

A FEW REMARKS ON NATURALISTIC ATTEMPTS TO RATIONALISE HERMENEUTICS

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Abstract

The aim of the text is to consider Gianni Vattimo's claim that hermeneutics needs to be more rational due to its criticised relativism and aestheticism. From this perspective, the author considers the projects proposed by Bartosz Brożek and Chrysostomos Mantzavinos, based on the assumption that the cognitive phenomena underlying the understanding of human behaviour and the resulting artefacts can be described using naturalistic methods. Finally, the question is considered whether these attempts, coming from outside the hermeneutic movement, offer hope for eliminating the flaws of hermeneutics mentioned by Vattimo, and what the prospects are for further research on this issue.

Keywords: Hans-Georg Gadamer, Gianni Vattimo, hermeneutics, rationalisation of hermeneutics, philosophy of interpretation, methodology of humanities, naturalism

Research initiated by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey to create a methodology of cognition specific to the humanities and social sciences caused processes that resulted in the development of hermeneutics in three directions: technical hermeneutics, philosophical hermeneutics and hermeneutical philosophy (see: Scholz 1994). The first deals with the construction of rules for the interpretation of human behaviour and artefacts, the second considers the epistemological value of these rules, and the third reduces hermeneutics to the level of a philosophy of human finitude, realising through understanding the need for a temporal sense of Being.

Although the development of these three types of hermeneutics proceeded in parallel, for a very long time it was hermeneutical philosophy that was considered the highest achievement of the hermeneutical movement. This despite the fact that its representatives, due to the consequences of their theories, were criticised for aestheticising irrationalism or creating a cultural anthropology based on

the analysis of the expression of life – as in post-Diltheyan concepts. (Paczowska-Łagowska 2013) The main objection that has been brought against hermeneutic philosophy is the fear of undermining the possibility of discussion and argumentation. Within the hermeneutical movement, Gianni Vattimo, among others, wrote about this (meaning hermeneutical philosophy):

[...] hermeneutics implies a more or less explicitly balanced rejection of discussion, replacing it with poetic-creative or purely narrative philosophising (Vattimo 2011, 112)

These arguments were one of the reasons why the Italian philosopher built a postulate for the rationalisation of hermeneutics as an answer to irrationalising aestheticism as a consequence of hermeneutical philosophy. In his view, this rationalisation should consist of ontologisation.

To really guard against the risk of relativism, aestheticism, irrationalism, it seems unavoidable to reveal the ontological implications of hermeneutic discourse. (Vattimo 2011, 122)

The nihilistic hermeneutics of Gianni Vattimo

How should the implementation of the Vattimo programme be understood? We will follow it in detail on the basis of a text published in 1997 entitled *The Reconstruction of Rationality* (Vattimo 2011, 113-127). Vattimo's main task here is to develop a concept of rationality that would distinguish hermeneutics from literature and poetry without losing its anti-metaphysical character.

His starting point is a weak notion of rationality understood as the ability: to propose arguments that are publicly intelligible. (Vattimo 2011, 114)

He differentiates it from the strong notion of rationality (practised within the framework of so-called normal science), which he defines as a classical epistemological position referring to the so-called myth of data in epistemology, the classically notion of truth and the aspiration for intersubjectivity.

He contrasts this classical epistemological position with the hermeneutic position, which is based on adopting a particular cognitive attitude thanks to an encounter with a *new system of metaphors*.

The question of reconstructing the rationality of hermeneutics is thus really to ask whether persuasive argumentation is possible within the, indicated above, hermeneutical position. Vattimo gives a positive answer to this question

and on this base he builds his project of reconstructing rationality. Let us therefore look at his argumentation.

In order to implement his programme, Vattimo distinguishes between three versions of hermeneutics.

In the first version the process of understanding and accepting a system of metaphors has nothing to do with proof or even persuasion, but more to do with confessional joining a 'church' of believers in a given narrative. This is a view that appeals to the theses of Thomas Kuhn. Such assimilation of a system of metaphors, however, excludes argumentation, polemic or logical coherence. It is therefore unsuitable, in Vattimo's opinion, for inclusion in a programme of reconstruction of rationality.

He also rejects the hermeneutics referring to aestheticism, which is a metaphorical description of the process of creating a coherent conceptual system due to a randomly chosen starting point. Aestheticism in this version shows its consequences within the artistic concept of performance as an affirmation of the "pure randomness" of any arbitrarily chosen point of tradition or language from inside which the cognitive agent speaks. The purely random occupation of the cognitive place (which would be this deconstructivist performance) is the realisation of a programme of full, radicalised, historical consciousness. According to Vattimo, however, within the framework of deconstruction understood in this way, the trap of authenticity awaits, and thus the risk of falling back into metaphysical categories. In addition, the programmatic arbitrariness of the choice of perspective, of the place from which one speaks, makes argumentation impossible because there is no intention of objectivity there.

A traditionally oriented proposal to avoid these dilemmas is built, according to Vattimo, by Hans Georg Gadamer, who, however, by criticising aesthetic consciousness for its separation from the notion of cognition, falls in his attempts into objectivist tendencies of describing hermeneutic experience from the phenomenological and analytical level distinguished by Gadamer from the historical and reconstructive level practised within the methodology of the human sciences. However, if Gadamer is to preserve his anti-metaphysical principlism, the phenomenological description of the experience of the artwork as a play of horizons must be considered to be done from a certain point of view. And this puts, according to Vattimo, Gadamer's project into doubt. Such a phenomenology falls into an internal inconsistency.

Thus, the three attempts considered by Vattimo have failed from the point of view of his project: the parapoetic production and assimilation of a system of metaphors, the deconstructivist throw of the dice or Gadamer's phenomenological analysis, which falls into internal aporias. As part of his attempt to reconstruct rationality, he proposes a different version of hermeneutics – a nihilistic one, constructed with use of Nietzsche's philosophy.

The starting point of his approach is the statement that the only method of saving the rationality of hermeneutics is to radically restore awareness of its own interpretative character. Just as Nietzsche's statements about the death of God are not a declaration of the fact of God's non-existence – they are not metaphysical in nature – but are a historical description of a certain process of cultural development, so hermeneutics should focus on a historical analysis of its development. And this is the only way he can escape from complete relativism and aestheticism on the one hand and scientism on the other. Thus, in opposition to these extremes, Vattimo wants to find a third way – hermeneutic rationalism by uncovering the ontological implications of hermeneutic discourse. (Vattimo 2011, 122)

This should be done by a rational reconstruction of the historical process, which, however, will not be a theory of plurality, but an interpretive expression of the thrownness, the randomness of the cognitive agent who always finds himself in certain temporal and spatial circumstances. In order to give a complete account of his position, the agent must make a reconstruction that is complete and thus persuasive, providing strong arguments to defend his position. Rational hermeneutics is, in this sense, a self-knowledge that is justified on two levels – on the level of the very choice of hermeneutics as a tool of cognition, as well as on the level of the self-conscious choice of how to explain the situation of the randomness of the cognitive agent – although, of course, this is always a 'weak' argumentation, aware of its historical position and therefore not generating ahistorical sentences about historicity. Vattimo writes:

The innovation and significance of hermeneutics ultimately consists in the recognition that the (rational) argumentative interpretation of history is neither "scientific" in the positivistic sense nor purely "aesthetic". The task of contemporary hermeneutics seems to be to express this original inspiration in a full and clear form, which also means the responsibility of formulating a response to the call arising from its heritage. (Vattimo 2011, 126)

A hermeneutics understood in this way in its implementation part becomes at the same time a theory of modernity. Vattimo writes:

The connection of hermeneutics to modern scientism or to the world of technical rationality cannot consist simply in a polemical rejection of. (Vattimo 2011, 124)

Rather, it should rethink the sense of technical and scientific rationalisation of the world. In his considerations, Vattimo bases himself on the notion of *Verwindung*, understood as the cancellation of all foundation and the rejection of metaphysics, as the dream of *arche*. Nihilistic hermeneutics will look for its relationship to modernity by showing that historical consciousness and its hermeneutical realisation is in fact a completion of the project of modernity and an affirmation of the process of "disenchantment" of the world, rather than a negation of civilizational development, emancipation and the "liquidity" of modern life.

The rationalism of hermeneutics, its cognitive legitimacy, is thus contained in the narrative-interpretive argumentation, which counters aestheticism, irrationalism and relativism by showing its own non-coincidental relationship to history. (Torzewski 2001). How should this statement be understood?

Firstly, Vattimo assumes that there is a modus of argumentation within which a cognitive agent representing hermeneutics is able to present a series of arguments showing the relationship between modernity and nihilism so understood, and a system of knowledge that is not a classical pyramid but a network – to speak after Davidson. In the process, however, it must go a step further and show the ontology of the modern Being whose activity, as a historical being, is the source of the emergence of this network – history. History in this sense is an event (an artefact) that can be reconstructed and within these reconstructive projects enter into debate seeking the best explanation for it within a rhetorical, weak argumentative efficiency that appeals to the historicity of the cognitive agent. It is therefore a discourse that derives its patterns from history as a research discipline and refers to it. In this way it avoids the ahistorical statements about Historicity already mentioned above.

Secondly, this reconstruction is circular in nature, i.e. it is based on the fact of "throwing" and the resulting pre-judgments of the cognitive agent, the interpreter. The circular rationality of hermeneutics is the ultimate theoretical development of the inhabitation of the Being (its throwing in time) and the attempt to

give an account of this inhabitation through a rational (and therefore argumentative) demonstration of the genesis and circumstances of this inhabitation. It therefore approaches any intellectual task in an outstandingly processual way, its aim is to demonstrate the emergence of the artefact within modernity understood as a nihilistic historical consciousness. Vattimo constructs the patterns of this reconstruction by referring to Nietzsche and basing on the 'cure' of all metaphysics. In this sense, then, it becomes a philosophy of modernity as an awareness of the historicity of all knowledge.

Third, such a hermeneutics could be called an ontology of actuality (Vattimo 2011, 125) and would combine hermeneutics as a philosophy of finitude with a modern affirmation of historical consciousness. The accomplishment of this task directed Vattimo (cf. Vattimo 2014) towards a postmodernism within which hermeneutics considers itself to be a continuation of modernism (post-in this sense it is a self-conscious continuation – *Verwindung*, not an overcoming of modernism – *Überwindung*). In this way, hermeneutics would get rid of its anti-modern odium as well as the traditionalist, communitarian inclinations derived from Gadamer's philosophy that steer it towards conservative social trends. (Przyłębski 2013)

What is interesting here is that this nihilistic (also called weak-thinking) position of Vattimo has been confronted with the new movement of "new realism" that questions postmodern narrativism (Ferraris 2013, Ferraris 2015, Gabriel 2015), which rejects the primacy of discourse over reality and counts perspectival narratives as contested reality.

Vattimo responded with a well-known text (Vattimo 2017) in which he criticised new realism for its lack of respect for the empirical fact of the diversity of discourses, their clash and the shaping within them of alternative images of reality in a globalised world. However, a detailed presentation of this discussion is beyond the scope of our consideration.

How can we evaluate Vattimo's project? First of all, he speaks from the depths of the hermeneutical movement and struggles in his reflections with all its aporias. First of all, there is the figure of thinking related to the well-known feature of natural language that is assertion. It is an argument already used by Socrates when arguing against sophists (whom some representatives of the hermeneutic movement consider as their continuation). By stating a sentence with the character of an argument in a discussion, we automatically give this sentence the status

of truthfulness. However, how to conduct a discussion trying to convince others of one's reasons, when the spoken arguments remain in "quotation marks" – they are given a historical status valid only within the framework of some, one of many, "project" of throwing a cognitive agent. This is completely contrary to the polemical nature of the discussion and the necessity of advocating and defending one position in an argumentative manner.

In an argumentative situation the cognitive agent must objectify itself in order to formulate a rational argument opposite to the argument of the disputant. Following Lacan, this objectification makes him speak of himself as someone else. (Choińska 2009, 160) As Georg Misch wrote, however, it is always associated with a sense of incompleteness, inadequacy, and unfathomability of what is said in relation to content. The source of this sensation is the transcendental difference between the ontic and the ontological sphere, between the empirical (ontic) subjectivity, thrown into the world and its practice, and the objectified (ontological) subjectivity, captured in a given moment, as in the lens of a camera, being the object of description and objectification.

The hermeneutist, similar to Wittgenstein in his famous ladder thesis, therefore states sentences whose cognitive status he doubts. It is a paradox that by its structure is similar to the paradox of the liar. Argumentation requires entering the ontological level (object language) in relation to the ontic level (temporal throw) in order to produce the object relation that is its condition. Project of any rationality, even a weak rationality by Vattimo, does not allow to remain on the ontic level, because that is where only a purely expressive, poetic aestheticism works. On the other hand, entering the ontological level has its consequences, as it can produce an infinite argumentative regress – to establish the value of an statement at level 'x' we always have to go to the higher level 'y'.

Our thesis, then, is that the project of reconstructing the rationality of hermeneutics in its consequences requires leaving the level of hermeneutical philosophy and going back to a lower methodological level in order to objectify and algorithmize the choice of the correct argumentation in the ontological domain. Otherwise it faces the risk of infinite regression. This regression can only be prevented by a methodology for objectivising selecting the best interpretation from the set of possible interpretations. Vattimo's project of the reconstruction of rati-

onality in fact will be a postulated affirmation of modernity insofar as it also accepts the consequences of modernity in the form of an objectified procedure that takes into account historical consciousness.

Theories of phronetic rationality

Another version of the hermeneutic movement's efforts to restore rationality to hermeneutics is to move towards a theory of phronesis, understood as a non-technical rationality that is based on empathic abilities and an understanding of human behaviour, which is subject to a process of continuous becoming (constitution) and thus distinguished from the objects of physical reality (Januszkiewicz 2016, 85).

The features of phronesis understood in this way are its non-exhaustibility – since it always refers to real existence as the source of understanding, its circularity in movement from the whole to the part (the entirety of life experience versus the individual situation), and its reference to individual existence with its uniqueness and singularity of place and time. For such phronetic rationality concerns the type of knowledge that Aristotle (see: Aristotle 1996) differentiated from *episteme* – knowledge about static objects treated as elements of nature, and *techne* – experience about methods of producing technical artefacts. We find it in the area of knowledge concerning those phenomena in the world which we treat as taking place in a purposive way, having a teleological character – that is, as describable particularly well through the use of one of the so-called principles of substance distinguished by Aristotle. The means of reaching these goals is a specific kind of knowledge and its corresponding rationality (in practice, it is best applied by those working in the field of pedagogy or politics).

Heidegger is considered to be the contemporary discoverer of this phronetic rationality. This is indicated by Theodore Kisiel – an eminent expert in his works, in accordance with the whom Heidegger initially intended to title his book *Being and Time* as *Phronesis*. Heidegger writes about phronesis as a science being practiced from the perspective of "as" (paragraphs 69a and 33 of *Being and Time*). It is knowledge related to the concern (Sorge) of the individual who is preoccupied with his own temporal existence and the search for its meaning (Januszkiewicz 2016, 85).

The cognitive agent – individual discovers himself here through expressions in language, gets to know his aspirations by objectifying his often unconscious convictions, which gives him the power to direct the teleology of actions where he treats the world "as" a means to the realisation of his goals within the framework of a project that manages an accidental "throw". This self-discovery is supposed to lead him to authenticity thanks to which his project of existence (being) will have a chance for full integration with being – he will become a shepherd of being based on the attitude towards it, which Heidegger calls *Gelassenheit* and with which he replaces Husserl's *epoche* (Augustyniak 2010).

Concluding this topic of consideration, an interesting reflection emerges. The projects of rationalisation within the hermeneutic movement, both those referring to nihilism or communitarianism and those drawing on phronetical rationality, usually end up as philosophy of politics or pedagogy, i.e. as a reflection on the highest forms of teleological guidance of behaviour. In doing so, they construct deliberations by rejecting cause-and-effect relationships, but rather seek morphological relations adapted to the world of human behaviour (Rodi 1969 and Rodi 2015). They also often rely on some form of sociology of knowledge or aestheticising mysticism (in aestheticising concepts seeking objectification at the pre-epistemological level, before the distinction between object and subject, such as Georg Misch's evocative speech theory (Sołoduha 2007, 169-172). In this sense, the reported doubts about rationalism understood as the possibility of discussing these concepts seem quite justified.

Turn towards naturalistic projects

The radicalisation of historical-ontological interpretation proposed by Vattimo remains within the project of hermeneutic philosophy. Rationalisation is here understood as gaining rhetorical advantage through a "fullness" analysis that reveals both the current "throwing" status of the cognitive agent and its genesis. "Fullness" is understood here, of course, as a regulative idea. This is a bit reminding of Husserl's project of genetic phenomenology, which has similar goals.

However, the basic question that we must ask considering such a project of hermeneutical philosophy – what is the explanatory and predictive power of such historical-anthropological statements, and thus their epistemological status.

This problem, then, concerns the value of Rorty's thesis on the replacement of epistemology by hermeneutics.

As we have shown above, the attempt to assess the epistemological value of an assertion constructed from some self-conscious local subject puts such a project at risk of regression to infinity. Indication of the predictive value of an ontological-historical statement must appeal to language a level higher. This in turn raises the question of the status of such referential criteria. This procedure can be continued in the next steps.

The only way to avoid this regression seems, against Rorty, to be a return to the epistemological-methodological roots of hermeneutics, in order to identify a criteria for choosing the best interpretation and thus a path of exit from the mystical contemplation of multiplicity, which is the result of abandoning the epistemological perspective and moving to the historical-anthropological perspective. The project of rationalisation through maximisation of hermeneutics in the Enlightenment version, proposed by Vattimo, offers no hope for such a solution.

In order to obtain the above-mentioned goal of "discussability" and to get the predictive power of hermeneutics' theses we are required a return to the methodological level of development of hermeneutics, and this in turn causes a shift towards naturalistic proposals which offer an algorithmic, objectified procedure of selecting the best interpretation from the set of possible solutions. In this way, we can also return to the ideal of unified science and make positive use of developments in the area of sciences of information processing and cognitive sciences. According to my convictions, a contemporary hermeneutics cannot ignore their spectacular achievements obtained in recent years (Gallagher 2004).

Naturalistic rationalisation of hermeneutics by Bartosz Brożek

As part of the projects of rationalising hermeneutics, there have appeared (apart from the recent proposals of the so-called 'new realism' mentioned above) attempts coming from outside the core of the hermeneutical movement, questioning the generally accepted thesis of hermeneutical philosophy as the highest form of its development and assuming that its transformation into an anthropological ontology is a blind corner. To correct this error, therefore, one must return to its methodological foundations. This trend includes the achievements of Bartosz

Brożek and Chrysostomos Mantzavinos. Both general attempts refer to the paradigms of hypothetical (abductive) reasoning, so strongly discussed today (Maganani 2009).

Bartosz Brożek's attempt to rationalise hermeneutics in his book *Granice interpretacji* (Brożek 2014) focuses on the term interpretation analysed through the perspective of the achievements of contemporary brain research and biological sciences. (Gallagher 2004) The very explanation of the cognitive agent's need for understanding, which in hermeneutic philosophy is usually explained as related to the issue of dealing with temporality, is, according to Brożek, deeply rooted in biology and psychology, as a psychological need for cognitive closure. We will return to this in the conclusions of this part of the considerations.

In his reasoning, Brożek generally does not refer to the classics of the hermeneutical movement, limiting himself to reading Gadamer, to whom he applies the hypothesis that:

[...] some of Gadamer's intuitions are in accordance with what the cognitive and evolutionary sciences say about thinking and understanding¹ (Brożek 2014, 74)

Crucial in Brożek's arguments is the notion of meaning, which he defines by referring to Wittgenstein and his theory of the use of language. This extrapolation is explained by the often mentioned argument of rejecting the concept of private language in philosophy, in favour of its social and communicative dimension, i.e. the theory of meaning taken from Wittgenstein.

We can construct the meaning of words...because we know in which sentences these words can potentially appear and in which contexts these sentences can be used. (Brożek 2014, 64)

According to Brożek, interpretation is the possibility to paraphrase a text. This is enabled through the features of language:

Due to the fact that language is structurally stable and therefore has such "imperfections" as vagueness, ambiguity and openness – any competent language user can point to many *prima facie* acceptable paraphrases of a given text. (Brożek 2014, 80)

According to Brożek, the choice of one of the paraphrases depends on background knowledge and context. A paraphrase reduces the meaning of the

¹ I am using here references to the digital version, which is expandable. Therefore, references may differ in page numbering from the printed version.

original expression. For Brožek, the process of interpretation consists, therefore, of mutual relations within the polymorphic domain of language (multiplicity of alternative conceptual forms) and its practical applications (multiplicity of forms of use) (Brožek 2014, 149).

The goal of the interpretative process is to create a community of understanding, connecting the sender and recipient of the message. It is achieved by unifying two types of background knowledge that clearly influence the way the message is understood. This communal nature of understanding allows, in turn, to give value to conceptual forms and processes of interpretation. Its limits are, on the one hand, a fully formalised logical system and, on the other, gibberish understood as the transmission of all content at once beyond the area of community and therefore beyond the area of meaning understood as a communally agreed way of use. This appears when it is not possible to establish a limited set of acceptable paraphrases (or interpretative hypotheses in the case of visual art) for a given statement.

The process of polymorphic reduction requires the unification of the diverse background knowledge of the participants of the agreement. The reference for this background knowledge are mathematical and physical theories. They are what is supposed to protect interpretation against pan-interpretationist anarchism. By using this knowledge, the cognitive agent linguistically mediates the environment in the most effective way – achieving a correspondence between predictions and conclusions. This is roughly how Brožek's reasoning goes. He clearly refers to well-known models of communication, such as Wilbur Shramm's competence scheme. He claims at the end:

[...] it is impossible to understand any cultural creation without integrating it somehow into the world view. (Brožek 2014, 163)

In his attempt to rationalise hermeneutics, Brožek therefore explicitly uses the enactivist strategy, according to which the most important activity for any kind of cognitive agent is the act of probing, which consists of looking for common ground between knowledge and the expected result of this knowledge – prediction with conclusions. His project is part of a wider discussion concerning the applicability of the achievements of contemporary cognitive science to the field of traditional humanities and social sciences. It was initiated, among others, by Adler and Gross's article regarding the use of cognitive science in the field of

literature studies² (Adler, and Gross 2002, 195–220). They compare the trend of using results of cognitive science research for problems of literature studies to the trend of using psychoanalysis some decades earlier. They claim that both fields can, in their view, be treated as supporting, but they are not able to eliminate the basic, comparative and source methodologies of literature studies and the humanities. In this sense, the strategies of rationalising hermeneutics by applying the achievements of cognitive sciences are for literature scholars only a cognitive curiosity, which does not change anything in their methodological workshop. (Michellini, and Köchy 2017)

As is not difficult to notice, Brožek's position is the complete opposite. He considers the application of the achievements of cognitive science, psychology, and the Anglo-Saxon philosophy of language to the problem of interpretation as cleansing for hermeneutics and making it possible to rationalise it, which is the subject of our discussion, i.e. to indicate the possibility of discussing interpretative hypotheses, and not reducing them to the author's unique existential situation, which we can only submit to reconstruction, aesthetic contemplation, or negation. Interpretations can thus be original, unique, revealing, attractive, but never true or false. And this, according to Brožek, requires correction.

A weakness of Brožek's project is naturalistic scientism, which undermines one of the important intentions of the founders of hermeneutics, namely the creation of an alternative to the naturalistic model of rationality. In Brožek's case, then, we are dealing with a diagnosis that the cure for the nihilism of perspectivism and a tool for reducing the irrationalism of hermeneutics in its existential version is the impossibility of discussing the status and epistemological limitations of naturalism. This is because reductionism presupposes the existence of an undiscussable domain within the project to which a given phenomenon is reduced. In this case, these are the achievements of the natural sciences, whose epistemological status is not as obvious and unquestionable as Brožek assumes. Leaving aside, of course, the question of their practical achievements, which are conclusive from the evolutionist point of view that Brožek adopts.

An additional problem is that these sciences themselves often use hermeneutic criteria to negotiate the diversity of theoretical positions, and what is more, they use interpretation in their everyday practice. In "hard" disciplines, such as

² This is an interesting aspect, one that will become the subject of separate consideration.

mathematics or natural sciences, there are known practices of valuing by the scientific community the proofs of theorems based on "soft" criteria, such as simplicity or beauty of the proof. So we are dealing here with a circle of reasoning, explaining a problem with the help of arguments that use for their explanation that which is being explained (Demillo, Lipton, Perlis 2014). In the case of logic that Brožek refers to, this is a logical mistake.

Another issue is the question of private language. Does not current cognitive research suggest that there is information-processing occurring in human cognitive systems that is not conscious in nature, and therefore is not and cannot often be expressed by language, but undoubtedly has an impact on behaviour and the cognitive agent's decisions related to interpretation of human behaviour?

That these doubts have their grounds is confirmed by several arguments. In Brožek's concept of interpretation, its process resulting from the need for cognitive closure does not allow, for example, to explain the differences between verbal declarations and actions (common in politics, for example). Do they result from the weakness of will or do they appear for another reason, for example, the use, depending on the situation, of various interpretative strategies without aiming at cognitive closure or simply a lack of awareness, and thus the inability to verbalise directly certain motivations, which are the hidden motives for action. This is, for example, standard procedure for so-called situationist ethics without a code, in which contextual and variable interpretations of human behaviour can be used to make variable ethical evaluations of these situations – often without linguistic expression.

It is also worth mentioning that moving the consideration about hermeneutics back from the ontological to the epistemological level should naturally lead to methodological considerations, and this is lacking in Brožek's statement. In stark contrast to the concept of Chrysostomos Mantzavinos.

Methodological rationalisation by Chrysostomos Mantzavinos

The methodology of interpretation, on the other hand, is the subject on which concentrates the Greek philosopher Chrysostomos Mantzavinos. He assumes in his concept that hermeneutics does not use a method specific for social sciences

and humanities, but a hypothetical-deductive method known from natural sciences, adapted to the specific material, which are artefacts and human actions. Therefore, the title of his most important book is *Naturalistic Hermeneutics* (Mantzavinos 2006). The basis of our analysis of Chrysostomos Mantzavinos' concept of rationalising hermeneutics are two articles that present and develop ideas from this book (Mantzavinos 2008, Mantzavinos 2019).

According to Mantzavinos, structures of meaning (Sinnzusammenhänge) are fully transferable into relations of interaction (Wirkungszusammenhänge), and these in turn are easy to consider with nomonological methods. He believes that dealing with the interpretation of texts and other artefacts this way makes possible such features of the scientific method as intersubjective intelligibility, verification by proof, exchange of arguments and objectivity. In this way, he denies the argumentation of scholars such as the above-mentioned Günther Scholz and the evaluative description of the development of hermeneutics. The need to rationalise hermeneutics from Mantzavinos' point of view demands a return to its roots and a focus on investigating the methodological basis of the interpretative process. Therefore, it is essentially a philosophy realised in a transcendental modus – the facticity of interpretation dictates to ask about its reason for existence and the conditions of possibility. In this way, Dilthey's dream of creating a critique of historical reason can also be implemented.

Mantzavinos takes the issue of the hermeneutic circle as the starting point of his approach, which, following Stegmüller, he considers fundamental to the problem of hermeneutics in general. He postulates a rejection of Heidegger's view according to which the hermeneutic circle corresponds to the ontological structure of Being, hence the afore mentioned reduction of hermeneutics to ontology. He considers it to be purely poetic in its consequences and not offering any hope for the development of interpretation procedures corresponding to scientific criteria. Heidegger's position results in an elevation of art, especially poetry, as a way of describing the uniqueness of existence, which is methodologically deprived of any possibility of objectivisation. It should be added here that art is submitted to aesthetic criteria of attractiveness, which do not play any role from the cognitive point of view. Secondly, he also rejects presenting the question of hermeneutic circle as a logical issue, because it does not deal either with the question of proving or defining in the classical sense. Therefore, it cannot be considered from the point of view of logic.

In contrast, he considers the treatment of the practice of the hermeneutic circle as a methodological issue to be relevant and to provide scope for productive reflection. Therefore, he confirms the analyses of both Stegmüller (Mantzavinos 2013) and a group of researchers from Oslo (Føllesdal, Walløe, Elster 1996), but expands on their observations by claiming that, from a methodological point of view, the problem of the hermeneutic circle occurs when problems with automatic, habitual understanding of some cultural expression or behaviour arise, and interpretative hypotheses have to be set and tested. Therefore, the wheel appears not at the stage of testing, but at the stage of hypothesis creation, because it requires reaching out to a broader cognitive context.

Therefore, hypothesis formation is based on the failure of the process of automated understanding, which is a certain competence acquired through the process of socialisation. The hermeneutic circle is a non-precise description of the search process known from psycholinguistics, which consists in scanning the available universe, the entirety of resources available in order to pose possible alternatives. A successful search and selection of an appropriate solution ends with an "Aha" effect, i.e. with understanding. It is an empirical phenomenon describable in terms of cognitive sciences, not in terms of ontology or logic.

In his opinion, the psychology of learning is especially relevant here, according to which we acquire, as a result of socialisation, certain social skills and these include in particular the ability to understand human behaviour. Human cognitive systems, due to their limited information-processing capacity, have to automate (Mantzavinos 2008, 607) their activities. So understanding in this way comes about mainly without the participation of attention and consciousness. The need for methodology arises only when this process is disturbed (Mantzavinos 2008, 609).

Hermeneutics as a rational method of interpretation is based, according to Mantzavinos, on five methodological steps referring to the hypothetical-deductive method known from natural sciences. The basis of Mantzavinos' thesis is the assumption of so-called methodological monism, according to which there are no two independent scientific methods – the naturalistic and the humanistic. The singularity of what is interpreted – human actions and their effects in the form of artefacts can therefore be interpreted using the methodology of natural sciences.

Mantzavinos uses here, as we have already mentioned, mainly the concept of *Sinnzusammenhang* coming from the Dilthey school. The determination of singularity is, according to him, above all a description of a set of interactions, forces (*Wirkungszusammenhang*). By defining this set of forces, an entity (a behaviour or an artefact) is given a certain general dimension, it is pulled out of its singularity by indicating its typicality or morphological relations.

This description takes the form of a text made up of descriptive sentences, which are supposed to reflect as accurately as possible the features and circumstances under which the artefact was created. This information builds a factual background and is the basis for hypotheses on the meaning of the artefact and its possible interpretations. However, they do not mean reproducing the author's intentions, but rather reproducing the objectivised features of the artefact on different levels. This is step one of the interpretation method.

This work only lets us conclude whether the understanding puts up some resistance. This resistance requires more effort and the production of several competing interpretative hypotheses. The production of hypotheses cannot be rigorously standardised. Rather, the principles of charity and forbearance (*Nachsichtprinzip*) apply here, as does Davidson's *principle of charity*. Consequences are also drawn from hypotheses, which show their exploratory power. This is the second step of the methodology.

The third step involves building a base for hypothesis verification by collecting available material, which is nomological in nature. These nomological findings may be of a trivial nature – for example, they may concern the number of concepts of a certain type that appear in the text or the statements of the author himself about his work. The statements of other specialists and existing interpretations to which it is possible to refer also come into play here.

In the fourth step, the previously made hypotheses are confronted with the collected empirical material. This evaluation is comparative and also refers to certain regulative ideas.

The fifth and last step involves the selection of the hypothesis that achieves the highest grade from the point of view of the adopted regulatory criteria (true – false, elegance, originality etc.). This resolution, according to Mantzavinos, should be of an objective and verifiable nature. In this sense, such methodological

fortifications with the help of the hypothetico-deductive method enable the complete objectification of the interpretation process and selection of the best possible hypothesis. He clearly refers here to C.S Peirce's understanding of abduction.

In the intention of the author, therefore, a procedure of this type erases the inconclusive existential sense of interpretation postulated by hermeneutic philosophy, of having the interpreter reflect on the work and impose it on other people, replacing it with the possibility of dispute and the choice of the most rational solutions at each stage of the interpretation procedure he proposes.

In this way he eliminates, on the one hand, the arbitrariness and undiscussability of hermeneutics understood existentially, and on the other, he rebuilds the unity of science by claiming the universality of the hypothetico-inductive method. He does not refer to reductionist approaches, as is the case with Brožek, who considers the language of neurobiology, psychology and biology to be primary for the theory of cognition. The achievements of these sciences can be helpful, but only in describing the phenomenon of interpretation and understanding itself. To objectify interpretation as a scientific procedure, it is necessary, according to Mantzavinos, to use a hypothetico -inductive approach.

Conclusion: Is rationalisation required for hermeneutics?

Reasoning that is based on the interpretation of artefacts (human behaviour and the 'products' of this behaviour) has enormous practical importance and is used to make decisions that are based on conclusions and predictions built on the basis of these interpretations. We can mention here the results of social research, the interpretation of which is used to reach important market or political decisions. But we are faced with these issues not only in the social sphere.

The interpretation of data concerning human behaviour collected by various information systems can be used to make important decisions in the area of security, administration, urban planning or architecture. Consequently, transcending the position of multiple perspectives is an essential element of the rationality of social life and a requirement that is imposed by the progressive dataisation (interpretation processes carried out on the basis of very large amounts of data) of knowledge.

The interpretation of data can be driven neither by comfortable refusal to act and aesthetic contemplation of multiplicity – nor by excessive ideologisation

often based on a pure identity need arising within social relations. Both attitudes can lead to damaging practical consequences in the form of bad decisions or lack of action. What is needed, therefore, are intellectual tools that would provide a rational foundation for decision-making on the basis of interpretation and prediction of human behaviour and the artefacts that are the result of such behaviour.

Taken in this sense, the proposals of Brożek and Mantzavinos are interesting voices in the discussion regarding the possibility of rationalising and objectivising these interpretations. Their efforts can be expanded to include yet another direction related to the use of tools and paths of reasoning that combine the operation of human, natural cognitive systems and their operating modes with artificial, computer-based systems in the modus of the digital humanities developed today, which allow for overcoming the limitations of human cognitive systems.

The rule of epistemological respect proposed by Nick Bostrom (Bostrom 2016) in relation to digital information-processing systems based on contemporary automatic learning procedures indicates that decision optimisation based on accurate interpretation and prediction of human behaviour and artefacts should be supported by open computer systems that are adapted to such epistemological models in which irrational heuristics of human behaviour are the subject of interpretation and evaluation (Sołoducha 2019). This can take the form of neuromachines, phronetic robots or linguistic systems referring to biosemiotics, thanks to which it becomes possible to solve the three basic problems of hermeneutics – passive synthesis, *verbum interius* and the Humboldt dilemma.

The considerations of Brożek and Mantzavinos are an important stage on this road by attempting to deal with the problem of rationalisation of hermeneutics and showing possible solutions. However, this objectification, also with the help of creating a methodology of the interpretation process, does not exclude treating hermeneutics as an ontology of being and therefore developing humanities in the mode of existential interpretation. They can be used as a tool of pedagogy as a hermeneutic discipline, which presents the diversity of interpretation perspectives as an important value of critical thinking and social activity (Milerski 2021)

Such interpretations simply cannot be used in the areas of performative humanities and social sciences, where it is important to minimise the risks of decision-making by choosing the best possible interpretation according to established criteria.

Of course, such conclusions arouse resistance in the hermeneutic community itself, as they undermine the long tradition of confrontation with the naturalistic model of knowledge. However, the affirmation of modernism postulated by Vattimo should lead, according to the author, to a revision of this position in the name of such modern values as democratic access to knowledge, its discussability and conclusiveness. Additionally, the digitalisation of knowledge creates completely new possibilities in this field. Perhaps it is worth to take this into account when working on the further development of hermeneutics as a field of knowledge problematising the sphere of teleological human behaviour and its expression in the age of artificial intelligence and big data.

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