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Discipleship and Tradition in the Romanian Philosophical Culture

Abstract: As we know, that discipleship, with the presence of those people by which it is concretely achieved and with its retake every new generation, may account for the alive and proper flow of a tradition. In this respect, I will consider such situations that may be deemed as relevant for the progress of philosophy in our cultural milieu. I will refer, for instance, to Dimitrie Cantemir and his relationship to scholars of his time, to the junimist period and the disciples of Maiorescu (in particular Rădulescu-Motru and Petrovici), to the generation of Eliade and Noica and their search for new existential reference points. One may ascertain, from Cantemir to the present, at least two types of discipleship, a technical one, related to a school or academy, and a life-concerning one, thus with ethic, existential orientation. At the same time, one may distinguish three situations concerning the relationship between mentor and disciple: first, the personal meeting of a mentor in the environment of one's own language or culture; then the orientation towards the mentor beyond, from an already established culture; lastly, the need to take a certain philosophical problem on one's own. The tension between some local cultural exigencies and the ones asserted in the Western milieu is still present today. They actually remake what might be called the "situation-in-the-interval" of the philosophical consciousness, for instance between the modern discourse and the patristic teaching ("between Kant and Dionysius the Areopagite", as Blaga says), between the established language of philosophy in an epoch and the mother tongue, and between the alert course of history and the traditional one. This fact in and of itself does not advertise any special glory, or conversely, any form of historical failure. The difficulties experienced in this respect – as real and obvious as they may be – may not justify a radical breed of skepticism with respect to the philosophical culture of this region.

Keywords: philosophical (academic and existential) discipleship, distinct forms of continuity, philosophical tradition, situation-in-the-interval of the philosophical consciousness.

1. I would commence by saying that discipleship, with the presence of those people by which it is concretely achieved and with its retake every new generation, may account for the alive and proper flow of a tradition. It may unveil its ability to be present in living minds, to create deep and durable impact. It is precisely for this reason that I will discuss some situations that I

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deem symptomatic for the evolution of the philosophy in our cultural environment.

Let me evoke a well-known fact, namely that in its long European history, philosophy means both theoretical training, logical or conceptual analysis, and the cultivation of values and attitudes, and an existential choice. As a matter of fact, it has been remarked that “philosophical discourse originates / if we consider the Greek culture/ in a life decision and an existential choice, not the other way around” (Pierre Hadot)¹. The ethical – after all existential – orientation of the philosophical approach is not lost afterwards, in the modern world or even nowadays, even though it becomes secondary or silent, more and more difficult to grasp. Even when it does not explicitly appeal to values and beliefs, when it follows a neutral analyzing methodology, philosophy still shows such intentionality, such as the wish to use an elevated way of understanding and relating to the other person. Real situations are never pure; in the European philosophy, I am not aware of any theoretical discourse devoid of any life choice or life choice devoid of any theoretical discourse. What matters is always the person’s belief about some life facts, as well as a certain discipline of thinking.

These implications of the philosophical approach are also observable with respect to the relationship between master and disciple. For instance, the icon of the master has at least two well-defined hypostases. The first is the master who knows how to orient their disciple towards study and research, and a discipline of thought, bringing to their attention a method of reflection and a relevant set of problems. This is the technical dimension of philosophy, where the discipleship might be called scholastic, educational, eventually academic. The other hypostasis is when the master attracts their disciples towards a peculiar way of life, while personally undertaking certain values or beliefs. The master unveils, for example, a form of self-care and the possibility of having profound changes in their lives². We may call this the ethos discipleship (in the broad acceptance of the word, related to the human ethos); possibly existential, save for its hubristic touch. In both cases, I would keep onto the account of the authentic mentor at least the following: the constant availability for dialogue, pedagogical skill – or even charm – and a certain vision, the ability to understand facts – both in human and in spiritual matters – and the underlying trends of their age.

Do we really meet the icon of the scholastic master in the Romanian philosophical culture? Of course, if we think for instance of Titu Maiorescu, the professor of philosophy whose lectures used to exert “high intellectual attraction” (Petrovici 1940, 33). The living icon of the professor – a real “priest who officiates” from the chair and charms the auditorium, nourishing “the sense of the importance of matters and the passion for great questions” – is described by his student with literary talent (Petrovici 1940, 53-66). He was able to mentor a whole bunch of young intellectuals

throughout their years of philosophical initiation: Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, Constantin Antoniadă, Constantin Dimitrescu-Iași, Ion Petrovici, Mircea Djuvara, and Mircea Florian. He encouraged critical thinking, with excellent applications to the cultural environment. Thus we may deem Rădulescu-Motru or Petrovici as disciples of Maiorescu and also, in their turn, good mentors for young people having a liking for philosophy. We may also think of other mentors in the academic sense. Let us remember that Ion D. Sârbu used to consider himself as a disciple of Lucian Blaga. So did Vasile Băncilă, as he wrote in a letter addressed to Blaga. Even though an exceptional philosopher in his writing, Blaga was rather rarely available for dialogue (as recounted by Ovidiu Drimba, his former assistant); thus, if discipleship was achieved in his proximity, it was based on other grounds than the above. In this respect, in the Iași academic environment there asserted Ion Petrovici and Nicolae Bagdasar, and later Ernest Stere, Petre Botezatu and Alexandru Zub. In a text called *Scurt portret al lui Dinu Noica (Brief Dinu Noica's Portrait)*, Emil Cioran implicates that the philosopher, like other cultivated spirits, wanted at any price to have disciples: "I have always been intrigued at subtle, cultivated spirits who will at all costs make disciples, sequester themselves in solitude, and wait for their pilgrimage [...]. What astonished me in Noica was his need to be surrounded by admirers that he helped and confused."³ However, I think that Noica not just wanted to be, but really was a good mentor with respect to initiating young people in philosophy.

Certainly, the terms "mentor" and "disciple" have a distinctive meaning in the Romanian academic environment. In Maiorescu's time, for instance, philosophical research was most often elementary, preparatory, aiming rather at the a good comprehension of western modern philosophy than the special and exigent analysis of ideas and concepts. In that period, there were few who made actual endeavors in philosophical research or creation, for example Vasile Conta and A. D. Xenopol. When Ion Petrovici talks about his teacher, Maiorescu, he remembers the latter's question to him immediately after having seen his recently published book *Teoria noțiunilor (The Theory of Notions)*: "All is well, but just one thing: isn't such a book premature in our culture? Are you convinced we have reached in the evolution of our culture this kind of works?" And after a pause, he goes on: "See the case of Rădulescu-Motru; he is very productive and has good things. But it seems to me, because of what I have just told you, that his writings flow sideways." (Petrovici 1940, 18-19) Without answering to him, Petrovici understood that, especially from his chair, he was supposed to teach at length "philosophical systems" that were already established in the West. Between Maiorescu's cultural pattern (who he admires and he considers efficient within the Romanian milieu) and Conta's pattern (described as speculative and detached from local history, delivered to his "philosophical creative demon"), he prefers the former. Of course, this

pattern is justified for that time, even though, looking from the temporal distance, it seems to have forgotten the essential correlation between research and education (*Forschung und Lehre*) instituted by the Humboldtian model of higher education.

This kind of discipleship seems to have been present, in a somewhat symptomatic form for the Romanian culture, since Dimitrie Cantemir. He owes his first knowledge in logics, ethics and metaphysics especially to his youth teacher, Jeremia Cacavela. In the letter that he sends him in the spring of 1700, together with the manuscript of his writing *Sacro-sanctae scientiae indepingibilis imago* (*Unportrayable Icon of the Sacred Science*), Cantemir considers Jeremia Cacavela *praeceptor* and *institutor*; he calls him several times *pater reverende* (“venerable parent”) and submits his work to the latter’s verdict. “I wanted to unveil to you the thought of my heart, my venerated parent, and this is why I present to you this first volume of the sacred science; I agree that you read it and read it again, I defer to your judgment, I accept that you tell me your opinion, I promise that I will cogitate just like you; leave aside what I have left aside, and should I make any mistake, forgive me and send it back to me corrected, as swift as possible. Farewell.” (Cantemir 2017, VIII) Thus we might believe that this relationship is similar to the one between a mentor and their prentice. But in Constantinople, Cantemir would come to discover that the real philosopher was another one. After hearing a series of lectures, especially on the philosophy of Jan Batista van Helmont, he is completely drawn towards his views. From his writings Cantemir puts together an impressive volume of excerpts, and he adds an encomium (*Praise the teacher and the virtue of his teaching*), a foreword to the reader, and a glossary. Thus the master in philosophical matters has now become a person outside his former language and culture. It was the Helmont’s view that that prompts the philosophical reflection in his most ample and ambitious early writing, *Unportrayable Icon of the Sacred Science*. The personally known master of the first phase makes room for another by whom philosophy itself seems to speak. However, later on Cantemir walks out of Van Helmont too; in his *Hieroglyphic History*, for instance, he does not mention his name anymore; nor does he in his writing *A Natural Research on Monarchies* (1714) or in *Unclear Passages in the Catechism published in Slavonic Language by an Anonymous Author* (1721). Thus simplifying things a bit, one may distinguish in Cantemir three cases with respect to the mentor-disciple relationship: first, the personal meeting of a mentor in the environment of his own language or culture (one should keep in mind that Jeremia Cacavela translated *The Divan* from Romanian into Greek, and *The Sacred Doctrine, that is of the Holy and Godly Liturgy* from Greek into Romanian); then, he orientates towards the mentor beyond his own culture, from the already established cultural environment; eventually, Cantemir would take up some philosophical matters and interpretations on

his own. In each of these phases one may see his wish to situate himself, as a philosopher, within the larger framework of the Christian vision.

These three distinct cases may be found – with some variations – in many Romanian philosophers between Cantemir and the present time. Particular relevance has the third case shown above, namely the reconsideration of philosophical matters and interpretations on one's own account. In the case of Cantemir, it preserves the tension between the secular and the Christian cultures⁴. In other cases, it is the obvious tension between the local culture – with its linguistic or conceptual possibilities – and the already established Western philosophy. This will nourish what may be called the “positioning in the interval” of the philosophical mind, which has been constantly reinventing itself in this environment.

2. However, as we have seen, there is also another kind of mentor in philosophy. It is the one that orients the disciple's attention towards his own way of life, more precisely towards his inner life and his relationship to the other, undertaken as such at the level of the sensibility and a certain belief system. In this case, what matters the most is the availability for a confession-like dialog. The capacity of mentor is checked here in an experience that concerns the self-orientation of the mentored, his decisive choices. In some traditions (such as the neo-platonic, but especially the Christian and the patristic), the form of this mentor resembles the one of a spiritual parent. As has been said, it concerns the experience as gathered in the power of the Spirit, as well as the charisma⁵. The relevance of philosophy is checked here in the living model of the guide and the living ways of the guided.

Is this kind of mentor observable in the Romanian philosophical tradition? It is not easy to identify, even though there are cases that let us get a glimpse of it. I think the same Dimitrie Cantemir envisions it, in an allegorical form, in his *Unportrayable Icon of the Sacred Science* (1700). For the real confessor is there neither Ieremia Cacavela nor Van Helmont. As we learn from the first pages of this work, the young prentice meets an honest and faithful friend, and shares with him inner crisis. The friend listens and clarifies the positive sense of his doubts, talks to him about the need for discernment and about the fact that he should think about the meaning of truth above all by means of his faith. Thus guided, the young man is unexpectedly shown the face of an old wise man who addresses him with infinite kindness and calls him “son”. He tries to restore his self-confidence: “Why is it, my son, that this posture has made you tremble so much? Have faith, hope, and believe!” (Cantemir 2017, 17) His words evoke the Christian virtues without which the road of true knowledge is not accessible. He brings forth, in his own words, the “sacred science of the eternal truth”, while the mirror in his chest is “the Holy Scripture and the designations of time.” (Cantemir 2017, 162) It has been noticed in respect to this new condition of the young prentice that it

bears two dimensions. On the one hand, the disciple in search of the truth, thus in relationship to his mentor, *id est* his spiritual parent “who initiates him into knowledge in a relation canonical for the Eastern Christian practice”; on the other hand, the human dimension which, “in the simplicity of his wish for knowledge, encapsulates the efforts that humankind never stopped making in order to reach this goal.” (Alexandrescu 2016, 80) Thus we may recognize in this place of Cantemir’s work the scenario of a possible spiritual initiation, which is understandable for a writing whose explicit intent is both philosophical and theological.

However, later in the local philosophical culture, one can hardly find mentions of the existence of a spiritual, or with a broader expression, existential master. It has either become very discreet, sometimes even up to anonymous, or retreated into such environment as the monastic. Thus we know, for instance, that Samuil Micu takes the vow early in life, and after giving philosophy lectures (in Blaj and Vienna), he returns to the “Sfânta Treime” Monastery in Blaj (1783-1806). His experience is not unique in our culture; the orientation towards the life of a monk – or most often, a similar one – is easy to recognize here up to the latest century.

Let us recall, however, that after the first Great War, it comes back to the public attention the possibility of having a spiritual guide. One of the people who may have played such a role was Vasile Pârvan, as writes Eliade in his postscript to the book *Roza vânturilor* (*The Rose of the Winds*) (1942). Pârvan understood early on the unusual seriousness of the situations that we were going through, during the first great conflagration and in the after math (as can be seen in his lecture *Datoria vieții noastre* /*The Duty of Our Lives*/, which opens his lectures on ancient history and arts history in Cluj, 1919). However, the historian and philosopher, in spite of his austere visionary character and his trembling voice that used to talk about the dramatic destiny of peoples, remained a solitary spirit, like a recluse who, from time to time, climbs down into the world. The other professors of that period did not manage to persuade the young generation with respect to the possibility of a radical transformation concerning the very ethos. This is well put in a nutshell by Ioan Petru Culianu. “In search of a master, Eliade approached, in turn, the philosopher C. Rădulescu-Motru, too old and ill to respond to the young man’s preoccupations, and the impassible P. P. Negulescu, too cold to arouse his enthusiasm. The young associate-professor Mircea Florian delights him, however without giving him an utterly fresh impression.” (Culianu 1995, 205) A certain acknowledgement enjoyed in that period Ion Petrovici and Lucian Blaga; yet the latter used to be often abroad with various diplomatic and cultural missions. With respect to Nichifor Crainic, he seems to not have had the sense of major changes and enough open-mindedness towards other cultural environments. Consequently, some of the young people feel drawn towards Nae Ionescu. “Chronologically, Nae Ionescu appears as an ‘inheritor’

of Vasile Pârvan. As of 1926 up to now, he has in front of him a mass of students who had grown under Pârvan's wizardry and who could not find now any other live support, any spiritual master", says Eliade in the same postscript.

It is important that, at that time, some young intellectuals were ardently looking for a spiritual guide in the very context of the philosophical endeavor. They feel dissatisfied with the certitudes of science and with those pedagogical methods as were limited to the formation of good scholars. "A generation of students, says Eliade, is never drawn towards the most erudite professor or the most efficient pedagogue. Students never look just for good and precise knowledge at the University. Above all, they look for a living and thinking method; a spiritual master, that is a man sincere enough not to falter in pointing out the futility of human sciences, and alive enough not to perish himself, crushed by the consciousness of such futility." It was not by chance, adds Eliade, that the professors who attracted generations of students after the 1900s, such as Nicolae Iorga or Vasile Pârvan, "avowed the tragic consciousness of life and nevertheless found a heroic sense of this life, which must be accepted and nurtured." (Eliade 1990, 427-428) No doubt, it is hard to say now which of the young people of that time have actually found such guide and precisely who, for how long and especially with which moral or political consequences. But after the second Great War, under the pressure of ideologies that completely overthrew old the former values, the image of the spiritual guide fades away for the most part from the public arena⁶. What we know is that the framework of the master-disciple relationship, in its existential sense, shrinks a lot, becomes discreet, or sometimes almost hidden, protected as much as possible under a directly personal form.

3. As a general rule, our attention is especially drawn towards the possible presence of epochal characters: absolutely remarkable masters, philosophers who are emblematic and broadly acknowledged in the period, or guides that appear as providential. In this case, one easily comes to negative conclusions about the fate of the Romanian philosophy and the description of desolate findings, at least for some historic periods. Yet one should not ignore the existence of common and modest, even humble, anonymous forms under which the philosophical consciousness may be nourished. For example, the lectures and discussions that may have taken place, even in an elementary form, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries, thanks to teachers that later fell into oblivion. For instance, we hardly remember old-time professors such as Nectarie Sinaitul, Spandonis Vizantios, Teodor of Trapezunt, Nicolae Kerameus and others, present at the Lordship Academies in Iași and Bucharest, in the 17th and 18th centuries, where they used to teach the works of Aristotle (that *universitas scientiarum*, as is called by Noica), according to such late interpreters as Teofil Coridaleu (1540-1646)⁷. Then, towards the end of

the 18th century, the lectures of Coridaleu leave room for the ones made after the “popular philosophy” of Christian Wolff, by his followers, Christian Baumeister and Alexander Baumgarten. This *translatio studii* towards the Western philosophy and the new sciences, takes place by the effort of such professors as Nikifor Theotokis (professor in Iași by 1765), Iosip Moisiodax (which is open for the writings of Descartes, Gassendi, Locke, Leibniz, and Fénelon), Nicolae Cercel (who translates from Wolff), Lambru Fotiade, Veniamin of Lesbos or Daniel Philippide (with translations from Condillac and J. J. Lalande). Thus they reconstitute, however flawed such reconstitutions may be, such philosophical traditions as the non-Aristotelian and the Wolffian, partly illuminist. Before them one may acknowledge, for instance, the stoic and the byzantine traditions, the latter with a profound patristic origin. It is not without great difficulty that we remember the existence of small philosophical communities, with the possibility of debates and publications, as happened around the 1800s (in 1795, Samuil Micu together with Ion Piuaru-Molnar found *Societatea filosofoască a neamului românesc în Mare principatul Ardealului /The Philosophical Society of the Romanian People in the Great Principedom of Ardeal/*, which aims at publishing a periodical, *Vestiri filosofoști și moralicești /Philosophical and Moral News/*). What I mean to say is that it would not have been possible to maintain the basic philosophical data (for instance, distinct language, specific thinking, philosophical sensibility) in the absence of the effort of teachers, researchers, and translators that we sometimes deem as modest, or who later became anonymous. Or in the absence of the people that, without leaving an impressive philosophical work, dedicated most of their lives to the founding and the animation of institutions: schools of philosophy, philosophical reviews and societies, small communities for discussions and dialog, forms of editing and translation. Without their effort – the people who later become anonymous – no living tradition is possible. Unfortunately, we hardly give any credit to this diffuse, continuous, and anonymous effort, so it is no wonder that its possibility is nowadays still difficult to maintain.

Thus if we talk about the building of traditions, and modalities of creating continuity, we shouldn't forget the great effort of unknown teachers and small communities, however anonymous. We should also not forget the simultaneous opening of philosophy from this area towards both the patristic tradition and the Western culture, by studies, translations, and publications. The former is related especially to the personal relationship between a mentor and his disciple, while the latter to the ever reiterated critical reflection about one's own cultural settings.

More obvious in its scholastic form, the philosophical discipleship is almost inevitably built by relating to an outside mentor, especially in the West. We have seen that Dimitrie Cantemir offers a first example, if we consider his

relating to Van Helmont. Something similar may be seen later, in the case of Samuil Micu, where decisive is his relating to the writings of Christian Wolff (by his followers, Christian Baumeister and Alexander Baumgarten). The same may be said about others, Gheorghe Lazăr (1779-1823, initially a Wolffian, rendering a *Curs de filosofie. Logica și Metafizică /Lecture on Philosophy. Logics and Metaphysics/*, after Kant, into Romanian), Eufrosin Poteca (*Elemente de filosofie, logică și etică /Elements of Philosophy, Logics, and Ethics/*, 1829, of Wolffian and Kantian inspiration, also drawn towards Victor Cousin), Eftimie Murgu (professor in Iași, with Kantian philosophical lectures), Ion Heliade-Rădulescu (under the influence of 18th century French and Hegelian thought), August Treboniu Laurian (professor at “Sf. Sava”, drawn towards the Kantian philosophy), George Barițiu, Simion Bărnuțiu (who elaborated his lectures after the writings of W. T. Krug, a popularizer of Kant), Timotei Cipariu, Ion Zalomit, and Al. Hasdeu. In the posterity of Maiorescu, that is after the return from abroad of some of his former students, Kant’s personality would dominate the Romanian philosophical milieu. A significant fact took place in 1889, as if it were to continue a message hidden in the pages of *Sărmanul Dionis (The Solitary Dionis)*: Constantin Rădulescu-Motru passes his philosophy degree with the thesis *Realitatea empirică și condițiunile cunoaștinței /Empirical Reality and the Conditions of Consciousness/*, in which he discusses and admits without reserves the Kantian apriorism. After abiding a while in the proximity of Wilhelm Wundt, he would defend his doctorate in philosophy, at Leipzig, with a dissertation titled *Cu privire la geneza teoriei lui Kant asupra cauzalității în natură /On the Genesis of Kant’s Theory on Causality in Nature/* (1893). Later on, say in his *Personalismul energetic /Energetic Personalism/* (1927), he would somewhat distance himself from the Kantian doctrine and try to deepen some philosophical matters on his own. A similar philosophical journey may be found in other remarkable scholars. One should not forget a detail from *Précis de décomposition*, namely that when Cioran, in the fragment *Adieu à la philosophie*, names the reasons why he considers philosophy of no use, immediately invokes Kant: “I have turned away from philosophy when I realized it were impossible to discover in Kant any human flaw, any real trace of sadness; in Kant and in all the other philosophers.” Thus important precursors in philosophy are almost always outside one’s own culture.

This latest fact may explain, in part, some weird discontinuities – at least at first sight – concerning the philosophical tradition. However one should not ignore, in this respect, other possible causes, such as, as I have mentioned above, the weakness of institutions (schools, reviews, scientific or research societies). Eventually the serious effects, in this cultural milieu, of the censorship of political dictatorships, at least for the 6th and 7th decades of the 20th century (Afloroaei 2003, 20-23). One should also not ignore the

considerable difficulties generated by what Rădulescu-Motru called “politicianism” (politicking), a phenomenon that here, in Eastern Europe, has been huge and durable, up to this day.

Yet could we recognize any form of continuity in the Romanian philosophical culture? Of course, if we consider in some cases, for instance, the simultaneous opening towards both the Eastern (especially patristic) tradition and the Western philosophy. Or, in other cases, the critical reflection about one’s own cultural setting, such as the illuminist and, later, the junimist. Or the constant comeback, after the 1800s, to the Kantian tradition and the Western authors who directly took it over. The tension between some local cultural exigencies and the ones asserted in the Western milieu is still present today. They actually remake the situation-in-the-interval of the philosophical consciousness, for instance between the modern discourse and the patristic teaching, between the established language of philosophy in an epoch and the mother tongue, and between the alert course of history and the traditional one. The condition of the interval may also be found in thinkers who seems to be completely separated from the local philosophical culture. For example, in the case of Vasile Conta, if we consider his philosophical language – both some concepts such as “fact”, “chance”, “fatality”, “fatalism”, “law”, or “matter”, as some of the representations by which their meaning becomes active⁸. This may even be ascertained in Constantin Noica: even though he used to often talk about a “God of culture” and a disciplined, almost military scholarly initiation, he was able to cultivate the personal relationship with the other, even a certain eremitism, a form of retreat, so that the intellectual discipline that he was trying to impose was not lacking the warm look of the “spiritual parent” from the Eastern tradition⁹. What Blaga says in a letter to Vasile Băncilă, namely that he situates himself, as a philosopher, between Kant and Dionysius the Areopagite, applies to a certain extent for many others who made possible here a form of discipleship in philosophy. This fact in and of itself does not advertise any special glory, or conversely, any form of historical failure. Yet it leads to a distinct way of configuring what we may call a philosophical tradition. The difficulties experienced in this respect – as real and obvious as they may be – may not justify a radical breed of skepticism with respect to the philosophical culture of this region. In fact, what matters is not a specific form of historical hubris or the imposition of a philosophy over another, but its actual and durable achievements in the living environments of communities.

(Translated by Adrian Oroșanu)

Notes

¹ I remember that Ernest Stere, while giving lectures in the history of philosophy at the University in Iași, used to say, whenever given the opportunity, that there is always ethical intentionality to the philosophy, as it concerns the very human ethos, the person's attitudes and decisions within the community.

² Some considerations about these forms of discipleship I have included in *Cum este posibilă filosofia în estul Europei (The Possibility of Philosophy in Eastern Europe)*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 1997, sections "Disciples, magisters, and heretics" and "The Condition of Discipleship in Philosophy".

³ Cf. Nicolae Manolescu, "Un text inedit" ("An inedited text"), in *România Literară*, 19, 2013, where he also offers the translation of the pages by Emil Cioran.

⁴ Cf. Lucian Blaga, "Dimitrie Cantemir". In: *Texte (Eseuri, Conferințe, Articole) / Texts (Essays, Conferences, Articles)*. Bucharest: Minerva, 1972. This tension is easy to spot in Cantemir, especially when discussing certain philosophical matters like time, world order, and life (cf. Afloroaei 2017, pp. LXIV-LXXXVI).

⁵ The mentor is here rather mystagogical and exemplary ("Be an example to them, not a lawmaker!" says avva Pimen), so that the disciple "advances, day by day, in the presence of his master, to freely reach a 'self' infinitely more vast and more luminous than the narrow 'ego' of his former identity" (Scrima 2000, 171-174).

⁶ Yet such expectation would be later met, at least in part, by a handful of people already asserted in the inter-war culture, such as Sandu Tudor, Mircea Vulcănescu, Sergiu Al-Gerge, Constantin Noica (especially during his detention years), Ion Petrovici, Anton Dumitriu, and Vasile Lovinescu. Of course, other names may be recalled now by the voice of disciples or prentices.

⁷ Cf. in this respect Constantin Noica, *Aristotelismul în principatele române în sec. XVII-XVIII (The Aristotelian Tradition in the Romanian Principalities in the 17th and 18th Centuries)*, in "Studii Clasice", IX, Bucharest, 1967.

⁸ Cf. Afloroaei 1997, 44-57. I have tried to show the relation of this condition of "situation-in-the-interval" with some very easily observable data of the history of philosophical thought in this area: the domination of exegeses and commentaries (pp. 35-43, 69-72), the relaxed form of the philosophical language and the method (pp. 46-49, 110-118, 255-259), the recurrent presence of the polihistorian (pp. 58-60) and the availability of philosophers for alternative views (pp. 111-113, 127-131).

⁹ "It may well be that Noica has made an alloy between the rigorist 'intellectual dressage' and the Eastern warmth of the 'spiritual parent' (a notion mentioned as such in the *Jurnalul de la Păltiniș / Journal of Păltiniș*)" (Ciachir 1994, 39)

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Functions of cultural prejudices: concepts and applications

Abstract: Prejudices – which are formally judgments – generally have foundation role in various argumentations, opinion networks and theoretical constructs. Those regarding culture or any forms of it (philosophy, science, religion, art etc.) are in fact valued judgments whose structure may be put into analogy with that pertaining to that Kantian “infinite judgments” (affirmative judgments with a negative predicate). Such prejudices make possible the phenomena of pre-judicative circularity, which consists in the crossover of prejudice from the public space towards cultural philosophy with the purpose of philosophically justifying it and returning it to its place of origin. There are, on the other hand, aside from the cultural prejudices present in a public space other prejudices of a representational nature, which join the judicative components of cultural (pre)judgments and prejudices which are the result of a nonjudicative experience. Sourced in this are some problems of cultural philosophy, but also some solutions regarding mainly the limitation of the functions of cultural prejudices that a foundation (a transcendental constitutive) of the judgments that formal philosophy of culture and that of ordination (finalistic-regulatory of cultural philosophy and cultural prejudice)

Keywords: cultural prejudice, transcendental-constitutive and finalistic-regulatory function of cultural prejudices, pre-judicative circularity, philosophical hermeneutics, nonjudicative experience.

1. Introduction

In our cultural environment which at least in part is the same with our public space, different prejudice circulate about Romanian culture and its relation with other cultures as well as about other cultural forms like art, philosophy, etc. in their relation with similar forms from western cultures. The specific prejudice refers foremost to the minor condition of our culture to its unfulfilled status if compared to other European cultures, to its dependency to foreign cultural traditions. On the other hand, there are also philosophical reconstructions of culture with applications to Romanian culture and, therefore, to Romanian philosophy, in which various prejudice either become significant ideas in theory, or, without being revealed, to be recognized as they are, become conditions of possibility for philosophical

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undergoings on the theme of culture. Starting from this situation of conjunction of the same prejudice both in public space as well as cultural philosophy, it is natural that we ask ourselves:

- (1) Can these philosophical reconstructions of culture be free of prejudice ?
- (2) Once placed in (cultural) circulation do these fore mentioned reconstructions become sources of prejudice for the public space ?

The first question may beget a straightforward answer: philosophical reconstructions of culture are not and cannot be free from prejudice. The ideas comprising them have to be supported and this operation demands some judgment to begin from. These are the primary judgments of any argumentation, those that support its conclusion. These judgments have logically necessary functions and become free judgments (prejudice) due to their position in the structure of arguments.

Therefore, freedom from prejudice of the philosophical reconstruction of culture argumentations is not a natural thing as far as logical functionalities of prejudice is concerned. There are on the other hand in any philosophical construct besides the natural logical prejudice (pre-judgment), some representations (sometimes concept-representations) which have the strength to determine some problems and interrogations, concepts and ideas to give them direction and set them on a trajectory that is “meaningful” from their perspective. Such representations are, in fact, still judgments even if they appear in a “representative” form in philosophical reconstructions; and they are, in their significant content, cultural, that is they are directly tied to the environment open to philosophical interrogations corresponding to a particular culture. On the grounds of this position in philosophical construction, cultural prejudices, both the “logical” as well as the “representational”, have two functions: that of *foundation* of philosophical reconstructions of culture (the transcendental constitutive function) and that of *ordination* of the fore mentioned (the finalistic regulatory function).

To the second question – are philosophical reconstructions of culture sources of public prejudices regarding culture ? – one may answer, provisionally, of such: these rather solidify some prejudices in particular those that they themselves seem to derive from to such effect that it is possible to consider some form of pre-judicative circularity which comprises both the philosophical reconstructions of culture as well as cultural prejudices from the public space.

2. The logically-formal function of cultural prejudices

From a logically formal standpoint, cultural prejudices are *value judgments* in the structure of which the subject is represented by a notion that refers to a particular culture (for instance the “Romanian culture”), and the predicate to a notion that expresses a quality of the subject (“minor”, “major”,

“unfulfilled”, “fulfilled”, “model”, “configuration” etc.). They have always been present in the history of culture and on their ground there have been built both the symbolical structures specific to a “natural” culture, as well as the cultural ideologies and the multi/trans/intercultural. In their logical structures, we therefore have the known and familiar judicative elements: terms, verb and time, quantifiers etc. Such valued judgments are grounded most of the times on other judgments and other representations, they themselves with pre-judicative functions which intervene constitutively but without being brought to a recognizable form in the very own logical structure of judgment.

For instance, in the judgment: *the Romanian culture is a minor culture* (as we generally agree when our attention is being directed towards what the public conscience has to say, but also towards some philosophers have said, for instance Lucian Blaga in *Geneza metaforei și sensul culturii*). The support representation, maybe even the foundation one for this judgment is that of a structural-qualitative hierarchy of (particular) cultures. It is the case of a representation with the function of prejudice, but not only in the logical sense, because it serves as grounds for theoretical constructs or for value judgments regarding a certain culture or culture itself, but also in a transcendental sense we might say because the specific representation makes possible or constitutes the fore mentioned value judgment as well as other value judgments whose subject is a particular culture (some of these, important parts of Blaga’s philosophy of culture, in the sense of a “morphology of cultures”, model of philosophical thought that the Romanian philosopher doesn’t accept proposing a formula that he considers a “metaphysics of culture”).

Given the somewhat transcendental sense, one could think that cultural judgments may be more appropriately expressed with their foundation function in the form of the infinite judgments that Kant speaks about in the *Critique of pure reason*: affirmative judgments with a negative predicate (Kant 2010, 77-8). This way, the judgment in the earlier example – *the Romanian culture as a minor culture* – appears as such: *the Romanian culture is a non-major culture* (S is non-P). From a logically formal point of view a usual negation of the initial judgment must be operated, allowed by traditional formal logic (resulting in *the Romanian culture is not a major culture*) then an obversion must be operated, allowed as well, in the respective context (reaching the judgment: *the Romanian culture is a non-major culture*). Though, once the “infinite judgment” is obtained we are no longer in formal logic but in a transcendental one, should we accept the Kantian perspective regarding the functional between the two affirmative judgments. Anyhow, the cultural philosophy’s judgments’ function of foundation, of constitution, is better connected to the infinite judgment than the one in classical format (*the Romanian culture is a minor culture*). Maybe it would be the case to put into play

the category of limitation also, the categorical correspondent of the infinite judgments in the specified Kantian context. For a cut in the subject's infinity of possibilities of being – the Romanian culture – is operated here: it may not be a major culture. Also, on the other hand, there is a crossover beyond this “limitation” into the new infinity that is expressed by the negative predicate. In fact, the transcendental function is being taken over by the infinite judgment by means of this very crossing beyond any positivity which is expressed by the initial (formally) positive predicate: minor culture.

As a matter of fact many of the Romanian philosophers' cultural projects – and not only theirs – are supported somehow on such a change of judicative structure. Mircea Eliade, for example, speaking of the “discrete” and “obscure” role of the Romanian culture and, in fact, of the entire Romanian history, in a text: *Romanians. historical sketch*, published in Lisbon in 1943¹, rather assumes the cultural prejudice's form of infinite judgment that we have mentioned he is not all entirely in agreement with the idea that we have a minor culture, although he admits that this culture is, somehow, by its performances lagging behind others, in certain areas due to certain reasons. Therefore, the Romanian culture is *non-major culture*: this is the form of the thought that we have to accept about Eliade's undergoing in the quoted text: what relates (referentially) to the subject (the Romanian culture) is achieved in its own determination and existence as something in “the world”. It is, but not a given, as it happens with those that are everywhere around the world but, an active negative that somehow may be continuously constituted (through creation etc.). On the other side, the predicative (*non-major culture*) shows that this subject may be anything, but not a major culture: it may be, for example, a contact culture, a liaison, between the western culture and the oriental one (as Eliade himself sustained as well as other philosophers of the new generation).

In the horizon of the philosophical construction, through the cultural prejudice's logical structure change, a phenomena of modification of transcendentalism takes place (formula which reminds of one of Husserl's terms, the “modification of neutrality”, of which the philosopher speaks in his papers, regarding the possibility of the “intentional object” of any conscious act to maintain intact its power to intervene in constitutive acts that follow the specific phenomena in which it occurs)². The modification of transcendency refers to the intervention of logical operations in order to change the structure of a judgment in such a way that it may exercise its function of foundation of judgments in the system of a cultural theory. Altogether the named phenomena draw into its own order the representational pre-judgments, those representations that play significant role in the cultural judgments' construction. They do not have the logical form of judgment – they are not, formally, cultural judgments, alike the prejudices

from the aforementioned examples – but they have, but they have the transcendental function of it because they intervene in a constitutive fashion in the construction of the most efficient judgments of a philosophy of culture, that is the judgments which support its essential meanings those by which it shows itself into the world of philosophy and the public space of a culture. The representation of a culture as an *organism* (organicism) or as an efficient *work technique* (instrumentalism) or as a *cosmoid* that evolves towards a “natural” state of its own (cosmism), or as a *scale* (hierarchy) of particular cultures which evolve towards the culture seated on the highest step, a variant of the western culture (finalism) are such representational pre-judgments. We can easily recognize all of them in various philosophies of culture.

3. The foundation (transcendental-constitutive) function of cultural prejudices

As I was saying earlier the philosophical reconstructions of culture rather strengthen some of the cultural prejudices from the public space, usually the once they themselves are supported on or derived from. This is why we may speak while considering such a relationship of a pre-judicative circularity while considering “such a relationship”. The most wide spread of the cultural prejudices that are in circulation both in the public space as well as in the cultural philosophies in our parts is the one exemplified earlier in Blaga’s *the Romanian culture is a minor culture (when compared to other cultures considered major)*. Moreover this cultural prejudice is a sort of matrix for other cultural prejudices situated of course in both public and philosophical media. Its formal schematic is as follows:

(1) By means of direct experience which implies knowing once own cultural environment as well as other such environments in working with the representation of a hierarchy of cultures, all entirely possible as long as culture may be but a particular one, tightly knit to the life of a determined community, one might reach in the public space the judgment by which the Romanian culture is considered inferior to other cultures (historically and/or geographically), without specifying the criteria of the comparison, the degree of similarity or difference the representative traits of the comparison etc. In the support of prejudice there may intervene some sensitivities, (cultural) feelings, acts of will etc., all targeted at modifying culture in a certain way.

(2) The particular prejudice is taken over by philosophers in order to “rationalize” (argument, justify, exemplify, interpret) it; this is when comparison criteria are found and degrees of similarity and difference, even representative traits for the comparison, are being determined. The theory of culture and its application to Romanian culture are integrated into systems, conceptions and philosophical visions without the underlying

prejudicial substratum to be dislocated, marginalized, set aside or limited in its power to sustain the cultural judgments that such a particular theory is made up from. Prejudice returns toward where it came from, the public space; of course reinforced. This way the circle closes: philosophy rebuilds its ties to the public life of people while, regarding cultural prejudices, the latter is validated and left open to similar experiences.

The connection of the common conscience, a public one, with the philosophical conscience, a consensually technical one, is problematic. The scheme above does nothing but depict the chronologically – formal moments of a culturally determined relation of a public space full of cultural prejudices and a particular philosophy in which such prejudices are “checked” in order to validate them. Such a scheme may be found in the cultural philosophies from our part even if the turns and the connections between them aren’t exactly the same with the four mentioned ones. The difference between this schematic and the structure of the undergoing of the philosophy of culture with applications to the Romanian culture derive from the intervention of prejudices of a different nature, namely the representational ones. At the same time this schematic brings forth a cultural phenomenon present in any modern culture or any that was built through public projects (cultural ideology) which may be called *pre-judicative circularity*.

This phenomenon has, as a matter of fact, two hypostases: (1) a very large one which engages the public space corresponding to a particular culture and the philosophy of culture of the latter (*the cultural hypostasis*); (2) a narrow one, limited to a certain philosophy of culture (*the philosophical hypostasis*). Of course these hypostases are not mutually autonomous; on the contrary, they co-exist and condition one another. Albeit, they may be examined separately with the purpose of identifying their components, their functions and the cultural consequences of exercising such functions. The philosophical hypostasis includes first of all representational cultural prejudices. These have a foundation function for the judgments that make up the theory and which confer this theory its thematic and technical unity.

Here are some philosophies from the Romanian culture which illustrate the phenomenon of pre-judicative circularity in both its hypostases.

Titu Maiorescu considered, in his studies that comprise the “critique of direction”, his model of a philosophy of culture, that the grounds for any culture are the truth³. However our culture from the second half of the 19th century was moving – due to its minority status we might add – on the wrong direction, that of historical forgery. This is why a critique of direction is necessary, that is a critique by which the Romanian culture could be oriented towards the truth, could move on a line of truth, because only in this way it could get closer to the western ones, or better said, to the possibility of reconstructing cultural experiences from the latter’s historical

past. The structure of the pre-judicative circularity of the “critique of direction” is as follows:

(1) the Romanian culture (from the second half of the 19th century) privileges falsity, because the direction on which some cultural productions – which are taken into consideration by the public conscience and the specialized, cultural one – are aligned does not promote the truth regarding our history and our language;

(2) The critique of direction (the philosophical reconstruction of culture) is necessary so that the direction of its evolution gets oriented towards the truth, many cultural creations (literary foremost) which have the meaning of truth already existing;

(3) the initial prejudice is reinforced; there are two directions for the evolution of the Romanian culture, but only one of them is the “correct” one, the viable, in “conformity” with the cultural experiences of the cultural west. The strongest historical evidence for the reinforcement of the prejudice of the precarious, sub-western condition of the Romanian culture we find at Maiorescu’s “students” from later periods of the Romanian philosophy (C. Radulescu-Motru, P.P. Negulescu, Ion Petrovici, etc.) who, in turn, have built their philosophies of culture and the applications to the Romanian culture on the grounds of the phenomenon of pre-judicative circularity.

Constantin Rădulescu-Motru stated, in his 1904 paper *Cultura română și politicianismul Romanian Culture and Politicianism*, working to some extent in the “morphology of cultures”, that cultures are of different ages; which means that they (at least) appear as organisms depending on their interior coherence on the convergence of the aptitudes of individuals and their communities’ ideals, on the emphasis placed either on the community or the individual, three forms of cultural existence are significant: (1) *pseudo-culture*: specific to the cultures destined to a superficial life for they are not supported by communities which are adapted to a natural environment and they have not built in their cultural tradition efficient response techniques to the difficulties of the natural and social life, in their environment, but they have rather privileged the individual’s interests in their environment; such cultures may look better than the real ones but only on the surface of their public life due to the fact the elements that comprise them are borrowed; (2) *semi-culture*: specific to the cultures at the age of childhood, not at the one of maturity of creation, vocational, etc.; this refers to a necessary stage of the evolution of culture towards its own fulfillment, which may be “intuitively depicted by the image of a house well situated on its foundation having its roof and rooms ready, but unequipped yet with stairs, windows and furniture.” (Rădulescu-Motru 1984, 14); (3) *culture itself*: “true”, particular to some European peoples. The Romanian culture is a semi-culture it is necessary for it to mature and transform into a fulfilled culture

by renouncing the mimicry that was dominant in the second half of the 19th century by discarding the petty politics, by the education of vocations, etc. The scheme of prejudicative circularity is not as visible as with Maiorescu and neither its public and philosophical impact has had the extension of the Maiorescian one. Also the idea by which the Romanian culture, semi-culture, has all the chances to become a real culture seems to be opposed by the judgement by which the Romanian culture is minor; it evolves on a wrong path, etc., which would limit the phenomenon of prejudicative circularity upheld by the theory of C. Radulescu-Motru. But there are other cultural pre-judgments, of a representational nature and from the same category with the ones observed at Maiorescu in his critique of direction, which are present here and ensure continuity between these two moments of Romanian cultural and philosophical history that are represented by these two philosophers. For instance, the representation of culture as an organism, or the representation of cultures in a hierarchy, that of the instrumental representation of culture, etc.

Lucian Blaga opens his representative work for his philosophy of culture – *Geneza metaforii și sensul culturii*, published in 1937 – with a chapter titled “Cultura minora si cultura majora” (*Minor culture and major culture*). The concepts in question – minor culture and major culture – designate different types of culture and they are designed so they do not attract the organicist meaning they have for the morphology of cultures (bearing different denominations: ethnographic culture and monumental culture). It refers to age, not that of culture but that of man. The first type is built on the grounds of man’s age of childhood; the other one, it is understood, becomes possible due to the maturity of man. Anyhow they do not refer to the ages of the same organism, although they may be the result of the same stylistic matrix and, therefore, different cultures of the same community. The criteria of differentiation between the two types have to do with the person who is their “subject”; therefore they are structurally-qualitatively differentiated like the ages of man. Such an image maintains its organicist note but not the one observed in the case of the morphology of culture, which is consistent with the idea of culture itself as an organism. At the same time the structural-qualitative conception of particular cultures keeps the instrumental note that is given by representational pre-judgment that of culture as a regulative instrument of man’s relation with nature. A note of finalism may be felt (that is of a hierarchy of culture depending on their chances to be or become a “major culture”), as far as Blaga’s depictions, in the fore mentioned context, have to do only with the passing, in the case of the community, from a minor culture to a major culture.

Constantin Noica in “Ce e etern ai ce e istoric in cultura romaneasca” (“What is eternal and what is historical in Romanian culture”), from his 1944 published volume – *Pagini despre sufletul romanesc* (*Pages about the Romanian*

soul), asserted: “We know we are what is called ‘a minor culture’. We also know it does not mean of inferior quality.” (Noica 1991, 7) Here we don’t have an actual theory of culture, but the representational pre-judgment about a hierarchy of culture may be recognized. In other contexts, some very late ones, Noica operates in the fashion of a “morphology of culture”, eliminating some of its representational pre-judgments, but instituting others⁴. Besides, his image on culture is in the stamp of the cultural prejudice that we have spoken about so far.

The same philosophically-public and representational prejudices on the Romanian culture and culture in general we also find in **Emil Cioran**’s 1936 paper – *Schimbaria la fata a Romaniei* (*The transfiguration of Romania*). Big culture and small culture, the “new” terms used by the philosopher, are defined by the “political and spiritual destiny” by which a people individualizes itself in the world (Cioran 2001, 7-31). In any case, they designate qualitatively different cultures. History has not allowed in so far but a few peoples to become big cultures; and the rule shall live on, since nothing seems to contradict or nullify it.

The phenomenon of pre-judicative circularity, connected to the two “media”, both public-cultural space and the philosophy of culture, brings forth, naturally, two sets of consequences, corresponding to the two “media”: philosophical and public-cultural. The latter have to do with the reaccreditation of the prejudice by which the Romanian culture exists in a condition of minority; further on, cultural behaviors have to be continuously retailored in order to correspond to this prejudice: to treasure our contribution in other culture, namely the great ones, in order to gain individual and collective recognition; attention must be attuned to what goes on in the great cultures, so as not to miss out on “opportunities for synchronicity”, etc. The *philosophical* ones entail, first of all, the effort of continuous resizing of the Romanian culture itself. The concept of “adamitic culture” that Cioran was speaking about in *The transfiguration of Romania* is well suited to understand this type of philosophical consequences that derive from the phenomenon of pre-judicative circularity. “The Romanian culture is adamitic, because whatever is born in it has no precedent.” (Cioran 2001, 33) Therefore it has to be reconstructed, re-made continuously, all from the beginning. We may understand from here that one of the principal roles of cultural prejudices, in both their hypostases, is the justification of the type of philosophical reconstruction of culture that is put into play.

In a simple enumeration, here are four problems involved in the foundation function of cultural prejudices, particularly those from the cultural hypostasis, which seems to be complete, engaging from the very get go both the public-cultural space, as well as the philosophies of culture; without losing track though of the representational prejudices, which are so

efficient in the function of constituting the conditions of possibility for any theory (philosophy) of culture.

The first of them may be formulated as such: if we reject the prejudice of the Romanian culture's minority in Blaga's formulation – the Romanian culture is a minor culture- could we be certain that its opposite is no longer a prejudice with public circulation and philosophical justification? I believe we cannot. As a matter of fact the opposite (logically-formal, not transcendental) judgment, *the Romanian culture is not a minor culture*, is itself a prejudice (and from the very get go, even without thinking of it as opposed to another judgment), for the very reason it contains in itself the "affirmative" answer: *the Romanian culture is a major culture*. It is a prejudice also for the fact that it can serve itself as grounds for a pre-judicative circularity: the case in which the Romanian culture appears as excellent in comparison to other cultures the very ones that the common prejudice from which we have started indicated as "major", "real cultures", etc.; see, for this line of understanding, what the ideology of "protochronism" has represented and, unfortunately, still represents.

The second problem refers to the evaluative and hierarchizing excess, instrumentalist and organicist, regarding the comprehension and interpretation of culture. It is present all throughout history. But does it apply unproblematically to different cultures that are historically and geographically conditioned, and further on through personal or acquired tradition and through various "local" data? I believe we cannot eliminate it! As a matter of fact modernity seems to have transformed it in a life principle; in any case historicism used it in a constitutive way in its descriptions, analyses and interpretations of culture, and the morphology of cultures, by extensively using it in the construction of cultural hierarchies, reached the subordination of its own logic. See for this purpose the idea of the demise of the western culture believe to be the most evolved one.

The third problem has to do with the coverage of the philosophies of culture that are conditioned by a cultural space. Living inside a minor culture, aren't the results of reflections on it that come from itself, they themselves "minor"? And then could the prejudices circulated inside it be transferred to any other culture, in order to beget the natural sense of validity? Aren't some cultural behaviors, like of instance, in philosophy, the lack of quotations of those around us, connected to the one's own culture and philosophers' evaluation as minor? Here we have to do with the idea of a strong conditioning of cultural facts by the cultural context data in which men of culture are formed, particularly philosophers. And if this seems impossible for the construction of judgments that make up a philosophy of culture, still, with respect to the cultural prejudgments that are unassumed, but active, in both their hypostases, things seem clearer: this conditioning is possible, I believe? The test to validate them as "major" in any cultures of the "major" type remains yet a problem.

The fourth problem is connected to the first: if we reject a prejudice of the form: *the Romanian culture is a minor culture*, what do we get? Solely the opposite prejudice about which we have spoken earlier? Many other prejudices, I believe! Working, even philosophically, in the narrow perimeter of this prejudice, we only reach other cultural prejudices, which gain meaning both in the philosophy that formulates them as well as in the public cultural space in which they are and in other philosophical reconstructions of culture from the same horizon. The problems formulated here above may, if taken into consideration, lead they themselves to rethemization of culture. In any case they are aimed at philosophical justification of the attitude of acceptance or rejection of public cultural and representational prejudices.

4. The ordination (finalistic-regulatory) function of cultural prejudices

This function gains meaning from the observation that cultural prejudices refer most of the times to solid cultural facts, situated on firm ground, they themselves having an unshakable stability. It is unaccounted, though, the flux of cultural facts – which we may call events – that constitutes, as a matter of fact, *the live culture*, itself a source of diverse cultural prejudices. The function is finalistic-regulatory because the prejudices towards which the philosophies of culture (from our parts and from other parts) are directed, prejudices that get to the public space (but not in a philosophical form because it wouldn't be possible), are the same with the prejudices that they derive from. Lacking under the strong and continuous influence of the prejudices from the public-cultural space a sensitivity suited to value the authentically-cultured *event*, that which claims any one of us as “support” (subject of a cultural experience, we might think of some philosophical techniques of fluidization of cultural prejudices and reordination of culture.

Such a technique may be the operational engagement in the interpretation of culture. This is necessary especially to give chance to a process of dislocation of prejudices or at least to their criticism, with the risk of making room for others. For example, for the Romanian culture would be suited a “model of the specificity”, as an “instrument” of dislocation of the prejudices that concern it, a model that may be methodologically “generalized”, in order to respond to a need for the “fluidization of prejudices” from any particular philosophy. Such a model may comprise: *the life rhythm of philosophy, philosophical sensitivity of thinkers, the language, the aporetic accent, the identity representations, events that establish and move the forms of philosophy*; all of these, as it was aforementioned, operationally interpreted⁵. In addition, on the grounds of the specificity model it becomes possible the operation of differentiation between the *cultural history* and the *topological history* of a philosophy. The latter assuming some of the “prejudices” of cultural history remakes the order of philosophy as such.

Also the direct implication of existential time has a certain significance in the reordination of culture and fluidization of cultural prejudices. In the “radical hermeneutics” of John Caputo, the flux of acts of conscience and its result, like a perpetual ordering of this one, are definitory for any cultural-philosophical “reality”. The tragic and the religion, as event experimentation horizons, define philosophically cultural attitudes similar to the Apollonian and Dionysian from Nietzsche’s philosophy of culture. The amplitude of radical hermeneutics project exceeds the place of cultural prejudices, aiming at opening a reinterpretation of the (cultural) functions of philosophy.

The rethematization of culture, of which we were speaking at the end of the previous chapter, would be possible by regular philosophical “techniques” of interrogation and “speculation” and they would have the purpose of reordination of cultural judgments in the philosophies of culture and that of remaking the order of the philosophers of culture within a culturally determined space.

The take over, in the philosophical construction of culture, of “systems” of judgments in which the prejudices in question lose their meaning (purpose), would be such a technique. *Philosophical hermeneutics* may be such a system of judgments, this way *relating to tradition*, but not by the prescriptions of a method (empirical knowledge experiment mathematical forms, etc.) but by the “conscience of historical efficacy”, could bring forth to light the prejudices unknown in the beginning and would subject to critique the very prejudices that this “method” of philosophizing over culture could not do without. In addition, the means in question have the power to perceive both the calling of one’s own cultural tradition, as well as the generally “humanistic” one, which makes possible the actual phenomenon of cultural synchronization. Noica seems to work this way, on the theme of Romanian 18th century philosophy, in one of the papers that make up the volume *Pagini despre sufletul românesc (Pages on the Romanian soul)*, mentioned above (Noica 1991, 45-72). Equally so, does Mircea Vulcanescu and again Noica regarding the thematization of the Romanian philosophical utterance⁶. The humanistic tradition that we have spoken about above is well seated in any modern culture. The “existential” meaning of this one are also present in the Romanian culture as far as it is “modern”. Yet, they have to be looked for.

Furthermore, the study of the elements that make up prejudice and the unravel of their origin, their nature might be a technique for refreshing the interrogation and the speculation regarding culture. As we already know, in the structure of cultural prejudice are involved proper logical elements (logically formal this is what a judgment is), but also elements of a nonjudicative experience of the sort of representations that support the philosophical reconstructions, or the sort of identity motivations that do the same thing. In the philosophy of culture we find many examples of

“theories” in which such elements of nonjudicative experience take over the roles of discourse foundation. The necessarily hierarchical representation of cultures, the superiority of some that have philosophy among their forms, are representational and public-cultural prejudices from Wilhelm Wundt’s *Nations and their philosophies*, published in 1915 and known to some extent in the Romanian cultural environment. Similarly, the feeling of discomfort regarding belonging to a minor, weak, powerless culture, yet “adamitic” one as experienced, seemingly, by Cioran, while writing the *Transfiguration of Romania*. There, also, all sorts of conventional or pragmatic subterfuges (masked by the utilization of cognitive judgments) like: there is but one single culture that all people participate to – the representation of a human universalism without touching the concept as in the case of Kant in the *Critique of the faculty of judgment*, where culture is considered “the aptitude and skill for all sorts of ends for which he can use nature (external and internal).” (Kant 2002, 297). There is, in the shape of a fulfilled, real culture, only the European culture from which the Romanian culture is a part of; this is the case of the representation of a cultural exclusivity, as with Noica in *The European cultural model*: only the European culture is an actual culture, a “model”, while the others (totemic, monotheistic, pantheistic, polytheistic cultures) are simple cultural configurations⁷. In general, cultural prejudices are supported on such elements of nonjudicative experience and of representational nature – in the case of the Romanian culture both the philosophies which preach its minority (from the previous examples), as well as those according to which the Romanian culture is well balanced and with the potential of being a model for other cultures (“advanced” protochronism for instance).

The consideration, in a critical fashion, of the opinions of others regarding the culture, may be another technique regarding speculation and interrogation about culture. For example, taking into consideration, when the Romanian culture is philosophically reconstructed, of the opinion of foreign travelers about our popular culture, or about other components of the Romanian culture.

The prejudices about culture which are the object of pre-judicative circularity lead also to the formation of cultural ideologies and the absence of which cultural modernity would not be possible. This way avoiding “ideological horizontality” gains meaning according to which the opposite of cultural ideologies is represented by other cultural ideologies. *Philosophically the opposite of cultural ideology is philosophical hermeneutics* that is *the live relation to tradition*, which may extract culture – or some elements of it – from the movement of the available and three-dimensioned time, in order to bring it on an *existential support*, in the moment of a flesh and bone person. One that lives culturally does not aim at resolving problems of cultural hierarchy, of instrumental finalities attached to culture in general or to a determined

culture, for his stake is his own being. In such an experience, culture no longer seems a “thing” in front of “I” but a fact trapped in “my” very own existence: only now and only in this way am “I” a *cultural being*.

5. Conclusions

The two functions – transcendental-constitutive and finalistic-regulatory – of cultural prejudices must be brought out to sight, problematize or thematize in such a way that they make possible cultural events and participate to the relation that the “conscience of historical efficacy” activates, that is the relationship between “us” and our cultural tradition, tradition that is not limited to the history of a determined culture.

Also, it is possible to avoid, through the knowledge of cultural prejudices, excesses of the sort: (1) there is no Romanian philosophy (or literature); (2) there is a Romanian philosophy (or literature) that is extraordinary. Therefore, it becomes necessary to practice a topological (thematic) history of philosophy, so as to get closer to other philosophies while recognizing the (operational) cultural specificity of the Romanian philosophy.

Cultural prejudices cannot be excluded from the philosophical reconstruction of culture (and its forms), but recognizing and studying them may become significant philosophical acts. Therefore, a chance at clarity outside our culture and our philosophy has the philosophical reconstruction that has loosened cultural prejudices, have recognized them and have limited their functions⁸.

Notes

¹ Mircea Eliade published, in the same time (1943): 1. *Os Romenos latinos do Oriente*. Lisboa: Livraria Clássica Editora. 2. *Los Rumanos. Breviario histórico* Madrid: Editorial Stylos.

² Cf. Husserl. 1983. *Ideas pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, First book: *General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, Part three, Chapter four: “The set of problems pertaining to noetic-noematic structures” (&97-&127): 236-303.

³ The first edition of this article, in *Convorbiri literare*, 1868.

⁴ For example, in *Modelul cultural european (The European Cultural Model)*. (First edition, in German: *De dignitate Europae*, translated by G. Scherg București: Editura Kriterion, 1988.)

⁵ For this model, see my paper: *Lucrari de istoria filosofiei romanesti (Works of History of Romanian Philosophy)* vol. I, II. 2015. București: Editura Universității din București. Vol. I, 1. “Note metodologice asupra istoriei filosofiei românești” (*Methodological Notes on Romanian Philosophy*): 21-42.

⁶ Mircea Vulcanescu talks in *Dimensiunea românească a existenței (Romanian Dimension of Existence)* about two conditions for emerging identity of a culture: temptations (ispite) and philosophical potentialities of some words from natural language. C. Noica constructs in *Rostirea filosofică românească (Romanian Philosophical Utterance)* a “system of Romanian utterance” (This expression is used by Alexandru Surdu in *Comentarii la rostirea filosofică (Commentaries to the Philosophical Utterance)*).

⁷ This Noica's "theory" appears in cap. IV "Tabloul schematic al culturilor" (*The Schematic Table of Cultures*): 42-49, of cited book.

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Cioran as an Ascetic and “Hunger Artist”. An Assessment of Sloterdijk’s Interpretation

Abstract: The Western philosophy depicts during the 80s a process that I would qualify as an authentic *performative* turn that regards the human subject as nothing more than the “vector” of its series of exercises, foldings, repetitions. The recent work of P. Sloterdijk is located in this framework of “antropotechnics”. I shall focus my attention on two of the texts where Sloterdijk is discussing Cioran. First, I shall do an assessment of the interpretation advanced by Sloterdijk of the notorious paragraph on “flesh” (*Paleontology*), a text by Cioran which seems at the same time phenomenological and anti-phenomenological, metaphysical and anti-metaphysical. Then, I shall discuss Sloterdijk’s understanding of Cioran’s self-writing as a *sui generis* asceticism involving a daily exercise in erasing any “infection” epicenter of firm belief and commitment, any kind of faith in the future or in oneself, adding that it is also a paradoxical testimony for the “miracle” of every living moment. This way, Cioran as an ascetic, “autopatographer” and “hunger artist” becomes a key figure in this gallery of the new “arts of living”, an important link in the historical process of “the informalization of spirituality”. He is the “anti-stoic” and pseudo-Buddhist master of demobilization, “the first master of not-getting-anywhere”.

Keywords: Cioran, Sloterdijk, metaphysics, Nihilism, asceticism, spirituality, art of living

1. A General Hypothesis Concerning the Performative Subject

This paper is placed under the sign of a general hypothesis that at a first view may seem to engage no direct reference to Cioran’s work, but the developing argument will hopefully make such an option clear. I hold that Western philosophy registers during the 80s an authentic *performative* turn, according to which the human subject amounts to being conceived as nothing more than the “vector” of its series of exercises, foldings, repetitions¹. I am well aware of the fact that such a statement may seem a bit extravagant if one is not familiar with a particular kind of philosophical literature. This is why I shall try to clarify it by starting from a well-known motif of continental philosophy. The notorious “death of the subject”, in its

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diverse figures (as Author, as Citizen, as Artist, etc.), constituted not only a central theme of 20th century reflections and discourses, but also the background, the framework itself for expressing philosophical questions and constructing alternatives during the decades following World War II. What I depict as the *performative* turn is then the manner in which the so-called “death of the death of the subject” (Hudis 2004) took place in contemporary thinking. This comeback followed the long decades of radical destruction of the notion of modern, “Cartesian” subject, the undeniable center of experience and action, through the combined attack conducted by Nietzsche’s or Heidegger’s supporters, by the structuralists from the 50s and the 60s, by the post-structuralists from the 60s and the 70s, as well as by the social and linguistic constructivism or the analytic philosophy embracing a reductionist view of personal identity.

But the subject that has returned is not the same as the one that “died”. Since the beginning of the 80s, a conception of the human subject not as something *given* in its essential constitution, but merely as a principle of *practical* reflection, becomes more and more popular among philosophers: “a subject that constructs itself, that gives itself rules of living and of conduct, that forms itself through exercises, practices, and techniques” (Gros 2005, 697-698). It is a subject that makes itself in a particular way through all of its actions and makings; a subject that is socially tamed and thus “folded” by way of bending to rules, but one that also holds the possibility of altering its habits, the power of “turning the power of repetition against repetition” (Sloterdijk 2013, 197)². Acknowledging the idea of self-change and self-perfectioning through repetition, by way of training, means rediscovering the stake of traditional virtue ethics. The subject becomes the combined effect or result of *disciplinary* techniques and *subjectivation* practices through which particular rules are “inscribed in our flesh” (if we want to make use of the troubling image depicted by Kafka in the seminal short story “In the Penal Colony”). We might also speak of a philosophical delayed recovery of the core artistic commitment of the Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde movements: the indistinctness between *poiesis* and *praxis* (Bourriaud 1999; Shusterman 1992), in the context of a radical critique of the art institution in the age of capitalism and Fordist production line.

This strategic reorientation of philosophical concerns towards the eminently practical, formative dimension of philosophy goes beyond the existentialist reactions to academic philosophy’s estrangement from daily life: in other words, it searches for effective techniques for converting the rhetoric of self-choosing into actual self-practice. This search also involves alternative re-readings of the pre-Christian and non-religious roots of asceticism, spiritual practices and “technology of the self” (Foucault 1988). We are speaking here of the “final” Foucault, inspired by the work of Pierre Hadot (1995), but we might also point to the rediscovery of spiritual

exercises in a therapeutic context, once philosophical counselling was established in the beginning of the 80s. We might as well address the "somaesthetic" turn of American pragmatism towards the "art of living", or discuss the more or less free styles according to which popular philosophers of our times such as M. Onfray, A. de Botton or L. Ferry are making use of the ancient ethical doctrines.

In the same framework of "antropotechnics" we can locate the recent work of one of the most influential contemporary thinkers, P. Sloterdijk, which is also one of the most important promoters of Cioran's work in the German cultural space and throughout the world. Putting together these two judgments about Sloterdijk is not something accidental: in fact, it indicates the precise way in which the German philosopher is reading Cioran, as a forerunner in a large-scale process of contemporary re-configuration of the meaning of asceticism. In what follows, I focus my investigation on two of the texts where Sloterdijk is discussing Cioran.

2. *Askêsis* and Flesh: Stepping Outside Western Metaphysics

Sloterdijk's short book *Eurotaoismus* (1989; 2004), a reading of the modern age as an era of general mobilization, comprises an interpretation of Cioran's notorious paragraph on "flesh" (*Paleontology*), from his praised book *Le Mauvais D emiurge* (Cioran 1995; 2002). Here we encounter one of Cioran's exemplary pages, a text that I would qualify as being at the same time phenomenological and anti-phenomenological, metaphysical and anti-metaphysical.

According to Sloterdijk, the "post-historical culture of panic" reacted to the "culture of historical mobilization" that instantiates the *activism* of modern Western thinking by restoring two old alternatives: metaphysics and *poiesis* (the making, the production, with its modern correspondent, the "art": an art that Sloterdijk conceives, following Heidegger, as being essentially vital, as giving-birth, in opposition to "technology"). The German philosopher calls on Cioran's text "Paleontology" in relation to the first alternative: in his reading, this is a text that states "the shiver felt before the flesh by an unredeemed metaphysician" (Sloterdijk 2004, 59).

An unforeseen shower, one autumn day, drove me into the Museum of Natural History for a while. I was to remain there, as a matter of fact, for an hour, two hours, perhaps three (...) Nowhere is one better served with respect to the past (...) One gets the impression that the flesh was eclipsed upon its advent, that in fact it never existed at all, that it could not have been fastened to bones so stately, so imbued with themselves. The flesh appears as an imposture, a fraud, a disguise which masks nothing (...) The flesh, so *obvious*, is yet an anomaly. The more we consider it, the more aghast we turn away, and, by dint of such

weighing, we tend toward the mineral – we grow *petrified*. In order to endure the sight or the idea, we require much more than courage: we require cynicism (...) The flesh is neither strange nor shadowy, but *perishable* to the point of indecency, to the point of madness. It is not only the seat of disease, it is itself a disease, incurable nothingness, a fiction which has degenerated into a calamity. The vision I have of it is the vision of a gravedigger infected with metaphysics (...) That is why I am so comfortable in this museum where everything encourages the euphoria of a universe swept clean of the flesh, the jubilation of an after-life. (Cioran 2002; 1995, 1192-1193)

I believe we should amend Sloterdijk's interpretation or at least supplement it. We should not neglect the fact that Cioran published this text entailing the repudiation of history and the revolutionary marches in 1969, in the context of the great protest movements that had just taken place in Paris. Simultaneously, we have to be aware of the French philosophical context, where an important point of reference was, at that time, the phenomenological approach that Merleau-Ponty had proposed, following Husserl, as a way of envisaging the primordially of the "flesh" (*chair*), of the phenomenological body, in forming the experience of the world and the intersubjectivity (Merleau-Ponty 1960; 1964). This way, the "phenomenological touch" or the embodied consciousness was turned against the Platonic, disembodied "theoretical gaze".

But Cioran's gesture was not simply a retaliation of the metaphysics of the *bones* – the skeleton of metaphysics, with its hierarchical, opposite structure (intelligible vs. sensible, eternal vs. ephemeral) – against the phenomenology of the *flesh*. It was a gesture in itself ambivalent, because the act of asserting the eternity of bones as opposed to the perishability of flesh and the trickery of historical mobilization was an act accomplished through a phenomenological experience *sui generis*. It is a gesture involving the factual position of an embodied subject that realizes this "eidetic reduction" of humanity to its skeleton cleaned of flesh in a particular existential situation, one that triggers the entire process. So the "view from above" that Cioran gains is not the privilege of metaphysical thinking, not even of an Aristotelian aporetic. It is not the product of rational "cold" reflection or speculative endeavor, but rather the sudden effect or precipitate of a life experience, following the Existentialist axis Kierkegaard – Nietzsche.

Let us now turn to the *practical* dimension of this disgust for the flesh. If we separate "Paleontology" from the totality of Cioran's writings, we are well justified in claiming that this Neo-Gnostic Romanian thinker expresses here a clear ascetic vein in the traditional Platonic and Christian way of self-renunciation and letting go of the passing world. This would be a very different meaning of asceticism when compared to the pre-Christian one, which Nietzsche was trying to resurrect: an *askēsis* involving a training that

aims at the fortification of the self and the enhancement of our vitality and creativity.

A few general remarks about the different meanings of asceticism may prove beneficial for the developing argument. First of all, it is clear that a modern genealogy of asceticism, suggesting the historical existence of two distinct kinds of *askésis* – renunciation vs. fortification – is directly connected to Nietzsche's project: "I also want to make asceticism natural again: in place of the aim of denial, the aim of strengthening" (Nietzsche 1968, 483). The German philosopher is also the thinker that inspired Foucault and Deleuze when they advanced the idea of *subjectivation* of rules, a notion that proves essential, in my view, for this new performative turn in philosophy (I speak about a new performative turn, because the Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity seems to have registered a similar process). This kind of *becoming* of an ethical subject is presented as the historical alternative to the objectivation of a subject, of its inner drives and secret desires, through confession (another possibility would be to envisage the "avowal of the flesh"³ as a particular type of subjectivation, the Christian "hermeneutics of the self", responding to the general injunction of "telling all" – Foucault 2005, 408-409).

In a certain sense, the whole of asceticism belongs here: a few ideas are to be rendered inextinguishable, ever-present, unforgettable, "fixed," with the aim of hypnotizing the entire nervous and intellectual system with these "fixed ideas" – and ascetic procedures and modes of life are means of freeing these ideas from the competition of all other ideas, so as to make them "unforgettable." (Nietzsche 1989, 61)

I should only add that Nietzsche's idea of two kinds of asceticism is elaborated in Foucault's final course from 1984 as a fundamental difference between two "aesthetics of existence" or two distinct teleologies of the ethical subject: on the one hand, the *purification* of the soul (*psukhê*), which is the main Platonic and Christian understanding of self-care; on the other hand, the *stylistics* of life (*bios*), in its (pre-)Socratic and Cynic understanding (Foucault 2011, 160-162). To put it briefly, we strive for the purification of our souls in order to get access to an "afterlife", or we train ourselves in leading another kind of life here on earth, one that is freed from a whole range of illusions, misconceptions and social conventions that come to define our "normality".

At this point, it becomes clear that the Nihilist Cioran was not pleading for the purification of the soul, like a well-behaved metaphysician, but rather for *self-writing* conceived as a *stylization* of existence: in other words, for an autobiography that was equivalent to the daily recording of the "sickness of living".

3. Cioran's Spiritual Exercises: Autopatography and Nihilist Miracle

Once we advance in understanding Cioran's peculiar practice of the self, the interpretation that Sloterdijk has suggested in his impressive book *Du must dein Leben ändern: Über Anthropotechnik* (2009), twenty years after publishing *Eurotaoismus*, seems a brilliant one. We know that basically Cioran's entire work is based upon his daily notations covering a small number of existentially pessimistic themes, notes that he was selectively publishing, preserving their aphoristic, anti-systemic character. We then have strong reasons for understanding Cioran's self-writing practice as a *sui generis* asceticism involving a daily exercise in erasing any "infection" epicenter of firm belief and commitment, any kind of faith in the future or in oneself, as Sloterdijk is suggesting⁴. But I think we have to add that Cioran's work is also a paradoxical manner of giving testimony for the "miracle" of every living moment. It would be enough, in this regard, to remember the famous aphorism that closes *The New Gods*: "We are all deep in a hell each moment of which is a miracle" (*Nous sommes tous au fond d'un enfer dont chaque instant est un miracle*) (Cioran 2002; 1995, 1259). The "lesson" would be that life as a personal history (or narrative web), same as history understood as the life of humanity, adds up to a "hell": yet, the moment is *worthy* of living. Even if it is something that Cioran acknowledges only in an oblique fashion, *sous rature*, it remains nonetheless the key stance that we guess behind the delight caused by this imaginary "montage" of his own suicide, reenacted mentally again and again, yet always postponed⁵.

My thesis is the following: what Cioran actually does is *self-writing* in its precise spiritual sense⁶. I realized elsewhere (Iftode 2016) a brief history of the different ages of self-writing. We may start with the Stoics' daily notations (*hypomnēmata*, which involved the writing down, for personal use, of brief quotes or reflections entailed by particular existential episodes, kept for the goal of periodical re-reading and constant meditation) and the philosophical epistolary discussions between master and disciple. Then we go through the Christian confessional writing (and inside this species, from the Augustinian model, to the tradition of spiritual journals). Further we reach the modern, expressivist age of self-writing (Rousseau), the Romantic cult for authenticity, and, through a time leap, we may get to the digital expressivism that is nowadays encouraged on social networking sites: a mixture of self-display, self-invention, and self-advertising tools.

In his own way, Cioran is also an *expressivist* – however, one of a very different kind than the ones mentioned above. Surely he doesn't believe in an authentic self that needs to be revealed and expressed as such, in its essential unity. Nonetheless, he permanently feels the need to expose his own weaknesses, defects, disillusionments, to write them down, to express them and make them public with such a disarming, "parrhesiastic" honesty (that is

cynical in the ancient sense of the word). Through this kind of self-writing, Cioran elegantly assumes the condition of "madness" as "the absence of an oeuvre" (Foucault 2006): the paradoxical state of an author that is no longer "able" and no longer "willing" to believe (Sloterdijk 2013, 78) – neither in personal redemption, nor in the perfection of an oeuvre. Fully embracing his "aggressive-depressive" mood as his fundamental way of being-in-the-world (Heidegger might have called it Cioran's *Grundstimmung*), what this Romanian dark thinker actually accomplishes, following Sloterdijk's interpretation, is an *autopatography*: the daily recording of his sickness, of everything he lacks – and he lacks "everything" (Sloterdijk 2013, 74; 76). So we are entitled to read his aphorisms as real *hypomnēmata* serving to an opposite purpose than those of the Stoics: engraving into our minds the very fact that there is no ideal Self, nor a hidden Order of the world!

However, by means of this daily exorcism performed over his ailing obsessions, we have to acknowledge the fact that Cioran puts forth a peculiar kind of *therapy*. The young Cioran had already stated it in an eloquent manner:

Writing holds any value and justification only as a release from obsessions, a way of postponing destruction and fall.

Writing holds only a therapeutic value and it has to be interesting for a person in so far as he can save himself through it. (Cioran 1995, 236; 239)⁷

I should only add the fact that Cioran provides us with something more than a mere recipe for survival or a paradoxical yet "effective form of suicide prevention for numerous readers" (Sloterdijk 2013, 82): his writing encapsulates a training for fully reconnecting ourselves to the miracle of the living moment.

In this way, Cioran is rediscovered as an *ascetic* of a different kind: he really is an "autopatographer" and a "hunger artist" (Sloterdijk 2013, 78). The link to Kafka's notorious text (1924), which Sloterdijk advances, seems more than appropriate. The indistinctness between *poiesis* and *praxis* that is the trademark of the artistic avant-garde is depicted through this Kafkaian image that stands, in my view, as a kind of supreme metaphor for performance art. Moreover, Kafka's short story might be read as a categorical assertion of the fact that "existence as such is an acrobatic achievement" (Sloterdijk 2013, 63) and that art in its pure form is "the art of living". The hunger artist is the acrobat that no longer trains for the leap into transcendence. Yet, this does not make his *askēsis* a less strenuous one than in the case of the old religious asceticism, though we might argue that such an artistic *askēsis* is no longer animated by anything more than a "will to power" aiming at its continuous intensification. If we read into this using Nietzschean lenses, the aim of "always-wanting-to-be-less" is itself a perverse, resentful form of the "will to power" (Sloterdijk 2013, 65).

As a radical and antimetabolic art of living that goes against any social habitus or custom, the avant-garde practice of the hunger artist cannot hold on to the goal of “reconciling” with reality. It rather strives for transforming its subject “into a virtuoso of the inability to live” (Sloterdijk 2013, 68) – namely, to live “normally”. *Askēsis* for its own sake, not with the goal of redemption, becomes the *art* of fasting, the nihilistic art of hunger: “I couldn’t find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else”, says Kafka’s character (Sloterdijk 2013, 70). And this is how a post-Christian asceticism that is different from the pre-Christian, vitalist, strengthening one that Nietzsche was dreaming about is destined to reveal

what remains of metaphysical desire when its transcendent goal is eliminated. What transpires is a form of beheaded asceticism in which the supposed tensile strain from above proves to be an aversive tension from within. (Sloterdijk 2013, 71)

To conclude this argument, I should quote Sloterdijk’s precise verdict: “In his own way, Cioran too is a hunger artist: a man who fasts metaphorically by abstaining from solid food for identity”; “Like Kafka’s hunger artist, he turns his aversion into a virtuoso performance” (Sloterdijk 2013, 73; 78)⁸. His work becomes the full expression of *self-loathing*. Even if he wants his personal calendar to be dated “after Nietzsche” (Sloterdijk 2013, 74), Cioran strongly rejects the affirmative side of Nietzsche’s thinking, which involved saying “Yes” to the play of the world, to the innocence of becoming, and to the advent of the *Übermensch*: all of this is merely a hoax in Cioran’s view. This is how the Romanian aphorist becomes, in Sloterdijk’s original reading, a key figure in the gallery of the new “arts of living”, an important link in the historical process of “the secularization of asceticisms and the informalization of spirituality” (Sloterdijk 2013, 75). Existentialist of a peculiar kind – instead of overcompensation or resistance, he commits to “an endless series of acts of disengagement”, namely to “an existentialism of incurability” (Sloterdijk 2013, 76-77) – Cioran is the “anti-stoic” and pseudo-buddhist¹⁰ master of demobilization, “the first master of not-getting-anywhere” (Sloterdijk 2013, 78)¹¹.

Notes

¹ “The over-discussed question of the subject is reduced to this compact formulation: a subject is someone who is active as the carrier (*Träger*) of a sequence of exercises.” (Sloterdijk 2013, 156; 2009, 248)

² This would explain the paradoxical shape that antropotechnics may take in extreme cases, such as the practice of *beteronyms* in Pessoa (“I reread some of the pages that together will form my book of random impressions. And they give off, like a familiar smell, an arid

impression of monotony. Even while saying that I'm always different, I feel that I've always said the same thing; that I resemble myself more than I'd like to admit" – Pessoa 2001, 442), or, in order to anticipate what I am about to show, Cioran's nihilist therapy.

³ *Les Aveux de la chair* (*The Confession of the Flesh*) is actually the title of Foucault's fourth volume of *History of Sexuality*, finally due to appear at the beginning of 2018.

⁴ "[T]he crutches he wanted to break... were those of identity, belonging and consistency. Only one basic principle convinced him: to be convinced by nothing." (Sloterdijk 2013, 76)

⁵ We should also add this decisive aspect about Cioran, highlighted by Sloterdijk: "Even if his prevailing mood was that of a 'passive-aggressive bastard' (...) his ethos was that of a man of exercises (...) who turned despair into an Apollonian discipline (...). The effective history of Cioran's books shows that he was immediately recognized as a paradoxical master of exercises (...). There was a secret readiness in him to give advice to the despairing who were even more helpless than himself – and a far less concealed inclination to become famous for his exercises in escape from the world." (Sloterdijk 2013, 81)

⁶ "Comme élément de l'entraînement de soi, l'écriture a, pour utiliser une expression qu'on trouve chez Plutarque, une fonction *éthopoiétique*: elle est un opérateur de la transformation de la vérité en *éthos*." (Foucault 2001, 1237)

⁷ For an excellent alternative interpretation of the essentially therapeutic dimension of Cioran's work, which amounts to a powerful criticism of the trend of "positive thinking" so influential nowadays, see Pătrașcu (2014).

⁸ Let us remember Cioran's exact words from his first book published in French, *Précis de décomposition*: "All our humiliations come from the fact that we cannot bring ourselves to die of hunger" (Cioran 1990, 168). In direct connection to this ascetical dimension of Cioran's work, we also have to keep in mind the fact that the initial title chosen for this book was actually *Exercices négatives*.

⁹ A philosophy well fitted for imperial civil servants and, nowadays, for corporate employees, the Stoicism assures us that everything is "in order", that everything happens the way it should be happening, according to a necessary chain confirming the perfection of the Cosmos (see Sloterdijk 2013, 79).

¹⁰ "Though he felt drawn to Buddhism, Cioran did not want to subscribe to its ontology. He not only loathed the reality of the world, but also intended to take advantage of it; he therefore had to accept the reality of reality, even if it was only sophistically." All said and done, Cioran rejects any kind of final salvation, as long as everything he writes "is a complaint about the imposition of requiring salvation" (Sloterdijk 2013, 77).

¹¹ "Cioran is a new type of practicing person whose originality and representative nature are evident in the fact that he practises rejecting every goal-directed way of practising" (Sloterdijk 2013, 77), as well as any explicit teleology.

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Art and Mathematics in Matila Ghyka's Philosophical Aesthetics. A Pythagorean Approach on Contemporary Aesthetics

Abstract: Although Matila Ghyka is one of the Romanian philosophers who changed the way some of the most important artists and art theorists of the twentieth century practice art and think about aesthetics, his works remain almost unknown to the Romanian public and to the Western academic-philosophy tradition. I will argue that this state of affairs is caused by some of the cultural biases and preconceptions concerning the Pythagorean sources of Matila Ghyka's thinking, that define a large part of the contemporary philosophical community as a whole. In this essay, I will tackle two main preconceptions and cultural biases that have contributed to this reluctance that contemporary thinkers show towards a mathematical approach to art from a Pythagorean point of view and will try to sketch a way of surpassing them. The means by which this aim can be achieved is a new (meontological) approach to the concept of "number", which lays at the heart of Ghyka's aesthetics and philosophy of art.

Keywords: aesthetics, philosophy of art, Matila Ghyka, ontology, meontology, ancient philosophy, affective hermeneutics.

Writing his main works on aesthetics and philosophy of art in the first half of the twentieth century, Matila Ghyka had a great influence on the artists and thinkers of his age, but failed to grant himself a place in the canonical history of philosophy because his works did not meet the modern criteria of the philosophical canon. Although these works changed the way artists like Salvador Dali (Lomas 2006, 11) and André Lhote (Lhote 1969, 68) made and theorized art, the sources of Ghyka's thinking, namely the Pythagorean tradition, are often viewed as pseudo-philosophical because of the so-called "mystical" elements which are present in it and the "secrecy" in which Pythagoras' teachings are covered. This is one of the reasons why many philosophers and scientists are reluctant in approaching Ghyka's work, his field of influence being restricted at large to artists and art theorists.

The problem with this attitude towards Ghyka is, as I will try to argue, that the interpretation to the Pythagorean philosophy as "mystical" and its

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teachings as “secret” is based on a preconception and is somewhat misleading. The preconception is that the early pre-Socratic philosophy as a whole and the Pythagorean tradition in particular do not constitute models of “pure philosophy”, but some kind of proto-philosophical endeavours belonging to the “pre-history” of rigorous philosophy. The philosophical tradition starts, from this point of view, with Plato and Aristotle, which are viewed as thinkers who purified the conceptions of their predecessors of mythological and mystical elements. This is misleading because it neglects the ancient meaning of the words “mystical” and “secrecy” and, at the same time, contradicts the attitude of admiration and respect with which “canonical philosophers” – such as Plato, Aristotle or Plotinus – view the Pythagorean tradition of thinking as a valuable and respectable one. This is why, in order to reveal the preconceptions and cultural biases of the common view on this problem, we must turn back to the pre-Socratic and classical Greek thinking and show the original meaning in which Pythagorean doctrines were “secret” and “mystical”. For this, we must sketch a new way of interpreting the early Ancient Greek philosophy that is able to relieve these concepts of the negative meanings which were imposed by Christianity in the Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. By means of this “hermeneutical detour” we will gain a better understanding of both Pythagorean philosophical tradition and of the relevance that Ghyka’s philosophy has for the contemporary research in domains such as aesthetics and philosophy of art.

Along with the above-mentioned preconception which affects the general attitude towards Matila Ghyka’s thinking, we can observe another preconception that is also widespread in the contemporary philosophical community: the idea that philosophy of art and aesthetics are not suited for a rigorous mathematical or scientific approach. The origin of this preconception lays in a modern view of the world, according to which judgements about scientific facts are constituted in a different way than judgements about artistic facts. This led to the opinion that science and art triggers two different modes of knowledge – “conceptual” and “sensitive” –, which have different logical structures (Baumgarten 1750, §14) and cannot be intertwined at the level of philosophical discourse or in practice.

In time, these differences between the two domains of human knowledge established the idea that science in general and mathematics in particular have a reductionist character, while all phenomena concerning art are essentially non-reductionist. This preconception can manifest itself more clearly nowadays, if we look at the fact that, although there are many philosophers which activate in the fields of human cognition, philosophy of mind and neuro-phenomenology which pay close attention to the new scientific approaches to cognition and human thinking, most art theorists and aestheticians ignore any kind of scientific implications of the aesthetical experience. There are, indeed, some notable exceptions, but these approaches

come very often from scientists with a good philosophical background (e.g. Thomas Metzinger, Antonio Damasio, Semir Zeki) and not from philosophers and art theorists as such. At the same time, although there are lots of philosophers pertaining to both continental and analytical traditions of philosophy that reflect upon the nature of numbers, there are quite few thinkers that try a mathematical approach to problems of artwork's ontology and aesthetical experience. In this case, many philosophers view the mathematical approach to art in a reductionist manner, although mathematicians themselves left this reductionist view on mathematics a few decades ago (Ian Stewart 2015, 484-487), along with most of the contemporary scientists that work in the field of neurosciences (Damasio 2016, 127-130). As I will argue, this reluctance towards a mathematical approach to art should apply neither to Matila Ghyka's thinking nor to the Pythagorean tradition, because in both cases we can observe a non-reductionist view on mathematics.

For this to become clear, we should start by reflecting on the hermeneutic nature of the process through which the corpus of the philosophical tradition is formed and the eventual alternative modes of interpreting this process. By rethinking the criteria of philosophical historiography, we have a chance of rediscovering a "vein of thought", which was ignored by the modern tradition but could prove itself valuable to postmodern thinking.

1. Towards a meontological history of philosophy

The reflection upon Matila Ghyka's works puts the researcher in a situation in which he must redefine the criteria and the essential traits by which a certain thinker's studies can be accepted in the canonical "history of Western philosophy". There is a manifest discrepancy between Matila Ghyka's reception into the non-academic world of artists, art theorists and philosophers and its academic reception. But this is not the only case in which this state of affairs becomes manifest. In many other cases, it is not the influence which a certain work had upon its age or its proven utility in a certain field of study, but rather a kind of "intrinsic value" attributed to the text that grants it a place in the history of philosophy. Unfortunately, this "intrinsic" is often founded on a bunch of preconceptions which the researcher himself is not aware of, among which, in our case, the above mentioned two ones are central.

This is why we need to define a perspective from which Matila Ghyka's Pythagorean approach to art gets encompassed into *meontological* a tradition of thought. To achieve this goal, we should focus not on the ontological interpretation of the history of philosophy, which started with Parmenides, but was developed mostly in Plato's *γιναντομαχία περὶ τῆς οὐσίας* (Plato 1900b, 246a-248d) and in Aristotle's sketch of a "history of Being" in the *Metaphysics* (Aristotle 1970, 983b-988a). In return, we will focus on non-

being and nothingness, as the main phenomenon that guides the historical philosophical efforts. This will grant the so-called “pre-ontologic” philosophers (i.e. the pre-parmenidian tradition, among which we can also count the Pythagoreans) a central place in the history of philosophy.

Meontology is usually defined as the philosophical discourse on non-being or, yet better, nothingness, and is quite well represented in both Romanian (Cernica 2002; Cernica 2005; Cornea 2010) and European contemporary philosophy (Heidegger 1988; Sartre 1943; Merleau-Ponty 1964). However, there are yet no attempts of a systematic meontological approach on the history of philosophy, as far as my knowledge goes. This is quite strange because the beginning of the Western philosophy in the pre-Parmenidian period had a very strong meontological approach and there are several arguments that can legitimate this view. First of all, in the very first of the philosophical fragments conserved, Anaximandros stated that the ἄπειρον, or *the limitless*, is the principle (ἀρχή) of all things. But ἄπειρον is essentially a “meontological entity”, which can be defined only by negation and is closer to non-being than it is to being.

In addition to this argument, I could add another one which I developed at large elsewhere (Moraru 2017, 107-112), namely that the word which signifies “Being” (τὸ ἔόν) appears for the first time, as far as our textual accounts show, in Parmenides’ poem. Although this institution of Being is viewed by Plato as one of Parmenides’ most important contributions to philosophy (Plato 1900b, 241c), he also felt the need to surpass the idea of Being in order to coherently think the interdependence of the five “supreme ideas” – being, non-being, rest, change, sameness and alterity (Plato 1900b, 241c). Given this context, it would take a lot of presuppositions to assume that the thinkers which preceded Parmenides were practicing ontology, because there was no such concept as “Being” that they could study. Instead, it would be much less risky to assume that they studied nature (φύσις), as the whole Ancient doxographical tradition states, and that nature is, in itself, different from Being just like Nothingness is different from Being. This latter claim, although not present in the doxographical tradition, can be argued for in a quite simple manner.

First of all, nature is a process, not a substance, as is the case of Being. It implies change and becoming and this is why the early Greek philosophers sought its “beginning” (ἀρχή), which is, at the same time, the principle of change in the case of nature. The beginning of a process is that τόπος which governs its whole horizon of progress along with its possibility of realization. This is why, the beginning cannot be thought in a “substantial manner”, but in a temporal one. It is not something, but a certain “rift” in the structure of temporality which marks the “starting point” of a process. Only by means of its retrospective re-thinking and re-interpretation can the beginning gain some substance and be instituted as something which exists

or existed in a substantial manner. It is because of Plato's efforts to reconcile the $\varphi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ with the $\tau\omicron\ \acute{\epsilon}\omicron\nu$ that one might think otherwise, although Plato himself was aware that the principle of all thing, the supreme idea, should be non-substantial and, in a certain sense, approach non-being (Plato 1902, 509b).

This paradoxical status of the $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta$ of all things as a non-substantial entity that offers the possibility of any substance or being can also be observed as a constant problem of ancient philosophy or even of philosophy as a whole. From Aristotle's *apories of the first principles* from the *Metaphysics* (Aristotle 1970, 993a-995a), to the problem of Oneness in Neoplatonism, from the apophatic theology to Nietzsche's nihilism, there are many texts in the history of philosophy that could be considered as "meontological". The main problem is that the "onto-centric" interpretation of philosophy is so well established that it governs most of the hermeneutical assumptions of philosophical historiography. To shake these foundations, one must systematically follow the meontological history of philosophy – roughly sketched here – and see the way Being is intertwined with non-Being throughout the history. Just like two veins that start from the same place, but provide blood to different parts of the body, ontology and meontology are two veins of thought which animate two different domains of philosophy.

3. Nothingness as the primary non-substantial entity and its hypostases

The first difficulty we encounter when talking about nothingness is a logical one. Whatever we say about this phenomenon violates the rules of traditional logic. As soon as we utter "Nothingness is the limitless", for example, we fall upon a contradiction, just because nothingness, by definition, does not exist or have being, so, it cannot *be* something. This shows that, in the field of meontology, classical logic reaches its limits and can no longer provide us with an instrument of rigorous analysis. However, this is not a sign that meontology is, in itself, an inaccessible path of thinking, as Parmenides thought, but should be linked to the fact that our language as a whole, along with its logic, is designed from an ontological standpoint and is generally used in order to express substantial entities, not meontological ones. Through logic we create a synthesis between the linguistic and ontic realms (Cernica 2013, 78-88) and the "categories" of Being are also concepts which structure our language and understanding of the world (Aristotle 1949, 1a-1b; Aristotle 1970, 1028b). In other words, language itself is designed to designate beings or states of affairs and has no means to properly express "nothingness".

This is why Aristotle stays that "one speaks of nothingness, according to its cases, in the same number of ways as there are categories and, in addition, one speaks of nothingness as false and as potentiality" (Aristotle

1970, 1089a)¹. So, our language “ontologizes” things and imprints the categories of being onto nothingness, donating its substance even before we can properly grasp it. This is, in fact, the fundamental paradox of meontology: *Although we consent to the thought that “nothingness is non-substantial”, we give it somewhat of a substance in the very first moment our mind tries to aim it intentionally.*

The fact that Aristotle uses in the cited place the same word as the grammarians from Alexandria will use to describe the “cases” of a noun – πτώσεις – is relevant for the strong relation between logic, linguistics and ontology. We cannot properly address the nothingness because our language and our logic transform it into “something” and give it some degree of Being. Caught in language, the nothingness gets mixed or intertwined with Being and, thus, becomes something. This transformation of nothingness into being through our discursive thinking by means of language is what we call *hypostasis*. It is a “stabilization” of the sense of nothingness itself in a certain conceptual and linguistic context and following a certain principle.

This is why nothingness has many hypostases and shows itself to the human consciousness in different ways. In an ontological context, nothingness is the non-being; in a linguistic or rhetorical context, nothingness is the ineffable; in an epistemological context, nothingness is the unknowable; in the context of psychology, nothingness is the unconscious etc. All these ways of talking about the nothingness show us that every meontological discourse has a *conceptual genealogy* which *gives meaning* to a certain hypostasis, usually through negation. The so-called “negative prefixes” (*a-*, *non-* or *un-*) each give a certain “meontological flavour” to a certain “kinds” of nothingness and paradoxically set up its foundation *in absentia*.

But, in each of the mentioned cases, there is another thing we should pay attention to, namely that every conceptual genealogy has its own structural principle. In other words, every conceptual context has a “central idea” in accordance to which all other concepts are organized. For example, the nothingness is, for a linguist, the ineffable in accordance with the rules of language, for the epistemologist, the nothingness is the unknowable according to the rules of human knowledge etc. This is what we can call an meontologic *archaeology* and is the *active* principle which structures the conceptual genealogy as *individual conceptual context*. In this way, we obtain a roughly sketched view on the process that enables us to speak about nothingness in many different ways. Each of these ways, however, corresponds to a particular use of human λόγος or “reason” in a very broad sense.

This broad sense of λόγος refers to the wide sphere of human discursivity, as it is designed in the history of philosophy by the Heraclitean κοσμικὸς λόγος or the Christian θεῖος λόγος from the Gospel of John. Some aspects this meaning of λόγος were also observed by contemporary

phenomenologists such as Martin Heidegger (1999, §48) or Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1960, 105-110) However, the philosophy of language, be it phenomenological or analytical, failed many times to notice the essential role of the λόγος in the hypostatization of the nothingness. From this point of view, language is a set of hypostatic functions because it works by means of *sedimentation* of certain meanings in our mind (Merleau-Ponty 1960, 111-115) and, thus, it transforms something that is fluid and ungraspable into a stand-alone entity, which we can aim intentionally. In other words, through language, we “give substance” to the world, that otherwise would be a series of transient intuitions, hunches and forebodings.

But our language has its limits and so does its possibilities of expression. This is why, we might expect some phenomena to be harder or even impossible to express by means of the everyday language. This is what the last of the Neoplatonic philosophers, Damascius, referred to as a “the retorsion” or περιτροπή (Damascius 1889, I, 7) of the λόγος, a phenomenon which occurs when we try to talk or think about the first principle of all things that lays beyond being and even beyond the One itself (Damascius 1889, I, 6), namely the nothingness (τὸ οὐδέν). About this “ultimate phenomenon” we cannot have a logically coherent cataphatic speech, but only an apophatic one, although, rigorously speaking, even this latter kind of speech is not fully adequate (Damascius 1889, I, 6) to express the vague consciousness or consenting of the ineffable – εἰς τὴν ἄρρητον συναίσθησις (Damascius 1889, I, 5) – that we feel at the most profound affective and dispositional level of our being. The first principle cannot be spoken of *per se*, but it can be hypostatized into language according to a meontologic *genealogy* and *archaeology*. We cannot refer to the nothingness *as* nothingness, but we can refer to nothingness as ineffable, as unknowable, as non-being etc.

So, if we would like to make a meontological interpretation of the history of philosophy, we should trace the ways and means by which the nothingness was hypostatized into philosophical discourse in each and every historical period. In this way, we can better understand that which stands beyond a philosophical text, considered as a *positum*, namely the ineffable motifs and intuitions that give reason, force and aim to every philosophical endeavour. The consenting of the nothingness is that which drives our curiosity and will to understand that which cannot be understood. Thus, we are able to reach down to the hidden root of the original philosophical discourse, namely the wonder towards the ineffable principle of all things, which is a kind of pure and ungraspable nothingness for the human discourse.

The two biases, which simultaneously prevent the Pythagorean thinking and Matila Ghyka's philosophy of art to enter the official curriculum of Western philosophy, are manifest due to the ignorance of the original

meontologic and hypostatic character of the philosophical discourse and of thinking in general. This is why a reinterpretation of Pythagorism in the light of the above-mentioned observations could shed a light on the authentic philosophical character of Matila Ghyka's aesthetics and on the possibility of a non-reductionist "mathematical" approach to art.

4. Pythagorean Mathematics and Hypostatic Character of Numbers

In order to show that the Pythagorean concept of "number" is, in fact, a hypostasis of the nothingness viewed as ἀρχή of all things, we must determine its meontologic archaeology and genealogy. The archaeology is that of the human μάθησις (Aristotle 1970, 985b), namely the process of human learned knowledge (διδασκαλία) which is deposited into information in a conceptual and propositional sense (μαθήματα). The information we refer to here can be constructed in various modes, depending on the domain of knowledge we refer to. For example, the "scientific knowledge" differs from the "historical one" and the "practical" one. So, there can be various types of μαθήματα, each of them having the main trait that is constructed through a process of learning, which implies some effort of memory (μνήμη) and re-collection (ἀνάμνησις).

This "mathematic" kind of knowledge is somehow opposed by the early Greek philosophers to σοφία, which means rather "clarity of sight" (Aristotle 1962, 1141a) or, yet better, a clear insight into the nature of things provided by the human direct intellectual intuition (νοῦς), which is, as Aristotle himself points out, a non-discursive or ineffable grasping of the first principles of things (Aristotle 1962, 1141a). This is why, "the multitude of information doesn't teach one how to have insight" (Heraclitus 1951, B 40)². In other words, knowledge won't necessarily provide wisdom.

This doesn't mean, however, that learned knowledge is completely useless. In fact, in the Pythagorean tradition, the μάθησις is some kind of "bringing to stability and grasping" - ἐπιστήμην καὶ κατάληψιν - of the truth by means of philosophy (Nicomachos 1866, I, 1), conceived as "appetence for wisdom" (σοφίας ὄρεξις). So, the essential character of μάθησις is that it grasps that which can be grasped from an ineffable intellectual intuition provided by the νοῦς and deposits it in a well-defined concept with a stand-alone meaning. In fact, this bringing to stability and concept of our ineffable intuitions by means of "syllogism" or "deduction" is the main character of science (ἐπιστήμη) in the Ancient Greek sense of the word (Nicomachus, 1866, I, 1; Aristotle, 1964, 71b; Beekes and Van Beek 2010, 445).

The relation between σοφία and μάθησις becomes clearer when we try to think about the nature of Pythagorean concept of "number", which is the first way in which the ἀρχή affects the human soul. For example, the idea that the infinite number existent of things can be reduced to one principle is

an ineffable intuition (νόησις) or a non-judicative experience, which cannot be founded on rational arguments alone because it is that which gives possibility to any reasoning. This is the reason why, in the Pythagorean tradition, the different numbers are perceived by the human consciousness, primarily and before any rational determination, as some kind of affection (Aristotle 1970, 985b), not as concepts *per se*. “Reason” and language in general would be impossible without the firm belief that we can refer to different objects of a class by the same word and that this word corresponds in some way with the ontic entities we perceive. Behind the Pythagorean doctrine (μάθησις) of numbers lays a “hidden meaning” which cannot be fully grasped by reason and which pertains to σοφία.

This means that the intention of the Pythagorean thinkers is to gain wisdom by studying the way in which our non-judicative experiences of the world could be grasped by means of the study of the doctrine of numbers. The reason is that “it [the doctrine of numbers *n.n.*] is, by nature, the vision (θεωρία) through which the most simple and original things can be elaborated [by reason]” (Iamblichus 1984, I, 1) and that “the discourse about it precedes any other doctrine” (Iamblichus 1984, I, 1). In other words, understanding the hypostatic character of numbers that makes the transformation of non-judicative experiences into “scientific” concepts and theories possible is the main aim of the Pythagorean philosophy and must be achieved *before* any other “scientific theory”.

This shows that the μαθήματα specific to the Pythagorean philosophical endeavour have an *epistemological* genealogy. In other words, the conceptual context in which the nothingness is hypostasized is formed by concepts pertaining to science in the Greek sense of the word and are different from other hypostases of μάθησις. However, that which lays *beyond* these numbers, conceived as first affections of the consciousness that spring from the first principle, is “secret doctrine” of the Pythagoreans in a peculiar broad sense of ἀπόρρητος μάθησις.

5. The “Secret Doctrines” and The Ineffability of The Nothingness

For a modern person, a secret is something that should be “kept” and that, in principle, could also be “revealed” by propositional means. Basically, a secret is some piece of knowledge which is “covered in silence” but could be uncovered by anyone who knows it. So, the secret is something someone *may not* speak and “keeping the secrecy” is an act of individual will. None of these meanings hold for the ancient ἀπόρρητον, whose main signification is “that which *cannot* be spoken”, the *ineffable*. For Greek philosophers, the secrecy is not something one *may not reveal*, but something one *cannot reveal*.

However, this is the sense in which Plato refers to the “secret doctrines” (Plato 1900, 62b) and the sense that results from his disclaimer from the

Seventh Letter concerning the accusations that he revealed the secret doctrines of philosophy to Dionysius (Plato 1907, VII, 341). He did not reveal any “secret doctrine” because the secret doctrines cannot be expressed propositionally. The “hidden sense” of every philosophy and especially of the Pythagorean doctrine of numbers is not a *μάθησις* that can be taught and learned, because all *μάθηματα* need a set of non-judicative experiences that are grasped in a non-discursive way by the *νοῦς*. In fact, this is the main argument by which Plato denies writing’s role as an aid for knowledge and a medicine (*φάρμακον*) for forgetfulness (Plato 1901, 275a-277b) – writing only helps the ones that have the proper non-judicative experiences or the proper insights to “remember”, but it doesn’t “teach” anything *stricto sensu*. The question we have to raise is: how could one “gain” insight, if not through reading and learning in general? Plato answers this when he states that the “shared substantiality” (*συνουσία*) and the “shared living” (*συζῆν*) with philosophy kindles the intuition of the ineffable just like rubbing two sticks together kindles the fire (Plato 1907, VII, 341). In consequence, the non-judicative experience is gained by means of an existential, not a cognitive effort. This is why this kind of experience is not “propositional” knowledge, but rather a “mystical” one.

As is the case of the “secrecy”, the mystical character of the authentic philosophical knowledge should not be understood in the terms of modern-day conceptions. For the Greeks, “mystical” meant “silent knowledge” or “intellectual intuition of the ineffable”. This is confirmed by an inscription, dated around the second century A.D., which speaks about mystical knowledge as “the ineffable knowledge of the initiation in mysteries” (Dittenberger 1883, 873.9)³. This “silent” and inexpressible knowledge is what is “imprinted” into our consciousness by *συνουσία* and *συζῆν* and is somehow expressed through *μάθησις*, but just for those who already have a certain intuition of the ineffable.

The reflection on the two forms of community with the subject matter that cause the insight about the ineffable brings us about some kind of “existential learning”, made by an effort to interiorize and live according to one’s philosophical occupations. Just like an actor which enters into a community of substance and of lived time with his character, the philosopher enters into a community of substance and time with the nothingness itself. As Plato puts it, philosophy is a form of exercise for death (Plato 1900, 81a) because death is the *ἀπόρρητον* of life. In some sense, death leads to the “secret” side of life, that which cannot be spoken of and cannot be conceived rationally, but of which we all have some insight through our deepest anxieties and fears. So, the authentic philosopher “imitates” death by his way of living – he neglects the body and the material things and tries to “unfasten” his soul from its knotting with the body. Just like an actor, the philosopher tries *to act* as if he lives among the incorporeal entities. From a

Greek point of view, *the philosopher is an actor that imitates the Gods*, hoping that someday he himself will transcend his human condition and *become* Divine.

As we perceive the Pythagorean tradition from this point of view, it becomes clear that the first preconception we have analysed is no longer sustainable. The Pythagorean philosophy is not a form of “proto-philosophy” because of the “mystical” elements and the ritualistic and religious character of the “secret doctrines”. On the contrary, judging by the aim of this endeavour, it is rather close to contemporary philosophical projects. However, this common aim, namely the indication towards some kind of insight of the ineffable or non-judicative experience, is pursued in each case by different methods, among which the Pythagorean one is the most undetermined and elusive. For it to become manifest, it is needed a rigorous reconstruction of the Pythagorean thinking in its “systematic” form in the late pythagoreic philosophers.

Nevertheless, what becomes manifest from the concept of “existential learning” carried out through *συνουσία* and *συζήτιν* is the connection between the Pythagorean doctrine of numbers and art. The two domains are essentially linked from the point of view of the process of imitation understood in the above-described sense, which we may call a “scenic sense”. From the perspective of the one who lives a philosophical life, art and arithmetic are essentially linked as two ways of hypostatization of nothingness into the vast domain of the human *λόγος*. As hypostatic *μαθήματα*, art (as a skill) and the philosophy of numbers have the same *meontological archaeology*, which means that they both are modes in which the insights of the ineffable are imperfectly expressed through learned skills and information. However, their *meontological genealogies* are different, which makes them different modes of expressing the same ungraspable phenomenon that is the nothingness.

6. Art and arithmetic as two forms of mathematical knowledge

In Nicomachos' *Introduction to Arithmetic* there is a distinction between two ways or “methods” (*μέθοδοι*) to deal with numbers as hypostatic concepts. First of all, the essential trait of numbers is that they can express the *quantity* and *size* of the “magnitude” and “multitude” of things (Nicomachus 1866, I, 3). But both “magnitude and multitude are, by their own nature and with necessity, indeterminate (*ἄπειρον*)” (Nicomachus 1866, I, 3.5). Magnitude can virtually stretch out to infinity and multitude can be divided into an infinite number of parts (Nicomachus 1866, I, 3.5). We can think about an infinity of numbers and about a number with an infinite number of decimals. So, the concept of number is used to approximate (i.e. create a hypostasis) of the primordial *ἄπειρον* of the *κόσμος*, the same *ἄπειρον* Anaximandros designated as *ἄρχή*.

In this context “wisdom” simply means the “scientific” account on these two “forms” of indeterminateness by means of numbers (Nicomachus 1866, I, 3.5)⁴. From this point of view, philosophy naturally aims to grasp the two main meontological features of the world – the absence of borders and absence of limits, i. e. ἄπειρον and ἀόριστον – into apparently determinate concepts or products of the human mind in general. This aim can be reached in two ways – through music in a broad sense and through the doctrine of numbers or arithmetic (Nicomachus 1866, I, 3.1).

The first method was analysed in the previous pages. It deals with “quantity in itself” (τὸ περὶ τοῦ καθ' ἑαυτό), which means that it deals with the nature of every number, considered as a stand-alone entity and with the affections (πάθη) through which that number manifests in the domain of human “mathematical” λόγος. But numbers are, on the other hand, inter-related in what we call proportions. In fact, this “relative” aspect of numbers is manifested in nature in general and in human’s artistic products. From this discipline springs one of the oldest theories of art, namely the *Harmonic Theory* of Beauty, which states that the κόσμος as a whole is a harmonic and proportional system of beings that manifests these harmonic qualities through what we call “Beauty”. The work of art is some kind of “microcosm”, harmonic and proportional in itself, which also takes part in the cosmic harmonic whole.

In consequence, there must also exist a domain that studies the concept of number in a “relative” sense (περὶ τοῦ πρὸς ἄλλο), and this domain is exactly what we could call “mathematical” or “arithmetical aesthetics”. As we can see, it is not an “reductive” discipline in the modern sense of mathematical sciences, but a discipline that aims to adequately integrate the indeterminateness and infinity of nature itself in the domain of human “reason” (λόγος) and consciousness in general. This is no mystical or esoteric endeavour in the modern sense of the world, just a natural impulse of the human mind. The Pythagorean arithmetic and philosophy of art are “mystical” only in the sense that they operate with an ineffable insight into the principle of all things, with a “ineffable” knowledge that cannot be expressed propositionally. But, at a closer view, thus are all kind of human effort to understand the profound nature of our world and our own being.

Having these in mind, the two preconceptions about Pythagorean philosophy (in general) and Matila Ghyka’s “mathematical aesthetics” (in particular) collapse. They are not pseudo-philosophical and mystical conceptions about art and the world that aim to reduce the complexity of the artistic and creative process to some obscure mathematical proportions and formulas, but an effort to grasp that which cannot be grasped, namely the first principles of things thought from a meontological point of view. Starting from this understanding of the Pythagorean philosophy, Matila Ghyka

builds a philosophy of art which has the concepts of “number”, “proportion” and “harmony” at its centre.

7. Matila Ghyka's Pythagorean Philosophy of Art and Contemporary Aesthetics

Ghyka's main concern is to establish a correspondence between the microcosmos of the human consciousness and art, a correspondence that could reveal *why* and *how* art manages to impress us and help us express our deepest insights of the world (Ghyka 1938, 13-25). The means by which such a task could be accomplished is of the Pythagorean philosophy of numbers and proportions, especially, by the understanding of the so-called “golden” or “divine ratio” ($\Phi = 1,6180339887\dots$).

Although the number Φ has a long history in the Western philosophical and scientific tradition, one fact about it usually escapes the modern-day thinkers, namely that it was called by the ancients a “secret” or “ineffable” number. Those numbers we call “irrational numbers” were called ἄρρητος (Plato 1902, 546c) or ἄλογος, which means they were “ineffable” or “secret” in the Pythagorean sense. They could not be grasped by the human reason and they fully express the paradoxical relation between nothingness and its hypostases. “Irrational numbers” encompass the indefinite and ineffable nature of the world into a “arithmetic” determination suppressing its meontologic character.

Another strange thing about Φ and the irrational numbers in general is that they can be expressed by means of proportions (Ghyka 2016, 58) between two “rational” numbers. So, the “irrationality” of the cosmos and of art lays in the ratio or analogy between two rational entities, by putting together two “rational numbers” or even “rational arguments” we can obtain an “irrational result”. This shows that the human λόγος has, in itself, encompassed some degree of irrationality which becomes manifest through analogy (or, in our terms, hypostatization). So, the irrationality is announced by the study of numbers in an “analogical” or “relative sense” (περὶ τοῦ πρὸς ἄλλο), which is essentially the study of “music” as “arts governed by the Muses”. This is why art was viewed throughout the history of philosophy as ineffable and impossible to reduce to a scientific formula. This view was especially promoted in modern philosophy and still predetermines our attitude towards art and science. At the same time, this is the place where the ineffability becomes apparent as the foundation of every “mathematical” experience we might have, and also of the aesthetic one.

In meontological terms, we gain insight into the “irrationality” of our conceptions when we confront with art and notice that there is something more to it than what we actually perceive and/or imagine. Art acts on our

consciousness as a *charm* or *incantation* (Ghyka 2016, 102-110) because it makes us perceive something that *is not there* and, generally, *doesn't exist at all*. When we look at a piece of painted cloth and we say *this represents Napoleon*, we basically create an image based on the ineffable sense of proportionality, harmony and rhythm that springs from between the various elements of the painting. In some sense, looking at a work of art is an “error of perception” because we see there what our minds construct aesthetically, not what “really is” there for the everyday consciousness – namely stains of colour on a cloth. The proportions and analogies between the elements of the work of art make us create a hypostasis of the “subject” so art basically manifests the same hypostatic character as the “arithmetic” theory of numbers.

But what we call “ratio” and the Greeks called *ἀνάλογον* is the principle from which we can construct, by multiplication, addition or other mathematical operation, an infinite number of equivalent proportions (Ghyka 1998, 49-53) or, as we might say, hypostases. These strings of proportions or strings of “analogic numbers” can be viewed as another aesthetical mode to express the ineffable principle of all things, encompassed in an arithmetical progression. At an intuitive level, we perceive these progressions as rhythm (Ghyka 2016, 198-208), which is another fundamental element of any work of art, not just of music. Architectural works, for example, have their own rhythm, which is constituted by the repetition of certain element (Ghyka 2016, 74-75) that could be expressed through a string of numbers or proportions, just like any other (musical) rhythm. So, if an art moves us, it's because these subtle proportions and rhythms which govern the form and constitution of any work of art.

This does not mean that the artist must necessarily be aware of these proportions and harmonic rhythms. What we call “beauty” is, in Matila Ghyka's view, characterised by the so-called Golden Ratio, a “secret” and “ungraspable number”, so the explicit proportions need not be manifest for a certain person's view. These proportions are hidden in the work and silently guide our perception, so that we need not make an effort to view a certain work of art as a work of art. The ineffability of the message of art reaches us because, as part of the *κόσμος*, we are by nature capable of observing its harmony and rhythms. The numbers and rhythms do not simply present themselves to us, but they evocate images and associations of ideas and comparisons in our souls (Ghyka 2016, 134). In other words, they are hypostatic.

Because our mind has a “metaphoric” or “hypostatic” nature, we transform perceived proportions and rhythms into affections, insights and ideas in natural manner. This is possible because the artistic experience has a different meontological *genealogy* and *archeology* as that of arithmetic theory and “musical” theory, which we analysed earlier. When we perceive a work of art, we don't have a “theoretical attitude”, by which employ in a willingly

manner the different *μαθήματα* we gained throughout our lives, but rather a “aesthetic attitude”, which automatically creates a hypostasis of the ineffable in the domain of our “affective rationality”. When the average person looks at a painting, he does not usually search for compositional elements or other theoretical items, but for some “understanding” of its own feelings. We “learn” what’s love by reading *Romeo and Juliet* and what’s nostalgia by reading *The Odyssey*. This means that some kind of “interpretation” of our own non-judicative experiences (in a scenic sense rather than a cognitive one) takes place in the authentic aesthetic experience. We could call this “affective hermeneutics”.

This kind of hermeneutics is the reason why Pythagoreans, along with Matila Ghyka, thought that numbers produce affections of the soul and that, to understand these affections, we must understand the true hypostatic nature of numbers. This means translating “affective rationality” into *μαθήματα* or transforming what the moderns called “intuitive thinking” into “conceptual thinking”, without suppressing its ineffability. Although we should take these conclusions *cum grano salis*, until the nature of “intuitive” and “conceptual” thinking is fully understood into a meontological manner, they open up a new domain of philosophy by which we can build some connections between science and art – a very fruitful research horizon for contemporary philosophy.

Having these in mind, we think that the arguments presented in this study are sufficient for the inclusion of Matila Ghyka’s Pythagorean aesthetics and philosophy of art into account as a domain worthy to be studied and developed by contemporary philosophers. This effort may lead to another paradigm in the philosophy of art, which combines the mathematical approach to art with the more “intuitional” one. In this way, the history and theory of art may reshape their current structure and open up the path to a *meontological theory of art*, which pays attention not to what *is* expressed by art, but to that which *in not* expressed, but just consented at the deep and affective level of our consciousness. This endeavour, as we may already conceive it, would be a hermeneutical one, whose main aim is to develop the instruments and mechanisms of what we called *affective hermeneutics* in order to grasp in a more accurate way the ineffable consent of the nothingness, which is hypostasiated into art.

Notes

¹ ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ τὸ μὲν κατὰ τὰς πτώσεις μὴ ὄν ἰσαχῶς ταῖς κατηγορίαις λέγεται, παρὰ τοῦτο δὲ τὸ ὡς ψεῦδος λέγεται [τὸ] μὴ ὄν καὶ τὸ κατὰ δύναμιν.

² πολυμαθὴ νόον ἔχειν οὐ διδάσκει· Ἡσίοδον γὰρ ἂν ἐδίδαξε καὶ Πυθαγόρην αὐτὶς τε Ξενοφάνεά τε καὶ Ἐκαταῖον

³ τὰ ἀπόρρητα τῆς κατὰ τὰ μυστήρια τελετῆς

⁴ τῶν ἄρα δύο εἰδῶν τούτων ἐπιστήμην νομιστέον τὴν σοφίαν

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Law and Ethics in Dumitru Drăghicescu's work

Abstract: According to Dumitru Drăghicescu, there is a close interdependence between law and ethics. The juridical life, either as an object of study or as a psychological field, cannot exist outside the moral notions which constitute the criterion for the analysis of acts. The purpose served by law is the attainment of good - the common good, the general interest. Such a result can be accomplished thanks to the idea of justice which entails the existence of the same level of freedom for everyone, not justice as a form of mechanical freedom, but as the equality realised among equals, standing in direct ratio to the amount of service and the level of necessity. Law and ethics are interconnected and complementary: law cannot exist without ethics just as ethics is crystallized in juridical formulas. Law and ethics tend towards a shared goal: ideally, all juridical principles should become as general as some moral principles, while all moral principles should attain the same level of certainty and necessity as the juridical laws.

Keywords: law, ethics, justice, equality, common good, general interest.

1. The Relationship between the Individual and the Social Environment or the Relationship between Freedom and Determinism

According to Giorgio Del Vecchio, the philosophy of law in Romania emerged simultaneously with “the awakening of the feeling of a unitary national identity founded upon the idea of the Romanian origin of the nation” (Del Vecchio 1995, 165) some of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries chroniclers being genuine public law philosophers. The codifying work of several XIXth century legal scholars stands out as well (C. Flechtenmacher, C. Bosianu, V. Boerescu). During this epoch of spiritual revival, Simion Bărnuțiu, a professor of legal philosophy in Iași, played a key role by establishing a system of natural and private law.

It is of paramount importance that the evolution of the general theory of law and of the philosophy of law during the first half of the XXth century ensures their philosophical and scientific establishment in the juridical culture and practice of the epoch, having a significant contribution to the

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doctrine of national and European law which is still valid nowadays. Moreover, we could state as well that the evolution of the general theory of law and of the philosophy of law during this period coincides with the fulfilment of the ideals of national unity and of a modern democratic society in Romania. Such luminaries as Dumitru Drăghicescu, Nicolae Titulescu, Mircea Djuvara and many others were directly involved in these accomplishments not only through their scientific works but also through their juridical, political or diplomatic activity.

Above all else, Drăghicescu is a sociologist. However, his educational background enabled him to approach questions pertaining to the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of history or the philosophy and general theory of law.

The core issue from which Drăghicescu starts out consists in the relationship between an individual and their social milieu, which, if put in a deeper perspective, emerges as the relationship between freedom and determinism (Bagdasar 2003, 410).

At the time when he was exploring this relationship, there were two remarkable thinkers standing out as representatives of determinism: Karl Marx (materialistic determinism) and Emile Durkheim (sociological determinism).

Starting from the understanding of the active role played by an individual in society, Drăghicescu highlights some of the features of the human psychic life and the social-human activities (Constantinescu-Stoleru 2013, 88); as he sees it, an individual is endowed with the ability to take initiatives, to act autonomously, freely and in full awareness: “No historical or social act can be accomplished but through conscious, foreseen and calculated human effort” (Drăghicescu 1904, 12); human individuality is defined by its ability to set goals, to conceive ways of attaining and pursuing them” (Drăghicescu 1904, 15).

Drăghicescu's emphasis is upon foregrounding the impact that social determinism has upon human nature and upon the connection existing between social determinism on the one hand and biological determinism and the specificity of the social-cultural determination on a human level, on the other hand (Drăghicescu 1903, 102). Thus, he points out that “all that is not transmissible, all that is not innate” within the structure of human individuality “pertains to the social; and all that is innate and all that is transmissible” within the structure of human individuality “pertains to the biological” (Drăghicescu 1903, 84).

In his attempt to configure an explicit theoretical model regarding determinism in all its aspects – social, historical and cultural – meant to approach the human being as a unitary bio-psycho-social being, Drăghicescu highlights the opposition existing between social and biological determinism corresponding to the opposition between instinct and reason, between the

organic rigidity of instincts and the plastic quality of the abilities to adjust to the changing social and historical conditions (Constantinescu-Stoleru 2013, 2). In the philosopher's view

the circumstances and conditions of social life, the relationships between the human beings living within the framework of an organized society build up the conscious and the spiritual – that is, the rational – personality which becomes the agent, as well as the resulting force of social determinism (Drăghicescu 1903, 86).

Under the influence of social determinism the biological human nature itself undergoes a process of change imparting to the human being a new nature derived from the defining characteristics of social existence. The spiritual, conscious, human life emerges from the system of social interrelations and contexts in which a person lives (Drăghicescu 1903, 87).

2. Scientific and Philosophical Foundations of Law

Few have been the Romanian legal scholars whose research has reached philosophical dimensions, just as few have been the philosophers who have approached the juridical phenomenon in their theoretical studies. Without operating a distinction between these two categories - the ones whose work originated in the legal studies and turned towards philosophy and the ones who proceeded in reverse order (sometimes such a distinction seems impossible) – we consider that Dumitru Drăghicescu can rightfully be placed among these thinkers, chronologically positioned after Simion Bărnuțiu and Titu Maiorescu but before Mircea Djuvara and Eugen Speranția” (Berceanu 1994, 403).

It is not our intention to dwell upon his juridical activity deriving from the offices he held at state level which consisted in merely applying the rules of positive law as a minister plenipotentiary – in this respect it suffices to mention his attending the Romanian-Soviet Conference in Viena in 1924 – or from the invocation of that *ius gentium* in the modern formulation of the principle of national self-determination, for Drăghicescu played an active role in that diplomatic action of the entire country the conclusion of which was the Paris Peace Conference in 1919-1920. Nor will we dwell upon his juridical activity emerging from his participation in the Romanian political life. We will focus upon the light he cast on the juridical life in his writings, none of them being confined to a unique field of study. In most cases, the titles of his works offer no indication of their juridical content (Berceanu 1994, 403).

Dumitru Drăghicescu (1875-1945) was a sociologist, and a diplomat who held a professorship at the University of Bucharest. Although the majority of the titles of his works do not reflect his interest either in the general

theory of law or in the philosophy of law, this is clearly visible in the content of these works. The following titles can be mentioned among others: “Raporturile dintre drept și sociologie” (“The Relationship between Law and Sociology”), “Droit, morale et religion”, “Philosophie du Droit et Droit Naturel”, “Droit et droit naturel”.

Dumitru Drăghicescu starts from the premise that the only possible relationship between law – being in the process of becoming a social science – and the science studying society is that obtaining between an abstract science and its object of study. In his view, the material consisting of juridical laws which crystallize and define social life provides the only means of creating a science devoted to the study of society. He regards the juridical facet of life as a true “sociometer” accurately registering the variations of the social evolution. Dumitru Drăghicescu considers that the collaboration between the experts in the fields of law and social sciences is necessary in order to adjust the laws in various countries to the actual conditions of social development existing at a certain point in time.

What stands out as original from a juridical point of view in Drăghicescu's work is the identity he establishes between the social laws and the juridical laws. Being aware that the stand he takes is distant from the one taken by the majority of authors whose aim is to discover the underlying laws of the juridical activity (the result of which is represented by legislation and positive law in general), these sociologists regarding positive law as the object of study of sociology, Drăghicescu states that “the positive juridical laws are the genuine laws of societies, for there are no natural laws outside of them governing the societies” (Drăghicescu 1904, 14); “sciences are nature's codes just as our legal codes represent the sciences of our society” (Drăghicescu 1932, 243). He even asserts that “it has not occurred to anyone yet to regard the positive juridical laws as the true sociological laws” (Drăghicescu 1904, 8). To discard the laws in order to search for the laws of laws, as the sociologists do, is to behave like a dog which “has let go of the chunk of meat it has in its mouth to go chasing the reflection of the chunk in the water,” or to be like the philosopher who fell into a well while gazing at the stars.” (Drăghicescu 1928, 77).

Two objections to Drăghicescu's thesis have been formulated: a) laws are man-made and b) they are ephemeral.

Drăghicescu's response to the former objection is that the truer it is, the more innocuous it becomes: for laws are immanent, in other words, “they are derived from the relationships between the things they govern” or, by simply acknowledging the fact that the social laws are man-made, their immanence is thus recognised: “It is precisely because nature's laws are natural, immanent, independent of any human being or any other superior anthropomorphic being that the social human laws should be decreed by human beings,” that is, they should be juridical laws. The opposite

perspective would only be a regression, “the reflex of a religious, anti-scientific world view.” Therefore, Drăghicescu maintains, the former objection, “though being valid, runs counter to the intentions of those who have raised it through the very truth it contains since it is obvious now that any sociological law can only be established by people – the members of society” (Drăghicescu 1904, 11-12). Looking for natural laws in society means losing sight of any distinction between nature and civilization, the latter being synonymous to “art, which is an artificial nature” (Drăghicescu 1904, 9-10). The essential difference between juridical and social laws on the one hand and natural laws on the other hand is that “the former are immutable and final while the latter are transitory, provisional, inconstant” just as “order defines nature and progress defines man and society” (Drăghicescu 1932, 243).

Nor does the author challenge transience, the second objection. But the natural laws are transient too, the difference lies only in the degree of transience, which is irrelevant: “There is no difference between a legal code which lasts a century and a planetary system which lasts millions of centuries.” Only the relative difference between the natural laws and the social juridical laws accounts for the difference between nature and society: “Just as it is a matter-of-course fact that natural laws should be relatively permanent and stable in all cases [...], it is equally monstrous to expect set laws, natural and scientific laws in society, where it pertains to the deep nature of any phenomenon to be unique [...]”; therefore, “the only possible sociological laws are those resembling the juridical rules” (Drăghicescu 1904, 12-14), being characterized by a certain degree of permanence:

The totality of the positive laws which govern a society at a certain point in time represent the uniformity, the stability and the regularity of all social phenomena existing at that point, the reflection of the regularity and uniformity in societies. Since the juridical laws correspond to this requirement, why shouldn't they be the scientific laws which govern societies? (Drăghicescu 1904, 15)

The totality of the positive laws in a society constitute what is called “social statics. The totality of the juridical laws represent the relatively stable and precise type of the respective society, the unchanging structure of the respective social life;” “the juridical laws are like the precise and permanent features of a biological species.” Just as the existence of biology is made possible by the relative stability of the species, so does sociology exist owing to this uniformity which is ensured exclusively through the juridical laws in society (Drăghicescu 1904, 15-16). Therefore, stability, as well as transience, governs both nature and society.

Obviously, from this theory there derive a large number of results regarding the prevalence that legislation – concrete positive law, to be more

precise – should have in the sociological law-making process, in the way in which the social evolution is conceived, either in the case of understanding its unfolding until now or in the case of planning it from now on. The relationship between law and sociology is perceived by the author as that between an abstract science and its object of study: the juridical aspect of social life is a true *sociometer*, able to record the variations of social evolution (Drăghicescu 1904, 4-5).

As we are discussing the positive juridical laws, it might seem that we are embracing a positivistic view in law. However, Drăghicescu goes beyond such a view as he sees the social life and its history as “the causal foundation of law;” moreover, he contends that “the social evolution is mirrored in the juridical evolution just as a cause is reflected in its effects” (Drăghicescu 1904, 22). Positivism is the boundary of what he terms objective sociology. However, he makes reference to the subjective character of psychology as well – out of which derives that science which he calls both social psychology and psychological sociology which he expects to intervene in the juridical laws in order “to impart to them the causal-rational character of the scientific laws” (Drăghicescu 1904, 17). All in all, the social-psychological evolution represents “the rational foundation of juridical laws” (Drăghicescu 1904, 22). On the other hand, the appeal to psychology does not mean subjectivism:

If reason and the determining causes of our acts are not subsumed to an internal, simple mechanism – what our soul is not – but within the social circumstances amid which our soul stirs and lives, the law of the laws of our actions has to be subsumed to the general principles which govern societies, to the principles of social psychology. In an extreme case, the science of social psychology has to identify with the legal science by a process of indefinite attraction between them (Drăghicescu 1904, 23, 30).

Thus, first and foremost, law has to be rational:

The legal science, in order to be worthy of such a denomination, has to be organized into a harmonious whole, consisting of various interconnected categories, all of them sharing a leitmotif made up of one or more simple principles; all juridical rules have to be logically connected to and easily derived from this leitmotif. In the field of natural sciences a law remains empirical if no connection can be established between it and a superior principle or a higher cause; likewise, in the field of the legal science, a juridical law remains a mere empirical formula and it becomes a social, scientific law only after its rational basis has been discovered (Drăghicescu 1904, 18-19).

The sociologists do not need to speculate upon the juridical laws existing in society, regarded as social facts, as the objective sociology has attempted to do; they should try to identify their titles and legitimacy; thus, these laws “would have rather been looked upon as starting points or points of

reference for the researchers, or, better said, hypotheses in need of being verified, validated or invalidated by research;” thus, the sociologists should have proceeded to “compare the text of the positive law with the corresponding psychic reality,” should have checked “whether the text still corresponded to the needs, the opinions and the hopes of the people who were subjected to it as well as the relationships existing between them,” in other words, whether “the positive laws still continued to reflect the current order of things,” whether “they were justified, legitimate and had their reason” (Drăghicescu 1928, 77); otherwise, the law-making sociologists were supposed to rectify the text of the law according to the psychic reality, and in their capacity as scientists, they were supposed to make it or keep it rational. For it is only by fulfilling this condition that “juridical laws can become similar to the scientific laws,” and it is incumbent upon the sociologist to discover “the true scientific laws meant to govern the society” (Drăghicescu 1928, 78) a domain in which the principles of statistics can be applied as well (Drăghicescu 1928, 40).

In short, according to Drăghicescu, “social sciences are meant to impart a rational quality to the juridical laws, thus converting law into a genuine science, whereas law is supposed to provide sociology with a basis of real, positive facts which it lacks most of the time” (Drăghicescu 1904, 3). Yet, in order to be able to discuss the content of juridical laws it is necessary to have a global perspective upon all the other social sciences.

He considers there is a close connection between sociology, political economics, politics, pedagogy, ethics and law: “The sociologist” – he says – “should be a bit of a jurist, a bit of an economist, a bit of a politician and a bit of a pedagogue” (Drăghicescu 1928, 79).

3. Law, Ethics, Religion

Simultaneously, Drăghicescu analyzes how law relates to ethics and religion: “Religion is the basis of ethics, which, in turn, is the basis of law,” whereas “God represents [...] the paragon, the ideal form of legal rules” (Drăghicescu 1932, 230). However, he thinks that God is nothing but human collective consciousness elevated to divine status (Drăghicescu 1932, 238), an expression of the dignity of the human species, in contrast to what religion maintains.

Drăghicescu is of the opinion that ethics and law share a common essence: “The most unchallengeable social-ethical law which governs the external relationships between individuals is justice, and, therefore, equality and solidarity, which stand for the very denial of natural laws: selection, competition, inequality” (Drăghicescu 1932, 237).

Obviously, there are differences between law and ethics, the former being an external fact, the latter pertaining to conscience: “The law as an

intention and an individual action program is a volitional act which relates to a category, to a generality or to changing situations” a fact which entails the contingency of the law while the moral principles are “universal, immutable, that is, eternal” laws, “having the capacity to lend a certain form to every historical matter” – laws constituting the “eternal code,” “the model code,” “the limit legislation” (Drăghicescu 1932, 231-232).

In Drăghicescu's view, law depends on ethics: the juridical life - whether regarded psychologically or as an object of scientific study - is inextricably connected with the moral notions which serve as a criterion for the analysis of acts. It is to this idea that Drăghicescu links the division operated by jurists into given and constructed (Gény), into normative juridical laws and constructive rules (Duguit). The purpose of law is the attainment of good, the common good, the general interest, an outcome reached only “thanks to the idea of justice which generates equal freedom for everybody not that of justice as a form of mechanical equality, but as the equality realised among equals, standing in direct ratio to the amount of service and the amount of need” (Drăghicescu 1932, 234-235).

Moreover, he offers a new interpretation to this ethics: “Law stands out as a logicized version of ethics, as a quantification and rationalization of the purely quantitative and irrational elements, the congealing of the creative heat into the schematic patterns of judgement;” at the same time, the function of law is “to convert quantity into quality, space and matter into spirit” (Drăghicescu 1932, 236). Law and ethics are interconnected and complementary: “Law cannot exist without ethics just as ethics is crystallized in juridical formulas” (Drăghicescu 1904, 6); law differs from ethics owing to its external, coercive character, but law overlaps with ethics in that it represents the latter's external, concrete expression; furthermore, the coercive force of law, its concrete sanctions are attributed to the moral principles which take the form of legal rules in order to be actualized (Drăghicescu 1932, 24). Law and ethics tend towards a shared concept: “The ideal of all juridical principles is to reach the same degree of generalization as some moral principles, and the goal of moral principles is to attain the same level of certainty and necessity characterizing the juridical laws” (Drăghicescu 1904, 6). The relationship between law and ethics displays a close similarity to – sometimes reaching the point of being identical with – the relationship between the positive law and the ideal law, between law and justice (“that is, between the justice of the law and the law of justice”), between justice and love, between the historical law and the natural or rational law, between necessity and freedom (Drăghicescu 1932, 231, 237). If the principles of ethics were directly applicable, law would lose its *raison d'être* (Drăghicescu 1932, 233).

According to Drăghicescu, law cannot depart from ethics to such an extent that it becomes immoral; “law as utility” – as “a legal expression of

the economic” – may be amoral, but never immoral, a formula which Drăghicescu sees as corresponding to the relationship between the useful and the moral (Drăghicescu 1932, 233); furthermore, law is related to the moral - most often through a subtle, complicated or deep connection – for “a law which has lost its moral character, has simply become immoral in order to become amoral” (Drăghicescu 1932, 231); thus turning into a legal framework, it can only support itself through a reformative action (Drăghicescu 1932, 235). There obtains a certain flexibility of the term “moral,” which, in certain cases, excludes the amoral.

Drăghicescu also notices that law and ethics are independent of each other. By referring to fraud and casuistry – a special form of fraud – he emphasizes that these represent the response of reality to the tendency evinced by law to overlap with ethics or of ethics to be converted entirely into law (Drăghicescu 1932, 232). Jurisprudence is precisely a form of casuistry, a type of “fraud.” When the law ceases to be just and is characterized by a diminished degree of morality, jurisprudence is able to provide a remedy by completing the positive incomplete text with observations related to justice and humanity, thus introducing the moral component it lacks.

In this case, probabilism and juridical fiction correspond to casuistry and fraud, playing a similar role but opposed to the one played by Jesuite casuistry (Drăghicescu 1932, 233).

Drăghicescu also points out that it is interesting to note that both the scientific analysis of the juridical phenomenon and the philosophy of law lead to the same result (Berceanu 1994, 410); moreover, “the juridical analysis and jurisprudential activity may be relied upon to renew and forward not only the philosophy of law but also moral philosophy itself” (Berceanu 1994, 238); such notions as *force majeure*, the misuse of law, the illicit act, *bona fide* and *mala fide* “can be clarified from the perspective of jurisprudential casuistry” (Berceanu 1994, 238-239). Thus, Drăghicescu operates a distinction not only between the real and the ideal law but also between the ethics proposed by moral philosophy and real ethics.

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An Ordeal Around the Existential Question of “What is man?”

Motto

“Phoenix Rebirth is easy:
my shadow also turns into ashes at times.”

Péter Demény
(alias Ivan Karamazov)¹

Abstract: This philosophical attempt – understood not as an experiment but as an ordeal – is an ontological and existential analysis of the real weight of the question: “What is man?”. It arrives to the conclusion, based on an essential inquisitive dialogue with Kant and Heidegger, that this question cannot, and indeed must not, be given a definition-like answer filled with information and facts. The real “response” – and not “answer” – *cor-responding* to the true weight and amplitude of the matter, can only be authentic and open if it claims that: Man is precisely that particular being who turns his own existence – in a questioning way, both for himself and “other” people, interrogating himself via his own world – into an *event*. This also proves that *the human and mode-of-being-like! questions about the meaning of Being and about the possibility of “What is man?” actually overlap both in their horizons and in their amplitude and radicality (depth, roots).*

Keywords: man, ontology, existence, questioning, being, Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger.

During his still timely and vivid contemplations on the essence and meanings of philosophising at the end of the 18th century, Immanuel Kant concluded that philosophy, both in a so-called *cosmopolitico* and *eminenti* meaning, can actually – “in *actus*” – gain its authentic meanings through its articulate and explicit relations to the “end goals or humanity”. It is also important that Kant formulated these end goals as *fundamental questions* distinguished not only because of their importance and greatness, but also because they are end-questions. These are, we know them, “What can I know?”, “What ought I to do?”, “What can I hope for?”.

It is also true that Kant himself connects the hassle with such questions to certain “branches”. And it is not clear about all of these whether and how they relate indeed to philosophy itself. Because, according to Kant, the

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question "What can I hope for?" should be "answered" – at least seemingly – by religion and not by philosophy. (Of course, this is also an end-question, namely that even before we "listened to" and accepted the hopeful answers that religion can give to this question, we should first consider what religion itself actually is.) *Recte*: the end-questions are "ultimate" questions because, on the one hand, one must reach to them – meaning that we must break and build the way that leads to them – and, on the other hand, because we can hardly *pass beyond* their horizons and halos. We cannot go beyond, or know more than, say, the question of "What can I know?". For, at the centre of things, it is only through it that we can know "everything" or "anything". Including that what we do not know (or cannot know).

However, amidst the analytical and constructive meditations on the end-goals of humanity formulated by these end-questions, Kant reaches the conclusion that the relationship between them, the *sending them to each other* and *pertaining to each other takes further* of *beyond* them. That is to say, the end-goals of humanity actually always send to and meet in a *newer* – but *most important* – (end)question. This question, the ultimate of every end-goal, the ultimate (and most concealed) of every end-question, always sounds: "What is man?" Even if, very problematically, Kant send off the treatment of this issue to a new "discipline", the so-called "anthropology". And which, moreover, he had no time or force left to ask or "elaborate on", no matter how much he considered it a very personal intellectual task².

Regardless of this, the ultimate end-question of "What is man?", and in the philosophical/existential end-goal of human(ity), Kant did not only formulate something advisable or an important task just for himself and the coming generations (of philosophers) but, much rather, he surfaced an aspect which, for philosophy – although in a hidden way, and seen as secondary – has always been and remained *inherent*. With respect both to its essence and its all-time origins and meanings. This, although tiresome, is not "difficult" to point out historically all the way to Husserl, Heidegger or Gadamer.

Therefore we cannot undertake such a task here. My concern is much rather what it means philosophically – for us people, for our being as humans – to ask the question of "What is man?" and, with respect to it, what is the state of this question these days? Or what is our state today?

Man is of course always "concerned" with... man. Whether he wants it or not, whether he "questions" it or not. And this is also the greatest problem with the question "What is man?", and also the greatest difficulty. For, on the one hand, man always shows, "says" about himself what he is, and how he understands or validates himself in this self-revelation, while, on the other hand, he does it in an "a priori" given situatedness in understanding which always also *suppresses* the inevitable, but *explicit* fundamental questioning of himself. Because his "world" is always filled with all kinds of

ready-made answers given or desirably given to this question. This is what the mythologies coming into being even before the appearance of writing, the religions, and also the so-called human sciences do as well, whether these sciences call themselves “natural” or “social”.

The mere existence of these proves that some kind of – basically historical – interpretation and situatedness of itself *pertains* to the being of man. And this is unimaginable without its “being inquired”, that is, questionableness, also pertaining to him.

Consequently, when Kant treats the question of “What is man ?” as the highest and most important issue of philosophy, then he – as every essential thinker all the time – does nothing else in fact than INQUIRINGLY brings to the surface a fundamental ontological aspect of being connected to the essence of man.

This meditation is of course also connected to my previous inquiries, both extending and deepening them. For, in their most important lines, these inquiries and studies, starting from the existential ontology of the *secret* (Király 1996, 318 and Király 2001, 256) articulated the *ontological metaphysics* of human finiteness – *death* (Király 2007, 321; Király 2008, 254 and Király 215, 180), the existential characters of the temporality (*past* and *future*), the ontology of *historicity* and *freedom*, (Király 1999, 156 and Király 2004, 216) and the *existential* questions of *human illness* through the *ontology of possibility* (Király 2011, 204). In the sense of the particular ontological identity of the being called “human”, and the *thematization* of our own *modes of being* ³.

These meditations take us further to a direction which was already formulated by Kant: “*What is man ?*” It is a great question whose thematisation needs a serious consideration. The most considerable is of course not only the “elaboration” or history of *merely* a more “adequate” “philosophical anthropology” and its research, or *merely* the emphasis of the “philosophical significance” of contemporary anthropological discoveries, but: how does the question and inquiry of “What is man ?”; belongs to man himself in a mode-of-being-like way ?

Therefore the “end-goal” of meditation cannot be a “general definition of man containing useful information”, nor the description of how man “occurs” – then and now. Because all kinds of conceptual “definitions” of man atomises the horizons of the *possibilities* raised by the question and its questioning, and the description of endless conditions of being of how man existed and exists offers no directions as to the ontological essence of the question of “What is man ?”. Because that/this question, in fact, on the one hand historically always *simultaneises* in a being-like way, on the other hand it *opens u*

Well, a dialogue (re)initiated with Heidegger may mean a milestone precisely in this respect. For on the one hand he problematises precisely the “concept” of MAN – radically precisely in the term of *Dasein*, of *Being-here* –,

but on the other hand it does it which such a historical clarity that finally it finds it "providentially" "unsurpassable"...⁴ Inasmuch as it proves: it is actually the man who is for Himself always *such* a "problem"... from the thinking over of which he always *escapes* or *turns away* in a mode-of-being-like way...

For this, as I have signalled, it must be proved that the question of "What is man?" is not only a "great idea" of Kant, but one in which he surfaced an essential aspect, which lurks not only in the roots and foundations of the efforts of a philosophy "always" brought to rebirth, but actually in every mode of being in which a historical man *is*.

But let us ask again, whose question the "What is man?" actually is, and whether he, we understand(s) this question – its amplitude and depth – when we search or give hasty "factual" answers to it?

Of course, like any other question, it is "also" a *human question!* For we do not know non-human questions. We cannot even know them, because – if by some miracle we found out about them – they would immediately become human questions.

The question of "What is man?" is a question through which the man – we – inquire about ourselves. More precisely: we inquire about ourselves with our own world.

For man, inquiry is a *mode of being* and not an accidental state in which he occasionally and possibly finds himself. The question of "What is man?", regarding its origins, it nothing more than the self-opening of man's self-problematic nature. For every inquiry is opening, the opening of the questioned – and the inquirer – with regard to its problematic nature. Because the question is only asked by he who is himself questionable, and only thus can anything become questionable for him. So only he can redirect or suppress his questions too.

However, we humans apply the inquiry only in a "logic" of question and answer, due also to our traditions. The quotation marks draw the attention on the fact that questioning does not have a real logic, no matter how many attempts for "correctness" or "rules" there have been for it. Gadamer's words, which claim that there is no method that would teach how to ask a question send us to great depths...

If there is a question – says the traditional man – there must be an answer. We have been formed in our traditions so that we do not want or cannot go without – any kind of, but possibly very fast – answers. And also so that we offer in advance the answers given to the "questions" that have not be re-asked authentically. So that we no longer ask the really uncomfortable, serious questions.

This of course belongs also to the question of "What is man?" with a special emphasis! Somehow we always "know" and receive the answer for it everywhere. Or rather, the all-time surrogates of the answer. The ancient

Greeks also knew that who did not speak Greek, were not really humans, but *barbaros*. Or that a slave is merely a talking tool. The Christian also knows that a non-Christian is actually an infidel. The Muslim too, except that on the other way round. And both of them know that a man without a god (*a-theos*) cannot actually be considered a human... And that all *such people* can only be (our) enemies...

Anthropological researches actually only widen and colour man's horizons connected to his *non-knowing-himself*, to his mistaking himself, which the postmodern today sanctions as narrations with an equal value. Patriarchy also knows that the human is actually a man, and those with a "wider perspective" know that the human equals: a woman and a man, or vice-versa (the so-called "sheman" is not included, of course). And so on!⁵

Therefore, when the man questions himself about himself, about his nature, he somehow already knows the answer from the beginning. Because it is "given" to him, prepared for him by himself. But what else does that mean except that the man always questions and "defines" himself through fake questions?! For a question which already has a prepared answer is of course a fake question. And anthropology – although it is a human mode of being as well – mostly actually asks *How?* does man exist everywhere.

The fake question is the repression, the dilution, the delimitation of the "real", the authentic question in its *definition-like* answers. Because the answers mentioned above – or, more precisely, the apparent definitions – also actually derive from the question of "What is man?". But, with respect to the question: *uncomprehendingly*. We could say that the history of mankind, of man is the history of the unavoidable and uncomprehending, and thus *bequeathed* inquiry (*recte*: answering) of the question "What is man?". So the question itself should not be widened or focussed, but *comprehended!* For we cannot "free ourselves" from inquiring it.

The mortal – and as such, historical – man is a being who is always "problematic" and "problematizing" for himself, that is, an inquisitive-questioning being. This is how he can become a *creating* and world-forming being between other beings. It is therefore not "all the same" either for himself or for the other beings how the man "defines", situates himself amongst them. It is not at all the same for our "environment" whether man understands and validates himself as an empowered "lord" of organic and inorganic nature. And, of course, such a thing has a historical effect on man as well.

But can we – or rather, "may" we – "give" definition-like or solution-like answers to our self-opening and being-opening question "What is man?", while it is precisely anthropology that teaches us about the amazing (sometimes wonderful, sometimes shocking) diversity of human existence? Do we not misunderstand the question itself this way? Or rather its existential weight and ourselves as well?

The information-providing "answers" that seem to offer "solutions" are not enough for questions of existential weight. As I have repeatedly mentioned, we cannot give any practical, non-exclusive and non-reductionist, but truly sustainable answers to the question "What is man?"... Therefore the answers corresponding to question of existential weight we must call *response*! Which *cor-responds* to the essential, permanently thematised *challenges* of the question.

So the human! question of "What is man?" must be given a *response*. Because man asks and validates his own ontological specificity in the question! For it is an essential aspect of man's – the all-time, living, mortal man's – ontological specificity that he is questioning... therefore a permanent "problem" for himself... The question of "What is man?" surfaces this same original and permanent aspect of existential weight. Which is asked not only since Kant, but ever since there has been man and as long as there will be man, explicitly or implicitly, in a being-like and permanent way, uncomprehendingly. And also "answered" and "solved"...

In the depths of uncomprehending lies precisely the non-understanding of the existential weight of the question and questioning. The non-understanding of the fact that it is precisely through it, because of it, and by it that man becomes man! We are who bring-to-life amidst the other beings, amidst our own life/lives.

The most appropriate *response* to the challenges, characteristics and weights of the human question of "What is man?" is and can only be: Man is precisely the being who makes himself, all the other beings and his existence amidst them a *happening* in a way that is questionable for all the "other" man and himself, that is: (mutually) questioning himself.

The corresponding response is therefore not the – necessarily narrowing – "answering" of a question, but "only" its mode-of-being-like, explicit, disclosed re-questioning. This is no "small" thing, but, just like reaching ourselves, it is the most difficult.

But without it... ?

* * *

If we come to think about it more deeply, then we may realize that actually the question "What is man?" is reborn with every new man or generation, in a historically timely way. And, somehow, necessarily, it is also "answered". If in no other way, than with prefabricated, traditional fake "answers". By which the question is always turned in to a face question. Because man does not merely – just like everything that lives – have a finite life, but he is *mortal*. Whether we admit it or not, this is why life has a weight and stake for us as well. Life is weightless for "immortals". Nothing can ever endanger or threaten it. For the other living beings, life is a natural – or

man-created – givenness, changed and outlined by conditions and possibilities. It is born, it grows, changes, develops, then dies. Or gets extinct. But *it does not happen!*

Only for the mortals do their lives have the weight, the difficulty and the stakes of happening. This is why the mortals look at the other beings, the other mortals, to themselves, to their world etc. as *possibilities* (Király 2011, 204) – some that can be used and some as threatening. That is, as possibilities that open up, or close down. And it is precisely why questioning is the *essence of human freedom* (Király 2008, 254). Always and everywhere articulated in a specific manner. That is, in a historical and history-creating manner. Through its particular – authentic, cor-responding or, on the contrary, wrong-going – modes of being.

The achievements of cognition, sciences, arts, technology, the establishment and perfection of religions, institutions, or philosophy itself are all human modes of being which the mortal man, or the questioning-inquisitive historical man builds up and continues as – facilitating or hindering – acceptance of his own existential weights. This way the search for sciences or scientific truths are not sets of curious observations, experiences or theories, but *human modes of being*. Which mankind develops and cultivates through its functionaries called scientists. By the cultivation of natural sciences we humans actually locate ourselves amidst nature, the universe, etc. And precisely so with regard to *possibilities*.⁶ Therefore we do not love more the – of course “relative” and historical – truth because it is nicer or more exalted than falseness, but because it is only the truths that can make us humans reveal and outline our (more authentic) possibilities of being. Together with the dangers of things. The situation is the same of course also with human and social sciences.

Thus the original and ultimate establishment of sciences – just like any establishment (based on sufficient motivation) – cannot mean anything else than the clarification of *Why? Wherefrom?* do we humans make anything we call (historically ramified) sciences?! And the question also refers to arts, technology, religions, and institutions and forms of human relationships.

My answer based on my previous meditations and researches to this cluster of questions largely says: Because we are mortals. And because of this – or thanks to this! – we are always actually finite. And not un-delimited and infinite, or dumb “omniscient”... For the case with the omniscient is the same with the immortal. Because an omniscient could only be who knows *without learning/cognition*. It is only he who does *not* know everything who is forced to the dangers and efforts of cognition. More precisely, who always does not know something he would need to know. So he asks questions and searches. And this, for him, also has an existential weight. Therefore, when he finally finds out something with efforts and danger, then he also finds out that ... he KNOWS. In contrast, the “omniscient” may know possibly everything, except the fact that he knows at all. The winding, dangerous,

and usually wonderful, perplexing or shocking road to the knowledge of knowing leads only through the knowledge of not-knowing – *recte*: through inquiry, question, and its explicit questioning. In contrast, one can hardly imagine a *dumber thing* than an “all-knowing”.

These meditations have brought to the surface another new, original and founding aspect. Namely, that the challenging question of *Why?* do we humans actually make, as our modes of being, as particular beings, what we call sciences, arts, technology, religion, institutions and forms of human relationships, can be answered in a way that corresponds to the weight and amplitude of the question in the following way: Because man is precisely the particular being who makes himself, the beings, and his life or being conducted amidst them a *happening* for himself and the “other” beings, questioning himself through the world, in a mode-of-being-like way. This is therefore the most appropriate *response* to the essential question on the *meaning of life*, often forgotten but sometimes still revived by thinkers. Because this question of *Why?* is not *primarily* a causal question or one that refers to the reality of something, but precisely a *meaning-question*, inquiring about the foundations, the roots, and the origins (Király 2009, 115-128).

Because it is revealed that the *human!* meaning-question of Existence, and the also human, meaning-searching and meaning-giving, mode-of-being-like question of “What is man?” actually coincides with respect to their horizon, as well as their amplitude and radicality (depths and roots). For there is being and meaning of being only as long as there is a being (of any kind) who conducts their questioning life in a mode-of-being-like way. In our case: man.

This also proves that the implicit or explicit question of “What is man?” is not any kind of disciplinary or “external” question for us, but an original, particular and foundational being-like and mode-of-being-like human-ontological aspect. Together with mortality understood explicitly in the sense of dying, and historicity deriving from it, (Király 2015, 180) and freedom that articulates historicity. That is, mutually originally. *Recte*: in a co-original way.

One that – we humans – can only face through *philosophy*, while “cultivating” philosophy and understanding its meaning.⁷

As the Motto says with a poetical, dialogical precision: “*Rebirth is easy: my shadow also turns into ashes at times.*”

* * *

So now we know more – that is, understand more authentically – about the question, this time written without quotation marks, of *What is man?* and the weight of its questioning, its stakes and the being-possibilities opened by it. Failures and/or successes...

(Translated by Emese Czintos)

Notes

¹ From the Facebook page of Péter Demény (alias Ivan Karamazov)

² It is well-known that Kant's anthropology outlined and published from a "pragmatic" point of view is actually a slightly revised version of his university lectures held under the same name, whose publication caused a considerable disappointment for the audience.

³ The terms *thematization* and *theme* I use here in the horizon elaborated and "tested" in my own works. In this sense, by *thematization* I mean not a pre-defined circle of things to be analysed, but much rather their *origin* and the particular nature of their philosophical assuming. The "intention" of thematization is in fact that it prompts philosophy to present itself as *actual*, being in *actus*, also in relation to the inevitable subjects it discusses. In the sense of an attempt of *correspondence* to an existential challenge. Therefore the "answer" to a thematising inquiry is always *emancipation*. This way the assuming of a question in the sense of its explicit thematisation always receives the pressure of *urgency*. Because it speaks about something that *pertains to us*, and inevitably burdens us, therefore it cannot be postponed. Our own existential challenges. The "theme" only discloses through thematisation, and only this reveals its inner tensions as well. These of course send to *never* and *never* themes. Therefore the only meditation that can be called "thematization" is the one that, together with its burdening "timeliness", always reaches back to some essential and central moment of "philosophy" and gives new points of view for shedding light on it. Undertaking it in the "living" historical present of philosophising, with regard also to the future. Thematisation is thus characterised by the fact that it is the thematisation of questions beyond the inner automatisms of philosophy, *but that do not lack actuality*. (This is the place to clarify some older etymological meditations on the Greek word *thema*. The centre of its meaning horizons is the thing which is "completed", "finished". But, on the one hand, in such a way that it also carries the process of its completion, and on the other hand, in the sense that it only begins to exist – have an effect, suffer, etc. – once it is completed, once it places itself within its boundaries and outlines (*peras*). I am grateful for my colleague Rigán Lóránd in relation to the meanings of *théma*.

⁴ So it gets back to it "by the end".

⁵ It should be noted that I am talking about theoretical considerations, and this is not the place to discuss the differences between various "images of man" or explicit or implicit "definitions of man", both in its social and ethical dimensions. There are significant differences, of course, for instance between the various images of man of the Islam, and that of the Islamist terrorist organizations. The same is true for Christianity, etc. (I must thank Cecilia Lippai for this insight).

⁶ We humans look even at the harshest laws of nature we discovered with regard to the *possibilities* they may offer. Including also the threatening possibilities! E.g., we examine the laws of gravity that keep constellations together precisely with regard to their use and threatening possibilities. Without it, airplanes, spaceships, even house building would be unimaginable. The flow of rivers and streams offers the possibility of sailing and mills, as also the dangers of floods.

⁷ This does not mean of course that that question of "What is man?" would be a kind of question only asked at feasts, as a ceremony... or only at times when we have nothing else to do. On the contrary, ever since we have been humans, we have always stood within the – often suppressed, misunderstood – horizons of this question! So that, on the other hand, this question does not refer to any kind of "professional" field of philosophy which the "system" offers as a job for living, but to the existential-ontological origins, roots, foundations – that is, the "Why-s" – of philosophy.

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V A R I A

Oana Maria NICUȚĂ-NAE *

Social Activism in Romanian Painting in the Early 20th Century: Reading Octav Băncilă through the lens of T. J. Clark

Abstract: The paper intends to complexify the classical marxist accounts of Octav Băncilă's socially engaged paintings offered in Romanian historiography of art by employing a reading inspired by T. J. Clark's social history of art. The subsequent analyses are focusing not only on the explicit iconography of the oppressed and of marginal social groups, but also on the representational features and techniques through which, in the wake of Clark's ideas, formalism may be mobilized as critical artistic agency, as well as on more subtle ways in which popular taste is being offered a distinct representation.

Keywords: social art history, Marxism, Octav Băncilă, T. J. Clark, realism.

1. Methodological Issues: Social Art history and the Romanian Art Historiography

The term “new art history” has become common at the middle of the eighties in the English and American academic discourse, designating “a series of developments of the disciplinary methods, theories and objects of study” in art history (Harris 2001, 7). It was also called radical or critical historiography, alternative terms that initially designated forms of historical analysis, description and evaluation related to manifestations of social activism and political criticism outside the academia. The “critical” aspect indicates a type of analysis oriented towards the inquiry of its own methodological premises and the search for explanations (Harris 2001, 6-9), unlike the “dominant” historiography at that time, limited to formal, descriptive and, at its best, iconographic description of the artworks. Thus, the “new art history” assumed an interdisciplinary character. These developments in the field of art included the following: (a) historical, social and political theory; (b) feminist critiques of patriarchy and of the place of the woman in historical and contemporary societies (c) psychoanalytical interpretations of visual representations and their role in constructing social

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and sexual identity and (d) semiotic, structuralist și post-structuralist concepts and analyses of signs and meaning (Harris 2001, 7-13).

Among these, social art history concerns the social and political action of artworks. It relates to the artwork's particular discursive structure and its relations with a precise ideological configuration. In other words, social art history no longer analyses artworks chronologically, but it focuses on a relatively short time-span, practicing a so-called "conjunctural" analysis (Harris 2001, 65). The latter designates an analysis of the relations between artists, artistic practices, artworks, institutions and political and social circumstances in a given historical moment. The specificity of these relations distinguishes social history from the traditional Marxist approaches according to which art passively reflects a certain social configuration (Minor 2001).

Generally, the term "social art history" refers to a certain engagement in researching art as a cultural practice, poetics and politics inextricably linked to other cultural and material practices. That is why social art history can be related, on the one hand, to visual studies, sharing a profound interest in researching artistic imagery in conjunction to those from popular culture, as well as with media and discourses in the broader visual culture that are not traditionally associated with art, such as journalism, advertising, fashion industry etc. On the other hand, it is similar to material history, as opposed to intellectual history, without being entirely subsumed to this type of narrative. It studies the concrete framework for the production of art: commercial and symbolic exchanges, institutions, patronage, commissioners, exhibitions and collections (Nae 2017, 102-105). However, social art history distinguishes itself from visual studies as it bestows a special status on artistic representations, considered to be more able to act critically in society than images circulated in popular culture.

It is well known that, given T. J. Clark's writings in the 70's and 80's, the relation between art and society has been radically reconceived. Far from regarding art as a mere reflection of dominant ideology, or as a mere consequence of the material and economic transformations in a given social configuration, as it was described by Arnold Hauser, the author of a famous *Social art history* published in 1951, Clark considered that art has to be granted an active role in culture and political life:

The making of an work of art is a historical process among other acts, events and structures – it constitutes a series of actions in but also on history. It may become intelligible only within the context of given and imposed structures of meaning; But, in its turn, it can alter and even fracture those structures. A work of art may have ideology (in other words, those ideas, images and values which are generally accepted, dominant) as its material but it *works* that material; it gives it a new form and at certain moments that new form is in itself a subversion of ideology. (Clark 1982, 15)

The very term ideology is not understood by Clark as “false consciousness”, but rather as an involuntary, spontaneous (that is, uncritical) adherence to a set of culturally shared values and principles that appear to be naturalized (Nae 2015). Thus, social art history does not regard artistic image as being fully determined by superstructures (that is, ideologies) situated outside its own field, but as being critical to these ideas. Instead of the old Marxist relation base-superstructure in which art is regarded as a mere passive instrument of the ruling power, Clark considers that art can intervene in social life by altering the structures of thought that offered stability to the representations of a certain social class such as the modern bourgeoisie analysed by the British author. For Clark, art resists power most efficiently not by direct opposition, but rather by subverting those structures of thinking that support the operations of power (Wright 2013, 164-175).

Alastair Wright noted that, according to Clark, ideologies (and not the apolitical pictorial schemes advanced by authors such as Ernst Gombrich) are those limiting the vision of an artist and his representational possibilities. Some things exist, but, since they have a low social status, are pushed towards the periphery of vision and are simply not represented on the canvas, due to the cultural representations they are associated with (Wright 2013, 166). Consequently art history must be not only a history of what we see, but also a history of “blindness”, of what is not represented, of the invisible in visual arts. It would be fair to state that social art history is mostly interested in figuration and iconography, favouring representational content over stylistic features, although the latter are not deemed irrelevant, especially the inherited representational conventions, since the latter become the subject of active artistic critique, thus challenging social discriminations embedded in these visual configurations (Nae 2017, 102-103). Clark is also challenging the ordinary notions of ideology and social class. For Clark, there is more than a homogenous social class to whom a certain artist can belong to and that a certain artistic representation can address (Wright 2013, 167). Therefore, it is important to understand not only the initial position of the artist (and the commissioner), but also the oscillations between the possible class positions in the social field.

These transformations in relation to both traditional Marxism and formal art history are key issues in analysing the emergence of a new subject in historical painting in Romanian modern art: the peasant and the worker, as well as of the representations of class struggle. However, my hypothesis is that, while these subjects of representation have been already subjected to scrutiny by various Romanian art historians such as Coman (1954) and Comarnescu (1972), social art history has also been abused in Romanian historiography attached to classical Marxism. Thus, T. J. Clark’s more innovative approach of the relation between society and art, which is not one of simple subordination, but rather of active engagement and

contestation achieved at the level of representational techniques and patterns, was missing from the interpretations of socially engaged modern art painting.

In the present paper, I attempt to fill in the gap and propose a new line of interpretation influenced by Clark's strand of social art history by taking as a case study the socially engaged works of Octav Băncilă. First, I will attempt to reconstruct some historical facts concerning the social transformations in the second part of the 19th century Romania in order to situate Băncilă's historical painting in this context in relation to his own social condition and political views. Second, I analyse the iconography of social life and the critique of power based on two major iconographic themes: representations of the peasant's revolutionary impetus and representations of individuals from the social classes such as the worker and the soldier. These analyses are meant to reveal the change in attitude which questions Băncilă's interplay with the notion of pictorial realism. In the last part of the paper, I expand Clark's ideas that it is the disturbance of representational techniques and patterns which may be considered as a more subtle critical approach of the social conditions the paintings encapsulate and critically reflect at the same time.

2. The social context of Romanian modern painting. Some historical facts

Important transformations and a massive restructuring of the feudal-medieval social arrangements are visible in the social history of modern Romania at the end of the 19th century. The secularization of the monasteries, the beginning of the process through which peasants acquire land ownership and the paid work have profoundly shaken the old social order. They also represented an advance in the capitalist development of the country. The big landowners will seek to strengthen their positions through new measures imposed with the help of the parties that protected their interests. The Law of Agricultural Expenses of 1866 and its harsher version from 1872 force the peasants to depend further on the landowners who, through communal councils, could oblige "rebellious inhabitants or fugitives" to work for them. The great landlords will be highly interested in preserving the feudal remains in their relations with the peasants, increasing their cultivated areas for grain exports.

The oppression of the still powerful strongholds and the primitiveness of the tools used to work the fields will prevent the majority of the rural population to overcome poverty. The working peasantry continues to live in miserable conditions, in dire needs, ill and impoverished, uneducated and subjected to all kinds of superstitions and prejudices (Coman 1954, 14-15).

Thus, the development of capitalism in Romania, at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first years of the twentieth century, will lead to the intensification of the peasant revolts. The interplay between the old form of feudal exploitation and its new, modern form is increasingly deepening social conflicts. Landowners and leaseholders take half of the farmer's products apart from all sorts of "obligatory bugs". The misery of the working peasants increases. The 1888 peasant revolts in Ilfov, Ialomita or Prahova continue in Moldova in Roman, Vaslui, Iasi and Botosani in the following year, and in 1894 spread towards southern Moldova.

The peasant revolt of 1907 began on February 21 1907 in Flămânzi village, Botoșani county and spreads throughout the country shortly thereafter. The revolt was defeated by the government. It was repressed by the army and resulted in killing an important part of the country's rural population. The main cause was the discontent of the peasants related to the unfairness of land ownership, which was restricted to only a few large owners. According to the historians Dinu C. Giurescu and Constantin C. Giurescu, in the years when the harvests were abundant (between 1902 and 1905), the landowners also increased the rents very much, and, as a consequence, they increased the exploitation of the peasants. The latter's dissatisfaction increased eventually leading to the rebellion in March 1907. The two Romanian historians show that the disturbances started "in the northern part of Moldova, where the lessees were strong", and says that only the Fischer brothers' trust, which owned estates and forests, totalized 236,863 hectares, or 2,368 sq. Km, of an entire county, currently leasing about 75% of the arable land in three counties in Moldova (the so-called "Fischerland") (C. Giurescu and D. Giurescu 1965, 656-657). On 18 March, the state of emergency was declared, and then the general mobilization, until March 29, the number of soldiers mobilized reached 140,000. The Romanian army opened fire on the peasants, the army even using artillery in Oltenia, entire villages being literally erased: apparently, 11,000 peasants were killed in one of the most brutally repressed social revolts in Europe after 1870 (Veiga 1995, 25-26).

The events profoundly impacted Romanian consciousness, becoming the subject of one of the best interwar novels in Romanian literature, *The Revolt*, written by Liviu Rebreanu and published in 1932. As for the Romanian fine arts, the image of the peasant begins to appear in the Romanian art in the 19th and 20th centuries under the influence of French Romanticism (Iancu 2012). If Nicolae Grigorescu (who died in 1907) was interested in an idyllic representation of rural life, Stefan Luchian is the first Romanian fine artist to paint the dramas of Belle Époque peasants. The latter's painting entitled *Corn Dividing*, exposed in 1906, becomes a symbol of the oppressed peasant in Romanian painting.

3. Băncilă's History Paintings: Realism and Phantasy in the 1907 series of works

Capturing significant and dramatic moments of the 1907 uprising, the works of the painter Octav Băncilă were censored at that time, being accused in the press of a trend towards morbid socialism. The most famous such work is the one called simply *1907*. It depicts the suppression of the revolt: a peasant running among the wounded in despair under the heavy fire of the army. Băncilă often returned to this subject in a long series of paintings: *Before 1907*, *Execution*, *Recognition*, *Our All-Time Bread*, *The Story of Rebellions*, *Old Farmer's Head*, *Under Escort*, *The Funeral*, *After the Revolts*, *Historia*. Băncilă was not the only one interested in this topic: Stefan Dimitrescu, Camil Ressu, Ion Theodorescu Sion, Francis Șirato and Apar Baltazar were equally interested in social life. Nevertheless, Băncilă seems to have been the most affected by the violence of the landowners' retaliation. According to Coman (1954) and Comarnescu (1972) this increased sensitivity was directly influenced by Băncilă's social background, who was born in a poor rural family and kept close relations to rural life throughout his life.

The 1907 uprisings certainly had a strong influence on the young Băncilă who could not forget the "brothers from the countryside", as neither did Sofia Nădejde, his sister, who owned a journal militating for improving the living condition of the peasants. This in her writings published in *The Contemporary* and in a play published in 1888, entitled "A Love in the Country", Sofia Nădejde describes the miserable life of the village at that time, but without remarking the combative force of the peasantry. The mistake was as big and confusing as the conception of the "poporanists", who, on the contrary, saw in the peasantry a force able to change the composition of society alone (Coman 1954, 5). Băncilă does not regard the peasants as a passive and pitiful, homogeneous social group, but as engaged in social struggle. However, in exacerbating their frailty, questions at the same time their social agency.

Let us review the main works signed by Băncilă dedicated to events around 1907. *Before 1907* is a unique composition. It depicts an old peasant placed in the middle of the painting. The character stands and is exhausted by work, hunger, humiliation and troubles. The face is sunburnt, the hair is white and his face is covered by a short white beard, complemented by long, bushy mustaches. His clothes are torn apart the skin and the bones becoming visible. His head is proudly raised, his hands suggesting signs of rebellion. The whole posture of the peasant emanates despair and suffering. The painting was exhibited at the exhibition in Iasi in 1907 and later in 1909 in Bucharest (Comarnescu 1972, 21).

The old peasant head remains a very expressive work simply because it has a sketchy character, but certainly the most famous work dedicated to the subject is *1907*. It was once known as a part of a monumental composition entitled *On the Olt Valley*. Today, the painting is shown at the Gallery of the Romanian National Art Museum. The composition *On the Olt Valley*, intended by the artist, was commented in the *Romania Muncitoare* newspaper (Bujor 1909). Thus, the artist wanted to show how the army fired the cannon against a group of peasants from the Olt valley. He wanted to portray “a bunch of peasants, surrounded in a valley, and bombed by the artillery behind the hills.” The monumental composition has not been accomplished, it has only remained as a sketch.

In the painting currently found in the National Gallery, due to compositional dramatism and due to the dynamic and at the same time monumental depiction of the subject, the painting has a particularly strong effect on its viewers. The work was exhibited in 1907 in Iasi, in the shop window of Moldova Library. In September 1908, it was exhibited at the Romanian Athenaeum in Bucharest. The work took part in the Romanian Art Exhibition in Moscow from 1949 to 1950, together with two other paintings, *the Worker* and *the Mender*.

The renowned *1907* is more complex in terms of composition and multilayered. It presents a devastated field on which the dead seem to appear as a background. They look like cardboard-made figures in comparison with the main character, who, in the foreground, continues the solitary battle against the invisible enemy. Expressionist accents are obvious and make this picture a testimony to the fact that Băncilă has the ability to transcend reality through expression and sentiment. Thus, contrary to Comarnescu and Coman's views, who regard Băncilă as a sort of socialist realist, depicting typical characters rather than individuals, one may also notice that the painter is rather subjectively depicting imaginary scenes.

Execution remains known only from articles written in the journals, it is an unseen work, known only as its description. It was commented in an article published in *Romania Muncitoare* newspaper in 1909. The information refers to a large painting, 2.5 meters x 2.5 meters, being

(...) one of the terrible scenes of the wild crackdown. In it, the painter caught and fixed the most deadly moment of the blood orgy of 1907. On a hill, surrounded by other green hills, under a glowing air like the struggle between the clouds of frowning, lead and sunny sunshine, there is the place of chastisement. In front, the execution squad is seated, with guns ready to shoot, waiting for the command of the officer, whose sword shines in the wind. Alongside there are troops brought to assist the slaughter, to learn the art of killing, get drunk with the scent of warm blood. In the front, there is the row of prisoners, the peasants waiting for their death (...) The painter had to overcome great technical difficulties painting a mute drama from almost rigid attitudes.

He defeated the difficulty. He knew how to dramatize the peasants' attitude in the gesture of that old man who draws the little child beside him and covers his face so that he does not see the awfulness that awaits him. And thus, the painting releases a cry of horror and produces a terrible sentiment (...). (Coman 1954, 76)

The painting entitled *The Execution* was exhibited at the 1909 Exhibition installed at the Romanian Athenaeum in Bucharest. The authorities ordered the removal of the painting from the gallery shortly after the opening. *The Recognition* is today a lost or destroyed painting, which is known only from the reproductions that appeared in the journals of those times. The composition depicts a field after the repression where the peasants gathered to recognize their killed relatives. The painting was exhibited in Iași, in the showcase of the Moldova bookstore in 1908. After twenty minutes of exposure, the police ordered her removal from the showcase and ordered the librarian to be expelled from Romania. In 1909 it was exposed at the Romanian Athenaeum in Bucharest, where it was also banned by the authorities. The same happened with the *Funeral*, which is also known only from the period reproductions of the time press. It shows the end of the crackdown on a field with many dead bodies, where two soldiers deal with the gathering of the dead and the digging of the graves. The painting was exhibited in Iasi, in the shop window of Moldova in 1908, for two weeks, after which it was banned from the authorities. Such gestures testify on the social agency of Băncilă's painting. The nonconventional and uncomfortable representations certainly succeeded in disturbing the ideologically complicit order installed shortly after the revolts.

Other paintings depart from realism while presenting equally troubling scenes in a less dramatic tone. *Under escort* is a painting reproduced in a monograph written by N. A. Bogdan (Coman 1954, 77). It presents a group of peasants with ragged shirts with hands tied back, under the escort of a convoy of knights. One of the peasants is in a fallen position, ready to be trampled by a rider. *After the uprisings* is known only from the articles written in newspapers of the time. It was exhibited in 1909 at the Romanian Athenaeum on the occasion of a contest for a professorship position at the School of Belle Arte in Iași that Băncilă took part of. The composition presented some peasants who are on a boyar's field. As a result, a peasant gathers with a stick the bones that come out of the plow blade. *The Curse* is a study realized by Băncilă in order to execute the larger painting entitled *The Recognition*. The picture shows a woman with her hair wobbling in the wind, full of despair and revolt. Grieved and with scarred cheeks, she has her arms raised, her fists clenched, suggesting the curse. *The Story of the Rebellions* (also known as *The Premonition of the Rebellions*) presents a young peasant who holds a red flag in one hand and knocks at the door of a

dwindled house. It seems she goes to a gathering of a group of rebels who will decide what is to be done. It is interesting to note that Bancilă approaches the female figure as an exponent of the uprising. It basically cancels out the fragility and vulnerability of the female body to bring us silhouettes full of pathos and physical strength.

Historia is one of the few allegories that Octav Băncilă made in 1911. It is painted in a decorative style that remembers Bancilă's debut work *Caritas*. In the picture a woman embodies History and speaks to the children around her about the uprising in 1907. Octav Bancilla had as his wife Ana as a model for the History, and his sons Vasile and Grigore as models for the bourgeois and the worker.

The paintings of the 1907 cycle were not entirely identified after a hundred years after Octav Băncilă made them. Some may exist in unknown private collections, some have been destroyed, and others have been sent abroad. It was represented by Bancilă in at least twelve paintings. Bancila later made paintings with the same theme, but they were given less attention by the art critics and the public (Coman 1954, 78).

These are perhaps the only paintings of Bancilă that cannot be assimilated to realism. His vision goes beyond the limits of a naturalistic play, and the distance from reality leads to fiction, to an imaginative surplus. Bancilă was accused vis-avis of these works of a lack of authenticity. R. Dreptu argues that they are the product of a burning imagination in the workshop shelter, an imagination that wanted to create a symbol of the peasant struggle, truly terrible and only managed to achieve a pastiche (Dreptu 1987). Băncilă would thus not be a true revolutionary. He remains at the periphery of the class struggle acting only as an observer.

It is remarkable that Băncilă was not subordinated neither to the leftist, nor to the conservatory ideologies, and his dramatism was thus, truly uncomfortable. In supporting this claim, one may also quote the hostile attitude of the leftist journals *Universe* and the *Epoch* to the paintings from the 1907 series. In the first newspaper, P. Botzan writes that the painter "worked a lot, but he was too impressed by those events painful", then criticizing his allegedly formalistic technique, thereby undervaluing the art of the painter (September 19, 1908). The more open is the attack in the *Epoch*, a conservative newspaper, which says,

"However, surprises have not been spared. One puzzling, Mr. Bancilă's macabro-cadaveric conception, another particularly pleasant, Mrs. Cornelia Emilian's cloth. The former, wishing to be the painter of peasant rebellions, only succeeded in betraying morbid socialism, and how the technique seems to envy the glory of the great Abrahamovici painter. Something else is with Mrs. Emilian." (Coman 1954, 40)

4. Towards Realism: the Nomad, the Soldier and the Worker

An important place in the work of Octav Băncilă is represented by the paintings inspired by the life of the Gypsies, especially the nomadic Gypsies. The painter made over a hundred works in which he evoked nomad carts that crossed the distances under blazing skies. This is how the paintings entitled *Caravan*, *Nomad Carriages*, *Towards the Unknown*, *Nomads* etc. can be seen. All compositions that have as their theme the life of the Gypsies are sad but lyrical. They are like blue-hearted songs, the entire color scheme is dominated by blue hues, with intertwined dark reds and purple beads. They reveal the painter's sympathy for people who are forced to earn their living from small jobs.

With the military theme, Octav Băncilă depicted in his work the hostility of the peasantry towards the military service. Thus, in 1898, Băncilă painted the famous painting entitled *Recruiting*, which was the beginning of his critique of the way in which the Romanian army was organized and led. In addition to the themes devoted to Romanian fine art, Octav Băncilă has created many portraits, still lifes, pictures of flowers and landscapes, all of which make the pleasure of contemporary auction houses.

From 1905 on Băncilă begins to represent in his paintings the workers and scenes of their life and labor. Until then, proletarians are not depicted by Băncilă. The two paintings entitled *Worker* and *Resting Worker*, painted in 1905, are the beginning of a major subject of his later works – the condition of the worker.

In the first painting, the proletarian is standing on his feet, clothed with an apron, wearing a hat and looking to one side. He has a beard and penetrating eyes. He holds his hands close to his chest under the apron. His gaze is serious and scrutinizing. The work is constructed with more nerve-like features than in the works of the same period. The *Silent Worker* has the same look, seated in the first plane and holding his hands together in one another. The beautifully shaped face is embossed by the shadow of the shirt. The energy of the hand also draws your attention (Coman 70-71).

With these two paintings, *Worker* and *Worker at rest*, the Băncilă begins to depict the life and struggles of the working class. For the representation of these workers, the painter sought a sober technique. The desire to make it more truthful and typical, with that resplendent look and dainty attention, causes the painter to use a technique that overlooks the details, focusing on the expression of the face and the outfit. The lines are nervously driven, but the contours do not have the vigor and precision of other work-related works, of which the most important are *The Worker* (1911) and *Flemish* (1908).

Painted in 1911, *The Worker*, sometimes referred to as *The Artisan*, according to the titles of the 1905 work on paper and of a 1909 work in

crayon, depicts a massive, hungry worker sitting and smoking his pipe, while his penetrating gaze searches to the future that bothers him. The laborer wears tights and some polished work clothes. The sleeves are rolled up, leaving the forearms visible. The painting is worked with realistic force and precision, and the worker's psychology expresses self-indulgence and awareness of responsibility. The man is preoccupied, he is embarrassed by an important thought, though apparently at rest.

We should remember that, at the same time, Ioan Zaicu (1858-1914), a painter who was born in Vienna and whom Băncilă certainly did not know, also painted a worker after his workday. *The Blacksmith Resting* depicts his main character stripped to the waist, looking at one side and having the knee-supported hammer. The muscularity of Zaicu's laborer has a force similar to that of Băncilă's workman, but the look and the whole expression are not so deep and meaningful in Zaicu's work, which must however be joined by Băncilă, due to the theme of this well-constructed work. However, Zaicu did not continue this subject, the *Blacksmith resting*, being a liturgical work on his romantic portrait and the church painting he practiced in the style of his forerunner in Banat, Nicolae Popescu (1835-1877).

It is particularly significant that in 1905, the year of the first bourgeois-democratic revolution, Octav Băncilă painted these workers and opened a series of other paintings with workers at work, on strike or unemployed. The revolution in Russia had a strong resonance and gave a new impetus to the struggle of the working class in Romania. Băncilă's intellectual affinities with the *Contemporary* magazine, his relations with some socialists and progressive scholars, his knowledge of the labor movement in Romania are now linked with the Russian revolution. It is true that Băncilă had previously been interested in social problems, only that, now, he begins to expand the social reality he observes (Coman 1954, 36).

Between 1907-1916, Băncilă also painted numerous images of the Jews in Iasi: *Zarafii* (1912, 1913, 1914), *Moses Ișic The Shepherd* (1914), *Old clothes* (1908), *The Mender* (1908), *The Witch* (1911-1913). In all the work created with Jewish themes, Octav Băncilă distinguished the social classes and revealed the antagonism between them. He portrayed the life of the poor Jews in Iași, revealed the sufferings characteristic of the exploited beings, criticized the wealthy wrath and the money-makers, and revealed some of the causes that determined the emigration wave of the early twentieth century. Both the Fascists and the anti-Semites expressed their hostility towards Octav Băncilă. The artist enjoyed a certain popularity among the humble because he was interested in oppressed people regardless of culture, nationality or religion.

His attention to this particular ethnic community seems rather to be based on class distinctions, the artist distinguishing between the ironmongers portrayed as avaricious exploiters and the wider group of service providers

who are busy with small jobs. About these images, art critic Petru Comarnescu noted that Băncilă's Jews appear to be labored workers, representative of the social condition of the inhabitants of the lousy neighborhoods of Iași. Referring perhaps to the artwork ironically entitled *A Good Business*, Comarnescu commented: "You see how good was the 'business' of those who are dressed in caftans." (Comarnescu 1972) With this series of paintings with Jews, which became remarkable through their realism, the painter drew the attention that most of them, as well as most of the Christians, are not wealthy or bankers, but they suffer together because of social inequality. They were deprived of citizenship rights, and they were forced to work as craftsmans and to do small, mostly unprofitable trades.

In Băncilă's painting an important place is occupied by the representations of the city life, an example of the progressive literature of that time. The subjects are chosen from the life of the poor people living at the outskirts or in the slums in are either comical or tragic situations. The works have a more pronounced narrative character visible in artworks such as *Telali* or *Towards School*. Another socially importance subject in the art of those times, famine can be encountered in two different artistic visions - Băncilă's *Starving* and Tonitza's *Bread tail*. The first one depicts a ragged boy standing with his mouth open in front of a showcase filled with sausages. The second presents an endless and anonymous queue, the people being impoverished by poverty. The overall expression loaded with a surplus of too explicit details, and the piousness of a desperate expectation of the depicted people denote an anecdotal approach opposed to the dramatic one favoured by Băncilă. These formal features distinguish the two paintings, although the intention of both painters had been the same – to criticize social injustice (Dreptu 1987, 83).

5. Still Life as Social Critique

The leftist engagement of a painter such as Băncilă can easily be grasped from paintings in genres such as history painting, portraits or genre studies. Nevertheless, they are more subtly felt in minor genres seemingly devoid of ideology such as the still life. A case in point is *Pot with Bluebells* dating from 1934. Using one of the existing interpretations of the artworks, written by Petru Comarnescu, who operates with the traditional instruments of Marxist theory, one may notice that bluebells were not a noble subject in the conventions of the genre at that time. Usually, at the beginning of the 20th century, still life was meant for a bourgeois viewer interested in contemplating a pictorial representation of natural beauty. According to Comarnescu's insight, the social and political engagement of the artist is expressed by his choice to depict simple, popular, accessible flowers (Comarnescu 1972). This is obvious in the current painting, where, instead

of greenhouse flowers, commonplace wild flowers are presented. The pot is also simple, unpretentious, a mere bowl of clay that could be found in any house. The painting thus suggests an intimate atmosphere, typical for simple popular life, that the artist is clearly sympathetic with. The analysis of the representational content, indicating the absence of certain representational topics in the artistic imaginary of the time, becomes of outmost importance. What is the meaning of choosing such a subject matter? What are the most common representations of that subject matter at the time and in the cultural space the artwork was produced?

In order to determine the relation between social classes and artistic representations in a given artistic configuration, T. J. Clark also employs a necessary history of reception. Relevant questions asked by the social art historian include: what did the art critics say about certain artworks? Who was actually seeing them? These questions are as important as those about the transformation of the source material by the artist. What transformations occur both in the representational technique and style, and in the very construction of that subject matter? It is perhaps telling that for Clark, Courbet's realism was equally shocking due to the way subjects entered the field of representation as a non-differentiated multitude of people situated on a horizontal plane of vision in artworks such as *Burial at Ornans* (Clark 1982).

The histories of reception and patronage are also relevant here in order to understand, for instance, how the genre of still life may be found among the artworks of an explicitly socially critical artist such as Octav Băncilă, while the analysis of the artwork should explain what is political in this obviously apolitical artwork. Although he painted many still lifes, it is certain that they seem to conform to the taste of the bourgeois clients at that time. However, the painter also affirms in this artistic genre his preference for depicting the life of simple people such as peasants and workers. One may observe that, belonging to the late period of Băncilă's practice (the 1930s), probably the result of a command from a wealthy person in a period of relative economic prosperity in Romania, the political effects of the image may be found in the option for the realist depiction of a commonplace subject in an interior typical for popular culture. Thus, by introducing a commonplace subject accessible to all social classes in the pictorial representation, Băncilă may be considered to produce a democratization of aesthetic pleasure, which transgresses the social boundaries of taste. Even though the fragment of domestic interior depicted belonged to the artist himself, indirectly expressing his own particular social condition, through its pictorial representation, the artist considers it to be equally worthy of interest as any other subject. It might be even implied that Băncilă is subversively juxtaposing in this painting two distinct social groups and environments, introducing popular culture in the imaginary of bourgeois, urbanized

social groups that attempted to conceal it by favouring the idyllic vision of rural life they have been accustomed to see in the paintings of Nicolae Grigorescu.

Concerning the way this subject matter is treated, it is through the chromatic scale that Octav Băncilă seems to comment upon the depicted fragment of domestic life (Nae 2017, 113). The overall chromatic scale is cold and austere, sustained by the flower's own blue, reminiscent of the winter that has just passed. This cold chromatic environment may be understood as an affective comment upon the ordinary world that fragment of reality belongs to.

6. Conclusions

The few examples discussed in this text show that the use of social history of art can explain the production and primary reception context of a certain artistic representation, given that the primary meanings of that image became less intelligible and its rhetorical underpinnings more difficult to read due to historical distance. Placing the artwork in a certain socio-political "conjuncture" that the interpreter has to patiently reconstruct from various historical data can offer precious information concerning the way a certain artistic representation can embody and sometimes, may even conceal a political, socially emancipatory potential, which is inscribed into a collective representation of the depicted subject-matter. It can also indicate the ideological relations that certain artistic representations can exemplify and contest when they are naturalized, becoming invisible for today's viewer.

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Maximus the Confessor and the Metamorphosis of the Idea of Justice **

Abstract: The term “justice” appears infrequently in Maximus’ works; moreover, when used, it does not refer always to a social and psychological virtue. To my knowledge, the question of justice in Maximus underwent a metamorphosis, making for a largely unexplored subject which I wish to investigate below. I will study first the concept of justice from the perspective of the divine providence and then I will investigate its transfiguration in Maximus’ works. As this separation is only methodological, I will finish my analysis by pointing out the connection between the two paradigms.

Keyword: Maximus the Confessor, Justice, Divine Providence, Divine Economy, Deification.

I. The issue of divine providence (ἡ πρόνοια) present in the writings of Maximus that implies the notions of judgement (κρίσις) and justice (δικη) has been little studied until now (only Blowers 2012, 199-217 and Neil 2015, 235-49). As it is well known, the stoics have developed a very detailed theory about providence (Cicero 2010, 27-59; Laertius 2013, 560-61), a theory that Maximus could have assumed directly from their texts or, rather, indirectly, from the writings of the Bishop Nemesius of Emesa (Sharples 1983, 141-56). In turn, Maximus exerted a decisive influence on Isaac Commenus (Sebastocrator), for example, who wrote a study entitled *De providentia* (Steel 2012, 255-57).

From the beginning one must say that everything becomes intelligible in Maximus if one reads his works in an Christological key since the Logos Itself is the Proniator. For example, in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 53, Maximus asserts that providence and judgement are the eyes of the Logos, and in the same writing, cap. 54, he speaks about providence and judgement as if they are two wings of the same Logos. More than that, in the same *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 55, Maximus says he who understood the value of the numbers discovers the providence of God (Van Deun 1992, 238).

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Therefore, arithmology represents another way that people may follow in order to understand divine providence. In the end, “everything is number”, as it has been so frequently said in the Pythagorean School, traditions that enjoy a certain renewal in the era of the late Antiquity.

The theme of providence is strictly related to the purpose of creation. Creation does not represent the result of an originary fall, as one may discover this idea in the writings of Origen and Evagrius Ponticus, but it has been done with a purpose (σκοπός). In this sense, Maximus explicitly says that “For God’s judgment looks not on what is done but to the intention behind it” (Maximus 1985, 52). In another writing, the Saint Confessor asserts that “The purpose of divine Providence is to unity by an upright faith and spiritual love those who have been separated in diverse ways by vice” (Maximus 1985, 77). Creation from the infinite goodness of God (Maximus 1985, 75) subsists and is completed in Christ through the way towards deification, towards justice, towards the natural condition of men, as we may see in the following lines.

The connection between providence and deification (θέωσις), our natural, just condition, as one may observe from the mention made by Maximus, after the book of the prophet Isaiah (9, 5; 25, 1), of God’s Secret Council from eternity in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 60, *Ambigua ad Iohannem* 10 and *Capita theologica et aconomica* II, 23 and 25, that does not sights out something else than our deification (Maximus 1985, 102). In other words, God’s Great Council decides the unsaid kenosis of the Son for our deification. Divine providence is indestructibly related, it is identical from a certain point of view with it, to economy (οἰκονομία), a word that might be translated through *incarnation, plan, design, administration, providence, responsibility, duties, compromise, lie, or guile* (Mondzain 2005, 13).

“Every good Christian will have to be an economist” (Mondzain 2005, 38). Scientific literature defines at least two complementary senses of the word economy: firstly, Christological economy, the Incarnation of the Word, that is the Son of God is understood as “an economy of the Father”, and, secondly, economy as providence understood as a divine plan that guides creation from the beginning until the end. The two aspects are complementary because “God’s economies encompass everything that the incarnational economy will redeem the whole universe. If this economy disappears, everything disappears” (Mondzain 2005, 36). On the other side, Gilbert Dagron appreciates that it

is necessary to go beyond summary definitions and see in the economy a well-constructed concept. Despite certain striking formulations, a fine rhetorical dressing, and some moral connotations, the notion remains blurred. Above all it is purely negative because it is satisfied to merely note and accept a definitive disjunction between ideal standards and a social space over which they henceforth have no hold [...]. If the notion of economy had a positive content,

we would have a real confrontation of ideas, a dialectic; but as the concept is empty, we only have two poles between which a sort of equilibrium is established. (Dagron 1990, 1-18; Mondzain 2005, 11)

Faced with such hard-to-understand statements as they come from the side of an excellent connoisseur of the Byzantine spirituality, Marie-José Mondzain captures in an excellent manner the falsity of G. Dagron's assumptions when he asserts that "To talk of an 'empty concept' or a 'negative concept', however, in relation to a term that in Christian texts refers both to the incarnation and Christ himself cannot but cause us some surprise" (Mondzain 2005, 11).

In *Ambigua ad Iohannem*, 60, for example, Maximus approaches the problem of the relation between "economy" and "theology". His spiritual father, the Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem (560-638), pleads for a clear distinction between theology and economy:

It is well and greatly pleasant for all those faithful to announce the one through the other, and to guard in an unmingled manner the showing of each of one. Even if the reasons of the Trinity are announced through the voices of economy, even if the words of economy are said through the theological announcements of the Trinity – because the Word is known as One from the Trinity, who has taken upon Him the human economy and saved the entire flutter of men –, but this is made through the means of distinct meanings and appellatives and through own means, so that from here a mixture and an interference to be born between "theological" and Trinitarians announcements and multiple "economic" appellatives because of the descending to us, the humbles of God the Word. (*Homily on the Annunciation*, Migne 1865, 87(3), 3221)

Maximus, the main follower of Patriarchs Sophronius' struggle with the heresies of the time, could not neglect this fundamental distinction, since his thought is a Christological, economical one by far, because only οἰκονομία „thought ensures the cohesion of the divine plan for the whole of the universe from its beginning until the end" (Mondzain 2005, 36). In the words of Maximus, from the *Capita X*, 20, "we, the ones who are so cared for, have to be grateful because, even if those that are arranged for us by providence presume difficulties, the ending is a happy one".

II. Following the Evagrian tradition (present especially in his youthful writings), we observe in Maximus, besides the virtues of the body, like fasting, vigils, sleeping on the ground, service to others, manual labor, the following hierarchy of the virtues of the soul: love, forbearance, meekness, self-mastery, prayer (Maximus 1985, 55). In *Ep.* 2, we find the same hierarchy adding gentleness, humbleness, benefaction, charity, kindness, peace and joyfulness. As one may observe, in the list of the aforementioned virtues present in the first writings of the Confessor, justice is not to be found among them.

Starting from the three parts of the soul: concupiscent (ἐπιθυμητικὸν), irascible (θυμοειδές) and rational (λογιστικὸν), found in Plato (1991, 106-10) we observe the three virtues: temperance, courage and wisdom (Mureșan 2000, 193-96). To these one may add justice that crowns the other ones. The Greek philosopher asserts that

in truth justice was, as it seems, something of this sort; however, not with respect to a man's minding his external business, but with respect to what is within, with respect to what truly concerns him and his own. He doesn't let each part in him mind other people's business or the three classes in the soul meddle with each other, but really sets his own house in good order and rules himself; he arranges himself, becomes his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts, exactly like three notes in a harmonic scale, lowest, highest and middle. And if there are some other parts in between, he binds them together and becomes entirely one from many, moderate and harmonized. (Plato 1991, 123)

The register is valid for Aristotle as well, who considers that "justice is the most excellent of the virtues" (Aristotle 1991, 68).

The platonic tetrad of virtues: temperance, courage, wisdom/ prudence and justice, is to be found as well in the Maximian writings (Maximus 1985, 58). Therefore, we do not have reasons to doubt the fact, verifiable through texts, that Maximus knew well the Platonic tradition (Plato 1991, 294) that considers the soul to be simple, immortal (*Opuscula theologica et polemica* I, Migne 1865, 91(3), 20) but, at the same time, threefold: concupiscent, irascible and rational (Maximus 1985, 42).

For some exegetes, "la question éthique traverse l'œuvre de Maxime. On la trouve dans les *Capita de caritate* à connotation fortement monastique. Elle est aussi largement présente dans le *Capita theologica et oeconomica* ou elle est articulée à l'étude de la nature et à la théologie. Elle en représente la porte d'entrée. Elle est enfin la visée fondamentale des *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*" (Van Deun & Mueller-Jourdan 2015, 445). I have observed that, probably, under the influence of the Origenist-Evagrian tradition, the Platonic virtues dominate, especially, in the Maximian youth writings (*Capita de caritate*, *Epistula II*, *Liber asceticus*). Here are a few examples through which Maximus valorizes the three faculties of the soul theorized by Plato and the virtues that lead the soul towards justice, the state of perfection to which the soul tends:

1. "The soul is moved reasonably when its concupiscent element is qualified by self-mastery, its irascible element cleaves to love and turns away from hate, and the rational element lives with God through prayer and spiritual contemplation" (Maximus 1985, 77).

2. "If you want to be just, assign to each part within you what it deserves, that is, to body and soul. To the rational part of the soul give spiritual reading and meditation and prayer. To the irascible part give spiritual love, which is opposed to hate. To the affective part give temperance and self-

mastery. To the bodily part give food and clothing, and only what is necessary” (Maximus 1985, 80).

3. “Curb the irascible element of the soul with love, weaken its concupiscible element with self-mastery, and give flight to its rational element with prayer, and the light of your mind will never be eclipsed” (Maximus 1985, 84).

4. Moreover, for Maximus, contrary to an interpretation that we frequently encounter:

The vices, whether of the concupiscible, the irascible, or the rational element, come upon us with the misuse of the faculties of the soul. Misuse of the rational faculty is ignorance and folly, of the irascible and concupiscible faculty, hate and intemperance. Their right use is knowledge and prudence. If this is so, nothing created and given existence by God is evil. (Maximus 1985, 61)

The exercise of the three Platonic virtues corresponding to the powers of the soul leads us to the fourth one, *justice*, the crowning of the other three ones, as follows from the *Mystagogy* of Maximus: “Now nothing is either so fitting for justification or so apt for divinization, if I can speak thus, and nearness to God as mercy offered with pleasure” (Maximus 1985, 211; Maximus 2011, 68: “Οὐδὲν γὰρ οὔτε πρὸς δικαιοσύνην οὔτω ῥάδιόν ἐστιν, οὔτε πρὸς θέωσιν, ἴν’ οὔτως εἶπω, καὶ τὴν πρὸς Θεὸν ἐγγύτητα καθέστηκεν ἐπιτήδειον, ὡς ἔλεος”). Firstly, our attention is drawn to the identification of *justice* and *deification*, which is not at all accidental. Interpreting this fragment from the *Mystagogy*, some exegetes consider that ethics (where justice is a fundamental theme) and deification are „étroitement interconnectées” (Van Deun & Mueller-Jourdan 2015, 445). More than that, “la divinisation est en un sens certifiée par l’éthique et l’horizon politique et social qui en découlent” (Van Deun & Mueller-Jourdan 2015, 445). From a Christian perspective, deification is a state that must be acquired by the soul. If, for Plato, justice “would be a certain health, beauty and good condition of a soul” (Plato 1991, 124), in the writings of Maximus the ontological register is changed, probably, starting from the passage present in *Malachi* 4, 2 „the sun of righteousness”, he speaks about „God, the intelligible *sun of righteousness*” (Maximus 2014, 247). Taking these aspects into consideration, *mutatis mutandis*, we may assume that the deified man is a healed man, healthy, just, but, who cannot become like this only by his own powers, but only through a conjoint work with Divine Grace. In this sense, Christ was explicit: “apart from me you can do nothing” (*John* 15, 5).

The Maximian idea from *Mystagogy* may have suffered the influence of Origenian tradition. What is Christ for us if not the model (*παράδειγμα*) that one has to follow (*Opuscula theologica et polemica*, Migne 1865, 91(3), 80)? In this sense, Origen speaks at a certain moment about those who “become capable of receiving Christ afresh in his character of the righteousness of

God (cf. 1 Cor. 1: 30)” (Origen 2013, 49). Only Christ is righteous, we may become righteous only by participating in Christ, therefore becoming parts of the divine nature.

I tend to believe that only a few examples of the Scripture and of the Holy Services of the Church may shed a ray of light over the above mentioned passage:

1. “the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them” (*Solomon’s wisdom* 3, 1); “the righteous live forever, and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them” (*Solomon’s wisdom* 5, 15).

2. “Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever” (*Isaiah* 60, 21)

3. *The righteous* will pass into “eternal life” (*Matthew* 25, 46), that is the deified ones; or “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (*Hebrews* 12, 23).

4. “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance” (*Luke* 5, 32).

5. “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (*Matthew* 13, 43); and in the *Psalms* we encounter many times the sentence “the upright in heart” (*Psalms* 7, 10 *et passim.*).

6. The Deacon, during the Holy Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom says: “Wisdom! Let us attend. Let us listen to the Holy Gospel” (The Romanian version of this fragment includes the word “righteous” in the calling and an exact translation will sound like this “Wisdom, ye righteous, let us listen to the Holy Gospel”). Of course, this calling does not speak about our vertical position while standing on our feet, but about a state, a *righteous* one, that we should all acquire.

Therefore, having in mind the aforementioned examples, we tend to believe that the interpretation of righteousness encountered in the Maximian *Mystagogy* is not a theoretical one (strictly discursive), that places righteousness in a certain hierarchy of virtues, but rather a mystagogical, practical, liturgical one.

III. From what it has been shown in the rows above we may draw the following conclusions:

1. The link between divine providence and righteousness appears in a fragment from *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 60:

With a clear view to this end, God created the essences of created beings, and such is, properly speaking, the terminus of his providence and of the things under his providential care. Inasmuch as it leads to God, it is the recapitulation (ἀνακεφαλαιῶσις) of the things he has created. (Maximus 2003, 124)

This may signify that righteousness may be interpreted as well as a state of rest (στάσις) present in the Maximian anti-Origenist triad: beginning

(γένεσις), movement (κίνησις), rest (στάσις). What is interesting is that righteousness, the state of one being deified that is “ever-moving rest” (ἀεικίνητος στάσις – Maximus 1990, 53) is identified explicitly by Maximus with “joy” (ἀπόλαυσις). In the place of righteousness one may find, as well, the virtue of virtues: love that, in this situation, is interchangeable with righteousness.

2. For J. Rawls, “Justice is the first virtue of social institutions” (Rawls 1971, 3). Though in Maximus’ writings, unlike Plato’s *Dialogues*, justice does not represent neither a “social virtue”, nor a “psychological virtue” (Vlastos 1971, 123). For the Confessor, righteousness does not represent a social virtue, because it is not understood as a reward: “There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity” (*Ecclesiastes* 8, 14). Therefore, as we understood from Maximus’ texts, in the divine plan righteousness is not a reward given by God for a set of deeds committed by a human person at a certain time, but the natural condition of man, as he has been made by the Creator, “in His image and according to His likeness” (*Genesis* 1, 26), deified. After the fall this condition has been lost, through sins the mirror of the soul became darker and man needs to struggle in order to regain the Edenic condition. In a certain sense, righteousness may also be called as “the most excellent of the virtues” mentioned by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle 1991, 68).

3. As it is known, Maximus will receive, right after his death as a martyr in the year of 662, the name of Confessor, and a passage from Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Romans quoted by Maximus himself during his trial (*Disputatio inter Maximus et Theodosium Caesareae Bithyniae*) leads us in believing that as his mouth confessed for salvation, so his heart believed for justice: “if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved” (*Romans* 10, 9-10).

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The History of Korean Philosophy

Dialogue between Tudor Petcu and Halla Kim***

TP: *At the beginning of our dialogue I wish to make reference to the meaning of Korean philosophy in the context of the universal philosophy. I mean I think it would be necessary to present in a relevant way the role that Korean philosophy has played in the evolution of the universal one, especially western philosophy. So, what could you say about this topic ?*

HK: The abstract thinking in Korea began with native religious thoughts but it received a critical impetus from various thoughts originated from outside of Korea. Buddhism was originally conceived in India and greatly

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developed in China, but it was enthusiastically received and promoted during the Three Kingdoms Period (57 BCE – 668 CE) in Korea as well as Unified Silla (668-918) and Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392). Indeed, it played a critical and decisive role in the development of mature philosophical theorizing in Korea. Among many of its brilliant contributions, an attempt to effect the achievement of wisdom and perfection in an individual life and in a society under this light was an integral part of this tradition. Later in the 14th century, Buddhism gave hegemony to Neo-Confucianism which originally arose in Sung China. In particular, Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) in Korea turned out to be a fertile ground for its further development. For example, the making of a sage in each individual and a virtuous government of a community by such a figure, which culminates in the ideal of sage king, has occupied a central place in this effort.

TP: *Which are the main philosophical approaches assumed over the years in the different academic milieus in Korea? Can we talk about a strong Korean phenomenology, or about any analytical Korean philosophy, or so? Every country where philosophy was assumed as a field of research has had a specific and general philosophical tradition, as for example England, very well-known through its analytical philosophy, or Germany through its idealism or phenomenology expressed by Edmund Husserl or Martin Heidegger. In this case, what about the philosophical tradition in Korea?*

HK: To understand what is Korean about Korean Confucianism, we have to look at the issues that Korean Confucians debated and identify those issues that seem to have interested them more than other issues, and which issues seemed to attract more interest in Korea than in the rest of the Confucian world. In the process, we should try to identify distinctive ways Korean Confucianism evolved, what sort of new schools of Confucian thought and practice it produced.

Though I have been studying Korean Confucianism for years, there are many nooks and crannies in Korean Confucian thought and practice I have not had time to explore. Confucianism in Korea, like Confucianism in China and in Japan, is multi-layered and even contradictory, with different scholars arguing for significantly different interpretations of the Confucian Classics and providing significantly different suggestions for how to apply Confucian principles to the world around them. Nevertheless, in my necessarily incomplete survey of Confucian thinking over the five centuries of the Chosŏn dynasty, I have noticed one distinctive thread that stands out – a concern for moral psychology.

It is that concern, generated by the recognition of the contradiction between the assumption of human moral perfectibility and the reality of human moral frailty, that led to the disputes between T'oegye and Yulgok over what role the Four Fonts and the Seven Emotions should play in

moral cultivation and between Han Wŏnjin and Yi Kan over how much of a sanctuary from evil our basic human nature provided. That same concern led to Tasan borrowing from Catholic writings to create a theistic Confucianism and inspired Ch'oe Cheu to create Korea's first indigenous organized religion. Because their concern over human moral frailty led Korean Confucians to discuss issues that either were not as important or were not discussed the same way in neighboring countries and even led them to develop novel approaches to solving old Confucian issues, I argue that one thing, at least, that is Korean about Korean Confucianism is this emphasis placed on the search for an explanation of, and a solution to, the inevitability of human moral failure, of the inability of human beings, no matter how much they study the Confucian Classics and how well they understand them, to consistently act in a selfless manner, to act in the way their Confucian tradition tells them they should and could act.

TP: *Western philosophy has always accorded a huge attention to the relation between philosophy and religion although there is basically difficult to find too many common denominators, first of all because of their comprehensive logics. Of course, from this point of view there would be a lot to say, especially if we should take into account the modal logics as a way to explain the Reality in comparison with religion, mostly based on a mystical worldview which has its own logics. But we shouldn't forget about the different Christian efforts in the Middle Age to create a liaison, a strong connection between philosophy and religion, as Saint Anselm or Thomas Aquinas did. Anyway, what can you say about the way by which was defined the relation between philosophy and religion in Korea and who were the main Korean philosophers focused on the analyses of this topic?*

HK: Philosophy and religion go hand in hand in Korean Philosophy.

In his Eleven Theses on Feuerbach, Karl Marx claims that “the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it,” thus incisely criticizing the abstract, isolated way that philosophy in the West had been practiced, in separation from the true reality of the world. According to Marx's conception, philosophy is to be fundamentally practical beyond ‘theories,’ both simple and complex (from the Greek verb, *theorain*). Marx's criticism, however, would be completely pointless if directed against the Korean Neo-Confucianism/Buddhism. For the latter has always been preoccupied with a concrete praxis in the daily context. Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism is, by its very nature, fundamentally practical, regardless of any shortcomings it is occasionally perceived to have.

In the familiar division of philosophy influenced by Western approaches, we commonly conceive it as being composed of three parts, metaphysics, ethics and epistemology. For Korean philosophy, this would be completely

inadequate. For it miserably fails to capture the most essential part of it – the art of self-cultivation (or as we can put it, “a way of life and thought”) is the most important part of philosophy proper. Just like metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, the art of self-cultivation (which I propose to call “sugihak (The study of self-cultivation)”) surely has theoretical components but the most essential component of it is its practical part. One who studies it must not only understand it or theoretically know about it but must also internalize it and actively practice it in his or her concrete relation with others. This is why it is different from theoretical disciplines (including the typically theoretical ‘philosophical ethics’ as it is widely taught in academia). You don’t have to be ethical to teach philosophical ethics but you cannot teach sugihak without exemplifying it yourself. There should be a unity of thought and action in the art. The Neo-Confucian/Buddhist reflection can be on things in the world but it must be directed toward oneself, thus “self-reflection.”

TP: *Would it be correct to say that Buddhism as worldview represents one of the most important foundations of Korean philosophy?*

HK: As Charles Muller suggests, Korean Buddhism is distinctive within the broader field of East Asian Buddhism for the pronounced degree of its syncretic discourse. Korean Buddhist monks throughout history have demonstrated a marked tendency in their essays and commentaries to focus on the solution of disagreements between various sects within Buddhism, or on conflicts between Buddhism and other religions. While a strong ecumenical tendency is noticeable in the writings of dozens of Korean monks, among the most prominent in regard to their exposition of syncretic philosophy are Wŏnhyo (元曉 617-686), Pojo Chinul (普照欽訥 1158-1210) and Hamhŏ Kihwa (涵虛己和 1376-1433).

The chief operative conceptual framework with which these scholar-monks carried out their syncretic writings can be shown to be derived from the metaphysics connected with the Hwaŏm (華嚴 Ch. Hua-yen) school, as well as the soteriological discourse of the closely related Awakening of Faith (大乘起信論) tradition, both of which have dual roots in Indian Buddhist and native East Asian philosophy.

Among all the earliest forms of Buddhism, the most outstanding is the synoptic philosophy of Wŏnhyo. According to him, the most fundamental Buddhist doctrines are to be understood from the logic of interfusion which enables him to embrace and harmonize different strands of Buddhism without forsaking the substance of them. His view then culminates in the metaphysics of One Mind with its soteriological implications. Then the holism of Ŭisang (625-702) and his Hwaŏm Buddhism is discussed with an

account of his Ocean Seal Chart (華嚴一乘法界道) followed by a brief discussion of Pure Land Buddhism and Consciousness-Only School in unified Silla dynasty. No discussion of Korean Buddhism is complete without Chinul (1158-1210), the founder of Sŏn (c. Chan, j. Zen) Buddhism in Korea. Chinul's Sŏn philosophy with a focus on the notion of "True Mind" is developed in the scheme of Sudden Enlightenment to our true nature under the guise of nothingness followed by a Gradual Cultivation via the practice of nothingness. This gave rise to the age-long controversy over Tonjŏm debate, i.e., Sudden Enlightenment vs. Gradual Development in Korea. Indeed, defying Chinul, T'aego Pou (1301-82), towards the end of Koryŏ, the final national master, emphasized Buddhism as a quintessentially practical discipline where both awakening and cultivation are fully realized in one fell swoop. This effort of Chinul and T'aego Pou were later continued by Chosŏn Buddhist monks, especially, Kihwa and Sŏsan (1520-1601). The Neo-Confucian attack on Buddhism, it will be shown, is in this respect unfounded, for Buddhism, in particular, the quintessential Buddhist concept of nothingness, simply does not entail nihilism conceived as expressing a fatalistic stance about the forces of nature (including human nature) with a strong implication for inaction and despair.

TP: *We shouldn't forget to highlight the contemporary philosophical theories in Korea, because in our days it's very hard to find a philosophical task given the technological revolution and the development of pragmatism. I am saying that because the general question that is addressed even in the British and American schools of philosophy is the following one: what role can philosophy play in our days, in a society where science is evolving on and on? But in spite of this fact and according to the question I have mentioned above, there are numerous contemporary philosophical views related especially to politics, science and economics. So, which are the most important contemporary Korean philosophical theories and approaches ?*

HK: I hope to promote the value and meaning of Korean philosophy in the very context of the age of globalization without forsaking our deep-rooted tradition in Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism and Tonghak (Eastern Learning) among others. This is why the topic of Korean philosophy as such and its modernity is important. Our vision is that there is something very valuable in the traditional Korean thought but this merit cannot be fully appreciated until we consider it in light of the achievement and dynamics of western philosophy. Therein lies the importance of East-West comparative philosophy, in particular, East-West comparative moral theory. The latter is all the more important because Koreans traditionally prided themselves on epitomizing the value of morality "in the East." The issues in traditional moral theories can best be elucidated and illuminated by the

recent development and achievement in moral and cognitive psychology (e.g., moral modularity hypothesis). Finally, we plan to approach and analyze many of the major issues in traditional Korean philosophy in the context of this comparative scheme and provide new answers to those old questions. For example, we strongly hope to come up with a contemporary understanding of the essential notion of *li* and *qi* as well as the causal concepts such as “produce” (*pal*), “ride” (*seung*), “begets” (*saeng*). Thus we can see that all these topics - philosophy and modernity, East and West comparative philosophy, some major issues in the history of Korean philosophy, Korean Neo-Confucianism and its moral psychology as well as the East-West comparative moral philosophy are all closely intertwined in the context of the comparative approaches to the problems in Korean philosophy against the most recent development in Western philosophy.

Korean philosophy is in its unique, particularized situation in the Korean peninsula and it can be best illuminated when we historically revisit the socio-political-economic-intellectual development up to now since 1945. Korea was freed from the Japanese colonial rule (1910~1945) as soon as WW II ended. At that time, there were fierce ideological disputes between socialists and liberalists. Since then until now, North Korea has followed Marx-Leninism and *Juche* (self-reliance) Ideology of its communist founder Kim Il-sŏng, while South Korea has discussed various theories of philosophy under liberalism. Thus the South Korean philosophy in the 1950s and 60s leaned toward German Idealism and Existentialism. This inclination was natural for the South Korean philosophers who experienced the Japan’s colonialism and the Korean War (1950~1953). The South Koreans had to gather powers in order not to lose the sovereignty of nation and recover the loss of human dignity from the war. At that time, the leading ideology was one-nation-ism (一民主義) that we are one ethnic race speaking one language. Such a strong nationalism in South Korea led to staunch anti-communism. This anti-communism was combined with the nation theory of Fichte and Hegel. The combination of nationalism and anti-communism remained unchanged until the pro-democratic resistance movement in June of 1987 occurred. In this situation, even liberalism was regarded as an impure thought. Korean traditional thoughts were deemed valuable only to the degree to which it supported nationalism. Therefore, South Koreans could not enjoy the freedom of thoughts much like North Koreans. However, the philosophers in South Korea made incessant efforts to achieve democratization. They actively discussed the social critical theory of Frankfurt Schools in the 1970s, Marx-Leninism and North Korean *Juche*-Ideology in the 1980s, and neo-rationalism, post-Marxism, and post-structuralism in the 1990s. Finally, the issue of environmental value and welfarism came to the fore in the 2000’s. They made continual efforts for

the purpose of democratization as well. Of course, these efforts were chiefly made rather outside the academia rather than in it. The philosophers in the academia concentrated on German Idealism, Existentialism, Phenomenology, English and American Analytical Philosophy, East Asian Philosophy, and Korean traditional philosophy. Though there were conflicts between the philosophical activities within academia and those outside of it, various schools of philosophy emerged in South Korea in contrast to North Korea. South Korean philosophers have discussed philosophy in a various ways in order to solve the conflicts between Korean traditional philosophy and the accepted Western philosophy, and then they tried to recover the identity of Korean philosophy which they lost during the 36 years of Japan's colonial rules. They have also discussed the true modernization of their community. Furthermore, they have discussed how to unify South and North Korea. True, it must be acknowledged that there were conflicts between the traditional Korean philosophy and the Western philosophy in the process. But we hope to elevate and develop this into productive communication between the two. This is the area in which East and West comparative framework can be considered and employed most fruitfully.

The relevance of traditional Korean philosophy to the meaning and value of Korean philosophy for the sake of ecological value as well as communal value can be seen from the way that I pursue various topics in the efforts of individual efforts. We do our best, and do plan, to make contribution to the issue of environmental values in our research agenda (e.g., post-modern variations with a touch of Taoism). The communal value is addressed in our research too (Confucian communitarianism.) The Korean society has now reached a critical juncture where its tradition has come into conflict with modernity and postmodernity. Its modernization was achieved not by the revolution from below but by the order imposed from above. In a word, the Korean society was modernized in the pre-modern way. Strictly speaking, the Korean society was not modernized until the pro-democratic resistance movement in June of 1987 took place. However, on the one hand, strong collectivism still exists in the Korean society, and, on the other hand, strong egocentrism thrives. Furthermore, Koreans achieved a certain measure of success of modernization at the price of environmental disasters such as the pollution of the air as well as the rivers among others. I plan to shed new lights on how to solve these problems as Koreans are now faced with the task of harmonizing the Confucian communitarianism of our traditional society with the modern libertarianism of the Western society. Some of them say that we have to recreate the Western modernity on the basis of our tradition, and some of them say that we have to keep alive our tradition on the basis of the Western modernity. Others say that we have to follow either post-modernity respecting difference among one another from the viewpoint of

Post-structuralism, or the 'autonomous movement' from the point of the Spinoza-Marxism. Now, some South Korean philosophers accept the theory of J. Habermas and J. Rawls, but others embrace the theory of A. MacIntyre, M. Sandel, and C. Taylor in order to synthesize the new tradition and modernity after 1987. Of course, there is also an attempt to solve the problem of modernization from the standpoint of Post-Marxism and Spinoza-Marxism, especially G. Deleuze, and A. Negri. In addition, many South Korean philosophers are seriously discussing this issue in regard to our Confucianism, too. The philosophers inclined toward communitarianism contend that we should not accept the liberalism of the West. They say that the liberalism is not suitable for us because our way of life is essentially based on Confucianism. According to their view, the South Korean society is now more individualistic than any other society, and so we must develop the Confucian communitarianism in order to solve this problem. We must also recreate the Confucian value in the economic sphere as well as the political sphere in order to realize the truly East Asian value. Thus we can see that all these important areas of research have been incorporated in the Korean lab project.

Emanuel GROSU *

La philo-calie. Le beau comme notion spectrale

(*Le Beau. Actes du XXXVI^e Congrès de l'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française (A.S.P.L.F.)*. 2018. Sous la direction de Petru Bejan et Daniel Schulthess. Iași: Editura Universității « Alexandru Ioan Cuza » Iași, 568 p.)

Pulcher (qui met en valeur l'idée de pouvoir, force), *bellus* (diminutive de *bonus*), *formosus* (dérivé de *forma*, -ae) (Ernout et Maillet 2001, 73, 247, 544) – il suffirait d'invoquer les trois termes à étymologie différente et à sphères sémantiques tellement distinctes pour mettre en évidence combien il était difficile pour les Latins de désigner le beau. D'ailleurs, les langues néolatines (et non seulement elles: v. l'angl. *beauty*) ont aussi repris cette indécision: *bello*, en italien, *beau*, en français (avec leurs familles de mots) dérivent du latin *bellus*, -a, -um, tandis que, aux extrêmes continentaux de la latinité, l'espagnol parfois, mais aussi le roumain (même le néogrec: ὁμορφος) préfèrent de lier le concept à l'idée de forme – *forma*, ae > *frumos* (roum.), *hermoso* (espagn.) –, malgré le fait qu'au moins dans le champs de la réflexion philosophique, l'Antiquité latine et le Moyen Âge ont fait des efforts pour équivaloir *καλός*/τὸ καλόν/*κάλλος* des Grecs avec *pulcher*/*pulchritudo*. En fait, qu'est-ce que le beau ? Auxquelles réalités est-il applicable ? Comment est-ce qu'on peut le définir ? Quelle est sa nature ? On parle d'une qualité ou d'une relation, tout en considérant que, finalement, décider que quelque chose est ou non beau suppose un jugement, une évaluation, un mode de se rapporter du sujet à l'objet ?

Même dès les épopées homériques, *καλός* avait des connotations autant morales que physiques qui joignaient ses valences esthétiques: τὸ καλόν/*κάλλος* se réfère à ce qu'on aime, à ce qui provoque l'admiration et il ne s'adresse pas seulement à la perception sensorielle. Cette polysémie a constitué la base des trois orientations – éthique et métaphysique; esthétique; artistique (Cassin 2014, 80) – à travers lesquelles l'Antiquité a analysé le beau, mais elle a constitué aussi l'une des difficultés majeures pour laquelle on a plutôt ouvert des horizons d'analyse qu'offert des solutions.

De la « grande théorie » des Pythagoriciens, qui comprenait le beau comme *συμμετρία* ou *ἁρμονία* (tout en privilégiant ainsi le domaine visuel et auditif) au beau intelligible du *Banquet* platonique: « beauté... qui est absolument identique et invariable par elle-même; de laquelle toutes les

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autres beautés participent, de manière cependant que leur naissance ou leur destruction ne lui apporte ni diminution ni accroissement ni le moindre changement » (Platon 1938, 70), qu'Aristote identifiait aussi avec le bien (Aristote 1856, 81: « C'est ce qui est plus beau, à la différence de ce qui est moins beau; car le beau est ou ce qui est agréable, ou ce qui est préférable en soi ») ou le beau comme utilité (l'adéquation de l'objet au but); de la beauté par participation perçue à travers un acte d'expérience intérieure (Plotin) au beau comme nom divin identifiable avec le bien et la vérité (Denys l'Aréopagite) et au beau comme propriété des réalités qui, tout en s'adressant à la faculté de la connaissance, provoque le plaisir (Thomas d'Aquin 2009, 89); du beau comme attribut des réalités perçues avec les sens à ce critère de valeur d'appréciation subjective de la production artistique – tous ces essais de limiter la notion reflètent les modifications répétées de la vision sur le monde et des efforts de le comprendre et de l'interpréter.

Néanmoins, on peut parler du beau comme un concept de maxime relativité, comme un problème d'option dépendante de la subjectivité du spectateur, conditionnée culturellement et mutable elle-même après des expériences de vie pertinentes: par exemple, lorsqu'on se réfère à une réalité « belle dans telle partie et laide dans telle autre, belle seulement en tel temps, dans tel lieu, dans tel rapport, belle pour ceux-ci, laide pour ceux-là » (Platon 1938, 69).

Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, s.v. « Beau »: puisqu'il n'a rien trouvé chez Platon (au moins dans le passage 251a de *Phaidros* qu'il cite) pour lui faire comprendre la nature du beau, le philosophe français se dirige dans son analyse vers la recherche de la relativité du concept. Il s'agit des idées sur le beau d'une grenouille, d'un diable ou d'un philosophe (se sont les exemples qu'il emploie) qui sont fondamentalement différentes, tout comme les appréciations en Angleterre ou en France (voir dans des espaces culturels distincts, même si voisins) sur la beauté d'un œuvre d'art (essentiellement sur une tragédie). Le consensus, observe Voltaire, est réservé seulement au « beau qui parle au cœur »: des maximes morales, des vertus... En citant ensuite une lettre de Jean-Denis Attiret où il décrivait la résidence de l'empereur de la Chine, à laquelle il avait travaillé lui-même, et en observant que, après son retour en Europe, Versailles semblait « petit et triste » en comparaison avec le faste de la cour impériale asiatique, Voltaire conclut: « C'est encore une raison qui me détermine à ne point faire un traité du beau ».

Heureusement, dans d'autres contextes on a été plus audacieux.

Sous la coordination des professeurs Petru Bejan et Daniel Schulthess, en mars 2018, les Éditions de l'Université « Alexandru Ioan Cuza » Iași ont publié le volume *Le Beau* qui, édité en français, réunit seulement une partie des ouvrages présentés dans la XXXVI^{ème} édition du *Congrès de l'Association*

des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française (A.S.P.L.F.), qui s'est déroulé pour la première fois dans l'Europe de l'Est, à Iași. Le plus important événement philosophique de l'année 2016 en Roumanie et l'un des plus importants au niveau international, cette édition du Congrès s'est proposé de rechercher le concept du *Beau*, en réunissant ainsi les actes de 120 participants de 25 pays (la France, l'Algérie, l'Italie, la Suisse, le Danemark, l'Hongrie, la Grèce, la Slovaquie, le Canada, les États Unis de l'Amérique, China, le Japon, la Nouvelle Calédonie, la Roumanie, etc.). Parmi ceux-ci, le volume inclut seulement 68 auteurs avec le même nombre d'études sur le beau et de perspectives d'approche. Des ouvrages à caractère général (Liiceanu, Swejten, Pontineau, Afloroaei...) joignent des recherches très ponctuelles sur la manière dont le thème a été approché dans de divers domaines culturels (l'Europe Occidentale, l'Océanie, l'Extrême ou le Moyen Orient), de divers auteurs (de Platon à Lucian Blaga et d'Augustin ou Maxime le Confesseur à Jacques Maritain ou Gilles Deleuze, en passant, naturellement, par Dante, Baltasar Gracián, Adam Smith, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, etc.) ou de divers ouvrages considérés de référence pour le thème.

Un intérêt spécial est suscité par l'article rédigé par Carolina Milhau, « La beauté dans les congrès de l'ASPLF », une preuve du fait que, tout en partant des considérations sur un thème, celui du beau, qui a constitué une raison de disputes pendant des siècles et parmi beaucoup d'écoles de pensée, on peut bien sûr atteindre l'un des objectifs fondamentaux qu'ASPLF a proposés, celui de réunir des penseurs de valeur autour des valeurs communes.

La vaste matière a nécessité une structuration équilibrée qui doit en même temps respecter les points de vue desquels on a abordé le thème de la conférence. Ainsi, on a eu neuf sections thématiques, inégales (*Le beau dans l'histoire de la philosophie; Le beau à travers les cultures; Beauté de la pensée et beauté du langage; Ontologie et métaphysique du beau; Le beau dans la nature et dans la société; Beauté, éthique, politique; Les catégories esthétiques; L'esthétique et la vie quotidienne; Renouveau et perspectives de l'esthétique*), précédées par la présentation de la table ronde à laquelle ont participé Peter Kemp, Anne Elisabeth Sejten, Henrik Vase Frandsen, Jacob Dahl Rendtorff, par les conférences plénières (présentées par Gabriel Liiceanu, Makoto Sekimura, Marie Fayad, Stéphane Courtois, Gerhard Seel et Jean-Michel Counet), par les allocutions des amphitryons (Henri Luchian, Ștefan Afloroaei, Daniel Schulthess, Petru Bejan), ainsi que par la consistante prise de position du professeur Mircea Dumitru, un bien mérité et toujours nécessaire éloge aux études humanistes. Il s'agit des noms importants dont la notoriété est en soi-même une garantie des approches complexes et profondes en même temps.

Évidemment, les curateurs du volume ont souhaité reproduire le plus fidèlement possible le déroulement d'un congrès auquel ont participé des

représentants des fameuses universités ou instituts de recherches. Pour la commodité du lecteur, les éditeurs ont ajouté un index des contributeurs à ce volume. Néanmoins, il aurait été utile d'y ajouter aussi un index thématique ou des auteurs ou des œuvres analysées ou seulement invoquées dans les études.

On n'arrive pas à un tel volume sans s'étant posé sérieusement la question du beau, quelqu'un fût la perspective, et sans avoir essayé de trouver des réponses plus ou moins satisfaisantes parmi les analyses unilatérales fournies par les divers domaines, surtout par l'esthétique. Le volume est destiné surtout à ceux qui ont dépassé depuis longtemps les premières approches du concept et qui voient dans l'interdisciplinarité une nouvelle opportunité d'élargir les propres investigations. D'ailleurs, même si le sens de certaines expressions est accessible – *beauté de la divinité*, *beauté cachée* –, il est néanmoins difficile de comprendre à quoi se réfèrent des syntagmes comme la *beauté du diable* ou la *beauté monstrueuse*; de plus, il est également difficile d'accepter même les idéologies totalitaires dont l'idéal a été tellement beau.

De la philosophie à l'esthétique, de la théologie aux arts ou de l'éthique à la sociologie, les ouvrages publiés offrent au lecteur l'occasion d'une approche intégrative sur un concept qui se métamorphose en fonction du moment historique, de l'espace culturel ou du domaine de réflexion, dans la même mesure où, loin d'offrir des solutions définitives, ouvre plutôt des horizons d'analyse, tout en inventoriant la problématique et tout en fournissant une série d'instruments de sélection et d'analyse de ce qu'on peut appeler « beau ». Ainsi, on comprend mieux pourquoi Aristote dans l'*Éthique à Nicomaque* (1998, 92) ne concevait pas la grandeur de l'âme (*μεγαλοψυχία*) sans la « beauté-bonté » (*καλοκαγαθία*) et le fait que l'homme moderne doit à la réflexion philosophique autant qu'à celle philocalique.

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Bogdan GUGUIANU *

Secretum Secretorum: **an intercultural alchemical salt of Medieval Ages**

(Pseudo-Aristotel, *Secretul secretelor [Secret of Secrets]*, Iași: Editura Polirom, 2017)

Presented in the Medieval Library Collection of Polirom Publishing House, the volume *Secret of Secrets* includes a diversity of texts exposed in the manner of a fictional epistolary exchange between Aristotel and Alexander of Macedon. Claimed, not without cause, by the literary genre of the “mirror of principles”, the text emphasises its didascalical character and manifests in the same time a strong tendency for initiation in the art of governance, as well as in disciplines like medicine, astronomy, alchemy or physiognomy. This bookish collection of an inestimable value that bespeaks features of hermeneutical writing, such as the approach of themes from occult sciences or the miscellaneous dialectics of chapters, is still proven to be, from the discursive point of view, pleasant, intriguing, precise and surprisingly accessible.

The praiseworthy intention of traducer Luciana Cioca (she is also the one that signed the introductory study, but also the final comment) to popularize this Medieval treaty with an anonymous author, is in the most happiest way concordant with the possibility of the receiver to approach the bookish material in a comparative way. The Latin-Romanian bilingual edition exploits, therefore, mainly the educational content of *The Secret of Secrets*, without neglecting its controversial cultural itinerary. The exegetic emphasis insists, especially, on the relevance this encyclopedic manual has among the scholar traditions that which we call medieval.

Significant cultural matrices espouse, filtrate and value this pseudo-aristotelic discourse initially edited in Greek, most probably before the VIIIth century A.D., therefore idioms like the ones in Arabic, Hebrew or Latin will cooperate to develop the precious sincretic material which reached modernity. In the Latin Medieval Age, the treaty was multiplied in approximate five hundred copies. The assiduous popularization campaign attracted to it also some adverse consequences, notoriety and the multiply contributing involuntarily to the corruption of the originality of the character. We can speak therefore about occultation in two manners: a subjective one, intended and confessed by the author, and the other – objective, that imposed through force of circumstances in the given context.

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The treaty is structured in four parts as we are already told from the prologue by Philip from Tripoli: the first part is about the variety of kings, their behaviour and about their way of government. The second part is about the regime of health. The third is about the amazing utilities of nature, arts and craftsmanship. The fourth part is about the admirable choice of friends and the king's ministers through the natural proprieties of bodies; and this science is called "physionomy" (p. 19).

The first part (pp. 43-103), which manifests strong influences of the Evangelic education precepts, urge the king to abstain from the pleasures of the flesh, to be generous towards the poor or the crippled, to manifest an authentic respect towards the Divinity. For example, there are brought into discussion certain aspects which concern the moral character of the king, as well as the vestimentation or his physical aspect. There are certain features that fall into one's attention regarding distinctive resemblances with Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*. The most significant is the following example: "Therefore, the greatest caution is also a praisable providence so that the respect towards yourself may live longer than love among the hearts of the subjects" (p. 83). "Reverentia" is translated here in an euphemistic way through "respect", but it also has the meaning of "fear" (Gaffiot, 2016), which clearly reveals the analogy with Machiavelli's text: "At this point a question arises: is it better to be loved than feared, or to be feared than loved? The answer is that a prince would like to be both. But since it is difficult to reconcile this two, it is much safer to be feared than loved-if the one must cede for the other." (Machiavelli, 2008)

The second part of the treaty (pp. 105-195) offers the king many advices concerning in the quality and moderation of his food regime, of the rest corroborated with the physical effort, of the interpretation over the body's temperature and the influences exercised upon the human organism by the changing of the seasons. A great deal of these matters have been debated by reporting to the teachings of Hippocrates. Relevant in this sequence of the text and of great complexity is a recipe given to the king, recipe that "reveals" the preparation of what the anonymous author names *gloria inestimabilis* or *thesaurus philosophorum*. This alchemic mixture represents, according to Alexander's counselor, the synthesis of all the cures, being also the purpose of any medical intention.

The third part of the treaty (pp. 197-189), although begins through debates that are also by the alchemic literature gender representing somehow a fallback of the previous parts, does not forget the issues regarding diplomatic relations between the king and his ministers. Firstly, there are brought into discussion matters such as "the animal stone, both vegetal and mineral, which is not a stone, nor has a stone nature" (p. 199), that *secretum secretorum*, popular named the "philosopher's egg", also and important passages, which are said to be of Hermes Trismegistus, according to the

explications given by Luciana Cioca in the study at the end of the treaty, being considered as a primary reference in the whole academic literature.

Through an analogical reportation to the relation between the sensory data and the intelligence, the author reveals in this part also the fact that the ministers under the king had to be all that the five senses are for the intellect. The judgement will be, therefore, the king, and his ministers the eyes, nose, ears, tongue and hand, intermediates through which he would take contact with the surrounding world and which have to offer him all that is necessary, especially, help, protection and safety.

Finally, the fourth and last part of the treaty (pp. 291-309), containing the most reduced quantity of information related to the others, highlights curious idioms that are now designed as "physiognomy". One must mention from the first lines the name of Marcus Antonius Polemon, considered by the anonymous author to be "the greatest doctor and professor" in this science (p. 293), afterwards following to be debated the etiological nature between the features of the human face and the human behaviour. The advantages would consist for the king in the fact that using this technique of facial semiotics, he could discover the important features of one's personality towards the people with whom he interacts, protecting himself from contingent bad intentions that people have.

With strong resorts in the oeuvres of the antique philosophers, such as the example from the philosophical treatise *De clementia* by Seneca, reaching the peak point with Machiaveli's *The Prince*, a work with unmeasurable cultural impact, the type of literature called "the mirror of princes" does not seem to have neglected nor the vernacular area, even if on the territory of today's Romania it will make its presence felt a bit later, as in the XVIth century. The *Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his Son Teodosie*, oeuvre that for the Romanian culture represents a highly relevant work, marks yet another check point in the path of this fertile way of writing.

Preferring to translate the complete version of the treaty, that known under the name of *The Secret of Secrets* and accomplished in the XIIIth century by Roger Bacon by collating four-five manuscripts and followed by annotations, among other things, Luciana Cioca sets herself to present as thoroughly as she can the cultural trajectory of the treaty, the relevance of the influence that Aristotle and Alexander Macedon had on the Medieval imaginary.

The introductory study, the constant justified translation by arguments and explicative notes, as well as the intricate explanatory comment placed at the end of the book, followed by a short abstract of the speech, guarantees the text a well and blissful reception in the Romanian culture.

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Bogdan GUGUIANU *

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Through an analogical reportation to the relation between the sensory data and the intelligence, the author reveals in this part also the fact that the ministers under the king had to be all that the five senses are for the intellect. The judgement will be, therefore, the king, and his ministers the eyes, nose, ears, tongue and hand, intermediates through which he would take contact with the surrounding world and which have to offer him all that is necessary, especially, help, protection and safety.

Finally, the fourth and last part of the treaty (pp. 291-309), containing the most reduced quantity of information related to the others, highlights curious idioms that are now designed as "physiognomy". One must mention from the first lines the name of Marcus Antonius Polemon, considered by the anonymous author to be "the greatest doctor and professor" in this science (p. 293), afterwards following to be debated the etiological nature between the features of the human face and the human behaviour. The advantages would consist for the king in the fact that using this technique of facial semiotics, he could discover the important features of one's personality towards the people with whom he interacts, protecting himself from contingent bad intentions that people have.

With strong resorts in the oeuvres of the antique philosophers, such as the example from the philosophical treatise *De clementia* by Seneca, reaching the peak point with Machiaveli's *The Prince*, a work with unmeasurable cultural impact, the type of literature called "the mirror of princes" does not seem to have neglected nor the vernacular area, even if on the territory of today's Romania it will make its presence felt a bit later, as in the XVIth century. The *Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his Son Teodosie*, oeuvre that for the Romanian culture represents a highly relevant work, marks yet another check point in the path of this fertile way of writing.

Preferring to translate the complete version of the treaty, that known under the name of *The Secret of Secrets* and accomplished in the XIIIth century by Roger Bacon by collating four-five manuscripts and followed by annotations, among other things, Luciana Cioca sets herself to present as thoroughly as she can the cultural trajectory of the treaty, the relevance of the influence that Aristotle and Alexander Macedon had on the Medieval imaginary.

The introductory study, the constant justified translation by arguments and explicative notes, as well as the intricate explanatory comment placed at the end of the book, followed by a short abstract of the speech, guarantees the text a well and blissful reception in the Romanian culture.

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