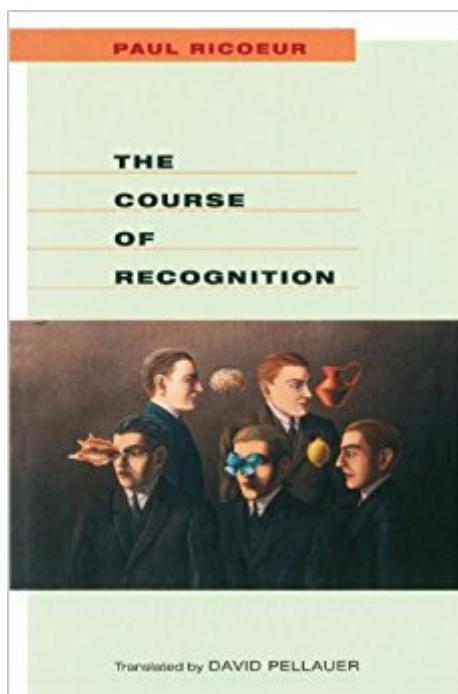


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# The Course Of Recognition (Institute For Human Sciences Vienna Lecture Series)



## **Synopsis**

Recognition, though it figures profoundly in our understanding of objects and persons, identity and ideas, has never before been the subject of a single, sustained philosophical inquiry. This work, by one of contemporary philosophy's most distinguished voices, pursues recognition through its various philosophical guises and meanings--and, through the "course of recognition," seeks to develop nothing less than a proper hermeneutics of mutual recognition. Originally delivered as lectures at the Institute for the Human Sciences at Vienna, the essays collected here consider recognition in three of its forms. The first chapter, focusing on knowledge of objects, points to the role of recognition in modern epistemology; the second, concerned with what might be called the recognition of responsibility, traces the understanding of agency and moral responsibility from the ancients up to the present day; and the third takes up the problem of recognition and identity, which extends from Hegel's discussion of the struggle for recognition through contemporary arguments about identity and multiculturalism. Throughout, Paul Ricoeur probes the significance of our capacity to recognize people and objects, and of self-recognition and self-identity in relation to the gift of mutual recognition. Drawing inspiration from such literary texts as *The Odyssey* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, and engaging some of the classic writings of the Continental philosophical tradition--by Kant, Hobbes, Hegel, Augustine, Locke, and Bergson--*The Course of Recognition* ranges over vast expanses of time and subject matter and in the process suggests a number of highly insightful ways of thinking through the major questions of modern philosophy.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

Ricoeur is one of the major French philosophers of the 20th century. In these essays, originally delivered as lectures at the Institute for the Human Sciences at Vienna, he endeavors to connect the various senses of recognition. We speak, for instance, of recognizing physical objects, recognizing other people, recognizing our responsibility for actions, and being recognized by others. Ricoeur finds a transition from an active to a passive voice in these various senses of the verb to recognize and organizes his discussion around this transition. He begins by focusing on the knowledge of objects, with a careful account of Immanuel Kant's move away from the substantial self of René Descartes. He then considers Henri Bergson's notion of memory and moves on to an analysis of mutual recognition that heavily stresses the discussions of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. With his characteristic erudition, Ricoeur also surveys the views of sociologist and anthropologist Marcel Mauss as well as those of his successors and critics. He displays a remarkable ability to convey sympathetically the ideas of a widely disparate group of thinkers and makes an excellent case, in readily comprehensible language, for the centrality of recognition in modern philosophy. (David Gordon Library Journal 2005-11-01)

This is vintage Ricoeur. Three lectures on "recognition" which link up the different ways that the concept has figured in philosophical discourse. In the course of this trajectory, Ricoeur makes connections between authors and philosophical themes, stretching over a vast area of time and subject. This rich book gives one a path through much of Ricoeur's work on language, narration, memory and the self; but it also shows the deep connections between so many disparate discussions. Who would have thought that reading Marcel Mauss could illuminate Mandela and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Who could have seen the connections between the modern rage for objectification and the occultation agency, ipse-identity, narrative, dialogicality, and a host of other issues? As with Ricoeur at his best, it suggests a number of wholly different ways of thinking our way through the major questions of modern philosophy. (Charles Taylor, author of *Sources of the Self*)

The book is one of Ricoeur's last works (he died in 2005), and it fittingly recapitulates many of the themes he explored over his long career. But that is how his books proceed: retaining the results of his earlier studies, yet always reevaluating them in light of new ideas and discoveries. Ricoeur exemplifies a desire to learn from others, whatever their discipline, and this book exhibits the unique blend of tenacity, charity, and modesty that characterizes his thought in general. (Brian Gregor Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies 2006-02-01)

[Ricoeur] has a

quality which is not as common among philosophers as it ought to be; that is the ability to see what their presumptions and prejudices are and the desire not to pounce on them triumphantly but sympathetically and sensibly to set things right. This book, which makes reference to a number of works of literature as well as to the work of many philosophers, may be of interest, therefore, to readers of this chronique. This work's worth will long be recognized. (Leonard R. N. Ashley Chronique 2007-01-01)The hermeneutics of the self that Ricoeur presents here is a major contribution to reflection about the capabilities that are constitutive of the self. An original, scholarly contribution to current arguments about what the distinguishing characteristics of humans are. (Bernard Dauenhauer, author of Paul Ricoeur: The Promise and Risk of Politics)A humanist of immense learning, a scholar of both literature and the human sciences (as is evident from Seuil's three-volume edition of his lectures), a traveler receptive to Anglo-Saxon culture and German tradition, Paul Ricoeur is difficult to identify with a single school or intellectual current. Christianity, phenomenology, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, linguistics, and history have all to some extent shaped his thought. But if his ideas are, in essence, most closely allied with Christian existentialism and with personalism, they cannot easily be reduced to a system. It seems that [for Ricoeur] the study of language, far from being an end in itself, was always just another way of asking the questions that long preoccupied him: those of being and of action. Nostalgic for an ontology that Nietzsche seemed to have invalidated, striving to find rules for moral conduct in ethical reasoning, deeply concerned about the age he lived in yet at the same time wary of engaged action, Ricoeur ultimately incarnated and reflected the most radical consequences of the wrenching contradictions that have characterized humanist thought since the early twentieth century. This tragic authenticity, which illuminates the entire span of his long intellectual journey, also makes his writings exemplary evidence of the crisis of our modernity. And it is no doubt this value as evidence that explains why his corpus of work which was (like the work of his friend Emmanuel Levinas) to some extent misunderstood by French intellectuals has, since the mid-1980s, attracted renewed interest in France and even more in the rest of the world. (Christian Delacampagne Le Monde)

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