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ABSTRACT OF THE HABILITATION THESIS

***„THE PARADIGMS OF DIFFERENCE”. CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND
ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE RELATION BETWEEN PRAGMATISM AND
NEOPRAGMATISM***

Initiated by the preoccupation for the relation between modernism and postmodernism, seen through the continuities and not the discontinuities between these perspectives my PhD thesis (entitled *The Paradigms of Difference in the philosophy of communication. Modernism and postmodernism*, dissertation thesis defended in 2006 and published in 2007), established a starting point for a complex investigation dedicated to pragmatism and neopragmatism in philosophy, to the relation between them and to the potential possibilities for the capitalization of this relation. Thus, I started conceiving several integrating visions, by depicting an original concept of “paradigms of difference”, approached through the philosophy of L. Wittgenstein, J. Derrida, J. Habermas, R. Rorty, F. de Saussure, Ch. S. Peirce, C. O. Schrag, G. Lipovetsky, J. Baudrillard, G. Vattimo, P. Virilio and Al. Boboc, V. Tonoiu, A. Botez, L. Blaga, C. Noica, V. Nemoianu etc. Through the holistic synthesis of such philosophical visions I have defined the “paradigms of difference” as a plurality of conceptualizations oriented so that to retrieve differences, “transversality” (Schrag), philosophical deconstruction and reconstruction of whatever is contingent, secondary and marginal in rationality, representation, culture, community and society.

Pragmatism imposed itself in philosophy as a meditation on meaning and truth, with representatives such as Peirce and James, although, one may identify a pragmatic nucleus in the Kantian primacy of the practical reason over the theoretical reason. Truth and meaning are established as validations determined by the practical consequences of their adoption. The implications of pragmatism are multiple and I have approached in my works many of these, from the philosophy of science to ethics and socio-political philosophy. Neopragmatist representatives are Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam or Donald Davidson sustaining contextualist, contingent and constructivist approaches to subjects such as truth, meaning, reality etc., following a minimalist approach in such matters and the connection between truth, belief and the successful action, as well as among the nature of opinion and the human attitudes, emotions and actions.

Situated at the confluence between pragmatism and neopragmatism, modernism and postmodernism, the “paradigms of difference”, which I identify are conceptualizations combing

language games and life forms, in the critical approaches to the ideal situation in communication, in a theoretical perspective that embraces ironism (Rorty), the philosophy of transversal rationality (Schrag) and the novel description of an ethical and political turn, an integrative theoretical vision constituted by the capitalization of all these paramount theoretical results of contemporary philosophy.

I have followed this interpretative neopragmatic direction and I have capitalized upon the concept of “paradigms of difference” discussed at the ethical and socio-political level in other two works: *The reforming ideologies* (2010) and *Mapping marginality* (2010, co-author). The former develops a pragmatic concept applied to an interpretation of feminism, ecologism, neohumanism, Rortian ironism, each of these offering the opportunity for a meditation on the permeability of the border between political philosophy, ideology and the socio-political practice, on the paradigmatic character of the ideologies (but also on the ideological character of knowledge in society). This is a novel interpretative perspective. In this respect, but not only, the reforming ideologies are not just utopias nor sterile theories and empty dreams. Described through the lenses of the Rortian “ironism”, reforming ideologies are theories, philosophical and political projects and, as well, ideals, which can be set in motion, through an open democratic culture, of an ironist type, with a relevant democratic role, with civic qualities, to the extent to which it becomes nuanced and continued socio-political practice. Thus, reforming ideologies describe a diverse “landscape”, which is also complex, of an “ironist” confluence (in the particular meaning proposed by Rorty) among these ideologies which are characterized also as “soft”, because their paradigmatic, educational and cultural stakes transcend the game of power, proposing the socio-political reform, inclusion and reconceptualization to all that is common and social for an improved togetherness.

On the same interpretative line, in *Mapping marginality* (co-authored), I am approaching the concept of marginality from different perspectives with interdisciplinary qualities. The predominantly theoretical chapters of the book are evaluating the assessment and the emphasizing of the fundamentally humane dimension of the marginal, of the marginal person (as individual, category and concept) and these chapters are complementary with a sociological pursuit, in the final chapter, capturing the tragic reality of marginalization. *Mapping marginality* is a philosophical analysis that overpasses the limited centre-periphery models, criticizing the Baudrillardian view of an inertial social world, and addressing the “voice of the marginal” and

the multitude of facets of marginality retrieving the differences in terms of expectations, aspirations or vindications, becoming thus a subtle “engine” of sociality and democracy.

In other works I have analysed different important concepts in socio-political philosophy (next to the above mentioned “paradigms of difference”, “reforming ideologies” and “marginalization”), such as republicanism, the correlation between republicanism and liberalism, “good governance”, democracy and human rights etc.

As a researcher at the Institute of Philosophy and Psychology “Constantin Rădulescu-Motru” of the Romanian Academy, I took part during the period 2003-2008 in a series of grants of research delivered by the Romanian Academy, along with my PhD adviser and coordinator of the Department of Epistemology of the Institute at that time. In this capacity I was granted also research grants in the Programme of inter-academic exchange in Belgium, England, Bulgaria etc. (inter-academic exchange grants that unfold within an interval of almost two decades, during the timeframe 1999-2018) with a beneficial role in my professional development, which triggered new collaborations, common projects, lecturing invitations and publications in scientific journals and in various collective national and international volumes.

In 2011, I took part in the coordination of the volume *Categories and concepts in the philosophy of science*, where I have published the chapter “The concept and the category of information in the philosophy of communication”. In this chapter I analysed the concept of information as well as the category in inter-relation, in a contemporary interdisciplinary perspective. I assumed that conceptualization presupposed a categorical approach. The analysis of information presupposes a dual conceptual and category-oriented approach, either we are approaching information as a mental representation of a relevant aspect of knowledge or an object of knowledge (the concept of information), or we depict it as a set of useful examples, characteristic and central for conceptualization (the category of information). Starting from the communicational model of Shannon and Weaver, then discussing the model of mass-media philosophy, at M. McLuhan and the cybernetic model at N. Wiener, to mention only of few out of the numerous theoretical resources capitalized in the research and approaching also defining philosophical elements in the history of ideas, information describes a domain neighbouring philosophy of knowledge, opening paths toward up-to-date cybernetic philosophy, informational and technological society, in which we are living, as well as toward the knowledge society.

Among the numerous results (lectures and papers) in which I have benefitted from my specialization in pragmatism, it is worth mentioning the international collective volume edited with two Belgian colleagues in 2013, entitled *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Discourses: A Global and Timeless Phenomenon?*, published at Peter Lang Academic Publishers. In this volume my contribution consisted in a pragmatic synthetic theoretical perspective, a discursive analysis of the dominant characteristics of the totalitarian discourses in a chapter entitled „Theoretical Argument. Totalitarian Discourse: The *New Snow White* / Society in the Discursive Wooden Mirror”, preceded by an introduction of the editors, among which myself, and followed by case studies conducted by specialists from various countries who draw conclusions concerning the totalitarian discourse in concrete cases, in Cuba, DGR, Nazi Germany, North Korea, Philippine, China, former Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Burma, Romania and Tunisia, all indicating the predominance of the similarities of these totalitarian discourses beyond the historical, socio-political, spatial and temporal particularities, aspect on which the title of the volume is based. In the theoretical chapter that I conceived I have emphasized the features of the totalitarian discourse: the heroic vision reflected in the content, pathos and intonation of the totalitarian discourse, the military character, which is also mobilizing, simplistic and artificial, the claims of scientific quality. It is an instrument that mirrors an ideological conception, considered the greatest one. The *snow white* metaphor included in the title sends to the renewing pretensions of this discourse which announces and guarantees the creation of *a brave new world*. Totalitarian discourse falls into the *newspeak* and *langue de bois* categories (hence the *wooden mirror* metaphor in the title). It is a hegemonic ideological discourse, sizing the entire society and in this totalizing meaning, which imposes itself as a unique rational standard of any communication, thus being also a discourse with indoctrinating effect.

Approaching scientific paradigmatic discourse in *Thomas Kuhn on revolution and paradigm in the philosophy of science* (2014), volume that I co-edited, I investigated the concept of paradigm in Kuhnian thought, analysing and emphasizing the importance of the concept in the perspective of contemporary philosophy, indicating also the capitalization of this concept in the works of important contemporary philosophers.

The preoccupation with pragmatism led toward a more profound understanding of the deeper changes of paradigm brought by pragmatism and neopragmatism in contemporary philosophy in a significant variety of subdomains – a true “neopragmatic enlightenment”. We can

notice, analysing contemporary philosophy from the perspective of its grand themes, the fact that an important vein of up-to-date philosophical and theoretical thought is pragmatist and neopragmatist. Capitalizing upon this theoretical vein I was captivated by the idea of the resources of representation, in antithesis with the extremely frequented philosophical theme of the crisis of representation, in my latest book *Symbolical forms and representations of the socio-political phenomena* (2017). Thus, through this research, I continued the pragmatic-neopragmatic investigation, placing the accent on contextualism and a certain representationalism based on the signifying power of the symbolic forms (capitalizing upon the theoretical direction set by the works of Ernst Cassirer, Mircea Eliade, S. Moscovici and others), a force interpreted also as an ordering force within human thought and existence. Analysing in this work the symbol as a “condensed” form of knowledge, meaning and emotion, as a special case of paradigm of difference, I show that it plays multiple functions in the human universe: the function of signification and communication, the function of knowledge, the function of conceptual ordering and orientation, the cultural function, the artistic function, the rhetorical function, political and manipulating functions. The need for symbolization and the need for order both result from a common human imaginary related to the nostalgia of the golden age and to its symbolical, mythical and philosophical derivatives interweaved, for instance, in the Platonic philosophy of the ideal forms. The work studies a multitude of symbolic forms and theoretical representations, as well as representations found in culture, society and virtual spaces, verifying in each of these perspectives the multiple (theoretical-speculative or daily) importance of the symbolical forms and of the representations sustained by these, for the understanding of the symbolical nature of the profound basis (*grund*) of the humane, of human universe.

All these scientific publications (results) are not to be considered merely significant contributions to the understanding of the manner in which pragmatic and neopragmatic themes ground the thought of numerous contemporary philosophers. These are not solely a chain of “conceptual archeologies” (on themes associated to the inter-connections between philosophy of knowledge and philosophy of language and communication, to “paradigms of difference”, to the theme of marginality and secondary, to the paradigmatic character of ideology, philosophy of representations and philosophy of image, social epistemology). The results of my research conducted after my PhD, represent especially openings towards multiplex areas from neopragmatic philosophy and philosophy of science (as are the new directions of study

approached in relation to the topic of the incommensurability of the paradigmatic example, to the theme of the legitimacy of science and social epistemology) all indicating future avenues of research.

In perspective, I consider interesting the conceptual and thematic investigation of the continuities and of the discontinuities between pragmatism and neopragmatism. Within this context, I plan to continue with the investigation of the conceptual connections among the linguistic, pragmatic, social and ethical-political turns.

On the direction of the pragmatic investigation of knowledge I shall develop in the future studies of social epistemology and within this theoretical framework, especially, the theme of “communicable knowledge”, deepen within a pragmatic approach nuanced within a conceptual architecture involving concepts proposed by Romanian thinkers (for instance, “revelatory” metaphors at Lucian Blaga, in a comparative perspective to the “living metaphor” at Paul Ricoeur, including aspects referring to metaphor in science at Alexandru Surdu, the “pragmatic turn” at Alexandru Boboc, “reasoning as an act of significance” at Dan Bădărău, the correlation between personalism and pragmatism in the paradigm of “energetic personalism” at Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, as well as a series of new correlations between “purpose” and “utterance” at Contantin Noica), next to the investigations of modern and contemporary international authors concerning the “sociality of knowledge” (Rorty, Putnam, Kuhn, Polanyi, Popper, Fuller etc.).

For the continuation of the research realized so far, the scientific projects that I envision in the future target research capitalizing the pragmatic-neopragmatic correlations among the philosophy of language, philosophy of communication and philosophy of science.

In this respect, the ideas investigated in the published articles and in the communications presented at the national symposia dedicated to Lucian Blaga, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru și Contantin Noica (organized by the Institute of Philosophy and Psychology „Constantin Rădulescu-Motru” of the Romanian Academy) represent a significant basis. At the same time, the results of future research will sustain new lectures, speeches, studies and authored volumes.