HABILITATION THESIS

CULTURAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICAL THINKING

- Abstract -

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The habilitation thesis carrying the title *Cultural and Methodological Assumptions in the Contemporary Aesthetical Thinking* presents the itinerary of my philosophical and aesthetical inquiries, my didactic activity, my academic activity and my activity as an essay writer and cultural journalist after the presentation of my PhD thesis *The Cultural Identification in the Romanian Philosophical World. A Critical and Historical Inquiry* coordinated by acad. Gheorghe Vlăduțescu.

In my habilitation thesis I stretch out the idea that between these four main fields of intellectual activity exists, on the one hand, a diversity of intellectual concerns that have their origin in my interdisciplinary formation as a graduate of the Philosophy and History Department of The History and Philosophy Collage, in my personal knowledge interests concerning the need to understand the world and in my psychological inclination towards the involvement, with development purposes, in the Romanian academical, cultural and philosophical world. On the other hand, this diversity of intellectual activities are harmonized by an unitary methodological perspective, which has its origin in my interest for the history of philosophy and the history of aesthetics, respectively for what the contemporary epistemology calls „fundamental inquiries”.

Starting with the belief that the actual state of every theoretical, philosophical and aesthetical humanist investigation is included in a continually conceptual and value reconstructing and resignificating tradition, I have systematically applied a sum of historical and hermeneutical methods in all my studies. These methods are unified in a single methodological principle, which I have metaphorically called *the unconcealment of the implicit from the explicit*, respectively *the explicitation of the unspoken which is found in the spoken words*.

This methodological principle, which involves inquiries concerning the pre-defined – which has as a source of inspiration the methodological propositions of Ludwig Wittgenstein („the reference is the usage”), Thomas Kuhn (the concept of „paradigm”) and Richard Rorty (which proposes the methodological prescription of the „understanding a thing in its own terms”). One might add along the „theory of the turn point”, the main methodological principle proposed by Isaiah Berlin concerning the history of ideas, Foucault’s “genealogical method” and Hand-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutic. All of these had helped understand better the mechanisms of the generation of novelty and the historical dialectics and discontinuity which are present in the history of the philosophical and aesthetical thinking.

But then, bearing in mind the unity of a culture resides in what Kant, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer call *Weltanschauung* and that the switch between major cultural ages
is done by the substitution of one Weltanscahuung with another, it follows that the main problem which lays before us consists in the generation of operational concepts which are able to explain the way in which the continuity in the domain of the history of philosophical, intellectual and aesthetical ideas is accomplished through disruptions and major separations. These disruptions and separations usually produce different modes of “viewing” and estimating the life-practices and the expressive facts of the culture at large.

Essentially, the confrontation with the tradition and the attempt to identify and develop the sum of implicit contexts which sustain the philosophical and aesthetical European and Romanian practices, both traditional and contemporary, had defined the “spinal cord” of my philosophical and aesthetical research program. This program aims to impose the idea of an intercultural history of philosophy in the Romanian cultural world and to think this idea in relation with the philosophical history of philosophy, as its complement.

The research of the cultural grounds of philosophical thinking, as a stable species of European philosophy, as it is illustrated in representative works, and the investigation of the implicit historical, philosophical and cultural assumptions of aesthetics as a theory of the “man of feelings” and as a research domain of the theoretical practices concerning the artistic practices, define my scientific contributions, which are objectified in books, articles, studies, essays, scientific speeches and university courses.

Strictly speaking, my scientific activity includes two main aspects. The first continues the inquiries which I had begun in my collage years and which made the subject of my PhD thesis. This thesis encompasses a series of philosophical investigations on the history of Romanian reflexive culture, in correlation with the history of the European philosophy. The purpose of these investigations is the foundation of an intercultural history of Romanian philosophy in reflection to the philosophical history of philosophy. The second main aspect of my works relates to historical and systematical investigations in the field of aesthetics and is intimately correlated with my didactic activity in The National University of Arts form Bucharest.

The habilitation thesis presents, in two separate chapters, the Contributions of my personal scientific research in the field of Aesthetics and Contributions of my personal scientific research in the field of the History of Philosophy, these main aspects of my investigations, first in the field of Aesthetics, because I’ve formulated a demand of doctoral habilitation in the field of “visual arts”.

My investigations in the field of Aesthetics originate, mainly, from a series of personal perplexities concerning the ontological and epistemological status of this field in relation with
the rest of the philosophical disciplines and fields of study. On the other hand, these investigations were made from didactical needs, because the specialized literature offers mainly specialized thematic approaches or particular subjects of discussion, and not university textbooks designed to recompose the historical pathway of the domain in a way in which it has configured itself before and after the appearance of Aesthetics as a separate field of study in the Enlightenment period.

Thus, in the chapter named *Contributions of my personal scientific research in the field of Aesthetics*, I explain, with precise bibliographical references to books, courses, articles and studies written by me and published at certified publishing houses and in various specialized publications of the Romanian Academy, the investigation pathway stretching those themes and subjects in which I’ve made a series of conceptual clarifications and innovations. These clarifications and innovations present, on the one hand, intrinsic scientific value and, on the other hand, didactic value.

More precisely, in this chapter, I’ve shown the nature of my historical investigations in the field of Aesthetics, which I’ve called “The Aesthetical Thinking before Aesthetics”, and I’ve proposed two main meanings of the object of Aesthetics, corresponding to the two main paradigms of this field’s academic practices – the continental movement, and the analytical movement. From this point of view, Aesthetics can be understood, on the one hand, as a theory of the emotional man and, on the other hand, as a theory of the linguistic, theoretical and conceptual practices concerning the artistic practices. I have also revealed the meanings of the contemporary Aesthetics in correspondence with the modern Aesthetics and I have proposed several criteria for a systematic distinction between the objective form of Aesthetics (The Philosophy of Art) and the subjective form of Aesthetics (the philosophy of the aesthetic experience). Finally, I have argued that the tension present between the continental Aesthetics, with its investigations programs (phenomenology, existential analysis and hermeneutics), and the analytical Aesthetics, oriented exclusively towards linguistic, logical and conceptual analyses, can be resolved if we admit that there is “a third approach”, namely an assumptional model of investigation and evaluation of the biggest dilemmas of both present day and past Aesthetics.

The second main topic, revealed in the chapter named *Contributions of my personal scientific research in the field of the History of Philosophy*, outlines my thirty years long constant pursuits for the investigation of the Romanian identity and the cultural foundations of Romanian philosophical thinking, as a stable species of European philosophy. These pursuits had been objectified in books, studies and articles. I had begun this investigation in my
collage years with an intensive and complete reading of Blaga’s philosophical works, then I’ve written a doctoral thesis which synthetized and critically analyzed the main models of Romanian self-consciousness, after I have read and reflected on the most important works on this topic which had been publicized in our cultural world. In the years after the presentation of my PhD thesis, I have analyzed the most important philosophical systems proposed by Romanian authors, in correlation with their European thinking topics. Also, I had studied Constantin Noica’s philosophical system and the links it has with the European directions of thought.

My investigations reveal that the traditional and recent Romanian philosophy is a species of the European thinking and that its cognitive agenda is intercultural by nature. More precisely, right from its systematical beginnings, the Romanian thinking placed itself at the center of the dialogue between the most important European cultures, assuming their state of openness towards both self and other cultures. In conclusion, my researches in this domain have argued the necessity of making a cultural history of philosophy, correspondent to the philosophical history of philosophy.

The habilitation thesis includes, besides my personal contributions to the scientific research, also a description of my didactic activity, my activities that sustain the academic community and a presentation of my activity and an essay writer and cultural journalist.

Thereby, I have shown that my didactic activity at the National University of Arts form Bucharest is complex and has a dynamic which can be put in correlation with the big changes that had taken place in the Romanian university learning system, especially with the ones generated by the “Bologna Process” reformation norms. In this context, characterized my reforms and permanent changes of the curriculum of the artistic education, I have been lecturing a series of courses with a philosophical and humanist profile, both in undergraduate and in masters programs.

The activity as a teacher, for me, is highly fulfilling. I’ve been willing to become a professor and I accomplish this activity with passion and with restlessness, fact which had been noticed by my best students. The title of “Bologna Professor”, which I had been rewarded with by the National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania in the Festivity of the Bologna Professor in 2014, certifies the idea that my didactic activity is on the right path.

Finally, I outline the fact that, beginning with the implementation of the “Bologna Process” by the National University of Arts of Bucharest, I had begun teaching the course of Aesthetics for all the undergraduate students in the second study-year, both in the College of...
Imitative Arts and in the Collage of Decorative Arts and Design. I had also begun an integrated formative program, for undergraduate and graduate students, with two new optional courses in the National University of Arts in Bucharest, namely Continental Aesthetics (I, Master) and Analytical Aesthetics (II, Master).

The activity in the service of the academic community reveals the fact that I had undertook a series of administrative positions, as Head of Department and Department Director, member in various doctoral committees or various representational activities in the Professor’s Council and the University Senate.

The habilitation thesis ends with a brief description of my twenty-five years long activity as an essay writer and a cultural journalist at the national Romanian radio station (“Radio Romania Cultural). This part of my habilitation thesis outlines the fact that the radio shows, which I had made without interruption since 1990, had a major positive role in the development of our reflexive culture.