



# Paul Ricoeur: Towards New Approaches

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Few philosophers in the 20th century have been like Paul Ricoeur, an animator of multiple dialogues and pluralistic interpretations. Ricoeur's capacity for understanding others, either as ideas or as living beings, made him one of the most widely read French philosophers in the twentieth century. His reflexive thought was marked by the influence of French philosophers, such as Nabert, Lachelier, Gabriel Marcel and Emmanuel Mounier. Yet his thinking was free of all forms of philosophical nationalism and open to the works of Jaspers, Husserl, Heidegger and Arendt. In short, if we have gathered today to celebrate the thought of Paul Ricoeur, it is because he continues to be one of the most multifaceted thinkers of our time. Moreover, he was one of the most gifted professors and lecturers of philosophy.

His vast erudition extended from hermeneutics to philosophy of language and political philosophy, passing through psychology, history and religious studies. It is a thought that is placed under the sign of all human initiatives and the confrontation of ideas. Thus, all his life, Paul Ricoeur listened to all modes of thinking that recognized a meaning to the human effort to exist and practice the art of interpretation of human reality. If one lays the various texts of Ricoeur side by side, one can see his continuous dialogue with the history of philosophy and his contemporaries. As such, we can find at the centre of Ricoeur's philosophy the famous adage of Edmund Husserl, the founder of modern phenomenology, that we must return to the things themselves. Applying this mode of thinking to his philosophical research and as a philosopher who was educated in the school of phenomenology, Ricoeur remained faithful to the phenomenological approach, although he kept his originality by finding a crossbreeding between phenomenology and hermeneutics.

No one has surpassed Paul Ricoeur's understanding of the emergence of hermeneutics and the clarity of his perception that hermeneutics, as a theory of interpretation is revolutionary in its philosophic significance. Truly speaking, Ricoeur's line

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of philosophical questioning is also a deliberate effort to open the dialogue with the social sciences. And so is Ricoeur's famous "detours" through psychoanalysis, structural linguistics, texts, time, narrative, justice and history. There is no doubt that Ricoeur's understanding of history as the ability to follow a story and his discussion of the relation between action and text, including the questions of evil and transcendence are central to his whole philosophical anthropology.

In all and for all, the conclusion that one can draw from Paul Ricoeur's intellectual life is that his philosophical questioning is in line with his approach to the meaningfulness of existence and an ontological commitment to the concept of hope. What Ricoeur teaches us is that being a philosopher is to stand firmly on one's own feet and to come in term with the fact that all thinking begins with the capacity to be projected being oneself and making universal what goes beyond the limited historical or national conditions of its constitution. The potential universality of Ricoeur's philosophy is intertwined here with his receptiveness around the globe. If this is the case, our encounters with Paul Ricoeur and his philosophy have only just begun.

Ricoeur's ideas have been a source of inspiration for many. He has contributed directly and indirectly to elevating the level of discourse around politics, literature, translation studies, history, psychology and philosophy. However, if one were to trace the map of his influence on different fields one can find that most of it is confined within the western hemisphere. We have tried to correct that by bringing in some articles in this special issue that will look at how Ricoeur can be engaged with fruitfully from philosophical movements from the global south.

The articles gathered herewith are mostly based on the contributions presented at a colloquium organized by Ramin Jahanbegloo and R. Krishnaswamy on February 17, 2023, at the Alliance Francaise in New Delhi, India.

This special issue titled "Paul Ricoeur: Comparative Explorations Toward New Interpretations" has seven research articles that engage with different aspects of Ricoeur's broad-ranging philosophy. Elise Coquereau-Saouma's article "The Humanization of Transcendence and Ricoeur's Second Copernican Turn in R. Sundara Rajan's Philosophy" is a compelling comparative perspective on how the philosophy of the under-studied Indian philosopher Sundara Rajan was deeply influenced by Ricoeur. This will make for a much needed intervention in thinking about Ricoeur's influence on Indian thinkers in the 20th century and how that influence has panned out. Next we have Babu Thaliath's article "The Aporicity of Time and Memory", which is a critical discussion on the problem of the aporias of time as presented by Husserl and how that is handled by Ricoeur in his *Temps et Recit*. Thaliath, via Ricoeur, wants to look at how the first aporia of Husserl, which refers to the protentional and retentional extension of 'now,' is actually an aporia of the presentification of secondary memory. Nishad Patnaik's "The Narrativization of Time: Paul Ricoeur on Memory and History" discusses the problem of how to understand the move from mnemonic to historical time. Patnaik uncovers how Ricoeur handles the dialectic between memory and history. Purushottama Bilimoria and Meera Baidur's article titled "Paul Ricoeur and Indian Thought: Analyzing Evil in Cross-Cultural Philosophy" is an attempt at making an interesting shift in how to understand and interpret discourses within classical Indian philosophy, particularly on the concepts of "evil" (*pāpmā*), *karma*, Brahman, and *mokṣa* (liberation). They make a case for what

they call a “decolonial hermeneutics of trust,” which they argue can help us read the Upaniṣads and *Brahmasūtra* not as a call for transcendence but as an attempt at embodied experience. R. Krishnaswamy’s article “Recognition across Axel Honneth” engages with the idea of recognition in Axel Honneth’s philosophy and offers a critique. He argues that Honneth’s theory of recognition – even though it is able to discursively capture the normative aims of a society – doesn’t quite meet the requirement of solicitude that Ricoeur brings into socio-political realities. Zeynep Direk’s article “Ricoeur’s Philosophy of Subjectivity at the Face of Foucauldian Genealogy of Power” is also a fascinating intervention in the debate around subjectivity and agency. Foucauldian ideas of genealogy, as we know, have been critical of hermeneutical methods of constituting the subject. However, Direk attempts to offset this by bringing back the relevance of Ricoeur’s ideas to our understanding of subjectivity. Ramin Jahanbegloo argues in his article “The Gandhian Moment of Paul Ricoeur” how the question of non-violence was so central to Ricoeur’s political thinking. He brings in a comparison between Gandhi’s view on non-violence and Ricoeur’s own, which illumines both thinkers’ approaches to the issue of peace.

We also have a review discussion by Rajeev Kadambi on the concept of Freedom in Indian political thought followed by two book reviews. The first is by Kathleen M. Higgins on Alva Noe’s *The Entanglement: How Art and Philosophy Make Us What We Are* (Princeton University Press, 2024). The second is by Randy Everist on Yujin Nagasawa’s *The Problem of Evil for Atheists* (Oxford University Press, 2024).

## Declarations

**Competing Interests** The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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