

ABSTRACT

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My habilitation thesis, *Non-conventional philosophical perspectives on the social sciences and humanities*, includes three sections: the first section outlines the main results of my academic activity from my doctoral dissertation to date, the second presents a project concerning the topics that I plan to explore in the future and the last consists of a bibliography attached to the first two sections.

The three chapters of the first section, including a number of subchapters, are focused on my contributions to the research of some of the most important issues in the field of philosophy. The topics that I was concerned with along my professional career belong to the special areas of general epistemology, philosophy of social sciences and humanities (particularly, philosophy of history and, more recently, philosophy of communication), moral philosophy, political philosophy/ethics, and communication ethics.

As to epistemology, the first subchapter presents in detail what I think to be my main contribution, namely the critical examination of the “phenomenological realism” and “experimental realism” – two non-conventional concepts of epistemological realism that in the Romanian philosophical space have not been known before. That investigation was the occasion of discovering some relevant compatibilities between pragmatism and phenomenology as epistemological programs. I made thus known their possibility to communicate, almost excluded by other critical approaches, which restrict themselves to note the absence of the dialogue between these two main traditions of philosophical thought.

I have also proposed an interpretation of phenomenology that, different from the current opinion, which deems it as anti-scientific, brings to light the potential contributions of phenomenology to the philosophy of science. Some examples: the recovering of the ontological foundations of science, overlooked by traditional epistemology; Grene’s concept of “relational and perspectival” objectivity; Compton’s redefinition of the link between the theoretical and pre-theoretical levels of experience; the so-called “dialectical thesis” about the mutual influences of philosophy and science, whose important implication is the idea of reality as an open, hence revisable concept.

Concerning the philosophy of social sciences and humanities (the object of the next subchapters), my studies have mainly concentrated on history and have resulted in a number of works dealing with a set of methodological and epistemological issues of this science. Among

them, *Epistemology of history. Between the myth of facts and the myth of meanings* has attracted numerous citations and reviews, having been particularly appreciated by the Romanian renowned scholar Alexandru Zub, who includes my book within what he terms “the promising meta-historical endeavors in Romania”. Another one, “Historical knowledge as perspectival and rational: Remarks on the Annales School’s Idea of History”, is a contribution to the volume *The Philosophy of Interpretation* issued by the prestigious Blackwell Publishers in 2000.

I mention here only one idea developed in these writings. I have identified the dilemma that the philosophy of history confronts now as result of the falling of traditional epistemology under the postmodernist criticism of it. This dilemma was described as follows. If we accept that the facts are dependent on our conceptual schemes, that is, inseparable of their meaning for us, then we assume the risks evolving from a *textualist* reductionism that would mean to equate history with literature and to deny the historian’s possibility to justify his own discourse. If we remain loyal to the ontological neutrality thesis, then we get back to foundationalism and objectivism, risking the consequences of a *positivist* reductionism, namely interpreting history in terms of the natural sciences and thus disregarding its humanist dimension. Actually, the entire philosophy of the social sciences and humanities faces this problem.

I argued that the postmodernist/historicist attack on the very idea of rationality is as damaging as the foundationalist objections against the plurality of conceptual schemes or frameworks. My writings question the concept of a principled incompatibility between rationality and historicity – a conviction common to foundationalism and radical relativism - as proving a misunderstanding of the nature of knowledge, which results in either dogmatism or skepticism. Accordingly, I found it necessary to go beyond philosophical schisms, dichotomies, and all the familiar oppositions set in conceptual stone, if we are ever to recover the epistemic and the historical (perspectival) dimension of knowledge. History as well as other social sciences and humanities should be regarded as a form of interpretive discourse that does not preclude, but on the contrary presupposes, epistemic constrains.

Such an approach that I constantly tried to defend in several writings is related to our current philosophical context, where there seems to be almost no room for “the justification questions”, where truth and objectivity have less and less of a modest place in our vocabulary (Rorty). In response to these excessively relativist tendencies, a reasonable position consists in assuming an epistemology that, by reconciling the “first order” and the “second order” issues, would be able to legitimate the social sciences under ontological (historical) constrains.

The next subchapters refer to results of my research activity in other, yet related subfields of philosophy. As to political philosophy, I mentioned the two volumes that I have edited, *Ontologie*,

politică și etică. Supozițiile metafizice și implicațiile morale ale teoriei politice contemporane (Editura Universitară, 2010) and *Teorii versus ideologii politice?* (Editura Institutul European, 2012), and I detailed the topics that I have approached in my contributions to both of these volumes („Ontologia heideggeriană și implicațiile ei politice”; “Natura teoriei politice: între naturalism și interpretivism”) as well as in a number of articles.

The remaining, still substantial part of the first section presents my contribution to the development of the Romanian philosophical literature addressing issues of moral philosophy and professional ethic. My preoccupations in these subfields are closely linked to my educational activities – i.e. the disciplines that I taught or still teach (Political ethics, Ethics, Communication ethics). My books *Noțiuni de filosofie morală, Introducere în etică politică și Abordări ale eticii comunicării în relațiile publice* are primarily conceived as being helpful for students’ study of ethic.

These works have been motivated by my belief that ethical education is an essential element of the specialty instruction that makes the difference between a profession and simply a job. In a word, professionalism gets more and more inseparable from ethics as a study of principles and standards that inspire and found the specialists’ behavior in an activity area.

As regards the last of the three books mentioned above, it fills a void in the Romanian ethical literature by offering a systematization of the contemporary approaches to the idea of PR ethics as well as an explanation of how they are linked to the competing paradigms of this domain (asymmetrical and symmetrical). I showed the connection existing between the “advocacy” theory and the conceptualization of PR ethics in terms of partisan values, and respectively between the “issue manager” model (Grunig *et al.*) and its followers’ option for an ethics based on reciprocal and public values. I have also distinguished the ethics of reciprocity associated to the concept of communication as dialogue and to the communicator’s idealist role (“ethics counselor”, or “corporate conscience”) from the partisan ethics assuming his pragmatic role (organization’s advocate) and the persuasive (monological) model of communication as revealing a communitarian worldview, contrary to the philosophy of liberalism underlying “the attorney-adversary” paradigm.

Additionally, my book points out the theoretical and practical implications of the dialogical approach to communication in public relations. For example, the change of both publics’ behavior and organization’s leadership; re-conceptualizing of the persuasion in symmetrical terms; redefining of the educational objectives by focusing on competences such as the capacity to cooperate and negotiate, that Grunig ascribes to “excellent communicators”, rather than on pure “technical” abilities.

The final part of the first section outlines the most important aspects of my university teaching career. I referred, for instance, to the following: the courses that I have taught or still teach

as well as the new courses included in the university *curriculum* on my initiative; textbooks for the students' preparation; the authorization and/or accreditation of a number of university programs that I obtained in my position as dean held years ago, or numerous student scientific activities organized and coordinated by me during those same years. I mention as well the course "Romanian inter-war philosophy" that I have taught between 2002-2004 as visiting lecturer at the Faculty of Arts, Department of South-East European Studies, Charles University in Prague.

Starting from the research themes approached up to the present, the section two of my habilitation thesis presents a short plan of my future professional career, focused primarily on its scientific dimension. On the one hand, it consists in developing certain themes that in certain ways I have already explored, hence requiring a deepening of the issues and for sure updating the information in line with the current philosophical discussion. On the other hand, I intend to enlarge my previous studies on the philosophy of social sciences by including the discipline of communication in this research area. The conclusions derived from these studies, dealing mainly with historical knowledge, offers me a good point of departure in approaching to specific meta-theoretical issues of this discipline.

I exemplify some of the questions I plan to explore in this respect. Is the theoretical fragmentation of the communication field into so many "theories" (rhetoric, semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, and so on) a sign of its immaturity, or of a pre-paradigmatic level of its scientific development? What role could philosophy play in such non-homogeneous, diverse theoretical landscape? What does the contribution of existential and hermeneutical phenomenology to the clarifying of the human communication consist of? How can the philosophy of communication fructify Husserl's concept of "ontological regions"? The reason and hence the pertinence of my project of exploring the phenomenological idea of communication could become clearer in the light of Gadamer's remarks on the risks that the modern civilization triggers, namely forces countering authentic conversation. It would be quite justified to investigate the consequences of the new informational techniques on human relationships, whether they still leave any place for a direct understanding between people beyond the words, that phenomenology encourages and whether such techniques do not deprive the communication of its subjective, existential dimension.

As I already noted in the beginning, the final section of my habilitation thesis is a bibliography attached to the first two sections.

