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Ștefan Afloroaei and a different way of doing philosophy

Abstract: Although distributed in the contents of several books, some published after 1990, others recently, the philosophical reasons addressed by Professor Ștefan Afloroaei have – without distinction – constancy, coherence, and continuity. In front of the huge doxographic repertoire on display, the critical reader or possible exegete could be dismayed; the nature of the issue, the flexibility of the argumentation, the density and diversity of information, the freshness of his language arouse interest and invite an in-depth reading. In fact, the author activates another way of doing philosophy, both in terms of speculative content and the form in which he puts on his ideas. We find in his books a rare pleasure of "deconstructions" and revisions. The "commonplaces", the ideas, and theories inertially accepted, the theses apparently unchallenged are especially targeted.

Keywords: hermeneutic philosophy, metaphysics, deconstruction, edification, negative reason, specificity, meaning of life, sense of beauty.

1. *Speculative deconstructions and re-significations.* Ștefan Afloroaei deliberately distanced himself from the canonical, school philosophy, allegedly "scientific", rigorous, and sententious. The "spirit" of philosophy has been corrupted over time by its own inadequacies and excesses, including the loud display of the soteriological claim that "philosophy can save the world." "By its very nature, philosophy means a lack of measurement, it means thinking against the usual way of thinking, simply going against the grain. Philosophy, when it really does not divest itself entirely of what it means, pushes a certain matter to one of its limits. It is always tested by abuse and violence" (Afloroaei 1997, 27).

In a chapter dedicated to the "situation of philosophy today", the author reinforces this idea: "Philosophy is either radical or it is not at all" (Afloroaei 1997, 157). The "critical" role of philosophy is decisive; it observes the world's precarities and vulnerabilities, rhizomatically multiplying her inquiries without hoping to achieve sharp and definitive resolutions. If it additionally proposes ways of personal "edification" or becomes a "way of life", philosophy proves to be "practical", useful, offering formulas for balance or even existential "fulfilment".

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2. *The temptation of the limit and the negative.* In Ștefan Afloroaei's writings, you find a predilection to approach unconventional subjects, to explore aporetic paths or, with a scent of paradox, to grope rather those "dead ends" of thinking located in the regime of the negative (negative transcendence, non-being, negative reason, non-rational rationality, the upside-down world, nothingness, evil, madness, the devil, the evil genius, the absurd, failure, nonsense, the abyss...), as he will do in *Ipostaze ale rațiunii negative* (1991). Many of the reasons approached in this book explore the limits of reason, the places where it encounters insurmountable epistemic obstacles. The demand for a differently oriented look, which invigorates philosophical reflection, is explicitly formulated, either in short discursive samples. "We feel the need to look at things and the world differently... We seek to a certain extent to think differently, to follow a different interpretation in facing the other"(Afloroaei, 1999, 17), or even in book titles (Afloroaei, 2013).

Întâmplare și destin, the book published in 1993, vividly evokes, in the footsteps of Hegel, the "tremendous power of the negative", from which it emerges that philosophy has systematically ignored the nocturnal, contradictory, and dilemmatic side of being (Afloroaei 1993, 12). Negativity functions either as destruction or as necessary subversion within existence, as a principle of alterity and difference, as a dissolution of time, "determining the existent in its very being" (Afloroaei 1994, 15). Although with an important weight in the economy of what they are, the postures of *No* and negation have rarely received the attention and consideration they deserve. In this generous thematic circumscription, metaphysics, hermeneutics, phenomenology will find ample opportunities for practice.

3. *Philosophy as a "fable"*. The style practiced by Ștefan Afloroaei is narrative or literary. Such an option seems supported by at least two references: Descartes and Nietzsche. Descartes conceives his *Discourse* as a "history" or a "fable", therefore, things are described in the most pleasant way (Afloroaei 1991, 29sq.). "Fable" is narration, construction of an epic style; actually, it converts abstract concepts into familiar, immediately accessible images and words. In this way, a personalized stylistic regime is outlined, rather circumscribed to the philosophical essay, in which the writing distances itself from the sobriety and austerity of the rigorous treatise. Descartes had resorted to "image-ideas", to metaphors that also facilitate argumentation and understanding. The body, for example, is described as a machine or a watch whose parts are perfectly assembled and joined; soul and body are in the same relation as "shipman to ship."

In turn, Nietzsche describes the history of philosophy as a "speculative anecdote". His writings depict philosophy as "epic or prose with initiations and intrigues, temptations and duels, paths through the forest, events and

characters (Idea, Reason, Ego, Will...). It is a formula that has, as we realize, a plastic, visual side, a philosophy of something that can ultimately be seen and told... In other words, this philosophy remakes, for the use of the many, the episode of incarnation, in philosophical variant" (Afloroaei 1994, 28). The attachment of the Iasian philosopher to Nietzsche is visible not necessarily in terms of style or discursive construction, but especially in terms of his working perspective or courageous manner of deconstructing "ready-made" ideas and deep-rooted prejudices.

In Ștefan Afloroaei's writings, the themes and motifs addressed are distributed rhizomatically; his writings have the allure of a friendly labyrinth where the pleasure of "losing" or wandering seems to be the only justification. In the expository logics of the philosopher, the recourse to images and imagination returns frequently, leaving the impression that ideas are "seen", are "shown" in their dynamics to the attentive viewer. The subjectivity of one who perceives things with sensitivity and discernment is essential. "Fable" tells the story of the world, of man and of the self. The world is like a "stage", a "theatre" – hence the "dramatic" or "dramaturgical" meaning of the happenings in the spirit world, populated with sets, actors, directors, characters, roles, staging, lines, exchanges of "defeated" and subtly decoded looks.

Most of the time, the author brings to attention the figure of the "other", the spectator or viewer, "the third", indispensable in the construction of the argument. Who is this? *Another one* apparently coming "from outside" and perceived as "stranger", the one who voluntarily insinuates himself into the "game" of ideas, justifying and tensioning the drama (Afloroaei 1991, 92). The stranger must not always be sought too far. Rather, the author uses a discursive strategy of Socratic-Platonic inspiration, through which the truth is obtained either from the exchange of lines between the characters, or through confessional availability or self-dialogue. "Basically, it is necessary to make room for the stranger in our perception and judgement, at least as much as we can. Man has this fantastic possibility of doubling himself, he can see himself both as judge and defendant, self-possessed and no less a stranger to himself... If we have the power to judge ourselves as if we were precisely strangers to ourselves, we would get a different picture of what we really are" (Afloroaei 1994, 8).

Universal knowledge and self-knowledge imply and condition each other. "Circularity" is also valid when we seek to understand worlds, cultures and mentalities different from those we are used to: "If we were not able to perceive – and, at the same time, take into account – what is stranger to us, another way of thinking or another historical world than the one we live in, then we would not understand what is happening to us" (Afloroaei 2001, 126). In such a speculative perspective, the Iasian

philosopher succeeds in balancing, inspiredly, the concept and the metaphor, the idea and the image, giving the speech a personal, distinctive imprint.

4. *Plasticity and "visibility" of ideas.* One of the distinctive notes of the writing practiced by Ștefan Afloroaei is the inspired graft between concept and image. The narrative plan is not separated from the visual one. The author frequently resorts to examples, parables, symbols, to lead the reader into an area of familiar representations. The role of the image is to simplify and clarify things. "When you look at an image, a certain understanding is at work from the very beginning. In a way it is prior, but this does not mean that the way of seeing and what you see are self-evident... It is just that the human mind knows how to endlessly complicate some states of affairs" (Afloroaei 2013, 25). Mental images, visual projections, representations, even "visions" occur frequently in the thinking dynamics, often facilitating understanding. "In order to be accepted or rejected, the idea of meaning must first be 'seen', intuitively captured, no matter how difficult this sometimes appears. Is it not precisely that such images make the idea more intelligible?" (Afloroaei 2021, 78).

In a study entitled *Idei și imagini speculative* (Afloroaei 2008, 175), the author believes that "at bottom, the questions or ideas we call metaphysical are never abstract. Their language is not purely conceptual... Thinking does not only operate with concepts, since behind them or where they prove difficult the most unexpected images and representations intervene... And some images and representations thus end up unexpectedly acquiring an exceptional speculative character" (Afloroaei 2008, 252). For example Hegel, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, spoke of the "great carpet of universal history" spread before us, in which ideas are the "warp" and human passions the "weft", referring to universal history as discourse ("texture" of history), but also to the history of discourse as such, in which "the occultation and decryption of the writing appear as operations that cannot be separated" (Afloroaei 1991, 228).

The same idea is nuanced in *Despre simțul vieții*, where he believes that "images remain indispensable to the human mind, both for their intuitive, sensitive character and for their unusual 'dynamic' and inventiveness. Their play is deeply ambiguous, they simultaneously manage to clarify and obscure, to reveal and conceal, to liberate and subjugate" (Afloroaei 2021, 73). Life, for example, can be "viewed" – metaphorically speaking – as a writing, path, book, journey, labyrinth... An entire tradition, from Plato onwards, seeks to "visualize" and "dramatize" ideas, "humanizing" the philosophical discourse, transforming it most of the time into something intelligible, attractive, and pleasant.

5. *Excesses of philosophy*. Many of Ștefan Afloroaei's writings explore the possibility of "something new" around philosophical speculation. Formulated by Constantin Noica in his youth writings, this demand is assumed with caution, especially aiming at avoiding explanatory schemes and templates that parasitize or sabotage free thinking, the actual "life" of ideas, but also, possibly, finding alternative routes to those used in excess. Hence the constant preoccupation with interpreting and understanding the meaning of events that we know or experience directly.

After the end of the Second World War, the ideological enslavement of philosophy in many Eastern European countries had monstrous effects; among other things, its instrumentalization in directions that diverted attention from the old, original meanings, but also from the reasons that justified its presence or usefulness in public discourse. Philosophical education suffered, as did the correct or reasonable perception of speculative effort, often denounced as "gratuitous" or "suspicious". With the ushering in of a new era of democracy and freedom, moderate optimism has replaced both the skepticism and fatalism of many about the chances of renewal.

For philosophers, the 1990s created an opportunity to resettle the discipline of free thought and critical exercise in its natural bedrock. The recovery of the true meanings of the philosophical discourse, hidden for several decades by ideological attrition, was considered a priority. In a study entitled *Cenzura în spațiul filosofiei*, Ștefan Afloroaei considers Marxism as "the first form of ideology in our modern history that banned any free form of philosophy" (Afloroaei 2002, 264). The single, totalitarian interpretation, imposed on others under the pressure of force, constitutes the model of censorship as *Diktat*. Sometimes, paradoxically, the censorship of philosophy was done "with the help of philosophy itself". We are talking about the philosophy enslaved, obedient and complicit with the various political regimes, the "philosophy that enters the service of power". The precarious status given to philosophy among the forms of culture demanded a different positioning. Hence the approaches to investigate the new possibilities.

What separates philosophy from its own nature and inherent ends? The author first identifies and denounces the main "excesses of philosophy". Among these, the assumption of a too broad perspective, which involves doing general philosophy ("To be a professor of philosophy, not an ordinary disillusioned teacher, but one who embodies the scholastic technique of this discipline, with a scholarly air and with academic authority, an institute-professor, a living, speaking textbook, to be a professor of philosophy and not to do general philosophy seems to many of us as a real contradiction in terms") (Afloroaei 1997, 28). On the other hand, the

orientation of philosophy towards soteriological ends, its transformation into an affected, pathetic discourse, proposing vague solutions of salvation or deliverance, seems excessive ("Many of those who speak of the wisdom of philosophy and its power to elevate they are only resuming a common place, old since forever, tedious and boring, whose Greek meaning, in the pre-Socratic case, has become for us timeless and superfluous") (Afloroaei 1997, 29). Such an intention is imposed where "the concept is weak enough", giving way to exalted or triumphalist perceptions and interpretations. Such misappropriations and interpretations have actually altered and made philosophy vulnerable.

6. *Philosophy as a way of life*. Is there a form of philosophy that the Iasian professor would consider closer to his expectations, or that he privileges it in an explicit way? A possible answer can be found in his study *Condiția discipolatului în filosofie*. Here, Ștefan Afloroaei notes that certain historical intervals, such as the Hellenistic centuries, as well as those of patristic thinking, then the romantic interval and the one in which a more extensive *Lebensphilosophie* is practiced, can be invoked in favor of a "practical" way of doing philosophy. It would be the periods when it seeks to build, to privilege those experiences that bring an increase in self-understanding, but also of the world of which man is a part. "Through its fundamental intentionality, philosophy tries to initiate into a certain way of life. Doing philosophy is equated, in certain eras, to engaging in a paideic or even initiatory scenario. It is when philosophy is recognized as a form of life that it finds a secure embodiment, a living, personal body: the struggle for an idea is in many ways like the struggle for existence" (Afloroaei 1997, 142).

But there are several ways of doing philosophy. Sometimes history and geography determine distinct formulas for practicing philosophical speculation. The differences can be seen, for example, at the level of some cultural spaces, where particularities are determined by certain prior data, suppositions and prejudices crystallized in the form of distinct traditions and mentalities. For the Western way of philosophizing, three names seem "emblematic": "Three names seem to me emblematic of the Western way of doing philosophy: Descartes, Kant, Husserl. With each of them, philosophy was constantly related to the sciences, especially to the mathematicians... Or the ideal proposed by these sciences is what was called in Latin *mathesis universalis*. Later, through Leibniz and Wolf, it determines itself as a *scientia universalis*" (Afloroaei 1997, 16). Hence a predisposition of Western philosophy for logics and formalism, supported by a cult of method and rigorously applied discipline, a model that is not evident in Eastern Europe either.

7. *Identity and Differences.* The research of alterity and difference is also possible at the level of "paradigms" configured with certain evidence. Ștefan Afloroaei considered as absolutely justified research on analyzing the possibility of identifying a "specificity" of philosophy in Eastern Europe and possibly on describing its distinctive "signs" in the economy of a venerable tradition, inaugurated by the Greeks, continued in Byzantium, and spread in other directions. The Iasian philosopher seeks to demonstrate the existence of an "Eastern" way of doing philosophy. Considered a necessary "convention", the term as such is used with some ambiguity. From the start, it excludes a strictly regional perception, which would equate it to what we call an Oriental or Balkan space. On the other hand, it does not seem to have a strictly geographical circumscription, as the East of Europe is a spatial reality of wider extension, completely inhomogeneous from a political, linguistic, mental, cultural, and religious point of view. "The East indicates a border zone of European man, that interworld that has always moved to one side or another" (Afloroaei 1997, 10). In fact, the Eastern space would be one of transition, but coming with other historical and mental data, more familiar to the Orthodox world. "In this space, Greek culture preserved a certain symbolic prevalence, later in its Byzantine version. Here, the religious experience of man is dominated by patristic thinking and the direct, mystical experience of the fact of creation... The man of this space mainly cultivates another kind of philosophical experience..." (Afloroaei 1997, 17).

Here, since the beginning of the first Christian millennium (the XIth-XIIIth centuries), authors such as Michael Psellos, John Italus, Soterichos Panteugenos, Nichifor Blemmydes, then Gregory Palamas, Nicholas Kabasilas, Teofil Coridaleu, Meletius of Arta, Nicodemus the Hagiorite, etc. would have been noted. Here, the XVIIIth century imposed illustrious figures of thinkers, such as Dimitrie Cantemir, Samuil Micu, Eufrosin Poteca, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, who contributed to the formation of a distinct profile of local culture.

Following closely the logics of the arguments, we might think that Ștefan Afloroaei finds himself or sympathizes with what he considers to be "space" and "Eastern spirit". Precisely in this part of the world, "the relationship of philosophy with the research of history and with the situation of man as such is seriously privileged", research designed and delimited a little differently than in the Western space, without that rigor capable of bringing it into analogy with the natural sciences. Here, philosophy is no longer understood as a technique or as a method, but rather as a reflection on the self-edification of man. Its speech relies on the moral or anagogical meaning of the statement, on its edifying meaning. The paradigm of thought to which philosophy seeks access is no longer a deductive or analytical-

experimental one, but a comprehensive one. Not by chance, a significant place will be claimed here by *meditation* as such or, with an approximate term, free reflection... like the meditation practiced by the Stoics... It has a preliminary, preparatory character, and it is exactly in this sense that we think it should be seen as a distinct philosophical exercise. Everything happens as if late Stoicism, defeated in its competition with Christian theology and metaphysics of Aristotelian inspiration, will take its revenge through the meditation of some Eastern European authors. We might think that within the Eastern space practical philosophy dominates, and not the theoretical one... *But things are not like that at all...* (*sine nomine* P.B.) (Afloroaei 1997, 20).

If we were to schematize and simplify things, it could be said that in the West, philosophy appears as a "technique" of the concept, and in the East as "meditation", as *praeparatio*, encouraging a passionate discourse, associated with an equally personal therapeutic and human history. But this delimitation, the author believes, *turns out to be false from one point on* (*sine nomine* P.B): "to the extent that there are differences, they do not possess any kind of purity, since they do not separate the two ways of doing philosophy. But they are found, although uneven, in both areas of spirituality" (Afloroaei 1997, 21). "The metaphysics of this European space has never moved away... from those data regarding the historical situation of man. It thematized... the fact of the fall and of self-edification, of 'reconciliation with the world' and equally of the personal way of presence. With this new explanation, Eastern metaphysics unexpectedly comes much closer to the discourse of practical philosophy and to that of theology... Like the religious experience, the metaphysical one has a soteriological intention" (Afloroaei 1997, 21). The author activates a hermeneutics of prudence, deliberately avoiding positioning at one extreme or another. Regarding the comparative approach assumed, he speaks not about the faults of differences that irreconcilably separate two worlds or two types of cultural experiences, but about "two faces of the same experience of thinking, unceasing characteristic of the European man" (Afloroaei 1997, 20).

We can also identify "brands of Eastern thinking" in the native culture. Authors concerned with noticing the characteristic and defining elements of this space are analyzed (Blaga, Ion Petrovici, Mircea Vulcănescu, Nae Ionescu, Băncilă, Noica, Mircea Eliade, Al-George, Culiănu), attached (unevenly, it is true) to a "hermeneutics of symbolic forms", interested, among others, in the problem of the Romanian "specificity".

8. *Hermeneutic alternatives.* In several places, Ștefan Afloroaei talks about the hermeneutic stake of philosophy: "Philosophy has been and is a form of comprehension, understanding", "philosophy means comprehensive thinking, understanding of a phenomenon or an idea" (Afloroaei 1997, 204-

205). The role of the interpreter is to re-signify prior data, to look for "alternatives" to already existing resolutions. "The word 'alternative'... is used when naming possible solutions to the cruel and treacherous oppositions of the time already passed (ideological, cultural alternative...). The idea of the alternative certainly means the occurrence of something completely different. Instead, this becomes possible because straight ahead the road itself forks – and distinct paths of historical life and self-understanding alike open up. These paths only together really lead further" (Afloroaei 1999, 15).

In another study, Ștefan Afloroaei talks about the "hermeneutic transformation of philosophy", but also about the non-methodological nature of hermeneutics. "From my point of view, hermeneutics is not definitively a method, a technique in a way common to historical, anthropological, or other investigations. I do not perceive it as a method... In no case can it be placed alongside the semiotic method or the structuralist one" (Afloroaei 1997, 207). Like H.-G. Gadamer, the one from *Truth and Method*, the Iasian philosopher adheres to a "philosophical" meaning of hermeneutics: "To distinguish between philosophy and hermeneutics seems to me absolutely useless or risky. Hermeneutic philosophy and philosophical hermeneutics announce, after all, the same thing" (Afloroaei 1997, 209).

Regarding the evolutionary trends of the discipline in question, Ștefan Afloroaei distinguishes the "hermeneutics of meaning", which would have dominated the modern world until Nietzsche or Dilthey, from a "hermeneutics of the prior", of the conditions of possibility for what applies to meaning or nonsense. Or, precisely, the latter seems to characterize the Western thinking of the century in which we find ourselves (Afloroaei 1997, 208). Regarding the type of interpretation that would suit the new realities, the author seems to lean towards the "anagogic" one – as it has a "therapeutic" dimension: actually, it is the interpretation that enriches, enhances, heals, edifies, adds something new...

When exactly is interpretation in general fully validated and eventually converted into understanding? What does it mean to understand something? In a study discussing the concept of "interpretation", the author insists on its "practical" orientation: "For interpretation tends to a point which we can call happy only when what we sincerely think can pass into action, when the meaning in our mind really means skill at something, the science of doing something, in the same way that the painter really understands only at the moment when he proves that he knows how to paint... Then probably happens what Pascal really wanted in humans; to speak justly about justice, humbly about humility, and beautifully about beauty" (Afloroaei 2001,151-152). The "Pascal frontier" or "extreme point

of comprehension", as the author calls it, marks the ideal place where interpretation and understanding merge, fitting perfectly into one's assumed competence or ability.

9. *Truth and Transfiguration in Art*. In *Fabula existențială*, Ștefan Afloroaei is concerned with "What is not seen" in a painting (Afloroaei 2018, 113sq.). The object of his interpretation will be *Van Gogh's Chair*, the work of van Gogh himself, in which the absence of the character "unsettles the gaze", highlighting at the same time "the loneliness that dominates that place". "Vincent's chair, empty and without a particular setup, shows itself to a gaze that feels its own loneliness" (Afloroaei 2018, 115). The author wonders if "we can speak of a truth specific to pictorial expression, possibly narrative and literary fiction, or to musical composition. If so, what would such truth consist of? (Afloroaei 2018, 122). Is van Gogh's painting a storehouse of truth? The conclusion of the Iasian philosopher is that the truth of a painting does not appear in a single form. The truth may even be the "meaning" of the painting – if and when it exists. The idea that truth means a single attitude, the strictly epistemic one, and that it is subject to verifiable criteria should be overcome, because it disregards other ways of knowledge, such as moral, religious, metaphysical, and artistic ones. The author suggests considering "distinct meanings of the truth": self-discovery or proof (in confession or in a decisive attempt), self-representation (assuming a *persona*, a role, in a sense close to the dramaturgical one), viable meaning (of a creation or symbol).

Regarding the optimal manner of receiving a painting, Ștefan Afloroaei is on the side of an "aesthetics of transfiguration", of those encouraged by Jean-Luc Marion (in the studies on the "saturated phenomenon"), by Jean-Jacques Wunenburger (in the analysis of the image with a religious imprint), and by Arthur Danto (in the description of the "transfigured banal"). The relationship between the work and the viewer is one of mutual affectation. "In front of a pictorial image you can ask yourself, for example, what power it reveals to the viewer, what testimony it bears through itself. But you might as well not ask yourself anything. Often it is probably enough to watch silently and intently. If indeed there is to be something to see, that thing will itself meet you in so far as the eye is prepared for what is in front of it... When an image leaves the possibility of seeing what in the first instance is not seen, when, for example, it makes possible the complete re-signification of a common place, then one can speak of its truth. We could say that, in front of it, a transfiguration of what is seen takes place" (Afloroaei 2018, 127).

In fact, the Iasian philosopher assumes a rather "romantic" perspective, valid in the economy of a classical "aesthetics of beauty", one that attributes inspiration, "genius" and premeditation to the artist, "aura" and power of

seduction – to the work, the ability to penetrate the "encoded" meanings on the surface of the painting – to the public. The problem of truth in painting also caught the attention of Jacques Derrida. In a reference writing (*La vérité en peinture*), he demonstrates that there is truth in a painting in several situations: when we invoke the veracity of the subject, characters, or events; when we consider the fidelity of the representation, the "proper meaning" of the reading, the authenticity of the work; but also, when the truth is represented in one's own portrait (allegorical representations of the truth). However, contemporary artistic practices refer to completely different realities. Conceptual art, for example, explicitly aims to illustrate ideas, while minimalist art insists on showing viewers "specific objects", real objects as they are, freed from any interpretive intention, any value, and any meaning. Therefore, the ideal or idealized frameworks that make the work a possible repository of truth, accessible to the attentive and sensitive viewer, disappear. The beautiful as such fades its stake, being rather attached to an outdated aesthetics, which must be overcome in favor of other targets (concept, message, participation, attitude). At this point, the aesthetics of art and traditional metaphysics can have a slight disagreement, however without obstructing the possibility of personal interpretations.

10. *Metaphysical meaning of beauty.* In the conditions of proliferation of many aesthetic theories that announce the "death of art" or the "twilight" of beauty, Ștefan Afloroaei grants a particular interest to determine a "metaphysical" meaning of beauty. The beauty of a thing immediately offers itself to the sensibility prepared thus to recognize it. The philosopher's arguments are supported by references to Plato, the one in the *Symposium* (if in front of a beautiful thing a man is unexpectedly amazed, feeling a real earthquake of his being, he will be more trembled in front of beauty itself), but also to Borges ("beauty is a physical sensation"). But there are experiences that can be considered "beautiful" (a calculation, a formula, a word, a gesture, a judgment), without necessarily involving a physical commitment or a synthetic perception. When exactly can we talk about a "metaphysical sense of beauty"?

Attraction, seduction, amazement, transfiguration seem to be the indispensable ingredients for perceiving something as beautiful. "If I were to speak of a metaphysical sense of beauty... I would seek it first as a sense of beauty – and by no means in the form of a notion with a claim to universality. I would have in mind the sense of something paradoxical, which defies common perception and appeals beyond itself. Therefore, the sense of what, although it shows itself sensibly, is intangible as such, although it allows itself to be seen, it cannot be contained within itself" (Afloroaei 2018, 144). The desire for beauty is antinomian itself; it means attraction, i.e. subjective mood, but also seduction, given by "the power of

something beautiful which, being desired, attracts to itself", opening at the same time to a "beyond", to "beauty itself" (Afloroaei 2018, 131). The conclusion, aesthetic and metaphysical alike? Beauty, therefore, can be perceived immediately, but it is also intangible.

For Ștefan Afloroaei, philosophy is the privileged place of the Good, the Truth and Beauty, both accessible through deep reading, interpretation and understanding. Is there a cutoff point of understanding? Taking exactly the author's words, "only who can do the thing for he truly stands understands the thing to which he consents. Only who can, in one way or another, realize the good truly understands the good. Only who makes room in his mind and life for the truth understands the truth itself" (Afloroaei 2001, 152). In the numerous books, studies, articles, conferences, during his decades of teaching career, in the occasions of public engagement, but also in everyday life, the philosopher confused himself with philosophy itself, assuming it both as profession, vocation, but also as lifestyle. Paraphrasing the previous quote, we could say that philosophy is understood only by the one who practices it and assumes it in an exemplary manner. Ștefan Afloroaei confirms the possibility of a *different* way of doing philosophy, imposing his own comprehensive "frontier" – deep, attractive, seductive –, open to all temptations of exploration, interpretation and, eventually, overcoming.

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