

“... THE POWER OF LANGUAGE TO TRANSCEND ITSELF.”

A POSTSCRIPT

Andrej Božič

Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities, Vodovodna cesta 101, 1000
Ljubljana, Slovenia

andrej.bozic@institut-nr.si

Throughout its richly ramified history, hermeneutics, not only as an ever diversely elaborated theory of interpretation, but also already as an always anew effectuated practice of understanding, has found itself, as a distinct discipline of (philological and philosophical) reasoning, engaged with the linguality of traditionally transmitted human experience safeguarded, secured in writing. If the hermeneutic movement—at least, in its predominant formation—, in essence, encompasses—as (all) reading—bringing (back) in-to language that which is, or had previously been, textually fixated, the response of interpretive intercession requires thorough attention particularly with regard to an understanding encounter with what one of the founding fathers of contemporary hermeneutics Hans-Georg Gadamer calls “eminent texts”: with literary texts as works of (accomplished) art.

Although it might, at first glance, maybe seem that the present thematic issue of the *Phainomena* journal, “Hermeneutics and Literature,” attempts

to re-configure, perchance to re-define, from a different and a differing, this time round hermeneutical stance, the—age-old, “ancient”—question of the relationship between philosophy and poetry, between thinking and poetizing, which within the development of the 20th-century culture, once more, especially under the overwhelming influence of Martin Heidegger’s thought, rose to become, for both of them, one of the foremost prominent of concerns, the titular juxtaposition, by shifting somewhat the counterbalance of accents, by “universalizing”—the particularity of—“poetry” to—the generality of—“literature” and by “particularizing”—the universality of—“philosophy” to—the speciality of—“hermeneutics,” aims not as much at a parallelizing, potentially contentious confrontation—a comparison of the non-comparable?—, which would in the proximities of opposites seek to state their distance and which would in the divergencies of composites seek to state their convergence, but rather at the (im-?)possibility of a dialogical inter-mediation of the—*that*—“in-between” that, despite the strain of a in-conceivably in-surmountable abyss between hermeneutic comprehension and literary creativity, fraught with tears
536 in the fragile fabric of the un-common, dis-closes the time and the place, the spaciality and the temporality of the—horizon(s) of—inter-human experience, insofar as it expresses itself through the self-transcending faculty of language. Accordingly, hermeneutics (perhaps) cannot—and should not—be considered as a separate scientific methodology of interpretation with prefabricated philosophical presuppositions and precepts to be followed and applied to research matter, but as a dimension—a measure?—of openness, which inheres with-in, in-habit(uate)s all approaches authentically denoted by the desire to understand the worded world and the worlded word, the wor(l)d of literature.

The contributions gathered in the issue bear witness to the abundantly varied versatility of hermeneutically accentuated discussions of literary art in respect both to thematic multiplicity and genre heterogeneity of selected works as well as to certain specifically or broadly observed con-textual aspects addressed through them. Outlining the manifold facets of the (for) ever fragmented totality of literature, yet thereby also complexly combining hermeneutic practice with theoretic contemplations, the articles span—without obliterating them by ill-fitting appropriations—geographical and historical boundaries with deliberations, which reach from the most primordial

embodiments of written culture imbued with the mythical that co-constitutes civilizations to the intricately dispersed development of post-modern modes of literary authorship in an era of continually secularized and individualized globality, and which, thus, through problems of the present, inter-connect topics presumably pertaining solely to the past with the salience of caring for the future of human(e) community. Whereas, on the one hand, some of the presented papers in a minutely detailed manner delve into reflections crucially characteristic of Heidegger's considerations relating (to) poetry and thinking, several authors, on the other hand, offer analyses critically focusing (on) the notions of prime importance for a meticulously consummate hermeneutic conceptualization of literature. Beside concluding contributions, which demonstrate the way writing can come to call for(th) other realms of (artistic) expression, such as architecture or painting, two exhaustive examinations of pertinent publications in the field of hermeneutic philosophy, a short book review, and an homage in honor of the recently deceased colleague Dimitri Ginev, member of the journal's International Advisory Board, complement and complete this issue of *Phainomena*.

537

The poem by Edvard Kocbek (1904–1981), one of the greatest literary voices and one of the central intellectual personalities of the Slovenian language, who had, as a poet and as a politician, witnessed, with-in his being, the turbulent times of the 20th century, the poem that, (as if) in a single, exalted and halted breath, trans-pierced with pondering pauses, be-speaks (of) the craft of poetry, the handiwork of creation, capable, at once, at the same time, through primal play, of pre-serving memory and of pre-ceding history, the poem that, through its own poetic utterance, circumscribes the tran-script of humanity through the—powerless?—power of language, the poem from the collection *Nevesta v črnem* (*Bride in Black*; 1977), which I would like to let with-stand, (as)—a sort of—a prescript, (with: against) the present postscript—is (not) the nature of all interpretation, however precise, however perceptive, such: un-necessarily supplemental?—, for poetry—of poetry—, in the Slovenian original and in the English translation, sings:

DAREŽLJIVOST PESMI

V vseh časih so naročali pesnikom,
 naj kot slovesni zgodovinoslovci
 skušajo s posebnimi besedami uloviti
 spomina vredne usodne človeške dogodke,
 da bi se jih stari in mladi naučili
 na pamet in jih prepevali za žalost,
 v slavo in poduk vsem rodovom. In

glejte, pesniki so se vselej razigrali
 in svojo sveto dolžnost do zgodovine
 povezali z nezadržno slo po prvinski igri.
 Napisali so pesmi kakor dež in sneg

opravita svojo dolžnost v naravi
 in kakor marljivi sejavec poseje
 zorane njive jeseni in jih poleti požanje.
 V tem hipu čutim posebno darežljivost.
 Hranjena je iz vsega, kar je bilo
 in kar je ostalo v človekovem čaščenju
 in presega moj spomin in se spaja z vsem,

kar živi z občestvom in z domišljijo.
 Zdaj čutim, kakor tega še nisem, da je
 pesem strnjena sila vseh človekovih
 sposobnosti in da je njena vzornost
 v presežnosti jezika.

Edvard Kocbek: *Zbrane pesmi II*
 (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1977),
 328.

THE GENEROSITY OF THE POEM

Poets throughout the ages, like solemn
 [historians,
 have been commanded to capture with special
 [words
 those fateful human accidents worth
 [remembering,
 so that old and young may learn them
 by heart, and sing them in sorrow,
 as a celebration and a lesson for the generations.

[But
 you see, poets have always gotten carried away
 and combined their sacred duty toward history
 with an unstoppable lust for primitive play.
 They have written their poems the way rain and
 [snow

do their duty to nature,
 the way the patient laborer sows the plowed field
 in fall and harvests it the following summer.
 But just now I feel a special generosity.

It is nourished by everything that ever was
 and has remained in human worship
 and overflows my memory and fuses with all
 [things

that dwell in community and fantasy.
 I feel now, as never before, that
 a poem is the condensed power of all human
 abilities, and that its ideal lies
 in the power of language to transcend itself.

Edvard Kocbek: *Nothing Is Lost. Selected*
Poems, trans. by M. Scammell and V.
 Taufer (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton
 University Press, 2004), 157.



On behalf of the editors and the publishers of the *Phainomena* journal, as well as myself personally, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude for the kindness of generosity to all the colleagues who graciously dedicated not only their extensive scholarly expertise, but also their profoundly engaged humanity to the preparation and the completion of the present issue on “Hermeneutics and Literature.” Likewise, I express our, my heartfelt appreciation to the president of the International Institute for Hermeneutics Prof. Dr. Dr. Andrzej Wierciński for all his friendly help in editing the publication, for all his tireless efforts in furthering the modalities of hermeneutic thinking, indeed, of being in the world.

Ljubljana (Slovenia), July 2022