiría leer en este proceso reconstructivo un espacio de acción para el historiador o, al menos, para el filósofo de la historia.

Ahora bien, entre las modalidades de ficcionalización de la historia que Ricoeur analizaba en *Tiempo y Narración III*, se subrayaba la de los acontecimientos que llama *epoch-making* y que "obtienen su significación específica del poder de fundar o de reforzar la conciencia de identidad

de la comunidad considerada, su identidad narrativa, así como la de sus miembros. Estos acontecimientos engendran sentimientos de una entidad ética considerable (...)” (909). Ricoeur considera aquí que una neutralización ética del historiador no sería ni posible ni deseable. Encontramos aquí sugerido este rol fundador o reforzador de identidades de la reconstrucción historiográfica de determinados acontecimientos históricos y la conflictiva relación del historiador en relación con su perspectiva ética para llevar a cabo su trabajo. Consecuentemente, puede pensarse que el historiador desempeña su rol en función de una responsabilidad ética que lo sitúa en un marco social y político condicionante.

En la presente comunicación trataremos de elucidar, utilizando la profunda reflexión ricoeuriana sobre la cuestión de la historia, la compleja relación entre el historiador y las representaciones simbólicas que mediatizan su práctica.

### *The Ethical and Aesthetic Value of the Novel: A Ricoeurian Approach*

**Leen Verheyen**

In the philosophy of literature, the novel's value is an important matter of debate. In this debate, roughly two seemingly opposite positions can be distinguished.

On the one hand, there are those philosophers who believe the novel's value is primarily ethical. In particular, it is often argued that by reading literature we train ourselves to be empathetic, which is considered an important moral value. However, by focussing on the moral value of a novel, its aesthetic value is often downplayed and literary works risk becoming merely a means to a non-literary purpose.

On the other hand, there are those philosophers who believe the novel's value is primarily aesthetical. While this position seems better able to value the literary artwork *as an artwork*, it seems unable to explain the fact that literary works can have important extra-literary effect on readers.

Furthermore, it seems impossible to reconcile both positions, because ethics and aesthetics are said to presuppose different attitudes. While an ethical attitude presupposes a certain kind of acting, an aesthetic attitude precisely asks for a withdrawal from the world of acting. Therefore, the debate on the novel's value seems to end in deadlock.

However, starting from a theory Paul Ricoeur developed in the third part of *Temps et récit* about the dialectical relationship between ethics and aesthetics in the act of reading, a reconciliation between the two positions might be possible. Ricoeur states that, in order to be influenced by a literary text in the "real" or "ethical" world, the reader first has to "irrealise" himself and jump as much as possible into the fictional world of the novel. According to Ricoeur, a literary work can have moral effects only because the aesthetical attitude first freed the reader from everyday life. Subsequently, the *catharsis* - which is only possible because the reader creates a distance towards his own emotions by adopting an aesthetic attitude - makes new evaluations of reality possible. Reading literature therefore involves both a distancing and a stimulus to action.

The aim of my paper is to explore to what extent Ricoeur's theory on the ethical and aesthetic value of the novel can offer a satisfying answer to the problem outlined above by confronting Ricoeur's position with contemporary theories defending the novel's ethical or aesthetic value.

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## **Graduate Roundtable 2: Theology, Modernity, and Forgiveness**

Organiser: Michael Sohn

Moderator: Alberto Martinengo

### Panelists

Paulo Furia (Consorzio Filosofia in Nord Ovest, Italy / École des hautes études en sciences sociales, France).

Maria Sidorova (Higher School of Economics, Russia)

### *Ricoeur: Modernity and Beyond*

#### **Paulo Furia**

In *Modernity and Its Discontents* (1992), John Caputo and James Marsh establish a clear distinction between “critical modernism” and “postmodern approach”. The first trend focuses on restoring the role of modern rationality and subjectivity by criticizing their theoretical and socio-historical perversions, while the second claims the triumph of ambiguity over any attempt to resolve it through reflection. Then, the two authors subsume Ricoeur’s philosophy unto the first attitude. Especially Caputo consider Ricoeur as Hegel’s mediation philosophy successor, engaged in a final effort to reconcile shape and life, universal claims of methodic reason and irreducible flow of sense and non-sense nibbling away any pretension to truth. Still, Caputo and Marsh are divided over the evaluation of the two approaches, the first preferring “postmodern attitude” and the second favoring “critical modernism”.

The aim of this paper is to discuss one premise of this debate, namely Ricoeur’s Hegelian way to proceed, in order to temper it by stressing Kant’s importance in Ricoeur’s perspective. In this way, it will be possible to reaffirm the belonging of Ricoeur to the “critical modernism” approach, but at the same time to re-conceptualize it. The reference to the ambitions of an absolute reason, which would be capable of dissolving ambiguity and reconciling the poles of contradictions, becomes at this point a secondary aspect.

In the last forty years, new interpretations of Kant appeared, strengthening the importance of anthropological sides of his thought, and alleviating transcendental cogito pretensions (Van De Pitte, 1971; M. Firla, 1981). Recently, R. Brandt (2007) have shown that the Kantian man is not an essence, but rather a flow of experiences, seeking for self-realization through reason. There is no absolute mediation in Kant’s philosophy, but the never-ending fight of a man looking for happiness against pain, and especially against the pain inflicted by the other (explicitly forbidden by the categorical imperative). This conception of manhood as a movement (both individual and collective) towards freedom and happiness seems to be the very origin of modernity, more than the postulation of an absolute and authoritarian rationality. We find this recovery of the “final destination” of manhood (“Bestimmung”) in Kant, as well as in Aristotle (“Ergon”), as reported by Ricoeur in *Le sentiment* (1959). Through this remark, Ricoeur rediscovers the classical background of modern subjectivity. Then, he entrenches the modern project of autonomy in a deeper and longer tradition, whose true beginning lies is the classical question of philosophy: “what is man?”

It is worth noticing that social scientists struggling against modern rationalism, represented for instance by the structuralist and functionalist approaches, reinterpret some of Kantian ideas, such as the universal claim of moral thought and the dignity of human subjectivity. It is the same recovery proposed by Ricoeur: that is, above all, the reason why it is possible to consider Ricoeur

as a “critical modernist”, alongside Touraine, Habermas, Taylor. Even if they are very different thinkers, they share interest for the recovery of a notion of subjectivity, which could be defensible in the “postmodern” era.

*Forgiveness as a Condition of Selfhood in the Hermeneutic Phenomenology of P. Ricoeur: Reflections on Arendt's Concept of Natality*

**Maria Sidorova**

Ricoeur recognizes forgiveness as a final topic of the dialectic relation between memory and forgetting in book “Memory, History, Forgetting”. However, he defines forgiveness not only in terms of memory, forgetting and history, but in the ethic notions of selfhood too. In "Oneself as another" Ricoeur asks four questions about the self of “capable man”: Who is speaking? Who is acting? Who is recounting about himself or herself? Who is the moral subject of imputation? In my opinion, Ricoeur formulates the problem of forgiveness as a mystery of the last issue of the self. My report will be devoted to the justification that the topic of forgiveness is an additional issue of the concept of ethical "who" in Ricoeur's philosophy. I try to show that Arendt's concept of natality helps Ricoeur to explore the phenomenon of forgiveness and to reveal new aspects of the ethical sense of selfhood. I will show that forgiveness is recognized him not only as a topic of the imputation of forgiven self, but also as an issue about the responsibility of authors of forgiveness too.

Ricoeur formulates the concept of forgiveness on the rethinking Derrida, Yankelevich, Abel, Arendt theories. He borrows certain ideas about forgiveness from each of them, from Arendt - the idea of natality. Ricoeur proposes to consider forgiveness as a constant of common being. He detects the possibility of its permanence in Arendt's concept of natality. Ricoeur uses the idea of natality as a justification for separating the selfhood of the actor from his act. He offers everyone in the common being with culprit to solve the problem of forgiveness, to recognize natality condition, to realize that the selfhood of the culprit has ability to self-upgrade. Thus, the topic of forgiveness is formulated by Ricoeur as a question of the ethical "who" not only in relation to the selfhood of guilty, but in relation to the selfhood of everyone who can forgive too. For Ricoeur forgiveness becomes one of the major ethical and moral relations between Oneself - Other (ethics of reciprocity) and Oneself – others or "each" (ethics of living together). He recognizes this "each" not as an impersonal anyone, but as a selfhood.

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***A Jewish-Christian Dialogue— An Ethical and Authentic Ricoeurian Project***

Convenor: Joseph Edelheit

Moderator: Ken Reynhout

Panelists

Joseph Edelheit (St Cloud State University, USA)

James Moore (Valparaiso University, USA)

On the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ricoeur Society, James Moore and Joseph Edelheit revisit their Christian/Jewish dialogue from the first Ricoeur Society meeting.

How is authenticity essential to Ricoeur's project? If the “ethical intention” is always aimed at the

‘good-life with and for others’, then what constitutes an authentic and ethical dialogue with the Other? Ricoeur argues that authentic transformative conversational engagement is “fragile” and “vulnerable”. At a time of dangerous extremes in both politics and religion can this project offer us renewed hope in shared authentic engagement. How is Ricoeur’s commitment to “who” over “what” fundamental to the need for authenticity and ethics in these conversations?

Ricoeur argues that the assumption of mutuality requires that each participant must be trust the intentionality in this exchange, is there a limit beyond which one partner can trust the other? In other words, if authenticity is required, then should every conviction of the exchange be “tolerated”? Given the extremes in today’s discourses might we now ask if unconditional tolerance has now become inauthentic.

This dialogue engages Genesis 4: Cain and Abel, using Ricoeur’s “The Self and The Ethical Aim” (*Oneself As Another*) and “Interpretation And/Or Argument” (*The Just*)

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### ***The “More” of Life: Forms of Transcendence in Ricoeur***

Organiser: James Oldfield

Moderator: Todd Mei

#### Panelists

Timo Helenius (Brown University, USA)

James Oldfield (Boston College, USA)

Sebastian Purcell (SUNY Cortland, USA)

Ricoeur’s thought has by now frequently (and justly) been described as resembling a broken Hegelianism, a dialectic in which the moment of resolution fails to resolve, in which the circle of reflection remains open. The totality is never fully grasped. There is always something more.

Already in *The Voluntary and the Involuntary* Ricoeur constantly refers to an enigmatic and animating “more” of life that is almost graspable, for example, in Orphic poetry that, nevertheless, tragically fails in its intoxicated admiration of the unattainable whole or the “wholly other.” Still, Ricoeur maintains that it is “the incantation of poetry which delivers me from myself and purifies me.” Through poetic language, “the presence of freedom points through ciphers to a certain beyond-the-self.” A similar kind of thought then seems to appear through Ricoeur’s corpus in the guise of conatus, the pre-reflexive self, drives, the dual surplus of being and meaning, or as the untranslatable. All of these, it is claimed, somehow ground human being, and yet remain mysterious even at the plane of Ricoeur’s philosophical pursuits. Despite the efforts of reflective consciousness, one is always confronted with a certain opacity: symbols, myths, metaphors, and narratives all disclose meaning, and yet point to a limit that remains beyond the power of thought to approach. This limit is in one way more accessible and immediate than Kant’s formal transcendental object, and yet at the same time still more mysterious to the extent that it thoroughly defies formal circumscription in a philosophical system, instead constantly shifting shape and taking on new names.

The papers presented in this panel will, from several viewpoints, attempt to identify this undefined core or nucleus, this source that simultaneously gives rise to thought and defies it, and that can be said to reside at the heart of Ricoeur’s philosophy as its primal condition.



*The Fragility of the Festive: Thumos and the Poetics of the Gift*

**James Oldfield**

The third part of Ricoeur's philosophy of the will was, according to *The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, to consist in a poetics of the will, one that would reveal the potential of an "a-logic of paradox." Famously, Ricoeur never carried out his poetics of the will in its originally imagined form. Instead we find traces of the promised work threaded through a variety of texts in his later work, notably in the closing stages of *Memory, History, Forgetting* and *The Course of Recognition*. In these passages, Ricoeur speaks of certain experiences as "festive." Such experiences are described as being governed by a logic of superabundance: the a-logic of *The Voluntary and the Involuntary*. In *The Course of Recognition*, for example, the gratuity of the experience of exchanging gifts is contrasted with the logic of equivalence that attends commerce. A true gift is without price. Such an experience of superabundance is one of freedom, but it is also one beset by ambiguity, as evinced in the case of gift-giving by the suspicion that the gift is in fact self-interested and intended to obligate the one who receives it. There is a risk and uncertainty about festive experiences. I do not know whether my gift will be returned, or even whether it is truly a gift. The idea of the gift can therefore be called fragile.

In this essay, I will seek to interpret the fragility and ambiguity of the festive experiences in the last writings of Ricoeur, as well as their exceptional nature, in the light of what in *Fallible Man* is analyzed under the name of "affective fragility." In particular, I will consider the description in the earlier text of the restlessness of the heart: its desire for more in a vital sense, its desire for more in a spiritual sense, and the difference and conflict between these different possibilities of transcendence. How does the interaction between the finitude of my character and the infinity of happiness bear on my relation to the experience of giving and receiving gifts? Are festive experiences, which Ricoeur says provide a "shelter" from the threat of the "fascination of violence," fragile in the same way as other experiences? Does gratitude, perhaps in its impulse to give in return, contain its own form of restlessness? To what extent can we think of it, in Ricoeur's term, as a state of peace? How do the poetics of the gift relate to the phenomenology of finitude and fallibility?

In addition to clarifying aspects of the relation between Ricoeur's early work and its fragmentary, re-envisioned sequel, this essay, as the title suggests, will constitute a contribution to ongoing debates about the so-called fragility of goodness, a subject on which it strikes me that Ricoeur is one of our most profound teachers.

*God or I? It's All Poetics*

**Timo Helenius**

"Here lies the most fundamental choice of philosophy: either God or I."<sup>1</sup> Ricoeur explains this stern distinction—presented in *The Voluntary and the Involuntary*—by introducing two further distinctions that are unavoidable meta-challenges for any philosophical pursuit. If the starting point for philosophy is "God" or *le Tout Autre*, meaning an ontological or potentially even a metaphysical grounding that is assumed to be necessary for experience, the epistemological question begs to be asked, particularly as it comes to a cognizing subject that by necessity stands in contrast with "Being in itself" (*l'Être en soi*). On the other hand, if the starting point is a self-positing consciousness—a strong version of which is the Cartesian *cogito*, and a weak version a pre-reflexive core of subjectivity as the grounding for a reflective self—it becomes difficult to allow

any specific importance to any empirical mode of being that, nevertheless, in the post-Kantian world is generally accepted to hold a firm role in a cognizing subject's experience.

As it comes to the first option, this paper will briefly explore Ricoeur's take on later Heidegger's poetic approach that discussed Ereignis or "enowning" in order to clarify why *le Tout Autre* from an epistemological viewpoint necessarily remains a "wholly other." Moving on to the second option, the paper discusses Ricoeur's arguments for the prereflexive imputation of the self that can be shown to remain problematical in their self-referential objectification that shuns away empirical self-observation, and, furthermore, self-awareness as an empirical subject. In order to suggest a way out from this dilemma, this paper will lastly outline Ricoeur's early, albeit equally concerning solution to *l'option la plus fondamentale de la philosophie*, or to the "fundamental choice" *The Voluntary and the Involuntary* asks us to consider. As for Heidegger, poetics is for Ricoeur a token of subjectivity capable of manifesting its own being, and potentially also *l'Être en soi*, while also attempting to surpass the linguistic-conceptual strains that hold it captive. It is clear that the "kind of 'Poetics' of the will" Ricoeur aspired to achieve in order to discover "new realities" of subjectively experienced being was never fully elaborated but, nevertheless, frequently alluded to in his texts until the end of his career. In this sense it remains the silent "more" of his philosophy that gives a ground for his scholarly pursuits.

*The Greater Ethics: On Askēsis and the Good Life*  
**Sebastian Purcell**

The conditions for the pursuit of the good life have typically been thought to be exhausted in questions of character, especially those qualities called "virtues." In *Oneself as Another* Paul Ricoeur rather playfully calls this set of concerns, including relevant considerations for action guidance, the "little ethics." He leaves it to his other works, especially *Time and Narrative*, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, and *The Course of Recognition* to address the reciprocal investigation: the greater ethics. The significance and coherence of this project has largely been misunderstood in the philosophic community, because it concerns a new, or perhaps more appropriately: forgotten, area for ethical investigation: what *further* conditions exist for the good life? How does the sequence of events that philosophers often call "modernity" affect or alter those conditions? More specifically, how are the practices in which we participate altered, distorted, or produced in the modern period?

Understood in this way, the greater ethics not only presents a new area of investigation for ethical philosophy, but it also approaches the topic of *askēsis*, which has variously been translated as a practice or spiritual exercise, in a new way. A sort of scholarly debate between Pierre Hadot (and his adherents) and John Cooper has recently emerged concerning spiritual exercises. At stake there is whether *askēsis*, as one finds it in Plato or Aristotle, intrinsically concerns non-rational activities, like religious observances, or whether that was only introduced at a later period, say in the work of Plotinus. Michele Foucault, famously, was concerned with the way that such spiritual practices were responsible for the production of subjects, or "identities." Mark Jordan has extended Foucault's concern to assess the way in which various historical identities like the "virgin martyr" were produced in the medieval period, only to vanish a short time later. Ricoeur's concern with the greater ethics, while more broadly conceived, then, nevertheless represents a third approach to the discussion on *askēsis*. He is concerned with the way in which practices are conditions for leading a good life.

Given this context, the purpose of this essay is to articulate in a fuller way what Ricoeur's interest in *askēsis* as a feature of the greater ethics is, since it is never fully thematized in Ricoeur's writings.

Moreover, I hope to show how it might complement the above noted related scholarly projects. The consequences, if successful, are multiple. For Ricoeur scholars it opens a previous unrecognized problematic. For philosophers interested in *askēsis*, it suggests a new approach. For ethicists, it opens up a new problematic. And finally, for philosophy as a whole, the present project is significant, since it highlights a distinctive concern for ethics in the Continental tradition. Because I hope to recover a forgotten ethical concern, my approach is initially historical. I begin, then, with the structure of the good life, *eudaimonia*, in his mature ethical work, the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

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### **Thinking through Christian Religious Identity with Paul Ricoeur**

Convenor: Stephanie Arel

Moderator: Michael Sohn

#### Panelists

Stephanie Arel (Boston University, USA)

John Starkey (Oklahoma City University, USA)

Dan Stiver (Hardin-Simmons University, USA)

For Paul Ricoeur, religious language has the same force as metaphor in rearranging the world, as it is multidimensional and has a transformative function, for both self and community. Also for Ricoeur, religious language forms the basis of religious stories, narratives that play a large part in shaping both individual and communal identity. Narrative identity, religious or otherwise, is a dynamic identity, intersecting with those of other persons constituting an otherness. This otherness comprises self-hood resulting in a conception of self or community that is never pure, always mutable, and which underlies Ricoeur's own hermeneutic of religious identity.

This panel will explore issues of identity from specific Christian platforms. Three scholars from different Christian contexts will approach their respective religious identities and experience alongside Ricoeur's work. Investigating faith and praxis through a Ricoeurian hermeneutic lens, these papers will also explore the significance of Ricoeur's work for their particular contexts.

The papers will probe the dimensional ways Ricoeur's work fosters the negotiation and even enhancement of particular identities. Briefly, each panelist, named below, will investigate religious identity, belief, praxis, and or/language from the following contexts:

- 1) John Starkey: Christian Quaker, focusing on the ongoing union of the particularism of Christianity in context of the universalism of Quakerism;
- 2) Dan Stiver: Baptist, examining the significance of Ricoeur for rethinking Baptist identity, in a post-modern context;
- 3) Stephanie Arel: Catholic, delving into how Ricoeur's work supports the notion of a feminist practice of sacramentality – bolstering the notion of praxis in the Catholic tradition.

Together the papers foster an important aspect of religion highlighted in Ricoeur's work on linguistic hospitality. This hospitality operates as a starting point for dialogue across traditions, but also an in-depth consideration of how Ricoeur's ideas help us think through what it means to be a Christian in these different denominational contexts.

*Catholic Creativity-Itself, Quaker Inner Light, Secular Social Values*

**John Starkey**

“Catholic by tradition, Quaker by conviction, and a servant of Methodists.” That’s my tag in adult Methodist Sunday school classes, where a Christian identity qualified by a denominational one still matters. But in my university classes where many have weak or no religious identities, or anti-religious ones, or vague Christian, Jewish, or Muslim ones, I still present three identities, but a different set. Standing front and center is the pose for consensus positions of religious and secular scholars who agree enough about how to interpret texts or assess historical claims to engage in a common conversation. When I stand to one side, leaning against the wall, students expect my own views. From the other side, they hear generically pro-religious or/and pro-scientific comments before getting them to speak to some issue. All this models elements of Ricoeur’s theory of narrative identity, including a variant of his *Time and Narrative* position on the ‘interweaving’ of historical and fictional narratives, or better here, scientific-empirical and symbolic-religious ones.

I myself am most alive in those classes in which the discussion involves the mutual acceptance or rejection of metaphors or interpretations of metaphors for ultimate divine realities or for profound but clearly finite human values. Constantly I try to weave the narratives more tightly, bring the metaphors closer, fit concepts to finer shades of gray. *The Symbolism of Evil* and *Freud and Philosophy* as combining partially opposing paths to truth still light my way, though “The Unity of Philosophy and the Search for Truth” remains the most succinct guide. Then it is *Thinking Biblically* with its connection of ontology to his text-oriented approach, and *Living Up To Death* with its pro-religious tone but clear (though not new) letting go of premodern empirical religious claims, that lead the way.

But for the focus of this paper, I re-instate Ricoeur’s connection of the Catholic, theistic, mystery-affirming Marcel with the Protestant, not-so-theistic, and paradox-creating Jaspers, typified by three metaphors from my traditions. One is a “creativity-itself” version of the Marcellian ontological affirmation of the divine as a way of continuing theistic discourse. Another is the “inner Light” of Quakerism as a sort of Jaspersian cipher for the leap to the Encompassing. The third is Ricoeur’s sense that while the referent(s) of religious discourse cannot be reduced to natural realities nor to the human quest for value (even love and justice), even so, religious life does not require making insupportable claims about empirical referents on the basis of religious symbolic warrants (e.g. premodern religious texts, however validly and profoundly inspired). In other words, I attend to multiple and diverse traditions to continue Ricoeur’s “amorous struggle” to find, not a short route to agreement about the ‘correct’ referents of our various religious metaphors and conflicting interpretations, but rather the long path of interwoven discourses leading in the direction of a ‘place’ where we will likely still not agree—but live together in a hope that our paths tend more to converge than diverge, however much any final conjunction eludes us.

*Baptists: Limping towards Modernity*

**Dan Stiver**

Baptists were born with modernity in the early seventeenth century, virtually in the same decade as a modernity identified as beginning with Galileo and Descartes, have grown up together, and in many ways fit almost hand-in-glove. Baptists have emphasized liberty of conscience, autonomy of the local church, democratic church government, the equal priesthood of all believers, and

separation of church and state. And the relationship has been reciprocal. Modernity has influenced Baptists, but many historians point out how Baptists influenced separation of church and state in the U.S. Bill of Rights. Some argue that the first documents in the English language affirming liberty of conscience were Baptists around 1611—who were promptly killed for their efforts. Southern Baptists have particularly flourished in the twentieth century, with Southern Baptists becoming the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. As the paradigm of modernity began to crumble, however, so did Baptists. The Southern Baptist Convention split, with the majority doubling down, so to speak on a very conservative appropriation of modernity emphasizing certainty, literalism, and clarity of belief. My own tradition, the minority of that split that is often termed as moderate Baptists, has moved gingerly in a postmodern direction. Now Baptists are often charged from both right and left of emphasizing freedom too much, of espousing autonomous Enlightenment individualism, and having no sense of community. The question is, what might the breakdown of the modern paradigm mean for Baptists who do not wish simply to hitch their theological wagon to modernity? As twins or cousins of modernity, can they survive in a postmodern context? A colleague and fellow participant in the beginning of the Society for Ricoeur Studies and I explored about a decade ago some of the resources found in Ricoeur's philosophy for responding to that question. This panel is a chance to revisit that issue with more history in mind. Baptists have a complex tradition that begins actually with a strongly communitarian emphasis and have been too actively congregational to fit easily into autonomous individualism. Ricoeur's mediating philosophy helps one situate freedom, the self, and community between the poles of excessive autonomy and authoritarian communitarianism. His thought offers a heuristic of how Baptist thought and practice can be reconfigured in such a way that their deep values are not lost but highlighted in new ways in a new context.

*Catholic Identity through Feminist Phronesis: Writing, Ricoeur, and Sacramentality*  
**Stephanie Arel**

For decades, feminists have asserted that knowing and understanding the world happens corporeally; that is, through the body. For instance, Hélène Cixous developed the idea of *écriture féminine*, a concept of writing that places experience before language, asserting that a woman must write herself. In this perspective, the act of writing/storytelling takes on critical importance as an articulation of self-formation, self-development, and self-hood. To the secular act of narrating, I add storytelling as spiritual formation, where writing becomes a way to practice theology. Writing/storytelling have theological implications, as feminist writing erases the line between theory and practice, between liturgy and sacrament.

In this paper, I explore two questions intimately related to one another. The first probes what it means to practice sacramental theology through writing – this is not a category defined by the Catholic Church, although it is one presented by Susan A. Ross' notion of sacramentality in *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology*. The second question explores what it means to erase distinctions between theory and practice in forming a Catholic identity that transgresses the traditional guidelines of the church uplifting feminist sacramental praxis as a kind of *phronesis* compatible to and important to Catholic praxis.

To show this, I will interconnect Ross' notion of sacramentality with Paul Ricoeur's notions of mutable identity, something that can be constructed, destroyed, and reconstructed, and therefore implicated in narrative. My approach will not be comparative per se, but instead will use a Catholic feminist's work on sacramentality, undergirding that work with Ricoeur's own exploration of critical *phronesis*, the term applied to writing/storytelling as a sacramental practice essential to identity making. I show that sacramentality emerges as 1) a bodily practice and

inherently good; 2) as something implicating others and not just a solitary act; and 3) as ambiguous, but also related to human affectivity. Ricoeur's hermeneutics and work on *phronesis* punctuates these points. Ricoeur insists in *Oneself as Another* that the work of *phronesis* is oriented towards the good and the ethical life; thus it implies a living well for and with others, a process that is never completed. In such a way, *phronesis* intertwines with *poesis* and creation. Practical wisdom is thus imbricated with narrative, and the self develops as it "detour[s]" according to Ricoeur, "into the external, into the other, and into the incomprehensible" (2007, p.11 my translation).

Exploring writing/storytelling as *phronesis* reveals that feminist Catholic writing is a writing of the body, but that as incarnated practical wisdom it ultimately leads, like all sacraments intend, to what Ricoeur considers mutual recognition, itself which decenters promulgating the acknowledgement of living among difference. Thus, writing/storytelling as Ricoeur's *critical phronesis* becomes a tool for Catholic feminists living in the still patriarchal Catholic religion where "the source of the conflict lies not only in the one-sidedness of the characters but also in the one-sidedness of the moral *principles* which themselves are confronted with the complexity of life" (Ricoeur, 1990, p. 249).

—END OF PANEL ABSTRACTS—