

# Introduction: Reading Ricoeur

*David M. Kaplan*

Paul Ricoeur was many things in his life: French Protestant, pacifist, prisoner of war, professor of philosophy, author of over 500 articles and thirty books, recipient of honorary degrees from thirty universities, and winner of dozens of international awards and prizes, including the Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy and the John W. Kluge Prize, sometimes known as the “Nobel Prize for humanists.” The scope of Ricoeur’s work is truly breathtaking. The topics he addressed himself to—in tremendous detail—over his sixty year philosophical career include: existentialism, phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, ontology, hermeneutics, biblical hermeneutics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of language, narrative theory, critical theory, philosophy of action, philosophy of history, moral philosophy, political philosophy, and philosophy of law, to name just some of the philosophical topics Ricoeur published in. He is widely recognized as among the most important philosophers of the twentieth century, moving comfortably within the worlds of French philosophy, German philosophy, Anglo-American philosophy, and the history of philosophy. He was also a socially engaged intellectual who wrote nonacademic articles about the political events of the day, such as fascism and pacifism in the 1940s, culture and colonialism in the 1960s, and memory and forgiveness in the 1990s. Ricoeur wrote on such a bewilderingly wide range of subjects that very few of us can fully understand the scope of his intellectual project.

The task of understanding Ricoeur’s work is not made any easier by his philosophical style, which often leaves his readers puzzled, searching for his voice amid his massive scholarly writings. It is often difficult to find a philosophy unique to Paul Ricoeur. While clearly an original thinker, his major works take the form of lengthy studies of others. He initially appears to be more like a commentator than a creative philosopher. Whenever Ricoeur takes on a problem, he usually explains its historical development, carefully considering the positions of his inter-

locutors. He will then synthesize a vast range of material into a *response* to the question or problem at hand; not an *answer*, but a response. He recognizes the difficulty of genuine philosophical questions and he owns up to our limited ability to know all of the answers without giving up the attempt to address himself responsibly to the challenges questions pose.

He has described himself (only half-jokingly) as a “post-Hegelian Kantian,” which means that he attempts to both mediate and not-mediate, overcome limits and accept limits. Like Hegel, Ricoeur believes we can find reason, truth, and moral right through philosophical mediation; like Kant, he believes that human experience and philosophy are riddled with aporia that have only practical responses, not theoretical solutions. He reads philosophy through the lenses of Kant and Hegel, interpreting the works of others as he creates creative responses to philosophical aporia. Ricoeur’s “third term” in a debate mediates without reconciling. He sometimes refers to this method of nonsynthetic mediation as a “hermeneutic arc” drawn from one philosopher to another, that both subsumes the work of another and leaves it alone. He is undogmatic to a fault. He is the most charitable philosopher you will ever encounter.

Readers of Ricoeur have long searched for a common thread running throughout his thirty books, 500 articles, and sixty year career. It is a perfectly understandable goal. As difficult as it may be to find Ricoeur’s unique philosophical voice, there is always something unmistakably Ricoeur-like in his work, even when he is faithfully explaining the thought of another. Even though he has addressed himself to (and even morphed into) every major movement in twentieth-century philosophy from the 1940s to the present, there is definitely a continuity of style and voice from book to book. On his own self-interpretation, each of his major works deals only with particular problems. For a long time he refused to see any relationship between his different books as either continuous or discontinuous, leaving that task to his interpreters.

After having completed a work, I find myself confronting something that has escaped it, something that flies outside its orbit, becoming an obsession for me, and forming the next subject to examine. . . . In this way, one can say that the theme of the new book is off-center in relation to the preceding one, but with a return to subjects that had already been encountered, touched upon, or anticipated in earlier discussions. What had been a fragment becomes the new envelope, the totality.”<sup>1</sup>

Ricoeur’s readers, however, are quick to agree that the notion of human capability (*l’homme capable*) is the guiding thread that runs through Ricoeur’s philosophical career, unifying his seemingly disconnected works. From his early phenomenology of the will in *Freedom and*

*Nature* (1950), to his investigation of psychoanalysis in *Freud and Philosophy* (1965), to his studies on the nature of self in *Oneself as Another* (1990), to his examination of memory and forgiveness in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004), exploring the problem of human capability has always been the focus of Ricoeur's works. To be a human being is to be capable of initiating new actions that are imputable to one as freely chosen activities. By analyzing the various ways that the verb "I can" is modified and realized in the ways that *I can speak, I can do things, I can tell a story, and I can be imputed* (as the author of an action), Ricoeur argues that the notion of capability forms a link between philosophical anthropology, language, and moral philosophy. It also forms a link between human action and human suffering. Our capabilities are intertwined with our vulnerabilities and the various figures of otherness that limit the will: the body, the unconscious, language, others, and so on. Ricoeur tries to show how we can conceive of a notion of the self that is neither an ultimate foundation nor a fragmented illusion but a capable person who is able to do any number of things, the most fundamental of which are speaking, acting, suffering, recounting, and being responsible.

Unraveling the interrelated threads of the concept of capability has taken Ricoeur a lifetime. It is not difficult to see why; the concept of capability implies a web of related phenomena. It implies a notion of the will as embodied, free, and receptive. It implies an existential and material relation to the world, what Ricoeur once characterized as "the fault" (*la faute*). It implies a relation to language through which we relate to the world, initially described in terms of symbols, then texts, then narratives, then translation as successive models of the linguistic mediation of experience. Capability implies a relation to the unconscious and other structured systems, above all language and systematically distorted communication. It implies a relation to the imagination that figures into action and language at the most fundamental condition of possible speech and action. It implies a relation to creative realms "as if" they could exist, including the realms of literature, poetry, and the divine. Capability implies a relation to the other with whom we live and without whom we would be unable even to understand ourselves. It implies moral relationships with others to whom we are accountable. Capability implies the imputability of actions undertaken and endured, as well as the quest for recognition of ourselves, other selves, and multiple forms of alterity. It implies a relation to memory, to history, and to forgetting, the interrelated concepts that attest equally to our human capacities as to our human vulnerabilities.

In the late 1960s, around the time Ricoeur shifted his emphasis away from questions of the self and the will in the context of a descriptive philosophy toward the questions of language and action in the context

of an interpretive philosophy, he offered a self-interpretation of his work as centered on the pair, speech and action, as two inseparable poles of human existence. “The question of language . . . is a mode of being, a pole of existence as fundamental as action itself. A new equilibrium between saying and doing must be sought.<sup>2</sup> His subsequent work in the 1970s and 1980s developed this equilibrium through studies of discourse, texts, metaphors, and narratives—increasingly broad units of meanings through which we think, act, communicate, and suffer. With the publication of *Oneself as Another*, however, Ricoeur’s focus on capability comes more clearly into focus. He has said as much, calling human capability “the cornerstone” of his philosophy, and that his recent work on selfhood, ethics, politics, and theology can be understood within the larger framework of his work examining it.<sup>3</sup> In *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Ricoeur again explains that *l’homme capable* is a “thin but continuous” thread running through his work.

The man capable of . . . speaking, acting, narrative and narrative himself, taking responsibility for his actions . . . but also remembering and forgetting, making history and writing it, judging and being judged, understanding his human condition, through the painstaking work of interpretation and translation, which is a way to say something again but differently. And capable also, at the end of a long lifetime journey, of realizing, through the difficult experience of forgiving, that humans are worth more than their actions and their faults and that the climax of wisdom is the capacity to be amazed by the splendor of the simple fact of being alive as human beings . . . as we are taught by those simple masters, the lilies of the fields and the birds in the sky.<sup>4</sup>

Domenico Jervolino calls the search for unity in Ricoeur’s work a “loving struggle” between the author and his readers.<sup>5</sup> Readers search for unity in an author’s work; authors write about what they please, leaving the question of unity to their readers. Perhaps with Ricoeur’s acknowledgment of the role *l’homme capable* plays in his work, we have a framework for concluding this loving struggle. The conflict is followed by what Jervolino calls a *pax philosophica* that consists in gratitude and recognition on the part of both the author and readers. Recognition that the questions we have been struggling with are ultimately about the nature and meaning of being human; gratitude for writing, reading, and for being understood by each other. Ricoeur has given his readers so much to think about. And for that we are very grateful.

The contributors to this book express their recognition and gratitude to Paul Ricoeur in chapters written about various aspects of his work.

We are a collection of readers united only by our deep respect and appreciation for the great body of work Ricoeur left for us. We approach his work with different questions. We are of from different generations, different nationalities, and different philosophical temperaments. All of these differences become apparent in the way we read, analyze, and think with Ricoeur. It is also apparent that we had different relationships with Paul Ricoeur. For some of us, he was the author of books we read, admire, and struggle with; for others, he was our colleague; for some of us he was our professor and our teacher; for others, he was our friend, even best friend.

It is my hope that readers will recognize the how thoughtful, respectful, and caring the contributors are in their examinations of Ricoeur's work. Readers will find most of the main aspects of his various philosophical reflections covered here. I think readers will find the struggle between Ricoeur and the readers included here one that is truly loving. Each of the chapters deserves more than the brief introductions that follow.

The first chapter is by James L. Marsh, who, in "Ricoeur's Phenomenology of Freedom as an Answer to Sartre," favorably compares Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* to Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. For Marsh, *Freedom and Nature* is one of the greatest yet most underappreciated works in the history of Continental philosophy in the twentieth century. Ricoeur's phenomenological account of the nature and limits of freedom is a dialectic of the voluntary and involuntary, activity and receptivity, freedom and necessity. Marsh contrasts Ricoeur's balanced account of a freedom that is bound by necessity to Sartre's one-sided, unbalanced, account of freedom that stresses the novel irruption of choice in the project—the fiat, the leap. For Marsh, Sartre's phenomenology of freedom lacks the subtlety and careful attention to the mediating role of the body at every level of voluntary activity: from decision, to action, to consent to the course initiated. According to Ricoeur, human life is the paradoxical unity of the voluntary and involuntary and our attempt to comprehend our paradoxical nature as both free and determined. Marsh hopes to right the historical injustice that has been done to *Freedom and Nature* by recognizing it—not *Being and Nothingness*—as the twentieth century's most important contribution to our understanding of freedom.

Bernard P. Dauenhauer, in "What Makes Us Think? Two Views," reviews the debate between Ricoeur and the neuroscientist Jean-Pierre Changeux on the nature of thought, the role of the brain in cognitive performance, and the status of neuroscientific knowledge in relation to philosophy. Both Changeux and Ricoeur reject metaphysical dualism between mind and body, but they disagree on how precisely to characterize the interactions between bodily processes and thinking. Changeux

believes that the brain and its activities are sufficient to account for all thinking; Ricoeur maintains that the brain is a necessary condition for thought, but not sufficient for it. Changeux and Ricoeur also disagree on the even larger issue of what thinking could accomplish. Changeux holds that the supreme achievement of the human brain is the search for truth, culminating in the organized scientific inquiry; Ricoeur maintains that third-person explanations of causal events in the brain are different from first-person reports about one's experience. Furthermore, whereas scientific explanations are falsified on the basis of empirical evidence, one's lived experience can never be proven, but only attested to. Dauenhauer clarifies the positions of Changeux and Ricoeur and analyzes two central issues in the debate: the nature of memory and the relationship of scientific practice to its social-cultural milieu. Dauenhauer both pinpoints the differences between lived experience and scientific explanation and also highlights ways to integrate scientific activity into the world of experience.

David E. Klemm, in "Philosophy and Kerygma: Ricoeur as Reader of the Bible," analyzes Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology. The thread that unifies Ricoeur's wide-ranging, diverse interests—from *Fallible Man* to *Oneself as Another*—is the concept of human capability. Klemm examines Ricoeur's philosophy of human capability in relation to the limits of human thought, clarifying what the limits are, how they are constituted, and how they can be known. Starting with Ricoeur's early philosophical anthropology, Klemm explains how we are both capable yet fallible, finite yet infinite, subjective yet objective—opposites mediated only by the transcendental imagination, in the Kantian sense. Next he shows how Ricoeur extends our understanding of the limits of our being human through creative and imaginative uses of language that produce new ways to see and be in the world. He explains how Ricoeur adopts Kant's limit ideas of self, world, and God, but pushes those limits and offers the possibility of imaginative, creative ways of understanding the full depth of meaning of self, world, and God. Klemm concludes with a reflection on how linguistic innovation at the theological level reveals the extraordinary meaning-function of the name "God"—the limit of all limits of understanding and the full extent of our linguistic capacities.

Richard Kearney, in "On the Hermeneutics of Evil," examines the concept of evil, an abiding concern of Ricoeur's philosophy. From his early work *The Symbolism of Evil* published in 1960 to his more recent 1985 chapter, "Evil: A Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," Ricoeur has given a great deal of attention to the challenge evil presents to human capability and human understanding. In the first part of his study, Kearney shows how Ricoeur addresses the problem of evil in light of his early philosophical anthropology (in which fallibility creates the possibility for evil) and phenomenology of symbolism (the myths and other

indirect means by which we comprehend the reality of evil). In the second part, Kearny shows how Ricoeur, in his 1985 chapter, broadens and expands both the concept of evil and our responses to evil in light of a more fully developed hermeneutic philosophy. In this work, Ricoeur is even more attentive to the various ways that the enigma of evil challenges us and calls us to responsibility. Narratives and testimony play a key role in understanding and responding to evil. In the final part, Kearny explores Ricoeur's threefold hermeneutic model of the experience of evil in memory and history, which involves, (1) practical understanding and action, (2) acknowledgment of suffering and working through it, and (3) pardon and forgiveness.

William Schweiker, in "Paul Ricoeur and the Prospects of a New Humanism," examines the connections in Ricoeur's work on human capability (our "effort to be") and his version of humanism. Schweiker endeavors to show precisely how Ricoeur's humanism reflects his basic philosophical orientation to articulate the effort to be and how, in turn, the human effort to be determines the outlines of a humanism Ricoeur believed necessary for the present age. Schweiker finds a theological humanism implicit yet undeveloped in Ricoeur's work by contrasting Greek rational humanism and biblical fideist humanism—what Ricoeur once called the possibility of a "third man." Schweiker presses beyond Ricoeur to develop a distinctively Christian humanism. In contrast to Nietzsche's "human, all too human," and Levinas's "human, otherwise than human," Schweiker's formula is "human, truly human" in which our human capacities are developed in relation to distinctively Christian sources. It is a distinctive form of humanism rooted in an affirmation of human capability to act responsibly with and for others, chastened by our fragility and fallibility, and thankful for the gift of life as revealed through the Gospel. Schweiker shows how we can follow Ricoeur and take a detour through Christian texts in order to develop a theological humanism that is distinct yet conversant with other kinds of humanism—perhaps the very realization of Ricoeur's third man.

Merold Westphal, in "Ricoeur's Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Religion," proposes five theses that constitute Ricoeur's version of phenomenology. Westphal then examines Ricoeur's reflections of biblical texts to develop a substantive phenomenology of religion in light of these theses. The first three theses place Ricoeur alongside of Heidegger and Gadamer within the hermeneutic tradition: (1) understanding is a matter of interpretation rather than intuition, (2) interpretation takes place within the hermeneutic circle, and (3) interpretation takes philosophical reflection on detours through prephilosophical texts. The fourth thesis, that the hermeneutics of recovery needs to be supplemented by the hermeneutics of suspicion, tests the limits of hermeneutic phenomenology and calls into question assumptions about the self as a transparent center of

experience. The fifth thesis, a hermeneutic phenomenology involves a movement beyond intentionality, further displaces the ego as the center of meaning by opening it up to others (both human and divine) who always precede us and call us to respond and to be responsible. This inversion of intentionality—toward, rather than from, me—is necessary in order to let that which is beyond me show itself to me. Westphal finds a substantive phenomenology of religion in Ricoeur's meditation of the ideals of justice and love. Westphal argues that, for Ricoeur, justice and love are dialectically related, yet never reconciled and always in tension.

André LaCocque, in "Love Proceeds by Poetic Amplification," pays tribute to his friend by discussing Ricoeur's distinction between justice and love, the latter understood in the sense of the Hebrew word *hesed* and which translates as love, goodness, compassion, generosity, and graciousness. In the first part of the chapter, LaCocque develops Ricoeur's thesis that justice proceeds by conceptual reduction, love proceeds by poetic amplification. LaCocque reflects on each of the three pairs of contrasting terms: justice and love, conceptual and poetic, reduction and amplification. He finds that in each pair, the second term is broader and encompasses the first. Justice and its well-reasoned orientation toward equality and reciprocity are never enough. The aim of a righteous life is to surpass justice toward *hesed*, a creative act of loving compassion. In the second part of the chapter, through a reading of the story of Ruth and her journey back from Moab to Israel, LaCocque finds an example of the poetic amplification of understanding the law. When Ruth breaks the law of marriage for the sake of remaining loyal to her family, she is rewarded by the law of redemption, a form of justice richer and greater than mere compensation or retribution. The story of Ruth is an example of how the poetic amplification aims not only to establish justice but also to redeem and restore humanity.

Pol Vandavelde, in "The Challenge of the 'such as is was': Ricoeur's Theory of Narratives," shows how Ricoeur's theory of narrative is designed to account for not only how we experience things, but also to show how narratives are already part of the very nature of action, time, and selfhood. Narratives are thus not mere descriptions of life, but are part of the ontological constitution of life. The phenomenological aspect of a narrative is the meaning content (or noema) of what is recounted; the hermeneutic aspect of a narrative is the interpretive mediation of experience. Vandavelde focuses on the phenomenological character of narratives to clarify Ricoeur's strong claim that narratives tell us what really takes place because action and experience have a prenarrative quality. When a narrative recounts things or people "such as they were" it makes a claim to accurately depict what happened. Vandavelde carefully distinguishes between the activity of narrative understanding and



the product of narrative understanding in a way that Ricoeur does not. He also clarifies Ricoeur's threefold conception of *mimesis* in *Time and Narrative*, reworking Ricoeur's confused distinction between narrative prefiguration and narrative configuration. Vandavelde argues that there is a grammar of justification embedded in narratives, transforming Ricoeur's claim that narratives depict the world "as if" it were true to the stronger claim that narrative depict the world "such as it was."

Patrick L. Bourgeois, in "Ricoeur and Lyotard in Postmodern Dialogue: Symbol and the Sublime," places two interpretations of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* at the heart of the debate between philosophical modernism and postmodernism. According to Bourgeois, Lyotard gives Kant's notion of the sublime such a central position that it collapses philosophy into literature. By contrast, Ricoeur extends Kant's notion of the sublime into a narrative function as a third kind of reflective judgment. While Lyotard expands the role of the sublime in Kant's aesthetics and explodes any rule orientation by means of Kant's notion of invention, Ricoeur extends the role of the sublime and the symbolic function and keeps a rule orientation in making this new type of function determinative. Ricoeur thus goes far beyond Kant by developing novel applications of the productive imagination, but without going as far as Lyotard in jeopardizing the role of reason. Bourgeois argues that Ricoeur's expansion on Kantian limit and imagination broadens the context of thinking and philosophy. He shows how Ricoeur has followed Kant concerning the boundary of theoretical knowledge, the limits of thinking and speculation, and has expanded on these through the use of symbol and semantic innovation yet he does not fall prey to the tendency of postmodernism to substitute literature and poetry for philosophy. Bourgeois' Ricoeur is an attractive alternative to Lyotard and post-modern deconstruction.

Olivier Abel, in "Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics: From Critique to Poetics," examines how Ricoeur orients hermeneutics toward a critical hermeneutics and reorients it toward a poetic hermeneutics. Abel explains how hermeneutics for Ricoeur overcomes the aporia of phenomenology—owning up to an intrinsic ineliminable ambiguity of experience—in a double orientation. One orientation is toward a critical hermeneutics and involves a search for the limits of experience; another orientation is toward the poetic and takes the form of a search for new, creative interpretations of the experience. Abel explains that different types of hermeneutics can be brought together under what he calls the "principle of the implicit question": the meaning of a text is a function of the implicit question it is meant to answer. Critical hermeneutics responds to this principle by pointing in two directions: one toward the distance between our context and the text; the other toward the belonging of interpreter to what is questioned. This play of distance

and belonging constitutes a critical hermeneutic. Abel then explains how a poetic hermeneutics results when interpretation is geared toward unfolding meanings “in front of” the text, opening the possibility for creative interpretations of the world. The same creative, narrative interpretations figure into the self and moral deliberation. Abel thus creates a topology of hermeneutics that divides into four orientations: critical, ontological, poetic, and ethical.

David M. Kaplan, in “Ricoeur’s Critical Theory,” examines Ricoeur’s contributions to the Western Marxist tradition of ideology critique. Philosophy for Ricoeur is critical in the Kantian sense of identifying the limits of understanding as well as in the Marxist sense of uncovering false consciousness and the material conditions of thought and action. Kaplan highlights this latter sense of critique, focusing on four themes in Ricoeur’s work that are particularly relevant to a critical social theory in the Western Marxist tradition: (1) The hermeneutics of suspicion, where Ricoeur distinguishes his version of critical hermeneutics from the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer, and which forms an internal connection between interpretive experience and critical consciousness. (2) The mediation of the Habermas–Gadamer debates, where Ricoeur integrates Habermas’s theories of universal pragmatics and discourse ethics into hermeneutics and moral philosophy. (3) The theory of ideology and utopia, where Ricoeur forges a link between creative, narrative discourses with the critique of ideology. (4) The fragility of political language, where Ricoeur offers a modest, limited critique of political legitimacy that affirms democratic political and economic institutions yet is keen to avoid the hubris often associated with Enlightenment political philosophy. Kaplan endeavors to bring Ricoeur in the conversation on critical theory and to encourage readers of Ricoeur to pay more attention to the critical dimension of his work.

David M. Rasmussen, in “Justice and Interpretation,” reflects on issues regarding public reason, global justice, and political differences. The dilemma of justice on a global scale is that any attempt to both affirm the legitimacy and validity of individual claims to rights might conflict with the claims originating from the distinctiveness of other political cultures. Rasmussen turns to Ricoeur’s reflections on political philosophy and his interpretation of Rawls in *Oneself as Another* and *The Just* to develop a model of public reason designed to steer this delicate path. Rasmussen explains how Rawls’s position has evolved from a pure proceduralism and deontological theory of rights to a political constructivism that involves judgment and interpretation. Rawls’s own development reflects Ricoeur’s central criticism of him, that public reason requires an interpretive framework not a purely constructivist one. Rasmussen shows how Ricoeur’s framework proposed in *Oneself as Another* of an asymmetrical model between self and other can be used not only for

individual self-understanding in politics but also for constructing a global framework. The key is the notion of a narrative identity that is capable of constructing a notion of selfhood that accounts for both self-identity and cultural identity while preserving the differences between the self and other. Rasmussen argues that Ricoeur's notion of selfhood allows us to reconstruct Rawlsian notions of reasonability and public reason that preserve the uniqueness of political culture to a global conception of human rights.

Domenico Jervolino, in "Rethinking Ricoeur: The Unity of His Work and the Paradigm of Translation," discusses the relationship between the notion of *l'homme capable*, the thin but continuous common thread that organizes Ricoeur's work, and the model of translation as Ricoeur's final version on the linguistic mediation of experience. Jervolino reads Ricoeur's last works as an effort to understand human capability in relation to metaphysics and to morals through the (reflexive) medium of language. The problem of converting the universal and transcendental into something contextual and practical is the problem of translation. The labor of translation is never ending; it is always possible to re-say something because perfect translation is impossible. Instead, the capacity to translate reveals a new form of vulnerability that reminds us of our limitations in understanding and communicating with others. Translation is the paradigm of our relation to the other—an asymmetrical yet mutual relation between self and other, including other cultures, religions, and historical ages. Jervolino relates Ricoeur's model of translation to his notion of recognition developed in his final book, *The Course of Recognition*: both attempt to respect the other while preserving the alterity of the other.

Charles Reagan, in "Binding and Loosing: Promising and Forgiving; Amnesty and Amnesia," gives a reading of Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* to make sense of the way that people and groups bind and unbind themselves to each other. Reagan begins with an account of promising and its relation to narrative identity in *Oneself as Another*, where Ricoeur shows how promising establishes the kind of permanence in time appropriate to selfhood. Promising binds us to do something or to be someone into the future. Forgiving, however, unbinds us from something done in the past. Reagan develops the notion of forgiveness by tracing Ricoeur's detour through remembering and forgetting. Ricoeur's main points are that we have no other resource to the past than memory and false memories can only be corrected by true memories, just as false testimony can be corrected only by true testimony. Forgetting, of course, poses a challenge and a threat to memory and history. Ricoeur discusses ordinary forgetting, pathological forgetting, manipulated forgetting, and commanded forgetting, or amnesty. Forgiveness is different. It is asymmetrical; only another can forgive, and forgiveness is

unconditional, directed toward the unforgivable (the *fault*, from *Fallible Man*). Ricoeur struggles to bridge the gap between the unforgivable fault and the impossible forgiveness. The dialectic of promising (which establishes identity and predictability into the future) and forgiving (which is asymmetrical and restores what is irreversible) constitutes the difficult relationship of binding and loosing.

In his epilogue, Reagan recounts his final visit with Paul Ricoeur in Paris at the end of February 2005, and describes the funeral in Chatenay-Malabry in May 2005.

## NOTES

1. Paul Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 81.
2. Paul Ricoeur, Foreword to Don Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. xiv.
3. Paul Ricoeur, "Ethics and Human Capability," in *Paul Ricoeur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, ed. John Wall, William Schweiker, and W. David Hall (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 285.
4. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 505–506.
5. Domenico Jervolino, chapter 13, "Rethinking Ricoeur: The Unity of His Work and the Paradigm of Translation."