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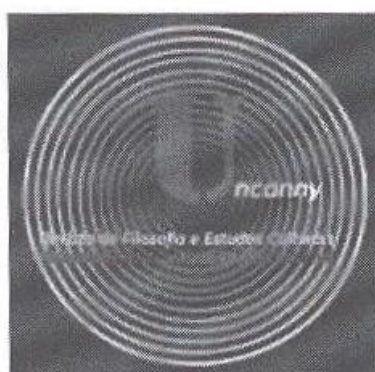


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Philosophy and Cultural Studies Journal

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Hermeneutics of Loving Relationship "I-Other"

Helena B. Starovoytenko,¹ Anastasia N. Isaeva²

Hermeneutic method as a way of interpretation of texts has a great history and originates in the works of Aristotle, Plato, Origen, Augustine of Hippo, etc. Modern hermeneutics emerged in the works of Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Hans Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Merab Mamardashvili. At present this method is widely used in psychology and social science.³ In this article we consider the contemporary development of hermeneutics as a method of personality science, in particular of *personology*.

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³ *Vide*: Richard A. Shweder, "Rethinking culture and personality theory. Part III: From Genesis and Typology to Hermeneutics and Dynamics." *Ethos*, 8:1 (1980): 60-94; Stanley B. Messer, Louis A. Sass and Robert L. Woolfolk, *Hermeneutics and psychological theory: Interpretive perspectives on personality, psychotherapy, and psychopathology* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988); Richardson, Frank and Blaine Fowers, "Critical theory, postmodernism, and hermeneutics: Insights for critical psychology", In Dennis Fox, Isaac Prilleltensky and Stephanie Austin (Eds), *Critical psychology: An introduction* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997): 265-283; Uwe Flick, *An introduction to qualitative research*, 4th edition. (London: Sage, 2009).

The field of study is “the new personology”,⁴ which differs from the traditional personality psychology in its focus on culture, theoretical synthesis, interdisciplinarity and reference to multiple humanities, and a pluriactivity in practices. The essence of the personological approach to particular research is the acquisition of psychological knowledge of personality through the unity of cultural experience, fundamental knowledge, practice, ways of individual self-knowledge, and a life change.⁵ The acquired knowledge is evaluated through a scientific, instrumental, and existential significance for the understanding, explanation, and self-investigation of a personality.

In the forefront of our research stands the cultural-personological approach, and in particular, the use of the hermeneutic method. In this paper while reconstruction of the model of personological hermeneutics we rely on the ideas of Martin Heidegger ([1927] 1996), Jean-Paul Sartre ([1943] 1992), Paul Ricoeur ([1992] 2008) and Merab Mamardashvili (1997).⁶ In this work we provide an example of how the method serves the task of explication, generalization, and modeling of the knowledge about *the abilities of the I*

⁴ Cf. Elena B. Starovoytenko, “Personology of relationship with oneself: cultural transpective”, *World of psychology*, 64:4 (2010): 13-25; Vadim A. Petrovsky and Elena B. Starovoytenko, 2012. “The science of personality: four projects of general personology.” *Psychology, Journal of the Higher School of Economics* 9:1 (2012) : 21-39. <https://psy-journal.hse.ru/en/2012-9-1.html>; Elena B. Starovoytenko, *Personology. Life of personality in culture*. (Moscow: Academic Project, 2015).

⁵ Elena B. Starovoytenko, *Personology. Life of personality in culture*. (Moscow: Academic Project, 2015).

⁶ Vide: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trad. Joan Stambaugh. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996); Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trad. Vitaliy I. Kolyadko (Moscow: Terra, Republic, 2002); Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trad. Boris M. Scouratov (Moscow: Publishing house of humanitarian literature, 2008); Merab Mamardashvili, *Psychological topology of path* (Spb: RHGI, 1997).

in love relationships to the *Other*.⁷

Hermeneutical research of the abilities of I conducted on the basis of texts by Jean-Paul Sartre (*Being and Nothingness*) and Roland Barthes ([1977] 2002).⁸ We believe the new understanding of certain philosophical and psychological works was implemented in this study. Some examples, which explain the specifics of applying hermeneutics in the field of “new personology”, are provided below.

Model of Personological Hermeneutics

The documents valuable for hermeneutic research in the field of “new personology” can be called “personality texts”. A good text contains such a connection of meanings, which opens a possibility of a different and better life for a person. These texts are constructed not only of words, but of symbols, images, colors, and tones of sound, which in a cultural language can “say” or “let the personality say” what is necessary for its fulfillment and unity with other people. “A personality text” contains something that clarifies vital puzzles and questions for a person: a story, a picture, a novel, a philosophical treatise, a psychological work, a confession, an autobiography, etc. By reading these documents a person gains new interpretations of his or her life events, him or herself and the Other, and this process facilitates his or her general understanding of text pertaining to the humanities

⁷ Elena B. Starovoytenko, “Abilities of the I in relationships with the Other: hermeneutics and reflection”, *Psychology. Journal of the Higher School of Economics*, 10:4 (2013): 121-42. <https://publications.hse.ru/en/articles/101962624>

⁸ Roland Barthes, *A lover's discourse, fragments*, trad. Viktor Lapickiy (Moscow: Ad Marginem, 2002).

that originate from many different cultures.

The generation of such texts can coincide for a person with the dynamics of his or her life, which involves a continuous creation of inner text, which interacts with texts of other people. The texts created by personality in its different vital states (yearnings and intuition, memories and thoughts, imagination and attribution) become instruments that the personality uses to "read" and interpret its life, creates its own chronotope, which can become a part of culture.⁹

The hermeneutic experience in personology is "reading of the text through the other texts". It is considered a scientific investigation dedicated to finding a solution to a new problem (for example, in this paper the problem is revelation of "abilities of the I" by applying the method of personological hermeneutics) in correspondence with the wide text of conceptual understanding of "personality", which was formed by the investigator- interpreter. The texts that serve as a basis for investigation are those towards which the investigator has a special disposition due to a rational and internal movement he or she has already felt while trying to reach a solution of the stated problem. Merab Mamardashvili says about this: "our understanding and our thinking is organized thus that from the text, even from the Gospels, nothing can reach us. It will come if we have inside the nonverbal root of the experienced misfortune".¹⁰

Hermeneutics can be exercised in different forms that include

⁹ Cf. Starovoytenko, 2011.

¹⁰ Mamardashvili, 1997, 88.

intuitive construction, logical interpretation, reconstituting reconstruction, creative modeling, and elaboration of a new practice. In a single hermeneutic process these forms can interact and interchange depending on the tasks set by the investigator. The desired knowledge about personality can be contained in the explicit semantics of the text, or can be hidden by the author in the subtext. It may be pushed aside by the already performed interpretations of the work, or stay unclear to the author himself. According to Paul Ricoeur, hermeneutics consists of the extraction of the

...meaning potential, left unexploited, even repressed by the very process of systematization and of school formation to which we owe the great doctrinal corpora. If one cannot reawaken and liberate these resources that the systems of the past tend to stifle and to conceal, no innovation is possible, and present thought would only have a choice between repetition and aimless wandering.¹¹

Hermeneutics of “the known” and “the unknown” knowledge when turning to the consciousness and the unconsciousness, intuition and logic, feeling and cognition of the author is an innovative action, which unleashes the previously concealed resources of the text for the solution of some current scientific problem in the field of personality study.

Hermeneutics of a text is an act of creative perception, which is aimed towards solving the mystery, deciphering the symbols, breaking

¹¹ Ricoeur, 2008, 350.

through the unbreakable, resolving contradictions, shedding light on the dark contents, transforming the meaning, and inspiring the progress to the truth.

This is an introduction of the work in the cognitive, emotional and practical life of the interpreter, and its change. It is a breakthrough to the area of the unknown, opening of the limits of the known, existential experience of extracting the value out of the concealed. The texts are read by the interpreter substituting the meanings with his own, changing the meanings, transforming the intonations of the author. The meanings proposed by the author and the meanings revealed by the interpreter often don't concur, but, as Merab Mamardashvili mentioned, with the great books these "errors" are good.

A text is a complicated speech, thought, symbolic, and emotional structure, created by various states of the author, which have the same high value for the hermeneutic process. Penetration into the style, genre, manner, unique expressions of the author, revelation of his thought process, compassion with his feelings and impressions, readiness to share his life experience makes up the holistic relationship between the work and the person who actively understands it (interpreter). In that case Merab Mamardashvili says:

my task is not the description of the beauty of the text literate beauty, but the revelation of the way of thinking of the person, who had the experience which is no different in its matter from the one we can have. It's just that we can experience and not understand it, and another person understood and wrote it down, so it's interesting to

look at it.¹²

The practice of personological hermeneutics is effective when the interpreter assumes the part of a “practicing phenomenologist” together with the author. This means to be able to use thought, feeling, imagination, and text to influence the intellectual, aesthetic, and practical life of many people. The texts of author and interpreter, the culture that stands behind them “make sense when they are immediately, individually woven in, when they constitute this life”.¹³ Both texts can touch and define the history of the I of many people, including the creators. “The affection of the self by the other that self finds in fiction, a privileged milieu for thought experiments that cannot be eclipsed by the “real” relations of interlocution and interaction”.¹⁴ Hermeneutics is a complex personological phenomenon co-existence of the author, the interpreter, the reader, “personality”, and a theme or the character of the texts.

Hermeneutics allow us to see the flow of author’s thought and word in a general continuum of thinking and writing, directed at “the mystery of personality”. The hermeneutic experience reveals that the author in his ideas continues the long cultural process of cognition and description of personality, marked by the “flashes of genius” of prominent thinkers.

¹² Mamardashvili, 1997, 34

¹³ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁴ Ricoeur, 2008, 384.

Presence of the author along the way of revelation of "personality", gives the interpreter the possibility to open the continuity, correspondence, synchronicity of the author's search with the search of his predecessors, contemporaries and successors. The interpreter finds himself in an eternal "laboratory", where a community of intellectual experimenters creates and modifies the knowledge of personality. Merab Mamardashvili says about this:

There is a continuum of thought and a continuum of state. As soon as we started thinking, we moved towards what already exists, what stays still, and shows itself in us, when we take the path of correspondence. We start to coincide with Mandelstam, Proust, Dante, etc.¹⁵

In this sense, any important author under the view of the interpreter becomes synchronous to many authors and intellectual movements, dispersed throughout the history of culture. In a hermeneutic process, Proust, as the creator of a great novel and the discoverer of new worlds of personality, coincides in cultural time with Pound, Eliot, Joyce, surrealism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and existentialism (Mamardashvili). The text of the work, the texts of its theoretical co-authors, and the text of the interpretation meet in a wide, polyphonic, multidimensional space of senses and meanings, which reveal "personality".

Personological hermeneutics extends the life of the work and prolongs the existence of the author in a historico-cultural process. If

¹⁵ Mamardashvili, 1997, 111.

the constructions and interpretations are marked by the investigator's talent and are based on subtle understanding and free improvisation, they strengthen the influence of this text in every area of personality cognition, from philosophy to literature. Hermeneutics is a way of the text's existence; we are "in the conscious infinity, which is opened by this work". In multiple interpretations, relationships, and impressions that emerge within this work centered on personality, the latter gradually stands out in the completeness of its "whole", and its essential, generally valid motive, idea, meaning, and symbol are being revealed. The making of the author's I during writing and the ascent of this making to the transindividual level opens up.

Jean-Paul Sartre says:

The genius of Proust, even when reduced to the works produced, is no less equivalent to the infinity of possible points of view which one can take on that work and which we will call the "inexhaustibility" of Proust's work. But is not this inexhaustibility which implies a transcendence and a reference to the infinite-is this not an "hexis" at the exact moment - when one apprehends it on the object? The essence finally is radically severed from the individual appearance which manifests it, since on principle it is that which must be able to be manifested by an infinite series of individual manifestations.¹⁶

Interpretation reveals in the "personality texts" that which is related to the individual and ontological structure of our soul and life; it relates to the historical and the timeless aspects of being and cognition

¹⁶ Sartre, 2002, 22.

of personality.

Detection of valuable personological content in “personality texts” is determined by the quality of the hermeneutic model, which sets the interpretation procedure. In general, the procedure of hermeneutic analysis and synthesis in the personological context can be described as follows:

1. Setting a new “personality” problem, which could in future be successfully elaborated using hermeneutics.
2. Actualizing the current understanding of this problem by the researcher, and uncovering gaps in its preliminary conceptualization.
3. Identifying the relevant works that have undetected potential for building the concept of the solution for the problem.
4. Elaborating a system of categories and ideas, which generates a “code” for reading, an instrument for research, and a project for the reconstruction of the text.
5. Searching for the fragments where the authors reach the “clearest clarity of insight” (Heidegger),¹⁷ logical purity of thought expression, and outline the ideas that contribute to the solution.
6. Applying phenomenological understanding and intuition in order to reproduce, explicate, and extract knowledge that is concealed, developing understanding of the essence of that aspect of personality, which has been problematized by the researcher.
7. Collecting, systematizing, organizing into a whole (logos),

¹⁷ Cf. Heidegger, 1996.

development of knowledge about the aspect of personality that is being examined, retrieved from the texts.

8. Constructing a conceptual model, which contains a new solution for the set “personality” problem, based on the synthesis of the thought experience of the text authors and the researcher-interpreter.

9. Reflexive delimitation of the constructed model and the notions of personality, which belong to the authors of the researched texts.

Various kinds of hermeneutics are important for personology. For example the philosophical interpretation of literary text, which was practiced by M. Mamardashili towards Proust’s novel *In Search of Lost Time*. Or psychological interpretation of philosophical and literature texts. Also it can be philosophical and psychological interpretation of the individual self-knowledge texts, and a historical and cultural hermeneutics of confession texts and autobiographies. Also it is about a philosophical or psychological comprehension by the author of his own life and Self, which is embodied in many texts of self-knowledge in culture.

Personological interpretation of cultural texts presupposes the implementation of general scientific and specifically personological hermeneutic guidelines. In search for sources of hermeneutic analysis and synthesis we consulted a wide range of documents, which form the European humanities culture and share similar vision of the authors on personality existence. Among them we separated works based on

ontological and existential approaches, where the philosophers could express their interest in the psychological knowledge of personality. Among those, we selected the works of Jean-Paul Sartre ([1943] 2002) and Roland Barthes ([1977] 2002). In our opinion, these texts are connected by a mutually complementary understanding of the abilities of I, which are formed, increased and multiplied in relationship to the Other.

In our study we use the term of I instead of Self out of concern that I is the reflective modality of Self. When we are thinking about ourselves our inner voice says “*I think*”, “*I feel*”, “*I do*”, “*I’m*”, etc. The I is the genuine epicenter of reflective life of personality (Starovoytenko 2010). In our understanding of I we rely on the wide context of philosophical and psychological approaches to the Self (John Locke, David Hume, Mary Calkins, William James, Daniel Dennett, Heinz Kohut, Donald Winnicott, Dan Zahavi, etc.). On our opinion I is the Self which reflectively owned and realized by personality. Applying of “the I” in this study is necessary because of hermeneutical analysis of reflective text of Barthes and because of emphasis on reflective position of personality in the text of Sartre. In addition, we believe that “the I” can change the view of classical theories of Self and can discover unsolved potentials of this knowledge in personology.

Abilities of the I in a loving relationship to the Other

In this chapter we would like to reveal how the hermeneutic method may be applied to study a loving relationship. The brightest

and deepest experience of a relationship to the Other, which awakens the maximum abilities of the I is love of a person. Love is a primary relationship to the Other and a powerful intention that elevates every vital relationship it penetrates. A loving relationship of the I to the Other is a freely unfolding project of "giving oneself and the Other more being" (Sartre). The loving-I by fulfilling its specific potential in the diversity of a loving relationship forms abilities through the affirmation of the Beloved's value.

We believe, based on our study of ideas of Sartre and Barthes, that the I in its loving relationship to the Other has the following abilities:

- *To aware a strong impression*, a being touched by the appearance of the Other. The factuality of the Beloved can be perceived by the I fully and immediately, without concealment or secrecy, from the first meeting. Knowledge and experience that the I acquires in its exciting, direct impressions of the Beloved, form its "psychic body", which exists as an Image, Imaginary, Symbolic, Text.

- *To be inspired by*, filled with the Beloved, overcoming his difference, objectness, leaving him freedom to be himself, returning to his personal presence in one's own life. This is a ability to discover each other's subjectivity in the field of the life together and one's own inner world;

- *To put the Beloved together* from the best impressions transmitted by many other people, who connected with him in different situations, and "from all the dots scattered as stars there will arise a perfect figure

– “My Other”.¹⁸

- *To identify with the Beloved's Image*, to lose the inner singleness, but at the same time respect and be responsible for his and my own autonomy resorting to the double negation: he is not I, and I am not him. The I desires to “own” the Beloved specifically as the Other, who gives it its being.

- *To achieve full identification* with the Beloved, becoming the Other for myself, and to see it as an ideal, as the highest value of love. The basis for identification is the freedom of the Beloved as an integral personality, which can fill the I, turning to it with many sides, including the ones revealed by the Lover.

- *To withdraw the Beloved* from the traditional system of identity, based on the others' assessment by the criteria of “qualities”. In this sense he cannot exist for the I as “small”, “insignificant”, “cowardly”, “insecure”, etc. “I love the Other not for his qualities but for his existence; I love not what he is but the fact that he is”.

- *To unfold before the Beloved* the vast picture of the world of possible values (knowledge, beauty, good, kindness to others, creativity), to become a generous mediator between myself and the Beloved in mastering extensive spheres of life, to model new potentials of the I, fulfilling which would draw a return feeling. “There occurs that brilliant and rare thing which is called exuberance and which is equal to Beauty”. Love in its essence is a large-scale project of the I to be loved, to renew the value being, involving the freedom of the Other

¹⁸ Barthes, 2002, 147.

in a relationship with me.

- *To become similar to a Sage and a King*, who try to be “owned” by the other person, so as to fill his inner world, “give him my world for living”, to summarize and symbolize the events of his life, to spread through all his intentions for freedom, to become an all- embracing value, to stand above all judgment. The purpose of such an expansion of the I is to create two individualities, which have mutual space for life dialogue.

- *To possess the word and the text of love* so that they would magically attract the Beloved, flow into him, deeply influence his imagination, fantasy, ideas, and desires. In an opposite awakening of love, the speech of the Beloved slips into his free involvement as an “enchanting force”. The Beloved becomes an “ideal interlocutor”, who creates the maximum resonance around the Lover. The words of the I-Lover strive to become truth for the Beloved and the response is accepted as truth.

- *To create a constant inflow of impression* about relationships for the Beloved; to overcome difficulties in the lives of two, which are open to the view of many other people; in difficult situations to return myself and the Beloved to the personal responsibility for the Other, to the loneliness of choices and decisions made in favor of the Other.

- *To understand* that the Beloved in his care and protection should not absorb the I, because the I, fully given to the Beloved, is unable to accept his independence. The dialogue of love is based on distance, which permits to subjectively elevate each other, and let the Other go,

when he wants to leave the relationship.

- *To know oneself* from the point of such aspects of love, that restrict creative potential of the I and freedom of self-determination of each one in the relationship:

“Suffering”, when the Other’s Image in the inner world of Lover becomes unbearable, and the Other is called to answer: “Turn back, look at me, see what you have made of me”.¹⁹

“Dominion”, when arises the desire to make the Other fully dependent on my presence in his world. “Because what I do is subjugate: by obeying and wanting to subjugate, I in my own way feel the desire to rule”.²⁰

“Shock”, when the Other in a joke, irony, rudeness demonstrates himself as “not-my” Other. “He is possessed by a demon who speaks through his mouth, out of which emerge, as in the fairy tales, no longer flowers, but toads. Horrible ebb of the Image”;²¹

“Abduction”, when it feels like the Other voluntarily or not appropriated me, and the I is fully projected on the Other and lost for myself. “Each time a subject “falls” in love, he revives a fragment of the archaic time when men were supposed to carry off women (in order to ensure exogamy): every lover who falls in love at first sight has something of a Sabine Woman (or of some other celebrated victim of ravishment)”;²²

¹⁹ Barthes, 2002, 92.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 184.

"Unknown", when the innermost essence of the Other eludes me, and it seems that I will not be able to know what the "unknown Other" thinks of me, how he sees me. "The other is impenetrable, intractable, not to be found; I cannot open up the other, trace back the other's origins, solve the riddle. Where does the other come from? Who is the other? I wear myself out, I shall never know.

"Discrepancy", when a confusing collision entangles my possibilities, and what the Other is capable of gaining from me. "Desire is to lack what one has-and to give what one does not have: a matter of supplements, not complements";

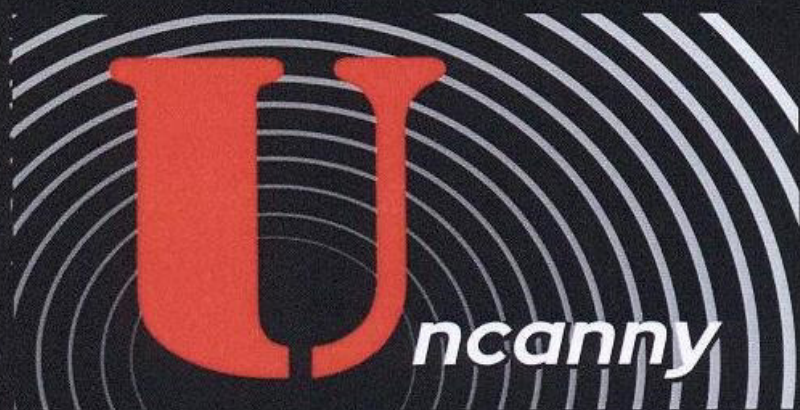
"Loss", when the Other deprives me of presence in him, lives where I am not, alienates me into the space where there is no mutuality. "I am spending my "qualities" for nothing: a whole program of affects, doctrines, awareness, and delicacy, all the brilliance my ego can command dies away, muffled in an inert space, as if – culpable thought – my quality exceeded that of the loved object, as if I were in advance of that object;

- To possess the art of reflection, understanding that on a life's scale it can be lost in a "great flow of unconscious"; to summarize my impressions of love in a firm Image, Symbol, Text of the I-Lover; to open in myself an inexhaustible ability to love. The other is my good and my knowledge: only I know him, only I make him exist in his truth... Conversely, the other establishes me in truth: it is only with the other that I feel I am "myself".²² Reflective foundation of love, that is

²² Barthes, 2002, 185.

open to the future, doesn't let its constructive dynamics to run out. Love directs the I towards the affirmation of values beyond the boundaries of relationship to the Other: in aesthetic, ethic, intellectual, practical sense. An inspiring Project is being born: the project of reconstruction and renewal of my being in the world of creativity and culture.

In the field of modern personology hermeneutics has a great perspective of search and systematization of significant knowledge of personality which contained in philosophical texts in its appeal to imaginative literature. The model of abilities of the I in loving relationship to the Other reveals new aspect of development of personality in love relationships. This aspect is significant for psychological counseling in cases of the experience of inner conflicts and risks of the loss of close relationships.



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