

## Introduction – The Articulation of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics in Paul Ricœur

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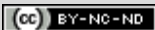
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# Introduction – The Articulation of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics in Paul Ricœur

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It is clear to all readers of Ricœur that phenomenology and hermeneutics take center stage in his work, and several of his commentators have obviously taken a close interest in these aspects. However, despite this scholarly attention, the question of their articulation is far from definitively closed. As the articles gathered in this issue show, due to its complexity, its multiple facets, and its evolution throughout Ricœur's work, there is still much to be said about this articulation, which for Ricœur is both an area of reflection and an approach or method applied to various phenomena.

Before exploring this articulation, one should first consider phenomenology itself, and more specifically the phenomenology of Husserl, the study, translation, and commentary of which occupied Ricœur for many years. Despite the critiques and distancing that would follow, Husserl's work would remain for Ricœur the great reference with which all phenomenology would have to explain itself. Then one must turn to hermeneutics itself—Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's, of course—which raises questions regarding method and the particularity of certain modes of understanding and interpretation. Finally, there is the discovery of a more radical philosophical understanding of hermeneutics with Heidegger to delve into, as well as its theological reverberations in Bultmann's work.

It is within this double heritage that Ricœur will try to envisage the necessary encounter between phenomenology and hermeneutics, from a philosophical point of view, as Heidegger had done before him and as Gadamer was attempting to do in the same period. When trying to understand how Ricœur articulated phenomenology and hermeneutics in his work, two key terms can serve as guideposts: heresy and detour.

With regard to the first, Ricœur's brief assertion—made in the 1950s, reiterated by him in different contexts and discussed at length by scholars—has become the indispensable reference: “in a broad sense, phenomenology,” he maintains, “is both the sum of Husserl's work and the heresies issuing from it.” This seminal statement has the merit of establishing both the work of Husserl as the orthodoxy to which one refers in order to know how phenomenology works, and the daring task of diverging from it in order to think something else, or in a different way. In this sense, this statement invites us to explore “lateral derivations” in Husserl's phenomenology—i.e., the paths that were opened but later on abandoned—rather than the hard core of the later transcendental idealism. Shifting the focus from Husserl's ambitions of providing a *prima philosophia* to understanding phenomenology as a descriptive method opening onto things

themselves, revealed a whole new field of research. It then became Ricœur’s task, via various preliminary theoretical adjustments and recalibrations, to bring out the richness of a “heretical” articulation of the phenomenological method with hermeneutics.

The reworkings brought about by “grafting” hermeneutics onto phenomenology find their most prominent expression in the detour, the second key term considered here. Whether willingly embraced or even sought after for its own sake, the “detour” sums up Ricœur’s response to the movement of “deregionalization and radicalization” initiated by the ontological hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer, notably through their shared view on understanding as an original way of being in the world. Whilst relying on the same foundations, Ricœur instead prefers to give this movement a reflexive and critical turn by keeping understanding and interpretation, ontological perspective and epistemological dimension, mode of being and mode of knowledge, articulated to one another. This approach aims to take a necessary distance from certain presuppositions of the Husserlian phenomenology: indeed, instead of counting on the “immediacy, transparency, and apodicticity” of the Cartesian cogito, hermeneutics takes the long path and dwells on the historical figures of embodied subjects immersed into an already interpreted linguistic universe.

This articulation of hermeneutics and phenomenology will take different forms throughout the development of Ricœur’s œuvre. It is the merit of **Jean Grondin**’s article that it focuses on the nature of and reasons underlying the initial hermeneutical turn in 1960, followed by the successive shifts and detours that were to redefine each time Ricœur’s approach and aims. Jean Grondin reminds us that the first turn taken in *The Symbolism of Evil* was based first and foremost on the will to respond to the loss of the sacred that would characterize the crisis of the modern times, by enabling the human being to rediscover a connection with the sacred through a reappropriation of its forgotten signs and symbols. He points out, however, that Ricœur did not pursue this ambitious project to its conclusion, no doubt because of the aporetic nature of this reappropriation, which was intended to lead to an (impossible?) second naivety. He proposes to understand the hermeneutical detours of successive years towards psychoanalysis, structuralism, and the critique of ideologies, in the light of this abandoned project, the search for a second naivety being abandoned in favor of a new dialectic of trust and suspicion. However, asks Jean Grondin, doesn’t the abandonment of this project and the option in favor of the long route, in which the detours will multiply, expose Ricœur’s approach to the risk of losing sight of a precise goal? Moreover, is it by following this path of constant turns and detours that one should understand Ricœur’s last hermeneutic as a reflection on incompleteness?

Questioning the role played by distanciation in the articulation of phenomenology and hermeneutics could be a task for a so-called immanent approach to Ricœurian thought. And Ricœur’s article “The Hermeneutic Function of Distanciation” is probably the first that comes to mind, with its emphasis on the paradigmatic dimension of the text. But this theme of distanciation can just as well become the guiding thread of an interpretation that opens Ricœur’s thought in an innovative and substantial way to decisive questions, proving once again its relevancy, as **Gert-Jan van der Heiden** does in his article. Here, the author seeks to bring Ricœurian hermeneutics into dialogue with the post-critical literary theories of Felski and Sedgwick and the new realism of Meillassoux and Harman, leading them into an intertwined, hermeneutically rich relationship. This is all the more significant given that the two orientations seem to be driven by opposite intentions. On the one hand, there is Ricœur’s theory of distanciation seen as a counterpoint to Heidegger’s

and Gadamer's prevailing emphasis on co-belonging at the level of the constitution of hermeneutic experience. On the other, there is the new realism's concern to rediscover forms of attachment at the very heart of our relationship to reality, as a reaction against the critical theories that tend to impose generalized suspicion as the new norm in today's debates. Indeed, the author's aim is to foster an encounter between the two approaches, which can have a mutually transformative effect. Thus, the new realism and post-critical theories could learn from Ricœur that the hyperbolic doubt led by critical theories cannot be countered solely by recovering various meanings of attachment; it would also be necessary to open the latter to a dialectical corrective with distancing by engaging an interplay between trust and distrust. Ricœurian hermeneutics would gain from this encounter an incentive to return to its phenomenological condition, in the sense of a shift of perspective: from *Schriftlichkeit*, textuality, to *Sache*, the being that matters to us.

Ricœurian hermeneutics can be understood, as we have already seen, as a corrective to Husserl's phenomenology, particularly to his transcendental idealism. Ricœur does not content himself with criticizing phenomenology as a philosophical doctrine, he deepens it by exposing its hermeneutical presuppositions. But could the direction of this analysis not be reversed, in such a way that some of Ricœur's theories could gain in depth by being questioned in return by Husserl, more precisely by adopting some of his specific views? This is the key to a penetrating reading that **Pol Vandeveld** sets out in his article. Central to this interpretation is the problem of imagination and its role in articulating the mimetic function of historical narrative. Thus, the theory of the three leading kinds of the Same, the Other, and the Analogous, through which Ricœur attempts to explain, in *Time and Narrative*, the relationship between narrative discourse and the event discovers new dimensions in the light of Husserl's analyses of the "sensible content of the imagination," or *phantasma*. If the guiding question of Vandeveld's approach stresses an essential aspect—in what sense is narrative analogous to reality, what is the ontological bearing of narrative—the answer lies in a single word: imagination. It is the imagination, the author argues, that is the true *logos* of the *analogon*; it is also the imagination that mediates our access to the real and can produce a "quasi-objectivity," intervening at the heart of perception or even making perception possible. From this point of view, the power of the world of the text to transform the reader's world seems to reside essentially in the *phantasma* that the narrative generates. In other words, the narrative's space of mimetic refiguration revolves around the *phantasma*—analogous to the sensations that underlie the perception of an event—and, through this artifice, the reader is able to see *and* understand, in the mode of "as if," what really happened.

**Sylvain Camilleri's** article examines how religious experience raises particular challenges to Ricœur's articulation of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Based on a detailed analysis of Ricœur's article "Experience and Language in Religious Discourse" (1992), he attempts to bring out an important tension in Ricœur between phenomenology and hermeneutics in confronting the phenomenon of religious experience in order to describe, grasp, and interpret it adequately. This tension finds expression in the idea of a possible "subversion" of phenomenology by hermeneutics, pointing in an entirely different direction from the famous metaphor of grafting. According to Sylvain Camilleri, Ricœur's approach would give primacy to a hermeneutic of religion that stresses the various linguistic, cultural, and historical mediations, following the logic of the long route, and disputing the very possibility of grasping the religious phenomenon in its universality. The author identifies a form of "violence" that hermeneutic reason does on phenomenology. It consists in underestimating phenomenology's capacity to provide a proper originary elucidation of religious

experience, based on hermeneutic intuitions of religious lived experience, as proposed by the young Heidegger.

To conclude our dossier, **Samuel Lelièvre** investigates how Ricœur's grafting of hermeneutics onto phenomenology has been understood but also criticized by certain contemporary authors, starting either from phenomenology, in the case of Claude Romano's interpretation, or hermeneutics, with Denis Thouard. In both cases, the author highlights the significance but at the same time the specific limitations these interpretations have. In his opinion, Claude Romano's reading seems to blur the distinction between phenomenology and hermeneutics, and then to mistakenly relate Ricœur's hermeneutics to a certain linguistic idealism. As for Denis Thouard's perspective, it appears to underestimate the capacity of Ricœur's hermeneutics of the self to conceive anything else but a "weakened subject" that is deprived of a true principle of autonomy, due to an overly pronounced Heideggerian heritage. In order to overcome these problematic limitations, Samuel Lelièvre emphasizes the importance of thinking more adequately about the place and role of the articulation of phenomenology and hermeneutics within the framework of the project of philosophical anthropology that inspires Ricœur's œuvre, taking into account the different moments in its evolution and the originality of its developments.

In sum, the articles collected here show the current relevance of the crucial question of the articulation of phenomenology and hermeneutics in the work of Paul Ricœur, as well as the diversity and importance of the issues raised by this question. In closing, we would like to thank the authors for responding to our call and for their high-quality contributions. Many thanks are also due to Jean-Luc Amalric and Ernst Wolff for their invitation to produce this issue, as well as for their confidence and their help throughout the process of selecting, evaluating, and editing the articles. We would like to express our gratitude to them and to the authors.