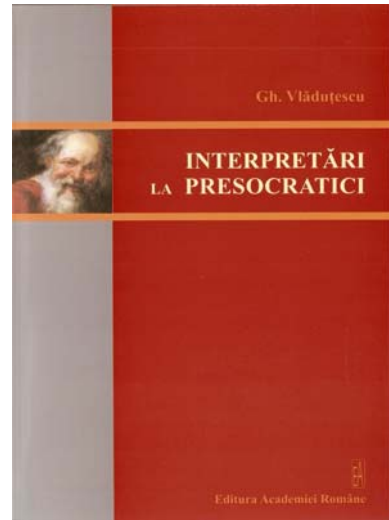


***Focusing on the
Hermeneutic Approach
of the Early Greek
Philosophy***

Carmen Cozma



Gh. Vlăduțescu, *Interpretări la presocratici / Interpretations of the Presocratics*. Bucharest: Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2011. Pp. 190

A thoughtful writing by a clear and nuancé architectural content, which offers a peculiar framework of approaching the philosophical texts in general, and by priority those belonging to the early Greek philosophy, is the book of Gh. Vlăduțescu, *Interpretations of the Presocratics*.

„An Explanation...” - put in front of this tome - forewarns us that somehow we face a second volume to a former author’s book: *Deschideri către o posibilă ontologie / Openings towards a Possible Ontology*, edited on 1987 by the Scientific Publishing House in Bucharest.

It should be noticed that Gh. Vlăduțescu is one of the most distinguished contemporary Romanian philosophers, with an impressive career as Professor at the University of Bucharest and titular member of the Romanian Academy, and with an outstanding written work containing original and pithy contributions in the area of: ancient and medieval philosophy; ontology, metaphysics, ethics and hermeneutics; Christian, Romanian, and French modern philosophy; history of philosophy. Over the years, he imposed himself as an eminent thinker and a critical exeget, mostly engaged with discussing the role of the philosophical act in developing and understanding the

various manifestations of human condition, starting from the early ideas, from the mythological cosmologies, up to the philosophical elaborations of nowadays.

An overview of just a part of the book titles signed by Professor Gh. Vlăduțescu could give an image about his creative personality and his dedication to the philosophical universe: *French Personalism* (1971); *Neotomist Philosophy in France* (1973); *Epicurus' Ethics* (1973); *An Introduction to Medieval Philosophy* (1973); *Experience and Induction in Aristotle* (1974); *Introduction to the Ancient Oriental Philosophy* (1981); *Philosophy of the Romanian Cosmogonic Legends* (1983; 1990); *The Modernity of Aristotle's Philosophy* (1983; 1997); *Philosophy in the Ancient Greece* (1984); *Openings towards a Possible Ontology* (1987); *A History of the Philosophical Ideas* (1990); *Philosophy in the Ancient Rome* (1991; 2012); *Philosophy of the Early Christian Centuries* (1995; 2012); *Minerva's Owl* (1996); *The Two Socrates* (1996; 1998); *How the Philosophers Were Dying in the Ancient Greece* (1998; 2009); *Ontology and Metaphysics with Greeks: The Presocratics* (1998); *An Encyclopaedia of the Greek Philosophical Thinking* (2001); *Unconventionally, on the Romanian Philosophy* (2002); *Philosophy and Politics* (2003); *Metaphysics and Theology within the Medieval Culture* (2004); *Ontology and Metaphysics with Greeks: Plato* (2005); *History of Philosophy as Hermeneutics* (2007); *Ontology and Metaphysics with Greeks: Socrates and the Minor Socratics* (2008); *Heraclitus of Ephesus, Cratylus of Athens and Antisthenes the Heraclitean: Fragments and Testimonials* (2008); *The Greek Foundations of the Modern Metaphysics* (2009); *The Language of the Greek Philosophers: The Presocratics* (2012); *Ancient Greek Skepticism as Critical Philosophy* (2013).

We get a fleet view not only upon a wide published work with various topics, but, above all, a standing out work as regards the profound interest and the qualified insight into the effort of acquiring knowledge and clearing up the professional language, entering controversial arguments and unfolding critical comments, especially on the Ancient Greek monumental philosophy. It is obviously that the importance of Gh. Vlăduțescu's volumes devolves even from the process of re-editing many of his books.

At the same time, we just mention that Gh. Vlăduțescu has realized major Romanian translations, such as: *Bonaventure: The Journey of the Mind into God* (1993); *Anselm: the Proslogion* (1997); *Aristotle: Metaphysics* (2011).

Briefly, we are facing an authentic model of exceptional scholar sharing – by his very own call – a *wisdom* in the most complete defining meaning of this concept; coming in the horizon not merely of professionals, but, also, of a large public expectations.

As regards *Interpretations of the Presocratics*, we stress that a significant *organon* for the studying and appropriating philosophy is giving us. It is by no means conspicuous the complexity of the subject, its “eternal present times” and utility for shaping an attitude and, eventually, a style of living enrooted in the best manner of thinking about life and human positioning in the world. From such a book we may learn a great deal about the philosophical investigation by its peculiar erotetic and critical dimensions, which arise serious questions like those the “physiologi” or the “physikoi” – according to Aristotle’s appraisal – have considered in the framework of an important tradition. Thus, the final inquiries Gh. Vlăduțescu is expressing: “How do we read the Presocratics and for what reason?” (p.161) and: “Therefore, why do we still read the Presocratics?” (p.163) hinge on the ideal – we dare to say – of the philosophizing act in the author’s vision. As he features: “We don’t ‘read’ the forerunners, respectively the Presocratics, for themselves within their age. The intentionality of reading in-itself and for-itself claims to do it with a view to something different from the referential point. ... It deserves to understand the past philosophies precisely for working much better with them in our own horizon of beingness. The eternal present times of which is forerunning us are just coming from the philosophy’s over-historic mode of being” (p.164).

Gh. Vlăduțescu takes up this problem also by tarrying on the best sources as concerns the doxographic approaches, starting by the end of 18th century and the first years of the 19th century, pointing out the starry moment of October 28, 1816, with Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie (Lectures on the History of Philosophy)*. The Presocratic philosophy gradually became known through the published collected excerpts thanks to: Heinrich Ritter and Ludwig Preller, the 1838 editors of *Historia philosophiae graecoromanae ex fontium locis contexta*; Ingram Bywater with *Heracliti Ephesii Reliquiae*, in 1877; F.G.A. Mullach’s three volumes of *Fragmenta philosophorum graecorum* (1860-1881) that appeared after the Schleiermacher’s edition and commentary on the fragments of Heraclitus: *Herakleitos der dunkle, von Ephesos, dargestellt aus den*

Trümmern seines Werkes und den Zeugnissen den Alten (Heraclitus the Obscure, of Ephesus, Depicted on the Basis of the Ruins of His Work and of the Testimonia of the Ancients). Certainly, among the classical historians, as a climax, Hermann Diels is mentioned, especially thanks to his scientific works: *Doxographi Graeci* (1879) and *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker (The Fragments of the Presocratics)* edited in 1903. Actually, Hermann Diels has exercised a crucial role by acknowledging – as it seems to be so - even the term of “Presocratics”. Within such a list, in his turn, Gheorghe Vlăduțescu stands an honorable position, considering his cogent doxographic work as unique in the territory of the Romanian philosophical culture.

The significant contribution of the philosophers belonging to independent schools before and contemporary with Socrates, no less some of them surviving him by decades, is emphasized in the book we are taking into account, by certain articulations of the epistemological sense of their work to making a peculiar language as lovers-of-what-is wisely. The author underlines the grounding movement occurred thanks to the crystallized status of *aner philon to sophon* in assuring the starting point for the individualization of the terms and for the further method of text hermeneutics alike.

Refined explanations for the becomingness of the principle notions are outlined, in a revealing discourse of intertwining the natural language and a holistic logic of the process to constructing the concept of *Being*.

It is a defining note that Gh. Vlăduțescu chooses to return to the early Greek philosophers on a vertical cut in the historic and hermeneutic perspective, which is able to „guiding to the constitutive structures”, admitting that „the descent way / the downward is, like in Heraclitus universe, exactly the ascend-way / the upward” (p.163).

An *Ariadnae filum* leads us throughout the 42 ideas-bold sequences of this thought-provoking and with a singular flavor book, rigorously but at the same time friendly written. Basic concepts, great personalities, and pivotal themes and motifs – e.g. *tò (e)òn, lógos* and *sophos, kosmon tonde, apeiron* and *péras, eidos* and *morphé, diké* and *adiké, noũs, arché, theos* and *agnosia, somatos* and *asomatos, anodos* and *kathodos, nomos* and *physis*, connected with Thales, Anaximander, Anaxagoras, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Gorgias, Protagoras, Cratylus, Prodicus, Archelaus, Hippo of Samos (or Croton), Zeno of Elea, Diogenes of Apollonia, Melissos, Petron of Himera, etc. – are brought in relief, within the author’s unfolding of

personal thoughts and explanations. The 42 sections that are supplemented with the erothetic pages of „Conclusions” and the „Addenda” flow smoothly in a well organized whole, giving a fundamental *organon* to enlightening meditation and comprehension, by critical comments on the ground of careful documentation and in-depth search into the major concerns of a proper human beingness-in-the-world we do access.

Gh. Vlăduțescu's *Interpretations of the Presocratics* volume is eminently worth reading by philosophers and other scientists interested in the basic themes of *being (on)*, finally. This volume reminds us the significance of keeping and improving the capacity to make anew research as the ever act to get more comprehensively the attempt to undertake and to explain the origins both of man and the cosmos, to catch much more in interpreting and understanding the value of humane, to continuously seek after what and how the *Being* – in its various levels and concrete forms - is.

Undoubtedly, a merit of this book remains the author's achievement to encompass and to provide insightful interpretation of what and how is to be known, understood, taught-learned and followed, by exploring and appropriating a wise learning in life, emerged from the early Greek philosophy.