

Prof. Dr. **Richard Kearney**, Boston College, USA

Richard Kearney is the Charles B. Seelig Chair of Philosophy at Boston College. In his vast work, comprising over two dozen books on Western philosophy and literature, and over twenty edited and co-edited volumes, he develops the project of reconciling hermeneutics and phenomenology in what he calls a “diacritical (carnal) hermeneutics.” Such hermeneutics comprises a critical function in the double sense of deciphering the conditions of possibility of meaning, as well as a critical exposure of injustice and inequalities of power, a diacritical function of discernment between competing claims to meaning, grammatological attention to inflections of linguistic marks, that is, a micro-reading between gaps and oppositions (similarly to deconstruction), and a therapeutic function based on a diagnostic reading of the body. Those characteristics point to a fundamentally carnal aspect of diacritical hermeneutics understood as sensing the Other. Rooted in Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “diacritical perception,” which stresses that meaning is never given as an isolated item, but as part of a complex and flowing interaction of elements, Kearney’s diacritical hermeneutics can be assimilated to an incarnate phronesis. Crucial for such phronesis is imagination, a fundamental notion in Kearney’s thought, explored as the uniting theme of his work in *Imagination Now: A Richard Kearney Reader* (2020). Developing Ricoeur’s notion of narrative imagination, Kearney portrays imagination as the capacity that allows us to navigate between the self and the Other in his considerations on ethics and aesthetics (*Poetics of Imagining: Modern to Post-modern*, 1998, *The Wake of Imagination*, 2002), theism and a-theism in his writings on theopoiesis (*The God who May Be*, 2002, *Anatheism: The Returning to God After God*, 2011, *The Art of Anatheism*, 2018), hospitality and hostility in his more politically-oriented works (*Debating Otherness with Richard Kearney*, 2018, *Radical Hospitality: From Thought to Action*, 2021).

Devoted to the idea that diacritical hermeneutics fulfills itself as applied to the lived world, he develops it through his *Guestbook Project* in narrative pedagogy. This practical peace initiative allows participants to confront their stories with those of strangers or adversaries (<https://guestbookproject.org/>). In his recent publications, Kearney’s carnal hermeneutics concentrates on the hermeneutics of touch, as he develops an understanding of touch as the most primordial, foundational sense, situating it in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic (*Touch: Recovering Our Most Vital Sense*, 2021). He has also published fiction and poetry.