

## Introduction

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# Introduction

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The concept of practical wisdom is a constant theme in Ricœur's reflections on practical philosophy. Its appearance in fifteen books and more than twenty-five of his articles proves its importance for understanding Ricœurian ethics. In "À la gloire de la phronèsis," he attributes the revival of practical wisdom and its modern philosophical potential to scholarly commentaries on the original Aristotelian text and the creative interpretations of philosophers such as Gadamer and McIntyre. We should also add Ricœur himself to this list.

Practical wisdom embodies several concepts and principles that run throughout his works. It addresses, for instance, the tension between the fragility of human life with its inevitable conflicts and the human capacity to imaginatively create practical alternatives to ethical dilemmas in public debate. In chapters 7, 8 and 9 of *Oneself as Another* which is dedicated to his "little ethics," practical wisdom becomes the central concept of his masterful dialectic between Aristotle's phronesis, Kant's deontological requirement, and Hegel's *sittlichkeit*. His proposed critical practical wisdom is the fruit of his attentive dialogue with the grand teleological and deontological ethical lines of thought, and it transcends the simple dichotomy between the "good" and the "right." He integrates them into a proposed practical approach for institutions that aim at justice.

Practical wisdom is intrinsically related to Ricœur's persistent attention to the notion of conflict. It provides a practical response to the potential outcome of evil ("mal") in various conflictual situations. In showing how practical wisdom is rooted in tragic wisdom, Ricœur's conceptual kinship thus gives us a fascinating perspective and path for research. In light of this broad background of Ricœur's practical philosophy, this issue of ERRS explores how practical wisdom drives his ethics and his overall philosophy. This concept and its connections to Ricœurian philosophy, in general, strengthen Ricœur's concept of ethics. Compared to other ethical approaches, his innovative use of practical wisdom indeed deserves attention.

For instance, in *From Text to Action*, Ricœur explores hermeneutics' practical potential, and his analysis of practical wisdom opens up new possibilities in the context of an interpretative practice of action in which the agent continually makes choices in the light of an interpretation of a happy life. Such a hermeneutic analysis leads to a general reflection on language. Ricœur's "little ethics" is accordingly an answer to the ethical question of imputation from his dialogues with the analytic tradition. The deliberative process of practical wisdom also suggests a relationship to narratives. To deliberate well requires creating a narrative for the future that leads to a good life. In this context, Ricœur's discussions of narrative ethics provide a fertile field of reflection to explore the concept of practical wisdom.

Luiz Rohden's article develops precisely this relationship between practical wisdom, ethics, and narratives. In his thought-provoking exploration of the ethical role of literary narratives, Rohden proposes that the reading of literature is an exercise in practical wisdom by enabling the reader to rehearse and explore the practical contours of the good life. This text provides essential

elements for further explorations of the relationship between practical wisdom and narratives in other practical contexts.

Fernando Nascimento's article explores one of these contexts by reflecting on the importance of Ricoeur's concept of critical practical wisdom for the contemporary discussion of the social and ethical transformations brought by digital and computational technologies. Through a refined analysis of concepts such as poetic universals and narrative density that articulate the passage from narrative theory to the ethical perspective of practical wisdom, Nascimento suggests that Ricoeur's concept of critical practical wisdom is uniquely suitable to shed light on the crucial issues on the ethical repercussions of the accelerating pace of technological innovations.

Nascimento also investigates how practical wisdom has a core relationship with Ricoeur's conception of creative imagination. Faced with the aporias generated by unprecedented situations of conflict, practical wisdom is indeed an expression of the productive imagination's capacity to weave a decision that respects ethical principles while applying them in particular conflictual situations through public debate. The role of imagination in practical wisdom corresponds to the act of judgment. It applies universal principles to singular and unique circumstances with substantial ethical, legal, and political implications.

It is also in the context of creative imagination that Jean-Philippe Pierron highlights the tension between ethical imagination and the pluralism of moral traditions that foreshadows practical wisdom particularly important dynamism and heuristic potential within the framework of Ricoeur's little ethics. Pierron offers a significant and insightful contribution to how practical wisdom has enormous ethical potential in the face of the ever more pluralistic and multifaceted realities of contemporary societies.

Pierron's article also examines two practical contexts in which the dialectic between tradition and the creative imagination underlying practical wisdom is particularly fecund. First, from the idea of good advice cells ("*cellules de bon conseil*") and their application to issues requiring ethical creativity combined with the practice of argumentative advice cells, such as bioethics issues. Second, in a fruitful dialogue between Ricoeur and Nussbaum, he investigates the creative potential of practical wisdom to address economic problems through an intriguing reflection on the central role of games.

It is with pleasure, therefore, that we present this thematic issue that we hope will inspire renewed interest in the potential of the concept of practical wisdom from Ricoeur's philosophy to address current ethical issues in our ever more diverse and complex societies.