

ARISTOTLE S DE ANIMA IN ROMANIAN HISTORIES OF PSYCHOLOGY. TIMI OARA SCHOOL.

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***Abstract.** This analysis is part of a longer term projected study concerning non-philosophical discourses on history of philosophy in Romanian public texts, especially within Academia. Methodological insights have been discussed within the special one-semester long lectures at Timi oara West University with the Master students in Philosophical Hermeneutics and Religion and will be published shortly in a dedicated book. This selected material is part of that forthcoming book but also an independent critical analysis intended to show limitations and risks of non-professional discourse on philosophical issues separated from their rational and historiographical context. We discuss Aristotelian thinking within histories of psychology and analyze textbooks and public lectures within West University of Timi oara as a structured scientific context of discourse relevant to our approach.*

Keywords: Romanian histories of psychology, Timi oara, Aristotle, De Anima

Is teaching philosophical concepts and debates to the non-philosophy students a philosophical teaching or not? Is there a “good” understanding or narration of Aristotle suited to other students than Psychology? Rigid rules often isolate philosophical academic life from the rest of Academia and the city itself; the regular teacher in a university department like Psychology or Visual Arts is able to know and involve in very little of what professional philosophers do and act regularly. Our investigation on how discourses on philosophers outside Philosophy departments has some methodological grounds on studies like that of Tejera about non-philosophic histories of philosophy (Lavine,T.Z., Tejera V., 1989). It is unphilosophic, Tejera says, to argue and address dead philosophers only on today’s heteronomous set of ideas and not trying to open communicative conventions with past thinkers. “It takes an awareness of some specific intellectual history” (Lavine,T.Z., Tejera V., 1989, p. 125) to realize what was actually an ancient author saying on what concept of reality.

History of Psychology in Timi oara.

Several results and important outcomes in Psychology were generated by individuals before 1990 in Timi oara, especially under the conduct of the psychiatrist Eduard Pamfil and Gh. Oancea during 1941-1946, who is considered to be the first psychologist within the Timi oara University (see Petroman, 1997, p. 269), and then within the Chair of Pshychopedagogy starting from 1949, as part of the Pedagogical Institute of Mathematics and Physics. History of psychology was studied eventually by personalities like Victor Târcovnicu (*Din istoria pedagogiei române ti* – History of Romanian Pedagogy).

It is after 1990 that superior education in Psychology develops in the University of Timi oara; though it was difficult for some time to speak of a Timi oarean “school” in psychology (Petroman 1997, p. 268) specialists appreciate it today as a meaningful team on the national level. Pavel Petroman teaches History of Psychology and authored two historical monographs (Petroman, 1997; 2001).

During the last five years Adrian Jinaru has been teaching a brand new course of History of Psychology (Jinaru, 2007). This is a more technical approach and offers no traces reference to Aristotle’s thinking at first glance, except the canonical explanation of the *psyche* and *logos* compound (Jinaru, 2007, p. 5).

A justification to study Aristotle and others

The two monographs authored by the History of Psychology chair of Timi oara University have been published by the same local editor (Eurobit) in 1997 and 2001. *Istoria psihologiei universale i române ti de la origini pâ n în prezent (History of universal and Romanian phychology from origins to the present day*, Eurobit, 1997) is the course taught by Pavel Petroman at Timi oara University as fundamental discipline for the students in Psychology, second year of study, two semesters. Quite a quantity of material amounting to 284 printed pages beginning with a short author’s introduction that announces a “great effort” of learning.

The second book, *Devenirea psihologiei. Psihologie implicit* (Development of psychology. Implicit Psychology) has been edited in 2001 and endeavors to develop a concept of *implicit psychology*. The *History* is anterior and obviously constituted the starting point for the second book. It begins with a methodological section entitled itself “Istoria psihologiei” (History of Psychology) and discusses issues of History in general related to psychology as historical approach, developing the concept of *implicit psychology (psihologie implicit)* as descriptor of any amount of psychological doctrines developed before the establishment of Psychology as a science. The historiological method assumed (p. 4) is announced to operate judgments of truth therefore to be a rational decision between historical doctrines and concepts. We could probably conjecture that historiographical concept similar to R. Rorty’s *rational history of thinking* (Rorty, Schneewind, Skinner, 1984, p. 49-75) is radically assumed as educational paradigm. Historical methodology background expected in an introductory section named “General considerations regarding History” (Petroman, 2001, pp. 6-7) is limited to quotations from Conta (without reference), Mihai Eminescu, N. Labi, G. Apollinaire. There is a further section on meaning and object of History of Psychology (Petroman, 2001, pp. 30-34) that identifies object with: 1) life of great personalities of psychology; 2) ideas, their spring and evolution, from Antiquity to Middle Ages and further to our times; 3) history of problems, how they appeared and solutions they were given; 4) social history, general. Lück’s model is opposed to this as a rational problem solving but Petroman insists on the fact that history of psychology as active according to such model should not be isolated and preferred to the “contemplative” model (Traxel, Ash, etc).

A reasonable debate on methodology is still difficult and Petroman offers a synthesis of methods (case analysis, anamnesis, interview, questionnaire, text analysis, text psychological commentaries etc) in order to conclude that methods are identical for all sciences (Petroman, 2001, p. 31) and History of Psychology involves methods specific to other historical sciences like Heraldic, Numismatic, Sphragistics or Sigillography and many others: source research, archives, trace research, oral history, factorial method.

There is no methodological discussion specifically focused on forging the concept of *implicit psychology* but we reckon it consists in some sort of history of pre-modern

psychological ideas and problems that eventually entered (sometimes under new names or content) into the new modern science of psychology.

P. Petroman's Greek philosophers before Aristotle

Different histories of psychologies narrated in short become models of style and motivation for the rest of the chapter. Problems of psychology raised by texts like Bible, Koran, Gilgamesh's Epopee, Homer, etc, become pretext for mentioning Aristotle's *De anima* as chronologically the first systematic approach of psychology, after which further development is to be found within Philosophy. Words like *psychic* and *psychology* do not occur in Aristotle's *De anima* (Petroman, 1997, p. 7) we are told in a confusingly elliptic statement, more anachronistic than precise since it is a matter of fact that the word *psyche* is the very Greek version for *anima* and Aristotle's text bears the Latin translation in later medieval copies. Even *psychology* as a modern word should be semantically connected to Aristotle's Greek title of the text: *Peri psyche* means literally *On the soul* which in the ancient Greek tradition of naming books refers with no exceptions to a rational discourse¹. *On the soul* means *Psychology* for a reader of Aristotle ever since. Additional debate on the different meanings of psychology should be more honest towards Aristotle than refusing the similarity of terms.

John Locke's books have similar hesitant approach in this historiographic section. First work mentioned is *Despre intelectul uman* (1671), a Romanian translation of a non-existent title among Locke's works and *Încercare² asupra intelectului uman* (1690), Romanian version for *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*³. As a matter of practice Psychology's beginning is considered to have been occasioned by the French materialist thinkers of 18th century (D'Holbach etc), although Godenius' use of the Latin word in 1590 is mentioned afterwards but still there is no mention of Philipp Schwarzerd (alias Melanchton, 1497-1560).

Ancient Greek philosophers have a special treatment in the section called "Începuturile psihologiei în Grecia antic" ("Beginnings of psychology in Ancient Greece", Petroman, 1997, pp. 23-35; similar in Petroman, 2001, pp. 35-50). The pre-Socratic philosophers are only put behind figures of Protagoras and Gorgias considered representative for un-explained reasons and therefore object of short and unclear narration. Of Protagoras we are told that he was the author of the most known sentence "man is the measure of all things" but the following discussion does not touch the problem of psyche. The same distant and irrelevant approach can be read regarding Gorgias mentioned as the proponent of Skepticism. Other sophists like Prodicos of Keos, Trasymachos of Chalcedon and Hippias of Elis are mentioned only to illustrate the idea that sophists got to compromising the human being by abolishing moral principles and reason. We can only guess that giving such examples was not an act occasioned by considerations focused on scientific relevance since the importance of Protagoras, for instance, in the context of Aristotle's *De anima* is not given by the known sentence on the "measure of things" but by the doctrine on the relativity of sensation, or the

¹ It is a matter of standardized practice of referring in the Ancient Greece. Most pre-Socratic authors were known as having written texts named *Peri physeos* and this means that we are not facing titles but common naming of texts dealing on nature, according to Aristotle's denomination of pre-Socratics as *physikoi*. Their titles mean *rational (investigation) discourse on nature* and it is implicit a denomination of a discourse different from religious or mythical. See G.S.Kirk and J.E. Raven, 1957, pp. 100-101.

² We tacitly correct what we understand as a typo mistake: therefore replace *Inceracer* with *Încercare*.

³ The most known principle in Locke's psychology (*nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*) is reproduced erroneously as well: *nihil est in intellectu quod prius fuerit in sensu*, thought the translation of the Latin missed sentence is correct.

denial of its validity. Aristotle encounters such claims also in *Metaphysics*, where he mentions Empedocles, Anaxagoras and Democritus and the maxim of Protagoras, an outcome or result of physical speculation, according to a note to 426 by R.D. Hicks (Aristotle, 1907), as well as in *De sensu*. Also, Plato has a discussion in *Theaetethus* 156 a-c, 159 c-d.

Nor is Socrates better served as a *psychologist* in this “implicit” meaning of the book who became an *authentic philosopher* especially because he “turned the focus of reflection from Cosmos to human being” (Petroman, 1997, p. 24). The quotation from Xenophon does not endorse this claiming neither does the following narrative about *Maieutics*. We should note then that *impiety* is the correct rephrasing of the Greek *asebeia*, one of the accusations formulated against Socrates for not being able to acknowledge the gods that the city acknowledges and for introducing new deities more exactly, and not for studying celestial bodies as P. Petroman says on the page 26 (Petroman 1997).

The second book (Petroman, 2001) has only few developments but admirably mentions Romeo Poenaru’s use of Socratic *maieutics* in forging *teaching erotetics* (see p. 37). There is also a chronological table added on page 39 and a short presentation of some of Socrates’ followers (Cyrenaics, Megarics, Cynics, after Gilson).

Plato is addressed as the “second great philosopher of Antiquity” in both books and we are told that he – we may like it or not – “reduced” reality to ideas, justice, beauty and human beings (Petroman, 1997, p. 26 respectively Petroman, 2001, p. 41). An acceptably accurate description of functions of the soul and *anamnesis* in *Phaedo* follows and then a few commentaries that approximate Platonic concepts with modern psychological keywords are offered: *anamnesis* as a process is compared to the theory of exogenetic perturbing factors in modern psychology, associationism is found in the Platonic discussion on perception (p. 28).

Some surprising conclusions come on the following page, like the statement that Socrates argues for the sensorial knowledge still considering that cognitive processes cannot be reduced to the reproduction of sense data. We find such a statement at least confusing and impossible to endorse on the basis of canonic Socratic resources.

Aristotle’s *De anima* and psychology in Petroman’s view

Similar statements open the chapter on Aristotle (named “Aspects of Psychology in Aristotle’s works” and thus contradicting previous sentences concerning lack of a psychology in Aristotle and any pre-modern texts – Petroman, 1997) under the introductory passage “General considerations” where students may find out that for both Plato and Aristotle *knowledge* is a preeminently rational activity oriented towards sensible things (p. 30) – any details would be useful to understand how Platonic rationalism can be assumed in sensorial terms and then how Aristotelian concept of soul describes some set of ideas that change according to circumstances. Though, the second book (Petroman, 2001, p. 44) has the title of the corresponding chapter changed (“Aristotel p rintele psihologiei” / “Aristotle the father of Psychology”) but the content remained untouched with very little adjustments.

A second section of the chapter on Aristotle is named “De anima – first book of psychology”. First of all we encounter a description of the form and matter relation: form “organizes body in order to bring it to perfection because matter cannot be conceived without form”. This statement has grounding on *De anima* II, 3 and 4, as well as the exposition of the three levels of union body and soul have together: body united with the vegetative soul, body united with the sensitive soul, respectively body united with the intelligible soul (pp. 30-31). We identified a non-distinct use of the concepts *matter* and *body*, which is illegitimate in Aristotelian context. The first and the second chapters of *De anima II* are a strong argument against such identification (Aristotle, 1968). Half a page is then dedicated to the brief description of vegetative, sensitive and intellective soul and then *De memoria and*

reminiscentia is mentioned as a second source for theory of memory and recollection. Of some interest must be the Aristotelian confusion between larynx and pharynx mentioned on page 32 among other components of the phonetic organs, then language as collective creation.

Other Aristotelian works shortly described are: *De somno et vigilia* as source of theories about sleep, wake, affectivity, desire, feeling, passion, that sensation determines pleasure and desire. It is important to note the mentioning that desires become passions or movements of the soul (distinctive Aristotelian judgment) and the dependency of such movements on the biological age. *Nicomachean Ethics* is given as source for this with an inexact reference, impossible to locate; next to the quotation Theophrastus and La Bruyère are announced as followers of the idea that human characters must be formed according to human nature.

A brief conclusion is exposed (Petroman, 1997, p. 33; Petroman, 2001, p. 47-48) where most if the modern psychological problems are found to have roots in Aristotle's *De anima*: division of psychic processes, analysis of sensibility, five analyzers, affectivity, and will as starting points. Some mistakes are considered to be found in Aristotle, namely heart as place of psychic phenomena and processes, brain as refrigerating organ meant to compensate cooling produced by the heart. It is obvious that such statements are present in Aristotle's psychological and biological texts but inappropriate interpretations make them sound ridiculous. It is nevertheless important to point out that brain as a cooling system seems to be actually a scientific truism nowadays: "Brain cooling is an essential thermoregulatory adaptation in heat stressed animals" reads an introductory course in Biology randomly googleized in a hurry at the end of March 2011 (website of Davidson College, N.C.). Names of modern psychologists that appreciated Aristotle's ideas are offered in the end to support the importance of Aristotle's "prehistorical" psychology, such as Piaget and Freud. Formal logic is strangely asserted in the end as a psychological problem, although no paragraph was describing or mentioning it before. About one page is then spent on biographical details under the title of section three: "Who was Aristotle, *de facto*?", containing strictly chronological information about Aristotle's life and activity, with some more inexact information for instance on a work called *Logica (Logic)*, title that actually does not exist as such.

After the chapter dedicated to ancient philosophy ends a special discussion follows on links between medicine and psychology. Another part provokes interest for philosophers, namely the chapter on Middle Ages. Though it is not the focus for the present paper still some remarks should be done regarding the concepts of Antiquity and Middle Ages that mingle at the beginning of that chapter. It is assumed for instance that Antiquity ends on strictly chronological basis when the B.C. calendar ends. First centuries of "our age" are understood to begin with Philosophical Hellenism namely Stoicism, Neo-Platonism and Eclectics, assuming for instance Plotinus as Medieval philosopher, probably on the model of Fr. Parot and M. Richelle (1995).

A. Jinaru's positivist approach

Jinaru asserts a non-permissive approach to philosophical subjects and mentions historical denominations like "peri psyche", "de anima", "noetic", "tymology" etc. under the qualification of *archaisms* (Jinaru, 2007, p. 6). Jinaru assumes the perspective that psychology may have a long past but a short history thus cutting any approach to antiquity or medieval subjects. *Empirical psychology* or pre-scientific is thus only accepted as a far away subject specific to mythology and folklore, along with philosophers, theologians, moralists or literates of all ages.

Aristotle's *De anima* is only talked about on half a page starting from the fact that it has been considered as the first psychological treaty by various historians. But subjects like

nature of the soul, relation of the soul with Divinity, ephemeral or eternal character, relation between the soul and matter, etc., do not stand in the view of Jinaru and may even be considered non-appealing since the majority of historians agree that Psychology was not a science before second half of the nineteenth century. Several fields of knowledge are being listed as hosts for pre-psychological subjects (metaphysics, logic, esthetics, religion, ethics, jurisprudence, politics, economy, etc) with no link to psychology as such.

Nevertheless, a distinction is useful in order to understand Jinaru's radical view, namely that between speculative method based on introspection (*philosophical psychology*) and *positive* approach of empirical tested hypothesis practiced by modern psychology (Jinaru, 2007, p. 7). The empiricist model of science is this proposed as privileged perspective or basis for distinguishing between pre-psychology and psychology itself; fundamental distinction is being made on method and *object* as well. This means that positivist approach on object is an important breakthrough of psychology during the last two centuries of natural sciences models of development.

A list of explanations given on page 9 is illuminating in offering the understanding for such a radical opinion. First, the Greek philosophers were not able to contribute to elucidating such complex realities as the soul is because they had to discover first the *physis*; it was only after Sophists and Socratics discovered the human subjectivity that philosophers succeeded in understanding piece by piece the ineffable of the psychic life (it is finally understandable why Petroman had isolated Sophists and Socrates as first philosophers to express concerns regarding *psyche* – perhaps based on a similar historiographical sourcebook); second, it is the historical domination of metaphysics that is problematic as such: since philosophy and psychology used to be one and the same *corpus* during centuries we should bring justice to Psychology. Plato was hesitant on accepting or not the divisibility of soul thus impeding on the modern valuable indifference on subjects like *nature of soul, eternity or non-materiality* and then the baroque and illuminist confusion between savant and philosopher added new conceptual problems (p. 10).

Third, it took all these centuries for relevant number of empirical cases to accumulate because traditional philosophical methods proved incapable of seizing their importance. Further, it is essential to acknowledge that experimental sciences were born as a matter of fact later than formal and deductive sciences like mathematics and logic just because it was necessary that the former exploit the methodological accumulations of the second (p. 11).

As a consequence, pre-modern philosophical psychologies are not to be considered as acceptable objective histories of psychology since psychology itself is acknowledged as a result of knowledge “scientification” movement specific to the nineteenth century intelligentsia determined to depart from the “Romantic non-rationalist wanderings” of the first half of the century and embrace the new positivist spirit invoked by Auguste Comte.

Conclusion

It is worth mentioning that Timi oara West University's School of Psychology had two opposed perspectives towards classical philosophy and especially Aristotle's *De anima* during its twenty years of existence: first there was Petroman's long beginning regarding Greek philosophy and Aristotle as worth studying due to coherent concepts of *perception, memory, mind process* etc., though there are hesitant affirmations concerning the qualification of such concepts taken as part of *implicit psychology*. Then there is the second approach of A. Jinaru which mentions Aristotle as an object of *some* historians of psychology but assumes an empiricist distant view towards what he calls *philosophical psychology* similar in some aspects with mythology, metaphysics, theology and morality.

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