

On the Border of Text and Experience
– About Adrian Marino’s Hermeneutics –

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Abstract

The study deals with Adrian Marino’s scientific activity developed in the domain of hermeneutics in the 1970s and considered to be trailblazing in the Romanian culture under the intellectual circumstances of that age. The paper is based on Marino’s works written about Mircea Eliade’s hermeneutics and about literary hermeneutics. It focuses on two main aspects of this hermeneutical achievement. On one hand it tries to investigate critically whether Marino’s basic hypothesis can be verified. This hypothesis stated that, in Mircea Eliade’s works written in the domains of history of religions, anthropology of religion, phenomenology of religion – works which explore the historical forms, cultural configurations and semantic contents of the universal religious mythology and symbol system – one can in fact discern the outlines of a universal hermeneutical conception that may be compared with Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. On the other hand our study makes an attempt to show all the deficiencies and limits of Marino’s hermeneutical view which arose from his structuralist view and his epistemological-methodological approach. Having compared the essential points of the problems investigated by Marino with Eliade’s statements as well as with Gadamer’s and Ricoeur’s relevant ideas, the present study concludes that Marino’s characteristic misunderstandings related to the hermeneutical conception arose exactly from the hermeneutical situation which served as a medium for his investigations and, in fact, these misunderstandings have proved to be hermeneutically fertile.

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The necessity of hermeneutics

Adrian Marino dealt with the questions of hermeneutics in two comprehensive, monographic studies in the first half of the 1980s. His book entitled *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade* (Mircea Eliade's Hermeneutics) published in 1980 was followed by another work, *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură* (The Hermeneutics of the Idea of Literature) in 1987.¹ By writing these two works and the preliminary studies connected to them, the author undertook an attempt of great importance: to introduce a hermeneutical view to the Romanian literary theory, more widely to the Romanian intellectual culture.

Marino considered – in agreement with Constantin Noica's remarks and reflections – that in Mircea Eliade's works in the history of religions and the anthropology of religion an intellectual tradition different from the prevailing epistemological view of modernity had been revived: the *hermeneutical* tradition, which on the whole was not alien from the heritage and mentality of Romanian culture. Thus, to investigate Eliade's hermeneutical achievement in the intellectual horizon of the Romanian culture does not imply an outward attitude. It means to position oneself into a *hermeneutical situation* where significations may occur during a unified process in the horizons of religious historical investigations such as Eliade's and of the "Romanian hermeneutical tradition", mutually open to one other.²

This conception fitted in the leading Romanian intellectuals' emancipatory effort, which became a programme in the second half of the 19th century and strengthened anew in the critical periods of the 20th century: the effort to put an end to the provinciality of Romanian culture

¹ Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia Publishing House, 1980; French translation: Paris, Gallimard, 1981; Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia Publishing House, 1987.

² Alluding to Hans-Georg Gadamer's basic idea according to which "during the process of comprehension a true fusion of horizons takes place" [cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Igazság és módszer. Egy filozófiai hermeneutika vázlata* (Truth and Method. The Outline of a Philosophical Hermeneutics), Budapest, Gondolat, 1984, p. 217.], Marino quoted one of Constantin Noica's diary notes referring to the fact that in the Romanian intellectual tradition instead of speaking *about* Eliade's hermeneutics "one can rather speak *from inside* Eliade's hermeneutics" („a vorbi *întru* hermeneutica lui Eliade" – cf. Jurnal de idei (The Diary of Ideas) (VII). *Cronica*, 1978/29). He referred to an intellectual similarity and correspondence in which the hermeneutical act comes to life so to say naturally. Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade*, pp. 18–19.

and to connect this to the universal intellectual circuit. For Marino, this endeavour was connected with the attempt to rethink the theoretical horizons and methodological bases of literary critical thinking.¹ He thought that in order to offset positivism a new method of textual analysis, criticism and interpretation was needed. The reconstruction of Mircea Eliade's hermeneutics was a suitable new theoretical background for the realization of this programme, since it could be considered as a "second" Romanian "critical system" in the "deprovincialization" process of the Romanian critical thinking and culture. This reconstruction could establish a "Romanian hermeneutical tradition".² According to Marino this was possible because Eliade's researches in the history of religions laid the foundations of an organized and systematic interpretative reflection which – since every hermeneutical pursuit is an open process – also integrated the most important previous hermeneutical achievements. Several constituents of Eliade's hermeneutical results achieved in the domain of the religious history and connected with the interpretation of myths and symbols seemed to verify this idea: Eliade's hermeneutical investigations were based on texts, they approached texts by means of texts, which were separated and could be interpreted according to strict rules and schemes; his interpretations, based on the interplay of the part and the whole, were open to the perspective of totality; in the course of his investigation he did not speak *about* something, but – with Noica's words – he spoke *amid* something, that is: he did not objectify the investigated religious phenomena, but positioning himself into and standing in the historical course of the religious experience he explored its inner, organic meaning relations; during his investigations he was all the time conscious of his historicity and he presented historic reality in the act of comprehension where one may experience how significations occur and exist.³

¹ See Adrian Marino's systematic works referring to this: *Introducere în critica literară* (Introduction to Literary Criticism), Bucharest, Tineretului Publishing House, 1968 (in Hungarian: *Bevezetés az irodalomkritikába*, Bucharest, Kriterion Publishing House, 1979); *Critica ideilor literare* (The Critique of Literary Ideas), Cluj-Napoca, Dacia Publishing House, 1974; German translation 1976; French translation 1978.

² Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade*, pp. 20, 21, 22. Later on Marino himself wrote that the main aim of *Mircea Eliade's Hermeneutics* was to enforce, or even discover, revive the hermeneutical tradition in the Romanian culture. Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură*, Preface, p. 5.

³ Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade*, pp. 16, 17.

Marino approached his own achievement too in this hermeneutical context. According to the preface of the *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade* he considered this work a “hermeneutical book” written in the spirit of hermeneutics and using hermeneutical methods, since – in accordance with Eliade’s principles – this book was also based on the analysis and interpretation of texts and it strived continuously to discover the signification of the studied texts and to place these significations in a wider contexts. Thus Marino was right to regard his undertaking as a hermeneutics focusing on Mircea Eliade’s hermeneutics.¹

Adrian Marino’s other great hermeneutical achievement, the work entitled *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură* had a similar approach. It developed a *literary* hermeneutics, a hermeneutical idea of literature. In this book the author completed a rather long investigation process; he discussed in a more detailed manner the problems he had already treated in some introductory and experimental studies published by him in this domain in Romanian, German and English. Marino defined this work as an attempt to think about and describe literature in a new, unusual way; a definite attempt to define and interpret literature – investigated in its complexity and its ramifications – in a new perspective and according to a specific method. This was an attempt to analyze literature thoroughly, to discover all its main and secondary meanings and all the explicit and implicit connections between these significations.² His starting point was that *literature* is *litera*, letter basically and in its essential aspects and that the “literal” interpretation of literature has always been favoured in the cultures with a hermeneutical tradition. This had no equivalent in the approaches to literature to Marino’s knowledge in his time. Because of this, to prescribe to the readers a new reading method which required the re-creation of the literary work during the reading process was not without risks and methodological difficulties. The reader had to learn, to “acquire” the hermeneutics operating in this new method, and he/she could “criticize” only after having acquired this knowledge. For this reason he constructed his conception as a hermeneutics aimed at the hermeneutics of literature. His work was conceived as a monograph with encyclopaedic amplitude. The different parts were studied in relation to the systematic totality of literature in this book. The concise synthesis of the studied material was included in a hermeneutical *continuum* which appeared as an open process progressing towards the more and more

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 9.

² Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură*, Preface, p. 5.

perfect, deep and comprehensive understanding of literature. This was based on the new source interpreting method and on the cohesion of the argumentation.¹

Why did Marino consider all these important in the intellectual and cultural context of his researches? In this case also, as in his investigations referring to Eliade's hermeneutics, Marino took into consideration that the hermeneutical approach occurred in a culture with "European" and "universal" bases and coordinates, in which, however, this kind of approach was somewhat unusual and several points of support were required for its consolidation. The *lack* of the hermeneutical tradition was associated on the one hand with the indifference shown towards it, on the other hand with the aversion to it manifested on the level of a publicity lacking absorption in study and serious counter-arguments. Marino, however, firmly believed in the possibility of an "original" Romanian literary hermeneutics. This was not some typically utopian plan, but the inner organic system of requirements of the literary culture which suggested that it could not be renewed and it could not develop without the ideas, principles, basic investigations and special solutions appertaining to the new approach and without the radical deprovincialization involved by these.²

The application of hermeneutics

The study of religious symbols and myths, as well as the critical investigation of literary phenomena meant for Marino both the realization of the hermeneutical process and – through the exploration of the phenomena's hermeneutical nature – the possibility to create and develop his own hermeneutical conception. It is important that studying Eliade's works in religious anthropology and history Marino noticed and demonstrated the latent hermeneutics inherent in Eliade's texts which permeated his conception. But it is similarly important that a specific interpretation of hermeneutics, characteristic to Marino, operated in this investigation. It is quite an interesting question: what did Marino mean by hermeneutics and how did he interpret this while he was making efforts to introduce a hermeneutical tradition to the Romanian culture? In Marino's case too, the essence of the hermeneutical pursuit was justified by the fact that his own conception of hermeneutics took shape while he was outlining Eliade's hermeneutics.

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 6, 7.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 7–8, 8.

Marino revealed many features in Eliade's oeuvre which seemed to justify the statement according to which Mircea Eliade and Constantin Noica were "the first Romanian hermeneutists".¹ According to him, Eliade had discovered a series of hermeneutical processes during his investigations, which had been formulated theoretically by Gadamer and Ricoeur parallel to him. Naturally, he acknowledged that Eliade did not strive to elaborate a philosophical conception of hermeneutics. He rather developed his hermeneutics on the grounds of "empiricism", by means of hermeneutical intuition and reflection related to the investigation of empiric phenomena and in the course of direct and authentic communication with the "texts". He took for a starting point the texts written in different cultures and historical periods and, through them, the direct encounter with the essential hermeneutical situation: the necessity to explain and interpret texts. This kind of approach made Eliade's hermeneutics devoid of speculations, concrete, technical, almost "philological". Thus the hermeneutics practiced by Eliade was connected to the Schleiermacherian tradition, but actually it encompassed all the hermeneutical processes from the interpretation of biblical texts to the universal mythological exegesis.²

According to Marino, in Mircea Eliade's work we can discover a hermeneutics being in the process of formation, constructed *in actu* as the progressing process of textual exegesis. This remark was associated with an observation differing from the traditional ideal of method and referring to "a non methodical" approach. According to this Eliade's hermeneutics was guided neither by dogmatic principles, nor by methodological preconceptions. Instead it was characterized by the *work in progress* "method"; it followed the methodological principles elaborated in interaction with the occurring problems. These principles went hand in hand with the problems and they were continuously specified, completed and actualized. Marino pointed out that through this spontaneous, "empirical" hermeneutics the inner structural organization and the ontologically well-founded character of the hermeneutical process were also really revealed.³

We find the same ideas about the central role of the texts and about the lack of method in Marino's works discussing the literary hermeneutics. He believed that literary hermeneutics was a specific hermeneutics applied to literature. Hermeneutics, from this point of view,

¹ Cf. *ibid.*

² Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade*, pp. 25, 26.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 26, 28.

remained the theory, method and practice of the “correct” interpretation of texts, mainly literary texts. The *primariness of the text* conferred a solid philological basis for the hermeneutical activity connected with literature; this activity was aimed at the discovery, reading and interpretation of texts; the need of documentation and interpretation was organically connected with the texts. Because of this – according to Marino – literary hermeneutics was often mistaken for “philology” and “textual commentary”. However, in this case no pre-defined methodological rules were applied, but rather an inner method operated. As the final outcome of this inner method it was demonstrated how literature in the totality of its textual formulations analyzed and interpreted itself.¹

Marino’s view on hermeneutics

Having said all these we can now ask the question: what did Marino mean by hermeneutics? What kind of hermeneutical conception can be reconstructed in Marino’s case if he outlined the hermeneutics of religion and literature in this way?

Following Marino’s hermeneutical investigation we observe that he used the term “hermeneutics” in a double sense and this carried a conceptual duality too. On the one hand he meant by this term an intellectual attitude which basically differed from the epistemological pursuits of the cognitional tradition characteristic to modernity both in what regards its theoretical horizon and its methodological basis. On the other hand he meant by hermeneutics the interpretative-cognitional practice in which the semantic contents and meaning relations of religious symbols and myths, respectively of literary works of art were truly revealed. Therefore Marino considered hermeneutics to be that insight and investigation in the process of which he explored the hermeneutical content of the researches in the history and anthropology of religion such as Eliade’s, respectively the hermeneutical content of the philological and interpretative activities performed on literary texts. But the practical process which was explored – namely Eliade’s interpretative investigation of the sacred symbols and myths, respectively the readers’ reception of literary texts – was also considered to be hermeneutics.

It is not difficult to recognize in these two directions of activity the duality inherent in the hermeneutical tradition which characterized the entire history of hermeneutics previous to the apparition of philosophical

¹ Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură*, pp. 11, 12.

hermeneutics: on the one hand hermeneutics was the *system of rules* on which the interpretation of texts was based, it was the methodology of interpretation; on the other hand it was the practice of text interpretation, the *exegesis*. This duality was present in Marino's conception of hermeneutics when he considered that hermeneutics on the one hand is the "art", the "method", the "science" of deciphering the religious or any kind of significations; on the other hand it was an exegesis aimed at everything from the texts and symbols of a concrete, particular religion to a universal mythology including the culture of each people and each historical period.¹

However, the duality referred to produced a difference too, in which the characteristics of Marino's conception of hermeneutics were really revealed. In Eliade's case the methodological component was included in the empirical plane of the exegesis and it was formed according to the current inner conditions and necessities of the interpretative process. In Marino's case – regarding Eliade's hermeneutics and later on literary hermeneutics – this methodological component took the shape of an independently organized and theoretically elaborated system, detached from the interpretative practice. In other words: hermeneutics was *re-epistemologized* on a theoretical level by Marino, it assumed once again the features which the practical hermeneutical process tended to supersede. Thus the "hermeneutics" of hermeneutics actually was the epistemological attitude – elaborated in detail and systematized, trying to bring a new approach – towards that living hermeneutical process which had been discovered by Eliade during his investigations, respectively which took place while the reader-receiver interpreted literary texts. This was not changed by Marino's unique realization that the idea of a "universal hermeneutics", related to

¹ Marino emphasized two main directions in Eliade's hermeneutics: 1. hermeneutics as the creation and tradition of the signification of sacred texts, the investigation trying to reveal the signification of the ultimate reality determined by these texts; 2. the investigation method of these significations, the methodological efforts made in order to present the religious values of the different historical ages. Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade*, p. 30. The first definition connected Eliade's hermeneutical investigations to the hermeneutical tradition of the exegesis of sacred texts which survived in the biblical hermeneutics. The second extended these investigations towards a methodological direction, (re)incorporating hermeneutics in the epistemological paradigm.

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, had taken shape in Eliade's religious historical and anthropological investigations.¹

Eliade's hermeneutics

Let us examine which were those components and characteristics in Eliade's investigations in religious history, phenomenology and anthropology due to which Marino – based on Eliade's several allusions regarding this matter – thought of and investigated this intellectual achievement as a hermeneutics operating on an empirical level.

According to Eliade's basic idea, man is a *homo semnificans*, a being who fills the world he lives in with significations. The lack of significations is an anti-human state. Man's basic way of existence is to subsist in world full of significations. This has already appeared on the level of the archaic consciousness. Significations arose as if "spontaneously" in the primitive consciousness. They neither sprang from the "physical" world nor had a "genetic" origin; they were the organic "creations" of the mind, the products of the language. Consciousness conferred original and organic significations to the phenomena. The human mind cannot function without creating and discovering significations. Man settles and becomes aware of his place in the cosmos on the level of primary reflection and contemplation through these phenomena. From this perspective the whole intellectual life of humanity is a comprehensive depot of significations, a global hermeneutical storehouse.²

The significations are concentrated into signs and symbols and the mythologies formed by these. The world is revealed as a language, the living process of meaning formation, a cosmos carrying complexly articulated significations. The mythological and symbolic language preceded language as a means of expression and communication. Its signs carry original significations which have a magical, prophetic or metaphysical signification. Each encounter with them is *anamnesis*-like,

¹ Marino emphasized that it is a wrong statement that Eliade's hermeneutics dealt only with myths and symbols. Actually, it carried the premises of a philosophical hermeneutics. Eliade himself pointed out – Marino wrote – that he was always interested in the elaboration of a universal "hermeneutical method" and not of a personal philosophical anthropology. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 31, 31–32.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 43, 46, 48.

a recollection of the original signification and a recalling of it from the depth of memory.¹

The original signification is necessarily hidden because it refers to existence as the transcendent ultimate truth encompassing and sustaining all that exists. It transmits deep, hermetical truths related to existence. Because of this the archaic mentality connected with the original significations was mysterious, enigmatic; every disclosure related to them required an initiation. Hermeneutics is in fact the extension, the consequence of this attitude. To bring to the surface the original signification referring to the "absolute reality" is possible only by getting in touch with the sacred.² In this respect hermeneutics is actually the inherent and spontaneous creation of the mind.³

Eliade considered that this primeval spiritual state an *archaic ontology* was concealed in the semantic contents of the documents of cultural and religious ethnography which informed us about and that it revealed itself in the course of the meaning disclosing investigation. The "secrets" inherent in these semantic contents require exploration, deciphering, consequently a *hermeneutics* in the case of the modern man too. This can be elaborated as an interpretative investigation which confronts us with the original significations forgotten, neglected, deformed in the modern age, therefore requiring interpretation. The hermeneutics constructed in this way can be practiced as a *humanist* discipline whose source and basis is the existential ontology rooted in the archaic unity of the transcendental and the experimental, the sacred and the profane, and which refers human existence to the ultimate reality.⁴

The difference between sense and signification

Taking Eliade's hermeneutics as a starting point Marino considered that the sign and the semantic content of the text were organized on two levels in the hermeneutical process. This was suggested by the differentiation between the terms "sense" (*sens*) and "signification" (*semnificație*). *Sense* is the general aim of a text, its basic, essential, comprehensive semantic content. *Signification* is some possible "connotation", "semantic" interpretation of the essential sense.⁵ Marino thought that this idea was analogous with the differentiation between

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 44.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 39, 40.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 45, 48.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 38.

sense and signification introduced by Paul Ricoeur: the sense of the text is formed by its "inner relations and structure", the signification is the text's "realization in the reading person's own speech". The text has a semiological dimension through its sense and it acquires semantic dimensions through its signification.¹

Though Marino tried to approach his ideas on Eliade's hermeneutics to Ricoeur's conception of hermeneutics, this analogy turned out to be in fact only apparent. Marino's definition of sense combined the two "meanings" of sense almost unobserved: the conception of the *direction* sense and *substantial* sense. We approach the meaningful text on the basis of one of these two sense-conceptions. In the two cases we regard the text either as an achievement which opens, positions the interpretative process in the direction of certain significations or as a creation with a particular semantic content. In Marino's view – it seems – signification was related to the latter sense-conception and it can be defined on this basis as possible "connotations" of some sole deep sense unravelling during an external interpretative process. Sense is deep, internal, unique and unchanged; signification is superficial, external, divers and varied.

On the other hand in Ricoeur's work the sense of the text was the *direction* opened and carried by the text. The intention of the text (and this is not equivalent with the author's intention) operates and the text communicates something in this direction. The text, which became independent of the author and the reader in the sense, is at its own self, which means that sense is the selfhood of the text. The sense is carried by the deep semantics manifesting itself during the *structural analysis*. On the other hand, signification is the *actuality* of the text created in reading, the realization of the text as a text in the relationship with its environment and its audience – as a text which is itself and the reader's "own speech" at the same time.²

¹ Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Mi a szöveg?* (What Is the Text?), in: *Idem, Válogatott irodalomelméleti tanulmányok* (Selected Studies in Theory of Literature), Budapest, Osiris Publishing House, 1999, p. 27.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 28, 29. Marino's idea about the relationship between sense and signification contained another contradiction rather difficult to solve, the problematic relationship between the permanence and changeability of the signification: on the one hand the signification of the text is identical with the text itself and repeatable, on the other hand it changes in the course of its representations. Regarding this we may refer to E. D. Hirsch's point of view to which Marino too made some references. Hirsch's viewpoint is an intermediary

between Ricoeur's and Marino's view, the latter being a simplified, schematized version of the former. (Hirsch, differently from Ricoeur, focused on the author instead of the text.) According to Hirsch's statement, the word "signification" has two distinct meanings: "There is a difference between the signification of the text (which does not change) and the present day signification of the text (which changes). The signification of the text is that which the author wanted to signify by using certain linguistic symbols. Having a linguistic character this signification is collective, which means that it is identical with itself and it can be reproduced in more than one consciousness. Since it can be reproduced, it is always the same, no matter when and where someone understands it. Nevertheless, each time this signification is constructed its signification for the person who constructs it (its significance) is different." One can notice that for Hirsch "signification" meant sense, while he substituted the denomination signification for "significance". Cf. E. D. Hirsch: *Gadamer értelmezéelmélete* (Gadamer's Interpretation Theory), in: Tibor Fabiny (ed.), *A hermeneutika elmélete. Második rész* (The Theory of Hermeneutics. Second part), *Ikönológia és műértelmezés 3* (Iconology and Interpretation 3.), Szeged, 1987, p. 395. However, the concept "significance" introduced by Hirsch also contained a semantic component which went beyond the accepted semantic meaning of "signification": he mentioned *significance* as "the significance of signification referring to the present situation". Cf. *ibid.* In another study he explained the reference to the "present situation" by the "explanation of the signification", the "ars explicandi", namely the actual sense of the exegesis. This contained, besides that which the exegetes of the Bible called *interpretation* – What does the given text *signify?* –, also that which we traditionally know by the name of *application*, which is *significance*: What is the use or value of the text in question, what is its signification that can be *applied* to our particular situation? The sole signification, the *interpretation* whose aim is to explore the sense of the text, to *understand* its signification forms at the same time the necessary basis "for the infinite number of tasks of the *application*". Cf. E. D. Hirsch: *Régi és új hermeneutikában* (Old and New in Hermeneutics), in: *A hermeneutika elmélete. Második rész* (The Theory of Hermeneutics. Second part), p. 433. Therefore Hirsch referred here to the roots of the organic connection between interpretation and application inherent in the exegetical practice. Such a unity of interpretation and application is a natural concomitant of the Eliade-like hermeneutics conceived as a universal mythological exegesis. However, the entire problem of application unfortunately was left out from Marino's reconstruction of Eliade's hermeneutics, though the basic principle of the Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics formulating the unity of interpretation–comprehension–application drew the attention to this question and Marino himself referred to this principle on several occasions from another direction. Marino operated with a semantically contextualized unity of interpretation and comprehension which prevented Eliade's hermeneutics from going beyond the limits of the text and description.

The terminological difference between sense and signification pointed out by Ricoeur is essential. Signification is not identical with the modus(es) of the sense as Marino's formulation suggested. In fact the text has a sense as regarded in itself, while the text actualized in the reader's speech carries significations. It is a further question how the significations are connected to the sense of the text, this being the question of *interpretation*.

The problem of interpretation

With reference to the problem of interpretation Marino tried to answer two interrelated questions.

As regards the problem of signification the "hermeneutics" conceivable as interpretation seems to be inexhaustible. In different interpretative contexts the same sense manifests itself as the multitude of simultaneous, interrelated significations open to further interpretations. Under these circumstances the question occurs: on what is the certainty of interpretation based?

Moreover, Marino thought that the real task of interpretation was not to associate to the sense different significations, but to trace the multitude of significations back to an obvious or hidden, but anyway "true", "primary", "original" sense. How can the interpretation establish a connection between the multitude of significations and the unity of sense?

These questions actually carry hidden premises.

The first one – the *ontological postulate* of interpretation – presented itself to Marino's idea of interpretation directly from Eliade's hermeneutics: each signification carries the absolute certainty of a basic, unalterable revelation. The hermeneutical interpretation restores, recreates and displays this ultimate reality which is the ontological basis of the signification each time; the certainty of interpretation originates from the display of this reality.¹ Interpretation is not simply the acquisition of signification, but the display and reconstruction of the reality revealed in the signification; it is a process progressing from the signification to the reality forming its basis.

The second question – the *hermeneutical postulate* of interpretation – is related to the nature of *comprehension* as seen by Marino inspired by Eliade's view in this too.

¹ Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade*, p. 52.

Marino could not detach himself from the epistemological-methodological habits connected with the notions and practice of cognition even while problematizing comprehension. He regarded comprehension in general hermeneutical terms as the ultimate object of interpretation. He thought that we reveal and interpret significations in order to "understand" them. According to this, comprehension is the ultimate and main aim of the hermeneutical act, the termination of the interpretative process.¹ But in fact the process of comprehension takes place in the course of the interpretation; its internal semantic content is unravelled, brought to light in the multitude and variety of significations. Interpretation does not lead to comprehension by a logical, discursive way; instead comprehension develops and happens in its fullness during the interpretation. Marino himself admitted this unity of interpretation and comprehension which interpenetrate and complete one another. He referred to Gadamer's and Ricoeur's idea of comprehension in order to support this.² But it is problematical how Marino saw the way in which the unity of interpretation and comprehension can be realized.

The problem of comprehension

Marino – despite his references to philosophical hermeneutics – *regressed* compared to the philosophical hermeneutical conception of comprehension when he accepted the classical idea according to which hermeneutics is the artistic doctrine of understanding texts. This regression can be explained by the fact that in Eliade's case the question of comprehension occurred as the particular problem of understanding religious phenomena. Thus the problem of comprehension became for Marino – based on Eliade – the question of discovering the implicit and explicit semantic contents of the texts (documenting religious manifestations).³ Because of this comprehension seemed to be conceivable from the direction of its connections with the *cognitive process*. Marino realized as well that cognition in itself did not necessarily mean comprehension. The structure of comprehension was

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 53.

² Gadamer: "The concept of comprehension [...] is not a concept of method..."; "Comprehension is an existential characteristic of human life itself"; hermeneutics is not the doctrine of "the art of comprehension"; "...comprehension and interpretation are one and the same thing after all"; "Interpretation is the executive form of comprehension". Cf. H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, pp. 188, 190, 272.

³ Cf. Adrian Marino, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

nearer to intuition and revelation.¹ According to this realization, it was necessary – in order to clarify the notion of comprehension – to move from the direction of the cognitive process towards the *process of living*. The semantic content of the religious text carries the *revelation* of the ultimate reality. The comprehension of the text's signification means on a basic level to apprehend, experience and explore this revelation *intuitively*. In this basic sense comprehension is *existential* comprehension, by its means man finds his essential place in the cosmos, the everlasting existential and sense unity between man and cosmos is restored.²

The conception of comprehension outlined as the connection between revelation and intuition naturally offered the possibility for Marino to situate the problem of comprehension into a perspective opened by the Heideggerian-Gadamerian existential ontology. According to this, comprehension is the way of existence of the *Dasein*. Comprehension means for man to exist in a basic, essential way.³ But this momentary approach towards the philosophical hermeneutics was combined with a more important regress in Marino's works. Since Marino – based on Eliade – thought with reference to the relationship between comprehension and existence that an existential life-relation is established with the object of understanding in the comprehension process and this always requires a certain degree of "feeling", "subjective" approach and "participation".⁴ The comprehension of a religious text's semantic content is based on some kind of existential

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 56.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 58, 59.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴ Marino also indicated that the conception of comprehension with an existential basis carries in fact a methodological option, since there were two schools, two opposite trends in contemporaneous history of religion and religious hermeneutics: a) the one – marked by R. Otto's, C. G. Jung's and K. Kerényi's works – returned to the spirit of positivism and subordinated comprehension to causal interpretation; its representatives thought that any causal, scientific interpretation was reductionistic, the interpretative process and the comprehension was concluded by the exhaustion of the problem; therefore comprehension operated as a reductive interpretation; b) the other – to which Eliade's investigations belonged – constructed an ontological, existential interpretative system and not a causal one; its representatives believed that the significations were inexhaustible because of their polyvalence; therefore comprehension could not be finished, it always went on and it could be amplified through extensive interpretation. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 62, 63.

reciprocity. On the one hand the interpreter has to place himself into the religious man's spiritual position of existence, into his dispositions which generate significations; he has to participate in these. On the other hand he has to transmit these semantic contents in the spirit of "congeniality", to receive them into the intimacy of his particular existential situation, to interiorize and acquire them subjectively.¹ In this terminological context Marino placed back the conception of comprehension – which had an existential basis and opened towards philosophical hermeneutics – into a former stage of the hermeneutical tradition, the context of Schleiermacher's and Dilthey's terminology. He placed it against a psychological and philosophical background based on the ideas of "congeniality" and identification-experiencing-acquiring-(re)creation. That Marino tried to outline the essence of comprehension through the semantic content of the Latin term *comprehendere* and the importance he attributed to *intention* in the act of understanding seems to prove this.²

The relation between interpretation and comprehension

The comprehension idea based on the revelation-intuition relationship also shows how Marino thought that the unity of comprehension and interpretation can be realized. Referring to Schleiermacher, Gadamer and Ricoeur, Marino believed that hermeneutics achieves its aim if the internal, deep, often hidden sense of texts and actions is discovered in the content of significations.³ This

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 63, 64, 65.

² The term *comprehendere* expresses that comprehension is the interiorization of the sense; to understand a text means to draw it into your way of existence (*comprehend*), to make it the part of your own world. "In order to understand this [other] world interiorly we have to live it anew." Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 65, 66. Marino indicated that the original meaning of *comprehendere* was close to the English verb *to realize*: to realize, to apprehend, to form a notion about it, to acquire it intellectually, which implies the re-discovery of the problem, its personal re-creation. This process is an intellectual and a sympathetic, a rational and an existential connection at the same time. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 67. Moreover, the act of comprehension requires the exploration of the original senses and *intentions*, the exploration of significations *in statu nascendi*. The original authorial "intention" or the intention of the text is primary, determinant in what we realize, re-create in our own world. The aim of comprehension is: to understand the author better than he understood himself. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 69, 70, 71. This latter idea explicitly refers to Schleiermacher's comprehension idea.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 41, 42.

actually means that the intuitive comprehension is unfolded, made explicit. Comprehensive thinking, identifying itself intellectually with the relative content of the intuitively experienced situations, develops interpretatively this content and expresses it in symbolic, cosmological, metaphysical terms. Thus interpretation reorganizes the unstructured, undifferentiated act of intuition into a structured, clear, rational system of sense relations open to intellectual approach and comprehension. Here the interpretation does not establish an external, discursive logical relationship between the sense of the given text or life situation open to the ultimate reality and its revelations created in the multitude of significations, but it discloses the experienced unity of sense and signification(s). It connects the sense with the significations by developing and converting the undifferentiated connexion inherent in the intuitive unity of comprehension into structured sense relations. Therefore interpretation has an existential basis just like comprehension. This also shows that interpretation is not connected with comprehension only externally, but in fact it is the comprehension structured and made explicit in its concepts and content.

While discussing the relationship between interpretation and comprehension, Marino emphasized continually the problem of interpretation. He dealt with the questions related to comprehension too expressly from this direction. This can be explained by the fact that – though he often referred to Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics – he mainly focused on the hermeneutical problem of the text and this was discussed in detail by Ricoeur. Thus he agreed with Ricoeur that hermeneutics is “the science of interpretation” and that “real hermeneutics” is the interpretation applied to a particular text.¹ From this point of view Marino too believed that Ricoeur’s interpretation-hermeneutics was closer to the spirit of Eliade’s hermeneutical investigations than Gadamer’s comprehension-hermeneutics.

The objectivity of interpretation

The way in which Marino discussed all those hermeneutical “categories” for which Eliade’s investigations provided a basis proves the inconsistency of Marino’s hermeneutics conception. He was ever searching for new principles and categories to base his reconstruction of Eliade’s hermeneutics on and he elaborated several methodological premises in order to establish the *objectivity of interpretation*. Because of

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 32.

this he studied a series of methodological terms and tried to force them into the frame of a hermeneutical view by reinterpreting and redefining them. These terms in fact did not originate from the essence of a hermeneutical attitude; they rather extended the methodological horizon of the structuralist, system-centred investigations to the hermeneutical investigations too. The following category pairs are such terms: morphology and typology, system and structure, part and whole, induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis. By explaining these expressions Marino made great efforts to unify the epistemological and hermeneutical approaches. This inevitably led to the epistemologization of hermeneutics which thus became estranged from its own essence. Such hybridization could only be sustained if he permanently represented the essence of the hermeneutical attitude as the carrier of a new methodological ideal. This suggested at the same time that hermeneutical investigations have a dominantly *methodological* character. This suggestion seems to be proved by the fact that Marino developed Eliade's hermeneutics from Eliade's own conception of religious history, phenomenology and anthropology and he did not confront it with a detailed, universalized hermeneutical conception. In this way the characteristics of Eliade's approach inevitably left their mark on Marino's conception of hermeneutics. This is the most obvious in the case of the objectivity of interpretation.

Marino was greatly interested in the issue of the *objectivity of interpretation*. Eliade's basic idea, that the transcendent, the essential, the true and ultimate reality coincides with the primeval, the absolutely primordial, is revealed to the greatest extent. Therefore every interpretative-comprehensive investigation can only achieve its aim effectively, it can only reveal the real sense of the phenomenon, if it succeeds in tracing the sense back to its ultimate basis of reality. This also implies that the present experience, the actual reading of the text is taken to refer to a sacred and archaic past. Marino showed from Eliade's investigations that the hermeneutical effort has a regressive and "maieutic" character, its aim is to adopt, to actualize the archaic attitude. He proved this with propositions taken from Eliade.

According to Eliade, every interpretation starts out from a "centre" and is organized around it. The primeval moment is the fixed, stabile "centre" of comprehension. The phenomena are always revealed in a double form during the interpretative process: on the one hand in their historical multiplicity, on the other hand in their unity with their

primeval source of existence.¹ Eliade thought at the same time that the past can be revealed and acquired only in the coordinates and structures of the present. He perceived the hermeneutical act as mediation between the past and the present. Tradition is the elongation, living continuation of the past in the present. The hermeneutics urged by Eliade is integrated into this tradition. To be the interpreter contemporary of the religious text in this respect means to situate oneself and to be standing continuously in the alternation of the regressive-progressive, anticipative-retrospective perspectives. In this play of perspectives the signification system of the interpreted phenomenon meets and is identified with the interpreter's system elaborated by the interpreter in order to explore and understand this signification system with its help.² The two systems are conformed to one another according to the principles of some kind of "hermeneutical coherence" in their interpretative relationship. This explains to us why Marino thought possible – while reconstructing Eliade's hermeneutics – to reconcile the semiotic and structuralist methodological principles and terminological frames with the hermeneutical investigations.³

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 116, 150, 152.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 130, 144, 148, 149.

³ We are thinking of such statements: *typization* is itself a typically hermeneutical operation; the *model*, the *pattern* suggests that the sense is inscribed in its own archetype; the synchronic character of morphological typologies and classifications requires atemporality; comprehension presupposes a synchronic reading of the interpreted phenomena and not a diachronic one, some kind of "synchronization" – we may add – of the past and the present in the interpretative process. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 80, 81, 82. In this same context we can understand why Marino was so much interested in the problem of the "hermeneutical coherence" which carries some inconsistency of methodology and view. It is problematic how the continuously evolving play of interpretation built of differences and inconsistencies can be reconciled with the demand of logical consistency. But Marino emphasized that the aim of Eliade's hermeneutics was to reveal the basic connections of significations, the structure, namely the coherently structured whole. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 82, 83. The "hermeneutical coherence" here refers to the internal systematic organization of the text, the latent coherence of the structural connections which determine this organization. For the interpretation starts out from the premise that every hierophany presupposes a complex system of statements referring to the ultimate reality and the interpretation has to reveal this system. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 84, 85.

Marino transferred the methodologized structuralist-hermeneutical, epistemological-hermeneutical hybrid view obtained from the reconstruction of Eliade's hermeneutics to the literary hermeneutics too later on. He operated with a literary hermeneutics whose aim was to discover, reveal and interpret the

In this way Marino thought to find a steady basis for the objectivity of the interpretation in the fact that the interpretation aiming at real comprehension reveals and establishes an organic relationship between the multitude of significances created in the semantic dimension of the text and the intellectual centre these significations are based on. At the same time it connects the present of the interpretative process with the primordial reality revealed as referential content in the interpretation. Marino believed that Mircea Eliade's whole hermeneutical work was based on an essential principle: comprehension cannot be achieved without revealing the primordial moment, without the eternal return to the "origin" of the phenomena.¹ It seems that by this Marino supported a methodological demand with an ontological argument: interpretation is objective if it reveals and restores the metaphysical unity characteristic to the archaic man's and the religious modern man's way of existence; the metaphysical unity carried by the semantic content of religious symbols, myths and rites and of the different hierophanies connected to them. In other words, the objectivity of interpretation is guaranteed if the semantic content of the existent religious documents can be matched to a reality they are giving information about.

But in reality this problem is much more complex.

The archaic man

The different religious documents, texts, hierophanies, which can be studied by the historians of religion, if the positivistic epistemological models are laid aside and they are seen in a hermeneutical perspective, prove to be not just some *descriptions* informing us about men's way of living in past ages, or about ancient societies' archaic way of existence. Eliade himself emphasized too on every occasion that the archaic man did not live his life independently of these religious contents. And these were not only settled on him step by

explicit and implicit senses of literary texts in an organized and systematic manner and on a double level, the level of terminology and the level of signification. According to Marino, this hermeneutics can be realized as a self-regulating interpretative system – a kind of *hermeneutical model* –, which ensures the necessary conditions for understanding literature and art in general. This is achieved by combining the principle of the *literal*, close and objective reading of the literary work with the preliminary comprehension, "knowledge" referring to the nature of "literature". Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură*, pp. 13–21.

¹ Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade*. p. 112.

step as a spiritual level in the course of his life, they recurred and were left as a heritage to subsequent ages. Eliade stated explicitly in the introductory lines of his book entitled *The Myth of the Eternal Return* that the archaic metaphysical conceptions did not always receive a theoretical linguistic form, though the semantic content of the different myths, rites and symbols carry a metaphysical system consisting of coherent statements referring to the ultimate reality. The point is that the *metaphysical position* revealed by the semantic content of these documents organically belonged to the archaic man's attitude towards the world and existence. It was materialized and it manifested itself in the most basic, common and profane elements of one's behaviour as *action* even there and then when words had not yet been enough to express it.¹ The archaic man lived in a particular metaphysical interpretation of the world while this world interpretation had always existed in his actions and relationships; it manifested itself spiritually in this natural process of interpretation and existence, it became structured and conscious in the semantic content of linguistic and textual formations. These spiritual formations organically belonged to the archaic man's existential process and to his interpretation of existence as his existential *awareness*. They themselves supported and carried this interpretation of existence, they shaped this attitude towards existence through its sense and thus they were the parts and the participants of the existential happening.

In this context one must ask the question: who was the archaic man, the *homo religiosus*? What kind of image had Eliade about him?

The difference between the archaic and the modern man is not that the former connected his everyday life processes with the primordial existential basis, while the latter does not do this. The difference consists of the fact that the archaic man acted as the carrier and the representative of a different way of existence than the modern man. Amid his uncertain, endangered and accidental circumstances of life he was tormented by a continuous existential thirst, all his actions were marked by his striving to maintain and consolidate his connection with existence, that is with the sacred, the ultimate reality. His rites, myths and symbols not only *inform* us about this, they are rather the organic *participants* and shapers of this way of existence. He succeeded in maintaining continuously and renewing from time to time his connection with existence by their means. In this relationship the archaic man lived his existence in an organic unity

¹ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Mitul eternei reîntoarceri* (The Myth of the Eternal Return), in: Idem, *Eseuri* (Essays), Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1991, p. 13.

with the eternal, the universal, no matter how accidental his existential state was. In contrast with this, the modern man, being thrown into the world and having a relative existential security, lives in a state of forgetfulness of being through which he loses his organic connection with the cosmic existential dimensions of universality and eternity in the particular life situations of his finite, historical way of existence. Religious experiences offer some possibility to the modern religious man to experience the archaic man's way of existence. The basic difference between the archaic and modern man's way of existence consists of the fact that while the archaic man's way of existence carried and represented a metaphysical interpretation of existence, the modern man's way of existence is without metaphysics and thus it is not organized in terms of a unified and comprehensive interpretation of existence.

The metaphysical way of existence

Why was the archaic man's way of existence *metaphysical*? By reading Eliade's texts attentively, one can realize that this was not so because of a substantially ontological grounding. The metaphysical aspect did not lie in the fact that the sacred as ultimate reality, as true existence ensured the firm basis of the everyday existence for the archaic man. The metaphysical aspect was not given by means of the sacred, but it was ensured through the myth and the rite. The archaic man's existence received its metaphysical dimension from the fact that the myth and the rite formed it and not from it being based on the sacred. And the essence of this *form* was that it held the phenomena of the profane, everyday life in organic unity with the sacred, the reality and existence.¹ The metaphysical way of existence in its internal, essential form is not different from the non metaphysical one. This internal form structures this mode of existence in such a manner that the particular experiential moments of life can be experienced in organic unity with the existential dimensions open to universality and eternity. The myth, the rite, the symbol and the hierophany carry this kind of existential formulation; to have a metaphysical way of existence means to be living in the meaning relations of these existential moments which structure and formulate experience.

Let us resume the discussion of the meanwhile suspended issue and let us investigate what the objectivity of interpretation means in this

¹ Eliade often emphasized that the "form" in which some profane, experiential moment became real, sacred, connected with existence was given by the myth or the rite. E.g. cf. *ibid.*, p. 19.

context. What we said above may suggest that it refers by no means to the operation of such a referential relationship as Marino intimated. Namely, objectivity is not achieved by retracing the multiplicity of present significations to the unity of sense of an ancient, primordial existential base. The interpretative process does not mean, even figuratively, a backward movement in time, it does not realize some kind of return to the primordial existential state, and it does not endeavour to restore the archaic unity in the modern man's existential circumstances. The *archaic* is valid and valuable not because it was some kind of perfect state of ancient times past for ever, but because it is the way of existence of the *universal*: the metaphysical way of existence and existential interpretation in its case have the *same* essential, inner form, the *same* structural character, the *same* meaning relations in the most different historical forms, hierophanies, myths and rites of the primitive religiosity. And a hierophany is universal not because it represents the sacred as a comprehensive and ultimate reality in the experiential, but because it carries this interrelatedness and unity of the sacred and the profane in its inner, essential form.¹ Thus, in this sense, there is nothing to return to, and there is nothing to restore. The interpretation is objectivity when it reveals the universal form which carries and represents the basic structures of existence and it connects the multiplicity of significations with the unity of the essential form. This requires that the "prehistoric",

¹ In his famous *Traité* Eliade stated explicitly too that every hierophany carries and reveals the paradoxical coincidence of the sacred and the profane, existence and non-existence, the absolute and the relative, the eternal and the changeable. What is paradoxical in this, is not the manifestation of the *sacred* in stones or trees, but the fact that it *manifests itself*, namely that the encounter of the two ways of existence *takes a form*, and that the *unity* (*one-ness*, unity of existence and sense) of this form becomes more important than the difference of the "totally different" (Rudolf Otto). Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Tratat de istorie a religiilor* (Treatise on History of Religions), Bucharest, Humanitas, 1992, p. 38. Eliade also stated here that the only difference between the appearance of a hierophany in a religious system and the interpretation and investigation of its semantic content is the difference of the "form" and the "formula". The hierophany as the *form* which carries the unity of existence and sense *manifests itself* independently of any other interpretation. The form is visible, which means that it *shows* the interrelatedness and unity (the being-together and unity of opposite essences) concretely as sense on itself. Thus its natural state is to be always in interpretation, even before we begin to interpret or reveal it. The way in which the analytic descriptive language of verbal hermeneutics *formulates* the interrelated unity in statements in the course of the interpretation differs from this concrete manifestation.

to which the concrete, the particular (the peculiar) and the historic refer, should not be considered as the ancient preliminary, but as the *universal*. This reflexive and speculative horizon of universality gives the true sense of the historic. Modernity tore apart this original unity of the metaphysical way of existence by this making the metaphysical contents of existence empty. The modern man is forced to live in a non-metaphysical existential form in which the particular and the universal, the concrete and the abstract seem to refer to one another only outwardly, by means of methodological and technical constructions. According to Eliade's hypothesis, the modern man's *religious experience* can create some connections between the two ways of existence. Because of this the nostalgia after the primordial states of ancient times does not cherish the modern man's wish for reversing history, but it rather supports his efforts to enforce the authentic forms of the true religious experience.

The linguistic medium

The archaic man's metaphysical way of existence and the modern man's non-metaphysical way of existence basically differ in their *form*. Form is the inner system of connections, the structuring medium which organizes the elements of existence into meaning relations, in other words: *converts them into texts*. The two ways of existence essentially differ in the mode of formulation. They are differently spoken of when described and even their self reflexive statements are dissimilar. The myth, the rite, the symbol are organized as a medium, as a textual universe carrying, shaping and representing the metaphysical way of existence not by means of its reference, but through its *linguistic form*. In this linguistic medium the particular existential elements and universal sense aspects are brought to unity. And in this the experiential, linguistic and spiritual reflexivity and speculativeness – which shape and carry this medium – form the “primordial” content of sense and unity of form which are revealed by the significations created on the different semantic levels and to which the interpretative efforts, directed towards significations, can be traced back. Thus it is proved that the interpretative text – in case it speaks correctly, that is objectively – narrates always what the myth, the rite and the symbol are about. It organizes into a system of statements the meaning relations represented and revealed by the myth, the rite and the symbol as experienced life forms. Therefore it can be justly asked whether the investigations in the history and anthropology of religions, which open hermeneutical perspectives, are really important for the modern man because they inform him about the

metaphysical constructions of an archaic, primordial reality; or rather because they interpretatively open the textual universe of the myths, rites and symbols carrying metaphysical constructions and the meaning relations of this textual universe towards the modern man's life and textual universe. Therefore, from a hermeneutical point of view, the result of a correct interpretation and comprehension is more than to reveal the essence of the religious experience. Such interpretation means to place the interpreter intellectually into the sense creating process in which the speculative, metaphysical unity of experience is restored. Instead of changing our knowledge about the religious experience, this interpretation rather modifies our *attitude* towards it.

The circle of comprehension

With reference to the objectivity of interpretation Marino also discussed the issue of the *circularity* of the interpretative process. He demonstrated in connection with Eliade that comprehension is always based on previous understanding and that the exegesis presupposes anticipation directed to the meaning relations. He agreed with Eliade that we comprehend what we are predestined to understand by our learning, our cultural attitude as well as by the experienced historical moment.¹

Marino realized that the circularity of comprehension actually takes place as the interplay of the opposite logical and experiential moments of the interpretative process, as a continuous pendular movement between intuition and reflection, induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, part and whole, past and present, the sacred and the profane. But neither in this case could he disregard the logical-epistemological limits of the methodological approach to hermeneutics. Exactly in connection with the study of the *hermeneutical circle* becomes evident that the limits of this approach restrict the entire hermeneutical problem of the interpretation and comprehension to the terminological sphere of cognition.

Marino's discussion of the hermeneutical circle as the question of "hermeneutical cognition" is another example to the hybridization of the epistemological and hermeneutical approach. He investigated how the hermeneutical cognition following the movement of the hermeneutical circle – which seems to be a logical tautology – proceeds. Can some new information be created in the interpretative process if only that which appears in the conclusion was comprised in the premises? Combining the

¹ Cf. Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Micea Eliade*, p. 110.

logical model with the historicity inspired by Eliade Marino believed that the solution of the problem was that, though the premise of comprehension is always given, the hermeneutist's attitude however is always predetermined by the specific spiritual and historical situation and his previous understandings of the interpreted issue derived from this situation.¹ Thus the circular motion of the interpretation begins always *differently* in the case of each concrete return to the same sense element. However, – due to the limits of his approach – Marino did not perceive that the hermeneutical attitude does not allow asking in earnest the question whether a linear, progressive movement exists in the process of interpretation-comprehension. It is true that in the same process of sense creation we can perceive and follow the ever progressive motion of interpretation which goes beyond the revealed and understood meaning relations. But the relationship between the two different acts of comprehension – even if they are the two different re-interpretative phases of the same meaning relation – cannot be described as progression, since each new comprehensive process leads in fact to a *different* and not a *better* understanding.²

The limits of interpretation

Having studied the numerous problems related to the objectivity of interpretation according to the above mentioned view, Marino perceived the *limits of interpretation*. He believed that all the factors related to the existential, cultural and historical conditions of the interpretative-comprehensive process make the interpretation *subjective*. Therefore, the question whether objective interpretation exists or not cannot be answered unambiguously in the affirmative. The hermeneutical interpretation is objective between the boundaries set by its object: objectivity depends on the documents, their sense and semantic contents. But as seen from the direction of the context of the interpreter and the

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 110, 111.

² This problem is clarified by Gadamer in connection with the statement that comprehension is more than the reproduction of a finished work; it is a *creative* attitude itself. "Comprehension – Gadamer said – in fact is not a better understanding either in the sense of a greater amount of positive knowledge resulted from clearer notions or as the advantage of awareness over the unawareness of creation. It is enough to say that we understand *otherwise when we comprehend at all.*" H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

interpretative act this objectivity becomes *subjective*. This holds true vice versa as well: the interpreter's subjectivity also becomes *objective*.¹

As we have seen so far, due to his approach permeated by methodological habits of a structuralist and epistemological character, Marino considered it natural to raise the question referring to the objectivity of interpretation. But it did not occur to him whether the questions raised within the dual terminological domain of objectivity and subjectivity have any relevance at all for the true hermeneutical attitude. The reason why this question was not usually asked must be sought not only in the limits of Marino's approach but also in the fact that he tried to build his basic statements related to Eliade's hermeneutics on Ricoeur's conception of hermeneutics.

Whenever it was necessary to confront Eliade's hermeneutics with a more universal hermeneutics, Marino considered Ricoeur's hermeneutics to be handier than Gadamer's. The former preserved and continued to develop many elements of the semiotic and structuralist antecedents of the hermeneutical attitude as well as of its methodological commitments. Thus Marino considered the question of the objectivity of interpretation worth to be studied thoroughly because he attached importance to the manner in which Ricoeur differentiated between "objective" and "subjective" interpretation. He saw in this the fulfilment of two conditions quite important for the success of the hermeneutical investigations.

The first is related to the fact that, it seems, Ricoeur managed to find a criterion which, if applied, guarantees the objectivity of interpretation in each case. Its essence, according to Marino, is that the interpreter has to place himself continuously into the interpreted text's reference domain, respectively into its specific horizon opened from here. This means – in Hirsch's words – that he has to use the inherent and original perspective, excluding any other point of view or perspective.²

The other condition is related to "the conflict of interpretations". Eliade's religious historical studies also reveal that the history of religions is also the history of different and conflicting interpretations at the same time. Approaches differing from one another as regards their direction and their point of view reveal the operation of the principle stating the polyvalence of interpretations which results in the conflict of interpretations. In order that the hermeneutical investigation may be

¹ Cf. Adrian Marino, *op. cit.*, pp. 201, 204.

² Cf. *ibid.* p. 34.

successful, it also becomes necessary to harmonize the great variety and different validity of the interpretations. This goes hand in hand with the hierarchization of interpretations, the inclusion of the new interpretations in one of the traditional interpretation types. Marino believed that the Ricoeurian criterion of the objectivity of interpretations could have a decisive role in the conflict of interpretations too.¹

The secret of the text

Let us compare now the question of the objectivity of interpretation – raised in connection with Ricoeur – with Ricoeur's own discussion of this problem.

Returning to the Ricoeurian differentiation between the text's sense and signification, this reveals that Ricoeur did not differentiate the subjective and objective interpretation in the sense Marino alluded to. In fact the problem of the objective interpretation is not raised as the question of the text's reference, the question of the relationship between the text and the world. Ricoeur separated the problem of the objective interpretation from the acquiring of the text in the reading process, a subjective interpretation. The reading process, even if it is adjusted to the text's intensions, preserves much from the psychological dimension of the interpretation practiced and perceived as *acquiring* (Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Bultmann). According to this psychological dimension the reader's manifestation connects another text – which *actualizes* the text in the direction of its context and its audience – to the text, in which the interpretation of the text is extended towards the reader's self-interpretation. The reader, trying to understand the text, in fact creates his own text which helps him to understand himself better or in a different way. This holds true only if we regard the text itself too as the medium of the author's self-interpretation and self-comprehension. But the interpretation should not stop at this psychological process, because the text's essence and sense does not consist of its being the mediator and the interpreter of the authorial intention. Ricoeur emphasized the hermeneutical importance of the structural analysis because he considered that structural analysis can reveal the text's *deep semantics*, that meaning relation which holds together and unites the text from inside and which enforces the text's *own* intention (independent from the writer's) and articulates the content communicated by the text itself. The text according to its "intention" or "will" draws us into *its own sense*

¹ Cf. *ibid.* pp. 35, 36, 37.

direction, it “wants” us placed in the same direction as itself, in the meaning relation carried and opened by it.¹ Therefore the objective interpretation is not directed to the text from the outside, but it is an *intra-textual* interpretation, namely the self-interpretative act of the text, which interprets itself as a meaning relation having a well-determined direction. That, which happens as the objective interpretation, is in fact performed in the text “as the work of the sense directed to itself”. The text’s natural way of existence is the continuous (self-)interpretation.² We, as interpreters, can do nothing else than participate ourselves as well in this self-interpretative process of the text.³ In this respect *to interpret* means “to choose the mental path opened by the text, we start on the road the text took”, namely we place ourselves in the text’s sense direction and we go on with it.⁴ In such cases the text interpretation, namely the “hermeneutist’s speech” is “a repetition which revives the speech of the text”.⁵

Ricoeur’s idea of the objective interpretation consists of two important elements: on the one hand it reveals the secret of the text, the real situation that the text’s actual way of existence is to be in a continuous self-interpretative state; on the other hand Marino’s thought, according to which the objective interpretation would be realized by placing oneself into the text’s referential plane, is corrected. At the same time the Ricoeurian approach to the problem of the text is really related to Eliade’s idea which we have discussed in connection with the archaic man and his metaphysical way of existence.

Ricoeur’s text conception actually reveals the text’s true existential state, its *metaphysical* way of existence. The continuous (self)interpretation, the reflexivity and speculativeness which accompany this as well as the particular existential contents placed into a universal

¹ Cf. P. Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

² Cf. *ibid.* p. 32.

³ This Ricoeurian thought is similar to Gadamer’s conception according to which “the concept of the text as the central category of the linguistic structure can be defined only if we take the concept of interpretation as our starting point. For the concept of the text is characterized by the fact that it manifests itself only in harmony with the interpretation and setting out from this – as the actually given and that which is to be understood.” H.-G. Gadamer, *Szöveg és interpretáció* (Text and Interpretation), in: Bacsó Béla (ed.), *Szöveg és interpretáció*, Cserépfalvi’s edition, s. a., p. 24.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

horizon are together the criteria of the metaphysical way of existence. The *secret of the text* is condensed into the *paradoxical* aspect that, though the text is always about “something” and this “something” is always revealed as a “world” by means of the text – and as the reference of the text –, the sense of the text does not originate from this in reality, but from that essential, inner and universal *form* which holds in an organic unity the world (as the referential content of the text) and the text (as the manifestation of the world). The text is in fact realized as the interrelatedness of these particular circumstances – the world as content and the text as a well defined system of signs – and the horizon of universality. The text’s inner meaning relation (as the particular world which forms the reference of the text) and the organic unity of the universal horizon opening in the text (as *form*) manifest themselves on the text itself as *form* independently from any other interpretation. The text speaks of a particular world, but speaking of it in a universal linguistic context and an open interpretative horizon it appears in its context as a text having *sense* before anyone would start to read it. Consequently, the objective interpretation can be realized not by placing ourselves into the referential plane of the text, but by revealing the text’s metaphysical way of existence; by partaking and participating in that continuous self-creating and self-building interpretation of existence and of the world which is the text’s natural way of existence as a continuous interpretative process. The text grants us the joy of creation and not the experience of being thrown into the world. But undoubtedly, if the interpretation places itself correctly into the text’s sense direction, it discovers in its referential plane that which the text would really like to communicate: the ontological frame of a world is outlined in the text’s metaphysical horizon. In these cases the text’s meaning relations are opened to a (possible) reference and not a (real) reference determines the directions of the sense.

A text which lacks its metaphysical horizon and the specific way of existence characterized by continuous interpretation is not a real text anymore. It is only a system of descriptive statements connected with the described object according to outward rules.

The power of the symbol

In this context it is worth discussing another problem raised by Ricoeur when adopting Eliade’s symbol conception. This problem, while revealing the nature of that linguistic context into which Marino placed Eliade’s whole hermeneutics, corrected in some measure the

methodological alienation which occurred between this linguistic context and textual universe as well as the living spirit of hermeneutics; alienation resulting inevitably from Marino's epistemological, semiotic, structuralist approach. We are referring to the problem of the *double meaning*. This is not identical with and cannot be reduced to the duality of sense and signification discussed in detail before.

Ricoeur – referring to Elide's discussion and allusions related to cosmic symbolism from the *Traité* – showed the essential characteristic of the symbol which is the condition of linguistic completeness. The linguistic completeness is created by the relationship between sense and sense, where one sense is placed inside the other. The symbol's way of existence is based on the *interconnectedness* of two senses. "The symbol is *determined* – Ricoeur wrote – in a double sense as it is connected *to* something and *with* something. On the one hand it is connected to the primary, literal, perceptible phenomena of the symbol: this creates the obscurity. On the other hand the literal sense is connected with the symbolic sense inherent in it; I call this the symbol's revelatory faculty. The symbol has power due to this – despite its obscurity."¹

Ricoeur's formulation reveals that what we stated with reference to the myth, the rite, the hierophany and the text, holds true for the symbol too: it is an internally formed, organic essential unity, meaning relation. However, it requires special attention. In the symbol the particular sense horizon of a sensory-experiential component is interconnected with the universal sense horizon of an intellectual component. Thus the sensory-experiential component does not remain purely concrete and particular, but it acquires a sense horizon in which it becomes open towards universal meaning relations; as a sense it surpasses its existential particularity. Its *obscurity* originates from here. But something similar happens in the opposite direction too: the universal and abstract intellectual sense acquires an experiential sense horizon in which it becomes open towards the concrete particular meaning relations, it manifests itself in the sensory-experiential. The symbol's *revelatory faculty* originates from here. The symbol can be reduced neither to the one nor to the other meaning relation, but it is based on the inward interconnectedness and unity of form of the two. Its inner cohesion is created by structural unification of the particular and universal meaning

¹ P. Ricoeur, Az interpretációk konfliktusa, in: Fabiny Tibor (ed.), *A hermeneutika elmélete. Első rész.* (The Theory of Hermeneutics. First part.) Ikonológia és Műértelmezés 3. (Iconology and Interpretation 3.), Szeged, 1987, pp. 210–211.

relations open to one another. The symbol requires special attention because of the nature of this unification. For this is more than the interconnectedness of forms as we have shown in the case of the hierophany or of the text, this is a special way of existence in which the two meaning relations *dwell in one another*. The particular and universal meaning relations penetrate one another reciprocally, they reveal and interpret one another. The symbol is determined because the experiential meaning relation interprets the universal one, while the universal meaning relation interprets the experiential one. One is the other's *interpreter* in Peirce's sense. Namely, that the meaning relation revealed in the one is the component of the other and vice versa. Without this neither the particular, nor the universal meaning relation would separately have the fullness of sense carried by the symbol by means of their unity. The *power* of the symbol originates from this.

All this shows that the linguistic medium revealed by the symbol is not only determined, but it is a *complete language* at the same time.¹ It includes the experiential particular and the universal, the sensory concrete and the abstract intellectual components at the same time. It cannot talk about the one without speaking of the other too. It cannot speak of the sensory without representing it in the universal horizon and as carrying the universal. And it cannot speak of the universal without revealing it as something belonging to and present in the sensory. It lends a *metaphysical* dimension to the particular experiential sense and an *existential* dimension to the universal sense. Consequently, the symbol's existential structure is *more* than the hierophany or the metaphysical way of existence of the text. The obscurity of the symbol is the metaphysical obscurity, but its revelatory faculty is the existential openness. Therefore the symbol does not only speak, it *speaks to me*. In addition to the particular experience speaking in the language of the universal meaning relations in the symbol, the universal sense speaks to me in the language of my particular existence. In this sense we can tell that the symbol's way of existence is determined, confined and it is a complete way of existence at the same time: a way of existence characterized by metaphysical and existential unity. The man living in the symbol's linguistic medium can only be the *whole man* with his *entire experience*.

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 211.

Observations and hopes

Finally, we must make two observations regarding Marino's hermeneutical investigations.

The fact that Marino's hermeneutical efforts – despite their unquestionable scientific expertise and seriousness – did not achieve their aim in the investigation of religious phenomena – which, by their nature, almost voluntarily offer themselves to interpretation – must have been due to the “hermeneutical situation” Marino made his investigations in. In the intellectual context of the 1970s and 1980s this was shaped as a situation whose terminological and methodological horizon was not yet really hermeneutical. Marino tried to interpret, understand and apply hermeneutics relying on the epistemological preliminary structures of a *non-hermeneutical* situation and in its semiotic, structuralist and methodological horizon. Thus it is no wonder that this interpretation was often done in a non-hermeneutical manner. Despite this, even those essential points and moments when Marino misunderstood and misinterpreted hermeneutics in a non-hermeneutical manner proved to be real hermeneutical deeds and events due exactly to the hermeneutical productivity of misunderstanding.

Our second observation is closely related to the former. The point of view offered by the indicated situation gives a characteristic starting point and a determined direction to Marino's investigations referring to Eliade's hermeneutics. Marino – due to an intellectual habit arising from the structuralist approach – placed the text into the centre of his hermeneutical investigations, and he followed the guidelines offered by the tradition of textual hermeneutics. Thus he proceeded in Eliade's case too as if he had had to deal with texts in Eliade's hermeneutics as well. In this way he did not realize or did not attach sufficient importance to the fact that in Eliade's hermeneutics to progress in the textual exegesis meant to progress to the living *religious experience* as to a hermeneutical experience.¹ Whereas the real essence and greatness of Eliade's hermeneutics lay in the fact that it outlined and discussed the religious experience as a hermeneutical experience. The text, the symbol

¹ We can prove with several quotations that for Eliade the religious experience was the starting point and the true domain of interpretations realized as hermeneutical achievements; e. g. he wrote related to the identification of the existential moments of cosmic and human existence: “Let us try to understand that man's existential situation for whom all these identifications are not just mere *thoughts*, but lived *experiences*.” Mircea Eliade, *A szent és a profane* (The Sacred and the Profane), Budapest, Europe Publishing House, 1987, p. 155.

and the mythology appeared as the linguistic medium of the religious experience in this process; a linguistic universe in which the religious experience is revealed as world experience. If we survey this development from the point of view of the Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics, we may be witnesses to the "empirical" realization of a "universal hermeneutics" in Eliade's oeuvre. And it is not impossible that the Gadamerian hermeneutics' universal linguistic aspects will be outlined for us in the linguistic medium of the symbol and the myth.

But if we pay attention to the fact that the meaning relations revealed in the *interconnected* metaphysical and existential structures of the symbol and the myth can start speaking as philosophical thoughts too in the context of intellectual-linguistic universality, reflexivity and speculativeness, then we can finally conjecture that the real inheritor of the archaic tradition is not the modern man's *present day* religious experience, but rather the philosophy of the *future*.