

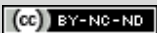
## Ricœur Across the World: Intercultural Receptions and Dialogues

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# Ricœur Across the World: Intercultural Receptions and Dialogues

Ernst Wolff (KU Leuven), Andrés Bruzzone (USP) & Roberto Lauxen (UESB)

*In Memory of Rita de Cássia Oliveira<sup>1</sup>*

“I have only one way of getting out of myself: it is to disorient myself in others.”<sup>2</sup>

## 1. (Dis)orientation: For Philosophical Displacement

The kind of philosophy that Paul Ricœur advocates opens itself to an outside; moreover, certain aspects of his work cannot be completed by the sole, finite and situated author, and require completion by others, themselves also finite but differently situated. Thus, not only did Ricœur affirm that, in working, he entered a dialogue that had begun before him and would continue after him; he also upheld a conception of philosophical practice that finds echoes in traditions of thought from other regions of the world and that places dialogue at the very heart of philosophy. To engage in dialogue means to practice listening, translation, recognition, openness to others, appropriation, and even hospitality; but it equally means to open debate, criticize, concede, articulate dissensus and sustain the conflict of interpretations.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, taking stock of the receptions and debates that authors around the world have initiated with Ricœur responds to two demands: on the one hand, ongoing excavation of the potential inherent in Ricœur’s work; on the other hand, promotion of the ideas of a wide range of authors who find in this work a source of inspiration for their own thinking. Between these poles lies a rich range of relations – dialogues in the broad sense – in which Ricœur’s thought is sometimes explored for its own sake and sometimes examined to identify

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<sup>1</sup> This special issue of *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricoeur Studies* pays tribute to the academic career of Prof. dr. Rita de Cássia Oliveira (1958–2026), a scholar who played a decisive role in disseminating Ricœur’s thought in Brazil. With exceptional dedication, she introduced and supervised countless students in Ricœur scholarship at the intersection of philosophy and literature, a field to which she devoted a large part of her theoretical work. She was also a poet and the first woman from Maranhão to earn a doctorate in philosophy. She taught in the undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral programs in Philosophy and Literature at the Universidade Federal do Maranhão (UFMA). A member of the first board of the Rede Brasil-Ricœur, she received the title of Honorary Member in 2025. She had also recently accepted the invitation to host the Third *Ateliê Ricœur na América Latina* at the Universidade Federal do Maranhão.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Ricœur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 51 (translation modified).

<sup>3</sup> Ricœur, *History and Truth*, 53; Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations. Essays in Hermeneutics*, trans. Don Ihde et al. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, [1969] 1974).

avenues for reflection. At times Ricœur is a stimulating interlocutor, even an intellectual adversary; at other times he is no more than a reference point in explorations and thematic fields that lead far beyond his own reflection, or even against his conclusions.

In this special issue of *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricoeur Studies*, we celebrate engagement with Ricœur's writings across all continents, in the light of extremely varied historical, social, and political situations. We acknowledge the constructive contributions of doctoral students and established scholars to the study of his work throughout the world. We also note with enthusiasm the growing tendency to foster this reception explicitly through international conferences.<sup>4</sup>

To carry these initiatives forward, we propose to examine (1) the modes of openness in Ricœur's thought and (2) the ways in which his readers have identified avenues for extending and surpassing his work, adding what Ricœur himself could not offer us. We are interested in how Ricœur "travels" around the world and how his readers use his ideas in their respective contexts.

## 2. Diversity as Aim, Opportunity, and Challenge

In keeping with this objective, the present issue brings together a highly diverse group of contributors. We ourselves – a South African living and working in Belgium, a Brazilian born in Brazil, and another born in Argentina and now half Brazilian – work in third languages. Alongside us, contributors come from Chile, Brazil, Cameroon, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Türkiye, Taiwan, and South Korea. The referees, on whose expertise we depended for peer review and whom we warmly thank here, represent an even wider range. Furthermore, the contributors also exhibit considerable diversity in terms of age, gender, mother tongue, religious convictions, and field of specialization. Finally, the number of contributions does not yet reflect the genuine interest elicited by our call for papers. Owing to a tight schedule and material constraints, several articles will be published in the journal's 17/2 (2026) issue as "Further Perspectives", thereby complementing the present special issue.

Opening the invitation to such a broad academic public has borne fruit. Thus, as we shall see, the ways in which the French philosopher's work is read and appropriated vary considerably with local realities and social or historical contexts. This variety reflects freedom with respect to the role ascribed to Ricœur's writings in the effort to think from one's own "speaking place".<sup>5</sup> To some extent, this practice is already familiar in Ricœur studies: creative and critical appropriations have enabled Ricœur's work to be received in fields as diverse as literature, sociology, theology,

<sup>4</sup> To name just a few recent examples: Manila, Philippines, *Paul Ricœur in Asia: Reflections on Politics, Society, and Religion* (19–21 November 2015); Stellenbosch, South Africa, *From Where Do You Speak?* (23–25 May 2018); Leuven, Belgium, *Ricœur 2020 – Ricœur as World Heritage* (19–21 November 2020); Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, *Mémoires blessées, promesses inachevées. La pensée de Ricœur et les horizons africains* (25–27 April 2023); Taipei, Taiwan, *Image and Imagination: International Conference on Paul Ricœur and Philosophy for Our Time* (28–29 May 2025). These examples may readily be supplemented by the series of Ibero-American Congresses on Paul Ricœur's thought, meetings of the Rede-Ricœur Brasil, and numerous individual contributions to regular events such as the Ricœur Summer School in Paris or the annual conferences of the Society for Ricœur Studies in North America.

<sup>5</sup> See Djamila Ribeiro, *Where We Stand*, trans. Padma Viswanathan (New Haven: Yale University Press, [2019] 2024). The same question was foregrounded at the Stellenbosch Ricœur conference, *From Where Do You Speak?*

law, psychology, communication, architecture, feminism, memory politics, information technologies, as well as in debates on racism, violence, democracy, decolonization, and gender issues. Many pages of *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricoeur Studies* have indeed already been devoted to several of these themes. The present special issue extends this work of appropriation while adding an intercultural and intercontinental dimension. Accordingly, we have focused on the field beyond the central sites of Ricœur's reception (France and the United States), in order to attend primarily to what is taking place on other continents, but also in other European countries. In all these respects, the intrinsically unfinished character of Ricœur's work (pointed out above) becomes both a task and an opportunity.

Yet philosophical reflection in a context of diversity also presents a challenge, one that is not always easy to meet. As guest editors, we have had to navigate linguistic diversity (mentioned above) and different time zones. Coordinating different academic cultures and practices required sustained reflection and difficult decisions. In short, while we have sought to examine and interrogate diversity, we ourselves have been confronted by the questions it raises. A constant dilemma throughout this process has been to remain lucid about the place accorded to the thoroughly Western philosopher Paul Ricœur in this enterprise of bringing diverse worlds into relation. The long history of Eurocentrism in the sciences and in philosophy compels us to do so.

More broadly, we must ask ourselves what becomes of Ricœur's thought when it is received in the four corners of the world, where the "other" is no longer the "neighbour" sharing the same cultural horizon, but an unexpected figure arriving from foreign horizons: indigenous thought, indigenous cultures, diverse religions, or even different social and political contexts. In his socio-political writings, Ricœur shows that this philosophical questioning corresponds to contemporary political concerns. Thus, to philosophize still means clarifying concepts, arguments and conflicts, but doing so whilst questioning the conditions under which encounters between peoples of different histories and cultures are possible – without resorting to domination or conquest.<sup>6</sup>

A hermeneutics of cultural diversity and a reflection on asymmetrical political relations, as well as on epistemic relations, must form part of the response. Faced with this difficult question, it is essential to bear in mind that we are not alone in reflecting on it, and to make the best possible use of the perspectives reaching us from all corners of the world today.

Far from being a happy conclusion, this rather highlights just how troubled the vast field of reflection on international cooperation is. The intersection of cultural and conceptual horizons multiplies the challenges surrounding identity politics, otherness, recognition, mutuality, linguistic hospitality and justice. In contexts of historical subordination and wounded memories, in particular, these questions pose daunting challenges. The summary of the chapters below offers an insight into the range of responses this issue proposes to this challenge.

To schematize, the frame of reference taking shape in these receptions is marked by an ambiguous polarity. On the one hand, "speaking places" are not incommunicable. The foreigner remains a "fellow human being", in the sense of an "equivalence without adequation"<sup>7</sup> that rises

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Paul Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures", *History and Truth*, 271–284, here 283.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan. New York: Routledge, 2006, 7.

“to the level of a wager and a voluntary affirmation of human identity”.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, lucid recognition of histories of violence and oppression, as well as of contemporary relations of domination and exploitation, is called for in a world in which predatory capitalism produces poverty<sup>9</sup> and in which international relations of violence inherited from the past are perpetuated by other means.

### 3. Across the World: The Contributions

Can Ricœur’s notion of recognition be thought in cultural terms? Hsueh-I Chen opens the issue with his article “Exploring Paul Ricœur’s Course of Recognition as a Possible Pathway to Intercultural Recognition”, in which he explores possible resonances between *The Course of Recognition* and several major concepts of intercultural philosophy. Tracing the Ricœurian trajectory from identification, through self-recognition, to mutual recognition, he examines how Ricœur’s phenomenological and narrative analyses can be coordinated with intercultural frameworks attentive to plurality, asymmetry, historical difference, and dialogical or polylogical openness. The article thus proposes rereading *The Course of Recognition* as a possible preparatory anthropology for intercultural philosophy, while bringing out tensions associated with the limits of reciprocity.

Marianne Moyaert introduces suspicion at the very heart of the dialogical ideal in the following article, “Dialogue and Suspicion: Ricœur, Ideology, and the Politics of Interfaith Understanding”. If Ricœur’s hermeneutic anthropology makes it possible to think dialogue not simply as an activity human beings choose to undertake, but as a constitutive dimension of human existence, Moyaert questions the limits of such a universalization of the dialogical condition. Rereading Ricœur from the standpoint of Enrique Dussel’s decolonial critique, particularly the relation between the *ego conquiro* and the *ego cogito*, she shows that subjects do not enter dialogue under historically equal conditions. Requirements of vulnerability, reciprocity, and reflexivity encounter histories of power, inequality, and coloniality that continue to structure concrete encounters. Hence interfaith dialogue can function not only as a space of mutual transformation but also as a site at which asymmetries are reproduced: some interlocutors already appear more foreign than others, bear a disproportionate burden of translation, and remain exposed to a dominant gaze that determines what can be heard, recognised, or rendered intelligible.

A tension thus emerges, moving us from the possibility of dialogue to a critique of its historical and political conditions. It is within this same horizon of reception and critique that Noeli Dutra Rossatto, in “Ethics and Liberation. Between Paul Ricœur and Enrique Dussel”, revisits the difficult, fruitful, and still little-explored debate between Ricœur and Dussel, especially on the basis of the seminar “Hermeneutics and Liberation”, held in Naples in 1991. The article examines the transition from hermeneutics to ethics in the Latin American context by considering Dussel’s critical appropriation of the symbolic, narrative, and ethico-ontological nuclei of Ricœur’s thought. Its central focus is the ethical subject and its relation to the other: between self-esteem, otherness,

<sup>8</sup> Ricœur, *History and Truth*, 282, translation modified.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Ricœur, “Que signifie la présence des pauvres parmi nous?”, *Foi-Éducation*, no. 31/54 (January–March 1961), 9–19.

exteriority, and liberation, Rossatto is less concerned with opposing Ricœur and Dussel than with showing the possibilities of a reciprocal appropriation of their thought.

With a particularly suggestive approach, Selami Varlik explores in “Imagination of Innocence: Ricœur and the Islamic Notion of Natural Disposition (*Fitra*)”, the possibility of a reciprocal decentering between Ricœur’s thought and the Islamic tradition. He contrasts Ricœur’s imagination of innocence with the notion of *fitra*, understood especially in al-Māturīdī as a natural disposition toward the good and a rational capacity to recognise God. Whereas Ricœur inherits a view of evil as a scandal that is always already present, *fitra* affirms, by contrast, the primacy of an original orientation toward the good. Nevertheless, the article shows that a convergence remains possible: in Ricœur too, evil can be understood only in the light of a more originary goodness. The encounter crystallizes in a twofold logic of “in spite of”: imagining the good despite evil and imagining the possibility of fault despite the primacy of the good. It does not seek to establish an easy consensus, but to show how each tradition can be displaced and revitalised in contact with the other.

In a decentering of Ricœur’s reception that remains within Europe, Burkhard Liebsch offers in “Between Self-Abandonment and Reorientation. Remarks on the Current Predicament of Philosophy – in View of the Reception of Paul Ricœur’s Writings East of the Rhine”, a reflection on the very meaning of philosophy based on the complex trajectory of the Germanophone reception of Ricœur. The article shows that this reception has long privileged hermeneutics, at times leaving in shadow the historical, political, and existential dimensions of his work. Liebsch thus presents Ricœur as a thinker of philosophical orientation within the *conditio historica*, attentive to history, otherness, testimony, memory, and responsibility. The concluding question concerns philosophy’s capacity to respond to historical and political violence without renouncing the demand for a possible living-together, despite everything. Next, Tomás Domingo Moratalla turns our attention to another European philosophical tradition in “Paul Ricœur and José Ortega y Gasset: A Necessary Dialogue. Configurations of Hermeneutic Phenomenology”. The article identifies a convergence between two bodies of thought that, despite their apparent distance, share a common phenomenological “ground”, a similar humanist “subsoil”, and common “adversaries”, notably positivisms and reductionisms. Reading Ricœur with Ortega and Ortega through Ricœur, Moratalla shows how their reflections on life, circumstance, metaphor, narration, translation, and responsibility contribute to an understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology not only as a theory but as a living tradition and a philosophical task for our time.

A methodological detour is presented with “La défatalisation du passé : Paul Ricœur, Jacques Revel et le réalisme critique en historiographie. Une implication scientifique et éthique pour la Corée et l’Afrique” [Defatalising the Past: Paul Ricœur, Jacques Revel and Critical Realism in Historiography. A Scholarly and Ethical Implication for Korea and Africa]. Oung Byun’s article brings Ricœur into relation with Jacques Revel and the methodology of shifting scales in order to conceive a history capable of moving beyond the opposition between memorial fidelity and historical truth. The aim is not merely to recall the past but to defatalize it: to return to situations of uncertainty, possible choices, and agents’ margins of action, where master narratives tend to transform history into destiny. This approach directly prepares the questions that follow, particularly in postcolonial contexts where historical writing must resist at once wounded memories, fixed national narratives, and fatalisms inherited from domination.

The subsequent movement takes us toward other horizons, where history itself becomes an object of debate and writing the past proves problematic in contexts marked by colonial denial,



wounded memories, and political uses of history. In “L’Historiographie africaine en contexte post-colonial : enjeux méthodologiques et débats critiques au prisme des perspectives de Mamadou Diouf et Paul Ricœur” [African Historiography in the Postcolonial Context: Methodological Issues and Critical Debates in the Light of Mamadou Diouf’s and Paul Ricœur’s Perspectives], Amélie Aristelle Ekassi examines tensions within postcolonial African historiography: restoring a dignity denied by the colonial narrative without reducing the plurality of African experiences to a unifying national novel. Drawing on Mamadou Diouf and Ricœur, the article thus examines the historian’s truth pact, the risks of chronocentrism, the value of fragments, the function of historical narrative, and the possibility of a just memory. Extending this African sequence but shifting attention from historiography to a hermeneutics of suffering, capability, and action, Ernst Wolff proposes, in “Defeat – Conscientization – Action. African Contributions to a Hermeneutics of Suffering and Capability”, to bring Ricœur into relation with certain orientations of African philosophical hermeneutics. The article first provides a historical orientation concerning Ricœur’s reception in Africa and then develops a systematic reflection around three themes: sociopolitical defeat as initial motivation, conscientization as hermeneutic work, and action as a response to the demands of practical contexts. Wolff thus shows that hermeneutics, far from being merely an academic discipline, can become a practice of raising awareness, reappropriation and support for the capacity to act. Expanding questions of historical memory, truth, justice, recognition, and reconciliation, Beatriz Contreras Tasso leads us from Africa to Latin America. In “Ricœur’s Hermeneutic Philosophy. Keys to Reflect upon the Case of Chile and Its Memory”, post-dictatorship Chile becomes a testing ground for Ricœurian categories of memory, narration, and mutual recognition. Confronted with disappearances, persistent impunity, denialism, and forms of impeded or manipulated memory, these categories shed light on the still-open wounds of Chile’s democratic transition while revealing their own limitations. The article thus demonstrates the fruitfulness of Ricœur’s hermeneutics in the face of a non-European experience of collective memory, but also the need to think through the institutional, political, symbolic, and narrative mediations that make recognition possible – or prevent it.

Brazil closes the issue in a doubly special way. First, there is the extraordinary dynamism of Ricœurian thought in the country. Second, given its triple historical configuration in which Indigenous, African, and European cultures form a unique combination, and in which erased memories, symbolic and real violence, and not always visible tensions still operate, Brazil offers both a challenge and an opportunity for testing the possibilities of a dialogical philosophy. This section proposes to do so through concrete examples. The Brazil section opens with Jeanne Marie Gagnebin, whose essay “Ricoeur à travers le monde : depuis le Brésil” [Ricœur Through(out) the World: From Brazil] offers a reflection that goes far beyond the Brazilian case alone. From her dual European and Brazilian inscription, and her founding role in disseminating Ricœur’s thought in Brazil, Gagnebin interrogates the very meaning of “reception”. She warns against excessive admiration or even pious veneration of European philosophers: reading Ricœur from Brazil does not mean applying a thought already constituted, but reactivating it, displacing it, and responding to it from another location. It is a kind of *Sapere aude!* addressed to the country’s thinkers. The essay thus stresses the fruitfulness of Ricœurian categories of memory, forgetting, amnesty, and identity for thinking slavery, dictatorship, literature, and Brazil’s plural narratives, while recalling the limits of intercultural dialogue that fails to take sufficient account of the colonial, racial, and social violence that precedes every supposedly egalitarian relationship.

A contribution in which Paul Ricœur's philosophy is significantly displaced from its usual contexts follows this call and closes the dossier: in "Élargir l'imagination pour fluidifier l'action – Paul Ricœur et Ailton Krenak" [Expanding Imagination to Make Action More Fluid – Paul Ricœur and Ailton Krenak], Cristina Henrique da Costa proposes an unusual encounter between Ricœurian thought and Ailton Krenak, a Brazilian Indigenous thinker, writer, and activist. The article starts from the idea that, for Ricœur and Krenak alike, there is no action without imagination. Yet this convergence also reveals a decisive tension: for Ricœur, imagination is thought through metaphor, narrative, utopia, and hermeneutic mediation; for Krenak, it forms part of a cosmology in which myth, the land, rivers, ancestry, and political action remain inseparable. Through the notions of ancestral future, *florestania*, and an alliance of differences, the article shows how Indigenous thought situated in Brazil can not only enter into dialogue with Ricœur, but also shift the limits of his theory of imagination and action.

#### 4. Future perspectives

We began this introduction by asserting that Ricœur's thought displays a constitutive incompleteness, in a stronger sense than with many other philosophers. This incompleteness has a positive dimension that becomes increasingly visible as his philosophy branches out in unforeseen directions and gains in strength and vitality. Ricœurian philosophy has unfolded into a vast, multifaceted branching structure, one that cannot be harmoniously integrated into a pacified framework. Between exegetical fidelity and respectful appropriation, on the one hand, and critical debate, on the other, in which Ricœurian thought becomes one element among others within a constellation of ideas shaped by authors' own concerns, the Ricœurian afterlife has itself become a mosaic of conflicts of interpretation.

It follows that, henceforth, philosophizing "with", "alongside" or "against" Ricœur requires acute awareness of the finitude of knowledge and the impossibility of occupying all the spaces of truth. Philosophy therefore has a vocation of listening, communication, and critical hospitality toward the thought of others – not as a flight from or denial of oneself, but as a task of reflective mediation and a quest for new intellectual horizons. A "Ricœurian" philosophy would be recognized by its dialogical character, understood as a "disorientation into the other". It thereby becomes a collective undertaking.

Such a reception, which aims neither at mere transmission nor at identical repetition, would also lead to a critique of the work from which it emerges. Serious philosophical critique of Ricœur's texts is, of course, not new. What is at stake is rather a new orientation of criticism. At the center of this orientation is a reconsideration of the profile of the positions from which and for which Ricœur wrote, each time with the associated perspectives and limitations of view. Thus, thinking from Ricœur by beginning in France or the United States loses some of its self-evidence (without in any way denying the contribution of studies arising in these contexts). The plurality of receptions described above draws much of its reflective force from foregrounding a sensitivity to fractures, tensions, and wounds: in exhausted and mistreated bodies, in relations of labor and exploitation, in identity politics,<sup>10</sup> in (in)capacities for action, in denied or distorted memories, and

<sup>10</sup> Jeanne Marie Gagnebin, "As armadilhas da identidade", in *Paul Ricœur: Identidade e Hermenêutica Crítica*, ed. Roberto Lauxen, Cristina Henrique da Costa and Andrés Bruzzone (São Paulo: Alameda, 2025), 89–106.



in struggles for individual or collective self-affirmation. Although the hermeneutics of the suffering human being already suggests such avenues, they would benefit from much fuller development from the standpoint of the lived experience of the people concerned. Overall, a revitalisation of the hermeneutics of suspicion is needed in order to bring to light the way domination distorts institutions, social interactions, bodies, and even the most intimate interior communication.<sup>11</sup>

Certainly, other domains remain to be explored in the same spirit. Accordingly, in our call for papers, we invited scholars from all the continents to explore together questions related to the dissemination of Ricœur's work: the interpretation of his writings, teaching, and scholarly practices around this oeuvre. Part of this exploration would involve clarifying what has facilitated its reception, but equally what, on the contrary, impedes its appropriation. These questions invite investigation into the place held by different "worlds" in his philosophy, the possibilities and difficulties of translation, and the degree of innovation that a faithful reception of a heritage can accommodate, between *innovatio* and *aemulatio*. In this sense, they call for reflection on the epistemological and political stakes of memory, transmission, and innovation in cultural goods, art, languages, and traditions, but also on contemporary problems that the reception of Ricœurian ideas can illuminate on a global scale: global justice, migration, xenophobia, racism, gender equality, slavery, and other forms of exploitation. Finally, in full awareness that international relations of violence inherited from the past continue today by other means (as noted above), incessant self-criticism is required to determine whether our own philosophical practices retain any complicity with instruments of domination, humiliation, and marginalization.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, sustained effort is needed to identify how academic philosophy can strengthen its contribution to resisting these tendencies, fully aware of the limits of its means and remaining faithful to its vocation to cultivate informed uncertainty.

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 55–56.

<sup>12</sup> We refer to the acuity with which Ebooussi Boulaga describes the first encounters with Western philosophy, in a colonial context, as an encounter with "an attribute of power"; see Fabien Ebooussi Boulaga, *Muntu in Crisis: African Authenticity and Philosophy* (Trenton: Africa World Press, [1977] 2014), 2.

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