

Introduction – Ricœur and Education

Eileen Brennan

Dublin City University, Ireland

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Paul Ricœur's interest in education goes back a very long way. In 1947, he helped found the *Fédération protestante de l'enseignement* (FPE), an association of Protestant teachers who campaigned for a revised conception of *laïcité* ("secularism").¹ Ricœur was elected President of the FPE in 1947 and continued to hold that position until 1960.² The FPE had its own journal, *Foi Éducation* ("Faith Education"), which brought out three issues per year. Ricœur contributed articles and book reviews to that journal, some of which Daniel Frey has arranged to have edited and annotated for the Fonds Ricœur's Digital Edition. But *Foi Éducation* was not the only journal with an alternative vision for education where Ricœur published his work. He also published in *Esprit* a journal founded by Emmanuel Mounier. *Esprit* exemplified a new kind of pedagogy. Mounier called it "political pedagogy." It took philosophy out of the university and on to the pages of a journal that was, at least in principle, open to all. The plan was to lead Europeans out of a social and cultural developmental regression, and back to "civilization."³ Six of the studies that are included in *History and Truth* were originally published in *Esprit*.⁴ However, as Ricœur emphasizes in the Preface to the First Edition of the book (French original 1955), all the essays in *History and Truth* "are oriented toward a political pedagogy."⁵ A little unexpectedly perhaps, given Ricœur's lifelong interest in education, *History and Truth* would turn out to be the only book length study that he dedicated to one of the great themes of education.

Ricœur played a significant role in third level education reform in France. From 1956 to 1965 he taught philosophy to packed amphitheatres at the Sorbonne. As he recalls, "the students were sitting on the windowsills to hear my courses on Husserl, Freud, Nietzsche, Spinoza..."⁶ Satisfying though it was to have such a high level of student attendance, Ricœur complained that overcrowded amphitheatres made it impossible for him to get to know the students and to establish good relationships with them. He blamed the university for entirely neglecting the task of "creating a community of students and teachers."⁷ In 1965, he devoted an issue of *Esprit* to the theme of the university where he offered his assessment of its shortcomings and made a number of proposals, which, he notes, "resurfaced in 1968-9." He subsequently included those proposals at the end of a

¹ François Dosse, *Paul Ricœur. Les sens d'une vie (1913-2005)* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001), 177.

² Dosse, *Paul Ricœur*, 178.

³ Paul Ricœur, *History and Truth* [1965], trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 135.

⁴ Ricœur, *History and Truth*, 329-30.

⁵ Ricœur, *History and Truth*, 3.

⁶ Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 28.

⁷ Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 28.

collection entitled, *Lectures 1*. However, as the contributors to this special issue demonstrate, Ricœur's contribution to the field of education is not limited to the texts that I have listed here nor does his interest in education themes end with the events of May '68.

José Sérgio Fonseca de Carvalho and Denizart Busto de Fazio's article takes as its point of departure an interview on the topic of education that Ricœur gave in 1985. It analyses Ricœur's views on (1) the role of tradition in the development of autonomy; and (2) what form tradition must take in a pluralistic world. It notes that, for Ricœur, contemporary education is marked by conflicts and antinomies. Those analyses set the stage for a critical examination of the Brazilian education system. Attention is drawn to the way a colonialist legacy has served to delegitimize plural traditions coexisting in rivalry. The article suggests that literature may offer a way to give voice to "silenced legacies."

Manuel Prada Londoño and Fredy Hernan Prieto Galindo's article poses the question: What should we teach? The context is important. The question relates to teaching philosophy in high schools in Colombia. The authors draw attention to a hidden curriculum: the message that the only thing that is of value in philosophy comes from the "first world," from "developed countries." Motivated by a concern for their students whose lived experiences and interests are not being treated as a foundation for learning, they turn first to Ricœur's *History and Truth* and then to his "The Canon between the Text and the Community" for help in designing a new approach to teaching philosophy in Colombian high schools.

Teacher agency is a concept that is now receiving a lot of attention internationally. And Caroline Fanizzi's article will certainly make a valuable contribution to our understanding of what is at stake. It opens with a description of what it is like when a teacher's capacity to act more or less disappears. The aim of the article is twofold. It seeks to understand teacher suffering from two different angles: (1) the relationship between self and others; and (2) the relationship between action and work. It draws inspiration from Ricœur's *La souffrance n'est pas la douleur*. Following the approach that Ricœur takes there, it examines testimonies and narratives documenting the suffering of teachers that have been published in Brazilian magazines and widely circulated newspapers.

Howard Pickett would like to know whether there are still good reasons to take a degree in the humanities. As he observes, many people say that the humanities are "in crisis." To answer that and other related questions, he turns to Ricœur's "Autonomy and Vulnerability" and his view that education aims to cultivate autonomy. Pickett argues that it takes a collective effort to achieve that aim. He then discusses the role that the humanities and symbolic representation play in supporting the development of autonomy in the learner. He also documents three stories, told by students, that illustrate the practical ways in which the humanities can help the day-to-day struggles for recognition.

My own contribution takes inspiration from UNESCO's recently published report, *Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*, whose opening line is: "Our humanity and planet Earth are under threat." My article examines the threat posed to humanity by the biomedical enhancement of human capacities. Drawing on a variety of Ricœur's texts, including *Oneself as Another*, *The Symbolism of Evil*, and *The Rule of Metaphor*, it tries (1) to position Ricœur in the debate on the biomedical enhancement of human capacities; and (2) to show how his work on education offers ways of enhancing human capacities that, not only pose no threat to

humanity, but offer greater protections than the more familiar “precautionary” measures advocated by some commentators.

Ricœur’s writings on education have not received as much attention as some of his other writings, but I hope that these contributions will encourage readers to seek them out and engage with them. I am grateful to Jean-Luc Amalric and Ernst Wolff for their encouragement and support of this project.