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CODOBAN'S TRILEMMA. FROM THE SACRED TO COMMUNICATION AS REALITY

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Abstract:
The research is premised on the concept of the trilemma, which, for philosopher Aurel Codoban, serves as a paradigm of communication. At the same time, the trilemma acts as a novel methodological guide for an original reinterpretation and understanding of the three modes of philosophical discourse: the ontological (object-centered), the gnoseological (subject-centered), and the logical-linguistic turn. In this reinterpretation, the sign accounts for existence, knowledge, and the possibilities of communication within the world culturally reconstructed by humanity. Implicitly, the trilemma suggests enigmatic alternatives that entail a journey through the signs of humanity found in Aurel Codoban's works. The research reveals that the Heideggerian formulation of the logical principle of identity applies in his case: "The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist."

Keywords: philosophy, sign, semiotics, hermeneutics, the sacred, communication, Aurel Codoban.

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1. Preliminary Remarks

Regarding the issue at hand, the premise to be considered is an idea proposed by the philosopher Aurel Codoban: to assign Gorgias's trilemma the function of a paradigm for communication. His reformulation is presented in the Introduction to the volume Sign and Interpretation (Codoban 2001, 5; Gorgias 1984, 461):

first, nothing exists;
next, even if something did exist, we could not know it;
finally, even if we could know it, we could not communicate it.

It is a matter of reinterpreting and understanding the three modes of philosophical discourse: the ontological, centered on the object; the gnoseological, focused on the subject; and the logical-linguistic turn. In A. Codoban's view, the thematic exploration of these discourses targets the "real" as its limit, encompassing the sacred and its derivative forms, the issues surrounding the interpretation and understanding of the world, and, ultimately, the thesis that reality is constructed through communication. As a hermeneutic exercise, it is hardly surprising that the idea of a trilemma highlights the function of his work as a part that accounts for the whole. The trilemma suggests enigmatic alternatives, necessitating a journey through the signs of humanity found in Aurel Codoban's works. Implicitly, it suggests that knowing him merely through the details of his CV is insufficient; one must also recognize the originality stemming from the subtle ways his thought articulates with Romanian and European philosophy. The interplay between knowledge and recognition forms a constructive dilemma concealed within the trilemma that serves as an epistemic guide. Knowledge is the result of a logical process, a conceptual construction based on information. Recognition, by contrast, entails something more than knowledge: namely, interpretation, understanding, and axiological validation. Furthermore, recognition implies a shared rediscovery arising from the zone of intersection between the "I" and the "Other." Methodologically, this act of recognition involves the hermeneutic circle, thereby giving rise to a peculiar effect. "The act of hermeneutics, asserts Aurel Codoban, entails an existential involvement, for understanding transforms the consciousness of the one who understands. In this transformation of consciousness, understanding reveals itself to be something entirely different from a cognitive process." (Codoban 2001, 78) Consequently, I acknowledge the affinity.

Officially, Aurel Teodor Codoban is a Romanian essayist and philosopher with a remarkable body of work, specializing in French structuralism, semiology, hermeneutics, the philosophy of religion, and communication

theory. He is a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy. His oeuvre comprises an open-ended series that includes fifteen books authored solely by him, five collaborative volumes, and an extensive, selective list of studies, translations, memberships in academic and professional societies, as well as awards, titles, and distinctions. Yet, he is also a novelist. A tally of achievements!

And yet, beyond the question involving cognitive demands *(Who is he?),* the following question arises: What does Aurel Codoban signify within Romanian philosophy? It is a question that entails initiating a process of interpreting and understanding the author in relation to his work. Might it be that, in Aurel Codoban's case, a specific form of the logical principle of identity applies, namely: "The artist is the origin of the work; the work is the origin of the artist" (Heidegger 1982, 31)?

The reference to Heidegger prompts reflection on the objective being pursued. I am tentatively considering the application of the trilemma concept, as a paradigm, to the work of Aurel Codoban. Reformulated and adapted to the context of Codoban's work, Gorgias's trilemma posits:

First, the sacred does not exist;
next, even if it did exist, it would not be logical for it to exist;
finally, even if it were logical for it to exist, we could not communicate it.

Although the tension of a dialectical contradiction persists within each proposition of the trilemma, the whole is governed by a paradoxical *coincidentia oppositorum*. The implicit limits define an interval wherein tendencies to negate becoming manifest themselves, thereby driving change. Human religious experience stands in opposition to the Sacred as a reality. Yet, man tends to question and analyze what he believes he sees, the ontophanies, while logical thought undermines the reality of the Sacred. However, logical thought itself is affected by the language that disguises it; consequently, lapses and shifts in meaning inevitably arise in communication.

The ideas found in Aurel Codoban's books animate precisely these intervals. Contradictions, becoming, and change! This framework persists throughout the historical evolution of European philosophy, and, by extension, in Aurel Codoban's interpretation thereof, manifesting in works such as *Sacru și ontofanie* (The Sacred and Ontophany, 1998*); Semn și interpretare* (Sign and Interpretation, 2001); *Exerciții de interpretare* (Exercises in Interpretation, 2011a)*; Imperiul comunicării* (The Empire of Communication, 2011b); *Sentimentul straniu al vieții* (The Uncanny Feeling of Life, 2023)*; and Comunicarea în epoca reproducerii ei artificiale* (Communication in the Age of Its Artificial Reproduction, 2025) among numerous other books and studies.

Is this a real history or a dissimulation? In this instance, I rely on Paul

Ricoeur's assertion, applied here by analogy, that the work of Romanian philosopher Aurel Codoban "guides its readers and thus creates its own subjective counterpart." (Ricoeur 1995, 102) I concur!

2. The Sacred, between existence and a derived "reality"

Regarding the ontological problem, Aurel Codoban seeks to reach primordial thought. This refers to the historical moment before philosophy reduced existential lived experiences to concepts and before religion fell under the sway of canons, a moment of syncretism in which the rudiments of philosophical thought were enveloped in poetic metaphor alongside religious visions. It was a time when Greek poets and philosophers conversed with the gods: Pindar invoked "*Αλήθεια* as a daughter of Zeus" (Vlăduțescu 1994, 37), while Heraclitus held that "the One, the only wise, wills and wills not to be called by the name of Zeus." (Heraclit 1979, 355). Such is the ambiguity of mystery! Although philosophers replaced the god with a concept, they were nonetheless "pursuing an approach to *sophia,* the ultimate ideal of Greek thought: the realization of Being." (Dumitriu 1986, 356). Consequently, a sense of religious experience persisted within the practice of philosophy. For the Greek philosopher, the concepts of truth *(αλήθεια)* and life (*ζωή*) are linked to the concept of being *(*ὄν*),* to the fact that being is singular rather than manifold, indivisible, and imperishable. By analogy, being finds its identity in the transcendence of the sacred.

Anton Dumitriu identified a pivotal moment: "In *Philosophia Mirabilis* (1974), I attempted to show that the aim of philosophy at its inception, in ancient Greece, was to achieve a certain state, a specific mode of *being'* that gradually transformed into a mode of '*saying*,' without, however, losing its original ideal." (Dumitriu 1986, 281) It is precisely upon the interval between *being* something and *saying* that it is something that Aurel Codoban focuses, conceiving "a new philosophy of religion" as a "phenomenology of the sacred, both as a category of individual experience and as a category of social, historical, and cultural life." The reality of the sacred finds its certainty in human lived experience. Naturally, as he himself acknowledges, he draws upon the thought of Mircea Eliade against the new backdrop of Heideggerian philosophy and Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics, on the one hand, and the anthropology of Leroi-Gourhan alongside French structuralism of a semiological/semiotic nature, on the other" (Codoban 1998, 21-22).

By refuting three types of objections, Aurel Codoban rehabilitates religious experience, defining it as "that which is immediately lived inwardly, prior to any analysis or rational formulation. It is the lived response of the concrete human being, open to the transcendent yet historically rooted in a culture, to a mystery or a mysterious power"

(Codoban 1998, 43). Consequently, defying logic, all human contradictions vanish under the influence of the sacred. The sacred is real, and its manifestations are attested to by religious experience.

Manifestations of the *sacred* in the world are perceived by humans as *hierophanies*, manifestations of the *sacred* in terms of form, and *cratophanies,* manifestations of sacred power. Yet, these manifestations interpose themselves between the human and the sacred per se; consequently, while the underlying meaning remains constant, specific significations vary according to context. If a *hierophany* is the trace of the sacred grasped by the human subject during their experience, then as A. Codoban posits, the religious symbol arises as a consequence of this mediated relationship between the human and the sacred. A symbol is religious "because it represents a law of mutual recognition, a spiritual bond, and the only possible realization of the union between the divine and the human: analogy." (Codoban 1998, 82). In the case of Yahweh, for instance, His existence is postulated through specific attributes, He is the One and is unknowable, allowing the ancient Hebrews to invoke Him only analogically and depending on the context. Thus, they invoked a name implying specific qualities, such as: *YHVH Mekadesh* (God who sanctifies, in Ezekiel 37:28), *YHVH Yireh* (God who provides, in Genesis 22:14), *YHVH Shalom* (God of Peace, in Judges 6:24), and *YHVH Osehnu* (God our Maker, in Psalm 95:6). In the Hebrew Bible, the sacred tetragrammaton appears approximately 7,000 times.

The symbol is simultaneously a mundane reality (the impregnation of the sacred into the profane) and a sign that reveals a transcendent reality. Drawing inspiration from Mircea Eliade, A. Codoban focuses solely on those functions that possess religious relevance. Key among these are: a) the capacity to express multiple meanings simultaneously, thereby integrating a heterogeneous reality; b) the simultaneous upholding of unity and heterogeneity within the harmony of a *coincidentia oppositorum*; and c) the possession of existential value, whereby the religious symbol fully engages the existence of archaic man.

Also from the perspective of Eliade's hermeneutics, specifically the interpretation of symbols as archetypes, A. Codoban posits a possible resemblance between archetypes and Platonic Ideas. Based on this relationship, one can speak of a symbolic logic, implying three consequences:

a) If "archetypes organize symbolisms, then the symbol is an immediate datum of «total consciousness», of «man becoming conscious of his position in the Universe»."

b) "If archetypes organize symbols, then the resulting symbolisms always possess the quality of autonomous systems."

c) We "live in a world where the symbol has eroded." Consequently, the

> symbol becomes a "sign of secularization, " and the multiplicity of meanings is reduced to a single meaning. Such is the course of history, the transition "in Western civilization from a signifying rationality to a predominantly operational rationality." (Codoban 1998, 86-89).

Aurel Codoban highlights another "transition" based on speculative analogies between ontophany and ontology. Ontophany marks the culmination of the evolution of religious experience, signifying the historical period in which "everything is more strictly determined and formulated with greater coherence"; within it, "myth and ritual stand in precise relation to one another, while hierophanies and cratophanies mutually limit each other." (Codoban 1998, 113-114). His research indicates that archaic ontology emerges from the elaborated form of ontophany. The Greek example is the most telling, with traces of this transition found in the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum*. Vasile Tonoiu expressed a similar view, likewise considering that the tension inherent in this unity of opposites "constitutes the anthropological basis for the sacred-profane opposition and for equating the sacred with Being itself." (Tonoiu 1989, 313). Humans perceived the distinction between what was real and significant for their existence, on the one hand, and what was chaotic and perilous, on the other. Reflection on this state of affairs gave rise to the conviction that the sacred is the essence of the real. Thus emerged the asymmetrical ontology in which the good-evil relationship persists.

It is also within the realm of Greek culture that the emergence of philosophical ontologies, which perpetuate the world's asymmetrical model, becomes apparent. The divine is reduced to a concept, thereby bringing the problematization of human existence as an ontological element to the fore. Man gains prominence through his capacity to reconstruct the world via thought. The complex relationship between the existence of the gods and human self-awareness becomes fundamental. "The early thinkers and, subsequently, the Greek philosophers," argues Aurel Codoban, "adopted the content of these ontologies against a backdrop of religious acculturation." (Codoban 1998, 122). Consequently, philosophical ontology asserts man and his world in relation to the sacred and its forms of manifestation. Yet, since philosophy is grounded in rational thought and knowledge, issues pertaining to religion tend to be stripped of ontological substance.

The relationship between the sacred and the profane is dialectical in nature: "either the sacred is generated by the profane and, consequently, the profane lies hidden within the sacred or, conversely, the profane is the product of the sacred, and it is the sacred that camouflages itself within the profane." (Codoban 1998, 169). The mechanism of this dialectic is mirrored in hermeneutic thought. Following Eliade's line of reasoning, A. Codoban posits that religion does not vanish; rather, in the modern world, it assumes

the form of various manifestations belonging to the sphere of culture. However, the religious spirit comes into conflict with logical thought; yet, without capitulating, it has camouflaged itself beneath signifying reason.

According to A. Codoban, among the novel forms in which the religious spirit appears in a disguised state are "political religions," the cult of the party, and the "deification of politicians." (Codoban 1998, 174). What is the conclusion? The negation found in the second proposition of Codoban's trilemma thus conceals a form of affirmation of the sacred in a new guise. Alienated from logical thought, so-called political thinking conflates truth with falsehood, legitimizing this choice through the logic of "weak thought." It is the everyday manifestation of the sacred under the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum*. The author ingeniously conceals the conclusion of his interpretation of the phenomenology of the sacred within a paradoxical formulation: "The precise formula would be the one Freud uses to interpret the dream […] rhetorically, a metonymy and a metaphor." (Codoban 1998, 184-185).

3. The Hermeneutics of Religion and Philosophical Thought

Transcendence renders a face-to-face relationship between man and the divine impossible. Consequently, human communication with the divine takes on unique forms: dreams, visions, prayer, meditation and contemplation, participation in religious services, the study of sacred writings, and sacred art. The religious person regards these forms as signs bearing meaning, that is, a mental content describable through interpretation. A problematic undertaking!

In elucidating the nature of the relationship between man and the divine, A. Codoban methodically revisits key themes of philosophical discourse. From an ontological perspective, knowledge of the world is constrained by the opposition between transcendence and the sensible world. In the second thematic approach, where *logos* transforms into logic, reality is reduced to a conceptual reconstruction of the world, the coherence of which precludes any contradiction. This raises the question: is there "another *logos* with the strength of logic", capable of "bestowing a meaningful intelligibility upon the world"? In Codoban's view, the appropriate answer would be metaphor, metonymy, grammatical categories, and language that takes precedence over knowledge. The articulation of linguistic signs establishes a world order "perceived through pre-modern taxonomies, symbolisms, and analogies..." Consequently, in the pre-modern world, "scientific knowledge is a matter of hermeneutics of interpreting meanings and symbolic deduction" (Codoban 2001, 12-14). Signs account for the existence of things; thus, the articulated image of the world and the understanding of how it exists and manifests is read through

these signs.

Naturally, the concept of the sign is subjected to rigorous analysis, drawing upon semiotic and semiological theories. Thus, the axioms defining the sign as a theoretical object - *pansemia* and *polysemy* - are examined in relation to the theories of C.S. Peirce, F. de Saussure, and their respective followers. A. Codoban's observations regarding the philosophical implications of the principle of the linguistic sign's arbitrariness are particularly interesting. He points to "a new ontological region that of the sign, of communication, of language", meaning that "alongside Thing and Idea stands the Sign; alongside Reality and Knowledge, Communication; alongside World and Consciousness, Language." (Codoban 2001, 26). One of the consequences appears striking: "language contains meanings for things that do not exist in reality. Thus, the path does not lead from things to language, but the other way around; the existence of things must first be established as the existence of meanings within language..." (Codoban 2001, 29).

This reversal of the relationship between *signification* and *designation* upholds the autonomy of language, the status of the word-as-sign as an existential principle. The consequences are particularly significant for the hermeneutics of religion, specifically, the interpretation and understanding of the world's existence. Nature becomes an object of interpretation, an "immense text, only when God lies behind it" (Codoban 2001, 76). The biblical text validates the concept of the Word (*Logos*) as an existential principle. In the original text of the Holy Gospel according to John, that is in Greek (*Noul Testament* 2022), the first verse unequivocally establishes the divine nature of the Logos, namely:

Original	**Translation**
Εν άρχή ήν ο Λόγος	In the beginning was the Word
και ο Λόγος ήν προς τον θεόν	and the Word was with God
καί θεος ήν ό Λόγος.	and the Word was God.

As a religion of the Book, Christianity necessarily entails interpretation in order to understand the world, and, by extension, the relationship between humanity and the Divine. Hermeneutics is neither a philosophical add-on to divine revelation nor a rational annexation of the biblical word, as some are tempted to claim. The evolution of hermeneutics comprises three distinct stages: a) philological-rhetorical, b) psychological-historical, and c) philosophical.

(i) The philological-rhetorical stage of hermeneutics. Biblical hermeneutics represents the culmination of this period. Its legitimacy is grounded in the very words of Jesus Christ: "Woe to you, teachers of the law! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering" (Luke 11:52). This also

justifies the exegetical program of Origen, who sought the essential relationship between the Old and New Testaments in the prefigurations of Jesus Christ, and especially in the meaning of His words, as well as the later theory of John Cassian. "Interpretation posits the existence of a textual meaning that can be reached by clarifying various obscurities and ambiguities and by tracing figurative senses." (Codoban 2001, 85). In general, this characteristic of patristic hermeneutics persists to this day, a fact highlighted, among others, by Father Dumitru Stăniloae. Commenting on one of the epistles of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, he states: "In fact, through words and meanings, we must always move beyond words and meanings. Only in this way do we grasp the mystery-filled presence of God." (Stăniloae 1996, 90).

History records Philo of Alexandria as the one who inaugurated biblical hermeneutics. He was followed by Origen, who established the theory of the three senses, then by John Cassian with the theory of the four senses, while Augustine elaborated the principles of this discipline.

Philo of Alexandria was shaped by the Hellenistic tradition, driven by the conviction that reason forms the basis for understanding the world. Consequently, it was natural for him to engage with his people's sacred history through the Septuagint and, by extension, to believe that Moses possessed the gift of philosophical thought. He adopted the method of allegorical interpretation from Greek philosophy, a technique intended to reveal meanings hidden within biblical verses. Thus, he proposed two modes of reading and interpreting the sacred text of the Torah, the literal and the spiritual, without betraying the Jewish spirit. "In *Praem*. 61–65, he states that there are secret meanings accessible only with God's help. He distinguishes three ways in which a secret meaning can be discerned: (a) directly through divine illumination, or (b1) indirectly alongside the literal interpretation, and/or (b2) through allegorical interpretation." (Levy 2018). Therefore, his work must be understood in relation to both the religious tradition of Judaism and Greek philosophy, specifically that of Plato and the Stoics.

Origen holds that a literal or apologetic presentation is sometimes insufficient, making it necessary "to reinforce faith with rational testimonies as well." (Origen 1982, 303). For him, faith and reason are not mutually exclusive concepts. Nevertheless, Origen asserts the primacy of revelation in the building of faith. In this regard, he states that "if people were convinced through ordinary means, by demonstrating the contents of the scriptures, it would rightly be believed that our faith rests on human wisdom rather than on the power of God." (Origen 1982, 308-309). But what are these so-called "rational testimonies"? It is easy to see that this phrase refers to linguistic forms. Specifically, they constitute the world within the realm of faith; we are dealing here with parables, dream

interpretations, oracular utterances, words of wisdom, short tales, genealogies, and the like. Yet these linguistic forms, it is believed, conceal the divine core of truth. Now, if the Bible is both revelation and mystery, then it is a sealed Book, as the prophets Isaiah and Daniel believed.

To penetrate the hidden world of words, one must engage in a hermeneutic exercise that conceals a tradition of cultivating clairvoyance, a tradition dating back to the time when "Israel was a child." Thus, Origen assures us that a methodical approach is required: "one must inscribe the meaning of the Holy Scriptures upon one's soul in three ways: first, the simple person is to be edified by the flesh (or letter) of Scripture; second, the one who is somewhat more advanced is to be instructed by its soul; and third, the perfect are to be educated according to that to which they bear resemblance and of which the Apostle speaks", namely, that "the perfect are edified by the spiritual law." (Origen 1982, 313). The theory of the threefold sense entails an exercise in interpreting biblical texts according to their literal, moral, and spiritual meanings. This approach is rational in nature, even if it lacks the rigor of logical analysis.

John Cassian is interested in an authentically Christian exegesis of the Bible. He held that the reading, interpretation, and understanding of sacred texts require certain preparatory guidelines, which are, however, subordinate to faith. He expounds his conception of spiritual science in the *Conferences*, where he further develops Origen's theory. It is noteworthy that St. John Cassian values precision of expression, employing definitions, classification, and the logic of analogy. Distinguishing it from the practical sciences of earthly life, spiritual science "has its own domain and methods." It comprises two parts: "the first is practical, or concerned with action, consisting of the correction of habits and purification from vices; the other is theoretical, consisting of the contemplation of divine realities and the knowledge of the holiest matters." (Casian 1990, 552).

After describing what practical knowledge entails, providing examples of how it can be applied in the Christian life, he addresses the subject of theoretical knowledge. Here, too, St. John Cassian employs classification, distinguishing between "historical interpretation and spiritual understanding," a distinction justified by a quote from Solomon. "And the branches of spiritual knowledge are three: tropology, allegory, and anagogy", a classification legitimized by a reference to *Proverbs*, which states: «But you, write them in three ways upon your heart.» (Casian 1990, 555). Naturally, he clearly defines what is meant by each of these branches. Thus, the term "historical interpretation" refers to the literal sense or the primary level of reading the Bible; allegory concerns truths "expressed in figurative language"; anagogy is the means of ascending "from spiritual mysteries to those of heaven"; and tropology "is the moral explanation that leads to purity of life and to principles of practical conduct." To ensure

clarity, St. John Cassian provides an example: "Thus, we can reduce these four figures to a single one, so that one and the same Jerusalem may be understood in four ways: historically, it is the city of the Jews; allegorically, the Church of Christ; anagogically, the heavenly city of God [...]; and tropologically, the human soul." (Casian 1990, 556). Such an interpretation highlights the purpose of biblical hermeneutics, the goal toward which every Christian must strive: the restoration of the unity lost through the sin of Adam.

Augustine "was for a time a philosopher without being a theologian, only to become a theologian without ceasing to be a philosopher." (Adămuț 2001, 5). Beyond the spiritual demands intended to lead the interpreter into a mystical state, he also considers intellectual requirements regarding knowledge of the Scriptures as a whole and the original language in which they were written. In his work, as Aurel Codoban asserts, "the Christian form of the hermeneutic principle clearly emerges: the necessary distinction and correlation between thought and expression." The distinction Augustine employs concerns "an inner language, that of the heart, and an outer one: the incarnation of the spirit in the corporeal." Since linguistic expressions are variable, and thus imperfect, "for biblical hermeneutics, the true meaning lies in the thought or contemplation, not the words." (Codoban 2001, 88-89). Here, contemplation constitutes the very goal of the hermeneutic exercise, which is premised on establishing a ternary relationship, mediated by human reason, between the linguistic sign (including a statement or text) and an object (whether mental or material) external to that sign. Augustine holds that the interpretation of sacred texts brings about communion, a merging with the text's divine spirit. It is precisely this mediation that constitutes hermeneutic interpretation.

(ii) The psychological-historical stage of hermeneutics. Reformation hermeneutics, through "F. Schleiermacher, seeks to restore the relationship with the primordial Christian essence of Scripture, in accordance with Luther's imperative of *Sola Scriptura*." At the same time, methodologically, it adopts the "principle of modern philosophy, attributed to Immanuel Kant, whereby the subject is the one who constructs the world through knowledge" (Codoban 2001, 96). Centered on the subject, this hermeneutics undertakes the reconstruction of the author's inner life and historical context, thereby becoming a psychological-historical hermeneutics.

Friedrich Schleiermacher, the founder of modern hermeneutics, defines understanding as an insight into the author's psychology and, complementarily, into the structure of the language associated with the historical context. Through him, hermeneutics takes as its goal the rediscovery of the intentionality of early Christian faith. At the same time,

pursuing the imperative of universality, he emphasizes the feeling of absolute dependence on God, self-awareness, and piety. His aim was to demonstrate the scientific nature of biblical exegesis through theological hermeneutics. In this regard, grammatical interpretation must be understood as a fundamental component of general hermeneutics, and biblical interpretation—subordinated to the effort to understand any text—cannot contradict the latter's general principles. For him, a failure to understand is a misunderstanding.

Schleiermacher believes that New Testament hermeneutics possesses a distinctive character, as the language's referential nature involves issues arising from the confluence of Hebrew mysticism and Greek rationality. In this regard, he states: "the path leading to the language of the New Testament begins in Classical Antiquity and passes through Macedonian Greek, the secular Jewish authors Josephus and Philo, the deuterocanonical books, and the Septuagint—which comes closest to Hebrew." (Schleiermacher 2001, 43).

In his hermeneutics, Schleiermacher maintained the necessity of clear rules of interpretation. For him, "text and discourse are the only domains of inquiry proper to the hermeneutic endeavor; the understanding he defines as "divinatory" seeks to grasp the text as a manifestation of individual psychic productivity, the interpreter attempts to achieve a fusion with the author's inner life. In contrast, comparative understanding, which eschews immediate merging with the creator, draws upon all accessible objective, historical, and philological knowledge to identify the expressed meaning. Interpretation achieves its goal only through the interaction of these two modes of understanding." (Hufnagel 1981, 8). This justifies the concept of biblical hermeneutics as a dual process of interpretation, linguistic and psychological. Furthermore, over time, a given text can only be understood if it is "translated" into contemporary language, a requirement that renders hermeneutics both a science and an art of interpretation.

W. Dilthey sought to restore the balance not only between philosophy and theology but also between the natural sciences and the human sciences. With his *Critique of Historical Reason*, Dilthey ushered in a new era in the history of the human sciences. These sciences do not form a unified whole with a logical structure analogous to that of the natural sciences; "rather, their specific theoretical-epistemological foundation is a critique of historical reason—that is, of the human capacity to understand oneself as well as society and history" (Dilthey 1995, 116).

"The significance of Dilthey's hermeneutic approach," asserts Aurel Codoban, "lies in the historical dimension he ascribes to understanding. The German philosopher counters the belief in the possibility of a historically unconditioned understanding of a work of art with the concept that any particular manifestation must be understood based on the context

of its era. The consequence of this view is the relativism of historical understanding, since each era must be explained according to its own criteria. However, historical hermeneutics, through the discovery and adoption of a historical consciousness, facilitates the overcoming of this relativism. The present era can thus capitalize on the fluctuations of previous interpretations, occupying a privileged position in relation to the historical past." (Codoban 2001, 101). Dilthey regarded hermeneutics as a specific method of knowledge acquisition through the interpretation of signs and symbols linked to events of spiritual life. In this way, philosophical hermeneutics seeks human self-understanding—an act that implicitly entails an understanding of the world. Dilthey's conception is grounded in the triad *of lived experience*, *expression*, and *understanding*.

(iii) The philosophical stage of hermeneutics. For Martin Heidegger, as Aurel Codoban maintains, "the meaning of the text and comprehension implicate Being." In relation to Being, man "is a privileged being, for whom understanding his own being already opens a path to Being." (Codoban 2001, 112-113). Man understood as *Dasein,* that is, man endowed with the capacity for questioning, the one who understands himself starting from his own being, is the premise for the reconstruction of ontology. "The 'essence' of *Dasein* lies in its existence." By the term "existence," Heidegger designates a specific "mode of being", namely, a privileged one: man. Thus, only man *exists*, whereas the rest of what constitutes the ontic merely *is*. The distinction between the meanings implied by "to exist" and "to be" lies in thought, in the capacity to become conscious of that which is existentially doubled within thought. Only the human being who questions the world and questions himself is *Dasein*; that is, only he is the one for whom questioning constitutes a possibility of his own being. "Man's existential essence", Heidegger holds, "is the reason why man can represent beings *as* beings and can possess an awareness of what he has thus represented." (Heidegger 1988, 357). Heidegger regards questioning as an *a priori* condition for the possibility of *Dasein* and for the understanding of this existence, including through the sciences. From this, we deduce that all ontological concepts possess meaning only in relation to man.

A disciple of Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer endowed the hermeneutic circle with the function of a method of knowledge, enabling the investigation of the empirical and spiritual substratum of philosophical concepts. At the same time, it ensures the deciphering of texts through interpretation, and, implicitly, the disclosure of truth. The philosopher engages in questioning the text. The "dialogical encounter" with a text's author gives rise to the "hermeneutic experience." Hence his distinctive methodological choice: replacing the ideal of objective knowledge with the ideal of participation. "I have tried to show in my works," states Gadamer,

"that the dialogue model for this form of participation... is characterized by the fact that we are not dealing with someone who possesses a comprehensive overview of the results and claims to master the issue single-handedly; rather, every partial breakthrough is achieved through participation in the truth and through mutual sharing." (Gadamer 1999, 58-59).

The hermeneutic experience entails a novel "historical fusion of horizons", that is, an "encounter" achieved by bridging the historical distance between a text's author and the interpreter. Aurel Codoban believes this perspective aligns the concept with theological hermeneutics. He holds that "language is objective" because "generations succeed one another behind it, transmitting a tradition." Indeed, this is how the "authority of texts transmitted through tradition" (Codoban 2001, 124) is legitimized. History, mediated by language, acts upon human existence. For Gadamer, "understanding" constitutes a historical, linguistic, and philosophical event. Hermeneutics develops as a reflection on the interdependencies between generations within a cultural context. Consequently, truth emerges from the reflection of each interpreter, shaped by the cultural pressures of their specific historical period as well as by historical tradition.

4. Does communication construct reality?

To capture the richness of the implications, I have adopted the title of the interview Aurel Codoban gave to Timotei Nădășan. I added the question mark to signal an issue embedded in the very verb "to construct." In a sense, the intention is to suggest an ongoing process regarding how communication constructs reality. Indeed, the interview highlights, or so I believe, two processes:

a) In the case of Aurel Codoban, the trajectory of his academic career involved an interest in the field of interpersonal and public communication. Consequently, the subject matter of his studies, which served as the basis for his academic courses, became a constantly revisited response to the fluid realities of social and cultural life within the European sphere. As he himself stated: "I found it very interesting, given my belief that what exists and what we know are relative to what we communicate, to examine more closely how this reality-constructing communication functions in interpersonal relationships and in society." (Codoban 2009, 20).

b) By forging his own path of philosophical thought, in dialogue with great philosophers from antiquity to the present day, A. Codoban arrives at that existential stage where "you do not communicate/transmit to others what you know, nor what you want, but rather what you are." (Codoban 2009, 21). In effect, under the pressure of philosophical tradition and the

history of art and universal culture, that "dialogic encounter" spoken of by Gadamer gradually took shape.

However, the concept of communication has discreetly disguised itself within the personas of "concept-characters" in two of his recently published books. The two aforementioned processes are woven into their very substance. These works are *Sentimentul straniu al vieții* (The Uncanny Feeling of Life, 2023) and *Comunicarea în epoca reproducerii ei artificiale* (Communication in the Age of Its Artificial Reproduction, 2025). In both, the author finds himself, yet it is possible that, through reading them, we too might encounter ourselves in the guise of the Other. Might this potential encounter involve the sacred? Yes! It would be akin to Plotinus's experience: "how could you proclaim Him as something other / than what you yourself are, / if, when you were in contemplation, / you did not see Him as something else, / but as one with yourself?" (Plotin 2003, 308-309).

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