THE EXPERIENCE OF MEANING AND HERMENEUTICS

Vasile Macoviciuc•

vasilemacoviciuc@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The author sustains the necessity/possibility of a theoretical-methodological complementarity among structuralism, semiotics, and hermeneutics within the effort to conceptualize meaning as existential experience. These analytic perspectives must be also received as contributions pertaining to the sphere of the ontology of the humane.*

Keywords: *semiotics, understanding/comprehension, interpretation, hermeneutics, meaning, language.*

"Language – notes Hans-Georg Gadamer – is the environment in which the I and the world unite or rather in which we are presented with their primal [co]-belonging."[1] Due to this multi-dimensional symbiosis, the grasping of meaning cannot be a purely intellectual operation, but "engages the entire human being"[2], assuming the recognition of some methodological criteria, very different as source, significance or comprehensive goal.

If the structural method and semiotics are relatively recent in European culture, hermeneutics had a historical evolution from antiquity on, receiving changes that seriously affected its theoretical shape, fields of problems, and stakes. Schleiermacher is taken as the founder of modern hermeneutics since, on the one hand, he believes that this can no longer be reduced to its traditional realm (interpretation of the Bible), but covers the large field of moral sciences and, on the other hand, it notices the fact that the understanding of the part (the element) is conditioned by the understanding of the text as a whole. His intention is to ground a general theory of the art of understanding and interpretation that unifies and guides the special hermeneutics. This is why he displays the phenomena of language: what must (and can) be assumed within the hermeneutic act and what can be discovered in and by it is no more than language. The effective significance of the word depends on the internal context an, finally, on the whole it pertains to. Therefore, our access to signification cannot be reduced to the grammatical understanding of the text, but needs to add a technical interpretation. The grammatical interpretation rebuilds the aria of significance of linguistic elements that specifies and by which the intention of the whole is realized. The technical interpretation precisely identifies the global context by and within which the terms receive a certain semantic shape and are functionally individualized in a far more comprising message; at the same time, the joints of the textual ensemble is confronted with the general laws of combination. Thus, one gets a detachment of the interpreter from his own experiences and opinions in order to be receptive to (and notice) those that belong to the author. The creative spirit is mostly unpredictable and settles within language unexpected things; its force compels the interpreter, by means of intuition, - "divinatory" in a certain perspective, states Schleiermacher – to identify himself with the author, mostly with his interior life, such that the effort of understanding adequate to the significations that the text bears. Thus the productive spirit of the text indicates and controls the interpretative

---

attempt. Although Schleiermacher especially underlines the fact that, within the hermeneutic act, one needs the spiritual fusion – therefore, not a mere solidarity – of he who wants to understand the text with the interiority of the author, we cannot say that, by means of this, he renders the interpretation psychological. He always recommends the elimination of those states, experiences, intentions, personal opinions that can lead only to a falsified reception of the message; therefore, he is the partisan of a psychological de-centration; the minimal condition – necessary, but, for sure, not sufficient – of understanding, is to renounce at oneself and to open towards the other; empathy and intuition are those aptitudes by which the noticing of the other (the author) is possible; the dimension of the author's interiority and thought are also exteriorized by means of language, and the task of the interpreter is precisely to reconstruct the spiritual distinctive qualities of the creator starting from the textual indices – which presupposes a type of affective complicity. The fundamental exigency of hermeneutics is clearly enough stated by Schleiermacher: "we must understand the same way or better than the author"; time has a limitative action on the author and this is why the author belongs to his present and/or to some later historical phases beyond and apart from what he could express through language. Hermeneutics is an art of understanding and interpretation of an horizon of significations that, although settled in and by the text, goes beyond the textual meaning. Language – as an instrument of an inter-subjective value – renders objective processes that generate thinking, thus confessing about the individual life of the spirit. The identification (with the author) and intuition allow to catch on the text, on its stylistic components, in order to discover the life of creative spirit, beyond the manner in which life itself becomes aware within and by language, in other words in order to unveil the surplus of signification that in textually unclear. As F. Mussner notices, Schleiermacher "establishes a more and more clear distinction between language and thought and strives on finding out in what manner the first one's interiority penetrates the second one"; thus, thought insinuates and shows up within, from, and by language, without it being able to be definitively assimilated to the grammatical meanings of the text. Hermeneutics aims towards the deep levels of signification. The act of interpretation presupposes and engages an art, i. e. as a subjective participation and skill, but this is "an art whose rules cannot be elaborated unless one starts from a certain formula; this is a historical and intuitive reconstruction, both objective and subjective, of the studies discourse."[3]

By its very nature language develops a spiritual identity, a certain vital community that dwells within language and remains linked to language. This fact justifies the two important means of hermeneutics: the intuitive capacity of identification with the object and comparison in a broad sense. By intuitive method, "posing itself, so to say, in the other's place, it tries to directly grasp the individual"; comparative procedure "links, at first, what must be understood of something more general and then discovers the singular by establishing a comparison with other individuals which are included in the same genus."[4] The first component of hermeneutic method, Schleiermacher continues, is, within human knowledge, feminine energy, and the second one is masculine energy.

Language renders communication among people possible. The human spirit evolves and discourse (text) is but one of the possible manifestations of individual spirit that communicates with the others. The very goal of hermeneutics is to reconstruct the life of spirit settled in texts. It is an infinite task precisely because the development of spirit is perpetual. Moreover, the interpretation of the individual object can only be an approximation, a controlled methodological effort to clarify what is, by its own nature, ineffable.

---

[3] Franz Mussner, 1972, p. 23.
[4] *Ibidem*, pp. 93-94.

Wilhelm Dilthey refers to history in order to grasp its specific logic, as this springs from various objectivisations that represent the object of the sciences of spirit. If the historicity of man and of social-cultural structures in which individuals and human groups dwell is but a truism, an evidence nobody questions any more, regarding the mode in which this historicity can be scientifically studied in order to render intelligible its grounds, goals, factors, and deep processes, the disputes were and are continuous, each point of view jealously imposing its own truth. Dilthey's intention is to look for a ground of history and an essential coherence of historic phenomena within experience itself, refusing metaphysical speculations. The theoretic path within this field of problems is that of comprehension. Continuing Schleiermacher, Dilthey says that the understanding of the individuality of great historical figures, of great creators and works assumes a certain type of approaching towards language and, in general, towards any other statement of a human presence such that one notices, by interpretation, the objectivated expression of some interiority, the unity of meaning, a irreducible psycho-spiritual configuration. Using terms closed to those of Schleiermacher, Dilthey notes that "the ultimate goal of hermeneutic approach resides in understanding the author better than he understood himself."[5] The value of interpretation increases when traces, vestiges, statements of a human life are written documents. In this case, interpretative techniques become – as they accept interactions, that are profitable concerning theoretical grounding, with the theory of knowledge, with the logic and methodology of some social-humane sciences – the main link that binds philosophy from historic sciences, and the main element of the effort to establish the grounds of the sciences of spirit.

The possibility of the sciences of spirit is a problem one reaches (and always suggests) by circumscribing a certain modality of rigorous knowledge of individuation within the human world, as it is created by art, especially by poetry: the understanding by us of another person, of some states of mind that do not belong to us. Dilthey states that philosophy and historic science are grounded on such a premise, inasmuch as they presuppose the capacity of transposing into other mentalities, eras, cultural atmospheres that are different from those we live in moreover: even when the sciences of spirit, starting from the objective presence of the singular, remark wider connections and formulate generally valid laws, they are also grounded by the phenomena of understanding and explaining. "This is why – notes Dilthey – these sciences, just like history, depend on the fact if the understanding of the singular can be raised to general validity." The difficulties have two sources: on the one hand, unlike the knowledge from the sciences of nature, whose object is a phenomenon rendered by the senses, in the case of sciences of spirit the object is represented by an internal reality that is directly given to us; consequently, knowledge can no longer be a mere reflection within the consciousness of an objective presence, but implies a correlation experienced from within; this is why a permanence is represented by the difficulty to conceive the objective statute of this reality that is given and reproduced by the very internal experience of the knowing subject. In fact, "further, the inner experience, by which I understand my inner states, can never render me awareness of my own individuality. Scarcely within its comparison with the experience of others I set up the experience of the individual within myself; now I establish what in my own existence separates me from the others."[6] The existence of the other (the same) is at first given by perceptive facts, gestures, sounds and actions, i. e. by a lot of signs and indices we receive in a perceptive manner; even our own manifestations are initially presented to us as facts that belong to another one; the exteriorizations of inner life are integrated in a perceptive world and this is why I can

[5] Wilhelm Dilthey, [f. a.], p. 45.
[6] *Ibidem*, pp. 27-28.

receive them as being estranged from myself. Hermeneutics is the theoretical-methodological strategy by which interiority is given back to the object that is directly noticed by senses; thus it regains its individuation and its unique and irreproducible qualities. "we call comprehension – notes Dilthey – the process in which from the perceptive given signs, we know a psychic whose expression is represented by these very signs." In fact, comprehension is the effective exercise of the aptitude of receiving and knowing by our experience the interior of another one, as he is (or is to us) present in and by perceptive manifestations. It requires a momentary willingness to/of communication. Interests hinder pressure, narrow and even falsify comprehensive intention. Removing such psychological barriers, ie, posting harmful sources in ourselves, facilitates the collection effort and skill of a foreign inner life, not ours, but we can participate to at the extent that we understand exactly the same way how much attention "out of the expressive progress can become tense, which reaches a manageable level of objectivity, only when the expression of life is fixed, and we can always go back on it. Such expressive comprehension of permanent manifestation of life we call explanation or interpretation." Deepening understanding culminates, then, with clarification of impressions as experienced by a faithful translation into language. Control and image correction coded in language to get the maximum adequacy to object are much higher for the texts. Therefore Dilthey attaches decisive importance for the understanding of literature and history of the spiritual life: "only in language finds the human interior its full expression, complete and objective - understandable. Therefore, their comprehension is central to art in the explanation or interpretation of traces of human beings that are contained in his writings."[7] Of course, in any understanding there is something irrational, content that oppose resistance to conceptualization, and therefore can not be explained satisfactorily in logical formulas. Status is due to life itself: an interiority perceive and understand the inner life of another man, but he could not exhaust the subject. Interpretative layers only build upon this fundamental given. Interpretation of immediacy than only deepens the understanding of the phenomenon of understanding, spiritualizing it but could not escape from its horizons. So, any interpretation assumes that comprehension by which it becomes possible; it is this primacy of comprehension - not in the scientific value, but the power of foundation - makes hermeneutical interpretations structurally distinct from the logical-gnoseologic one. So is the pivot of comprehension of the processes that highlights the differences in knowledge procedures in sciences of spirit and methods of natural science.

In fact, Dilthey moves from a simple philosophy of life involved in the techniques to a comprehensive philosophy of history. In a specific manner, is actually treated the irreducible condition of human subjectivity. Synthesizing it, we can say that for Dilthey human essence is subjectivity and spirituality; spiritual life is reflected in the works (scientific, moral, religious, philosophical, artistic ...). To know the man, must therefore be considered in the analysis of his works in the pulsing life of the spirit, as it is historically conditioned. Dilthey maintains a theoretical and methodological dualism between science and spiritual science. They would differ radically in terms of method and type of knowledge. In natural science, the object remains outside us and, therefore, we know from the outside, as something alien, as required intense, this knowledge intensely engaging only logical structures. On the basis of actual or mental experiment, we find, describe and explain the invariants of a domain of reality, the stakes is the identification of laws. These are the relations which are simultaneously necessary, essential, general, stable and repeatable under certain conditions, valid for all objects in a class of objects. In the study of nature, individual cases do not matter, being regarded

---

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 29-30.

as mere examples of materiality or of a general law. Aspiration of the explanation lies in identifying their causal relationships specific to the studied object. The knowledge obtained is emotionally neutral, we do not employ inner life; moreover, the subject of natural science are revealed gradually.

In the field of sciences of spirit, the subject is talking about ourselves in some way: he addresses us, calls for commitment, sends expressly or deferredly a specific message for the simple reason that it is built on (coded) the life of a spirit. Therefore, the spirit of science is always subject to individual and unique - for this reason not suitable for the operation of generalizations. In this area there are no laws. Knowledge is personalized, individualized, can not achieve maximum objectivity simply because it is permanently marked by our own way to feel and think. In relation to the subject of spiritual science, we have egocentric, personal feelings, a spontaneous way of expressing and responding to external stimuli. Our feelings express us as temperamental structure and are attached to own person and even more, they are committed to preserving instinct. In this case, the "experiences" shall mean: emotions, intuitions, feelings, sensations, pleasant or unpleasant emotional states related to diffuse object, direct action on our own being. The process begins only with the understanding of knowledge. This is manifested also at the psychological level and requires, as opposed to mere feelings, distancing ourselves, interests and selfishness to get de-centration of subjectivity and direct communication with the object. In extension, the agreement includes implementation inside the object (even if the object is the subjectivity of a person or a work of art). Transposition begins with accommodating the new spiritual universe to recreate through their own spiritual experiences of other states, as they are set by the object. Therefore, understanding is reliving significant concreteness of the object. Spiritual life regains its object structure, with understanding, concreteness. But the process requires the ability to take it to merge with another individual spirit and power of imagination to revive psychological and spiritual atmosphere of the object. It is noted that, unlike natural sciences, in this case it is not purely rational knowledge: the object is perceived as being close to us and his knowledge can only be participatory, involves emotional complicity with the object.

Interpretation is the last phase of the knowledge of hermeneutics, which completes and perfects the acts of understanding, manifesting the spiritual level. It is codified in language and content of sense which were relived, which can be described as a verbalized awareness of the message that another subjectivity (person) we send it to through the object. Subjective interpretation involves developing a model designed to recreate the atmosphere and sense of spiritual work. If the explanations are general interpretations, they relate only to individual objects. While explanations demonstrate, interpretation shows, revealing the meaning of the individual. The explanations are universally valid, subject to true-false distinction, and thus submitting to experimental verification and logic; plural interpretations are marked by the subjectivity of understanding. Since they are subjective, interpretations can be more expressive, appropriate or not real, but it can never be strictly true or false. The check of interpretation is insignificant, it can speak only of "rationality", of "completeness", both targeting the degree of obedience of our subjectivity to the object.

Following the path of interpretation, we can classify the practice of hermeneutics: reconstructive hermeneutics (or restitution) aimed at restoring the original meaning of an object (a faithful reproduction of what the object is and what he wants to be), teleological hermeneutics in which understanding and interpretation are operated in terms of presuppositions, assumptions and expectations of systems: the initial cutting is done in the object to confirm a prior vision. In both cases, maintaining individuality during the "empathy" to be achieved by correction by means of de-subjectivization hermeneutic model: both the control and the phenomenon of controlled composition are

essential parts of understanding. In its first sense, hermeneutics has evolved into a complex imaginary anthropology, the second variant has stabilized in the plural formulas of reductive hermeneutics.[8] However, in all its hypostasis, the route follows diltheyian methodological hermeneutics: from comprehension - the process in and through which the sensory expressions of life is to aspire to knowledge - to interpretation – "understanding of externalizing life under the rules set script", to exegesis.[9]

The transition from operational interpretation of meanings attached to textual interpretation symbolic value - hence the indirect sense - admits an inevitable conjunction between the current structuralist-semiotic perspectives and labor advocates hermeneutic. Tzvetan Todorov pleads for a methodological complementarity in/through which Schleiermacher's ideas build on homogeneity about the meaning and philosophical exegesis necessary translate from the gradual recovery of meaning through textual notes and metatextual strategies.[10]

Subsumed under a regulatory and methodological ideal, hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey type enter a line of thought in modern and contemporary contextual modulations, which is responsive to valid modulations, whenever the question of meaning and subjectivity has been challenged and/or qualified as illegitimate/irrelevant in relation to theory. Another opening will have, however, philosophical hermeneutics employed on a path-reflexive.[11] Hans-Georg Gadamer starts, in the treatment of hermeneutics, with the obvious premise that "the humanities are found in certain types of experiences outside of science, with the experience of philosophy, with that of art and history itself. All these are types of experience which promise to be a truth that can not be verified by the methodological procedures of science."[12]. Legitimation of such a kind of truth is sought for by Gadamer in/by deepening the phenomenon of comprehension. The dichotomy is not between science and spirit, but between Truth - accessible to philosophical hermeneutics for which understanding and interpretation are constitutive human life forms - and method - as a set of assumptions of rationalist objectivity, de-subjectified by own specialized scientific attitudes . Hans-Georg Gadamer produces a shift in how to address the issues of hermeneutics: "My real ambition was, and remains philosophical," "a «technology» of comprehension, as older hermeneutics wanted to be, which is foreign to my project; I never proposed a system of technical rules, which may describe, let alone guide the conduct of human science methodology"; philosophical hermeneutics is an option for another stake: "what is at issue is not what we do or what to do, but what occurs to us beyond our will and our doing. " The starting point is to make explicit the assumptions on which the human[ist] sciences got from their historical legacy as a humanist task, thus distinguished from any other modern methods of research. There is no dispute about the updating of the methodological and theoretical science and that of spirit: "that concerns us is the difference between methods, but among the goals listed in knowledge." In the tradition of Kant, Gadamer is interested "to know what are the conditions under which our knowledge of modern science is possible, and how much may our knowledge extend". The question refers to the entire human experience. So "how is comprehension possible?" The answer is of Heidegger: "Heidegger's temporality analytic of human Dasein's has shown in convincing manner that means it is not a matter of behavior among other things, but how of Dasein's being himself. In this respect the concept of hermeneutics is used here. He appoints the motion for the existence,

---

[8] Cf. widely Gilbert Durand, (1964).
[9] Wilhelm Dilthey, [f. a.], p. 46.
[10] Tzvetan Todorov, 1978, pp. 150-151, pp. 91-122.
[11] See widely Nicolae Râmbu, 1998.
[12] Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1976, p. 21.

which is (like existence – our remark, V. M.) in its finitude and historicity, and which embraces all of his experience, here and there, with the world."[13] Comprehension is not therefore biased conduct on an object, but "belongs to the being of what comes (...) [as] to be understood"[14]. Universality of exploitation involves critical hermeneutics of tradition. However, this approach assumes the manner of his own construction hermeneutics, "a clear point of view of to make, to produce, to build are the necessary assumptions under which it is placed himself."[15] So Gadamer's hermeneutics is not about expanding the size of a organon of the ancient to the social and human sciences, as Dilthey proceed, but assumes that the referential foundation of Heideggerian temporality of Dasein's comprehension, although in this case we have to accept a non-reflexive aspect and irrelevant in relation to method and that the practice of hermeneutics, hermeneutic procedures themselves, even on own structure - as hermeneutics must, by virtue of what belongs to universality, to be itself a hermeneutical dimension - make permanent "the self-comprehension that is attached to the comprehension exercise, constantly being corrected and purified by any inappropriate added aspects."[16] Permanence and inevitability of tradition activism within comprehensive act reveals that "the idea of absolute reasons is not at all part of humanity's historical possibilities. For us, the reason is only as real and historical as it is, that is, after all, it is not his own master, but remains forever dependent on the data that exerts its action. This reluctance is not only valid in the sense that Kant, under the influence of Hume skeptical critics, has limited the ambitions of reason to the a priori element in knowledge of nature, it applies more clearly in the possibility of historical consciousness and historical knowledge", since" man is a foreigner himself, and his historical destiny is in a different manner and that which is alien to nature does not know anything about him." History is not ours, but rather we belong to history, therefore the references moving around epistemological status can not be reduced to diltheyan hermeneutics interpretation: before getting access to comprehensive self-reflexive techniques, we know in a not reflected / pre-reflected manner the immediate environment and the integration of own life (family, society, state, tradition). "The focus of subjectivity is a mirror that deforms. Knowledge of the individual by himself is nothing but light trembling (an uncertain explanation – our remark, V. M.) in the closed circle of the current historical life. Therefore, individual prejudices, rather than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of its being (existence – our remark, V. M.)."[17] This situation is considered as a starting point in addressing hermeneutics: not as simple method, but a philosophy, i. e. a global vision about the human world. Understanding and interpreting phenomena are social actual realities and hermeneutics is not only an amount of technical knowledge, but captures an essential determination of human existence. Any human self-knowledge necessarily includes a certain way for acceptance, understanding and interpreting the world. At the same time, interpreting the external world is always made from a human point of view, which assumes that knowledge is activated for a particular way of understanding and assuming the human condition. Therefore, all scientific knowledge has a hermeneutical preamble. Sound scientific knowledge has the illusion that applying methodological rules can explain the world as it actually is, but all this knowledge uses subjective assumptions that are not explanatory. Before sound science, with it, as an extension of the theory, there is always a subjective background knowledge that consists of judgments and prejudices, attitudes, beliefs,

---

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 8-10.
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 12.
[15] *Ibidem*, p. 19.
[16] *Ibidem*, pp. 103-104.
[17] *Ibidem*, pp. 114-115.

mood, mentalities, aspirations and illusions belonging to a particular global vision of the experienced world and man. These contents are the result of subjective understanding and interpretation of the immediate surrounding world and of his own circumstances and missions worldwide.

Understanding and interpreting pertain not to the epistemic and methodological plan, but to the existential direct level. This level is a carrier of meaning, therefore, science is subject to mental and spiritual world of a society specifically formed from existing content and unconditional subjective rational knowledge, which belong to the sphere of pre-reflexive content. "Cognitive situation" includes the pre-context as being non-, extra-scientific and parallel, active beyond the assumptions of the method. "Dasein's way of human history is precisely characterized by the fact that it is not simply related to a point of view, there is thus bounded by a truly closed horizon (enclosed – our remark, V. M.)"[18], but requires disclosure of worlds in motion as the comprehension itself progresses, placing in every historical situation - in which veins of tradition are active - it is simply quality implementation or submission to another object, an empathic comprehension of the subjective rules the hermeneutic act is committed to; the basic requirement of comprehension is merging with the horizon which can access the real historical consciousness, and this fusion (in location) with the historical horizon "is the work of specific language" and was in a "worrying proximity to our thinking"[19], for which it should (be) moved from understanding to interpretation. Established by, in and through language, our experience with incorporating the world [and] the various relationships is vital. Area of semantic analysis of linguistic terms, but mostly expressive poetic speech prove that language is not a creation of reflective thought, but forges and cook the behaviors towards the world, and these are the reactions of life itself, in and through language [we] are shown and presented with the world itself, "verbal experience of the world is «absolute»", because "everything above is recognized and considered to be (being, - our remark, V. M.); the world is therefore not treated as a simple object itself of the scientific approach: "The fundamental ratio between language and world does not mean that the world becomes an object of language. Instead, what is the object of knowledge and utterance always understood as the horizon of mundane tongue."[20] Determination of "existence itself" obtained by science a determination that is about (regards) the will that establishes research purposes, detach itself from the world of immediate life; elimination of subjective content is imminent to scientific procedures, but "not to confuse language positivity and objectivity of science"[21]. If the experience of human existence as shown is also significant - and this happens only through access to/from language - science builds its theoretical and methodological rigor in the light of this experience of the natural world that is structured by / through / in markup and is a incorrigible source of bias. The process of language is the result of human finitude and testimony, establishing the environment within which to show off our entire experience of the world as hermeneutic experience and involve in the history comprehensive efficiency. "The word is not a tool to build a universe of beings objectified and returned as available by calculation, as does the language of mathematics. An infinite will cannot, neither an infinite spirit, overcome the experience of being (existence – our remark, V. M.) which is appropriate (corresponding – our remark, V. M.) to our finitude. Environment is the only language that expressed the whole of what exists, mediates

---

[18] *Ibidem*, p. 145.
[19] *Ibidem*, p. 225. Cf. p. 235.
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 303.
[21] *Ibidem*, p. 306.

finite and historical essence of man with himself and the world."[22] From this angle, scientism can not be legitimized, as it is a myth of scientific support.

The world in which man lives is structured in and through language and therefore can not be reduced to the environment, but involves human behavior, assimilation by a community of language - a condition beyond which no one can speak of "the world". The man himself is independent of the issues, determined, below which shows the world and is actually there for him.[23] Mediation of the order of language can not be addressed in which it has specific - that is activism in itself of this horizons of tradition as an indispensable condition of existential comprehension - by methodological rigor and objectified procedures in scientific knowledge. The meaning of hermeneutics reveal - beyond the need for a methodological basis of the humanities - a universal aspect of philosophy. Target language of its ontic-ontologic value generates adislocation of the problem: from the method towards the foundation of a philosophical discourse about the human condition.

"Philosophy of language – Alexandru Boboc notes – studies the following: a) language and signs, i. e. semiotics issues, b) the language and meaning, that the issue of semantics; c) grammar and theories of grammar, syntax and its interpretation through the semantic and phonological components, d) language and action, mainly pragmatic and its true meaning (beyond the closing of what has been called "pragmatic turn"), e) language and thought, that word and the concept and the relationship between language and logic, f) language and knowledge, the report reality-language-knowledge and linguistic interaction with the theory of knowledge and ontology."[24]. Simultaneously, these dimensions are addressed from the perspective of philosophical ontology of "ontological difference." This concept is currently required by Heidegger's hermeneutic throughout H.-G. Gadamer's; however, linguistics and semiotics even take it in specific ways. The expression "language and ontology" used by Alexandru Boboc seems to be significant for the integration of the various philosophical options in the current theoretical and methodological investigation of language, signs and culture in general; as the author himself states, the phrase "definitely associates a fundamental domain of being (not just one way of communication) with a fundamental field of Being[25]. This ontico-ontological condition of language seems to be recognized in speeches and theoretical and methodological options in dispute, not willing to possible fixations, to polemic and legitimate junctions. It may even suspect the same ontological assumption that human order is singularized the universe, but assumed with distinct references: mission of semiology, language as a system, the couple signifier / signified and unmotivated character of the sign (F. de Saussure); myths elimination regarding ego by analyzing the [meta] language functions of personal pronoun (E. Benveniste); intrinsic rules of speech acts (Searle J.); [re] invention [and internalization of] the world through language and the anthropology of "dialogical man" (Cl. Hagège); man as a sign (Peirce), semiosis, culture as system of signs by which the world segmentation operates (semiotics); "ontological difference" between Being and being judged in the category of Dasein's temporality, language as a sanctuary/shelter/house of Being (Heidegger); the fusion of self with the world environment language (Gadamer); diltheyan comprehension or inter-comprehension by targeting the communicational action (Habermas) etc. The very paradigm of structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss is no stranger to such an assumption: "everything that is universal to human nature and highlights the policy is characterized by spontaneity, while everything is subject to rules

[22] *Ibidem*, p. 311.
[23] *Ibidem*, p. 295 sqq.
[24] Alexandru Boboc, 1997, pp. 139-140.
[25] *Ibidem*, p. 140.

related to culture and presents the relative attributes and the individual"[26]. Such opposition has only a methodological value[27]: the "nature" is designated as "all that is in us biological heredity" and "culture" encompasses "everything we have from external tradition"[28] - customs, beliefs, institutions of learning materials, techniques. It is the "two large orders of facts": the nature as the "universe of laws" and culture as "universe of rules"[29]. Even more: although he applies Saussure's linguistic model in anthropology and in particular the analysis of kinship relations, he believes that to understand a culture - other than that to which one belongs – the ethnologist and sociologist must "translate into people living in them (...), to bring an era and culture as a signifying whole"[30]; structural perspective will therefore need a comprehensive prelude and hermeneutical completion.

The epistemological criteria for anthropological research formulated by Claude Levi-Strauss are applied by Michel Foucault to the study of history[31]; the unification of the perspectives having as their object this vast area is pursued by concentrating the discourse on the historicity of the ideas that allow us to delineate a theory of cultural structures. Structural anthropology reveals some semantic equivalences (symbol – unconscious structure – model – language) that polarizes the space of reality (actual or potential) between culture and nature – understood as ideal situations, therefore as possible ways of articulating some different and antinomic arranged existential spheres. If hermeneutical directions – Dilthey, for instance, in terms of a theoretical and methodological dualism – are interested in understanding/interpretation of the meaning – existing in human history and facts – the direction initiated by Levi-Strauss and developed to the last consequences by Foucault no longer accepts conscience, spirit as a starting point and reference system. In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault argues that he is interested in detecting those configurations that, in the space of knowledge, gave rise to various forms of empirical knowledge and experience, "such an analysis (...) does not belong to the history of ideas or science: is rather a study that tries to retrieve possible theories and knowledge starting from what they were; according to what space of order knowledge was founded"[32]; history is addressed archaeologically in order to identify those apriori structures that have made possible the emergence of today science: "epistemological field" – "epistema". The focus is fixed on the description of the cultural mutation that prodeuced the occurence of "man" (as object) in the space of knowledge, "when natural history becomes biology, the analysis of wealth becomes economy, especially when the reflection on language becomes philosophy and when the classic discourse where being and representation found their commonplace is superseded (is deleted, it disappears – our remark), then, in the profound movement of such archaeological change, man appears with his ambiguous position as object of knowledge and knowing subject[33]. Knowledge, experience, language are marked by fundamental human finitude[34]; Foucault's analysis, while having other stakes, cannot come in essential conflict with the purpose attributed to finitude by Gadamer in altoghether different contexts: more specifically, that of an existential hermeneutics. However, Foucault's position is (also) anti-hermeneutical; he seeks to separate human sciences from anthropocentrism. The paradigms of today positivity/scientificity focused on

[26] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1971, p. 10.
[27] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1970, p. 415.
[28] Georges Charbonnier, 1961, p. 180 sqq.
[29] Jean Pouillon, 1979, p. 23.
[30] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1970, p. 419.
[31] For more details, see Édouard Morot - Sir, 1971, pp. 96-102.
[32] Michel Foucault, 1966, p. 13.
[33] *Ibidem*, p. 323.
[34] *Ibidem*, pp. 324-326.

language "state beyond doubt that man is just about to disappear"[35]; in modern paradigms, "death of God and the last man are related parties" – says Foucault following Nietzsche; and in fact, not only "the absence or death of God" are to be proved, but also the "end of man": "human finitude has become his own end"; *l'homme va disparaître*"[36].

Foucault believes that against positivism and, more generally, against modern scientific rationality we cannot call upon the return to the sphere of living – and hence to hermeneutics. Beyond the whole legacy of European thought, we might ask "if man indeed exists"; the answer is paradoxical: recent times shows that "there existed the world, its order, the human beings, but not the man"[37]. These problematizations and diagnostics allow us to maintain that, although Foucault identifies – as consequence of the rules of structural method – impersonal structures beyond subject and object, one can speak of a hermeneutic dimension of theoretical approach, even for the simple reason that it restores some interpretative and critical-valuating strands of nietzscheean origin. He produces a leap: from methodological structuralism to structuralist philosophizing, employing a reductive/finalist implicit hermeneutics. The comprehensive-interpretative component is especially obvious in the post-structuralist and post-hermeneutic points of wiev - be it the "de-construction" of J. Derrida, the "rhizomic thinking" of G. Deleuze or "intercomprehension" of J. Habermas.

Structuralism, semiotics and hermeneutics share a set of methodological assumptions: the primacy of assemblies in relation to elements, the activism of meaning, the preference for the sense fixed in cultural objectivations. As a not random hypothesis – as brief analyses presented above could lead us to believe – we think that it is also present an ontological assumption: the understanding of the humane through culture as "artificially" invented non-natural, symbolically articulated environment, so the that reality itself – internal and external – shows a historical nature as it is subordinate to and present in the very structures and requirements of language. The study of language and signs, then, at least in its substrate intention, can be integrated into an ontology of human nature. Hermeneutical method and philosophy are willing to grasp the restitution of an universe of meaning seen in its versatility historically and socially created. The philosophical approach of values is, confessed or not, hermeneutical in its nature, since the emphasis is on experiencing, understanding and interpretation. Structuralist, semiotic methods initiate an explicative behavior concerning this phenomenon or, rather, a descriptive-explanatory one. But theoretical and methodological attitudes are, however, complementary. As Paul Ricoeur notes[38], explanation and interpretation may be located on a single hermeneutic arc. First, because both prefer texts, that is speech fixed by writing. These are second to real acts of signification and communication; moreover, he approaches them with the means and in the systems of signs. Of course, semiotic resorts more to theoretical constructs, so the significant concreteness of the text disappears, especially because the disappearance of the author, recipient and environment, of the circumstance that makes the horizon of meanings and intentions f the discourse fixed in and by the text. However, we must note that a similar risk is possible for the hermeneutical view: giving too much credit to the mentioned dimensions, it may end in hypotheses that make the message excessively subjective. So the over emphasizing of the universe of meanings found in the work, the excess of creativity and intervention in grasping the meaning of intervention is a danger that threats both semiotic and hermeneutic positions. Therefore, it is important for the

---

35 *Ibidem*, p. 397.
36 *Ibidem*, p. 396.
37 *Ibidem*, p. 332, 333.
38 Paul Ricoeur, 1986, pp 137-158.

explanatory and/or comprehensive attempts of approaching the meaning to restore the horizon of meaning of the text, and not one projected on the text. Since the transcoding operation, i.e. switching from one meaning network to another is dominant[39], explanation and understanding, interpretation can work together in ways that lead to mutual correction. While the code, noted P. Guiraud, structures the message – namely, the set of rules/conventions of meaning/communication organizes the textual content – the reception moves beyond the code, employing the subjectivity of the recipient: "Hermeneutics is a cipher (philosophical, aesthetic, cultural, psychological) applied by the receiver"[40] to the decoding of the unique world of meaning (fixed and transmitted through a textual structure). This fact is more obvious in the case of weak codes such as aesthetic ones: the creation of imaginary worlds, the ineffable of emotional dominants, the power of suggestion of the combination of expressive signs and energies make difficult the purely intellectual reception; the artistic imaginary suggests another way of acquiring the psycho-spiritual mysteries of existence, and also "compensate the shortcomings and frustrations of the experienced world and society"[41]; therefore, the language is not simply a mediator between creator and receiver; although structured by codes (U. Eco speaks about hyper-codification and invention of highly personalized codes), the text refers always to itself as an inexhaustible and untranslatable source of meanings: "the aesthetic message does not have the simple transitive function, of leading to a certain sense, but is an object, an object-message"[42]. In this situation are, in fact, all the values and cultural works. The very issue of interpretation should be put in other terms than in Wilhelm Dilthey. The antinomy he puts between explanation, on the one hand, understanding and interpretation, on the other, no longer works, the displacement of explanation from natural science movement to the domain of linguistic models requires profound transformations in the way of conceiving the act of interpretation. It is, therefore, confronted with a model of intelligibility that belongs to human sciences. Even in Dilthey, the strong opposition was between explanation and understanding[43], from the desire to separate, in terms of subject and methodology, two spheres of reality – nature and spirit – towards wich are to be taken different attitudes the knowing subject. Unlike this opposition, that between explanation and interpretation is more attenuated. For if understanding requires, through a sort of emotional complicity, the transposing into the psyche of the other, the interpretation is applied, according to requirements that do not suppress the intervention of subjectivity, to those events that are fixed in the works, documents, etc. But their signifying power of their intentions is somewhat independent of the intentions of the subject that is fixed in and through them. If usually the hermeneutic processes started from lived, marked, text, in any case, by subjectivity, the structuralist-semiotic ones are aimed primarily to the internal relations of the text, that make possible the emergence of meaning. But since the semantic interpretation of the text aims to make actual the semantic disponibilities of the text, the explanatory labor of the semiotic and structuralist kind – because it can not avoid, not even by formalization, the significant intention and the dimension of meaning itself, but only reveals its construction technique – is a necessary and preparatory step for a deeper and with a reduced dose of psychological-subjective instability semantics – hermeneutical, of course. It can be said that there is a whole problematic within semiotics, specific by habit and methodological reclusion, to hermeneutics. Descriptive-explanatory tools developed in the light of semiotic landmarks allow the junction with the hermeneutic tradition.

---

[39] V. Jean Starobinski, 1985, p. 59.
[40] Pierre Guiraud, 1973, p. 77-78.
[41] *Ibidem*, p. 82.
[42] *Ibidem*, p. 80.
[43] V. for more details Erwin Hufnagel, 1981, p. 814, Raymond Aron, 1969, pp. 67-88.

Semiotics became very aware of linguistic imperialism to which it has felt prey and what made it possible. Comprehensive assumptions are involved in establishing semiotic constructs. Thus, the models of intelligibility concerning literarity, poeticity, the categories of narativity etc. presuppose pre-reflexive insights and images, the dominants of taste, age, occasional fixations etc. Therefore, even if they claim scientific objectivity, they have a hermeneutic infrastructure and it can be activated in applications of actual reading. On the other hand, hermeneutics can not bet only on romantic genius and philological virtuosity in the comprehensive act[44].

In Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's version, the intention was to delineate the specific of the sciences of mind; therefore, emphasis is placed on comprehension; this, unlike the observation of natural facts, presupposes appropriation of the expressive signs of a mental life, transfer through intropathy in someone else's the inner self – as alternative to the objective, unengaged attitude, of observation – and apprehension of the cohesion of significant chains; "in this dichotomous scheme, the interpretation could not occur except as a subdivision of comprehension"[45]. However, when hermeneutic faces semiotic and structuralist models, interpretation itself suffers an epistemological shift, integrating explicative mediators concerning the rules of textual composition. This entails "the shift from hermeneutics of symbol to hermeneutics of text" and from this to "the hermeneutics of human action"[46].

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Aron, Raymond, (1969), *La philosophie critique de l'histoire,* Librairie philosophique J. Vrin.
2. Boboc, Alexandru, (1997), *Limbaj şi ontologie*, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, R.A.
3. Charbonnier, Georges, (1961), *Entretiens avec Claude Lévi-Strauss*, Julliard.
4. Dilthey, Wilhelm, (1942), *Introduction à l'étude des sciences humaines*, P.U.F.
5. Dilthey, Wilhelm, f.a., *Geneza hermeneuticii, în Filosofie contemporană*, Texte alese, traduse şi comentate de Alexandru Boboc şi Ioan N. Roşca, Editura Garamond.
6. Durand, Gilbert, (1964), *L'imagination symbolique*, Quadrige/P.U.F.,Paris.
7. Gadamer, Hans-Georg, (1976), *Vérité et méthode. Les grandes lignes d'une herméneutique philosophique*, Éditions du Seuil.
8. Guiraud, Pierre, 1973, *La sémiologie*, P.U.F., Paris.
9. Hufnagel, Erwin, (1981), *Introducere în hermeneutică*, Univers, Bucuresti.
10. Lévi-Strauss, Claude, (1970), *Gândirea sălbatică*, Editura Ştiinţifică, Bucureşti
11. Lévi-Strauss, Claude, (1971), *Les Structures élémentaires de la parénté*, Éditions Mouton.
12. Morot, Édouard–Sir, (1971), *La pensée française d'aujourd'hui*, P.U.F., Paris.
13. Foucault, Michel, (1966), *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Gallimard.
14. Mussner, Franz, (1972), *Histoire de l'herméneutique. De Schleiermacher à nos jours*, Les Éditions du Cerf.
15. Pouillon, Jean, (1979), *Sartre et Lévi-Strauss*, în vol. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Textes de et sur Claude Lévi-Strauss*, réunis par Raymond Bellour et Catherine Clément, Gallimard.
16. Râmbu, Nicolae, (1998), *Prelegeri de hermeneutică*, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, R.A.

---

[44] Paul Ricoeur, 1986, p. 144.
[45] Paul Ricoeur, 1995, p. 50.
[46] *Ibidem*, p.61.

17. Ricoeur, Paul, (1986), *Du texte à l'action. Essai d'herméneutique,* II, Éditions du Seuil.

18. Ricoeur, Paul, (1995), *Réflexion faite. Autobiographie intellectuelle*, Éditions Esprit, 1995.

19. Starobinski, Jean, (1985), *Textul şi interpretul*, Univers, Bucureşti.

20. Todorov, Tzvetan, (1978), *Symbolisme et interpretation*, Éditions du Seuil, pp. 150–151.