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John Arthos offers the most clear and direct application of philosophical hermeneutics for the field of communication. While much of Arthos's work details and expands Hans-Georg Gadamer's contribution to the hermeneutic and rhetorical traditions, most recently, in *Hermeneutics After Ricœur*, Arthos offers a critical appropriation of Ricœur's project for general hermeneutics. By bringing Ricœur into dialogue and contestation, the book enacts general hermeneutics in its form and method. Blending together theory and application, Arthos provides a textured review of Ricœur's work, accounting for its intersections with his life experience and his contemporaries.

Arthos begins with a point of application, framing general hermeneutics in higher education. Drawing upon his experience incorporating this approach into a liberal arts program at Indiana University, Arthos frames general hermeneutics as "an ally against the proclivity of the university to become an uncritical adjunct to an unthinking corporate culture" (1). He references Gadamer's educational philosophy rooted in "vulnerability-recognition-transformation" while simultaneously recognizing Gadamer's "chief weakness"—an exaggerated emphasis on belonging (1-2). Ultimately, Arthos seeks to integrate Gadamer's dialogic consciousness with Ricœur's hermeneutics.

Arthos reviews hermeneutics' humanistic impulses, tracing the relationship between hermeneutics and rhetoric from Friedrich Schleiermacher's work onward. While Heidegger and Gadamer rely on Schleiermacher and Dilthey, who used hermeneutics to oppose positivism, Ricœur reverted to a "critical-methodological school" while maintaining a commitment to ontology (4). This shift complicates his trajectory, rooted primarily in French rather than German philosophical traditions. The intellectual culture of France during and after World War II creates a "distinct heritage" from German hermeneutics; this influence, or in Arthos's words, "intervention," alters the "character and sense of direction" for hermeneutics more broadly (9). Ricœur's hermeneutics, which cannot be equated with his philosophy, marks a distinctive turn from the German hermeneutic tradition dating back to the Reformation.

In Chapter 1, Arthos juxtaposes seven distinctions between Gadamer and Ricœur that were first noted by Jean Grondin. The first distinguishes their fundamental question; Ricœur emphasizes interpretation while Gadamer highlights understanding. The second distinction identifies their intellectual adversaries; while Ricœur counters the assumption that language is "a tool of deception," Gadamer confronts the Enlightenment emphasis on reason (12). The third difference surfaces in their responses to Heidegger's fundamental ontology; unlike Gadamer's linguistic turn, Ricœur contends that Heidegger's fundamental ontology "short-circuited the passage of hermeneutic identity through linguistic culture" (13). The fourth distinction juxtaposes Gadamer's phenomenological hermeneutics and Ricœur's hermeneutic phenomenology. The fifth

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difference considers agency. Gadamer's emphasis on tradition highlights autonomy, while Ricœur's emphasis on capability and fallibility points toward the self's limitations. The sixth distinction accounts for personal agency and ethics, recognizing Ricœur's turn to Aristotle and Kant as a response to a lack of ethical consideration in German hermeneutics. The final difference appears within the role of language; while meaning manifests through language in Gadamer's work, Ricœur contends that the capability of the self is a result of language.

From these seven distinctions, Arthos focuses on two: the movements confronted by each thinker and their explication of agency. From these two differences, Arthos searches for *phronesis*. In response to Ricœur, Arthos problematizes the privileged realm of the expert and reiterates the recognition that history, memory, and historians are always situated and interpreted within larger social, political, and cultural contexts. In response to Gadamer, Arthos references Dennis Schmidt's position that the Gadamerian project only works "where status and security are secured," but once removed from those privileges, his *phronesis* becomes "inadequate" (19). Arthos explains that while neither project takes us to this communication climate, Ricœur considers ethics and justice implications. Arthos explores these possibilities and simultaneously outlines some concerns, beginning with hermeneutics' relationship to structuralism.

This concern becomes the guiding theme of Chapter 2. Arthos traces Ricœur's commitment to Algirdas Julien Greimas. While Greimas sought an algorithmic and algebraic understanding of narrative, Ricœur aimed "to save structuralism from itself" (28). In his 1984 essay, "On Narrativity," Ricœur proposes a "hermeneutic correction" to Greimas's structuralism (42). While Ricœur positioned structuralism's emphasis on scientific explanation "a worthy counterweight" to understanding in hermeneutics, Arthos finds this attachment methodologically unsound as it denies hermeneutics' attentiveness to the particularity of a text (42). Arthos offers the structuralist project articulated by Gerard Genette as a potential alternative. While Ricœur was only ever critical of Genette's project, Arthos contends that these critiques are better directed toward Greimas and suggests that Ricœur missed Genette's meaningful amendments to structuralism, which could have contributed to Ricœur's attempt to integrate explanation and understanding.

In Chapter 3, Arthos discusses the "mixed success" of Ricœur's "structural-hermeneutic method" (51). Ricœur hoped to offer a new paradigm for the human sciences that could bridge objective analysis and interpretive judgment by applying textual analysis to human action. Ricœur suggests that textual analysis is a valid method for the human sciences. Within this argument, Ricœur assumes that the logic of an argument can account for an action's meaning. Arthos objects to Ricœur's conflation between actions and their records as well as his contention that human actions are more akin to written texts than ephemeral speech. Arthos extends Ricœur's textual analysis of human action with Johann Michel's hermeneutic sociology and Louis Quéré's hermeneutic anthropology. These accounts foreground of the problematic implications of privileging the hermeneutic insights of experts.

Arthos problematizes Ricœur's emphasis on the expert in Chapter 4. This emphasis moves away from Gadamer's stress on dialogue and announces significant "class implications" (74). Arthos recognizes the social responsibility placed upon disciplinary and professional experts but objects to the notion that hermeneutic understanding falls within this category. After a 1982 exchange with Gadamer on this theme, Ricœur introduces discussions on the "enlightened citizen" as a "court of public opinion" (91-2). Arthos, however, determines that these additions do not

indicate an amendment. Viewing these additions as too "weak" and "passive," Arthos prefers the "nuanced collaboration" required of Gadamerian dialogue, which is better characterized as a "clash" rather than an "agreement" (92). Arthos advocates for the "anticipatory skills" that inform interpreters about when the expertise of another is necessary. In this engagement, the practical use of hermeneutics emerges with a dual recognition of Ricœur's appreciation for institutions and Gadamer's commitment to dialogue.

To respond to this need, Chapter 5 amends Ricœur's narrative hermeneutics. Arthos problematizes Ricœur's emphasis on textual inscription, arguing that the notions of configuration, prefiguration, and refiguration should apply more broadly to narrative identity rather than solely to literary texts. Within Ricœur's account for temporality, Arthos suggests a turn from the text to the notion of *ipse*. Arthos suggests that "narrative identity is not an 'offshoot' of the operations of narrative configuration, but rather the very thing itself" (111). Arthos's amendment to Ricœur's narrative hermeneutics advocates for multi-modal narrative identity that does not view a text as a fully closed end.

In Chapter 6, Arthos follows Ricœur's response to others while constructing his distinctive detour. Beginning with his mentor, Jean Nabert, Ricœur responds to "a proto-hermeneutic impulse," seeking to place the self within a "complex negotiation" (117-8); however, Ricœur determined this negotiation as incomplete within Nabert's work and tasked himself with completing this project. In response to Husserl, Ricœur situates phenomenology within the hermeneutic tradition (119). Arthos places Ricœur's "hermeneutic (re)turn" in the 1960s, emphasizing his notion of the symbol. In the psychoanalytic model provided by Freud, Ricœur finds hermeneutic possibilities situated within the tensions of ontology and psycholinguistic philosophy, the conscious and unconscious, the methodological framing of psychoanalyst and interpreter, and the understanding of meaning within as an inner/outer relation. This influence moves away from Heidegger's conceptualization of hermeneutics as a "mode of understanding of Dasein" (126). Ultimately, Ricœur's detour demonstrates that hermeneutics is never a complete circle, even when he suggested that we speak of a spiral. This step away from Heidegger directs Ricœur toward human finitude and fallibility in the constitution of the self. Ricœur's notion of self is constituted discursively, narratively, and socially in contexts reciprocally influenced by institutions. This stress on institutions recognizes cultural ground and announces ongoing responsibility.

Arthos commits Chapter 7 to Ricœur's work on the promise of institutions as a mediating link between the personal and the political. Arthos clarifies Ricœur's framing of the *promise* as a bridge between "personal identity and social responsibility" (143). Promises, through language, permit us to consider the perspective of another, to establish temporal structures, and to build character. For Ricœur, institutions "carry over human commitments to broader and more permanent social forms" (145). Arthos identifies how institutions embrace the changing present and enduring textual inscriptions. Institutional policies and standards inform Ricœur's reliance on Kant's commitment to rules. Institutions, like promises, are performative, expressing intention and identity. Arthos extends this discussion with jurisprudence, punishment, forgiveness, critical philosophy, and politics.

In Chapter 8, Arthos reviews Ricœur's reliance on Kant's moral philosophy. In Ricœur, one finds a dialectic between Aristotelian ethics and Kantian moral philosophy. For Arthos, "Ricœur's

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Kantian qualification" allows practical reason to test institutional rules as one moves toward the particularities of application (162). Kant's categorical imperative measures institutional standards by mediating self interest and responsibility for the other. Ricœur positions language as a "necessary condition for evil" (172) that opens possibilities for action and deception. Through language, Ricœur positions hermeneutics toward ethical obligations. Arthos announces implications for a hermeneutics of suspicion and general hermeneutics.

In Chapter 9, Arthos traces notions of the ethical and the political in Ricœur's life experiences and philosophical perspective. In his earliest works, as Europe faced the economic depression and political turbulence that led to World War II, Ricœur condemned capitalism and consumerism. He collaborated with Emmanuel Mounier on *Espirit* to interrupt "the dehumanizing machinery of mass society" (185). By the 1950s, Ricœur's early radicalism shifted toward "a critical analysis of political power in established systems" (186). Following widespread attacks on the legitimacy of authority, Ricœur accepted the deanship at the University of Nanterre in 1969. Ricœur hoped to mediate a radical progressive orientation with a commitment to "just institutions." (189) Ricœur made himself available to students for open discussion. Arthos suggests that this availability made him vulnerable to having students empty a garbage can over his head in the university's cafeteria. This event gained public traction, rallying sympathy and ridicule. Afterward, Ricœur resigned as dean.

According to Arthos, Ricœur's reputation experienced a "triple assault" (194); this incident at Nanterre paired with strong critiques of his work on Freud and a "very public loss" of a position at the Collège de France to Michel Foucault caused Ricœur to step back from the French intellectual scene (194). Ricœur began teaching at the University of Chicago where he remained an active researcher. Following the Chicago lectures, Ricœur "retreated" from their themes, prompting Arthos to describe Ricœur's later work as "backward-looking" (200). Arthos explains that hermeneutics after Ricœur continues to address the ethical and political legitimacy of institutions.

Arthos summarizes the implications of Ricœur's work for general hermeneutics. Centered on the dialectical themes of Ricœur's project, Arthos recounts his concern in explanation/understanding, text/speech, expert/layperson, method/judgment, and freedom/punishment. Nonetheless, Arthos celebrates Ricœur's attentiveness to the ethical and political implications of hermeneutics and his recognition of critical theory.

Arthos appropriates Ricœur's project for the ongoing enactment of general hermeneutics. He positions general hermeneutics within the current environment of higher education. This discussion is one of the most valuable contributions of *Hermeneutics After Ricœur*. In an era characterized by the collegiate embrace of a corporate mindset, Arthos offers Ricœur and general hermeneutics as a defense for education rather than certification, for critical thinking rather than technique, and for understanding rather than consumerism. It would have been helpful to read more about the program he implemented at Indiana University particularly in the book's conclusion. Nonetheless, Arthos's engagement with Ricœur demonstrates general hermeneutics in action. Consistent with modes of hermeneutic engagement, Arthos moves from question to text to understanding to implications for ongoing inquiry. Arthos enacts his unique ability to practice general hermeneutics as he explains its theoretical and practical implications.