

## Abstract

### HABILITATION THESIS: Philosophical hermeneutics and Practical Philosophy. Critical Research

The habilitation thesis entitled *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Practical Philosophy. Critical Research* presents the main scholarly, teaching and institutional achievements, as well as future research and academic development plans based on which I am submitting my application for the habilitation certificate in philosophy, with a focus on philosophical hermeneutics, phenomenology, practical philosophy and philosophical anthropology.

The first part outlines the main research directions following doctoral studies until 2024. The place from which I start (the first part of my post-doctoral research) is, in fact, about what I might call the failure of a "philosophy of evil". Hence, the need for a hermeneutic phenomenology. The central problem of my doctoral dissertation (unsaid and in the subsidiary) had to do with the construction of a possible philosophy of evil, a construction which, peremptorily, proved to be a failure. Phenomenology seemed to me, to use a famous expression, to be the "royal road" that could have accessed the problem of evil with all the necessary neutrality and without any theological language. It is just that *intention*, as the only access of consciousness upon consciousness, does not work in a vacuum; it always needs the palimpsest layers of culture. In fact, the thesis is this: against a direct ontology of understanding, an inverted ontology. Such a thesis, which has in view exclusively the problem of the cogito, becomes functional, obviously, also in the context of my initial question: against a direct ontology of evil, an inverted ontology.

Therefore, a first part of my research has been concerned with what we might call the problems of the slippage of phenomenology into hermeneutics or hermeneutic phenomenology. Two major difficulties, out of a multitude of possible difficulties, suggest the necessity of such a concept: on the one hand, the impossibility of reflection to accede to a so much desired "total transparency of the self", on the other hand, to give or construct an "identity between being and thinking (self)". Here, then, are the shortcomings that put hermeneutic phenomenology to work: access to the cogito, via phenomenology, is barred (hermeneutics opens a door, if we may put it that way); the (exaggerated) claim of philosophical discourse to construct an identity between being and thinking. Hermeneutic phenomenology responds to both tasks. However, the resolution of these shortcomings created by the problem of the self must be seen as "dreams" of reflective thought, dreams of philosophical thought in the sense of ideals never to be attained. This is why a 'by-pass', a 'militant ontology' are required as instances through which we might at least hope, if not succeed, in accessing such reveries. Reflection, phenomenology and hermeneutics, in this context, can be seen as paths, roads, paths through which thought attempts, seeks, explores a possible access into the ubiquity of these reveries. In this place we have introduced, against a direct ontology (whether of Heideggerian or Gadamerian inspiration) the possibility of an indirect ontology.

A second part of my research focused on hermeneutics and Romanian philosophy. My research started from a simple question: does Western philosophical hermeneutics have a counterpart in Romanian philosophical culture? In a word, can we find exclusively hermeneutic themes in Noica's philosophy? I focused mainly on the text *Commentary from a Modern Perspective on Aristotle's On Interpretation*. But apart from this text which refuses, in the name of a certain logic, its hermeneutical valences, I have also considered *Interpretation in Cratylus*, especially the *Cratylus Dialogue in the face of the modern world*,

in which Noica does exclusively hermeneutics. One more simple observation; both texts have been viewed through the prism of the *Writings on the Logic of Hermes*.

The third part of my research concerned the transition from philosophical hermeneutics to practical philosophy. Gadamer and Ricoeur, both in different ways, elaborate what we might call a practical philosophy but both endeavors fail precisely at the central point: to transfer the methodology of practical philosophy (if such a methodology exists) into actual practice. The central concepts that construct the two distinct kinds of practical philosophy, or more accurately, *phronesis*, are *application* in Gadamer's case and the *path of phronesis* in Ricoeur's case. Application as the center of the experience of understanding works, Gadamer explains, on the model of Aristotelian *phronesis*. When we understand something, anything, what happens in the actual act of understanding is nothing other than the application of general rules to the particular context (as, in fact, both biblical and legal hermeneutics fully attest). Our whole understanding functions as a permanent coupling between two extremes: the general and the particular. For this reason, application is central within the experiences of understanding: it is, if I may put it this way, a natural, instantaneous datum, which produces and is produced within understanding. From this point, however, I have tried to show that we cannot draw conclusions so generous as to claim that Gadamer's hermeneutics is nothing but practical philosophy. "Moral knowledge does not culminate in courage, justice, and so on, but rather in the concrete application that decides, in the name of such knowledge, what is to be done here and now." But if we question how this "moral knowledge" is produced, outside the *habitus* proposed by Aristotle, Gadamer does not give us any answer but only a rather imprecise and perfectly Aristotelian indication: "*phronesis* - the virtue that enables us to grasp the meaning of an action and to concretize it". But it is precisely at this point that our question resides: what are the procedures by which we can grasp the meaning of an action? Or, in other words, what is, in hermeneutical terms, the methodology behind the decision that determines the meaning of an action? Of course, the answer is, again in hermeneutical terms, none: just as hermeneutics has a methodology, paradoxical as it may seem, extra-methodological, so it is also the case for practical philosophy. Therefore, if there are no procedures it is obvious that there is no way to learn, teach, apply and ultimately practice practical philosophy.

The fourth part of my research continues, by virtue of a dissatisfaction with hermeneutically inspired practical philosophy, the problem that I have never really left: the ethical act or the problem of man. I have tried to see through Berdiaev with his eschatological metaphysics to what extent, indeed, "ethics precedes ontology, that is, consciousness precedes being". The idea that freedom can manifest itself without subjection to the world of necessity I have tried to understand, against Berdiaev, without the light of eschatology; or, as Berdiaev himself says, "perhaps it is appropriate to be less theologians and more anthropologists". Now, it is precisely this idea that led me to Şora, the center of my most recent research, which has been concerned with this permanent search for an "ontological anthropology". An ontological anthropology that starts from a simple observation: "our life, that's what it is: a constant struggle against the oscillation between a thousand apparently possible answers to a question that has only one (...); a ceaseless war against problematic and dialog, this abominable hydra that will never be defeated, because it will always have new heads to cut off". But the complication is that almost none of us (and the adverb "almost" is a lifesaver!) knows either the answer (which, although devastating in existential terms, is nevertheless unimportant) or the question (which, on the other hand, has catastrophic consequences in terms of community). In fact, in the ontological anthropology sought, I return to the problems that

opened my first efforts within philosophy: the problem of evil. It seems to me that, through Şora, I have succeeded in answering a question opened twenty years ago.

In the last part of the habilitation thesis I project three future research directions: (1) starting from the most recent research of Babette Babich I will consider a possible symbiosis between philosophical hermeneutics and the phenomenology of corporeality that starts from Maurice Merleau-Ponty; (2) a second research direction will consider carnal hermeneutics as understood by the American philosopher Richard Kearney. I want to investigate the extent to which the 'critical', the 'criteriological', the 'grammatological' and the 'diagnostic' are forms of hermeneutics that are based on 'carnal hermeneutics'; (3) a third line of research will consider the ways in which philosophical hermeneutics cohabits with the cognitive sciences. I begin with Shaun Gallagher's most recent research.

Professional and academic achievements refer to professional training and teaching activity, participation in national and international research projects and grants, involvement in the development and promotion of the field of Philosophy. The career evolution and development plan, presented in the third part, takes into account the research themes addressed in the last period, presented in the first part and the proposal for their finalization, but also includes a career project in which the main directions of future academic development are highlighted.

Based on the academic, teaching and research experience described above, I consider that my concerns are relevant to the field of hermeneutics and phenomenology, with a particular emphasis on the encounter, in various formulas and contexts, between practical philosophy and philosophical anthropology.