

# Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies

---

ERRS

---

## Introduction

Johann Michel

Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies, Vol 5, No 1 (2014), pp. 4-6

ISSN 2155-1162 (online) DOI 10.5195/errs.2014.248

<http://ricoeur.pitt.edu>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.



This journal is published by the [University Library System](#) of the [University of Pittsburgh](#) as part of its [D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program](#), and is cosponsored by the [University of Pittsburgh Press](#).

## Introduction

Plans for this special issue of ERRS, which is devoted to “Ricœur and Analytic Philosophy,” were initially devised after the international conference that was held in Paris in November 2013 to mark the centenary of the birth of the philosopher. (This conference was jointly organized by Olivier Abel, Jean-Marc Tétaz and Johann Michel.) While there has been a genuine enthusiasm for studies devoted to Ricœurian thought over the past twenty years or so, there is clearly a relative dearth of secondary literature on the significance that analytic philosophy holds for Ricœur’s work. It was in order to fill this gap that Jean-Marc Tétaz and I devised the thematic of the colloquium, held at the Fonds Ricœur in 2013, and then developed the theme of this issue. It should be noted, however, that the call for proposals for the Centenary colloquium was more broadly concerned with Ricœur’s links to contemporary philosophy in the English language.

It would certainly be a mistake to consider Ricœur an “analytic philosopher,” given that he is seldom discussed by philosophers who would describe themselves in that way nor did he ever claim that this label applied to him. But one should not forget that he had taken an interest in analytic authors even before his long sojourn at the University of Chicago, (and had done so sometime prior to the beginning of the 1960’s). He also helped introduce those authors to a French audience, particularly in his “rue Parmentier Seminar” and in his role as director of the collection *L’ordre philosophique* with Éditions du Seuil. Then, especially from the 1970’s onwards, he did for analytic philosophy what he had done for phenomenology several decades earlier (following on from Levinas and Sartre): he took up the task of transmitting it and initiating discussion around it. This undeniable gesture of openness, is all the more remarkable given that the analytic traditions had been largely formed in opposition to a philosophical method—phenomenology—which contributed more than any other to Ricœur’s early formation.

However, Ricœur was not content with introducing and providing a commentary on authors of the analytic tradition in his teaching; he integrated them at the pivotal point of his work’s hermeneutic turn, that is to say when the question of language became the central motif of his thought, particularly after his confrontation with structuralism. It would be simplistic, then, to confine Ricœur’s interest in analytic philosophy to a single phenomenological perspective, even if he was one of the first to attempt a dialogue between these two paradigms of philosophy, only traces of which are to be found in “The Semantics of Action” (the outcome of his seminar at the Sorbonne). It is certainly difficult to consider the analytic philosophy in his work as a “graft” similar in nature to the “graft” of hermeneutics on phenomenology. But it is undeniable that the introduction of the analytic paradigm harmonizes well with the “philosophy of the detour,” which has to be the signature of Ricœur’s philosophy.

In addition to the preliminary discussions found in “The Semantics of Action,” it is really in four essential works that Ricœur is seen to practise this “philosophy of the detour” through the analyses of action and language proposed by the analytic movement: *The Rule of Metaphor, From Text to Action*, the first volume of *Time and Narrative* and, of course, *Oneself as Another*. In *The Rule of Metaphor* Ricœur turns to analytic philosophy for help in clarifying the problem of reference. (Analytic philosophy is represented here by Frege, Strawson, Goodman and Max Black.) For

Ricœur it is a matter of finding, in this movement of thought, the means to capture the semantic dimension of language, and more specifically the semantic dimension of metaphorical language.

In *Time and Narrative*, American analytic philosophers (Dray, Danto, von Wright, Mink, Gallie, etc.) play a vital role in the construction of a narrative model of historiography. The arrangement that Ricœur adopts sees the Annales School directly compared with positivism's (i.e., Hempel's) nomological model. The latter is then contrasted, in turn, with the theses of Dray, von Wright, Danto, Gallie and Mink, thus permitting the reconstruction of the thesis of the narrative character of history on a new foundation. Ricœur's wager that these traditions can be linked together merits being questioned both from an epistemological viewpoint (the composition of a historical science) and from an ontological viewpoint (the reconstruction of the being of the having been).

In *From Text to Action* and *Oneself as Another* Ricœur enters a debate with the analytic philosophy of action that he had opened up in the 1970's: semantics (Strawson), pragmatics (Austin and Searle), and the theory of action (Kenny, Wright, Anscombe, and Davidson). How does Ricoeur analyse these authors? How does he link the phenomenology of the owned body and the analytic philosophy of action?

It is to all of these questions that the current issue of ERRS attempts to respond, particularly those that directly relate to the philosophy of language and of action. The issue starts with an article of Ricœur's (whose publication has been authorized by the editorial committee of the Fonds Ricœur)—in its French and English versions—on Wittgenstein and Husserl on the subject of language. This text shows the philosopher's early interest (from the middle of the 1960's) in attempting a dialogue between the two traditions.

In his contribution (*Langage, imagination, et référence. Ricœur lecteur de Wittgenstein et Goodman*), Samuel Lelièvre offers a detailed analysis of the confrontation that our philosopher sets up in that article at the same time as he re-examines the Ricœurian reading of Goodman's general theory of reference, having taken *The Rule of Metaphor* as a guiding thread. Lelièvre is co-editor with Catherine Goldenstein of the article by Ricœur that we are publishing in this issue. Jean-Marc Tétaz takes the same work as the theme of his reflection (*La métaphore entre sémantique et ontologie. La réception de la philosophie analytique du langage dans l'herméneutique de Paul Ricœur*), dwelling upon the role played by analytic philosophy in the Ricœurian meditations on language and the poetic or literary text. This choice is justified historically insofar as these are issues related to the language and interpretation of texts, to which Ricœur's debate with analytic philosophy is committed.

It is in support of another still unpublished textual corpus (*Lectures on Imagination* delivered at the University of Chicago in 1975) that Jean-Luc Amalric sets out to analyse the meaning and the implications of the comparative interpretation of Sartre's and Ryle's theses on the imagination, which Ricœur conducted. This comparison, which focuses on the question of image production, is an opportunity to show the convergences and divergences, which are played out between a philosopher of the analytic tradition and a philosopher of the continental tradition. Linda Cox's article (*The Convergence of Ricœur's and von Wright's Complex Models of History*) does justice to the historical epistemology, inspired by analytic philosophy, that runs through *Time and Narrative*. She tries to show more precisely where a constructive conjunction occurs between von Wright's theses and the synthesis between explanation and narration that Ricœur calls for.

As the title of his article indicates, David Pellauer's contribution (*Ricœur's Own Linguistic Turn*) raises a more general question about the appropriateness of hypothesizing about "a

linguistic turn” in Ricœur’s work, an expression that is generally used in connection with authors within the analytic tradition or those influenced by that tradition. What is essentially at issue is knowing whether all philosophical problems are ultimately reducible to questions of language. David Pellauer’s article has to be seen as a counterpoint to Pascal Engel’s contribution (*Y a-t-il eu vraiment une rencontre entre Ricœur et la philosophie analytique?*), which whilst it acknowledges Ricœur’s undeniable merit as someone who introduced the analytic tradition into France, doubts that there really has been “an encounter” with this tradition, and suggests that, at most, there has been an attempt at dialogue.

The last two contributions, those of Jean-Luc Petit (*Ricœur et la théorie de l’action*) and Vincent Descombes’ objections to it are focused on the analytic semantics of action especially in line with the Ricœurian phenomenology of the will. One of the problems is to know whether, even before Ricœur’s supposed linguistic turn, the phenomenology of the will was already in search of a philosophy of ordinary language.

I want to thank Jean-Marc Tétaz who contributed to the initial development of this issue, Eileen Brennan who actively collaborated in its production and Guillaume Braunstein, our new sub-editor, for the work he has done, editing, correcting and formatting the texts.

Johann Michel  
(translated by Eileen Brennan)