

**Maria Luísa Portocarrero Silva, *Horizontes da Hermenêutica em Paul Ricoeur*** (Coimbra: Ariadne, 2005).

*Horizontes da Hermenêutica em Paul Ricoeur* ["Horizons of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics"] (2005) is a solid and stimulating approach to Ricoeur's philosophical project. Written in a rigorous and penetrating way, the book as the flair of an original introduction to the works of Ricoeur, but it is also, in fact, a solid contribution to a better – or alternative - understanding and philosophical appropriation of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of human condition by those already familiar with the works of this major contemporary philosopher.

The book is divided into five chapters: "Corporeality, Fall and Confession," "Identity, Sovereignty and Responsibility," "Phenomenology of Time and the Poetics of Narrativity," "The Long Path of Hermeneutics," and "From the Fusion of Horizons to the Conflict of Interpretations." The internal coherence of the book is granted by a specific critical option that illustrates Portocarrero's way of appropriating Ricoeur's thought. We can formulate it in the following terms. Without the understanding of the anthropological meaning of Ricoeur's project of a *Philosophy of will*, it is impossible to fully account for the depth and range of a hermeneutic path that is primarily determined by the topic of the *homo capax*. Thus, becomes clear the fundamental orientation of all and each one of the above-mentioned chapters: the more or less implicit starting point of each chapter is the Ricoeurian conception of human fragility (*fragilité*), as it resounds over a much-needed new conception of rationality – a hermeneutic rationality – for our times.

At the heart of such a model of hermeneutic rationality, Portocarrero suggests that we must find an *ethical ground*. This, the author argues consistently, is of crucial importance if we want to meditate on a "meaning" of human existence that does not start from the pure spontaneity of the cogito. We must begin elsewhere; we must begin by an interpretative temporal mediation (made by the *via longa* of the signs, symbols, texts, institutions) of the human condition itself. In other words, we must start *in media res*, within the infinite hermeneutic movement of interpretation of personal and intersubjectivity decisions, options, words, texts, promises, testimonies, etc. Hence, the ethical value of a hermeneutic recovery of the testimony, of history, of the treasures of cultural symbols that have influenced us.

Maria Luísa Portocarrero is one of the leading scholars in her field of study. In her native country, Portugal, those working in the field of hermeneutic philosophy will always be in her debt. The book *Horizontes da Hermenêutica em Paul Ricoeur* ["Horizons of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics"] is, in this respect, an easy way to show why.