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In 2011, Le Centre National du Livre (The National Book Centre), Paris and Institutul Cultural Român (The Romanian Cultural Institute) ventured together in a collaborative project aiming to strengthen the ‘French-Romanian collaboration in the domains of books and lecture’. The first step in this significant enterprise was to translate, from French into Romanian, several small pieces of wider philosophical texts. The idea behind this was to firstly present an anthology of authors and texts representative for the French humanistic disciplines, thus facilitating their coming together with the Romanian public. Subsequently, the project was desired to stimulate the complete translation of the texts, equally introducing, on the one hand, the French authors and their work and, on the other hand, the young translators undertaking the assignment of converting the pieces from French into Romanian.

The texts included in this volume are, in the editors’ words, selected by personal choice. Their intention was to maintain an ‘equilibrium’ between old and new, between continuity and innovation, and to assemble, in terms of stylistic and terminological suggestions, as many challenges as possible. The editors’ expertise in this sense speaks for itself. Bogdan Ghiu is renowned for his multiple translations of French philosophers into Romanian language, while Vlad Alexandrescu is well known, nationally and internationally, as an important figure in Cartesian studies. Their knowledge in particular fields of study could be another argument favouring the selection of the texts.

In order to fulfil these already declared plans, the present volume proposes a glimpse of French intellectual history, starting from early modernity to the contemporary world. The collection of texts seems to be built upon the idea of intellectual power brought forth by modernity (in terms of the success of rationality over the superstitions, the scientific approaches of efficient causality, the organization of production in accordance with capitalistic relations) and the increased capacity of

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individuals able to manipulate these instances to overcome current challenges. The selection of the texts included in this volume appears to argue for this idea.

The book opens with a translated text from Pierre Hadot, *Le Voile d'Isis. Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de Nature* [*The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*, translated into Romanian by Dragoș Jipa]. Considering Heraclitus' aphorism, according to which 'Nature loves to conceal Herself' as a starting point, Hadot tracks this idea through Romanticism. It is interesting how the book points out the way in which modernity captures this idea. The way in which modernity captures this idea is also interesting. For instance, Francis Bacon declares that nature unlocks its secrets through the means of experiment. Bacon uses another beautiful metaphor, 'the hunt of Pan'. The hunt of Pan is nothing more than a method man uses to unveil the secrets of nature.

The second text, Jean Luc Marion, *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes* [*Descartes' White Theology*, translated into Romanian by Daniela Măricuța], suggests that, although Descartes has never developed a fully articulated metaphysics, he uses an onto-theological approach to question a metaphysical problem: human likeness to God the Creator. In terms of knowledge, humans are unable to comprehend infinity. All knowledge depends on our knowledge of God but God is incomprehensible. Humans' resemblance to God is in terms of will, which is intrinsically free, but human intellect is finite, therefore they can make moral decisions having an unclear perception of what is true or good.

Continuing, in a sense, this onto-theological approach, the third text (Jean Greisch, *Du 'non-autre' au 'tout autre'. Dieu et l'absolu dans les théologies philosophiques de la modernité*,¹ [*From the 'non-other' to the 'any other'. God and the absolute in the philosophical theology of the modernity*], translated into Romanian by Lucia Vișinescu) uses as a starting point the belief that each epoch has a particular idea of God and concludes that God continues to be present in contemporary thought under the form of three essential questions: Where is God? Who is God? How does God become an idea?

The text authored by Jean Robert Armogathe (*La nature du monde. Science nouvelle et exégèse du XVII^e siècle* [*The nature of the world. New science and exegesis in the 17th century*] translated into Romanian by Maria Mățel-Boatcă) approaches science as a hermeneutics of nature and an analysis, paralleled by the scientific discourse and the biblical one. Interesting names and well-known metaphors are evoked – Robert Fludd, Christiaan Huygens, Sir Isaac Newton are some of them. As for the re-interpreted metaphors the text advances, I would like to mention the very famous 'All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players' (William Shakespeare, 'As you like it') used by Armogathe to mark the moment of replacing the church with theatre in modernity. Theatre not only substitutes the role of the church, but it converts itself into a world and becomes a world in itself. The dramatization of time is possible due to the mathematization of time and to the enunciation of modern physics.

Michel Henry (*Généalogie de la psychanalyse. Le commencement perdu* [*The genealogy of psychoanalysis*], translated into Romanian by Alexandru Matei) proposes

¹ The book has not yet been translated into English.

a radical text, which rejects Cartesianism as an intellectual discourse ‘par excellence’. The text is structured as a dialogue equally involving psychologists and philosophers. For Michel Henry, ‘cogito’ is the original manifestation of ‘the self’, the essence of life, the primal fact of the subjective presence, and not the self articulacy of the human consciousness.

Georges Didi-Huberman, in *L’image survivante. Histoire de l’art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* ([*The surviving image. The history of art and the times of ghosts by Aby Warburg*], translated into Romanian by Andreea Rațiu), discusses a central concept present in Aby Warburg’s thought, ‘the concept of surviving’. This particular concept introduces a temporal model for the history of arts, the concept of surviving, of restoration and of expressing ‘the unconsciousness of time’.

Marc Fumaroli’s text, *Quand l’Europe parlait français* (*When Europe Spoke French*, translated into Romanian by Speranța Sofia Milancovici) depicts an image of Europe in the period of the Enlightenment, a world speaking French and sharing French ideas and ideals. Although English gained more and more territory in the global context (especially in the twentieth century), Fumaroli argues that French is and will always be the language of the veritable intellectuals, of the elegant and ‘clandestine’ spirits, of refinement and select companionships.

The Israeli historian and political scientist Zeev Sternhell advances a text (*Les anti-Lumières. Une tradition du XVIII^e siècle à la guerre froide* [*The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition from the 18th century to the Cold War*], translated into Romanian by Mihaela Gabriela Stănică) trying to identify the specifications of an intellectual tradition that emerged as a reaction to the Enlightenment and has been transformed into an anti-enlightenment alternative (a movement originally identified by Nietzsche). The decline of reason engendered the fall of democracy and the rise of radical political movements such as nationalism and fascism.

Maurizio Gribaudi and Michèle Riot-Sarcey (*1848, la Révolution oubliée* [*1848, The Forgotten Revolution*], translated into Romanian by Raluca Vârlan) introduce a book reporting the events of the 1848 French Revolution. The authors reject the idea that the collective memory always records the processes and events that support the course of history in a linear fashion. History is not just a string of phenomena governed by causality, but it is made up of different perspectives on the same event. The case of the 1848 French Revolution is the same, constructed of the perspectives of the actors involved: Alexis de Tocqueville, George Sand, Alphonse de Lamartine.

The closing text of the book, Pierre Rosanvallon, *La légitimité démocratique. Impartialité, réflexivité, proximité* (*Democratic Legitimacy: Impartiality, Reflexivity, Proximity*, translated into Romanian by Andreea Maria Blaga) asserts an analysis of contemporary democracy as well as its changes, alienations, and mutations. Starting from the idea that the simple act of voting cannot confer political legitimacy, the author draws a comprehensive account of the past and present problems associated with the issue of majority. The political concept of ‘people’ is not regarded as it has been considered by Rousseau anymore, but as a sum of singularities, whereas the majority is not able to capture the singularity.

The book can be divided into two parts, the one builds around the most debated issues over Modern Europe (questions concerning our relation to God, several

re-interpretations of classical metaphors, the importance and the position of natural knowledge in our path through gaining intellectual power and a sovereign position) and can be easily regarded as constructed under the sign of Cartesianism, while the second half of the book deals with the particularization of the aforementioned ideas, insisting on the different forms of alienation associated with the concept of intellectual power achieved in Modern Europe.

The major aim of the book is to introduce to the Romanian public a number of interesting works belonging to some of the most influential contemporary figures and to open further exploratory pathways in the realm of culture and knowledge. Simultaneously and of equal importance, another aim of the project has been to present the young Romanian translators who devoted themselves to the task of deciphering and introducing the texts to the Romanian public. Assuming this task, the book addresses a wide range of audience, from young researchers, linguists, philosophers, and historians to a larger public interested in the ideas that significantly contributed to the development of the last century of European thought.