

## Reading the self and the other

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The problem of reading reduced to the appeal for *reading thyself!* is not an actual reduction, but the openness of the meaning surrounding the reading problem itself. Not using *read thyself* (as it appears so frequently in this journal), but *read one's self* proclaims this reader's (my own) point of view to be a distant, rather general regard on the things to be discussed here. In a few words, the title intends to be a way of understanding the principle of the hermeneutical circle in a radical manner.

*The International Yearbook for Hermeneutics / Internationales Jahrbuch für Hermeneutik* has been published annually since the year 2002, under the watchful care of the German philosopher Günter Figal, who is currently professor at the Albert-Ludwig University of Freiburg. The topics addressed so far in this publication list as follows: the problem of language; humanism; the understanding of art; Plato and hermeneutics; the hermeneutics of religions; literary hermeneutics, historical hermeneutics and hermeneutics of art; word and writing; hermeneutics and phenomenology; an anniversary number – 50 years since the first publication of

*Wahrheit und Methode*; hermeneutics in the ancient times; the problem of reading; philosophy as literature.

The volume 12/2013 refers to the problem of reading and is divided into two sections, the first entitled *Lesen (Reading)*, the second *Beiträge (Contributions)* which includes no less than fifteen very interesting articles. The contributors to this volume are: Heike Gfrereis, Bernhard Zimmermann, John Sallis, Luca Crescenzi, Ben Vedder, Dennis J. Schmidt, Daniela Vallega-Neu, Gert-Jan van der Heiden, Nicholas Davey, David Espinet, Andrea Kern, Alexander Schnell, Enrique V. Muñoz Pérez, Csaba Olay, and Eberhard Geisler.

The underlying variations on the same topic – i.e. the reading problem – interfere to the point where it is difficult to group them. Read in order, the articles seem to take away from each other, operating as stand-alone analyses. However, taken as a whole, then grouped by their common assertions, they seem to become communicating vessels, which urges us to read them following a logical order, customized, this approach bringing with it the need for re-reading them in parallel.

Since the volume focuses on the problem of reading, I choose to appeal in this presentation to the following type of reading: firstly I identify some conclusions arising from the hypotheses considered by the authors, and secondly I try to identify the ideas that bind the current volume, those ideas that make reference to what occurs beyond it, a kind of *Ausgangspunkt*, a starting point, an *incipitus* of the reading as interpretation.

The article written by David Espinet – *Read thyself! Hobbes, Kant, und Husserl über die Grenzen der Selbsterfahrung* lies within a discourse related to phenomenological hermeneutics, but also makes a common core with a series of articles that fall within the topic of *sich lesen*, that we will recall later. Also the article by Luca Crescenzi (one of the two authors that are to collaborate for the editing of this volume, the second being John Sallis) – *Sich wandelnde Wahrheit und selbstkritisches Lesen. Nietzsche Variationen* – falls as well into this area of how to read someone else's writings as if those were your own (*sich selbst wiederlesen* – to re-read; *sich kritisch mit sich selbst auseinandersetzen* – self

criticism as the deal with oneself). The focus on *the problem of reading* is part of a special kind of analysis that is not limited only to the nature of a text and the ways the reader is exposed to the text, on the contrary, it leads to a radical hermeneutics of reading, which occurs unexpectedly (see Daniela Vallega-Neu, *At the limit of word and thought. Reading Heidegger's Das Ereignis*, 77-92). We can say that the element of surprise of a writing is the reading itself, that is always a miracle, a revelation, a crucial meeting. Reading stands always under the auspices of an unrepeatable time, it is the *momentum*.

In the article mentioned above, Heidegger's analysis over the ratio *thought - po(i)etical language* (from *Das Ereignis*) is eloquently presented. We can identify a first common idea on the peculiarity of poetry (the speech being this time brought in the area of literary hermeneutics and in that of the philosophical critique of art). This issue will be reinstated later, within the last article, *Hölderlin und die Gabe* by Eberhard Geisler, from a new perspective of understanding, one that doesn't see Heidegger as a main actor, but instead as an interpreter of Hölderlin's writings. Further, Eberhard Geisler will combine Heidegger's and Adorno's interpretations of Hölderlin's writings with the vision of the relationship between *giving* and *receiving* as it appears in the gift economy of Derrida. It is full of interest, within the volume considered, to see in which way the same passage or the same author cited in various ways and under various pretexts meet within the same interpretative frame. It can represent for the reader an excellent opportunity to see within a literary or a philosophical text, not the finality, but the novelty and its availability for being perpetual actualisation of certain new possibilities of understanding: it will be read differently, in a new key, depending on other time and history, as Hölderlin himself said in one of his correspondences. For Hölderlin himself, poetry is a form of intoxication, a divine language through which the truth really shines. In *Andenken*, the poet is the one who gives the measure of what is eternal, and universal.

The second common idea is that of *sich lesen*, the stake being here, from the perspective of the philosophy of language, the postulate which underlies the entire history of writing: from

the stoical logos to the authenticity of Dasein, passing through the modern subjectivity, the purpose of the every writer is that of being read, and this is an universal truth. As Heike Gfrereis says, within the first article of this volume (*Nicht-Lesen. Die Entzauberung einer alter Vorstellung*, 1-12), every literary work has in its core the interaction between its own structure and that of its receptor. The understanding of oneself is now formulated as the interpretation of a written text that begins with a prefiguration of what is going to be read; in other words, *das Lesen* is revealed here as the intention to foresee that signification-event which has not yet occurred. If writing is to obey a set of rules that define language, specific structures such as morphology or syntax, speaking and reading implies a much more freedom, a way of preparing for hearing not only the voice of the other, but also our own voice. Naturally, *sich lesen* is always done by looking at the intentionality of someone else, but this someone else can be the language itself (as Derrida says). Writing is a first form of access to my own self, granted by an external action; this is the easiest form of externalization, except the speech of course, but we must also take into account that writing offers the opportunity to analyse his/her own consciousness. If talking with someone always involves a double censorship, writing remains a genuine form of access to oneself. In *Doubly slow reading*, by John Sallis, *sich lesen* is defined in respect to Nietzsche, whose preface to *Morgenröthe*, published five years after the publication of the book, is presented as a significant event not only for the writing, but for the author itself. After reading the preface, it's obvious that it is not the same thing to simply read Nietzsche and to read Nietzsche after reading Nietzsche read by himself. This point could be seen as a general strategy for understanding the entire art of reading. The volume opens a reflection upon the experience of reading as the most familiar and most foreign thing possible, the close-distant, comprising the thinking and the unthinking and even the doubtful (*das Bedenklichste*). However, in our modern times, finding a common ground where the problem of reading can be announced as a problem of understanding is no longer enough, because reading presupposes the displacement of the reader, who is simultaneously here and there: here where

reading begins and there, where understanding takes place. This calls for a radical experience of reading that has to encompass the truth, the self and the distance from oneself to another (the being, the language).

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