

Introduction

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This collection of papers is dedicated to the philosophical work of Virgil Ciomoș. It focuses on two key concepts in his oeuvre—time and difference—upon which his original philosophical vision is constructed. The fundamental intuition underpinning this vision is that of a temporal gap, a temporal difference within time itself, which allows for the inscription of the transcendental. Ciomoș's preoccupation with the topic of time has been longstanding and has undoubtedly played a central role in the development of his philosophical ideas. As early as 1989, he began by publishing his reflections on the homonymy of time. Over the following decades, his phenomenological interpretations of time culminated in three major works: his books on time and eternity in Aristotle (*Paideia*, 1998), on consciousness and change in Kant (*Humanitas*, 2006), and on *Être(s) de passage* (Zeta Books, 2009).

It would be difficult to fully grasp Ciomoș's analysis of the various modes of temporality without considering the problem of difference. By linking the problem of time with the radical alterity presented in Husserl's *Fifth Cartesian Meditation*, Ciomoș suggests that the continuity of the temporal flux is not defined by the unity of the ego, but rather by the resonance between the different phases of apperception. This in-depth analysis of time leads him to explore the phenomenological unconscious, which manifests as the differentiation of the difference between these phases. His distinctive way of intertwining phenomenology and psychoanalysis allows him to further explore the temporal modes that emerge from the encounter with the other. Virgil Ciomoș stands among a distinguished lineage of philosophers who have sought to deepen our understanding of the world as fundamentally and irreducibly differentiated. On this basis, a new approach to being takes shape, one in which temporality reveals itself primarily through its forms of non-coincidence.

Born on October 9, 1953, in Deva, Romania, Virgil Ciomoș has become a major figure in post-communist Romania's philosophical culture. His distinctive style of thinking, vast knowledge of the history of philosophy, and welcoming, engaging personality have inspired generations of students.

Scholars and various collaborators, invited to reflect on the cardinal problems of the human spirit, join him in an active and innovative exploration of the lived world and the challenges of embodied experience. The core of this endeavor lies in addressing, both theoretically and practically, situations where cardinality intersects with ordinality, as Ciomoş would say.

Psychoanalysis can certainly assist in this direction by offering examples of such crossings gone awry. Or, as Ciomoş suggests, we should look more closely at these “transgressions,” to better understand the overall experience of every human being, who is essentially a *speaking* being—situated precisely at the intersection between ideas and things. When language intervenes in a wild and unsettling manner, causing suffering to the being called to speak it, its effect becomes clearer—namely, its *affective* impact on our lived body. The clinical practice of psychoanalysis is thus invoked to *make a difference* in how an embodied being is affected by language, though this therapeutic effect is always conditioned by the subject’s own acquired absolute difference.

The path to absolute difference was long anticipated by Ciomoş’s phenomenological project and amounts to nothing less than a strictly intimate and subjectively assumed transcendental reduction. His encounter with psychoanalysis only confirms that this reduction must be more radical, pointing to the ego itself as a subject of the unconscious. The intertwining of a transformed phenomenology (as developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Marc Richir) and a transformed psychoanalysis (as advanced by Jacques Lacan)—which is also Ciomoş’s personal hallmark—provides him with powerful tools to reveal our situated being in the world.

The contributions to this volume are diverse. Some authors have chosen to continue Ciomoş’s interpretive style by engaging with major texts from the history of philosophy, while others have opted to employ phenomenological tools to explore topics closely related to his work. Additionally, some contributors reflect on the clinical practice of psychoanalysis. Friends also provide testimonies of their spiritual encounters and the philosophical community they shared with him. This diversity is reflected in the four sections of this Festschrift: (I) *Philosophical Interpretations*, (II) *Phenomenological Explorations*, (III) *Psychoanalytical Inquiries*, and (IV) *Testimonia*.

The first section begins with Alexandru-Vasile Sava’s contribution, which highlights that Ciomoş’s philosophical work, while oriented toward building a system, is also marked by an anti-systematic counter-tendency that suspends any rigid structure of thought. Sava’s paper explores how this dynamic leads to the self-suspension of philosophy, allowing it to be anchored in a broader mode of thinking. To illustrate this, he examines the unfolding of time in the core authors who served as predecessors and intellectual resources for Ciomoş’s philosophy: Aristotle, Kant, and Lacan.

Anchoring his investigation in Kant's architectonic, Vlad Mureșan seeks arguments in favor of elevating the status of imagination in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Following Ciomoș's interpretation, Mureșan advocates for recognizing the role of imagination in preserving the permanence and identity of the self within the flow of time in internal intuition. Furthermore, he proposes a concept of imagination that vertically permeates all levels of Kant's architectonics. Starting from time as the form of internal sense, intimately connected to the consciousness of the transcendental subject (Kant), we move, in Horațiu M. Trif-Boia's paper, to the heteronomy and heterology of Time, closely linked with death. He emphasizes that the abolition of Time culminates in the overcoming of the eternal Instance. As presence, it reveals the Place that opens to the transcendent. For Trif-Boia, Heidegger failed to foresee that *An-wesen* would manifest as the Machine's *Anspruch* on Man, rather than as the *Er-ignis* of the relationship between Man and Being in the atomic age. Thus, we might say that the revelation of the ontological difference is muted, and the decay of "eternal Time" is merely a false Object.

Building on Ciomoș's radical distinction between the now of transcendental quasi-consciousness (i.e., the unassignable presence for us) and the now specific to self-consciousness, Victor Dogaru seeks to demonstrate that the noncoincidence of time unlocks the very conceptualization of time and revitalizes one's relation to the self, or enhances the subject's self-relatedness. From this perspective, non-contemporaneity, discordance, eternal delay, and non-synchronicity are self-defining features of time. Jad Hatem explores the theme of death by focusing on the relationship between the living, who belong to our sensible world, and those residing in the spiritual realm. If death reunites those who were separated during life, as Gide suggests, does it do so more profoundly for those who were never separated? Hatem answers this question using Marcel's words: it is on the "ground of immortality that the decisive metaphysical option is located." Looking back, for Schelling, this option represented a decisive and definitive shift in his anthropology.

Taking a comprehensive look at Heidegger's understanding of translation, Bogdan Mincă seeks to uncover a deeper structure, which he refers to as "transitivity." In this sense, translation can be viewed as a manifestation of transitivity, which ultimately aligns with the essential concept of "difference"—specifically, the "ontological difference." Similarly, Eveline Cioflec explores the alignment of the "In-between" with the meaning of Being in Heidegger's work. She examines the question of the meaning of Being to understand how the In-between relates to this central issue in *Being and Time*. She argues that the In-between is not merely mentioned in passing but could, in fact, offer new insights into the interpretation of Heidegger's major work. Turning to Gadamer, Alina Noveanu examines the ethical choice of an individual who seeks to experience otherness against the tendency to confirm one's own prejudices. To truly understand the

other, a “hermeneutical distance” (*Abstand*) is required—one that involves the interpreter’s full attention and personal engagement. This also entails understanding temporal distance (*Zeitenabstand*), which functions as leeway that acknowledges one’s own historicity and allows facts to emerge within a shared (horizontal and ontological) space of a speaking community.

Ioan Chirilă’s study explores the intricate relationship between time and eternity from a theological perspective. He reveals that the intersection of these two dimensions occurs during moments of grace, when the present opens toward eternity, becoming simultaneously enveloped by its eschatological significance. Chirilă argues that the Holy Liturgy achieves a simultaneous overlay of the historical and the eternal, suggesting that eternity should not be seen in opposition to time but rather as a continuous presence—an eternal love within the Trinity. Nicolae Turcan explores key aspects of Jean-Luc Marion’s innovative attempt to overcome metaphysics, including the dynamics of authority within the philosophical tradition, the indeterminate nature of metaphysics, and its historical pursuit of unification, from Aristotle to modern interpretations. The chapter highlights the intersection of phenomenology and theology, suggesting a new horizon for post-metaphysical philosophy.

The second section of the volume (*Phenomenological Explorations*) begins with Laura T. Ilea’s contribution which, building on Heidegger’s efforts to conceive the possibility of an original science of life, reflects on her encounter with Virgil Ciomoș, focusing on the hermeneutics of the facticity of the original Christian experience. In this context, she illustrates what the presence of destiny means (described by Ciomoș as “the translucent gaze of destiny”). Together with Ciomoș, and following the path of André Scrima, Ilea questions the possibility of a science originating from life—specifically, the challenge of constructing a method from the discontinuities of factual life. Starting from Husserl’s seminal analysis in his research manuscripts focused on intersubjectivity, Claudia Șerban seeks to reveal the meaning of an intersubjective temporality that manifests as truly generative. In this process, she brings to light an unexpected convergence with Levinas, drawing on *Time and the Other*: phenomenologically, time should not be understood solely as subjective or egological; rather, it is already shaped by the encounter with the other. This approach also clarifies Husserl’s assertion (directed at Heidegger) that being-toward-death is not the ultimate horizon of our existential time and future.

Cristian Ciocan explores the complex relationship between temporality and testimony, focusing on the unique temporal structure inherent in the act of bearing witness. Ciocan emphasizes how this process unfolds across three phases: “becoming witness,” “rumination,” and “bearing witness.” His paper examines how these stages progress from immediate, lived experience to reflective engagement and, finally, to the act of communicating that experience

to others. It highlights the existential impact of extraordinary events on the witness, whose temporal experience becomes fragmented and dislocated from the flow of ordinary, everyday time. In their joint investigation, Ion Copoeru and Cristian Bodea reflect on the concept of heterogeneity in relation to difference. They start from the same premise—an analysis of the experience of a thing belonging to the natural world—but consider two distinct, yet related, limits of experience: first, the difference within phenomenality itself, where temporality appears as a particular way of organizing sensory diversity (a heterogeneous multiplicity in Husserl's theory of constitution); and second, the difference within subjectivity itself, where impeded temporal movement leads to hallucinatory experiences.

If actors identify with and merge into their characters, what safeguards the spectator from confusing being with appearing, or reality with fiction? Raluca Mocan emphasizes that by openly and consciously presenting the blend of life and convention, the theatre enters the realm of truth and meaning. Drawing on the works of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, she questions whether it still makes sense to speak of identification. Dragoş Duicu examines the merits of Jan Patočka's position on time in relation to the presuppositions of Husserl's subjectivation of objective time. Duicu sheds light on the dual meaning of Patočka's reflections on time: the movement of the world in its "before" and "after" (world's time) becomes subjective time, in the sense that it imposes both the contents and the order of those contents as impressions, which are retained in subjectivity. What do Husserl's concept of the lived present and Heidegger's concept of the temporality of the project mean for psychopathology? Mircea Lăzărescu addresses this question and concludes that these concepts still hold the potential to revitalize phenomenological psychopathology.

The third section (*Psychoanalytical Inquiries*) opens with Alain Harly's paper, which aims to confront us directly, following St. Augustine's lead, with the question: "What is time?" Harly offers an interpretive reading of the *Confessions* and shows how this question of time arises from a psychoanalytic perspective. For the psychoanalyst, the question is not necessarily about the being of time (as with Augustine) or even the atemporality of the unconscious (as with Freud); instead, it is a question of engaging with the logic of the signifier, which opens up a contradictory space that escapes Aristotle's logic. Returning to the question, "What is time?" Harly responds: "(The) 'I' doesn't know!" The "I" is no longer present because what is not "I" comes from the "it"—the unconscious, which exists at the edge of a void, or what Freud called original repression. How could we orient ourselves or find meaning without memories, without hope, and without the consistency provided by the articulation of past and future with the present? In his study on obsession, Lucian-Ioan Ile observes that, to assume being-toward-death would require a transformation in

the meaning and foundation of repetition, and this goes for not just obsessives but everyone.

Following Lacan, Jean-Jacques Gorog begins with Lacan's assertion that something radically different emerges in the world with the concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, the Freudian *après-coup*. He seeks an explanation in Lacan's text *Le Temps logique*. The implications of logical time have often gone unrecognized by many psychoanalysts. Gorog emphasizes that scansion, the effects of time, interpretation, and moments of transference must all be understood within the framework of a peculiar, non-linear progression of time. In her paper, Livia Dioşan examines Lacan's table of formulas of sexuation, where the exception is necessary, the contingent is *pas-tout*, and the impossibility of the sexual relationship pertains to the unquantifiable and the barred *La femme*. Dioşan defends the idea that, since psychoanalysis is not a science but a practice of the impossible, it proposes a singular time for that which "does not cease not to write itself." Maria Gyemant addresses the topic of temporality in psychoanalysis, drawing from Lacan's *Seminar VI, Desire and Its Interpretation*, specifically focusing on his comments on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Gyemant concludes that the temporality of the empty repetition of a paradoxical desire, which lies at the heart of the hero's hesitation, reveals *Hamlet* as a staging of the death drive itself.

Opening the fourth section of the volume (*Testimonia*), Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron describes Virgil Ciomoş in the same way Mallarmé once described Rimbaud: as a "considerable passerby"—passing, yes, but not fleeting, for he was worthy of serious philosophical reflection. In recalling their meetings in France and Romania, Vieillard-Baron refers to a purely spiritual history, a *hierro-history* at work, bearing much fruit. In turn, Andrei Pleşu reflects on the many themes of thought, formative encounters, and decisive experiences that have connected him to Virgil Ciomoş over the years. In particular, they share a constant interest in intermediate spaces, such as the "interval" (expressed theologically through angelology). For Ciomoş, the key themes are those that illustrate the "passage"—the shifting boundary between the Conscious and the Unconscious, fall and redemption. It is within this space of "transit" that self-revelation, the revelation of God, the dialectic of hope and despair, crisis and resolution, and the edifying question with its unsettling answer unfold.

We hope that this volume not only pays tribute to Professor Virgil Ciomoş but also serves as a catalyst for new investigations in the fields of philosophy and psychoanalysis that he so diligently promoted. His work, rooted as it is in both phenomenology and psychoanalysis, continues to inspire and challenge scholars, offering rich and original insights into time, difference, and the complexities of human existence.