



**ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ**  
**SCOSAAR**

## **HABILITATION THESIS**

**PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY OF BIOLOGY:  
A TRANS-DISCIPLINARY PROJECT OF A PHILOSOPHICAL  
ANTHROPOLOGY**

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## **SUMMARY OF THE THESIS**

In my habilitation thesis, I have tried to present in a synthetic and summative manner the main themes and ideas that I have addressed in the papers published after obtaining the scientific title of doctor in philosophy, focusing primarily on the books, and then on some of the studies and articles published in scientific reviews and other collective volumes. They address topics pertaining to the theory of philosophical categories, philosophy and methodology of social sciences and humanities (philosophy of history, political philosophy, philosophy of economy), philosophy of biology and economic and philosophical anthropology. I will focus on these latter issues, because they are my main concern at present and will be in the near the future, as it was shown in the final part of the thesis, where I briefly talked about future research projects and the issues I intent to study in the coming years.

In my book *Între istorie și filosofie. Sistemul lui R.G. Collingwood (Between History and Philosophy: R.G. Collingwood's Philosophical System, 2009)* I have discussed a few problems in the philosophy of history, particularly the issues of historicism and historism, with particular reference to Croce and Gentile. The main original contribution of the book is the critical investigation of the hypothesis of Collingwood's radical conversion to absolute historicism (formulated for the first time by T.M. Knox). In my view, the idea of identity between philosophy and history, formulated by Collingwood in his later work, could be better understood with reference to the idea of 'dialectical identity' between the two disciplines, in which philosophy and history are conceived as two distinct but inseparable forms of human experience and knowledge, placed in a hierarchy with some partial overlaps, the relationship between them being given by the fact that philosophy makes explicit what is implicit in history. Consequently, what I attempted throughout the book was to reject the radical conversion to absolute historicism hypothesis by identifying a profound continuity in Collingwood's work concerning the relationship between philosophy and history and a coherent understanding of the *rapprochement* between them, given that none of them should lose their identity and autonomy.

The next book I have published after obtaining the Ph.D. in Philosophy is *Cercetări de istorie a filosofiei (Investigations in the History of Philosophy, 2012)*. The texts included in this volume do not have a perfect thematic unity, but there still are some intersecting and overlapping 'motives' around which they are grouped, while the methodological option for the historical approach of the discussed issues is the reason for choosing the title of the book from many possible versions. A first group of texts concerns problems of the general theory of the philosophical categories, which became of interest for me since 2008, when as a scientific researcher at the 'Constantin Rădulescu-Motru' Institute of Philosophy and Psychology of the Romanian Academy I

became a member of the team that worked on the research program 'Classical and Modern in the Theory of Categories'. In this context, under the coordination of Acad. Alexandru Surdu, I have started at the Romanian Academy Publishing House, in 2009, the publication of a series of annual volumes under the title 'Studies in the theory of categories', for publishing the research results of this project, which reached the 10th volume in 2018. A second category of texts included in the aforementioned volume that I wanted to talk about includes studies of philosophy (more precisely, methodology) of social sciences and humanities: philosophy of history, political philosophy, philosophy of economics, philosophical anthropology.

The third book published after obtaining the Ph.D. degree is *Egalitatea de șanse. Scurtă introducere (Equality of Opportunity. A short introduction, 2013)*, which is the product of the research undertaken as a team member in the project POSDRU/109/2.1/ G/82343, funded by the European Social Fund, between May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 and August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013. The book integrates in the wider context of my interest in the philosophy of social sciences and humanities, in this case in political philosophy, yet it does not address methodological issues, but focuses instead on examining a fundamental category in this field, that of equality and of a special sub-species, the concept of equality of opportunity. A first part of the book is devoted to the general philosophical idea of equality, the second deals with the principles of equality, the third part deals with the typology of equality, the fourth with the problem of equality of opportunity, distinguishing between the formal equality and the substantial equality and proposing a comparative analysis of Nozick's and Rawls' doctrines about equality of opportunity, while the fifth part presents some possible directions of social action towards establishing this kind of equality in the contemporary society.

The next volume I have mentioned in this thesis is not an original personal work, but an anthology that includes studies of well-known scholars from a particular field of anthropological research, namely economic anthropology. The book's title is *Antropologie economică. Antologie de texte (Economic Anthropology. An Anthology of Texts, 2014)*, and the idea of its publication came about when, while teaching an economic anthropology course at the University of Economic Studies in Bucharest, I noticed the absolute lack of any specialized bibliography in this field in Romanian. Thus, the first thing I thought it had to be done was the translation (by a team of members of the Department of Philosophy, Social Sciences and Humanities from the aforementioned University) and the publication in an anthology of some of the most important studies belonging to Western scholars in the field economic anthropology. The texts in this volume are organized into two categories.

In the first, more substantial category, there are included studies, articles and book chapters that deal with the methodology of economic anthropology, especially the relations between economic anthropology and economic science, the emphasis being

placed on the idea of complementarity between the two disciplines. The subject-matter of most of these texts is the dispute between the substantivist and formalist orientations in economic anthropology, starting from its origins in Polanyi's work, along with some of more recent, alternative approaches, such as institutionalism or the ecological perspective. In the second category, studies that propose interpretations of fundamental institutions of human societies (exchange systems and religious institutions) were grouped, from the perspective of economic anthropology, as well as works that represent applications, i.e. ethnographic investigations on specific aspects of economic life and specific activities from different cultures and geographic regions (such as investment, production, exchange, demonstrative consumption), that use the specific methodological instruments of this discipline.

The last book I wanted to talk about here is the most important one for the general discussion: *Homo œconomicus și competitorii săi. O perspectivă trans-disciplinară asupra antropologiei economice (Homo Œconomicus and its Competitors. A Trans-Disciplinary Perspective on Economic Anthropology, 2017)*. The book goes on with what I have started with the publication of the *Anthology* of fundamental texts mentioned earlier. It is a large book, of more than 500 pages, and was written in collaboration with my colleague from the Department of Philosophy, Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Economic Studies, Lucia-Ovidia Vreja.

It must be said from the beginning that this is not a book of economic anthropology, but one *about* economic anthropology, namely about its theoretical foundations and its fundamental assumptions. Economic anthropology is understood as a frontier discipline, situated at the point of convergence between economics and anthropological research, and under these circumstances is not intended to replace economical research in any way but to support and complete these theoretical approaches, bringing into question other, specific ways in which human beings can be understood in the context of their various ideas, actions and decisions belonging to the sphere of economic behavior.

The most important part of the book consists of a comparative analysis of the three main methodological assumptions about human nature that underpinned the explanatory constructions in economic anthropology, i.e. those manners of using a specific understanding of human nature in order to explain the diversity of behaviors in the sphere of the economy: man as a moral and cultural being, man as a social being, man as a utility maximizing rational being (*homo œconomicus*). Considering none of them to be a sufficiently grounded and comprehensive theoretical basis of analysis, in the next chapter I proposed a new working hypothesis, taken from the philosophy of biology and some other disciplines built on the Darwinian theory of evolution: man could be conceived in a more appropriate manner as a product of his evolutionary

history, as *homo sapiens*. The formulation of this new explanatory hypothesis on human nature and the sketching of the principles of a philosophical economic anthropology based on evolutionary theory is the main original contribution of the book.

I have then critically analyzed the various theoretical perspectives derived from the evolutionary theory that attempt to use these ideas for building a better explanation of human nature and behaviors: sociobiology, behavioral ecology, evolutionary psychology, memetics and the co-evolution or dual inheritance theory. The approach I have preferred is a cross-disciplinary one, which uses ideas from economics, history, anthropology, sociology, cultural theory, philosophy of science, psychology, neurology and cognitive science, but the discourse remains philosophical: the goal is not a descriptive approach, typical for anthropology, but a philosophical approach, that is, the goal it is not just the description of behaviors, but the identification of a theory capable of explaining those behaviors.

In the final section of the first part of the thesis, I have talked about a series of studies that best reflect my recent theoretical interests and form the basis for work in progress and developing future projects. These are some works dedicated to the philosophy of pre-Darwinian, Darwinian, and Neo-Darwinian biological evolutionism. The ultimate goal of the project for which they are a beginning is to build a viable argument in favor of the idea proposed in the book I have just discussed, namely that human nature can be usefully and successfully studied if the methodological assumptions are based on principles and ideas taken from the philosophy of biological evolution. In this regard, I have addressed a number of issues on which I have noticed that some theoretical confusion and misunderstanding still persist, so I felt that a few conceptual and historical clarifications are welcomed. I will only mention here the titles of some of them: *Categoria de specie biologică în interpretări realiste și nominaliste (The Category of Biological Species in Realist and Nominalist Interpretations, 2013)*; *Ideea de specie în filosofia contemporană a biologiei (The Idea of Species in the Contemporary Philosophy of Biology, 2016)*; *Ideea filosofică de evoluție prin selecție naturală (The Philosophical Idea of Evolution by Means of Natural Selection, 2014)*; *Ideea de teleologie în filosofia biologiei (The Idea of Teleology in the Philosophy of Biology, 2015)*; *Semnificația conceptuală a „sintezei moderne” în filosofia contemporană a biologiei (The Conceptual Meaning of ‘Modern Synthesis’ in the Contemporary Philosophy of Biology, 2018)*.

In the second part of the thesis I briefly discussed how these results relate to my future research projects. First of all, I intend to continue my research on the fundamental issues of the philosophy of evolutionary biology, which is at this time my main concern. A second way in which I intend to pursue the philosophical interpretation of the ideas of biological evolutionism is to investigate the ways in which

they can be used in a transdisciplinary research destined to build a general theory of human nature, about which I believe it must be a philosophical anthropology based on principles derived from Darwinian and Neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory. Some of the issues that I think I should approach in this context are: the problem of human nature itself (is it still possible today to have a meaningful discourse about the concept of human nature?); the very current problem of the transition to Anthropocene and the so-called post-humanity (and thus the transition from human to post-human species); the question of the general relevance of Darwinian and Neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory for contemporary consciousness (how well is evolutionary theory known and understood today, and how can one explain this situation?); the issue of social Darwinism (how real is the danger that any theory about human nature that starts from Neo-Darwinism will inevitably end as social Darwinism?); the difficulty of building a philosophical anthropology based on the philosophy of biology that is not affected by scientism and reductionism (how is an evolutionary philosophical anthropology that does not suffer from scientism and reductionism even possible?).