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Agora Hermeneutica

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Dear Friends, Esteemed Colleagues, and *Professores honoris causa* of the International Institute for Hermeneutics,

Hans-Georg Gadamer, the hermeneutician *par excellence* and the Honorary Member of the IHH, coined the expression “hermeneutics in enactment” (*Hermeneutik im Vollzug*). Bringing together the world-class scholars in philosophy, theology, literature, architecture, education, law, and medicine, should help us to understand what needs to be understood in its *Wirkungsgeschichte* and honor great minds of intellectual history by our thinking (Heidegger’s “*einen Denker achten wir nur, indem wir denken.*”).

In the spirit of our mission, International Institute for Hermeneutics continues to be an innovative new form of academic collaboration. Founded upon the recognition of a legitimate diversity of modes of human thinking, we strive to welcome different voices and be attuned to what is said and unsaid. Communication technology is at the heart of the IHH's methodology. We use it intensively, turning the IHH into a virtual *piazza globale*, where scholars from all cultural, linguistic, professional, and religious backgrounds converse freely with each other on the subjects that make us all scholars.

The International Institute for Hermeneutics has successfully completed twenty years of service to the international community of scholars interested in

hermeneutics. This anniversary gives us a welcomed opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude for all our patrons. The original idea of creating an international platform for communication among scholars of hermeneutics beyond the established academic formulas proved to be very fruitful. Responding to the transformation of the idea of international academic collaboration as caused by the rapid changes of the digital culture, the IHH is a truly virtual community where all hermeneutic voices are welcomed and taken seriously in the spirit of hermeneutic hospitality. We are convinced our hermeneutic work is already a reward in itself.

The main measurable success of the IHH apart from organizing congresses, conferences, workshops, seminars, and Summer Schools is in the area of publishing. *Analecta Hermeneutica*, a journal of the IHH, has been published since 2009. We can look back at the issues with the sense of accomplishment. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Sean McGrath, Memorial University of Newfoundland, who was instrumental in this successful endeavor. From the current issue, the journal will be edited by Prof. Dr. Ramsey Eric Ramsey and hosted on our new website. The internal editorial change should not be considered as the rapture but a continuation of our efforts to offer the possibility of an engaged discussion on phenomenological hermeneutics at the international level.

International Studies in Hermeneutics and Phenomenology at LIT Verlag is a series that foster the dialogue between hermeneutics and phenomenology. The description of lived experience and interpretation generates shared meaning through the fusion of horizons belong together. Promoting international cooperation in the philosophical traditions of phenomenology and hermeneutics, we offer the platform for sharing innovative research on the infinite task of interpretation in the spirit of hermeneutic hospitality.

Hermeneutics in Enactment: International Research in Hermeneutics and Phenomenology is a series of publications at Brill International that discloses the interpretive nature of understanding as the mode of being a human being in the world. By contrast with the prevailing compartmentalization, specialization, acquisition, and distribution of knowledge in academia and society, hermeneutics empowers us to interpret the totality of dwelling in the world. Deciphering what needs to be understood, instead of merely setting out the conditions and following rules of interpretation, reveals the indispensability of hermeneutics and phenomenology, as well as the significance of thinking and living as the community within challenging contexts. The contributors to the series are seriously engaged in critical and constructive conversation among different academic disciplines, predominantly, philosophy, theology, education, literature, law, medicine, and architecture. The interpretive nature of understanding

requires the hermeneutic ear to hear the polyphony of voices that expresses lingual mode of being in the world. Since the “language speaks,” (*die Sprache spricht*) our task is to listen to this voice and respond to it. The productive tension between listening and responding calls for an understanding of being a human being as *existentia hermeneutica*, i.e., *existentia interpretativa*. As such, our life is a hermeneutic practice of uncovering (ἀ-λήθεια, *Ver-bergung/Ent-bergung*) the reality we live in. Thus, by *doing* hermeneutics, we hope to contribute to the wellbeing of individuals, societies, and the world as caring stewards called to authentic life, commitment, and responsibility.

To pay tribute to outstanding accomplishments of our colleagues to *artes liberales*, IHH conferred the award of *Profesor honoris causa* to particularly achieved and internationally recognized scholars. In the 20 years of international and interdisciplinary collaboration, we have become a significant voice regarding the scholarship on phenomenologically oriented hermeneutic philosophy. We want to build an elite circle of Honorary professors to facilitate even closer and more intense collaboration between different disciplines. The newly awarded *Profesores honoris causa* are honored for their exceptional intellectual acuity and advancing the culture of thinking, inventiveness, and originality in contemporary academia. Acknowledging the outstanding contributions to the interpretive approach to our being-in-the-world as being-with-others, we build together *Agora Hermeneutica*, an eminent circle of world-class scholars in philosophy, theology, literature, architecture, education, law, and medicine. The newly appointed Honorary Professors are hosts and guests in our *Agora Hermeneutica*. We want to work together and bring our perspectives into the subjects we discuss as the world community in the rapidly shrinking *piazza globale*. The international society becomes increasingly conflicted and polarized. Many excellent academics retire to the private sphere. *Agora Hermeneutica* wishes to be the hermeneutic home to all of us, who are seriously engaged in contributing to the academic culture. We want to participate in the continuing process of sharing life and shaping the world we live in.

With profound gratitude and overwhelming joy, I address you and welcome you to this prestigious circle at the International Institute for Hermeneutics. Your kind acceptance of the honor of *Profesor honoris causa* expresses the importance of the interpretive approach to reality. We take the urgency of thinking in this difficult time seriously and with a sense of radical responsibility for the world we live in. As a genuinely heterogeneous community, we represent different academic approaches, races, nationalities, religions, and political beliefs. We understand tolerance in every aspect of our life, not only as a patient acknowledgment of differences but as an active

and welcoming gesture of hermeneutic hospitality toward the Other and otherness. The cordial gesture of the handshake (δεξιωσις, *dextrarum iunctio*), the touch of which we have been largely deprived of during the pandemic, reminds us constantly that there is always a possible path to the hearts of others.

The award of *Professor honoris causa* at the IHH acknowledges your unique, outstanding, and internationally acclaimed individual accomplishments. On the other hand, the community of internationally and interdisciplinarily respected colleagues endorses the esteem of the honorary title. We understand that only together, in a *communio*, a union in diversity (*in varietate concordia*), we can be salt of the earth and light of the world: τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς; τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου (Mt 5,13–14).

Czesław Miłosz, my compatriot, a Nobel Preiss Laureate (1980), and Professor of Literature at the University of California at Berkley, expressed congenially inner conflicts we have to deal with while struggling with our personal identity. When I had the pleasure to work with him at the University of California in 1992-1993, he particularly liked my expression, “the confusion of voices”; a confusion which is not to be overcome or suffocated but heroically discovered, faced, and lived.

R E P O R T

O Most High, you willed to create me a poet and now it is time for me to present a report.

My heart is full of gratitude though I got acquainted with the miseries of that profession.

By practicing it, we learn too much about the bizarre nature of man.

Who, every hour, every day and every year is possessed by self-delusion.

A self-delusion when building sandcastles, collecting postage stamps, admiring oneself in a mirror.

Assigning oneself first place in sport, power, love, and the getting of money.

All the while on the very border, on the fragile border beyond which there is a province of mumblings and wails.

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For in every one of us a mad rabbit thrashes and a wolf pack howls, so that we are afraid it will be heard by others.

Out of self-delusion comes poetry and poetry confesses to its flaw.

Though only by remembering poems once written is their author able to see the whole shame of it.

And yet he cannot bear another poet nearby, if he suspects him of being better than himself and envies him every scrap of praise.

Ready not only to kill him but smash him and obliterate him from the surface of the earth.

So that he remains alone, magnanimous and kind toward his subjects, who chase after their small self-delusions.

How does it happen then that such low beginnings lead to the splendor of the word?

I gathered books of poets from various countries, now I sit reading them and am astonished.

It is sweet to think that I was a companion in an expedition that never ceases, though centuries pass away.

An expedition not in search of the golden fleece of a perfect form but as necessary as love.

Under the compulsion of the desire for the essence of the oak, of the mountain peak, of the wasp and of the flower of nasturtium.

So that they last, and confirm our hymnic song against death.

And our tender thought about all who lived, strived, and never succeeded in naming.

For to exist on the earth is beyond any power to name.

Fraternally, we help each other, forgetting our grievances, translating each other into other tongues, members, indeed, of a wandering crew.

How then could I not be grateful, if early I was called and the incomprehensible contradiction has not diminished my wonder?

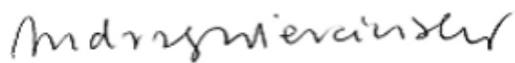
At every sunrise I renounce the doubts of night and greet the new day of a most precious delusion.

Czesław Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems (1931-2001)*, trans. Czesław Miłosz and Robert Hass (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 589-590.

In our eminent circle of *Profesores honoris causa* at the IIIH, we wish to give a testimony to the truly global, interdisciplinary, comprehensive approach to the world we live in without suffocating the voices that are very different or even contradictory to our own. Many of the nominees expressed, along with their gracious acceptance, a sense of wondering about the importance of their contributions, similarly to Miłosz's humble confession. The meaning of the distinction and the meaning of hermeneutics as engaged with understanding in its broad sense expresses understanding *Agora Hermeneutica* as a community of distinguished scholars whose key contributions are varied and diverse.

I wish our hermeneutic community that, as *existentia hermeneutica*, we keep sharpening our concentration of attention to everything which calls for understanding.

Hermeneutically yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrzej Wiercinski', written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Prof. Dr. Dr. Andrzej Wiercinski
President
Hermeneutic Academy