

Imaginative hermeneutics

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The main subject of my research project in the realm of the Research program *Time, Memory and Representation* is the role of imagination in hermeneutical thought. Rather than a theory or method of interpretation, hermeneutics means a way of thinking that acknowledges, as it's *a priori* the historicity and finitude of thought. The hermeneutic claim that to think means to interpret and further that philosophical thought is concerned with interpretation rather than with "truth" is the claim about the historical finitude of thought. Acknowledging the historical and finite nature of thinking categories, modern philosophical hermeneutics has developed new perspectives concerning the philosophy of history, the philosophy of time and the philosophy of memory. Central for hermeneutical thoughts on time, history and memory has been the recognition that past and future are not times "outside" the present but on the contrary times "inside" present time. They present otherness inside the sameness of present time, appearing therefore as instances of self-estrangement and critique. That explains why Schleiermacher, the "father" of modern philosophical hermeneutics understood hermeneutics as philosophical "critique". Considering time and history as presentation of otherness in the same, as transformation rather than as development, modern hermeneutical thought has dislocated philosophy from questions about the correspondence between subjective consciousness and objective reality to a questioning about the understanding of the relation between sameness and otherness, introducing the topic of otherness and difference in modern philosophy. Hermeneutical thought has thereby recognized the distance between the same and the other (both within the same and within the other) not only as a central question, but also and above all as the ground of philosophical thought. In this sense, Hans-Georg Gadamer has affirmed: "the in-between is the true place of hermeneutical thought". Modern definitions of hermeneutics as *ars interpretandi*, that found its first formulation already in Kant's words: "the art to understand the author better than him/herself", and further in Schleiermacher's classic formula as "the art to understand correctly the discourse of another" and in Heidegger's parole "the art to understand otherwise the said and thought", aim to express how hermeneutical thought is thought concerned with a fundamental in-between. Even if not always made to an explicit

subject, the in-between is for hermeneutical thought the central category for a hermeneutical philosophy of time, of history and of memory, from which a thought about the time, the history and the memory of the in-between is made possible. Among different modern attempts to develop hermeneutical thought such as among others in Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Reinhart Koselleck, and Werner Hamacher, fundamental contributions to what could be called a hermeneutical philosophy of the in-between can be found. To this hermeneutical tradition, other thinkers from Friedrich Nietzsche and Jacques Derrida to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy can be considered thinkers of the “hermeneutical” in-between even when not using this label. Still to be thought is however the articulation of the time, the history and the memory of the in-between or to say it in other words the inner dynamics of the in-between. My proposal is that the inner dynamics of the in-between is imagination, and hence that imagination is the way temporality, historicity and memory appear as the inner dynamics of an in-between. To investigate the role of imagination in hermeneutics is therefore to investigate the in-between as the articulation of time, history and memory.

My participation in the Research program *Time, Memory and Representation* has two levels. I have contributed to the formulation of the program and I am part of the administrative staff of the Program. As a researcher, I began my work first in the second year of the Program. My inquiry about the role of imagination in hermeneutical thought as the articulation of time, history and memory, arose from my former researches. I used the term “imaginative hermeneutics” for the first time in my readings of medieval philosophy, published 1998 in Portuguese under the title *Paralelos medievais. Ensaio de hermenêutica imaginativa*, (Petropolis: Vozes, 1998). Since then, I have worked on two central questions trying to develop: a) the in-between as hermeneutical category, which is the main topic of my book *Lovtal till intet. Essäer om filosofisk hermeneutik* (Glänta, 2006) and b) the phenomenology of imagination and of the image, which is the main topic of my book *Att tänka i skisser. Essäer om bildens filosofi & filosofins bilder* (2011). From these former inquiries what became clear for me was how the in-between rather than a place in-between places or forms is the movement of a coming to forms. In this sense, the in-between is neither temporal nor spatial but rather a spatial-temporal category that exposes the

movement of becoming from within, that is, *while* becoming. As such it can be described as a dis-forming movement, a movement of abandon of former and formed forms without reaching another form and hence remaining in tension with the no-longer and the not-yet. It can be described as a form in exile, for at stake in the experience of exile is a departure without return and without arrival, even when returning and arriving. I proposed to call this tension a *sketch* and to understand sketch as form in exile. Central for these discussions is the being with the without at stake in the sketch-like, exilic experience of an in-between.

In the last two years, I have been studying the sketch-like, exilic, inner dynamics of the in-between, and proposing an interpretation of what does hermeneutical interpretation mean, above all in relation to Heidegger's concepts of "destruction" and "deconstruction", the later under Derrida's influence. I have published the following articles on these general issues:

- 1) "Imaginative hermeneutics" in *Ylevä, Ajatuksen kosketus*, ed. Jari Kaupinen, Ari Hirvonen ja Niko Aula, (Helsinki: Loki-Kirjat, 2010);
- 2) for a discussion about the concept of sketch as dis-formative and un-forming forms, which present my attempts to developing Heidegger's concept of "destruction of history", see "Abstract Hermeneutics" *Research in Phenomenology* nr 41/1, NY: Brill, 2011, p. 45-59;
- 3) "Penser, esquisser: la limite illimitée entre philosophie et littérature" in *Limite- Illimité, questions au Présent*, (Patis. Ed. Cécile default, 2012), p. 227-249;
- 4) "Quelques notes à partir de la pensée de la parabole chez Jean-Luc Nancy" in *Epekeina*, vol. 3, n. 2 (2013), p. 211-228, CRF – Centro Internazionale per la Ricerca Filosofica Palermo (Italy), www.ricerca.losoca.it/epekeina.

In order to develop the sketch-like structure of the in-between and hence its "imaginative temporal structure" I have been studying the philosophical potential of the writings by Paul Klee and published the following articles:

- 5) "The Poetics of the Sketch" in *Paul Klee: Philosophical Vision: From nature to art* (Boston: McMullen Museum of art, 2012);
- 6) "In-between Painting and Music – or, thinking with Paul Klee and Anton Webern", *Research in Phenomenology* 43 (2013) 419–442, NY: Brill, 2013;

- 7) “The Eye and the Spirit of Nature: Some Reflections on Merleau-Ponty’s Reading of Schelling concerning the Relationship between Art and Nature” in *The Barbarian Principle. Merleau-Ponty, Schelling, and the Question of Nature*, ed. Jason M. Wirth and Patrick Burke (NY: Suny Press, 2013);
- 8) “The fiction of the image” in *True Lies Worldwide, Fictionality in Global Contexts*, ed. Cullhed, Anders/Rydholm, Lena, 2014, p. 67-82.

The result of this first two years of investigation can be summarized as the discovery of the sketch-like inner dynamics of the in-between. In the realm of my investigations, imagination, which since Immanuel Kant has provided a new awareness of time and temporality and furthermore of history and historicity, appeared rather than production of images as the hovering of sketches. The hovering of sketches presents a closer description to the movement of coming to forms from within the forming, which hovers between no longer having a form and not yet having a form, between the loss of forms and the not possessing forms, between the un-imagined and the un-imaginable. This movement un-conceals the hermeneutical structure of exilic existence. Exilic existence can be therefore understood as the articulation of the inner dynamics of the in-between as time, as history, and as memory. Based on these outcomes, it became possible for me to find hermeneutical categories to investigate exilic existence as the articulation of imagination and the in-between, and hence as the articulation of time, history and memory. The next step of my research is to develop a hermeneutics of exilic existence, or to express it in more existential philosophical terms, a hermeneutics of the exilic, sketch-like, in-between structure of human existence. Indiana University Press has contacted me for the publication of the outcomes of my research under the provisory title: *Eye to eye. An investigation on exilic existence*. During the spring 2014, I will have a research period at the *Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (IWM)* in Viena in order to develop the concept of exilic existence.

During the two first years of research, I have participated in international conferences, and have been invited to become member of the editorial board of *Philosophy today*, (<http://las.depaul.edu/philosophy/Resources/PhilosophyToday/index.asp>), International journal on Contemporary Philosophy, and to start a new Philosophical Journal in Italy and France, called *Hyperbolé*.