It is Mine but it is Not Me: On the Borders of Authorship

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This paper explores the potential relevance of authorship for social and human sciences. In particular, it inquires to what extent is it possible for humanities and social sciences to set a rigid border between their scientific works and its author(s) but still make full sense of it. Ultimately, I advocate for a biographic approach to the works of these disciples, borrowing ideas from Ray Monk's philosophical biography, Berthou Hermansen's transformative language and Lordelo's connection between writing and research (this issue). This synthetic perspective looks to stress that the production of human and social research is embedded not only in historical and cultural contexts but also within the lives of the authors doing it, thus making their biography something worth to keep in mind as connecting border. The latter, however, should be done avoiding ad hominem attacks or as shortcut to impose a theory about a specific author. Finally, the case of Martin Heidegger is presented as an example of how this position could contribute to the better understanding of humanities and social sciences.

The question for authorship is certainly manifold. It might range from legal cases regarding copyright (*who is the owner of an idea/invention?*), to human rights and political persecution (*who is behind an anti-government leaflet or movement?*), to academic authorship (*is a scientific discovery an individual or a collective achievement?*). The present article elaborates on the latter facet of authorship, although it borrows elements and arguments from the former dimensions in order to stress a different angle: to what extent is it possible for humanities and social sciences to detach their scientific work from its author(s) and still make full sense of it. In other words, where is it reasonable–if possible–to establish the boundary between understanding the research made by human-social sciences and understanding their makers, the human scientists. Ultimately, I argue in favor of a relational position where a clear-cut separation between author and work is considered misleading, yet the conflation between them–as static and isolated entities–is avoided too. In order to build this argument up, I firstly explore Berthou Hermansen's and Lordelo's papers looking for clues about the developmental dimension of authorship, expressed through the writing of research. Following this, I present a relevant counterpoint for the question of human scientific authorship: the ad hominem versus biographical understanding. Within this theoretical landscape, I introduce my position on this matter, which is aimed to better suited to the particularities of social sciences and humanities.

MAPS AND LANDSCAPES: POST-STRUCTURALISM AND COLLABORATIVE WORK

Berthou Hermansen's paper (this issue) advances a pragmatic variant of poststructuralist discourse analysis. However, as the author herself acknowledges, the latter task implies tackling many of the poststructuralist core assumptions; which in

turn questions the very basis of the structuralist perspective on language, namely give a priori more relevance to the *lange* (see Saussure, 1916/1966) rather than to the material world. Thus, her critique is very harsh but ultimately well supported, as it is framed specifically for the context of pragmatic communication, which requires from an ever-changing language. In fact, the shortcomings of post-structuralism presented by Berthou Hermansen are based on its complications for accounting change in language beyond 'jumps' between plural–but already established–discourses. Thus, in order to fill the gap between language-as-fixed-discourses and language-as-used-for-something, the author invokes the Gricean cooperative principle, and also Harder's "functional circuit" notion, which connects the world, its change, language users, and the existing language. The rationale that leads Berthou Hermansen here is always clear: how to better conceptualize collaborative work (upon texts). It is for this purpose that she presents the collaborative elaboration of a renovation project conducted in a Danish parish-community center as example; through this case the author shows how different views about the project, its elements, and its meaning go back and forth between the participants (community leaders, old community members, architects) along the planning stages. In particular, Berthou Hermansen makes clear that the terminology used to talk about the material and symbolic elements of the project constantly changed due to an active process of linguistic negotiation between participants, thus making a novel, contingent discourse emerge.

Although Berthou Hermansen's subject and example may seem quite distant to the question for authorship, it advances a notorious idea for this issue: that the evolution and change of the language used is something inherent to discussing and agreeing upon social matters. Even though the parish-community center could be a very specific, local case, the nature of the process behind its elaboration resembles–to a certain extent–the constant renovation that most scientific languages–humanistic and social included–goes through in order to adapt to novel findings, ideas and, state of affairs. Yet, it is necessary to read through Lordelo's reflections (this issue) in order to see more clearly how this language transformation specifically applies to research.

RESEARCH AS/IS WRITING (AND VICE VERSA)

In her paper, Lordelo (this issue) inquiries about research without any adjectives or surnames, since she departs from the idea that artistic and scientific variants of research are just different forms of the same activity. In this vein, Lordelo looks for convergences between these kinds of research, thus challenging the convention that set them apart from the outset. It is precisely by questioning this boundary that she enters into the realm of literature and writing, specifically following the lead set by Fathali M. Moghaddam (2004): psychology is literature. For this purpose, the author explores conceptualizations on borders ranging from the classics–Aristotle–to contemporary scholars–Varzi (2013), Marsico *et al*. (2013)–, ultimately emphasizing the notion of *epistemological border*, proposed by Bachelard. The latter defines the character of scientific activity: establishing both the limits that need to be crossed and the areas to stay away from. Following this, Lordelo focuses on the act of writing, firstly by introducing the narrative approach by Bruner (1991), and then by concluding with remarks from semiotician Roland Barthes (1978). By doing so, the author addresses three questions that she considers essential: when we write about our research, are we

doing research? Are we already researching when we think about the research? Are we doing research when we publish? In brief, the conclusion of Lordelo to these questions could be summarized by her paraphrase of Barthes when she says that science can be coarse and life subtle. Thus literature would exist I shortening this gap (Lorderlo, this issue). In other words, Lordelo proposes that the act of writing is the necessary–if not unavoidable–*connecting border* between the rigid establishment of scientific research and the untamed nature of the human and social phenomena addressed.

In contrast to Berthou Hermansen, Lordelo's reflections appears as more connected to the issue of authorship. Yet the ideas from both authors are quite connected, as the former advocates for a language in constant renovation and the latter shows how closely related is language–through literature–to the very act of research. As it will be shown in the last section, when these two ideas are taken together, they introduce a relevant nuance into the main issue of this article (how important is authorship for understanding human scientific work): when seen through the lens of their research works, considering authors as fixed entities is quite problematic since the language, ideas and topics addressed by them *change and develop* along the time. In this vein, neither works nor authors are static things–beyond the material print of the former and the name of the latter.

Here it is necessary to acknowledge that the relation between language evolution and research addressed by Lordelo seems to be prevalent among human sciences, but less common among a number of physical and logical sciences–yet not absent. Among many possible reasons, the availability of alternative languages for these disciplines appears to me as a crucial factor: since these disciplines are able to successfully express their arguments and conclusions in terms of, for example, symbolic mathematical formulae, the place of literature does not disappear but certainly recedes in importance. Despite adopting quantitative approaches as methodologies, humanities and social sciences seem to be more tightly bound to the literary way addressed by Lordelo. Although it is a discussion that goes beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary for me to say that this is the rationale behind choosing to focus this paper in human and social sciences.

AD HOMINEM FALLACY: IT IS ABOUT YOU

Going beyond the linguistic and thematic mutability inherent to human and social research, let us move to the counterpoint shaping our position on the relevance of authorship for social sciences and humanities: the ad-hominem versus biographical understanding. The latter is, of course, a simplification of the main arguments behind two ideas pertaining quite different domains: on the one hand, the *argumentum ad hominem*, a logical fallacy, and on the other hand the biographical understanding of philosophical ideas–rather philosophers–proposed by Ray Monk (2001). Let us review both in detail.

The argumentum ad hominem, commonly known as ad hominem fallacy, is the latin expression for an 'argument to the person'. This argumentative flaw refers to dismiss or criticize an argument based on the character or traits of the person defending that argument, without contending the logical or empirical grounds of the argument presented. Examples are abundant: a politician's idea that is criticized for his or her

sexual orientation, a journalist's big story dismissed due to the lack of a degree from the author, a scientific discovery made from somebody outside academia, etc. Thus, this fallacy is the opposite of the argument from authority, i.e. considering an idea as correct only because of the prestige of the person advocating for it. The purpose of the ad hominem fallacy is simple: to warn the discussants and audience of not discrediting a potentially reasonable argument only because of its author. This aim is mirrored by its taxonomical organization, where the ad hominem is located within the genetic fallacies, which are those appealing to the origin or history of someone, or something, instead of its current context; and also within the fallacies of irrelevance–or missing the point–since is an argument that, regardless its logical validity, does not address the question at stake. Hence, regarding the question for authorship, an (anti) ad hominem position would be crystal clear: by no means the life or character of the author should have any influence on the consideration of his or her works or thinking. Not only for social sciences and humanities but also for all disciplines and topics.

In relation to the latter, however, it is worth to note that an argumentum ad hominem may not be completely fallacious under certain conditions; for instance, in the context of practical reasoning. More specifically, as Taylor (1997) proposes, when the personal trait or past element invoked is actually relevant for the argument discussed. As in the case of conflicts of interest, where it would be impractical–and even naïve–to disregard such kind of elements for the sake of being logically flawless. For instance, when a politician with a previous career in a certain industry proposes a bill favoring that particular sector. In this case, that notorious biographical fact from the author does not necessarily make the whole bill something negative (so far we know nothing about its content), yet it is an element that could not be deemed as irrelevant or fallacious so easily; as it could be, for instance, whether that person is religious or not.

A similar questioning has been issued in the case of the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who–besides the famous political treatise "The Social Contract"–wrote his "Emile, or on education". This five-book work, half treatise half novel, is devoted to raise awareness and give orientation on child rearing and education beyond school, thus being pioneering family and tutor guided upbringing. In spite of being one of the first systematic works on child-centered education, by the time of its publication the book received harsh criticism not because of its ideas, but due to the major inconsistencies between them and the biography of Rousseau: following his autobiographic *Confessions* (2012, p. 413), he gave all of his five children away to a foundling hospital. Accordingly, Rousseau received severe critiques by figures like Voltaire and Burke because of this paradoxical stance. Even though the latter case could depict a typical example of ad hominem–meaning fallacious–criticism, it is not absurd to wonder why an author would act so strikingly against what he presented as the best way of conducting the own life. It is in practical situations like these where the exact border between the fallacious and the reasonable consideration of ad hominem, personal elements get more and more blurry. In fact, how do we determine whether certain traits or experiences are relevant for a specific matter or not? If some are deemed as relevant, how much do these elements from the past impact in the present? Does the criterion for relevance change along the time given the evolution in the ideas and topics of an author? Since these are the questions to be addressed, it seems more reasonable to move away from the

territory of fallacies in order to address its "opposite": the biographical understanding proposed by Ray Monk.

RAY MONK'S PHILOSOPHICAL BIOGRAPHY

I put opposite between quotation marks on purpose, as Monk himself acknowledges: "(…) that biography is irrelevant to the *assessment* of the greatness of a work, whether it be philosophy, fiction, poetry, or whatever." (2001, p. 3, emphasis added), which would rather be the stance from somebody against considering any personal elements, thus following ad hominem warnings. Yet, he further elaborates on this idea: "It seems to me, however, that there is an important sense in which to *understand* what somebody says is to do something other than to evaluate it." (2001, pp. 3-4, emphasis added) And so he concludes that:

> *"The task of biography, I think, is to enrich understanding in these two ways: by attending, so to speak, to the tone of voice in which a writer expresses himself or herself and by accumulating personal facts that will allow us to see what is said in a different light."* (2001, p. 4).

In this vein, the consideration of biographical elements for Monk do not concern the falsity or truth of any given argument, but the proper understanding of the tone and the orientation under which an author expresses. Going back to the case of Rousseau, the worth of the ideas contained in *Emile* does not depend upon whether he educated or abandoned his children; yet this fact is crucial to note that Rousseau was presenting an illuminist ideal on education, which would be quite difficult to implement in real life contexts. In other words, that he was oriented to write a philosophy of education rather than a manual on didactics or upbringing; and this is more visible when we look beyond the *Emile* into his personal life.

Yet the question remains: how do we *know* that a certain biographical experience has had an impact on the works of an author? For Monk (2001) it would be difficult to objectively establish the existence of such impact. Through biography, he aspires to achieve the "understanding that consists in seeing connections" (p. 5), a key idea from the late thinking of Ludwig Wittgenstein. The author exemplifies this idea through seeing the likeness between the faces of a mother and her baby. Though it can be helped by indications like "look at the nose, look at the shape of the eyes" (p. 5), some people would be able to see the connection–likeness–and some others just would not. Provide further proof to convince the latter would be complicated since it is only possible to point to the mother's face and then the baby's face, but not to the connection between them, as it cannot be fully expressed in material terms. In this sense: "Faced with someone who cannot see these connections, we cannot say that they are making a mistake, only that they are missing something" (p. 6). Here Monk is not claiming a superior ground for those who are able to see connections, as this is not a gift of those–like him–making biographies and seeing connections between life events and written works. In fact, following Wittgenstein, he argues that regarding connections *nothing is hidden*, meaning that: "To see deeply into a person's inner life requires a rare attentiveness to and understanding of its outward manifestations. We can hear anxiety in a tone of voice, see fear on a person's face, recognize insincerity in a person's prose

style" (p. 10). And he continues: "Yet the sensitivity with which we do so varies with our experience, our understanding, and the extent to which (…) we are willing to absorb the secrets, sorrows, and avowals of others" (p. 10). Thus, Monk concludes: "The first requisite for a successful biography, then, is a willingness to be deeply absorbed in the inner life of another person (…)"(p. 10). In brief, Monk proposes that the thinking and the works of an author are always colored, connected to his or life–biography–, yet coming to see those connections is only possible through the effort and will of "immersing" oneself into the other's life, something we may call an empathic understanding of the other, or co-phenomenology (Cornejo, 2008).

Maybe contrary to the impression created so far, Ray Monk's reflections on biography (2001) are not intended to be a general theory for using biographical data in social and human sciences, as other authors have proposed (for a review see Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf, 2000). He just presents support for his *philosophical biography* (2001), which is a method for biographic literary criticism specifically aimed: "to understand a philosopher" (Monk, 2001, p. 3). Yet, to my understanding, his reflections on biography should be fruitful beyond (notable) philosophers and their thinking. Case in point, Monk recently published a biography on physicist Robert Oppenheimer (2012) using a similar approach, thus showing the value of his perspective not only beyond philosophy but also beyond humanities at large.

Monk's take on biography, however, is not exempt from practical limitations when we look to apply it into the academic context of human and social sciences. For example, should we perform a full biography for every single author cited or studied? While answering positively to this question seems feasible for philosophy, this is hardly the case for our target disciplines. Anybody who has worked within this academic framework is familiar with the mixed use of theoretical and empirical literature; a habit that in turn implies quoting and putting different sort of authors together–as this very paper portrays. This issue gets even more complicated for works centered in empirical phenomena where it is necessary to comprehensively report–albeit mentioning–previous literature on the subject. All the latter makes the number of authors addressed to be usually counted by the tens. However, even if we stick to a limited number of authors, thus making viable to check in detail their biographies, what should be done in the cases of living or young authors? Monk of course does not face this challenge, as he works on the life and thinking of persons that already passed away. Yet, for instance, by writing this paper I do face such challenge, as Monk himself is alive and actively writing. What should I do if, for example, Monk takes back all his ideas on biography declaring them to be a second "Sokal affair"? (see Sokal, 2000) Or worse, what to do if later examination proves that Monk made up a series of events in order to present a certain picture of his target authors, thus making him an untrustworthy biographer and author. As recently showed by the Stapel case in 2011 (see Stapel, 2014), it is far from impossible to systematically make data up in order to succeed in academia. In any case, I think that the general answer to all these questions is quite clear: for humanities and social sciences, it would be definitely impractical to use the Monkian perspective *exactly as he does*. As an approach designed for the particularities of philosophy, it does not fit squarely the requirements of other social and human disciplines–despite being connected to each other.

These restrictions, however, should not be taken as a prohibition of using Monk's ideas in social and human sciences, but as the necessary reminder of never taking a set of ideas and applying them *verbatim* into a different disciple or phenomena. As seen, in the case of Monk this leads into a dead, impractical end. Despite this, I think that the core of his ideas remains solid and valuable for our purpose: first and foremost, Monk advocates for considering the author as a–so to say–key element for *understanding* his or her work and thinking, rather than a fallacious trick to undermine a certain argument. Secondly, for such understanding the author is anything but a "hidden element" behind the text that needs to be unraveled. Not for Monk at least, as he proposes that the person of the author is ever-present in the writing, not *behind* it–as a schemer–but rather *interwoven* with it–unavoidably expressing his or her life. Furthermore, Monk remind us that the author is the only one actually writing, typing the text–which could be something strikingly obvious for somebody outside academia, but we, scholars, tend to forget nonetheless. Therefore, when we disregard authorship and establish a sharp separation between author and works, we are doing nothing but restricting our sources for understanding the latter as we dismiss its most direct source, its very origin. Ultimately, if we do so and neglect the author, it would be similar to disregard the historical and cultural context of any thing that has been manmade: we would have a finished, polished product, yet we will wonder how such a black-box came to be. Hence, it is difficult to question the relevance of approaching the research made by humanities and social sciences from a biographic perspective, i.e. taking the issue of authorship seriously.

From a different angle, this biographical turn could be assimilated to a cultural psychological understanding (see Valsiner, 2014) of authorship, i.e. approach to authors not as isolated consciousness, mental entities solely devoted to produce ideas but actual human beings living by certain historical and cultural environments, full constrains and possibilities. This panoramic perspective, centered in the relation between the author and his or her environment, becomes relevant as it contributes to balance existing perspectives on how a human or social scientific work is produced, e.g. sociology of scientific knowledge (e.g. Collins, 1983), which tend to skip the author in favor of social and institutional conditions. Thus, putting the core of Monk's ideas in the foreground may not only assist us to understand a specific written work from humanities or social sciences, but also expand the way in which we conceive the research production of these disciplines by stressing the relation between authors and their particular socio-cultural environments.

THE CASE OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER

Here the well-known case of Martin Heidegger–also discussed by Monk–and his relation to the Nazi government in Germany serves as a useful example[1] for the position presented. Firstly, an ad hominem approach would claim that none of Heidegger's philosophical ideas could be questioned given his implicit–to say the least–political support to the Nazi regime, as his personal position on political matters has nothing to

[1] Here I want to acknowledge that many of these ideas are connected to the avid discussion on this issue held by Kitchen Seminar members, mainly Nikita Kharlamov, Eric Charles and Nick Thompson, during November 2014.

do with his thinking and its value. On the other hand, a position oriented to practical reasoning would probably claim that, as a philosopher and humanist, it is not reasonable to pretend that Heidegger's writings are totally independent from his academic and civic actions supporting the Nazi regime; therefore, if the latter is considered not to be acceptable, we should partially or entirely proscribe Heidegger's works. However, taking the approach here proposed, i.e. thinking along the lines of Monk and cultural psychology, we would agree with the fact that the merit of Heidegger's ideas does not depend upon his political position. Yet a considerable more complex analysis would be required in order to arrive to the conclusion of labeling Heidegger as a Nazi philosopher, which in any case should to avoid or censor his ideas. In the first place, this biographic perspective requires to define in concrete, factual terms what is it referred as support to the Nazis, for how long it lasted, and what where its consequences. Only after collecting these personal facts it is possible to analyze to what extent these life events permeated into his extended philosophical work. This detailed analysis would of course face many challenges, from defining what would be 'Nazi ideas' to dealing with the major shift of focus between his Marburg, Freiburg and post-war works; all the latter certainly creating disputed conclusions. Ultimately, this careful analysis could reveal a certain disconnection between Heidegger's deeds and his thinking, thus questioning the label of 'Nazi philosopher'; or it could show how deeply ingrained Nazi ideas are all along Heidegger's works, thus coloring the tone and the perspective of his system of thinking (e.g., Trawny, 2016). More important than the conclusion on this particular matter, however, it is how faithful to the author is this biographical analysis, i.e. whether it tries to look for Heidegger's tone and orientation within his life beyond philosophy and academia. On the other hand, it will certainly fail if is an effort to prove–or disprove–the *theory* that Heidegger's thinking is ultimately a philosophical support for Nazi ideology, as this kind of analysis, for Monk, must be *descriptive* in order take the author's perspective, thus empathizing in order to understand him or her.

Looking at a very specific facet of Heidegger works and life, I personally dissent with the claim that Heidegger's vision of 'german spirit', 'machination', or 'homeland' specifically aims to support the Nazi regime; I come to this conclusion because of a biographic element. As expressed in his 1954's *The question concerning technology* (1977), Heidegger declares to be concerned about the extinction of rural, land-based way of living (being) in hands of an overwhelming technical and technological existence. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* lecture (1935/2000) he noted that this spirit is embodied in both the USSR and the USA, which were closing a pincer on Germany; this passage could certainly be taken as a validation of the later military action against these countries. Yet, when looked in detail, this claim was something more than geopolitics or an abstract idea for him: since 1922 he and his family moved into a small cottage located in a rural valley by the border of the Black Forest (*Schwarzwald*), near Freiburg. This cabin never had running water, and it received electricity only after the war following an specific offer from Freiburg University. Far from a summerhouse where Heidegger went in his spare time, it is enough to note that the dedication of *Being and Time* is signed at this place (Todtnauberg) to see its relevance in his work. Additionally, this critique to a material-centered way of living could hardly been considered as an endorsement to the Nazi active industrial policy. Yet, if these ideas are nonetheless considered as another form of fanatic German nationalism, which just looks to covertly foster hatred against other nations and ethnics groups, so it could be taken as an ideological supporter of the

Nazi regime. Otherwise, and despite the latter biographical elements, I do not see how the latter could play a central role in his thinking.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: PERSONS TALKING ABOUT PERSONS

This paper departs from a very specific question within authorship: whether is it possible to get a full understanding of the research made by humanities and social sciences if we do not consider the author(s) producing it. Or, in other words, if it is fruitful for the advancement of these disciplines to set a rigid border between human and social scientists and the works they produce. As it is clear from the previous arguments, my answer to these questions is *no*–although a mild no. It is–and probably must–be a moderate position for a very simple, factual reason: to the best of my knowledge, humanities and social sciences at large have not read through their research on the basis of a biographic, personal approach, yet they have definitely advanced and grown. Therefore, taking authorship into consideration is not indispensable for them. This conclusion, however, does not say anything about what an approach sensitive to authorship could contribute to these disciplines. This article presented a number of ideas on what would be such contribution.

Firstly, I borrowed ideas from the essays written by Berthou Hermansen and Lordelo (this issue), which, despite not addressing authorship directly, discussed on concepts worth of consideration for this issue. In this vein, Berthou Hermansen emphasized how changeable is language in general, but specifically how that change follows local and contingent negotiations between persons looking for agreement. Lordelo, on the other hand, addressed the close relation existing between writing and research, revealing how this literary, linguistic activity bridges the strict realm of science and the ever-changing domains of social and human phenomena. When connected, these two ideas are definitely interesting for our discussion: following Lordelo we know the unavoidable role of language–through writing–in the process of research (specially for humanities and social sciences, as noted); and following Berthou Hermansen we remember that such written language does evolve and change according to what for it is used. It is here, when we see that the language of research is in constant development, where we need to ask: *who* performs such change? And then we realize that all the latter implicitly assumes the existence of persons discussing and making novel language emerge, and the existence of researchers–those persons who make research–, in order to focus in some neglected features of these activities. Yet the question stays: what is the role of the persons behind these processes? How do they shape the products of these activities, namely research works? These questions are addressed neither by Lordelo nor by Berthou Hermansen, since authorship is not their aim. Yet the authors hint on a relevant matter nonetheless: since the language through which research works–specially in humanities and social sciences–come to be is always changing, it is not reasonable to assume that the author(s) creating these works is a constant, immutable person(s) who changes nothing but his or her ideas. Or, could it be the opposite case, namely that it is the changing author the drive for the change in writing researching?

Following Ray Monk's reflections on (philosophical) biography, this is a false question: thinking and writing are not activities that exist apart from author's lives, they do not happen in parallel dimensions, and hence they are to a certain extent intertwined to

each other. Is in this sense that a biographic approach to authorship contributes to understand the research of humanities and social sciences better. Just as we need to know any person's life in order to understand his or her current situation better, we definitely get a lot from knowing the person of the author, his life and his trajectory, for understanding his or her work. The specific connections between life and work, however, do not reduce any idea or work to be the consequence, or cause, from a single life event. This is why biography never *explains* this research and its published works, but only makes more clear the perspective and the tone of the author.

The counterpoint to this perspective would be always clear: the risk of falling into ad hominem attacks, i.e. pondering the merit of an argument solely based on who its author is. At first sight, this would seem to go against looking to the whole of the personal-intellectual biography of the author in order to properly understand a research work. This tension, however, does not necessarily involve a contradiction since the proper sense of ad hominem is to avoid using the author as a ready-made excuse to debunk an idea, which is certainly different from forbidding any consideration of the author–as certain cases from practical reasoning show.

In this paper I have proposed an extension of Ray Monk's core insights on philosophical biography to the broader context of authorship in social sciences and humanities. Yet establishing the exact border between ad hominem intromissions and key life events for understanding research is an open, eventually unsolvable matter, at least in abstract terms. This aporia, however, finds a way when we discuss about real authors, this are concrete persons with real, mostly ordinary lives that performed a rather uncommon occupation: research on human and social sciences.

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