

# *Journal* *Study* *for the* *of* *Religions* *&* *Ideologies*

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LAURA PAVEL

## Eliade and his generation - metaphysical fervour and tragic destiny

### Abstract:

*In the study, the author brings under scrutiny some of the main theses that Eliade advances, in the Romania of the years '30, as the recognized "spiritual leader" and main theorist of his generation. The argument focusses upon the intriguing emotional and ideological climate of his generation, more precisely upon their specific and ostentatious search for authenticity, spirituality, and metaphysical foundation. The essential point to be argued throughout the study is the tragic sense of the generation's evolution, a tragic that is relevant, on one hand, on an individual level, and, on second hand, on transindividual level, within the larger historical and ideological context.*

### The distantiation from the "spiritual itinerary"

Acknowledged as the spiritual leader in the 1930s, Mircea Eliade published in the journal *Cuvântul* (between the 6th of September and the 16th of November of 1927) a series of programmatic articles entitled *Itinerariu spiritual* [*Spiritual Itinerary*]. Surprisingly, in 1933 he wrote an article entitled *Moment nespirtual* [*Nonspiritual Moment*]. This became a reverse in the negative, a parodical interpretation of the metaphysical moment that Eliade's professor, Nae Ionescu, had theorized upon in his university lectures. Eliade's critical response to the so-called "authenticity" and "spirituality" that emerged from the mantle of Ionescu's charismatic personality is relevant for the paradoxical evolution of his former principles. Eliade mocks, somewhat in the style of the insurgent Eugen Ionescu, the leitmotifs of his "spiritual" generation. The former promoter and theorist of the spiritual itinerary is now moving away from his old obsessions: "Sir, I confess I am tired of seeing everybody doing the same thing. You produce 'spirituality', someone else does 'authenticity'; someone brings about mysticism and the other skepticism, one exasperates everybody around him with India and the other with America, five of them scream about agony and other five about orthodoxy, a smart one writes the apology of barbarism and a smarter one jumps in the pit after him - for the

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### Key words:

generation, "generationists", The Spiritual Itinerary, experientialism, authenticity, metaphysical inquiry, the tragic (both on individual and on collective level)

illusion of experiencing the void. We reproduce old forms, sir, and we reproduce them up until we reach nausea..." And further on: "We all are, after all, some sort of buffoons - and I would like to confess, in this time of anger against you and against myself, that I am sick of it and I do pity our mockery. (...) I hate and despise you with the same sincerity. (...) Something else, I can't tell you how thirsty I am for something else, something completely different from what we are doing right now."<sup>1</sup>

For the author of the *Spiritual Itinerary*, the temporary detachment from the ideals of his generation stands as a paradoxical therapeutics, a sort of slow poisoning - a Mitridatism, I might say - if we take into consideration the fact that Eliade's itinerary crossed, after all, the boundaries of the Iron Guard's inferno. If Petru Comarnescu, the organizer of the group *Criterion*, denounced in 1933 "the false position of the right wing",<sup>2</sup> amongst whom there were Nae Ionescu, Mircea Vulcănescu, and Constantin Noica, the case of Eliade's attitude is more complicated in this respect. Thus, in 1937 Eliade was to attach to the spiritual revolution that he himself had inaugurated a decade earlier "a political end, somewhat linked to the Legion, although such a political goal had no real base."<sup>3</sup> Eliade himself had set the main points of reference for his generation's spiritual itinerary: the new dilettantism, unmediated living, authenticity, the imperviousness of the synthesis, mystical experience, orthodox Christianity. This temporary step of Eliade's apart from the spiritual ideals emerged from a kind of destiny neurosis. The distance that Eliade kept from the theories is a paradox that better fulfills, as in the case of young Eugen Ionescu, the profile of "the generation of '27" (a label formulated by the critic Dan C. Mihăilescu regarding the year when the *Itinerary* appeared).

Eugen Ionescu's bitter and pathetic letter sent from Paris to Tudor Vianu, dated 19 September, 1945, is totally symptomatic of his disagreement with the "criterionists." As compared to the "bragging young generation", Tudor Vianu's generation proved to be, in Ionescu's opinion, "much luckier", "more solid", whereas "we were some giddy-heads, some unfortunates. As far as I am concerned, I cannot blame myself for having been a fascist. But this reproach can be leveled against almost everybody else: Mihail Sebastian remained clear-minded and authentically human. Too bad he is gone. Cioran is here, in exile. He admits that as a young man he was wrong. I find it hard to forgive him."<sup>4</sup>

As far as Eliade is concerned, Eugen Ionescu thinks he is the "great guilty one", but he immediately denounces the unchallenged bad influence of Nae Ionescu on the outstanding *Criterion* generation. Eliade, Cioran, Noica, Vulcănescu, Haig Acterian, and Mihail Polihroniade are all amongst the victims of "the hateful departed man Nae Ionescu. If it hadn't been for Nae Ionescu (or if he hadn't argued with the king) we would have had, nowadays, a valuable leading generation, aged 35-40. Because of him, all became fascists. He created a stupid, frightening 'Reactionary Romania.'<sup>5</sup> Blaming the political opinions of several members of his generation, who under Nae Ionescu's influence were contaminated by the ideology of the right wing, Eugen Ionescu discovers in the failure of the criterionists an immense tragic farce, directed by fatal and inviolable occult laws: "Fatality follows in everybody's footsteps - both those who did not let themselves get caught up in stupidity and madness and then all those who are still lucid. Absurd accidents and mysteries took place, and threw them on the other side: a plague, in the case of Alexandru Vianu, a drunk driver, that brought about the death of Sebastian. They all integrate themselves within the common destiny; they are silently solidary."

Eugen Ionescu doesn't forget to underline the so-called irony of destiny that, sparing the *Criterion*'s agent, Petru Comarnescu, deepened the void around him. Beyond his hypercriticism, translated into the sharp and sometimes unfair, ironically exaggerated

portraits that he drew of his *Criterion* colleagues, the exiled Ionescu admitted, more or less explicitly, a real emotional dependence upon this fascinating 'young generation': "On my part, I split and left the party: even if I came back, could I get to find my roots again? I always hated them: I fought against them, they hated me in their turn - but without them, my enemies, I feel lonely. I was doomed to love them and be tied to them. Who shall I continue the dialogue with? I am branded with the same sign myself."<sup>6</sup> Emil Cioran, another exceptional personality of this generation endowed with the passion of total freedom - an evidence of this being, among other things, the voluntary exile of some of its most valuable members: Eliade, Cioran, Ionescu, Vintilă Horia - confessed, in a letter addressed to the same Tudor Vianu, that Paris gave him a "poetical distance from the world." This is an affective distance that could have been obtained only as a result of a prolonged contact with the sea or the desert, since this city "ruthlessly speeds self awareness, people here discover much quicker than elsewhere the void, unhappiness or luck."<sup>7</sup> Only a few years after Cioran assumed this philosophy of the interior "desert" - a kind of despair that reaches the climax in a paradoxical inner peace - the emotional attitude of the exiled Ionescu, soon to become world-famous as Eugene Ionesco, seems to be much foggier. The latter admits that he actually has a contradictory love-hate relationship with his own spiritual generation. The inquisitorial light that Eugene Ionesco sheds upon the generation of '27, throughout his acid and desperate correspondence with Tudor Vianu, still reveals some typical characteristics of the generation's itinerary.

But what are the involuntary temperamental affinities and the specific adoptive age of this outstanding generation?

## Authenticity, aliveness, experientialism

*Youth*, for instance, is the spiritual crest of Nae Ionescu himself, who stays alive in the memory of his generation, as Father André Scrima says, "through and for the sake of his youth", in a careless and provocative "complicity with youthfulness."<sup>8</sup> Cioran, in his turn furious about the pornography accusation brought against Eliade's writing, and angry because of the threat of Eliade's dismissal from the University, expresses his revolt against the "old men". His text (published in *Vremea*, June, 1937) is actually an acid pamphlet, with strong accents that seem to be taken out of Swift and Dostoyevsky, where gerontophobia reaches a kind of pathological cynicism. Here are some significant extracts from the article entitled *Crima bătrânilor* [*The Old People's Murder*]: "A Saint Bartholomew's Night among certain old people is the only salvation", or, "Our interest is to accelerate their agony and pitifully not to sentence them to life."<sup>9</sup>

The vocation of *youth* - be it real or just an adoptive mental state - is nothing else but the symptom of a complex spiritual attitude, one that can only be described through terms as *authenticity*, *aliveness* [in Romanian, *trăire*] and *experientialism*. Yet the often contradictory solidarity of the generation is to be seen in the early writings of Eliade, Cioran, Ionescu, Mihail Sebastian, Noica and other similarly *organic* authors, who experience a typically organic philosophical and artistic thinking. The writer of the generation is a man that thinks through and with his biology and all, his thoughts being just as many revelations of pain, according to an emblematic expression of Cioran's. In *Pe culmile disperării* [*On the Edge of Despair*], a book that appeared the very same year, 1934, as Ionescu's *No* (*Non*, in French, or *Nu* in the original Romanian edition), Cioran



prefers the *organic* man to the abstract one: "In front of the abstract man, who only thinks for the pleasure of thinking, there is the organic man who thinks under the determinant of a vital disequilibrium, who is beyond science and beyond art. (...) People are not yet convinced that the time of superficial and intelligent preoccupations is gone and that the problem of pain is infinitely more important than that of the syllogism."<sup>10</sup> The dichotomy *philosophical syllogism* / *living pain* is polemically speculated by young Ionescu in an essay called *Contra literaturii* [*Against literature*], published in *Facla*, in 1931: "Yesterday, my unrestrained cry of joy, my friend, and today your shoulders quivering in weeping make me feel as if I were your brother, the way no other speech, deliberation or logic could have done before."<sup>11</sup> In a micro essay in *Discobolul* (May, 1933), Cioran stigmatized in his turn the dryness and the inner void of these apparently intelligent people, pleading instead for "the essential and organic thinker, for whom the thought means urgent necessity and risk altogether."<sup>12</sup>

Claming their roots from Nietzsche's a-moral *will to power*, as well as from the *abyssal man* of Dostoyevsky and Gide's 'fervours', or descending from the *Lebensphilosophie* or the Papinian "masculinity", transformed into Eliade's "apology for virility", the members of the generation of '27 are all interested in the agonistic, troubled kind of thinking, set under the sign of a "vital disequilibrium". But perhaps the one who managed to induce in them - from Elide to Cioran, Mihail Sebastian, Stelian Mateescu, Mircea Vulcănescu, Constantin Noica, Arșavir Acterian, Petre Țuțea, and last but not least Jeni Acterian - the need of an organic and authentic thinking is the Socrates-like professor Nae Ionescu, who taught metaphysics and the history of logic. In an article written on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> commemoration of Nae Ionescu's death, Father André Scrima invoked the charismatic presence, already a legend at the time, of the professor. The latter is eulogized for the special "coherence" of his thought, "of a different order, anterior to the 'system'", and for the organic quality of his thinking, "because of whom the living spirit brakes the mirror effect of the subject-object reflection, that closes him within the space of a *de-finite* philosophical work, and states itself as a free and awake state of mind...."<sup>13</sup> Even the "written language" of the professor is, in Scrima's apologetic vision, an organic mixture of the word with a meaningful revelation, his genuine "pronunciation" having a surprisingly "impersonal" effect. The controversial mentor of the generation - whose so-called spontaneity in delivering courses was, in fact, skillfully stage directed - had upon the young proselytes a fascinating influence, that of a "superb intelligence, always to be grasped in the act." A similar portrait of the professor, seen as a Mephistophelian charming character, tormented by anxieties and by existential paradoxes, is drawn by his very first disciple, Mircea Elide, both in the novel *Gaudeamus* and in his *Memoirs* (Nae Ionescu is in fact the model for several other literary characters, such as Ghiță Blindaru from *De două mii de ani* [*Since Two Thousand Years Ago*] by Mihail Sebastian, of The Logician from Ionescu's *Rhinoceros*).

## Metaphysical euphoria and the cult of the ego

As a prerogative of the organic thinker, authenticity is the crossing point of more than one coordinate of the generation's program. First of all, there is one characteristic that Ion Ianoși called "the hypertrophy of a personalized relationship to the world,"<sup>14</sup> when he was talking about the mentor of the generation, Nae Ionescu. This means, in other words, the specific tendency of hypertrophying the ego, related with polemical and



persuasive intentions. Because of it, several members of this generation, as many fervent proselytes of the “lyrical” philosophy of Nae Ionescu, wrote journals and essays that were profoundly marked by the “preoccupation for the concrete” and by the metaphysical preoccupation for both their personal and ethnic destiny. They all belonged to an existentialism *avant la lettre*, because of their non-systemic and non-dogmatic approach to certain philosophical relations: those between transcendence-immanence, consciousness-existence, and freedom-metaphysical “imprisonment”, then the becoming of the authentic self in relationship with the other, the authenticity of living and profound experientialism, the confrontation of the individual with the anxieties and the “revelations” of pain, the extreme and liberating despair, the ethical ego, the aesthetic ego, and the religious ego (if we are to take on Kierkegaard’s distinctions), and also the demoniac, the tragic, and the heroic ego. Turning back, for now, to what I would call the vocation of egotism, it is naturally countermarked, in the ’30s, by the spectacular vocation, that of the ostentatious and not for only once scandalous exit from oneself, to be found with Nae Ionescu, Emil Cioran, Eugen Ionescu, or Petre Țuțea.

This narcissistic shift between implosive and explosive attitudes gains, for the representatives of the generation of ’27, an added degree of authenticity, when crowned by what Petru Comarnescu, in an article published in *Vremea*, 10th of January 1932, called “the metaphysical euphoria”. Metaphysical euphoria was understood by *Criterion*’s organizer somehow like the religious experience, the mystical urge or the magical rite, as an essential component of *experientialism*. This was a key phenomenon of the young Romanian culture at that time.<sup>15</sup> Searching for a metaphysical justification of both literature and the everyday life at the same time, Eugen Ionescu and Emil Cioran were able to justify the fundamentally tragic perspective over the individual and his ethnic destiny. In other words, the metaphysical euphoria is for them - as for every other member of their generation - the condition of the tragic appearance, the halo of nobility that makes it possible. In fact, the tragic is to be noticed both on an individual and social level. The tragic aura gained by the individual and by the collective itinerary, in the ’30s, could be seen as a chance to value the avatars of the ego and those of the ethnic being. This amazing generation, which follows a historical cataclysm and senses another one, sets out its energies in two complementary directions: “the assumed identity of being Romanian” and “the outburst of the ego”. One of the criterionists’ mottos could be found in a substantial synthetic formulation of a well-known critic: “the cult of self-expression as a supreme ethno-creative guarantee.”<sup>16</sup>

In the affective and ideological climate of the generation, the narcissistic cult of the ego allies itself to axiological relativism, and, consequently, to the nostalgia for metaphysical, transindividual values. The title of a little essay of Ionescu’s from 1935, entitled *Eu [Me]*, is symptomatic in this respect. The incendiary part one of Ionescu’s volume *Nu* is entitled *Eu, Tudor Arghezi, Ion Barbu și Camil Petrescu [Me, Tudor Arghezi, Ion Barbu and Camil Petrescu]*. The narcissism of the generation of ’27 is also to be noticed, when pointed towards polemical purposes, in another peculiar coincidence. A decade earlier, Mircea Eliade gave the title *Papini, me and the world* to a chapter of his *Novel of a Nearsighted Adolescent*.

As a consequence of a hypertrophied, theatrical ego, Ionescu, in his turn, takes on an exaggerated negativism, representative for “the negativity of the young generation” (this is the title of the book of another generationist, Mihail Ilovici). In an article published in *Facla*, June 4th 1936, entitled *Despre “generația în pulbere” [About the “generation turned into dust”]*, Eugen Ionescu’s circumspection towards his own generation

and towards its ideologist, Mircea Eliade, sometimes reaches the sarcasm and the acute condemnatory attitude: "Having, after all, like all Romanians, like Farfuridi [a comic character of Caragiale - n.n.] himself, the obsession "What will Europe say", the ridiculous Mirciulică Eliade considers that the right evaluative criterion for the young generation is the approval or consecration come from abroad. (...)Mircea Eliade has ten "troubled" friends, and because they are so "troubled" (this fact being obvious to him from the conversations he had with them), these friends of his must be some sort of geniuses. And if they have become University professors at age 30 (N. Iorga became professor at 24), Mircea Eliade is then forever amazed. We have to admit, as calmly as possible, that Mircea Eliade's three criteria of selection (approval from abroad, "inner struggle," and University teaching job) prove the complete naivety (to be polite) that is so very characteristic to the adorable leader of the young generation."<sup>17</sup>

If we take into account Ionescu's omnipresent negativity - one directed either against the criterionists or against the "old men" - we must look for a complementary relation between the *inner tragic* and the *external theatricality* of his public appearances and manifestations. I must mention here a consonance between Eugen Ionescu and N. Steinhardt, the one who, in the very year of Ionescu's Nu, 1934, makes his debut with an anti-generation book, *În genul... tinerilor* [*In the style... of the young men*].<sup>s</sup> This totally surprising parody - if we think about the later Steinhardt, the monk from Rohia, of the writings of Cioran, Noica, Eliade, Geo Bogza, Sașa Pană and many others - is not so much the product of an explosion of the critical hypertrophied ego, as in Ionescu's case. On the contrary, it is the product of a stripping of the self, as Steinhardt himself said, and of a *passing through*, by imitative sympathy, to the others.

## The immanent tragic and the lack of absolute values

The appeal to parody and exploitation of a mimetic disposition are, for the members of this generation, the effect of their awareness that the hierarchy of values is relative. At the same time, they polemically state the need for absolute aesthetic, ethical, and metaphysical values. After all, even Ionescu's *No* is based on his skeptical attitude, originating in the "lucid admission of the relativity of all values and, at the same time, in the tragic feeling... of the necessity of absolute values, recognized as being humanly impossible to reach."<sup>19</sup> We can identify, in the case of Cioran, the same tragic itinerary, from the overrating of his own individuality to the point when this overwhelming individuality, that admits value in itself only, although deceiving, reaches the impossibility of building any other axiological criterion outside itself. About the tragic mix up of any values' hierarchy, Cioran confesses the following, in a letter addressed to his friend Bucur Țincu: "All my tragedy - as he wrote on the 4th of March, 1932 - reduces itself after all to one fact only: I can no longer establish a hierarchy of spiritual contents and values of any kind."<sup>20</sup>

Still, the individuality is felt, in its "uniqueness", as a value, "all the subtext of the inner life" being, according to Cioran's metapsychology, an "inner narcissism."<sup>21</sup> Up to a point, Cioran's sentences about the narcissistic exaltation and those of Ionescu, followed by a common inability to use any axiological terms, seem to be interchangeable. For example, with an even greater purifying negativism, Cioran tends to extend his narcissism over the whole generation. His words, at the same time messianic and eschatological, could be attributed as well to the insurgent critic that wrote the essayistic diary *No*: "You can build nothing with no negation. You become aware of yourself in a per-

fect self awareness, when you eliminate and shadow everything that is external. As an individual, you must believe you are the centre of the universe, and as a generation, the peak of history. You cannot live without a divine shiver and with no delirious seductions. Any messianic feeling is an eruption of the infinity in formation, a paroxysm that dilates the individual or an epoch. (...) The myth of generations surpasses a historical relativism and awakens an eschatological representation. At last, a generation with a great calling considers itself the crowning and the end of all efforts.”<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, Cioran's ego projects his own negativism and his constant agony in confronting the void over his whole spiritual generation. The latter seems to faithfully mirror his anxieties and demoniacal euphorias. In fact, in his article *Spiritualitate* [*Spirituality*], published in October 1934 in *Criterion*, Mircea Vucănescu considers that both Eugen Ionescu and Emil Cioran belong to a sort of “agonic spirituality” (along with P. Manoliu, M. Ilovici, and I. Dobridor). That is a special branch of the generation, characterized by “full spiritual crisis and values revision,”<sup>23</sup> by negative lucidity and tragic doubtfulness. The tragic vision of the generation of '27, with its agonic, conflicting, and dynamic component, is revealed through certain theories of amorality, as well as in their skepticism towards axiology. Cioran, for instance, seems to be suspended in a quasi-impersonal state of mind that sets him in the position of a lyrical philosopher - a *storm-philosopher*, I might say, or some kind of an Orator of the void (similar to Ionesco's, at the end of his well-known play *The Chairs*). His revelations become a prophecy of universal apocalypse, where the Apollonian *principium individuationis* makes place for the metaphysical vision of collective ritualistic despair of a Dionysian type. This is one way to read, on an abysmal level, Cioran's statements in the same letter to Bucur Țincu, dated the 4th of March, 1932. On the background of the Nietzschean disease - his insomnia being real this time, but he also suffered from an adopted or ideal disease, the Dostoyevskyan epilepsy - he seems to undergo a self destruction. His self, excessively individualized before, disseminates in the paroxysm of pain. The sleepless nights place him “beyond despair, beyond the limits of endurance”, where everything “seems to be set on the same plan, insignificant and null”. Next, Cioran confesses to Bucur Țincu about an “asthenic feeling of life”, one that “makes me unable to enjoy anything, but to constantly torture and destroy myself”. And he adds: “You must know that if I live, I will make myself remarked by an extreme attitude; I will fearlessly suffer the ultimate consequences. I am no longer afraid of any idea or attitude. Here they call me cynical. (...) I am not too young, since I am beyond all ages.”<sup>24</sup>

As in the case of Cioran, caught up in the despair of his untemporal insomnia, young Eugen Ionescu feels suspended in his own sense of existential gratuity. For him, literary criticism is, as literature itself, “a futile game of wits on serious subjects,”<sup>25</sup> a game devoid of any metaphysical thrill. Such a negative exorcism of the death fantasy, imbedded in literature, can be associated once more to some of Cioran's assumptions, which can stand for possible mottos in front of some chapters of *No*: “To destroy means to act, to create in mockery. (...) Negation is not an absence; it is plenitude, a troubled and aggressive plenitude. If we find salvation in action, to deny is to save your own self, to follow a project, to act a part.”<sup>26</sup>

Left at the will of his own negative and somehow demoniac conscience, the human subject can only have the chance of a tragic immanence, issued by the unique *fatality* of his own conscience. Cioran's tragic despair, as well as Ionesco's, could be associated to the dimension of the modern tragic, one from beyond the tragic. This almost absurd tragic emerges from some sort of metaphysical clandestine condition, in the

absence of any transcendent mark. Sentenced to lucidity and fed by the “passion in immanence”, originated in a similar metaphysical deception, Nae Ionescu also appears to be, in Cioran’s vision, such a tragic hero. About this “master of doubts”, Emil Cioran says in an article published in *Vremea*, June 6th 1937: “When God didn’t embrace you, you settle to the orgy of temporality. The divine silence leads tortured men into politics. (...) I learned from him that existence is merely a fall, and who could stop me then from concluding that the purpose in life is torment, self torture, satanic voluptuous enjoyment?”<sup>27</sup>

Beyond the sophistic justifications that Cioran finds for the serious political deviations of his master, his text re-positing the tragic condition from the perspective of the immanence/transcendence relationship. The tragic question is thoroughly detailed in an essay dated 1933, *Revelațiile durerii [The Revelations of Pain]*: “If life is an immense tragedy, it is due to the immanence of the demoniac principle alone.”<sup>28</sup> Once the immanent demoniac negation is stated, the philosopher blames on the conscience the task of converting the demoniac principle into a tragic one. For the tragic to be possible, it is necessary, Cioran says, that the demoniac principle of life be not surpassed, only diminished. The human being, in this case, is not entirely free, but falls under the “determinant of an interior element”, or under the irrational of an interior fatality. The conscience vainly attempts to counterattack such a fatality, through the tragic *hybris*: “When it comes to humans, you are aware of fatality, hence the tragic. The more it gains in intensity, the more it has as a determinant an inner fatality, immanent and not transcendent, because in this case we are closer to the sad than to the tragic.”<sup>29</sup>

Confronted with the obsession of death, Eugen Ionescu also hypertrophies his own ego, in an attempt at self-compensation, while making any possible hierarchy of values (both moral and aesthetic) explode. The revelations of pain, which bring the revelations of the *void*, also gradually lead Cioran to give up the moral criteria. His metaphysical nihilism is reminiscent, to a certain extent, of the amoral philosophy of Nietzsche, who metaphorically formulated the thesis of God’s death. Polemically arguing against the Christian concept of pain and considering the redemption a mere illusion, Cioran exalts the suffering as a supreme anti-value, by which the Void itself is being valued. Hence, the tragic impact of the conscience with the irrational seed of life contradicts any “metaphysical fundamentalism” of a so-called “moral teleology”. So, “only those who live unconsciously can formulate a verdict, because the moral criteria are instinctively assimilated, so that moral absolutism is characteristic of mediocre people. Living without a morale means the surpassing of any morale and living on the high edge.”<sup>30</sup> Once more, as in the case of Ionescu’s *No*, the tragic vision, issued by the immanent fatality of one’s own conscience, results in the relativity of values of any kind.

The ability to identify the immanent tragic comes from the *metaphysical vocation* of the generation of ’27. Petru Comarnescu spoke of a certain *metaphysical euphoria*. In 1937, a decade after *The Spiritual Itinerary* had appeared, Mircea Eliade foretold that “the historical era we are getting ready to enter will take place under the sign of the metaphysical”, adding that the writer who would want to express his own era will have to write “under the metaphysical sign of time.”<sup>31</sup>

Cioran clearly distinguishes between mere suffering and the aesthetical experience of suffering, pleading, as Ionescu does, for the man who only writes to “keep himself away from crying”. But even as early as 1927, in the pages of his *Spiritual Itinerary*, Eliade already stated the *insufficiency of literature*, which was, in the opinion of the generation’s leader, no more than “an impure synthesis”.

## The tragic destiny of the generation

The Romanian writers of the year '27 prove a tragic vocation, one that can be discovered not only on the level of individual destiny. This tends to be recognized as a sign of nobility, at the collective level of their generation taken as a whole. The fact appears symptomatic for the tensed historical period of intermission between two World Wars. From a rationalistic point of view, Mihai Ralea denounces the unfortunate effects of barbarian vitality and of spiritual excesses, pleading, in a prophetic essay titled *Misiunea unei generații* [*The Mission of a Generation*], for the creation of a specifically Romanian ethics: "If our generation should feel any calling, then we would have to fight on the battle field of ethics. We should fight the Byzantine attitudes, the "phanariotism", the shrewdness, the unfairness, the trivial skepticism and the mocking joviality, frequently used by Romanians in order to surpass the most tragic situations. We claim, for the honor of our people, a little tragic sense of existence, a bit of conscientious bitterness, instead of the sinister operetta or musical comedy that uses up our energies."<sup>32</sup>

Ralea's attitude, although polemical against the Bergson-like vital irrationality of the generation, is confirmed by the definitions that Mircea Vulcănescu, Emil Cioran, and Eugen Ionescu offer to a specifically Romanian world-view. Appealing, in *The Romanian Dimension of Being*, to a phenomenological hermeneutics of the national character, Mircea Vulcănescu states that the Romanian spirit does not acknowledge any absolute impossibility. In spite of his critical insight as "an inborn opponent", the Romanian is "not a negativist but a limit setter", therefore preserving "an equilibrium and a limit in each gesture which, although devoid of tragic stiffness, do not lack nobility"<sup>33</sup>.

As for the assumed Romanian *Weltanschauung*, one declaration of Ionescu is challenging and polemical, even self punishing: "If I were a Frenchman, I should be some sort of a genius". But as far as the imminence of death is concerned, the "metaphysically exiled" Ionescu, like Cioran, is far from having an emotional reaction influenced by the Romanian national legend of "Mioritza". The law of "whatever is meant to be... will be", that Mircea Vulcănescu talked about in connection with the mild Romanian metaphysical vision, doesn't seem to work when it comes to both Ionescu (the later French Ionescu) and Cioran.

When writing somehow admiringly, in 1936, about the structural non Byzantine attitude of Mircea Eliade, about his heroic cultural activism - opinions later restated in *Exercices d'admiration* [*Exercises of Admiration*] - Cioran complains, instead, of a supposed lack of a spiritual attitude of a tragic kind (a founding, civilizing, constructive tragic) in the Romanians: "There is a tendency of abandonment, of nonresistance, of coward wisdom that favors everything except tragedy."<sup>34</sup>

"The anxiety" or the agonic tragic heroism of some exceptional personalities, possessed by the metaphysical calling, is in Cioran's view a temporary solution to compensate the "natural" urge of the Romanian to fail his ethnic destiny: "The metaphysical neutrality of the Romanian", says Cioran, "must find a compensation in the anxiety of some of us." And his original exercise of adulation could be suspected of a bit of mockery, after all ironic as far as Eliade is concerned: "So many objected to Eliade's decision not to stay in India. Yet we should be glad because he accepted to compromise himself here, along with us. We ought to understand this renunciation, greater than his renunciation to contemplation. The acceptance of history seems to me the greater possible heroism."<sup>35</sup>



The constant agreement of the Romanian spirit with the intrinsic nobility of the tragic could have been fulfilled, as some members of the generation advance, through the defeat of the Balkan-like inactivity. The typically Romanian metaphysical neutrality could have been compensated for through the adoption of a heroic, combative dynamism. Such a dynamic heroism was to have extraordinary cultural effects, on one hand, but on the other hand it also resulted in catastrophic consequences on the political level, because of Right Wing ideological excesses.

Here are some of the most relevant combative exultations, taken from Eliade's *Spiritual Itinerary*: "We will not confess to be serious adults, forever conserved under the crust of the 'system', of one political idea, or of our personal belief. We cannot leave so soon the most dangerous and delightful line of the battlefield - where the putrid, sadistic, savage ideas are our enemies - in order to look for shelter somewhere else."<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, the autobiographical character in Eliade's novel *Gaudeamus* confesses a similar propensity towards the combative heroism: "We wanted the endless unlimited combat that inserts within our soul the aroma of both the deity and the devil."<sup>37</sup> Speaking of an *imperative of discontinuity* between different generations, Cioran invokes, in order to legitimate the combative bursts of his and his colleagues' generation alike, the necessity of a metaphysical foundation of their action: "The action fatally limits the horizon, and we are warriors only to the extent we lend to the contingent gesture an absolute outline."<sup>38</sup>

Set under metaphysical signs, the tragic sense of the generation of '27, to be clearly seen in the writers' outrageous political evolution, has though a dynamic and somehow constructive cultural and spiritual dimension. The agonic component, equally claimed by Eliade, Cioran and Eugen Ionescu, renders the tragic a sense of a heroic self accomplishment. I would like to call to remembrance in this respect the thesis of Miguel de Unamuno, one of the idols of this generation, about the tragic feeling of being. This feeling, metaphysically based, would reside in the permanent agony between the belief in the irrational immortality, as an emotional projection of the fatally mortal being, and the rational acceptance of the finite human condition.

How did it happen that the tragic sense of the generation of '27 became disintegrated, even though this type of tragic was considered a crest of spiritual nobility, capable of creating a cultural identity and a historic *destiny* for the Romanian people? As far as the collective destiny is concerned, with its extremist ideological and political implications, the tragic seemed to have been unavoidable. Few members of the generation - among them, Eugen Ionescu, Mihail Sebastian, and Petru Comarnescu - were left untouched by the revolutionary plague, or by any kind of "becoming in the state of rhinoceros."<sup>39</sup> On an individual level, though, the way out of the tragic, be it only temporary, seems to have been found sometimes, either actively, or passively.

The activism, first of all, is a main characteristic of the generation's leader, Mircea Eliade. His attitude counterbalances the tragic, beyond anything, through a pompous obsession for heroism (the hero being, in Bela Grunberger's definition, "the one who does not want to owe his life to anybody"<sup>40</sup>). It is the case of the autobiographical character in Eliade's *Romanul adolescentului miop* [*The Novel of the Nearsighted Adolescent*], fascinated by the Papini-like "masculinity". At times, as for the characters in *Huliganii* [*The Hooligans*], another novel by Eliade, the heroism gets vulgarized and becomes hooligan revolt, keeping a certain 'virile' and offensive tone: "There is a single fertile debut in life: the hooligan experience. Respect nothing; believe only in yourself, in your youth, in your biology, if you feel like it".



Another active attitude of assuming and then surpassing the tragic is formulated by Eliade in a small essay entitled *Justificarea bucuriei* [*The Justification of Joy*], published on the 30th of April, 1933 in *Floarea de foc* [*The Flower of Fire*] and later integrated within the 1934 volume, *Oceanografie* [*Oceanography*].<sup>41</sup> Referring to “the tragic sense of spirituality” and to “the revaluation of the agony as a supreme justification of spiritual life”, the philosopher of religions actually argues with the somber and negative vision of Cioran. In Eliade’s vision, the pain is not a catalyst of a nihilistic perspective, but “a necessary moment in the making of knowledge”. Agony, then, becomes “a necessary experience in the making of joy”. Consequently, says Eliade, “despair and agony can be mere steps, but not centers”. This argument reminds one of D.D. Roșca’s *Existența tragică* [*The Tragic Existence*], a book that appeared the very same year as *Nu și Pe culmile disperării* [*On the Edges of Despair*] (1934). For the pre-existentialist D.D. Roșca, tragic existence does not imply sterile despair and defeatist fatalism, but the *intellectual heroism* of any free creation of values; in other words, a lucid, dynamic and positive attitude towards life, that is to be accepted along with a whole number of contradictions.

Instead, the passive exit out of the tragic condition places Eugen Ionescu and Emil Cioran in similar positions for one more time. First of all, as compared to the integrating, affirmative and somewhat representative (both for the polemic and combative approaches of his generation) ego of Eliade, Cioran’s and Ionescu’s egos are doomed to embrace the revelations of the void. Those “revelațiile durerii”, in Cioran’s words, testify for their common damnation to a proud and lonely place within the generation. The obsession of the *fall*, for example, the archetypal trauma of the primary sin, is shared by both of them: “I believe that even more pertinent is the theory of the primordial sin - says Cioran, the philosopher of decomposition, in a conversation with Fernando Savater - even if you strip it of the religious connotations, and leave it on a purely anthropological level. There was an irretrievable fall, a loss that can never be compensated by anything.”<sup>42</sup>

In the letter sent to Tudor Vianu, sent from Vichy, on the 20th of February 1944, Eugen Ionescu has the vision of an obsessive, repeating ontological fall: “We are falling with a ‘geometrically progressive’ speed: and yet, the last second is long. Long. It doesn’t end anymore... Never again. I have the feeling of a void. Of something irreparable that is happening. Since we fell ‘out of heaven’, we have been doing nothing else but falling. We repeat the gesture: it is an obsession. Humanity has the obsession of failure. You can imagine: ‘the primordial sin’, what a formidable traumatic moment.”<sup>43</sup>

In spite of a peculiar tragic charge in the metaphysical visions of both Ionescu and Cioran, the two writers experience a paradoxical exorcism through their way of living on the edge of despair and negation. For Emil Cioran, the depressive moods, endowed with the greatest revealing capacity, would lead to the progressive departing of the ego from the world. A tragic beyond the tragic is thus being reached. In the paroxysm of pain, the depressive mood “is being distilled into despair”, as Cioran says.<sup>44</sup> He also insists over the privileged state of *enchantment*, produced by the “assimilation in the *nadve* rhythm of existence”. We find the same nihilistic author exalting the “easiness of grace”, the state of transparency and immateriality, in his book *Pe culmile disperării* [*On the Edges of Despair*]: “I would still like a warm bath of light to emerge from me and then transform the whole world, a bath that would not resemble the strain of the ecstasy, but would preserve the calm of a luminous eternity.”<sup>45</sup>

In the chapter called *Esența grației* [*The Essence of Grace*], the latter is praised as “an escape from the beastly claws of the demoniac urges of life” and defined as the

reverse of the nihilistic tragic: "The transcendence of negativity is an essential note of the graceful feeling of life."<sup>46</sup> Although he desires to experience the sacred and to reach the paradise-like state of grace, the skeptical Cioran is being refused all these, only being able to live some sort of ecstasy, emptied by the mystical perception of God. Through ecstatic *rapture*, as a passive reverse of the immanent tragic of life, Cioran claims that one could get purified of anything contingent and hazardous. Plus, the metaphysical feeling of being, which allowed the acknowledgement of the tragic, has its roots, according to Cioran, in a form of ecstatic rapture, too. It is that ecstasy that can only be achieved after the living of the full despair, an ecstatic despair, actually, close to the state of Dionysian exaltation.

A correspondent of Cioranian rapture could be Eugene Ionesco's almost mystical *amazement*, associated with love, a lyrical and imponderable state of mind. It is what Eugen Ionescu, who later became the playwright Eugene Ionesco, would call *l'étonnement d'être*. Approaching this *étonnement* through the tragic and comic anxiety of his theatre, Ionesco tends to induce a very special type of *catharsis*. As in the case of Antonin Artaud's plea for the theatre of *cruelty*, one should notice, with Ionesco, his nostalgia for reviving the very soul of authentic tragedy. Returning for now to the period of the Romanian writings of Ionescu, more precisely to the article from 1930, about the rhetorical poetry of Walt Whitman, the young critic defines poetry as "love and amazement for yourself, felt as if you were another; and for another, seen as if he were you."<sup>47</sup> A few years later, in 1938, Eugen Ionescu has once again the lyrical vision of universal decomposition, where the detachment of the individual self is brought along by an almost musical contemplative ecstasy: "When I sometimes walk on the street, I remember that the world is not as I see it, as I smell it, as I hear it. An inner bell tolls, and everything seems to break into waves. An immaterial vibration! I fall into chaos, into a sea, I keep on falling."<sup>48</sup>

In spite of his refusal to be considered a member of the Criterion generation, Eugen Ionescu affirms, most of the time implicitly and involuntarily, the structural affinities to the other criterionists. This is true as far as Emil Cioran, the other agonist and avid negativist, is concerned. And the spiritual affinities of the two go beyond the eschatological revelations of despair, surpassing these by reaching for the ecstatic contemplation and amazement before the "immaterial universal vibration". The ecstasy of despair, or the despair of rapture, and ingénue childish amazement are accomplished by both of them.

The tensed oscillation between the somber despair of death and the sublime ecstasy before the miracle of life can be associated with the complex duality despair-beatitude, theorized by André Comte-Sponville. Despair would be, in his opinion, more of a force of the soul, freed from hope. The existentialist trajectory of the mythical Icarus is symptomatic for the philosopher. Thus, after a frenzied wandering through the labyrinth, the mythical hero would come to understand that his agitation is mad and vain, his struggle is futile and all hope is mere illusion. And this is when he would stop, exhausted by despair, beyond the tops or abysses of despair, living in a permanent state of beatitude: "Et soudain la sérénité étrange qui le saisit. L'angoisse qui s'annule à l'extrême d'elle-même. Le désespoir."<sup>49</sup>

The philosophical and lyrical phrases of Comte-Sponville, comprised in the section dedicated to the myth of Icarus in his book *Traité du désespoir et de la béatitude*, are relevant for the spiritually related destinies of Cioran and Ionesco alike, to a certain extent.<sup>50</sup> But they seem an echo, over time, of the earlier thesis of Eliade, formulated in

the fourth decade of the last century. According to Mircea Eliade, there is an almost tonic “tragic sense of spirituality”, an antidote to skepticism.

## Notes:

1 Throughout my present study on Eliade and his generation, I have translated into English the fragments taken from the Romanian essays of young Mircea Eliade. The article *Moment nespirtual*, from the series *Scrisori către un provincial*, was published in *Cuvântul*, June 3, 1933, being included by Eliade himself, one year later, in 1934, in his volume *Oceanografie*; see also *Drumul spre centru*, anthology by Gabriel Liiceanu and Andrei Pleșu, București, Ed. Univers, 1991, pp. 72-73.

2 Petru Comarnescu, *Falsa poziție a celor de dreapta*, in *Stânga*, II, January 22, 1933.

3 See Z. Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, București, Ed. Fundației Culturale Române, 1996, p. 202. Z. Ornea makes reference to the article *O revoluție creștină*, published by Mircea Eliade in *Buna Vestire*, I, 100, June 27, 1937.

4 *Scrisori către Tudor Vianu*, II (1936-1949), Edition by Maria Alexandrescu Vianu and Vlad Alexandrescu. Notes by Vlad Alexandrescu, București, Ed. Minerva, 1994, p. 274.

5 *Ibidem*.

6 *Ibidem*, p. 275.

7 *Ibidem*, p. 131.

8 See Fr. André Scrima, *Cuvinte târzii și nepotrivite despre Nae Ionescu*, in *Prodromos*, no. 10, 1970, p. 25.

9 Emil Cioran, *Revelațiile durerii. Essays*, Edition by Mariana Vartic and Aurel Sasu. Foreword by Dan C. Mihăilescu, Cluj, Ed. Echinoc, 1990, p. 170.

10 Emil Cioran, *Pe culmile disperării*, București, Ed. Humanitas, 1990, p. 32.

11 Eugen Ionescu, *Război cu toată lumea. Romanian journalism*, vol. I, edition and bibliography by Mariana Vartic and Aurel Sasu, București, Ed. Humanitas, 1992, p. 24.

12 See *Revelațiile durerii*, p. 107.

13 See Fr. André Scrima, the above-quoted article, p. 26.

14 Ion Ianoși, *O istorie a filosofiei românești - în relația ei cu literatura*, Cluj, Biblioteca Apostrof, 1996, p. 154.

15 See Petru Comarnescu, *Semnalizări. Între estetism și experiențialism, două fenomene ale culturii tinere românești*, in *Vremea*, V, 220, January 10, 1932. Also see *Atitudini și polemici în presa literară interbelică. Studies and anthology* (volume published by the Institute of Literary History and Theory “G. Călinescu”), București, 1994, pp. 368-369. Petru Comarnescu distinguishes between two directions of young Romanian culture at the time: the intellectual and artistic aestheticism, in poetry and literary criticism (main representatives: Serban Cioculescu, Mihail Sebastian, A.D. Broșteanu și Dan Botta), and the experientialism, expressed mainly in the writing of novels and philosophical essays (main representatives: Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcănescu, Sandu Tudor, Haig Acterian - the poet Mihail).

16 Dan C. Mihăilescu, *Prefață* [Foreword] for Emil Cioran, *Revelațiile durerii*, p. 11.

17 Eugen Ionescu, *În loc de cronică literară. Despre “generația în pulbere”*, in *Război cu toată lumea. Romanian journalism*, vol. I, edition and bibliography by Mariana Vartic and Aurel Sasu, București, Ed. Humanitas, 1992, pp. 94, 96.

18 See N. Steinhart (Antisthius), *În genul lui Cioran, Noica, Eliade...*, with an Afterword by Dan C. Mihăilescu, București, Ed. Humanitas, 1996.

19 Mircea Vulcănescu, *Pentru Eugen Ionescu*, Afterword for Eugen Ionescu, *Nu*, București, Ed. Humanitas, 1991, p. 217. Vulcănescu's text first appeared in *Familia*, no. 5-6, September-October 1934, under the title *Manifest pentru Eugen Ionescu*.

20 Cioran, *12 scrisori de pe culmile disperării*, followed by 12 older letters and other texts, anthology by Ion Vartic, in *Apostrof*, 12, 1995, pp. 48-49.

21 *Ibidem*, pp. 17, 19.

22 Emil Cioran, *Imperativul discontinuității*, in *Revelațiile durerii*, p. 174.

23 M. Vulcănescu, *Spiritualitate*, in *Criterion*, nr. 1, 15 October 1934.

24 See Cioran, *12 scrisori de pe culmile disperării...*, pp. 49-50.

25 Eugen Ionescu, *Contra literaturii*, in *Război cu toată lumea*, I, p. 26.

26 Cioran, *Căderea în timp*, translation from French by Irina Mavrodin, București, Ed. Humanitas, 1994, pp. 75-76.

27 Emil Cioran, *Nae Ionescu și drama lucidității*, in *Revelațiile durerii*, pp. 166, 168.

28 Idem, *Revelațiile durerii*, p. 90.

29 *Ibidem*, p. 98.

30 *Ibidem*, p. 95.

31 Mircea Eliade, *Profetism românesc*, 2, *România în eternitate*, București, Ed. "Roza vânturilor", 1990, p. 198-199.

32 Mihai D. Ralea, *Misiunea unei generații*, in *Viața românească*, XX, 1, January 1928, p. 120.

33 Mircea Vulcănescu, *Dimensiunea românească a existenței – schiță fenomenologică*, in *Caiete critice*, 1-2, 1983, pp. 169-185 (text republished from *Izvoare de filozofie*, vol. II, 1943). See mainly pp. 179, 185.

34 Emil Cioran, *Mircea Eliade și dezamăgirile sale*, in *Revelațiile durerii*, p. 149.

35 *Ibidem*, pp. 150-151.

36 Mircea Eliade, *Profetism românesc*, 1, *Itinerariu spiritual*, pp. 35-36.

37 Idem, *Romanul adolescentului miop*. Text edition, foreword and chronological list by Mircea Handoca, vol. II [*Gaudeamus*], București, Ed. Minerva, 1989, p. 259.

38 Emil Cioran, *Imperativul discontinuității*, in *Revelațiile durerii*, p. 172.

39 As far as the political and ethical significance of Ionesco's play *Rhinoceros* and of the process of "becoming rhinoceros", see also Matei Călinescu, *Ionesco and Rhinoceros: Personal and Political Backgrounds*, in *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 9, 1995, pp. 393-432.

40 The definition given by Bela Grunberger to heroism, in the book *Le narcissisme* (Paris, Payot, 1971), is commented upon by Jean Bellemin-Noël as well, in his *Psychanalyse et Littérature*, Paris, PUF, 1989 (1re éd. 1978), p. 68.

41 Eliade's brilliant fragments or essays in *Oceanografie* are to be interpreted, in the opinion of his important American biographer, Mac Linscott Ricketts, as "expressions of Eliade's 'philosophy' that found the deep problems of life not in the 'ocean depths', but near the surface in commonplace things, in matters ordinarily taken for granted. Herein lies the explanation for the book's title, which was first the title of an essay". See Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade. The Romanian Roots. 1907-1945*, New York, East European Monographs, Boulder, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1988, p. 584.

42 See *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, București, Ed. Humanitas, 1993, p. 27.

43 *Scrisori către Tudor Vianu*, II, p. 235.

44 See Emil Cioran, *Revelațiile durerii*, pp. 89-96.

45 Idem, *Pe culmile disperării*, p. 30-31.

46 *Ibidem*, p. 93.

47 Eugen Ionescu, *Război cu toată lumea*, I, p. 19.

48 *Ibidem*, p. 109.

49 André Comte-Sponville, *Traité du désespoir et de la béatitude*: 1. *Le mythe d'Icare*; 2. *Vivre*, Paris, PUF, 1990, p. 12.

50 The structural affinities with his generation did not cause Ionesco, as Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine falsely maintains (in her book *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco. L'oubli du fascisme*, Paris, PUF, 2002), to approve of the extremist deviationist options of his colleagues. On the contrary, Ionesco always stuck to his anti-totalitarian ideas.



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## Mircea Eliade – Exile and Diasporic Identity

### Abstract:

*This article is about Mircea Eliade's rapport to exile, both his and other Romanians'. His approach of the exilic experience allows an incursion into the "diaspora" semantic field in the study Theorizing Diaspora by Jana Evans Brazilier and Anita Mannur and a look at Eliade as a "diasporic subject". To Eliade, the relationship with homeland and the diasporic identity assume religious significance. He urges members of the Romanian diaspora to hold the native country sacred as a 'Jerusalem in the Sky'. A strong believer in the salvaging power of cultural creation over the political factor, he wanted his work to be a response to the communist regime in Romania.*

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### Key words:

Mircea Eliade, exile, diaspora, homeland, identity

Motto: "The spirit creates especially when faced with great challenges." (Mircea Eliade, *Incercarea labirintului*)

Perhaps the greatest challenge that the world-famous Romanian-American historian of religions Mircea Eliade had in his life was his exile, a condition he assumed after World War II, when the political regime changed in Romania. A distinction Mircea Eliade felt important to make with respect to his situating in the world was that he was an exile not an emigrant. He thought of himself as an exiled writer and in that condition he would compare to other exiles, like Ovid and Dante.

Eliade did not like the sadness and desolation in Ovid's poems, and preferred to remember Dante, who found strength and inspiration in the pain of his exile in Ravenna where he wrote *Divina Commedia*. While Ovid remained uncomfortable in his loss of imperial Rome, Dante, on the contrary, mastered his fate bravely. "He too suffered to the depth of his being the split with his Country, but accepted no compromise to return. Exile did not bring him down, didn't even lessen his spirit. Romanian writers in exile should remember Dante more, Ovid less. It is Dante's model we should follow" (*Impotriva deznadejdii* 133).

Eliade spoke against writing nostalgically like Ovid, and against ill feeling and resentment that cripple creativity and spoil the quality of life. On the contrary, he advocated among the Romanian diaspora to accept the rift with the native country, and turn the crisis into a battlefield of creativity. "Creation is the response we can give to destiny, to the terror of history" (*Incercarea labirintului* 85). He believed that it was the duty of Romanian exiles to use their freedom to create: "We, who are outside the Iron Curtain, free and safe, have the duty to keep and continue the Romanian cultural tradition. It is



the only intelligent political action we can take” (*Impotriva deznadejdii* 66). In his view, literature and arts constituted a weapon, a political instrument that in time would have a political effect, in the sense of changing human conscience and giving hope.

In some of his exile articles, Eliade insisted that exiled writers and poets suffered more than any other exiles.

“They take with them everywhere the image of the lost Country. (...) or they are rather carried and nurtured by it, by the faded icon of the Country; as only the longing for it, the melancholy and crying keep alive these uprooted who cannot get roots anywhere (...) Because they cannot keep their spiritual integrity unless they create, and poets, writers – unlike engineers, musicians, painters – use language to create, that is they are destined to write only for their own. Therefore, anywhere they may be, they can write only thinking of the Country and of those left there.” (*Impotriva deznadejdii* 133)

Eliade himself resorted to writing his fiction in Romanian in an attempt to reconnect with the lost country: “From time to time I would feel the need to regain my origin, my homeland. In exile, one’s native land is one’s language and dream. And then I would write novels” (*Incercare* 80).

Exile was a hard choice that involved hard decisions: “I had to choose between despair and hope, and as I am always against despair of political, historical nature. I chose hope. I said to myself that this would also be a trial – we know very well the trials of history, we, the people in Romania, also in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, as we are in between empires” (*Incercare* 72).

Exile is accepted, dislocation is assumed and valorized as an initiatory experience. “To me, exile was no break from my past or from Romanian culture. To me, exile was part of the Romanian destiny” (*Incercare* 81). Eliade sees in the shepherds of the old a Romanian pre-diaspora (*Impotriva deznadejdii* 20-21). The pastoral masterpieces in Romanian folklore, as the *Miorita* ballad, such quintessence of Romanian culture and spirituality, are exemplary creations.

Eliade appropriated exile and was determined to help his country through his cultural work. Surviving through culture was seen as the only way: “Culture is a condition typical to human beings. One cannot be human without being cultural” (152). He was convinced that in the absence of culture, Romanians and all people would be crushed by history. And while traditional societies used to participate directly in religious phenomena, “we, products of the modern world, are condemned to receive every revelation through Culture” (*Incercare* 52).

He urged his fellow exiles to master their yearning for homeland and understand their condition as a “hard and long initiatory trial” aimed at transforming them. In his view, any suffering may turn into an initiation that eventually leads to a revelation otherwise inaccessible in the profane existence. If at times an exile may feel lost that condition equates to getting lost in a labyrinth, which in a religious sense, is but a road to a sacred Center.

Relationship with the Country assumes religious dimensions. Nostalgia for the far-away inaccessible homeland is like the nostalgia for Paradise – one can only ‘enter’ it “in spirit, mysteriously, but nonetheless for real”:

“Our Country starts being like the ‘Jerusalem in the Sky’ of the Jews in captivity: a city not less real than the other Jerusalem, the terrestrial one, but of a totally different nature. Let us remember that this is how the ‘Jerusalem in the Sky’ came into being, the true spiritual center of post-exilic Judaism: from the tears and yearning of the Jews taken captive, but seen, understood, and

explained through the genius of an elite, first of all of the prophets”. (*Impotriva deznadejdii* 134)

Therefore, the exiled intellectuals are the elite Eliade would entrust culturally and also spiritually with the fate of the future Romania. Eliade holds the image of Romania as a space of myth. His is the eternal, perennial Romania. To him, the Country remains in its fundamental, unalterable values. Eliade “visits” it in his dreams and carries its image with him in his memory space.

The country that is left behind is not lost, it lingers on as part of the inner world. In the absence of the real contact, the imaginary takes its place building onto the memory of the real. Memory preserves the past and Bucharest becomes a place of fiction: “To me Bucharest is the center of an inexhaustible mythology. Due to this mythology, I have succeeded in learning its true history. Probably mine’s too” (*Incercare* 34).

Memory preserves and brings back Romania, the world missed, in vivid images at the first sight of resemblance. In his *Autobiography* he records that once, while on a vessel going to Naples, the rhythm of the waves, or the starry sky and some mysterious sounds like whispers around, “projected me into a past hard to identify: a trip on the Danube or the Black Sea? I was fascinated by this sudden blissful regaining of the past” (151).

At a different time, in Chicago, Eliade devoted himself to working on the cosmogonic myths in Romania and Eastern Europe, to legendary figures like Dragos-Voda, and to Romanian religious folklore. “Although I didn’t realize it”, Eliade records in his *Autobiography*, “the periodical return to the study of Romanian spiritual traditions was, in a sense, a means of preserving my identity in the ‘melting pot’ of the United States” (204).

Eliade’s ‘fight’ to resist assimilation, Americanization, involves keeping the Romanian part of himself unaltered. He does not want to lose his past and be homogenized.

Asked by Claude Roquet to tell about his separation from the native country, Eliade recognizes the separation but he also sees himself in the exile posture similarly to a migrant Romanian shepherd in the old times and even to the Biblical Jews: “It is true that there was a split with homeland, but this split has already existed in Romanians’ past; it has existed also in the history of the Jewish people that constitute a kind of exemplary history and that I consider one of the models of the Christian world” (*Incercare labirintului* 85)

It is the example of the Biblical exile of the Jews that Eliade uses to urge Romanian diaspora to hold the native country sacred, as the Jews did, and likewise never allow themselves to be cut off from their ‘Jerusalem in the Sky’.

The term “diaspora”, defined as “the naming of the other” (Evans Braziel 1), is originally linked to the Hebrew scriptures. Historically it referred to people dislocated from their homelands through migration or exile:

“First used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures explicitly intended for the Hellenic Jewish communities in Alexandria (circa 3rd century BCE) to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland in Palestine, diaspora suggests dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, countries.” (Evans Braziel, Mannur. *Nation, Migration, Globalization: points of Contention in Diaspora Studies* 1)

The term ‘diaspora’ appears to hold religious significance. In itself it is indicative also of the mission of its members that Eliade often spoke about with reference to the

Romanians in exile.

In *Theorizing Diaspora*, Braziler and Mannur link contemporary forms of diasporic movement, from travel to exile, with issues including identity, nation, and homeland. Their theorizing of the term reveals certain intriguing ambiguities: literally, on a historical level, “diaspora” has a negative connotation as it denotes “communities of people dislocated from their native homelands through migration, immigration or exile as a consequence of colonial expansion”, while etymologically it has a positive significance, suggesting “fertility of dispersion, dissemination and the scattering of seeds” (4).

Indeed, diasporic experiences are not necessarily caused by colonial expansion, although Eliade did perceive post World War II Romania as being under occupancy. Often his discourse about the duty of the Romanian exiles urged them to act to resist the “occupant” – the Soviet political regime in Romania.

Eliade himself, as a “diasporic subject”, experienced a “nostalgic dislocation from homeland” (4) and is marked by “hybridity and heterogeneity – cultural, linguistic, ethnic and national” (5). According to Stuart Hall, as cited by Braziler and Mannur, the “diasporic experience” is defined “not by essence and purity but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity, and by a conception of identity which lives in and through, not despite, difference, by hybridity” (5)

Although it is difficult to quantify either the Romanian or the American ‘portion’ of Eliade’s hybrid identity, and despite his self-posture as European, in the context of his exile, Eliade’s identity is “negotiated”. He chooses as dominant version his Romanian national identity, an “essentialized”, “nativist identity” affiliated to the construction of the Romanian nation and his home country. However, by definition, also, as a diasporic subject, Eliade experienced at least a “double identification” as part of the hybrid identity. This may very well be the scholar and the writer, the diurnal and the nocturnal mode of his creativity, the American and the Romanian (to stop just at the two halves of his life).

In a theorized approach of the diaspora, various starting points are taken into account, as well as essentialist notions like: homeland, national, ethnic identity, geographical location, deployment, hybridity and heterogeneity. In his own rapport of exilic experience, Eliade often seeks refuge in clear-cut essentialist categories like the ones just listed above. In a similar approach as that of scholars of Jewish diaspora, Eliade sees himself and the Romanian diaspora “grounded in the fixed or metaphysical-geographical foundations of home, identity and exile” (6)

Theorists of diaspora talk about “boundaries” demarcating nations and diasporas. Eliade also uses the term but extrapolates its meaning. According to him, no matter where on earth, one may find oneself in a “boundary situation” which is not only historical but “which man discovers in becoming conscious of his place in the universe” (*Images and Symbols* 39), meaning in relationship to God. In that sense, every man is an exiled, if estranged from the source of meaning in life.

Going back to an exile’s position with respect to the native country and to the host country, R. Radhakrishnan’s essay “Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora”, included as a chapter in *Theorizing Diaspora*, identifies the ‘symptoms’ of a diasporan citizen who opposes homogenization in the host country by taking recourse to “some mythic” homeland. “We turn our diasporan gaze back to the home country. Often that gaze is uncritical and nostalgic” (Evans Brazier, Mannur 128)

Radhakrishnan is concerned with diasporan citizen’s “obsession with the sacredness of one’s origins. (...) The diasporan hunger for knowledge about and intimacy with

the home country should not turn into a transhistorical and mystic quest for origins” (128) He advocates a balanced view, which should accept the possibility of change in identity, a natural result of travel and mobility in the contemporary world. As with every exile, “the home country is nor ‘real’ in its own terms and yet real enough to impede Americanization, and the ‘present home’ is materially real and yet not real enough to feel authentic” (123).

Eliade’s homeland is the archetypal Romania. When he told Claude Roquet “I know my country very well”, he meant not only geographically and culturally, he meant a deep knowledge of its spiritual values, its history and beliefs, the very identity of a people that makes it different from other people and at the same time that is universal and part of humanity.

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ION CORDONEANU

## Mircea Eliade și semnificația antropologică a simbolismului religios

## Mircea Eliade and the anthropological significance of religious symbolism

### Abstract:

*The religious consciousness functions symbolically. As the orientation towards the sacred belongs to consciousness, human existence is constitutently symbolic. For Eliade, symbolism is an immediate given of consciousness, an essential object of intelligence that belongs to human beings and can be found in any existential situation of man in cosmos.*

*If, according to Eliade, the religious history of humanity begins with the existence of the sacred, with those infinite hierophanies which organize the world and fill it with significances, then we are entitled to state the anthropological importance invested by Eliade into the religious symbolism.*

Interpretarea unei opere de anvergură cum este cea a religiologului român presupune grile de interpretare, mai mult sau mai puțin complexe, care pot pune în lumină virtuțile sau, dimpotrivă, lipsurile unei construcții argumentative. Ceea ce poate face cercetătorul, aplecându-se asupra unui corpus devenit deja clasic în câmpul religiilor, este să observe că opera lui Mircea Eliade a suscitat interpretări diverse. Totuși, este lesne de observat că situarea cea mai fidelă scopurilor mărturisite de Eliade însuși ține de aria fenomenologiei religiei în care autori precum N. Söderblom<sup>1</sup>, Joachim Wach<sup>2</sup>, Gerardus van der Leeuw<sup>3</sup> ori R. Pettazzoni<sup>4</sup> au legitimat această ramură a *Religionswissenschaft*.

La vremea la care Douglas Allen scria cartea sa despre *Mircea Eliade și fenomenul religios*<sup>5</sup>, fenomenologia era cel mai recent și mai important punct de vedere metodologic în studiul religiilor. În opinia lui Allen, disciplina Istoriei religiilor a beneficiat, grație fenomenologiei, de un studiu sistematic, ea fiind cea răspunzătoare, în mare parte, de chipul de atunci al Istoriei religiilor.

Fenomenologia religiilor își propune să studieze ceea ce fenomenele religioase, în ciuda diversității lor, au în comun. Denominația lor comună reprezintă „semnificația interioară” la care nu se poate accede decât asociind cunoașterii istorice a faptelor o „simpatie infuză”, o „empatie”, o „sensibilitate” în ceea ce privește faptele religioase. Fenomenologia religiilor încearcă, înainte de toate, să înțeleagă și să descrie ceea ce este în însăși inima „realității religioase”, iar fenomenologul trebuie să respecte caracterul absolut al diverselor credințe pe care le analizează<sup>6</sup>. În descendența lui Rudolf Otto și a lui Gerardus van der Leeuw – autori care, în mod particular, se axează pe cercetarea esenței și structurii fenomenelor religioase, Mircea Eliade afirmă antireducționismul metodologic. Otto pune în evidență în *Sacral* structurile fundamentale ale fenomenelor

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religioase, cercetând ceea ce au ele în comun (și acest element nu poate fi decât *numinos*<sup>7</sup>). Dacă Otto își propunea să definească o structură fenomenologică universală inerentă experienței religioase în termenii care să-i permită fenomenologului să analizeze și să organizeze manifestările religioase particulare, Eliade își propunea să confere structurilor simbolice universale baze fenomenologice. De pe aceste baze și împărțâșind refuzul lui Otto în privința oricărei interpretări unilaterale, Mircea Eliade identifică sarcina fenomenologiei în câmpul religiilor în încercarea de a revela stucturile lăuntrice ale fenomenelor religioase pentru a surprinde intenționalitatea lor, adică semnificațiile.

Disponerea fenomenologică a hermeneutului religiilor va fi, în bună măsură, responsabilă de definirea sacrului dintr-o perspectivă antropologică integrantă. Pentru Eliade, sacrul este un element în structura conștiinței, nu un stadiu în istoria ei. Ideea mi se pare esențială pentru construirea perspectivei fenomenologice, în efortul de a identifica actele religioase ca purtătoare de sens și semnificații pentru viața omului religios. În această direcție, Eliade afirmă: „O lume semnificativă – iar omul nu poate trăi în *haos* – este rezultatul unui proces dialectic care poate fi denumit drept manifestare a sacrului. Viața umană capătă sens prin imitarea unor modele paradigmatiche revelate de ființele supranaturale. [...] La nivelurile cele mai arhaice de cultură, *a trăi ca ființă umană* este de la sine un *act religios*, căci hrana, viața sexuală și munca au valoare sacramentală. Altfel spus, a fi – sau, mai degrabă, a deveni – om, înseamnă a fi *religios*”<sup>8</sup>. Afirmția lui Eliade are valoare antropologică; aceasta înseamnă, de fapt, că sacrul nu este o fază în istoria omului, ci o „structură a conștiinței care dă naștere unei forme de a fi în lume caracterizate în primul rând prin deschiderea către Transcendență, care se constituie ca sursă de semnificație și de valoare supraumană.”<sup>9</sup>

Definiția omului ca *homo religiosus* își găsește acum semnificația ei autentică și importanța ei în sistemul de gândire al lui Eliade: *a fi – a deveni om înseamnă a fi religios*, este echivalent cu faptul că omul religios, datorită diferenței ontologice originare în experiența sacrului, transfigurează lumea în sistem de simboluri. Simbolismul este constitutiv ființei umane în genere, pentru că, în opinia lui Eliade, gândirea simbolică nu poate fi înlocuită de nici un alt tip de gândire iar omul „prin simbol se deschide către cosmos, către lume, către propria lui viață”<sup>10</sup>.

Conștiința religioasă funcționează simbolic; deoarece deschiderea către sacru aparține conștiinței, existența umană este una constitutiv simbolică. Pentru Eliade, simbolismul este un dat imediat al conștiinței<sup>11</sup>, un obiect esențial al inteligenței care aparține ființei umane și pe care îl găsim în orice situație existențială a omului în cosmos. „Dacă proprietatea sacrului este aceea de a se manifesta – hierofania – de a se face prezent în realitatea mundană a profanului (...), simbolicul apare ca limbajul vieții religioase prin excelență”<sup>12</sup>. Eliade va afirma, în acest sens, că gândirea simbolică nu este domeniul exclusiv al copilului, al poetului sau al dezzechilibratului, ea este consubstanțială ființei umane și precede limbajul și raționamentul discursiv<sup>13</sup>. Înțelegerea simbolului ca prelungire a hierofaniilor face din el obiectul autonom al istoriei religiilor eliadiene. „De aceea, orice religie, ca raport între om și o realitate care îl depășește, este deci simbolică”<sup>14</sup>. Prin simbol – locul originar al adevărului ca trezire și matrice ale gândirii, omului i se revelează nivelele cele mai profunde ale realității, iar hierofaniile sunt limbajul originar al omului, anterior oricărei gândiri reflexive.

Mitul și simbolul sunt mijloacele de expresie originare privilegiate ale omului în calitatea sa de om religios. Întreg universul mental al omului religios reprezintă viziunea sa transfigurată despre lume, convertită într-o lume simbolică la nivelul miturilor, viziune în care omul trăiește în conformitate cu modelele revelate în povestirile mitice. Mitul este o



„istorie adevărată”, sacră, exemplară și semnificativă<sup>15</sup> – o povestire simbolică în care istoria capătă sens și care se înrădăcinează în acea „dimensiune a conștiinței datorită căreia omul caută rădăcinile propriei ființe dincolo de sine însuși<sup>16</sup>. Împărtășind cu E. Cassirer ideea că esența omului este aceea de animal care simbolizează (*animal symbolicum*), Eliade afirmă necesitatea existenței unei medieri, la confruntarea cu alteritatea absolută care este revelată la întâlnirea cu sacralul. De aceea, situarea omului în lume se exprimă întotdeauna prin cuvinte care exprimă ideea de „legătură”, „înlănțuire”, „atașare” etc. Sacralul intră în experiența oamenilor prin medierea realizată de simbol, a cărui natură este duală: are o latură rațională care poate fi cunoscută și o latură misterioasă, irațională.

Eliade nu definește în mod foarte clar caracteristicile simbolului, dar în ceea ce privește rolul de mediator, el remarcă faptul că simbolul se referă în primul rând la hierofanie și că realizează o legătură între sacru și profan. Simbolul *prelungeste* o hierofanie, îi dă realitate spațială și temporală. Mai mult, „un simbol e important nu numai pentru că prelungeste o hierofanie sau pentru că i se substituie, ci, înainte de toate, pentru că poate continua procesul de hierofanizare și, mai ales, pentru că în acel moment, *este el însuși o hierofanie, adică revelează o realitate sacră sau cosmologică pe care nici o altă manifestare nu ar putea să o reveleze*”<sup>17</sup>.

Dacă, după Eliade, istoria religioasă a umanității începe cu experiența sacralului, cu acele infinite hierofanii care organizează lumea și o încarcă de semnificații<sup>18</sup>, atunci suntem îndreptățiți să susținem importanța antropologică cu care Eliade investește simbolismul religios. Faptul că *homo religiosus* manifestă, la toate nivelurile de cultură, dorința de a trăi conform simbolului, demonstrează că simbolismul religios *a creat omul*, adică l-a diferențiat de primat. Simbolul are funcție unificatoare și aceasta arată că omul are conștiință structurată sintetic și că poate intui cosmosul în mod unitar. Despre funcția simbolului, Eliade nota, tot în *Jurnal*: „odată constituit, simbolul e investit cu o dublă funcție *existențială* și cognoscitivă. Pe de o parte, un simbol unifică sectoare diverse ale realului (...); pe de altă parte, simbolul este întotdeauna deschis, în sensul că e susceptibil de a dezvălui semnificații *transcendente*, care nu sunt *date* (*nu sunt evidente*) în experiență imediată”<sup>19</sup>.

Definind cunoașterea ca încercare a omului de a găsi elementele de unitate ale vieții și ale cosmosului, Eliade crede că putem descifra în spatele simbolurilor un imens efort de cunoaștere. Simbolul constituie fundamentul limbajului curent între oameni, el face posibilă comunicarea perfectă și firească între oameni, fiind cunoscut tuturor membrilor comunității. Întreaga simbolistică a omului religios este organizată într-un sistem care reflectă o viziune coerentă, cu un univers de semnificații<sup>20</sup>. Astfel organizate, simbolurile dezvoltă o logică proprie, un logos propriu, o raționalitate specifică. Este motivul pentru care Eliade dezvoltă ideea existenței unei logici a comportamentelor simbolice care, la rândul ei, este expresia unei ordini ontologice, a unei reconstrucții ideale a realității. Semnificația acestei logici a simbolului este atât de complexă, încât Eliade propune deschiderea discuției în afara câmpului propriu istoriei religiilor și înscrierea ei printre problemele majore ale filosofiei<sup>21</sup>. Nici valorizarea din perspectiva unei antropologii religioase nu îi este străină savantului român: „Toate sistemele și experiențele antropocosmice sunt posibile în măsura care *omul devine el însuși un simbol*. Trebuie să adăugăm totuși că, în cazul acesta, propria lui viață este considerabil îmbogățită și amplificată. Omul nu se mai simte un fragment impermeabil, ci un Cosmos viu, deschis către toate celelalte Cosmosuri vii care-l înconjoară. Experiențele macrocosmice nu mai sunt pentru el *exterioare*, și, până la urmă, *străine și obiective; ele nu-l înstrăinează de el însuși*, ci, dimpotrivă, îl conduc spre el însuși, îi dezvăluie propria existență și propriul destin”<sup>22</sup>.

Eliade atribuie și miturilor valoare gnoseologică. „Istoria” povestită de un mit constituie „cunoaștere” ezoterică – transmisă în cursul inițierii, ea este însoțită de o putere magico-religioasă. Omul religios știe, mai mult decât omul modern și în mod aproape natural, că a cunoaște originea unui obiect sau a unui ritual înseamnă a domina realitatea<sup>23</sup>. Mai mult, cunoașterea mitului conferă capacitatea de a îndeplini un rit: „nu se poate îndeplini un ritual, dacă nu i se cunoaște „originea”, adică mitul care povestește cum ritualul a fost îndeplinit pentru prima oară”<sup>24</sup>.

Comentatorii remarcă apropierea dintre analiza simbolisticii religioase eliadiene și elaborările hermeneuticii contemporane. Astfel, unul dintre reprezentanții ei – Paul Ricoeur – a elaborat o hermeneutică a simbolului în care afirmă, ca și Eliade, natura dublă a simbolului, constând din elemente semantice și non-semantice<sup>25</sup>. Astfel, hermeneutul francez asimila analiza simbolului teoriei metaforei. Problematika analizei limbajului religios din perspectivă lingvistică este dezvoltată din multiple perspective<sup>26</sup>.

O perspectivă interesantă, deși devenită clasică în aria analizei lingvistice, din care ar putea fi evaluată hermeneutica simbolismului religios la Eliade le-ar putea constitui cercetările lui George Lakoff și Mark Johnson în *Metaphors We Live By*. În opinia lui Lakoff și Johnson, „sistemul nostru conceptual obișnuit, pe baza căruia gândim și acționăm, are o natură fundamental metaforică”<sup>27</sup>. Așadar, fiind un așa de puternic instrument cognitiv, metafora se dovedește a fi o parte intrinsecă a vieții de zi cu zi. Mecanismul de construcție a metaforelor la nivel lingvistic nu se reduce la condițiile acestui nivel, ci ține de gândire. Expresiile metaforice sunt, de fapt, o formă de a conceptualiza realitatea după modelul cartografierii. Într-o reprezentare a realității, esențiale sunt simbolurile care o reconstruiesc, iar principiile generale care iau forma unei hărți conceptuale se aplică nu numai expresiilor poetice (metaforei din teoria clasică), ci și unei mari părți din limbajul cotidian. Caracterizarea metaforei pe care o face Lakoff ar putea fi aplicată în manieră aproape identică și în teoria simbolului din hermeneutica lui Eliade. Astfel, metafora/simbolul este principalul mecanism prin care noi înțelegem și reprezentăm realitatea și efectuăm raționamente abstracte/exprimăm hierofaniile. După modelul lingvisticii cognitive, simbolismul religios reprezintă veritabile hărți ale mentalului omului arhaic. Dacă metafora, în natura ei, este fundamental conceptuală și nu lingvistică, simbolul este o realitate trăită în aria trăirilor și reprezentărilor religioase. Limbajul metaforic este o manifestare de suprafață a metaforei conceptuale, așa cum în activitățile omului desacralizat sunt recunoscute structuri camuflante ale gândirii religioase. Apoi, metafora conceptuală (la nivelul gândirii) permite înțelegerea unui subiect relativ abstract, nestructurat în esența sa, prin intermediul unui alt subiect mai concret – simbolul este el însuși o hierofanie, adică revelează o realitate sacră sau cosmologică pe care nici o altă manifestare nu ar putea să o reveleze. Și metafora, și simbolul funcționează, la nivelul gândirii, ca analogie reprezentativă, diferența fiind dată de termenii care referă și referenții propriu-ziși. După structura lor, metafora cognitivă și simbolul sunt hărți semantice raportate la domenii specifice (concepte sau hierofanii). Fiecare proces de cartografiere este fixat pe un set de corespondențe ontologice, între entități dintr-un domeniu sursă și entități dintr-un domeniu țintă. Domeniul sursă este simbolul sau mitul, iar domeniul țintă este realitatea sacră reprezentată – așa se structurează ontologia arhaică în concepția lui Eliade. Hărțile care rezultă din procesul de sintetizare se ancorează în structura corpului uman, biped, vertical și în experiența și cunoștința cotidiană (spațiul sacru, simbolismul centrului, templu sacru, modele cosmice, arhetipuri celeste etc.). Conform analizei lui Lakoff & Johnson, teoria metaforei moarte ar putea fi echivalată, în interpretarea hermeneuticii lui Eliade, cu teza camuflării sacralului în profan. Dacă metafora moartă este

cu atât mai puternică cu cât ea devine stereotip de gândire și expresie, iar metaforele încoștiente constituie platforma pe care funcționează un nou sistem conceptual, atunci putem considera că ceea ce avem ca documente de ontologie arhaică și ca mod de gândire și structură „conceptual-simbolică”, ar putea reprezenta metafore moarte și adâncite în subconștientul omului modern desacralizat.

Avantajul perspectivei cognitive asupra metaforei este că dă statut egal tuturor tipurilor de metafore. Pe de o parte, dacă miturile sunt considerate ca atare, atunci ele vor putea fi abordate fără orgoliul omului modern care se consideră superior doar pentru că este recent sau are acces la cuceririle civilizației. Apoi, în întâlnirea cu alte culturi contemporane, dacă folosim aceleași metafore conceptuale pentru a ne structura viețile, în ciuda faptului că aparținem unor culturi diferite, înseamnă că am ajuns să conceptualizăm lumea din jurul nostru într-o manieră similară.

Perspectiva lui Lakoff & Johnson, chiar dacă vine din câmpul semioticii și al lingvisticii, aplicată aici, nu vedește caracterul reduționist al acestei interpretări. Dimpotrivă, în măsura în care dă seama de complexitatea fenomenului religios ca atare și îl consideră, în continuare, în specificitatea lui, ea ar putea arunca o nouă lumină asupra simbolismului religios și al istoriei religiilor în general. Dacă hierofaniile reprezintă limbajul originar al omului, iar înțelegerea mitului și a simbolului religios se structurează în jurul conceptului de metaforă (nu doar în sens estetic, ci cognitiv), am putea înțelege într-o manieră mai completă și mai complexă fundamentele religioase ale umanității, afirmând cu o nouă tărie esența religioasă a naturii umane.

## Note:

1. Arhiepiscopul lutheran din Upsala definea, în *Das Werden des Gottesglaubens, Untersuchungen über die Anfänge der Religion* (Leipzig, 1926), omul religios ca acela pentru care ceva este sfânt (p. 162-163), iar în *Der Lebendige Gott im Zeugnis der Religionsgeschichte* (ed. Fr. Heiler, München, 1966) întărea că în religie sacrul este cuvântul-cheie, mai esențial decât Dumnezeu (cf. J. Martin Velasco, *Introducere în fenomenologia religiei*, Polirom, Iași, 1997, p. 56).

2. Joachim Wach, *Sociologia religiei*, Polirom, Iași, 1997. Wach identifica scopul unei *Religionswissenschaft* în încercarea „de a mijloci înțelegerea oricărei religii” (p. 39). Această știință generală a religiei va avea în vedere semnificația fenomenului religios.

3. Eliade îl consideră autorul primului tatat important de fenomenologia religiilor. Este vorba despre *Phänomenologie der Religion* (1933, traducerea engleză purtând titlul *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, Londra, 1938). În descrierile sale, autorul olandez respectă datele religioase și intenționalitatea lor specifică, subliniind ireductibilitatea reprezentărilor religioase la simple funcții sociale, psihologice sau raționale. Deși identifică insuficiența demersului lui van der Leeuw în dezinteresul pentru istoria structurilor religioase, Eliade apreciază faptul că acesta respinge prejudecățile naturaliste care încearcă să explice religia prin altceva decât prin ea însăși (*Nostalgia originilor*, Humanitas, 1994, p. 64).

4. Conștient de riscul că absolutizarea istoricității oricărei creații religioase poate reduce cercetarea hermeneutică în domeniul religiilor la una pur istoriografică, Pettazzoni (*La Religion dans la Grèce antique, des origines à Alexandre*, Paris, 1953) a susținut ideea complementarității dintre fenomenologie și istorie.

5. Cartea va fi publicată la Editura Payot în 1982, cu o prefață semnată chiar de Eliade, datată august 1977, Paris.

6. Douglas Allen, *Mircea Eliade et le phénomène religieux*, ed. cit., p. 46-47.
7. Experiența numinoasă, la Otto, are caracteristicile unei realități cu totul alta, *ganz andere*, și se prezintă ambivalent ca *mysterium tremendum* sau *fascinans*. În opinia lui Allen, Eliade și-a însușit marea parte a ideilor lui Otto în materie de analiză structurală, în special pe cele referitoare la structura transcendențială, cu totul alta, a sacralului și structura sa ambivalentă (Douglas Allen, op. cit., p. 49).
8. Mircea Eliade, *Nostalgia originilor*, Humanitas, 1994, p. 6.
9. Juan Martin Velasco, *Mircea Eliade, o nouă hermeneutică a sacralului. Locul lui Mircea Eliade în știința religiilor*, în Eliadiana, Polirom, 1997, p. 54.
10. Mircea Eliade, *Gânduri către sine însuși*, în Eliadiana, ed. Cit., p. 17.
11. Douglas Allen remarcă (*L'analyse phénoménologique de l'expérience religieuse*, în *Cahier de l'Herne*, Paris, 1978, p. 75) faptul că, la Eliade, caracterul dominant al simbolismului sau al structurilor simbolice, împreună cu dialectica sacru-profan sunt cele două idei cheie ale metodologiei sale.
12. Juan Martin Velasco, op. cit., p. 55.
13. vezi *Imagini și simboluri*, Humanitas, 1994, p. 13-16.
14. Natale Spineto, *Mircea Eliade și redescoperirea gândirii simbolice*, în Eliadiana, ed. cit., p. 69.
15. Mircea Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, Editura Univers, București, 1978, p. 1.
16. Juan Martin Velasco, op. cit., p. 56
17. Mircea Eliade, *Tratat de istoria religiilor*, Humanitas, 1992, p. 407.
18. Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal*, Humanitas, vol. 2, 1993, p. 190.
19. Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal*, Humanitas, vol. 1, 1993, p. 58-59.
20. Mircea Eliade, *Nașteri mistice*, Humanitas, 1995, p. 26.
21. Mircea Eliade, *Tratat de istorie religiilor*, Humanitas, 1992, p. 413.
22. *ibidem*, p. 414-415.
23. Mircea Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, ed. cit., p. 15.
24. *ibidem*, p. 17.
25. Natale Spineto, op. cit., p. 69.
26. Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and religious language*, Oxford University Press, 1985; Eva Feder Kittay, *Metaphor. Its cognitive force and linguistic structure*, Oxford University Press, 1987; Jeffery Scott Mio & Albert N. Katz (editori), *Metaphor: implication and application*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publisher, New Jersey, 1996. vezi, de asemenea, și cercetările pe care Chaim Perelman și Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca le dezvoltă în *Traite de l'argumentation. La nouvelle rhétorique*, Edition de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1988.
27. Lakoff George, Johnson Mark, *Metaphor we live by*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago&London, 1980, p. 3.

NICU GAVRILUȚĂ

## Actualitatea paradigmei Eliade-Culianu în interpretarea mitologiilor contemporane

### The actuality of the Eliade-Culianu paradigm within the contemporary mythological interpretations

#### Abstract:

*In the first part of this text, the author includes a synthesis of Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu's thoughts regarding the actuality of ancient mythologies and their camouflaged presence within the cultural, political, social, and entertainment practices of the contemporary human being.*

*The main idea of this text is that the Eliade-Culianu paradigm of the myths' interpretations is of actuality because, in the first place, does not deceive the specific of mythology and explains myths through myths.*

*The text then presents the author's ideas regarding the camouflaged presence of certain mythological phantasms within the games of the quotidian. Basically, these phantasms refer to the social mythologies reactivated in the world after September, 11, 2001, to mythological content of the neighborhood subcultures' practices, as well as to the need of reinventing the "black sheep". The author also mentions the mythological sequences disguised in a successful book-*The Da Vinci Code*- or in the extravagant car promotions in the contemporary Occident.*

## 1. Mircea Eliade și demnitatea metafizico-religioasă a mitului

Tema mitologiei (arhaice și moderne) a fost una dintre marile pasiuni ale lui Mircea Eliade și Ioan Petru Culianu. Acestui subiect, cei doi istorici ai religiilor i-au consacrat pagini speciale în scrierile lor<sup>1</sup>. Asemănările și diferențele cu privire la interpretarea mitului, valabile în orice veritabilă relație maestru-discipol, se regăsesc și în scrierile celor doi autori. Asupra unora dintre ele mă voi opri în paginile următoare.

Definind mitul, Eliade constată că nu de puține ori exegeții occidentali i-au conturat acestuia un portret robot negativ. Au identificat mitul cu fabula și ficțiunea, minciuna și povestea, într-un cuvânt cu *irealitatea*. Mediile culturale pozitivistice și marxiste au amplificat și dus spre o limită a interpretării această istorică eroare. Or, de fapt, lucrurile stau exact invers, constată Eliade. În culturile vechi, tradiționale, mitul era temeiul spiri-

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#### Key words:

sacred, myth, camouflage, religion, religious hermeneutics, mythologies of the quotidian.



tual al întregii existențe. El numea întâmplările sacre, revelațiile din *illo tempore* și constituia *modelul exemplar* al tuturor faptelor umane semnificative. Mitul cuprindea o sumă a tradițiilor ancestrale și a normelor sociale esențiale transmise intergenerațional, pe cale inițiatcă<sup>2</sup>, povestea aventurile ființelor supranaturale, iruperea sacrului în istorie și modul în care omul a devenit ființă sexuală, culturală și muritoare.

Adevăratele mituri revelau o față nevăzută a realității, inaccesibilă direct experienței profane, experiență întemeiată, înainte de toate, pe simțuri și exercițiul rațiunii. Misterul naturii duale și contradictorii a unor zeități și ființe mitologice, de pildă, era revelat pe calea regală a mitologiei. Numai așa puteai “înțelege”, de exemplu, cum Iahwe - divinitatea veterotestamentară - era bun și mândru, blând și înspăimântător, creator și distructiv. Chiar și celebrul fragment 64 din Heraclit<sup>3</sup> dobânda un sens doar atunci când îți asumai total datele inițiatice, prezente în structura vechilor mituri și ritualuri magico-religioase.

Absolut salutar și semnificativ pentru momentul cultural actual îmi pare a fi faptul că Mircea Eliade nu explică mitul prin practicile economice sau prin acțiunea socială, prin pulsuniunea sexuală sau prin varii fantezii dezlănțuite. În gândirea lui Eliade, mitul nu este nici efemerul produs al creației imaginare sau, mai rău, banală poveste de adormit copii. *Eliade explică mitul prin mit, iar religia prin religie*. Ambele sunt realități spirituale autonome, structurate după legi specifice și mecanisme funcționale ireductibile. Mitul “este un act de creație autonomă a spiritului; prin acest act de creație se efectuează revelația, iar nu prin materia sau evenimentele pe care ea le folosește”<sup>4</sup>.

Ideea aceasta a lui Eliade este exemplificată de istoricul român al religiilor (și) prin celebrul mit al lui Tammuz. Prin mijlocirea acestuia se revelează inițiatului drama morții și învierii vegetației. Accentul este pus pe alternanța inevitabilă a vieții și a morții, pe speranțele umane în realitatea unei existențe postmortem. Ele definesc într-o manieră esențială anumite structuri ale condiției umane. Cu alte cuvinte, în mitul lui Tammuz, ca și în alte mituri asemănătoare, nu interesează în mod special moartea concretă și reînvierea vegetației. Faptul natural este absolut secundar în hermeneutica eliadescă a mitului. El nu face decât să mijlocească intrarea în lume a unui mister și să provoace înțelegerea unor date capitale ale condiției umane. “În nici un caz mitul nu poate fi considerat ca simpla proiecție fantastică a unui eveniment «natural»”<sup>5</sup>. Natura nu este niciodată naturală, susține Eliade, în sensul că este o kratofanie sau hierofanie. “și numai prin aceste kratofanii sau hierofanii devine «Natura» obiect magico-religios și, ca atare, interesează fenomenologia religioasă și istoria religiilor”<sup>6</sup>.

Dezvăluind elementele de bază ale condiției umane, mitul chiar îi aparține acesteia. Asemenea erosului, fricii, sacrului, “anumite aspecte și funcțiuni ale gândirii mitice sunt constitutive ființei omenești”<sup>7</sup>. Ele nu apar într-un anumit moment istoric pentru ca ulterior să dispară. Secvențele gândirii mitice sunt permanente, sfârșind prin a se camufla și izbucni în viața și universul oniric ale omului modern.

Aceste idei eliadesti cu privire la mit și funcționalitatea acestuia au constituit și obiectul de interes al lui Ioan Petru Culianu. Celebrul discipol le va analiza uneori în varianta maestrului Eliade, alteori resemnificându-le și interpretându-le original din perspectiva științelor cognitive.



## 2. Culianu și interpretarea binaro-fractalică a unor prestigioase mitologii

Mitul ca fapt real, viu și exemplar, reprezintă, în opinia lui Eliade, autenticul mit. Culianu își va asuma și el ideea magistrului de la Chicago, deși n-o va face întotdeauna în mod explicit. În exegezele sale asupra gnosticismului și în textele despre literatura română și universală, Culianu se va arăta mai curând a fi interesat de articularea unei metode prin care să surprindă supraviețuirea unor secvențe mitice în literatură, filosofie, artă și ideologie. Va numi această metodă *mitanaliză*, diferențind-o de ceea ce Adrian Marino propunea în *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade* a fi *mitocritica*. Specific mitanalizei ar fi, după Culianu, *circularitatea*. Așa cum unele întrebări filosofice își conțin în ele însele răspunsurile, la fel un mit adăpostește deopotrivă recunoașterea și analiza sa. Pentru a analiza un mit – scrie Culianu cu privire la *Cezara* lui Eminescu – trebuie să știi să-l recunoști: a-l recunoaște înseamnă a-l analiza deja.

Întrebarea care se pune în mod firesc este următoarea: ce anume recunoștea/analiza Culianu într-un mit? Păstrându-i formularea, am putea răspunde astfel: *un concept inform, croit din seturi semantice ce se întretaie*. Mitul este un potențial semantic uriaș, cu variante istorice diferite și chiar contradictorii. Limbajul specios, cu reminiscențe structuraliste în care Culianu discută alchimia mitului este doar o capcană. Aproximarea de Claude-Levy Strauss și de structuralismul său nu rezistă. Gândirea lui Culianu nu încremenește în proiectul structurii relaționale sincronice, ci insistă în mod original asupra genezei și rulării variantelor mitice în timp și istorie.

Într-o manieră clasic buddhistă, Ioan Petru Culianu neagă realitatea mitului, așa cum discipolii lui Buddha o negau pe cea a eu-lui. (Evident, este vorba în ambele situații de o negare cu valoare pedagogică). La limită, mitul “nu există”. Irealitatea sa i-a dat chipul unei intrigi fără conținut. “«Mitul» e pur și simplu echivalent cu repetiția unei intrigi goale purtătoare de diferite mesaje”<sup>8</sup>. Cu radiografierea intrigii în sine - fără relație cu istoria - se ocupă antropologia. În schimb, relațiile secvențelor mitice cu faptul social au făcut dintotdeauna obiectul istoriei. “Neexistând” mitul, există totuși variantele mitice care se rulează în timp și istorie. Ele creează *sistemele ideale* din a căror interacțiune se naște istoria. *În esență, mitul interpretat de Culianu se reduce la jocul imprevizibil și provocator al fantasmelor mitice în viața fiecăruia dintre noi*. Dincolo de acese variante, mitul în sine, negat, se manifestă printr-o “voință de a repeta o narațiune supusă reinterpretării continue...”<sup>9</sup>.

Culianu își exemplifică teza cu mitul occidental al progresului și cu cel al lui Faust. Primul dintre ele a interesat în mod special știința și filosofia din Occident. Pentru a-l înțelege mai profund, Culianu interpretează mitul progresului dintr-o perspectivă nouă, binaro-fractalică. Astfel, toate variantele acestei mitologii s-ar grupa sub semnul unui *sistem logic* cu soluții istoric previzibile. Dintru început se pune problema unei alegeri bina-re între existența mitului progresului și nonexistența lui. În cazul în care optăm pentru prima variantă – și așa se întâmplă de cele mai multe ori – atunci suntem puși în fața unei noi decizii: a ne asuma varianta progresului pozitiv sau negativ. De data aceasta, indiferent de opțiune, mitul progresului se dezvăluie sub alte două reprezentări clasice: este finit sau infinit.

Or, ce observă Culianu? Faptul că în istoria occidentală s-a rulat insistent, făcând o remarcabilă carieră, *varianta progresului pozitiv și infinit*. Ea a cumulat cel mai amplu număr de alegeri. Totuși, în sine, din punct de vedere strict generațional, nici o variantă

mitică nu este mai adevărată decât altele. Noi suntem cei care le concedem (total și ireversibil?) unora o mai mare doză de adevăr. Interesant este și faptul că nu orice alegere mitică este la fel de inspirată. De exemplu, “dacă cineva afirmă că progresul *nu* este infinit, atunci va apărea inevitabil un grup care să-și aroge cunoașterea direcției autentice și a căii unice a progresului”<sup>10</sup>, fapt care, de cele mai multe ori, s-a și întâmplat. Aproape invariabil, serviciile unui asemenea grup autoselectat și cu incontestabilă charismă au fost păguboase în orizontul istoriei sociale.

Pentru a exemplifica, Culianu invocă grupul părinților fondatori ai marxismului. Acesta a preferat să ilustreze istoric o variantă combinată a două *pattern*-uri progresiste: ei credeau “într-un progres social finit și un progres tehnologic infinit...”<sup>11</sup>. Mai mult, demiurgii totalitarismului roșu nu negau nici realitatea “regresiei finite”, ilustrând-o cu inferioritatea luptei de clasă comparativ cu condiția comunismului primitiv. Cu toată această complexă alegere, Marx și Engels, ca și alții de altfel, nu s-au putut apropia de *adevărul* din spatele acestor *pattern*-uri mitice ale progresului. În interpretarea “ultimului Culianu”, adevărul ascuns, total, al unui mit este dincolo de posibilitatea alegerii și instrumentării noastre. Noi reușim să operăm doar cu adevărurile construite ale rulării în istorie a unor variante sistemice proprii unui mit, ceea ce nu este, totuși, lipsit de orice importanță.

Cred că aici se poate întrevădea o profundă asemănare între interpretarea mitului la Eliade și Culianu. *Ambii înțeleg mitul ca pe un element consubstanțial condiției umane, unul ce ne marchează esențial existența, neavând nici o șansă să dispară definitiv*. Mitul doar se poate camufla, degrada și izbucni neașteptat în istorie, actualmente în versiuni uneori insolite. Așa cum deconstrucția metafizicii este, în cele din urmă, tot un act metafizic, tot așa și *demitologizarea conține în sine și fața ascunsă a remitologizării*.

Atât Eliade, cât și Culianu pledează pentru o urgentă remitologizare a lumii contemporane, dar și a perioadei istorice critice din dramatica aventură a mitului în timp și istorie. “Astăzi ar trebui înfăptuită, minuțios și poate chiar nemilos, o operație de *remitologizare* a filosofiei perioadei, pentru a ne da seama de miturile ce au fost insidios propuse spre a ne explica trecutul și a ne determina viitorul”<sup>12</sup>.

### 3. Versiunile (post)moderne ale unor străvechi mitologii

Gândindu-ne la viitorul mitului din perspectiva paradigmei Eliade Culianu, observăm acum, la început de mileniu III, o realitate oarecum diferită. Despre ce este vorba? Noi trăim astăzi un timp în care mitul încetează - pentru multe spirite (post)moderne - a mai fi acea istorie adevărată, sacră și exemplară despre care scriau Eliade și Culianu. Miturile recente nu mai (re)actualizează un *illo tempore* transfigurat de prezența creatoare a zeilor. Nu mai explică de ce omul a ajuns să fie o ființă muritoare, sexuată și culturală, ca să reiau întocmai termenii lui Eliade.

Totuși, miturile autentice n-au dispărut. Ar fi suficient să amintesc aici permanența actualitate a mitului christic pentru *homo religiosus* creștin. Nu de puține ori, chiar și astăzi, secvența mitologică a dramei Răstignirii este asumată și pățimită total, chiar la modul fizic. Mă gândesc la scenariile sud-americane ale refacerii periodice a drumului Golgotei, dar și la straniile “fenomene fizice ale misticismului” (sindromul stigmatelor, al “pielii negre” și “călugărițelor elastice” etc.). Prin urmare, textele autorilor care declamă insistent, dar cu un fals profetism, sfârșitul mitului, al istoriei și ideologiilor, sunt departe de a ne convinge.

Pe de altă parte - plecând de la înțelegerea mitului de către Eliade și Culianu - nu pot să nu constat existența, în viața omului recent, a unui ciudat clivaj între mituri veritabile și pseudomituri. Mai exact, unul și același mit - al Salvatorului, de exemplu - este perceput, reprezentat și trăit prin dedublare ca un mit adevărat, dar și ca unul fals. În ipostaza sa tare, autentică, *mitul Salvatorului* ia forma, în mediile creștine, a mântuirii întru Iisus. Am fi tentați să credem că și aparițiile mariale (inclusiv cele din România începutului de mileniu III) ilustrează motivul salvării. Aici rolul de mijlocitor al Fecioarei Maria este esențial.

Invers, în versiune desacralizată, mitul Salvatorului se regăsește în scenariile pur istorice și politice. Aici el va face o semnificativă carieră. Foarte inspirat, Raoul Girardet regăsește expresia a patru figuri mitice soteriologice în tipul Cincinnatus și în cel al lui Alexandru cel Mare, în modelele exemplare ale lui Solon și Moise. Tuturor, Ruxandra Cesereanu le găsește o convingătoare ilustrare în istoria și politica românească. De câțiva ani a început să se scrie și să se vorbească și despre inedita așteptare a unui Salvator gen Superman de către americanii lunii septembrie a anului de grație 2001.

Toate aceste situații confirmă reactivarea puternică, dar în forme noi, neașteptate, a unui mare mit ancestral - în cazul de față cel al Salvatorului. Sunt realități în care Eliade și Culianu ar regăsi prezente străvechi fantasme nihiliste, complet lipsite de anvergura lor metafizică de altădată.

Pe urmele gândirii lui Eliade și Culianu, nu putem să nu observăm *retragerea și camuflarea miturilor în practicile cotidiene ale omului recent*. Străvechiul mit al originilor supraviețuiește astăzi și sub forma obsesiei noastre identitare. Sistemul mitic al "originii noastre istorice" și-a reactivat - în sfârșit - și o variantă considerată până mai ieri eretică: cea a dacilor ca strămoși ai romanilor! (Noi discutăm aici doar de valoarea de adevăr construită social a acestei interpretări false, ceea ce este cu totul altceva decât operațiunea istoricului de a găsi argumente și contraargumente unei supoziții iconoclaste).

Ar mai fi de amintit și alte ipostaze mitice actuale ale veritabilelor fantasme soteriologice de altădată. Ele numesc invazia *subculturilor de cartier* care ne "salvează" de plictisul și dominația culturii oficiale; *arta graffiti* care "salvează" și ea ideea de artă de eroziunea timpului și de praful uitării; *inflația hip-hop*-ului, o perfectă ilustrare a haosului precosmogonic ce va face cu puțință noua lume a muzicii etc.

Mitul morții creatoare ia și el, printre altele, chipul social al "țapilor ispășitori", special sacrificați pentru a asigura (supra)viețuirea tihnită a coruptelor oligarhii politico-economice. Mult discutatul motiv eliadesc al "nostalgiei originilor" nu este nici el protejat acum de ilustrări profane. Unele dintre ele se referă la exodul săptămânal în spațiile rurale și la întoarcerea în natură. Este vorba, printre altele de "duminicalism" (A. Pleșu) și la constanta rată a întâlnirii noastre cu natura. Prin grila de înțelegere a camuflării miturilor oferită de Eliade și Culianu se pot interpreta multe alte practici culturale, politice, religioase și de divertisment, la modă acum: fenomenul "Codul lui Da Vinci", somptuoasele lansări de mașini, fascinația mass-mediei în general și a televiziunii în special, imensul succes al telenovelelor și al emisiunilor de confesiuni publice, becalizarea României și fetișizarea Uniunii Europene etc. (Asupra lor voi reveni altădată).

În concluzie, omul timpului recent pare a le da - vrând, nevrând - dreptate lui Eliade și Culianu. Miturile străvechi n-au dispărut. Ele au fost doar maculate și desacralizate. Uneori s-au camuflat convingător sub cele mai neașteptate versiuni profane. Evident, nu toate aceste versiuni ascund veritabile și autentice mituri. Tocmai aici stă însă importanța și actualitatea hermeneuticii lui Eliade și Culianu cu privire la descifrarea subtiliei dar eficienței prezențe a miturilor în viața omului (post)modern. Cărțile lui Eliade și

Culianu ne invită să descoperim și să alegem ca obiect al jocului hermeneutic o parte dintre aceste mituri. Straniu și stimulat e faptul că, nu de puține ori, miturile sunt cele care ne aleg și posedă pe unii dintre noi.

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## Note:

1 Dintre cele mai cunoscute cărți ale lui Mircea Eliade care tratează mitologia, menționez *Aspecte ale mitului*, *Mituri, vise și mistere*, *Mitul eternei reîntoarceri*, *Nostalgia originilor* și capitolul consacrat “Mitologiei și funcțiilor mitului” din *Tratat de istorie a religiilor*. Ioan Petru Culianu a cercetat subiectul, printre altele, în *Eros și Magie în Renaștere. 1484, Gnozele dualiste ale Occidentului, Arborele gnozei și Jocurile minții*.

2 Inițierii, Eliade îi consacră o lucrare specială. Este vorba de *Nașteri mistice*.

3 “Zeul este ziua și noaptea, iarna și vara, războiul și pacea, saturația și foamea: toate opozițiile sunt în el”. Traducerea a fost preluată din lucrarea clasică a lui Mircea Eliade, *Tratat de istorie a religiilor*, prefață de Georges Dumézil, cuvânt înainte de Mircea Eliade, traducere de Mariana Noica, Editura Humanitas, București, 1992, p. 382.

4 *Ibidem*, p. 389.

5 *Ibidem*, p. 388.

6 *Ibidem*.

7 Mircea Eliade, *Aspecte ale mitului*, în românește de Paul G. Dinopol, prefață de Vasile Nicolescu, Editura Univers, București, 1978, p. 170.

8 Ioan Petru Culianu, *Jocurile minții. Istoria ideilor, teoria culturii, epistemologie*, ediție îngrijită de Mona Antohi și Sorin Antohi, studiu introductiv de Sorin Antohi, traducere de Mona Antohi, Sorin Antohi, Claudia Dumitriu, Dan Petrescu, Catrinel Pleșu, Corina Popescu, Anca Vaidesegan, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2002, p. 242.

9 *Ibidem*, p. 249.

10 *Ibidem*, p. 223.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 224.

12 *Ibidem*, p. 270.

## The construction of the religious space in post-socialist Romania

**Abstract:** *Some of the post-socialist countries of Europe experienced after the fall of communism what some called a religious revival. Anthropologists and sociologists alike were sure that they discovered serious evidence against the case of secularization theory. What unfortunately most of them failed to observe was the particular shape and form of this religious growth and the structural changes of the religious mentalities occurred in the process of transition from a closed, ideologically monopolized society, to a pluralistic one. After more than half of a century of atheistic ideologization of the public sphere, Romania remains one of the most religious countries of both Eastern and Western Europe. The thesis of this article is that this fact is due to the lack of modernization of the Romanian social system both before and during the post-socialist period.*

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### Key words:

secularization, atheism, ideology, religious beliefs, religious mentalities, modernization, Romania, Central and Eastern Europe

## 1. Introduction

In some recent studies Paul Froese, defending the supply-side theory of religion, argues that after the fall of the communist regimes, the post-socialist countries have shown an increasing interest toward religion, which reveals a so-called religious revival pattern that proves the secularization theory wrong (Froese 2001, 2003). Ignoring the serious methodological errors of his studies (the treatment of confessional belonging as an indicator of religiosity on one side, and the eluding of the communist active policy to weaken religion when evaluating the level of religion adherence on the other side) we have to stress the danger of confusing the temporal euphoria of religious freedom with the strong long term dependency of religious mentalities from the socio-anthropological backgrounds that make them possible (Todd, 2000).

Differentiating between secularization at the *societal, organizational* and *individual* level, Karel Dobbelaere operates a fruitful analytical distinction that has as a main goal a synthetic critical account of the main contemporary debates regarding the erosion of religion in societies that are at a different level of social and economical development and the testing of different hypothesis of secularization (Dobbelaere, 2002).

Dobbelaere brings conceptual and methodological clarity by underlining the errors of different secularization theories and by delimiting their area of applicability. Although his contribution manages to focalize and better circumscribe the existing secularization theories and brings convincing arguments that the process of secularization is not mechanical, one-directional, but an evolving process, he fails to highlight the multiple meanings that individual secularization can have. The distinction used by Dobbelaere aims at revealing the locus of the secularization process (macro, mezzo, micro) and so highlights only little of the impact this process has on the different spheres of life.



This is why for our analysis the multi-dimensionality of the secularization concept (through which Dobbelaere understands the intended level of social reality) means the different sub-dimensions of religion that are or can be affected by secularization.

We have to differentiate here among three such sub-dimensions. First, *religious beliefs* that can be traditional (having a historical institutionalized structure of plausibility), non-traditional (recently appeared on the religious market), syncretic, magical, and last but not least non-existent (a magical-religious worldview replaced by a technical-rational one). Most of the secularization studies limit the analysis at this level. A second dimension is represented by the *institutional expression* of these beliefs (going to church during childhood and at present time, attitudes towards the religious institutions and ecclesial policies, etc.) The strong debates regarding the privatization of religious experience and the emergence of a new social type of religiosity, that of *believing without belonging* (Davie, 2000), make necessary the corroboration of this second dimension with respect to religious beliefs. Finally, a third dimension heavily ignored by most of the studies, *the practical behavior*, or more precisely the moral values that are legitimized by a religious attitude. Therefore, we are able to refer to secularization as a demoralization process of the practical behavior (Wilson, 2000).

Therefore, we can easily note the different meanings that religiosity and non-religiosity can have. The coherent presence of all three dimensions of religiosity allows us to talk about a traditional type of religiosity, the denial of all three dimensions allows us to locate a complete secularized mentality. Situating analysis at the level of all three religious dimensions will make possible the revealing of all social types of religiosity that exist between the two above mentioned ideal-types.

Clifford Geertz's approach to religion as a cultural system pays in this case a lot of dividends (Geertz, 1973). His argumentation that the religious worldview is always defined in such a way that the ethos of a community appears as something presupposed and assumed and that the ethos is experienced as a direct consequence of the state of affairs that the worldview depicts (Geertz, 1973:127), has drawn attention to the socio-anthropological backgrounds that make the different typologies of religious mentalities possible.

The position taken within the religious field can be conceptually translated through the fusion between the objective structures (the objectified social field) and the incorporated structures or the religious dispositions (*habitus*). The circumscribed religious dispositions have a generative function that forms genuine categories of social perception and interpretation of the religious experience. This brings at the level of religious mentalities the underlined socio-anthropological frameworks that make these structures possible, but not in a determined and causal way, rather as reciprocally generated field, grounded in the relational properties of the religious structures.

This will allow us to see why the theories of secularization find in the post-socialist spaces an irrefutable confirmation of de-sacralization, an already strong developing process in Western Europe.

## 2. Secularization as de-objectivation of religious beliefs.

Most of the studies regarding the process of secularization are focused on the dynamics and morphology of religious beliefs. At this level secularization manifests itself as an erosion of the belief in the existence of a supernatural dimension (that takes different forms from one religion to another) or as de-objectivation of these beliefs, as a

direct consequence of the emergence of pluralism of plausibility structures within the social world (Berger, 1990). The direct consequence of this is a slow process of de-christianization, understood here either as mobility at the level of religious ideas towards alternative non-Christian religious beliefs (yoga, reincarnation, etc) or as renouncement of the specific religious beliefs in favor of more general and diffuse ones.

In many ways, this process of pluralization of life-worlds, which both in Western and Eastern Europe became synonymous to the process of modernization, was re-experienced and re-enacted with the fall of communism in the socialist states. The communist ideologies acted as an agent of conserving the social world, penetrating and controlling completely the public space and allowing no alternative plausibility structures. The transition which Eastern Europe is undergoing is only secondary an economic transition from state-planned economy to the free market economy; primarily, this transition goes from a unique social world, with an ever increasing level of plausibility structure and a total encompassing and monopolization of social reality, both at macro and micro levels, to a differentiation of social worlds and emergence of multiple competing structures of plausibility.

Although it will be wrong to assume that privatization and de-institutionalization of religion is due solely to the increasing pluralization of social-worlds in post-socialist countries, it is important to notice the two different logics of secularization underlying the two social systems: forced atheization through ideological constraints on the one side, pluralization of life-worlds and emergence of subsequent competing structures of plausibility, on the other side.

What strikes the most when we take a look at the religious data<sup>1</sup> available for the post-socialist society of Romania is the practical failure of the communist ideology to extinguish the religious mentality by a forced atheization of the population. This attempt that was carried out through an elaborate program imposed on all levels of society, church persecution, imprisonment of religious leaders and marginalization of those clinging to "obsolete" religious thinking, left apparently only a limited mark on the Romanian population, so that in spite of this, social scientists are able to speak now about Romania as one of the most religious societies in both Eastern and Western Europe. (Müller, 2004; Pollack, 2001, 2004)

Let us now inquire into the exact meaning of this state of things by analyzing the main structures of the religious representations. On a general level quite a large segment of the Romanian population state the belief in God, moral culpability understood in religious terms, and the power of religion to offer comfort and strength when needed. Each of these religious beliefs is shared by a very large part of the population (91 % for the belief in God, 83.51 % for the belief in sin and 79.84 % in religious strength). This large acceptance of religion is consistent with the self-perception of the Romanians: 80 % of them think of themselves as being religious people whereas only 1 % declare themselves atheists, and 14 % just plain unreligious people.

The context of post-socialist reality and the limited influence that the church has on the public opinion allows us to refute any type of social desirability towards a religious self-perception: popular culture tends to back up a pattern of personality constructed along lines of non-conformism, originality, independence and freedom understood as the abolition of all types of norms, limits and constraints. The enforcing of such interpretative schemes makes it hard to maintain a religious identity because religion on the level of mundane reasoning can become synonymous to the deprivation of liberty ("you do what the church tells you to do").

The paradox of this prominence of religious thinking lays not only in the fact that it goes against the direction set by the communist modernity, through the ideologization and reification of social life and through the massive process of industrialization and urbanization that took place at mid of the last century, but also against the Christian worldview that is still accustomed to the Romanian society, the religious system being almost completely dominated by the Orthodox Church and some important religious minorities (all Christian) belonging to the Catholic, Protestant and Neo-Protestant denominations.

This domination of the Christian Churches in the Romanian public sphere becomes obvious also by looking at the latest national census that took place in 2002, which reveals a complete domination of the Christian faith in the way people perceive their religious identity. If we count all the people that belong to a Christian confession (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Neo-protestant)<sup>2</sup> we find that more than 99.01 % declare themselves Christian. *Why is this a paradox?* Because when we take a closer look at more confined religious structures that define the religious mentalities of today's Romania, we find a great deal of non-acceptance of Christianity at all levels: at the level of religious ideas, religious practice, and at the level of ethical values.

At the level of religious ideas, we find a striking and massive erosion of the Christian ecclesial worldview that acted as a sense giving meta-narrative, which conferred the believer a moral cartography to his life-world. This process affects a great deal of the Romanian population. Only 60.12 % of the Romanians still believe in Heaven, 56.72 % believe in Hell and 51.31 % believe in Life after Death. These religious ideas are articles of faith, important and longstanding doctrines to all the Christian confessions that inhabit the post-socialist religious space, and their less acceptance stands at odd with the wider acceptance of general religious ideas and with the declared religious identity.

We have now a strange situation that is very peculiar and unusual to the dominant and institutionalized Christian religious self-understanding: a great segment of Romanians think about themselves of being religious but do not accept the very Christian definition of what religion is; people believe in God and moral culpability understood in religious terms (sin), but do not believe in the Christian eschatology and in the main articles of faith, believe in religion as a source for spiritual comfort and strength but do not necessarily think of Christianity as being this very religion. Post-socialist Romania is experiencing at the level of religious mentality a great disparity between general religious ideas and specific Christian ones: the first set of beliefs have an acceptance among more than 85 % of the population whereas the second set of religious beliefs only 56 %, giving us almost a third of the population that finds itself in the situation described above.

In conclusion, the analysis of the realm of religious ideas and beliefs has to take into consideration at least two sub-dimensions: *general religious ideas* (that do not always represent a genuine indicator of religiosity, they can mean as well only the presence of a diffuse residue of religious representations) and *specific* and historical institutionalized *religious ideas* (in the case of Romania, the Christian religious ideas).

If we run a factorial analysis at the level of each European country we manage to identify the same two latent factors: one saturated by variables as belief in God, strength and comfort from religion, moral culpability understood in religious terms (sin), the belief in the efficacy of prayer and meditation, the second saturated by variables as belief in heaven, belief in hell, belief in life after death, belief in purgatory, etc (specific Christian religious beliefs).

In all European countries we can notice a strong disparity between these two sets of beliefs, a disparity that grows bigger from a succeeding generation to another, an indisputable sign of an ongoing process of secularization. A growing segment of the European population abandons traditional religiosity for a more general and diffuse one, which does not mean that this will necessarily lead to a complete abandonment of religion as a capable form of meaningful structuring of social reality.

### 3. Secularization as de-institutionalization of religious experience

Another structural effect of the above-described process regards the de-institutionalization of religious experience. If we either refer to an “invisible religion” (Luckmann) or to “believing without belonging” (Davie), the process we have in mind is one that diminishes the function of social integration of the institutionalized religion: the religious community is not so important an element anymore for the enfolding religious experience, and the church tends to play a decreasing role in regulating the existing religiosity.

This leads to the appearance of new structural forms of religion allowing an individualization and privatization of religious experience: both the possibility of a religion “a la carte”, and of an “orthodoxy” that refuses to give an institutionalized expression of this belief represent a direct consequence of this process.

Seeing the memory of society as foundation of the communitarian dimension of religion, Grace Davie analyzes the shift in the way societies memorize as cause of the decline of institutionalized religion (Davie, 2000:30). This is a consequence not of an interior process of rationalization, as Peter Berger argued, but of the structural impossibility of the contemporary societies to articulate a collective memory which leads to the emergence of a new social type of religiosity (believing without belonging).

This is the reason why Davie pleads for a weak theory of secularization: at individual level, societies are as religious as ever, but at collective level they tend to be amnesic. We will find both high levels of religious beliefs and a significant decline in the institutionalization of these beliefs (going to Church is a classic indicator). This discrepancy, argues Davie, should not be interpreted as a sign of secularization of society, but as a shift in the way collective memory operates.

Systematically modern societies fail to ground social mechanisms that are necessary to sustain collective memory. At the societal level, religion loses its significance because it does not succeed in finding collective support for the religious experience which is par excellence an act of collective remembrance (Durkheim's influence can here be easily noticed). This is why the social form of the religion specific to these societies is one that lacks an institutional integration, or in Davie's terms of believing without belonging.

Davie's thesis is that because of this structural process, the European societies will rather develop a private religiosity, but will keep a close relation with the institutionalized religious forms because of the mobilizing potential they have in times of uncertainties. The relationship between believers that belong and those that do not is realized through a special form of memory, namely the vicarious memory.

If Davie's approach to the issue of secularization succeeds to capture conceptually an important aspect of the modern social condition of religion, empirically her approach has some inadequacies and shortcomings. The category of those that belong but do not believe is obtained by subtracting the segment of churchgoers from the per-

centage of those with nominal belonging to a religious confession or another. Nominal belonging is seen here as a minimal indicator of a presupposed religiosity and so loses sight of the degree to which this belonging overlaps with the level and the types of religious beliefs existing in society.

We could this way easily see that religious belonging is a very weak indicator of religiosity: it acts as a means of affirming a cultural identity (Catholic versus Protestant in North Ireland, Orthodox versus Greek-Catholic in Romania, etc.) or simply the religious origin of the parents. Moreover, religious belonging does not overlap with what we have called general religious beliefs and even more with the specific religious beliefs.

This is why we have to pose the question of why should there be a need for a person who only manifests a general, diffuse religiosity, not a specific Christian one, to give an institutional expression of this belief within Christian settings (going to Church)? Believing without belonging is a valid category only for the case of those that manifest a specific Christian worldview. This is why the segment of those who believe but do not belong has to be looked for within this segment of the population.

The de-christianization on the level of religious beliefs has its correlative on the level of religious practice, which can be best put into light by revealing the attending rates of religious service. This indicator, a very privileged one by most of the social scientists who try to depict the secularization process undergone by a country, has in our framework of analyses just a limited power of prediction.

This is mainly for two important reasons: first of all, the pluralization of life-worlds and its effects on the structures of plausibility of religious worlds make it hard for every cognitive minority to give a coherent expression through objectified institutionalized meanings (and hence, the large process of privatization of religious experience), and secondly, because the de-christianization of religious mentalities which takes place in Romanian society makes way for alternative non-Christian world-views.

Church attendance gains its significance only within a specific Christian worldview, and what becomes evident by looking at this, is the growing numbers of those that do not understand to give a specific institutionalized expression of their religious faith by going to church: 53.10 % of the population never or almost never attends religious services whereas 46 % go regularly to church. This strong polarization gives us an idea of the massiveness of both still active Christian mentalities on one hand, and the unleashing of a large religious segment by disconnecting religion from a specific Christian worldview on the other hand.

We are able to conclude that the church loses its privileged position of housing the religious experience and that the process of de-institutionalization of religious experience leads to structural changes to the locus of the church in society. This becomes evident also when we analyze the legitimating of different roles of the church within Romanian contemporary society by the different demographical segments. At the general level of the Romanian society there is a growing tendency to limit the involvement of the church to strictly spiritual issues and to decline its competence regarding moral, family-related, social and political matters.

The way the roles of the church are perceived in society constitutes a genuine sign of societal secularization. The more the population legitimizes the involvement of the church in the different spheres of life, the less the differentiation between the religious and the secular sphere and so the less societal secularized a society.

We can easily note from the table below the structural changes occurring in the past twenty years in this area (differences between age groups). The younger generation



tends to legitimize less and less the involvement of the church in social issues and limit its competence to strictly spiritual issues. The legitimate roles that a church can play are shrinking with younger generations. There are significant differences at the inter-generational level in regards to the way the church is perceived, leading to gradual erosion to the legitimating of church involvement in the different spheres of life.

Table 1. Legitimizing the involvement of the church

	18 - 34	35 - 54	55 - 70+
Church and spirituality	86.4 %	88.7 %	91.5 %
Church and morality	75.2 %	79.6 %	87.0 %
Church and family	71.8 %	76.6 %	86.8 %
Church and society	38.1 %	52 %	66.2 %

#### 4. Secularization as de-moralization

Another important aspect of secularization is related to the impact this process has on the practical sphere of life. The disconnecting of the religious meta-narrative from the social system has as a consequence the growing difficulty of the system to assure an efficient integration of society. At religious system level this leads not only to a de-institutionalization of religious experience (as we have seen above) but also to a large scale process of de-moralization. The community, as Durkheim has shown, represents both a factor of objective condition of salvation (by fusing a world-view with an ethos, the religious experience is legitimated by the belonging social structure) and a generative force of functional norms that aims at a coherent and harmonious social integration of a community (norms that have a religious grounding).

The concept of de-moralization captures the correlative effect at the practical level of crisis in modern societies to generate norms by which legitimacy is shared by the majority of the social body and of its incapacity to supply a nomic meaningful social universe.

Bryan Wilson notices in his attempt to define this process of de-moralization: *“the secularized salvation of modern times surrenders the community: the survivor becomes the self”* (Wilson, 2000:46). The new soteriologies of modernity will insist not only on the structural possibility of a private religiosity (as opposed to the traditional one that legislated the religious community as the only “true” medium of pursuing salvation) but also on the abolishing of all the norms of the community as a consubstantial part of the religious experience, operating this way one of the most important scission of post-modern religiosity: between the spiritual and the moral.

This scission, translated at practical level through a genuine process of de-moralization, can be traced not only to the level of religious beliefs (by identifying a religiosity without any relevance for the moral conduct) but also through a radical transformation of the way religious institutions are perceived as well: the degree of competence that contemporary society assigns to the religious institution is limited strictly to a spiritual role, the social, political and moral role falling out of its legitimacy.

One of the idioms of the secularization theory is thus the decline of moral order. The roots of the process of de-moralization have to be sought within the structural devel-

opments of the economic sphere. Wilson traces the genealogy of this process to the hyper-technicization of work and to the reduction of moral competences specific to each profession, to simple technical procedures that led to a de-personalization of work order (a genuine weberian argument: the primordial locus of secularization were the social segments drawn first in the industrial revolution).

With modernity, social life is immersed and organized not locally as in the traditional communities, but in a societal way, the agent of this transformation being the nation-state (Wilson 2000:184). Because of the great expansion of the economic system and the development of an impetuous bureaucratic administration, and the increasing urban agglomeration (making Weber depict modernity as a hyper-rationalization of the life-world), we are witnessing a decrease of integrated and strongly related communities and so implicitly of religion and traditional forms of morality.

The modern social system functions not by providing an all encompassing moral order, but by elaborating and efficiently using the rational means of determination and control of conduct, and by a prescription of an exact role within the economic system. The main effect of this process on the values system is represented by the replacement of substantial values with procedural ones (Wilson 200:191) and the emergence of a process of ethic rationalization.

In socialist countries, where modernity came very late into being, and the process of urbanization and industrialization were extensively planned by the communist authorities, the moral structures were less eroded and the traditional forms of marriages were further perpetuated (Rotariu 2003:217). By imposing a “socialist morality” against the “decadent bourgeois culture”, the communist state employed an extensive cultural hegemony, promoting traditional moral values (especially the values related to the family), and legitimizing them through the enactment of secular order. Moral transgression became now anti-national sins (Kligman 2000:53).

What Daniel Bell designates as “ideological prescribed social order” (Bell 2001:270) includes not only the legitimized political attitudes, but also the different moral institutionalizations meant to create the “new man” and the mechanisms of a social reality that reproduces a moral order drawn from the guardianship of the church (which becomes now either “imperialistic” or “retrograde”) and legitimized by a communist ideology<sup>3</sup>.

This explains why for many of the post-socialist states the new era of freedom meant on one side religious freedom (and so an intensification of the religious activities in most post-socialist countries, including Romania) and on the other side the liberty to abolish all constraining social norms (adultery ceasing to be a crime punished by the penal code, for example).

With the help of a factorial analysis we can reduce the complexity of data regarding the diverse axiological options of the respondents to their latent dimension. The solution obtained after the factorial extraction shows the existence of four factors (dimensions of morality) and the way the different variables saturate this factor facilitates the identification of the meaning of each dimension<sup>4</sup>.

The first factor is saturated by variables that measure the different aspects of sexual conduct (homosexuality, adultery, casual sex, divorce and abortion) and circumscribes in the field of moral behavior those ethical values that are legitimized and encouraged by the church. This factor of family conduct morality is strongly correlated with the religious practice, and in the segment of the population that attributes the church not only a spiritual function but also a moral and a social one, we find the highest factorial scores.

The second factor is saturated by the variable of divorce and abortion. In all other European countries these variable saturates the first described factor. At least two reasons can be identified for this: a) the majority of the European populations that was included in the factorial analysis is catholic, and the catholic ecclesial practice is extremely intransigent regarding divorce in comparison with the orthodox one (Ghitulescu, 2004); b) the public attitude towards abortion in Romania, in spite of the strong opposition of the orthodox church, has experienced an important liberalization in post-socialist times, and is still marked by the memory of repression of abortion and the enforcement of reproduction imposed by the communist authorities (Kligman, 2000).

The third factor is saturated by variables that measure the ethical attitudes towards the institutions of the state (to claim benefits from the state when not entitled, not to pay taxes, commercial transactions, lying when one has a personal interest). This factor of fiscal morality has its genealogy in the construction of spirits by the state, in what Bourdieu calls the “formative action of lasting dispositions” of the State (1999:92, 80-82) and its capacity to legitimize its own objectivation as a principle of vision and division of cognitive structures (“the acts of subordinations are cognitive acts”- Bourdieu 1999:91) that operate at the level of collective mentalities.

The forth factor sums up variables that specify a civic conduct, understood not in its political sense but as the care for public goods: to throw litter in public spaces, to drive under the influence of alcohol, to exceed the limited speed and to joyride. If the other two dimensions of morality have their specific institutional field (the Church, and the State) the factor of public conduct morality can be harder institutionally circumscribed. We consider this type of morality as having its support in the existence of a civic community and we are able to find it at those people interested in the well functioning of the local community and its security.

Out of all these factors only the factor of sexual and familial conduct is strongly correlated with the variable of religious practice and the importance of God in life, therefore in the elaboration of the fundamental structures of religiosity we will use only this last factor. As we can notice in the table below all the dimensions of morality are significantly declining at an intergenerational level<sup>5</sup>, a fact that indicates a strong structural mutation in the last twenty years at the level of the practical sphere of life.

**Table 2. The erosion of moral values**

	18 - 34	35 - 54	55 - 70+
Sexual moral conduct	-.4806	.0961	.4103
Familial moral conduct	-.2021	-.0501	.2741
Civic moral conduct	-.4576	.0743	.3649
Fiscal moral conduct	-.4271	.0449	.3649

## 5. The religious space in post-socialist Romania

With the help of cluster analysis we are able to group the four<sup>6</sup> dimensions of religion into typologies of religiosity, and then with the help of homogeneity analysis we will outline the socio-anthropological profile of these religious typologies. The main goal of this approach is to identify the main religious mentalities typologies existing within the post-socialist religious space and the socio-anthropological structures that condition these mentalities.

The obtained result shows the existence of five main typologies, and the analysis of the mean values of the five identified clusters allows us to conceptually define them.

The five obtained clusters can be defined as: *traditional religious mentality* -40% (the acceptance of all four religious dimensions), *liberal religious mentality* -19% (the acceptance of general religious beliefs and the specific Christian ones, medium church attendance but non-acceptance of the moral dimension), *non-belonging religious mentality* -14% (believing without belonging, no church attendance), *non-traditional religious mentality* -19% (the acceptance of general religious beliefs but not the specific Christian ones) and *secularized mentality* -8% <sup>7</sup>.

Situating the analysis at the level of the identified typologies of mentalities we can outline the complexity of religious phenomena and we can settle the secularization debate not in two steps (the religious moment and the secularized moment), avoiding

thus the assumption of a nonlinear and deterministic process. Our approach will try to identify the multiple mutations that were produced within the religious field itself by outlining the mobility from the traditional religious mentality to a non-traditional religious mentality and by the other possible trajectories.

Graphic 1 reproduces the frequency distribution of the five identified mentalities. It is now easy to see the multiple meaning that the term religiosity and non-religiosity can have: taking into consideration the specific dimension of religion (religious belief, religious morality and religious

practice) we can notice several critical variations from the ideal type of traditional religiosity (understood here as the absence of a differentiation process of the formal concept of the subjective, social and external world<sup>8</sup> and therefore as a presence of a religious interpretation of the different social sub-systems).

The debates regarding the secularization process tend to be settled by taking into consideration only one dimension of religion or when multiple dimension are taken into consideration they are analyzed successively, without keeping in mind that these dimensions are part of a complex structure of religiosity grounded in a socio-anthropological setting and situated in a specific religious field (Bourdieu). Some of the methodological errors of the different theories regarding religious change have their origin here.

The belief in divinity represents in the majority of studies the most important indicator when operationalizing the dimension of religiosity. The implicit assumption of this equivalence is the identification of the secularization process with a specific ideology, atheism (that in the socialist countries became the official ideology of the State) to which another ideology is a methodological counterpoint, that of religious belief (most of the time undifferentiated morphologically).

Using as a tool of analysis the religious mentalities grounded in the fundamental

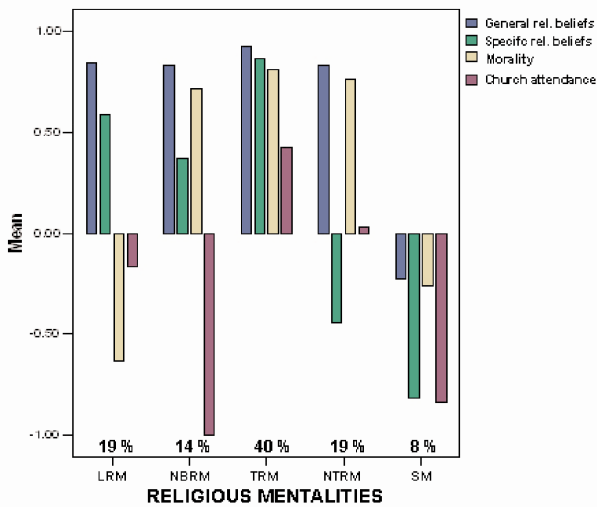


Figure 1. Cluster analysis of main structures of religion

structures of religion it is easy to notice the specific meaning that the belief in a divinity has. The prediction value of the fact that 91.6% of the Romanian population believes in God is limited by the unknowing of what type of religiosity circumscribes this belief and so the religious meaning that the belief in God has.

We can this way find out that almost 40% of the Romanian society believe in God (and in the other general religious beliefs) concomitantly with the belief in a Christian form of this religion (specific religious beliefs), express this faith in an institutional setting (church attendance), and manifest a religious structured morality.

Almost 19 % of those that believe in God no longer accept the Christian world-view as a genuine expression of their faith and do not legitimize anymore the Christian pastoral as the authority that regulates the practical sphere of their life and the institutional forms within which their faith can express itself. This segment of the population is looking for alternative forms of religiosity.

Only 8% of the Romanian society has a non-religious (*secularized mentality*); a percent rather small taking into consideration the fact that the communist ideology acted as an agent of conserving the social world, not allowing its supremacy of controlling the public sphere to be contested by any other structure of plausibility that was trying to supply an alternative definition of reality. We can notice the practical failure of the communist ideology to eradicate the religious mentality through forced atheization. We will see in the next section this segment of population that does not share a religious world-view.

The two other types of religiosity represent a significant modification of the traditional Christian religious mentality: at the level of the institutionalized religious expression (as a consequence of the privatization of religious experience) on one side, and at the level of practical behavior (as a consequence of the de-moralization process) on the other side.

The *non-belonging religious mentality* represents a modification resulted directly from the process of the privatization of religious experience. As we have shown above, the de-monopolization of religious tradition throws the individual conscience into the new reality of co-existence of multiple worldviews and so in the situation of socio-religious pluralism.

Because of increased difficulties in legitimizing and maintaining their own religious worldview we witness the tendency of religion to lose the capacity of structuring social-reality in a meaningful way. Religion maintains its subjective plausibility but loses its social objectivity (Berger) and so it starts being an important part of the private and individual experience, but not of the public one.

For Grace Davie this process of privatization of religious experience means firstly the emergence of a new type of religiosity: that of believing without belonging and of a specific type of memory, the vicarious memory, that delegates the right of representation to a small minority (the clergy and those who believe and belong, i.e. traditional religious mentality).

The *liberal religious mentality* represents a second important modification of the traditional religious mentality and it manifests itself as a rejection of the church authority to regulate the moral practical sphere of life.

It will be an error to state that the religious experience of this segment of the population is a superficial one. It represents the direct product of contemporary society and it is strongly impregnated with its values. This type of religious mentality mirrors best the internal religious tension of the present and the structural changes of Romanian society in the process of transition from a closed society to an open one that is struggling



to find its own identity.

Our thesis is that a specific trait of post-socialism in Christian countries is the emergence of exactly this type of religiosity. This is a result of religious recoil after the constant communist censorship in regards to non-materialistic definitions of reality on one side, and the disappearance of the communist state that exerted a moralizing guardianship on the son of the nation, on the other side.

What most of the analysts of religious change in post-socialist countries have identified as a genuine process of de-secularization passes in our analysis as a case of secularization of the practical sphere of life at the moment of the religious quest itself<sup>9</sup>.

The five types of mentalities above identified and described with the help of a cluster analysis represent five types of fundamental positions taken within the religious field that are a direct result of the fusion of the objective structures (social field) and the incorporated religious dispositions (habitus). The religious disposition has a generative function that forms a genuine social perception and interpretation of religious experience.

These (non)-religious dispositions use interpretative resources available in a common stock of knowledge with whose help the entire social reality is rendered meaningful. We can this way notice different grades of “enchantment” and “disenchantment” of the world and the legitimizing mechanism of the more or less coherent structures of plausibility, and so we can observe the profound mutation taking place in a society in which the “opium of the masses” had to disappear once the nationalizing of the means of production has taken place.

## 6. Religious mentalities and socio-anthropological backgrounds

With the help of homogeneity analysis we will try in the following section to group the five typologies of mentalities in regards to their socio-demographical structure. The purpose of this approach is to outline the way in which these typologies are structured by the anthropological backgrounds that make them possible, the underlined thesis of this approach being the existence of a dependency between these backgrounds and the religious mentalities that saturate them.

In our analysis we will use three important variables for the religious phenomena: the residence locus: urban / rural, (the process of societalization contributed to the dislocation of the traditional forms of morality that needed first the support of a community), the age (important to determine the period of socialization: before the war, the communist period, the post-communist period), the level of education (a high degree of education offers a high potential of contesting the moral norms).

The representation of the categories of these four variables in bi-dimensional space succeeds in explaining 80 % inertia. From the way they are grouped we can easily sketch the socio-demographical profile of these religious typologies.

The traditional religious mentality is mostly a rural phenomenon, with a low educational capital and with an aged demographical profile. The persons that share such a religious typology are mainly persons that were religiously socialized within families that attended often the church, and therefore manifested an intense religious participation during their childhood. If we accept the thesis that religious values are crystallized and stabilized at an adult age, then at an inter-generational level we can see that the generation born before the second world-war manifest prevalently a traditional religious mentality and so a very conservative attitude towards issues related to family, church and state.

The low educational level of this people explains the absence of a religious rationalization that becomes manifest when affirming a traditional image of the divinity in which they believe (a personal being rather than a spirit or life force) and the belief in some magical elements. The rural area impregnates this religious mentality with a traditional profile manifested through a moral normativization and a religiously grounded morality on one side, and a strong social control that aims at the reduction of social anomaly on the other side.

It may be easily seen that as we ascend the temporal axis the generation do not become less religiously (because of the fact that the generations that grew up in the post-socialist period manifest an intense interest towards religion) but share only a different type of religiosity that structures in a different way the different spheres of life.

At the opposite pole *the secularized mentality*, as was expected, represents an urban phenomenon, with a highest educational capital and with a medium age. Mostly this mentality is encountered in people who were born and grew up in the socialist period. If at the level of religious ideas, atheism can be analytically substituted to the secularized mentality, then Romania distinguishes itself alongside Poland and Malta as one of the least secularized countries both within Eastern and Western Europe.

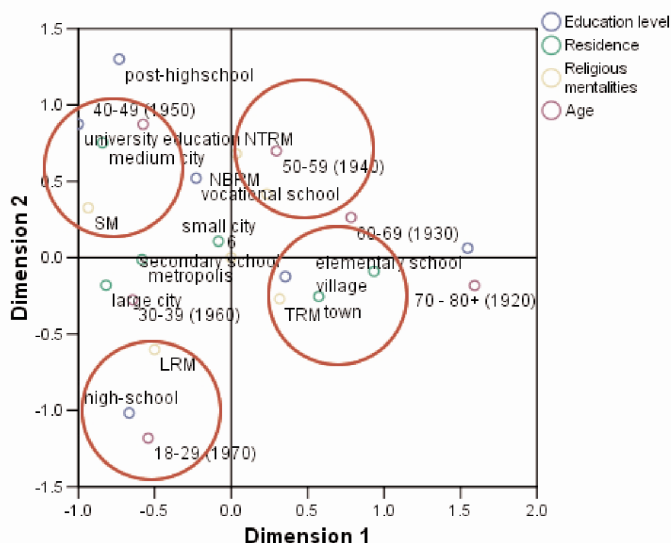


Figure 2. Religious mentalities and the socio-anthropological backgrounds

Unlike Poland where the Catholic Church played an important role in the forming of an anti-communist resistance and where the secular forces were counteracted by a religious interpretation of life and social world, the Romanian social system did not offer such an alternative.

At the level of public sphere such a religious counter-ideology was not able to form itself and the religious system was able to survive only as long as it did not manifest any critical attitude towards communist ideology. This weakens the religious communication within a society and contributes to the emergence of secularized mentality.

We still have to ask the question of why in Romania, unlike in other communist countries like East Germany, Estonia, and the Check Republic (where the secularized mentality has a share of 40-50%) the communist regime did not manage to secularize the social system more, in spite of the ideological authority that backed up its policy.

We think that the answer to this question lies precisely in the socio-anthropological background active at the level of a country, namely the level of modernization that a country has. Romania continues to be in the post-socialist period one of the less mod-

ernized countries in Europe, with a low level of educational capital and a high rural sector.

Religious mentalities are more dependent on the structures of daily life than on the ideology and propaganda of the state. The rationalization of life-world has as its correlative the emergence of a post-conventional moral representation and a scientific image of the world; therefore the absence of a state enforced atheist ideology, but the presence of a modernization process has as a consequence a stronger rationalization of the spheres of life and so a stronger secularization. Western Europe has a higher degree of secularization than Eastern Europe in spite of more than half of a century of forced secularization and the methodical attempt at the eradication of the "opium of masses".

The *non-traditional religious mentality* has a socio-demographical structure similar to the secularized mentality: an urban setting, a socializing period after the second world war and a medium educational level. The non-traditional religious mentality experiences strongly the impact of modernization at the level of religious beliefs (manifested through the rejection of the Christian representations) and at the practical level as well. This type of social mentality keeps only a diffuse religious perspective on the life-world and is looking for alternative forms of religiosity.

The *non-belonging religious mentality* (believing without belonging) represents from the point of view of the socio-demographical structures the closest one to the traditional religious mentality. The people that share such a religious mentality have a higher educational level than the one that share a traditional religious mentality, but the average hardly exceeds the level of eight years of education. As a generational profile, the people that share such a religious mentality have an aged demographical profile, most of them living in the rural part of Romania.

Sharing the same habitus within the social space as the traditional religious mentality, the non-belonging mentality represents a significant structural modification of the former: not at the level of the practical sphere or at the level of religious ideas but as regards the necessity of an institutional expression of their faith. This has as its correlative the tendency to limit the church role to only moral and spiritual matters, and to decline its competence in matters regarding social and political life.

The persons that share such a religious mentality continue to religiously legitimize the practical sphere of life without considering the church an important medium for the expression of their faith. This type of people has a strong social religious socialization, the decline of church attendance occurring only at a later stage.

The *liberal religious mentality* represents a relatively recent phenomenon, with a high educational level, an urban setting and a young demographical profile. This type of people manifest an intense interest in religious matters but the position expressed in the field of religiosity represents a double negation: on one side that of the traditional religious mentality because of its moral conservatism, and on the other side that of the secular mentality for its lack of interest in matters regarding spiritual aspects.

The liberal religious mentality represents a hybrid of the Romanian post-socialist world that reflects both the structural modifications at the level of secularization of the practical sphere of life and that of a growing interest in spiritual matters. The people that share such a religious mentality are most of all people that are in search of a spirituality and find in the institution of church not so much a moral regulator but a supplier of a way (among other ways) to get closer to a perceived transcendence.

## 7. Final remarks

Some of the post-socialist countries of Europe experienced after the fall of communism what some called a religious revival. Both anthropologists and sociologists alike were sure that they discovered serious evidence against the case of the secularization theory. What unfortunately most of them failed to observe was the particular shape and form of this religious growth and the structural changes of religious representations triggered by the post-communist period.

On one side this religious growth meant moving away from traditional religious expressions towards new religious forms: oriental beliefs, especially yoga and new age movements, and on the other side a strong rejection of any institutionalized religious authority. For example for the young generation that grew up in the new post-socialist world this meant both a religious quest on one side, and freedom from any kind of bonds that tended to restrict their liberty at the moral-practical level on the other side. Religion became spirituality and established orthodox religious identities were questioned with new cultural means.

On a general level Romania is one of the most religious countries of both Eastern and Western Europe, in spite of more than half of a century of forced atheization and ideologization of the public sphere. But, as we have shown above, the religious mentalities are strongly dependent of a specific socio-anthropological background: one that has a strong lack of modernization, i.e. a high rural sector, low educational capital, weak industrialization. Romania is one of the most religious countries in Europe precisely because it has one of the least modernized social systems on the old continent.

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## Note:

1 All the data that I am using in this article is provided by a research carried out in Romania in 2000 by the European Value Survey.

2 In spite of major differences, all of them share a basically similar Christian worldview, the only thing important in the logic of the argument unfolded here.

3 We have shown elsewhere (*Patterns of morality in Europe*, Studia, forthcoming) why this is the reason of the existence of stronger conservative values in ex-communist countries by comparison with Western Europe.

4 The factorial scores have been obtained with the Bartlett method. For the advantage of this method see Culic 204: 115. I have used the principal axis factoring and the original solution was rotated with the help of the "direct oblim" method. A solution with four factors explains 54.79% of the variance, the KMO index is .849.

5 The difference for each two averages is significant at the probability level of  $p=0.000$  (the Bonferroni test).

6 For the cluster analysis the following variables were used: factorial scores for the general religious ideas (believe in god, religious person, comfort and strength from religion), factorial scores for specific religious ideas (believe in hell, heaven and life after death), factorial scores for the sexual moral conduct (see above) and church attendance. The grouping of cases has been realized in two steps: first with the help of a hierarchical agglomerative method (Ward method and squared Euclidian distances) we have identified the number and the centroids of the clusters and then with an iterative method we have managed to obtain the final clusters. The stability of clusters has been tested by dividing the sample into two random parts and by repeating the above steps.

7 We will use the following abbreviations: *traditional religious mentality* (TRM), *liberal religious mentality* (LRM) *non-belonging religious mentality* (NBRM) *non-traditional religious mentality* (NTRM) *secularized mentality* (SM).

8 HABERMAS, Jurgen (1986). *The theory of communicative action, vol. 1 - Reason and the rationalization of society*; Cambridge, Polity Press.

9 C.C. affirms alongside other people of her age the constant need of religion and



the permanence of religious quest within mainstream Christianity, church attendance and the belonging to fellowship groups within the church. Doing this, she affirms within our focus-group the most religious position, very clearly differentiated from the affirmed secularized position and the invisible religion position of others. But she insists to add that when it comes to the moral values although she disagrees with abortion and pro-choice advocates she is not at all agreeing with the Church attempt to control her intimate life, especially with having sex before marriage. Other agrees as well with this de-moralized spirituality.

ANTON CARPINSCHI

## The culture of acknowledgement and the horizons of truth

### Abstract:

*Focused on the dynamic of the relations between truth and acknowledgement, this study brings forward the following series of hypotheses: 1) between “the essence of truth”, as revelation and referential experience, cognitive and moral supreme resort and the various embodiments of partial, temporary and relative truths, there is an operational space of thinking and acting, favorable to the comprehensive truths, as we call them; 2) within the unceasing aspiration of overcoming the partial truths and asymptotical closeness to “the essence of truth”, the comprehensive truth is the wide-awakeness of the self-conscience haunted by worries and doubts and which, through the quests for faith and reason, becomes capable of acknowledgement; 3) from an extensional point of view, the comprehensive truth is the acknowledgement in the informational-cognitive area, and from the intentional point of view, the comprehensive truth is the acknowledgement in the axiological and moral areas; 4) if by means of comprehension we acknowledge something or someone, then comprehension and acknowledgement interact with each other, and the path towards a culture of acknowledgement can be realized by living the comprehensive truth as a truth of acknowledgement oriented to understanding and communication; 5) the path towards a culture of acknowledgement implies the establishment and implementation of a human model, a real challenge for each of us. The anthropological model that this study suggests starts from the dynamic of the hypostases of the human being. According to this model, the human nature, as the natural essence of what human means and the human condition of moral and spiritual fulfillment, meet in the human essence synthesized in what Pope John Paul II called “the acting person”<sup>1</sup>. By shaping the real human being, a fallible and creative being, through the dynamic of his hypostasis, we come to a comprehensive truth regarding the human being, a truth on which the culture of acknowledgement is founded. Moreover, the main idea of our demarche is that between acknowledgement and comprehension there is a deep, organic connection for the comprehensive truth that lies at the basis of the culture of acknowledgement.*

### Introduction

The reasoning of these hypotheses is structured in the present study as it follows:  
I) The horizons of truth and the need for comprehension. II) The *comprehensive truth* as truth of acknowledgement. III) The fallible being, the hypostases of the human being, and the comprehensive truth. IV) Comprehension and truth: towards a culture of acknowledgement. This means that, after drifting briefly through the “ins and outs of truth” in the theory of knowledge and in the hermeneutical one, with the help of the interactions between anxiety, doubt, faith and reason, we will rebuild the condition of self-consciousness that, through the understanding and acknowledgement of someone or something and through the orientation towards communication and communion,

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### Key words:

acknowledgement, truth, comprehensive truth, culture of acknowledgement, hypostases of the human.

acquires the name of comprehensive truth. Then, starting from the hypostases of the human being, we will elaborate an anthropological model to define *the fallible human being*, author of the comprehensive truth oriented towards the culture of acknowledgement. This is because the infallible person, free from worries and doubts, living in revelations and truth is an ideal-type. The fallible human being is, in fact, the actual being who needs comprehension and acknowledgement and the one who is, in return, capable of showing them after long searches. The fallible person is the one, who, by living the comprehensive truths, trains his/her ability to acknowledge, first his/her own fallibility, thus aspiring to a culture of acknowledgement.

## The Horizons of Truth and the Need for Comprehension

The researches in the field of logics and epistemology contributed to the accretion of a rich description of truth that contains a series of important aspects: the nature, the criteria, the dimensions, the types of truth etc. The correlation to reality, the verification of the coherence of reasoning, and the obtaining of success have opened horizons of expression and, at the same time, have formed the criteria for legitimating the truth. In this respect, it is not by coincidence that we come to speak of the truth-correlation, the truth-coherence, and the truth-utility. Experience, faith, and reason have become sources and ways to define truth, each by itself. At the same time, truth has acquired different forms: *a priori* and *a posteriori*, analytic and synthetic, absolute and relative, abstract and concrete, theoretical and empirical, formal and experimental. Additionally, according to the existential recordings, truth may have a factual, logical, scientific, artistic, philosophical, or religious manifestation.

The semantic theory of truth elaborated by Alfred Tarski provided a wide path in the research of truth. More precisely, he came up with a method of formalizing systematically the relations between expressions and the objects they designate. Through the understanding of the logical consequence as the transmitting of truth and the rehabilitation of the notion of truth through correlation, Tarski introduced a realistic spirit in the frequently haunted field of logics, because of the excesses of coherency, characterized by a sterile formalism. On the road opened by Tarski, Hans Herzberger revealed the semantic aspect of the alethic dimensions, by explaining away the assumptions of meaning that go along with the fact of correlation and turn it into a possible reality. This way, he introduced the semantic competence, *the truth having the meaning of correlation + semantic competence*. The distinction in the field of semantics between the theory of meaning and the theory of reference allowed the study of the referential dimensions of truth. The idea of correlation itself constitutes a referential dimension of truth, with different degrees. Following the same direction, Petre Botezatu demonstrated that the four alethic dimensions- correlation, representation, reference and information- require an evaluation system that leads, in the end, to a synthetic definition of truth as, "evaluation of the degree of correlation between a set of representations and a set of objects, a correlation endowed with representative capacity, referential force, and information transport"<sup>2</sup>. The integration of the semantic dimensions of truth within a conceptual system permitted the re-evaluation of the theory of the truth-correlation, within the epistemological context of the complementarities of the theories of correlation, coherence, and utility.

The variety of the incomplete perspectives on the research of truth brings us again, through relation to the question of hermeneutics, development, and interpretation, to the

old idea of “the circle of comprehension”, very important in the methodology of reasoning in philosophy and socio-human sciences. As it has already been said, the circularity of comprehension sends us back to the human being and to the tout ensemble of the forms of his coming to be. Comprehension developed gnoseology not only towards the hermeneutic universe, but also in the direction of phenomenology and ontology. First found out in the vocabulary of modern post-Kantian gnoseology of the emancipation of socio-human sciences, “the comprehension of comprehension” has evolved through the “universal hermeneutics”, or Schleiermacher’s science of comprehension, Dilthey’s historical hermeneutics, M. Weber’s comprehensive sociology. Afterwards, through the opening of Heidegger’s, Ricoeur’s, or Gadamer’s hermeneutics it became a phenomenology and an ontology, a comprehension method perceived as the universal human element and, first of all, as the human element in “the production of works” and the structure of the means of being human.

In the context of these acquisitions of the theory of knowledge according to hermeneutics, phenomenology, and ontology and starting from the set of hypotheses we have already mentioned, we decided to delineate a *theory of the culture of acknowledgement founded on the comprehensive truth* perceived as acknowledgement-truth as practiced by the fallible human being. It is a known fact that, within the socio-human knowledge of the late modernity, the hermeneutical exegeses, the relativist-contextual intercessions, and the systemic epistemology of complexity have developed more and more. In the context of an intellectual anti-positivist atmosphere, the comprehensive approaches always become more popular<sup>3</sup>. In our opinion, the heterogeneity of the meaningful socio-human facts, the interdependency of the subject and object of knowledge and action, the knowledge acquired through synthetical intuition and lived experience, the emphatic attitude and holding the subject responsible, the sensitization regarding the ecological, historical and multicultural contexts, the analysis of contradictions and the assumptions of paradoxes concerning the socio-human complexity, as well as the preeminence of qualitative analyses, turn the comprehensive paradigm into an adequate analytical model. This model is characterized by a gradated way of thinking, regardful of the consequences and sideslips of the hyper-rationalism, determinism or historicism, all the more so in the era of postmodern challenges.

Engendered by the searches of faith and reason, constantly haunted by worries and doubts, *the comprehensive truth coagulates the self-conscience, the trust in oneself, and one’s own confirmation through acknowledgement and communication with the others*. Developed within the horizon of personal self-conscience, the way to the self-recognizing truth and acknowledgment of others implies the constant meeting between faith and reason, because – as we may read in the first lines of the Encyclical letter *Fides et ratio* – “faith and reason are similar to two wings by means of which the human soul raises towards the contemplation of truth. God is the One who placed the desire to discover the truth in the human being’s heart and, this way, the desire of knowing Him so that, by knowing and loving Him one may discover the whole truth about oneself”<sup>4</sup>. The path of the truth towards the whole truth about one’s self is, after all, the road of the comprehensive truth through faith and reason lived by the self-conscience, through “the dirt of the philosophical truth” and “the memory of the theological truth”<sup>5</sup>, that constantly entwine.

In one of his aphorisms, Lucian Blaga said that philosophy was the flat symbol of life since it lowers its tone with a semitone, thus passing onto a thicker register. Going back to a paraphrase we ventured in a previous study<sup>6</sup>, we could make the following

affirmations: *the philosophical conscience* is, in its own turn, “the flat symbol of philosophy” because, in its complex psycho-spiritual condition, it manifests into a state of maximum lucidity towards the value of the various demarches of philosophy. The philosophic conscience is, “when it comes to life and in the place it riches the fulfillment, a product of the supreme vigilance of the human being. (...) it is <something> permanently requiring to be done, very rarely something already done, and taken once and for all as an alleged <canon>, that should only become aware of its own existence”<sup>7</sup>. As it forms the self-conscience, the philosophical conscience is the attempt of the human being, as a rational being, of becoming wiser and more comprehensive, in itself. What we want to do here is to make a parallel between *philosophical conscience* and *comprehension*. As a personal act of rational living and understanding of the other, the philosophical conscience watches over the path of reflexivity towards measure and towards reasonable acceptance of the differences by means of facing up to the responsibilities and acknowledgement of our own limits. Counter-balancing the dangerous, amoral side-slips of the “science with no conscience”, the theist and manipulating ones of ideology and propaganda, or fundamentalism, *philosophic conscience as the acting comprehension* manifests “in the natural light of reason” and involves the ability to understand and interpret, judge and discern.

Challenged by worries and anxieties, fears and doubts raised from within and outside it, the human being starts attending to the soul through faith and reason. In this respect, one encounters various ways of one’s cognition and adjustment to the world: the objective cognition of reality by means of scientific acquisitions, by subjective cognition, by means of artistic creation and esthetic experience, by cognition through faith and revelation, as well as by the adjustment of the human being to the divine perfection. Through science, one comes to know the causes and effects in the light of reason and, according to these, one can project and build technologies guaranteeing one’s welfare and comfort. Through art, one can live esthetic experiences and states of mind that facilitate the understanding of the others and of oneself. Through cognition and experience “in the supernatural light of faith”, as a limited being, one can relate to the divine Referential, as Thomas of Aquinas said: “it was necessary for the human being, in order to be redeemed, to discover what lies beyond human reason, with the help of the divine revelation. (...) Thus, beyond the philosophical disciplines studied by means of reason, it was necessary for the human being to receive the divine doctrine through revelation”<sup>8</sup>, as “there is no impediment for any another science to study these things, according to the way they are revealed in light of the divine revelation, the same things which are developed by the philosophical disciplines to the extent to which they are knowable in the light of natural reason”<sup>9</sup>. The neutrality of science in the quest for the objective truth, the sensibility of the esthetic experience in the artistic act, the religious faith, or the revelation of the Absolute Person of God, cannot exclude the *philosophical conscience and the comprehensive actions of the human being as a person*, with his/her interrogations and questionings about the intellectual and moral condition of man and about the virtues and limits of the philosophical reflection. By ruling out the elations of scientism, the expressed platitude of propaganda and the ambitions of fanaticism, *the philosophic conscience develops into a comprehensive act of understanding and acknowledging one’s own limits and, at the same time, becomes a form of openness towards new horizons of knowledge and action governed by wisdom and measure*.

The exactingness of the philosophical conscience as a comprehensive act seems of actuality today, in a world characterized by “the crisis of meaning”, by the disintegration



of knowledge, relativization of values, and the terrible experimentation of evil. Faced with the ambiguities of eclecticism, the relativism of historicism, the sufficiency of scientism, or the disintegrating negativism of nihilism, philosophy should not allow itself to be drawn into the risky situation of abandoning the quest for “the nature of things” of moral devotion and responsibility. Thus, it would degrade the reason for the instrumental functions, depriving itself of the sapient dimension, of the metaphysics and axiology, and of the openings towards transcendence, meaning and value. This is exactly why, since it is sensible to openness, difference, dialogue and complementarities, the philosophical conscience appears as a wide awakening of self-conscience through the dialogue with the other, therefore, as an act of comprehension.

## The comprehensive truth as the truth of acknowledgement

An important idea in our study is that *there is a deep and original relationship between comprehension and acknowledgement standing at the basis of the configuration of the comprehensive truth*. Comprehension implies acknowledgement, and vice versa, acknowledgement implies comprehension. If by means of comprehension, we acknowledge someone or something, and by acknowledging, we realize comprehension, then comprehension and acknowledgment interact organically. Not accidentally, this interpretation is included in the Latin etymology of the word itself that stresses on both the literal (to take, to contain something) and the figurative meanings of the word: to comprehend with the soul and mind, to understand and feel with somebody<sup>10</sup>.

In our opinion, the two meanings of the word “comprehension” can be found in the two levels of the comprehensive truth, respectively in the truth by acknowledgement. The first one is the *extensional level*, that is to be observed in the *informational-cognitive acknowledgment* applying to the comprehension by means of the power of mind, therefore to the neutral acknowledgement of elements, features, distinctive dimensions of an object, process, entity, and concept. The second one is the *intentional level*, regarding common experiences and emotional resonance, a level observed in the axiological and moral acknowledgement.

From the *informational-cognitive* perspective, acknowledgement has no axiological, juridical, or moral connotation, but only a minimal one, important from a cognitive point of view: the transmission, reception, and increase in the amount and quality of the information and knowledge. Informational acknowledgement implies the intervention of memory, by means of which the conscience identifies the object of an actual representation with an object previously perceived. In fact, we are talking here of a closeness between perception and memory, which helps the studying of reality in order to determine its content, features, and becoming. In this informational and neutral direction, we are speaking of the acknowledgement itself of a person or place, with no emotional connotations. We are also considering the acknowledgement of the road before an official race, of the military action of acknowledging the field, of the recognition of a book, of an object, a title, a text, or a song, etc.

Nevertheless, there is also a deeper level, *the intentional one*, and in this context, comprehension means the acknowledgement of something or of someone by means of the power of going beyond the meaning and understanding the spiritual and inward senses of human action, co-living through empathy, self-overcoming, and self-objectifying the ego, the transposition in the position of the other. Practiced on the intentional level of

living similar experiences, comprehension means acknowledgement of the principles, norms and values of the other. This means that, besides informational acknowledgement and comprehension on the cognitive level, there are also other types of acknowledgement – *axiological*, *juridical*, and *moral* – according to the level of their deepness and manifestation of comprehension.

Thus, in an *axiological* context, acknowledgement allows for the evaluation and recognition of the value of someone or something, from a professional, political, economical, religious, artistic, and sports point of view. This implies appreciating and validating the competences, abilities and performances of a person or group according to their activity field; evaluating the amount and quality of the information, the explanations, or the style of a text, whether religious, scientific, literary or philosophical. It also implies the appreciation of cultural acquisitions and of the political, economical, religious, and artistic experience of the various types of societies. Axiological acknowledgement goes beyond the informational acknowledgement, but is not confounded with moral acknowledgement. Two persons may acknowledge or appreciate somebody from a professionally, political, economical, artistic or sports point of view, without acknowledging him/her also on a moral level. Life continues to witness the activity of some important people from a professional, political, economical, or artistic point of view, but far from the standards of *minima moralia*. The degrees of axiological acknowledgement vary according to the value of the work or activity in question, of the field of activity, spatial-temporal coordinates, etc. Thus, they speak of acknowledgement at a local, national, regional and international level. It is known that the processes of evaluating and establishing hierarchies are among the most complex and controversial human activities, often giving birth to a genuine “turbillion” of egos, jealousies, and animosities.

From a *juridical* perspective, acknowledgement means the institutionalization of someone or of something, accepting the legal status of a person, a political or confession-al-religious group, a sexual, ethnical, or generational one, etc., the official acknowledgement of a particular situation legally undisclosed up to that moment. The juridical acknowledgement of someone or something does not automatically imply the axiological acknowledgement and, least of all, the moral acknowledgement of that person or thing. Of all the forms of acknowledgement, the juridical type seems to be the closest to toleration. Someone might not agree with homosexual behavior or with certain exotic cultural models, but as long as they do not interfere with the freedom and security of others, they do not represent a public danger, and do not threaten the democratic society, they begin to be accepted and legalized as such in the societies with a well-founded democracy. Somebody might particularly agree with the doctrines and practices of some fundamentalist or extremist parties and groups. Beyond the debatable character, this personal option is sanctioned as such, from a juridical point of view, supposing its political materialization. The criminal character of activities counts out the extremist parties and political orientations within the legally acknowledged political frame.

Regarding the religious acknowledgement of a person or group, outside its own religion, but of a non-fundamentalist type, this requires, first, juridical acknowledgement. Of course, one may also speak of an axiological or moral acknowledgement of various degrees, even though one does not belong or adhere to that particular religion. If one does not admit the doctrinaire truth of a certain religion or confession, this does not mean that one cannot accept the legal acknowledgement of that religion or confession, if these do not interfere with the governing principles and democratic practices. From a legal point of view, religious acknowledgement of a group means the institutionalization of that

group and the juridical acknowledgement of its organization and religious practices.

According to the *moral* meaning, acknowledging someone or something implies, according to each situation, acceptance, consideration, admiration, and respect for that someone or something. Moral acknowledgement is, after all, the maximum of comprehensive power and, implicitly, the realization of human condition, the fulfillment of the human being as person. Moral acknowledgement focuses on moral conscience, therefore on the ethical evaluation and moral values and, last but not least, on the evaluation of professional, political, economic, and sports skills. Even at the expense of losses at the level of axiological or juridical acknowledgement, moral acknowledgement remains the sign of reaching the human condition. When the human being raises to the level of human condition and starting from the acknowledgement of his own limits and mistakes, he is able to admit the other's superiority, a defeat on the battlefield or in the vertiginous current of the professional, political or artistic skills might turn into a moral victory. The lesson of moral acknowledgement is characterized by discernment and correctness, spiritual growth, and self-overcoming.

We can also make the most of the abundance of meanings of the word *acknowledgement* by means of other distinctions of levels. Passed through the filter of voices, acknowledgement can be classified into three types: *reflexive*, *active*, and *passive*. First, we speak of *reflexive acknowledgement* because, in the context of the coagulation of self-conscience and formation of the personality, the reflexive moment of self-discovering and self-recognition plays a vital role. In the process of forming comprehensive truths, self-discovering and recognition are also validated through the discovering and acknowledging of the other. In some circumstances, before acknowledging something or someone, it is necessary to discover ourselves and to be able to acknowledge our own qualities and limits as much as possible. Ideally, one would evaluate others only after passing the reflexive moment of self-acknowledgement, as honestly and correctly as possible. The honest acknowledgement of our own limits and mistakes implies, at the same time, courage on one's part and trust in the critical judgment, the discernment, and understanding of others.

Acknowledgement implies the active moment – *to acknowledge someone or something* – and the passive one: *being acknowledged by someone*. Consequently, acknowledgement can be *nonreciprocal* and *reciprocal*. Nonreciprocal acknowledgement is either active or passive. One may acknowledge someone, and that someone may not acknowledge one; or someone acknowledges one, but one does not acknowledge him/her. For example, A acknowledges B as being a good professional, but B does not acknowledge A's professional qualities. In this situation, we have a univocal, nonreciprocal acknowledgement, going one way. We speak of reciprocal acknowledgement, bringing together the active and passive moment, when the acknowledgement goes both ways: one acknowledge and is being acknowledged.

From the perspective of the number of actors involved another distinction with important social and political consequences can be made, between inter-personal acknowledgement and the inter-group one, with important social and political consequences, on several levels: informational, axiological, juridical, moral or religious. The big political issues – of acceptance, projection, and construction of a new culture of acknowledgement – are raised by the minority groups, when it comes to the relations among themselves or between them and the majority group, when problems and distinctive interests between generations, professional, cultural, religious, or sexual orientations arise. Going from the inter-personal level to the inter-group level makes acknowledge-

ment more complex and complicated.

Starting from the extensional and intentional levels of comprehension and comprehensive truth, the different types of acknowledgement show us a multitude of meanings and nuances of acknowledgement, perceived as a psychosocial fact and process. However, the honest experience of acknowledgement implies, as I was saying, a particular human type. The real man, aware of his own fallibility, able of acknowledging the other, becomes this way the carrier of the comprehensive truth. How would such a human type look like? How could we form the profile of this actor of the comprehensive truth and of the culture of acknowledgement?

## Fallible man, the hypostases of the human and the comprehensive truth

The model of the hypostases of the human is the expression of a comprehensive truth born through the understanding of the fact that *the human being lives in an anthropological context* functioning as a *matrix of his distinctive nature*. Conceived as a totality based on the dynamic of its complementary and concurrent elements, according to the interdisciplinary researches in the last decades, the anthropological field brings together: *the genetic system* (genetic code, genotype), *the brain* (the phenotypic epicenter), *the social-cultural system* (phenomenal-generative system), *the ecosystem* (ecological niche, environment)<sup>11</sup>. The ecosystem controls the genetic code, the brain, and the society; the genetic system produces the brain that determines the society and the development of cultural complexity. In return, the social-cultural system brings up to date the capacities and abilities of the brain, modifies the ecosystem, and acts upon the selection and genetic evolution. This means that, from a scientific point of view, any sequence of human behavior exists in an anthropological context presenting a genetic, cerebral, social, cultural, and ecosystemic dimension. From a philosophical point of view, this means that the human being is a *multidimensional being* and that the human nature is not exclusively genetic or cultural. Viewed as multidimensional, circumstantial, plastic, and creative, the human being can be considered a *genetic-cerebral-socio-cultural* system whose organic epicenter is the brain, the real “bio-cultural revolving base plate” by means of which the individual organism, the genetic system, the ecosystemic environment or the social-cultural system communicate. As the integrating center of the anthropological field, the brain of *Homo Sapiens* accounts for the communication between biological and cultural, conferring particularity to the human nature and, thus, openness to its other hypostases: the condition and essence.

As an ever-changing interaction of abilities, conditions, and necessities, human nature is dynamic and contradictory. “The key to human nature lies in the variety- John W. Chapman wrote- Our nature is plastic and impressionable. We symbolize self-modeled cultural artifacts. Or, better said, our nature is a mixture of tendencies and features, constantly confronted to a variety of circumstances and meanings”<sup>12</sup>. Instinctual and intellectual, optimistic and pessimistic, constructive and destructive, ordered and less order, heroic and coward, tragic and comical, human beings display an amazing variety that cannot be understood starting out from a simple and rigid principle of unity, but only from an ensemble of generating principles with a specific action in various historical contexts. The multidimensional human nature determines people to always be paradoxical and unpredictable. This is because of the cleavages formed between the biologi-

cal-genetic substratum, the richness of the brainwork and of physical experiences, social plurality and the diversity of groups of interest. Human nature, as a dynamic reality that expresses the natural essence of what is human, has been shaped during the process of humanization through the exigencies of survival and selection.

Human nature, plastic and innovative, intelligent and amoral, enables the human being to get different forms of manifestation and adapting performances. The consequences and social risks of this fact, unimportant when compared to the moral and rightful values, disclose the limits of human nature. Moreover, by observing the implacable rules of nature, the human being remains a limited and dependent individual. The agonizing conscience of his finitude gave birth to the “thirst for immortality” of the human being, the subjective conscience founded on the faith in the spiritual values of transcendence and transmortality. “Facing death – the documents of the Second Vatican Council admonish – the enigma of the human condition reaches its climax (...). The seed of eternity it bears in itself rebels against death, incapable of being reduced to materiality”<sup>13</sup> and, through the divine revelation, the human being discovers that, being created by God for a blessed purpose, he was endowed with the dignity of moral conscience that exists in man’s call to the communion with the everlasting God.

Of what has been said until now, one may infer that the transcendental meaning of human existence cannot be understood from the perspective of human nature exclusively. In his aspiration to spirituality, the human being assumes and overcomes his nature. In fact, since the appearance of the “anthropological breach”, the human being has made the first step towards the dissociation of his spiritual destiny from his natural one. Indifferent, implacable, and objective, the human nature could not gain an insight into the world of ethical values, of spiritual freedom and personal decisions, *sua sponte*. The human being can only deal with transcendence by aspiring to the state of maximum axiological and spiritual altitude of the human condition. Exploring the depth of conscience, the man discovers “a law he doesn’t put up himself, but he must observe and whose voice reverberates at the right time in the ear of the heart, ceaselessly calling him to love, to perform good actions, and avoid bad ones: Do this, avoid doing that!”<sup>14</sup>. Only through an “inner meting within the spiritual experience”, can man become better, more humane, and reach his human condition.

*Immanent in his protean nature and transcendental through his spiritual condition, the human being fully comes to fruition as “person in act” within social life.* Human essence becomes real in praxis. The problems every society faces unleash the potential of human nature calling, at the same time, for the principles and values of human condition. The meeting between nature and human condition takes place within action, within the great systems of socio-human activity. Each of these systems of activity makes the most of the human essence and constitute, at the same time, conditions for the existence of any human community. This way, every community continues to exist and multiply (the biosocial system), lives and organizes its space, coexisting with other species (the eco-social system), commercializes the goods it produces (the economical system), creates and assimilates cultural values (the cultural system), and shares information, images, symbols. It also mediates (the communicational system), controls groups of interest, social rapports, and orients collective actions according to the politic system in power at a certain time. We see that each of the conditions of a human society exists within the context of the appearance of the corresponding social system. Each of these systems performs specific functions through precise means as well as through the interaction with the other systems. Although autonomous, social systems are not “independ-



dent entities", "essences", or "metaphysical substances", but ensembles of activities interacting within the actual totality of a global society. Both autonomous and interdependent, the multi-stable social systems constitute the global society manifesting as a complex "integron" (François Jacob) with the multi-finality propriety<sup>15</sup>. In this social context (social-global, societal), human essence appears as the effective resultant of nature and human condition.

*Nature, condition and essence shape the profile of the fallible man as "person in act" through their dynamics.* However, only as an actor of comprehensive truth as the truth of acknowledgement, is the fallible man able to admit his own limits and the value of the other and, at the same time, aspires to a culture of acknowledgement. The fallible man can only get to comprehension and truth by traveling the long and difficult journey from recognition to the culture of acknowledgement.

## Comprehension and truth: towards a culture of acknowledgement

Taking into consideration the meanings of the term "acknowledgement", one can identify two important forms of the process of acknowledgement: one *limited* or *partial* and the other one *global* or *multidimensional*. When one speaks about limited or partial acknowledgement, one refers to the nonreciprocal, interpersonal, informational acknowledgement and eventually to the axiological and/or juridical acknowledgement. Limited to certain meanings and levels, the incomplete and fragile partial acknowledgement is still far from a true culture of acknowledgement. In our opinion, the journey towards the culture of acknowledgement marks *the process of getting from the reciprocal, inter-group acknowledgement to the informational, axiological, juridical, religious and most important, the moral level*. The acknowledgement that, at the community level, becomes a culture of acknowledgement implies a systematic process that takes a long time, is difficult, and does not have only a cognitive-informational role anymore, but only moral and practical ones.

As a culture of a matured humanity, the culture of acknowledgement adjudges the diversity of the levels and meanings of culture - philosophical, sociological and anthropological - melting them into a concept of synthesis. Thus, it manages to comprise almost all the products of the human collectivities by means of which the conscious transformation of the natural and social environment takes place. Culture, the vital code of humanity, turns into a culture of acknowledgement the moment it can communicate on the interpersonal and inter-group level in different environments such as social, ethnical, religious, professional, and generational. The Culture of acknowledgement is, after all, the arranging system of the different life expressions, the necessary correlation of often contradictory existential and dynamic contents. In this context, one should mention the constructive role of critics in the projection and forming of a culture of acknowledgement. Authentic, interpersonal, inter-group, axiological, juridical, or moral acknowledgement implies a critic evaluation from the perspective of the permanent activation of discernment. One could say that, if somebody does not pass through the collimator of critic judgment on the professional, political, or artistic level it means he/she is not acknowledged.

The culture of acknowledgement is a real multidimensional and synthesizing concept of culture. As an inner reality marking "the journey of the soul towards itself"<sup>16</sup>, implicitly "the process of progressive self-deliverance of man"<sup>17</sup> and construction through language, art, religion and science of his own universe, the culture of acknowledgement

necessarily relates to nature, society and human becoming. In addition, this provides the philosophical concept of culture of acknowledgement with a meaning of emancipation. From a behavioral perspective, the culture of acknowledgement may be seen as a “configuration of learned behaviors and of their results”<sup>18</sup> shared and transmitted on to the members of a society. In a sociological sense, culture designates the “values, norms, and material goods specific for a certain group”<sup>19</sup>. In other words, through the totality of its products, the society is the favorable environment for a culture of acknowledgement. Having as the actor the fallible creative man, the culture of acknowledgement is a whole that comprises language, art, customs and traditions, knowledge, different mentalities, religious beliefs, and principles achieved by man in a social context. As far as the origin of the cultural products is concerned, we consider the culturological point of view of Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckholm<sup>20</sup>. According to him, the culture of acknowledgement, does not only refer to behaviors, but is an unsubstantial, superorganic, symbolic reality, as well. It also creates new structures, meanings, and models for action and thought.

The concomitant use of the multidimensional concept of culture of acknowledgement in various contexts – literal-figurative, subjective-objective – or from complementary scientific perspectives – sociological, psychological, ethnological, anthropological, historical, politological, etc. – turns it into one of synthesis. In fact, in an attempt to systemize it, Raymond Williams distinguished its three important directions: 1) the general process of intellectual, spiritual, and esthetical development; 2) the particular way of living of a nation, era, group, or humanity, in general; 3) the works and practices of intellectual and, most of all, artistic activities filtered through time<sup>21</sup>. We notice the interpenetration of contexts and meanings that we will call *psycho-educational*, *ethno-sociological*, and *historic-axiological*. The psycho-educational process shows the degree of instruction and socialization of the individual, the ethno-sociological context focuses on the indestructible connections between culture and the social group, and the historic-axiological one shows culture as a synthesis of values and historical fact. We can distinguish here the logical-historical articulations of the culture of acknowledgement constituted in the space-time of the social pluralism's becoming and of multicultural collectivities' maturation. This way, the culture of acknowledgement appears as a *cultural synthesis of a matured humanity*<sup>22</sup>. When we speak of cultural synthesis, we think of the force and synthesizing vocation of culture and, particularly, of the peace making, reconciling, and synthesizing ability of the culture of acknowledgement in an experimental and wiser community of fallible men.

## Notes:

1 Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, 1980; also the French translation: *Personne en acte*, Éditions du Centurion, Paris, 1983; the title of the original work in Polish is *Osoba I czyn*.

2 Petre Botezatu, *Dimensiunile adevărului*, in the book: *Adevăruri despre adevăr* (Petre Botezatu, coordinator), Editura Junimea, Iași, 1981, p.47.

3 John R. Searle, *Realitatea ca proiect social*, Polirom, 2000; Gary King, Robert Keohane, Sydney Verba, *Fundamentele cercetării sociale*, Polirom, 2000; *Dicționar al metodelor calitative în științele umane și sociale*, (a book coordinated by Alex Mucchielli), Polirom, 2002; Ronald F. King, *Strategia cercetării. Treisprezece cursuri*

despre elementele științelor sociale, Polirom, 2005.

4 *Fides et ratio*, Pope's John Paul II Encyclical letter, regarding the relations between faith and reason, Editura Presa Bună, Iași, 1999, p.3.

5 Wilhelm Dancă, *Fascinația adevărului, de la Toma de Aquino la Anton Durcovici*, Sapienția, Iași, 2005.

6 Anton Carpinski, *Nevoia de filosofie și politică în lumea de astăzi*, in "Dialog teologic", *Revista Institutului Teologic Romano-Catolic Iași*, Anul VII, Nr.13, 2004, pp.19-30.

7 Lucian Blaga, *Despre conștiința filosofică*, Editura Facla, 1974, pp.172-173.

8 Thomas of Aquinas, *Summa theologiae, Despre Dumnezeu*, Books I, Part I, Quaestio I, Chapter I, (Editura științifică, București, 1997, p.40).

9 Ibidem, (p.41).

10 The Latin verb , *comprehendo, -dere, -di, -sum* (made up of *cum* and *prehen-do*), meant to grab, to take, to cover, to show, to count, but also to understand, that is to comprehend something with the soul and mind.

11 Edgar Morin, *Paradigma pierdută: natura umană*, Editura Universității "Al.I.Cuza", Iași, 1999.

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## Culture as Religion and Religion as Culture in the Philosophy of Lucian Blaga

### Abstract:

*Mircea Eliade, the renowned scholar of Romanian origin, wrote that Lucian Blaga was the greatest Romanian philosopher of all time. Blaga was intensely interested in both culture and religion as areas of philosophical investigation. Blaga's philosophy proposes a metaphysics that explains the origin of culture and its unrivaled significance to humanity. His philosophy also endeavors to explicate the relationship between culture and religion. Blaga finds that religion is a cultural product, but does not view this as a detriment to religion. On the contrary, according to Blaga, it is the very fact that religion is an expression of cultural creativity that gives religion its beauty. This article will introduce Blaga's philosophy of culture and his philosophy of religion, explain the relationship between them, and show that Blaga accorded high honor to both.*

### Introduction

In the year that marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Mircea Eliade it seems appropriate to look at the work of the one who Eliade called "The most gifted and critical original thinker" in the history of Romanian philosophy. The greatest of Romanian philosophers, according to Eliade, was the early twentieth century Transylvanian philosopher Lucian Blaga. Eliade once wrote that Blaga was the first philosopher since Hegel who had the courage to create a system that attempts to address all the aspects of systematic philosophy.<sup>1</sup> This broad system includes a very interesting and constructive analysis of the relationship of culture and religion, topics that were of particular interest to Blaga (and to Eliade). The goal of this article is to explicate Blaga's philosophy of culture and his philosophy of religion, making clear the reciprocity of religion and culture in ordinary human experience.

### Blaga's Philosophy of Culture

#### Introduction: Place and Method

The philosophy of culture occupies a place of great importance in Blaga's philosophy; it could be argued that his thinking on philosophy of culture is that aspect of his philosophical system that most influences the rest of the system.<sup>2</sup> The philosophy of cul-

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ture is interwoven throughout all the areas of his philosophy: not only his metaphysics and epistemology, but also his philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, aesthetics, philosophy of history, and philosophical anthropology.

Philosophy of culture is Blaga's true area of specialization. This contention is supported by the fact that a special chair for philosophy of culture was created for Blaga at the Romanian University of Cluj, and is further supported by the fact that the address that he delivered at his induction into the Romanian Academy was on Romanian culture ("Elogiul satului românesc"). It is also supported by the abundance of his writing on the subject. From his doctoral dissertation (Culture and Knowledge) to the penultimate chapter of his final book ("Oswald Spengler and the Philosophy of History," in "Ființa Istorică"), Blaga is repeatedly found exploring the issues of philosophy of culture. Thus it is no surprise that in his philosophical writings more space is devoted to the philosophy of culture than to any other single area of philosophical inquiry. Blaga sees culture as the single most important factor that distinguishes humanity (and all that humanity creates) from the rest of existence. Culture influences, according to Blaga's theory, all human activity.<sup>3</sup>

Blaga's philosophy of culture includes a further development of the philosophy of culture expounded by Oswald Spengler, as Blaga himself acknowledges.<sup>4</sup> However, Blaga's philosophy of culture is more than a simple restatement or synthesis of these insights.<sup>5</sup> He offers new insights of his own, and integrates his philosophy of culture as a vital part of a complete philosophical system.<sup>6</sup> This introduction to his system will omit certain prominent aspects of Blaga's treatment that are, in their essence, illustrations and/or applications of his thought, in order to focus on the elements of his treatment that are central to his analysis of culture itself.

Blaga's method of presenting and arguing for his philosophy of culture is similar to that employed in presenting other aspects of his philosophy.<sup>7</sup> He develops his system in interaction with a wide range of other thinkers in the field, from ancient Greek philosophers to contemporary thinkers from a variety of specialized domains. At times he adopts certain elements of their systems; at other times he criticizes their findings and offers alternatives. Consistent with his pragmatic and coherence approaches to justification, Blaga does not try to prove his system but instead substantiates it by showing how it can be fruitfully applied to various actual cultural phenomena.<sup>8</sup>

## What Culture Is

Blaga observes that the twin phenomena of style and culture have often been studied, but only as of secondary importance.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to this, Blaga places them at the zenith of his thought, making culture one of the most important elements of his philosophy and, more importantly, of human existence. Culture is, according to Blaga, the *sine qua non* of humanness.<sup>10</sup> It is culture more than anything else that distinguishes humanity from other forms of animal life.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, it is culture that distinguishes historical events from all other events that occur in time and space.<sup>12</sup>

According to Blaga's analysis, a culture is a collective product of human creativity actuated through a given "stylistic matrix" and within a particular set of concrete circumstances (the concept "stylistic matrix" and what is meant by "concrete circumstances" will be explained presently). Culture is a "precipitate" of the fullness of human existence.<sup>13</sup> Full human existence involves living in the face of and striving to understand



mystery. Therefore culture is the direct result of human life. It is a result of the human attempt to reveal/depict/grasp mystery, an attempt that is an irresistible part of human destiny.

Culture includes all human fabrications that bear the mark of human creativity (“style”). These include works of art, philosophy, mythology, science, historiography, and other human creative acts, everything from the creation of simple utensils to advanced philosophical creations. All of these activities involve the attempt to reveal mystery.<sup>14</sup>

Every cultural creation involves three essential elements: concrete material, metaphorical expression, and style (analyzable into a matrix of elements). The concrete materials of a culture are the physical, intellectual, or spiritual materials that humans utilize in their creations. These are used metaphorically to express ideas, emotions, or intuitions that transcend the material itself. The particular way that the concrete is metaphorically used reflects the style of the user, which is the product of a number of factors called the “stylistic matrix.”

## The Categories of the Understanding and the Abyssal Categories

A very important aspect of Blaga’s philosophy of culture is his original analysis of the categories of the human mind and how these categories relate to human culture. Although the Kantian influence on this area of Blaga’s thought is unmistakable, Blaga departs radically from Kant’s understanding of the categories.<sup>15</sup> Whereas Kant argued that humans experience reality through a set of interpretive intellectual categories, Blaga argues that humans are equipped with two sets of categories. The first of these he names “the categories of the understanding.” These categories correspond fairly closely to the Kantian categories. Their role is the organization of sensory data in what Blaga terms “type I cognition” (or “paradisic cognition”).<sup>16</sup>

Contrary to many scientists, who take categories such as time and space to be objective realities, Blaga agrees with Kant that the categories of the understanding are subjective. Kant’s reason for drawing this conclusion is that the conceptual contents of the categories surpass the contents of experiential data, and therefore cannot themselves be a product of experience, and thus must have their source in the mind itself. Blaga writes that the climate (influenced by the Enlightenment and the growing influence of natural science) within which Kant worked prevented him from positing a supernatural source of the categories, and therefore Kant concluded that if they are a product of the mind, then they must be subjective.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the conclusion that subjectivity is the only alternative left after the elimination of the possibility of an experiential origin of the categories is mistaken. There remains the possibility that the categories are the product of a supernatural source, and furthermore that this source created them as objective.

In Blaga’s view, the categories are in fact the result of a supernatural source that Blaga names the “Great Anonymous.”<sup>18</sup> However, Blaga is in agreement with Kant that the categories are subjective. Blaga’s reason for this interpretation of the categories is quite different from Kant’s, and has to do with the structure and purpose of cognition. Blaga’s reason for believing the categories to be subjective is that, according to his proposed metaphysics, in order to further its purposes in creation, the Great Anonymous does not permit humans to have objective (“positive-adequate”) cognition. The categories are one of the means utilized by the Great Anonymous to guarantee that humanity does not achieve truly objective cognition. The categories act as both facilitators of cognition and as limits to cognition, enabling subjective knowledge but preventing objective knowl-

edge.<sup>19</sup>

According to Kant, the categories of the understanding are a fixed set that is necessarily possessed by all people. Therefore all people have the same immutable categories of the understanding. Spengler argued, contra Kant, that no particular sentiment of spatiality is universal to all humanity, but rather that particular sentiments of spatiality are culturally relative. He argues that there are at least nine different space/time sentiments that are found in different cultures.<sup>20</sup> In reflecting on these views, Blaga observes that, while the perceptions of space, time, and so on appear to be universal, space and time are also constructed differently in different cultures.<sup>21</sup> The categories of the understanding, though subjective, are not affected by culture (and do not bear the imprint of style) because they are not human creations—they are created by the Great Anonymous.<sup>22</sup> He accounts for the apparent variability of the categories by proposing that humans have two sets of categories, not one: the cognitive categories of the conscious and the abyssal categories of the subconscious (also called the “stylistic categories”).<sup>23</sup> The former are invariable, but the latter are quite variable. Space and time (as determined by the cognitive categories) are universal concrete horizons of the conscious. However, their “texture” is determined by the abyssal categories of each individual’s subconscious, and is therefore variable. For example, space can be conceived as being tridimensional, flat, undulatory, arched, or other ways.<sup>24</sup> Based on its particular set of abyssal categories, the human subconscious attributes to space and time details of structure that are similar to but more determined than the indeterminate structures of space and time in the conscious.<sup>25</sup>

The abyssal categories are both functionally and structurally different from the cognitive categories. Functionally, the abyssal categories lie at the base of all cultural creations and form a complex that Blaga names the “stylistic matrix.”<sup>26</sup> The immense number of combinations of the stylistic categories possible within an individual’s stylistic matrix accounts for the plethora of possible and actual cultures.<sup>27</sup> Because of this important role in forming culture, the abyssal categories are constitutive of the substance of humanity, whereas the cognitive categories merely enable the integration of objects to the conscious.<sup>28</sup> Blaga hypothesizes that the cognitive categories have more to do with survival and the abyssal categories have more to do with creativity.<sup>29</sup>

Structurally, the details of the cognitive categories are immutable and universal, while the details of the abyssal categories are variable and individual.<sup>30</sup> It is sometimes the case that there are parallel cognitive and abyssal categories, such as in the case of time and space. These are what Blaga calls “doublets of horizons.”<sup>31</sup> The two categories of a doublet are complementary but differ from each other in detail.

Both cognitive and abyssal categories are part of the plan of the Great Anonymous for protecting and enhancing created existence. While the specific cognitive categories are direct creations of the Great Anonymous, the specific stylistic categories are human creations. The cognitive categories are one way that the Great Anonymous implements transcendent censorship, while the abyssal categories are a means of implementing “transcendent braking.” The two types of categories work together to fulfill the “principle of the conservation of mystery.”<sup>32</sup>

## The Stylistic Matrix and its Key Components

Each human subconscious possesses a set of stylistic categories that determine the results of its creative endeavors. This set is what Blaga calls the “stylistic matrix.”<sup>33</sup> A

stylistic matrix is defined as a group or constellation of factors that together determine the style of the creations of a person or group of people. It is the sum of all the stylistic categories and their influences upon a person's creativity.<sup>34</sup> This matrix is composed of four primary factors and an unspecified number of secondary factors.<sup>35</sup> Two different creative styles can be separated by as little as one of these secondary factors.<sup>36</sup>

The idea of a stylistic matrix explains why and how creations within a particular culture bear certain similarities and also why they are not identical.<sup>37</sup> It is also that which enables a creation to have a sense of fittingness and context.<sup>38</sup> A judgment that a particular creation "lacks style" may be nothing more than an indication that there are subtle differences between the matrices of the creator and the critic.<sup>39</sup> Conversely, the ability of one culture to appreciate the creations of another is explained by the shared elements of their stylistic matrices, which can enable reciprocal understanding.<sup>40</sup>

Stylistic matrices are shaped by the physical and spiritual environment in which the person or community lives.<sup>41</sup> They are usually conservative by nature, however: they are resistant to criticism and change.<sup>42</sup> This explains why two different cultures sometimes coexist within the same physical environment: their stylistic matrices were formed at a time when the cultures were geographically separate, and although they are not indifferent to their current cultural setting, they do retain much of their old cultural formation.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, it is possible for the factors that make up a particular stylistic matrix to change, which leads to a change in the stylistic matrix itself.<sup>44</sup>

The four primary components of any stylistic matrix are: 1. The horizon of the subconscious; 2. An axiological accent; 3. A particular sense of destiny; and 4. A particular formative aspiration (*nazuința formativă*).<sup>45</sup> The first of these, the horizon of the subconscious, refers to the particular way that a person's subconscious mind structures space and time, and therefore the particular forms of the abyssal categories that imprint the spatial and temporal aspects of a person's creations.<sup>46</sup> A variety of spatial horizons are possible. Blaga gives the following examples of spatial horizons of particular cultures: Arabian culture—veiled space; Babylonian culture—twin space; Chinese culture—rolled space; Greek culture—spherical space; popular Romanian culture—undulatory space; Saxon culture—infinite, tridimensional space.<sup>47</sup>

There are at least three possible temporal horizons of the subconscious: past (pictured as an artesian well), present (pictured as a waterfall), and future (pictured as a stream).<sup>48</sup> These horizons sometimes combine and overlap, causing blurring or hybridizing of the horizon.<sup>49</sup> The temporal horizon of a culture is reflected in the creative constructions of that culture, including its histories and its metaphysical creations. Blaga mentions as a particularly European view the idea that there exists a clear history that can be understood by anyone.<sup>50</sup> Each view of history is a "possible perspective" that will appear true to the extent that it resonates with the subconscious matrix of the beholder.<sup>51</sup> It is thus that stylistic matrices become, for Blaga, the basis of history (as well as a major force in historiography).<sup>52</sup>

The second component of a stylistic matrix, the "axiological accent," refers to an attitudinal reflex of the subconscious that is superimposed upon the spatial and temporal horizons. Although the subconscious is intrinsically united with its horizons, it is not always in complete accord with them.<sup>53</sup> The axiological accent is a valuation of the respective horizons of the subconscious, an evaluation that is positive, negative, or neutral, resulting in an affirmation of, negation of, or neutrality toward the spatial or temporal horizon. A particular horizon can have different senses depending on the accent it

receives.<sup>54</sup> A negative axiological accent does not result in the annulling of the particular horizon, but rather in that horizon being used in a negative way in the construction of cultural creations.<sup>55</sup>

The third component of a stylistic matrix, the “sense of destiny,” refers to the attitude or predisposition of the subconscious that influences how it views life as a trajectory within the horizon of the subconscious.<sup>56</sup> This movement can be one of advancing toward the horizon (which Blaga labels “anabasic”), one of withdrawal from the horizon (“catabasic”), or it can be static (“neutral” or “vegetative”).<sup>57</sup>

Blaga gives several examples of the sense of destiny in different cultures. According to Blaga, Europe has the following components to its stylistic matrix: an infinite horizon (spatial and temporal), a positive axiological accent, and an anabasic sense of destiny.<sup>58</sup> India has an infinite horizon (spatial and temporal), a negative axiological accent, and a catabasic sense of destiny. On Blaga’s analysis nihilism would have a negative axiological accent but an anabasic sense of destiny.<sup>59</sup> Ethiopians have an infinite horizon and a neutral sense of destiny, while the ancient Egyptians have a pronounced catabasic sense of destiny, which Blaga compares to Heidegger’s “existence towards death.”<sup>60</sup>

The fourth of the key components of the stylistic matrix, the “formative aspiration,” refers to the human drive to imprint one’s own inner form on the things around oneself.<sup>61</sup> This drive takes different forms in different cultures. Blaga notes three distinct possible forms that the formative aspiration takes: individualized, standardized, and elementized.<sup>62</sup>

Through each of these approaches those that employ them aspire to reveal “truth,” to portray through their creativity things as they really are. Each believes that his/her respective approach is the correct approach.<sup>63</sup> In response to the question regarding whether these attempts reflect objective reality or a “style of thought,” Blaga affirms the latter.<sup>64</sup>

In the individualized form of the formative aspiration the emphasis is on the expression of the individual and the individual’s perspective. Blaga gives as examples of individualized formative aspiration German culture, and specifically mentions Shakespeare, Leibniz, the physician Pauli, Goethe, Fichte, Kant, the Reformation, and above all, Rembrandt.<sup>65</sup> In the standardized form the emphasis is on the expression of the universal element of a type of phenomenon. The best example of this is Plato, with his elevation of the form over the individual. Other examples include the Renaissance and Catholic theology.<sup>66</sup> The elementized form emphasizes the conceptually fundamental aspect of a phenomenon. It reduces phenomena of the same type to their ideal expression, eliminating incidental variations and producing representations of the phenomena that surpass the objects themselves. Examples of the elementized form include Egyptian and Byzantine art and Byzantine metaphysics.<sup>67</sup>

These four primary components and an unnumbered quantity of secondary components make up the stylistic matrix of the subconscious. The stylistic matrix is the inner horizon of the subconscious, and it functions according to its own norms, relatively independent of the conscious. The stylistic matrix is responsible for the unity of attitudes, accents, and aspirations that distinguish one culture from another and that give to a person’s conscious the support of continuity and to a person’s subconscious the connection to a collectivity.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the existence of stylistic matrices witnesses to the creative destiny given to humanity by the Great Anonymous.<sup>69</sup>

## Philosophy of Culture and Blaga's Epistemology

Blaga's philosophy of culture has a direct impact on his epistemology.<sup>70</sup> According to Blaga's analysis, there are two types of cognition: type I cognition (paradisaic) and type II cognition (luciferic). Type I cognition increases knowledge quantitatively, through the numerical reduction of the mysteries of existence by adding new facts to human knowledge. It utilizes the cognitive categories. Type II cognition increases knowledge qualitatively, through deepening the understanding of the mystery of a cognitive object. This deepening of the understanding involves creative constructs that provide theoretical explanations of the phenomena in question. Since all creative acts are affected by a stylistic matrix, these acts of type II cognition are as well. They operate through the application of both the cognitive and the stylistic (abyssal) categories.

Type I cognition is limited by transcendent censorship via the cognitive categories. The abyssal categories do not affect type I cognition.<sup>71</sup> Type II cognition is limited by both transcendent censorship and the "stylistic brakes," which are the abyssal categories. Therefore all knowledge acquired via type II cognition is culturally relative.<sup>72</sup> The abyssal categories function both positively and negatively in cognition, and these two functions are intrinsically related. They function as a structural medium for revelation of mystery and as a limit to this revelation ("stylistic brakes"). Thus the abyssal categories both lead humans to create and prevent human creativity from reaching absolute adequacy.<sup>73</sup>

Corresponding to the two types of cognition and the two types of limits on cognition are two definitions of truth that spring from Blaga's philosophy of culture. In type I cognition, truth consists in a relation of correspondence between an idea and reality.<sup>74</sup> This is what Blaga names "natural truth." This type of truth involves the application of the cognitive categories to empirical data. Because the cognitive categories are not influenced by culture, "natural truth" is not subject to cultural influences.<sup>75</sup>

What is judged to be true in type II cognition, on the other hand, is relative to one's stylistic matrix. What is judged to be true does not depend only upon the criteria of logic and concrete intuition. It involves style, culture, and a feeling of resonance between the proposition and the cognitive subject.<sup>76</sup> "Judgments of appreciation, which refer to 'constructed' truths, will vary therefore according to how the people's stylistic matrices vary, from region to region, from epoch to epoch."<sup>77</sup> This is because what is being judged is not the relation between an idea and a (supposedly) observable reality, but the relation between an idea that is a construct and a reality that is known to be hidden. The fact that the reality is hidden entails the constructive nature of the idea. The constructive nature of the idea implicates the incorporation of culture (since all constructs are cultural constructs according to Blaga's analysis). The incorporation of culture implicates the employment of the stylistic categories, as much in the appreciation/evaluation of the idea as in its construction.

The fact that type II cognition involves culture in its truth-judgments has implications that reach far beyond philosophy. Even science is affected by this conception, since scientific hypotheses and theories are constructs that involve type II cognition.<sup>78</sup> The extent to which Blaga was convinced of this is revealed in his startling statement that "the new physics . . . is more the expression of our kind of thinking and of our style, than the reflection of an objective reality."<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, he argues that the domination of one mode of rationalization over others within science, and the overthrow of one mode of rationalization by another, provide an argument for the significance of style as a factor in scientific change.<sup>80</sup>



Both type I and type II cognition operate by utilizing categories. The categories both facilitate and limit cognition. In this way the two types of categories work together to fulfill the “principle of the conservation of mystery.”<sup>81</sup>

## Philosophy of Culture and Blaga’s Metaphysics

Blaga’s philosophy of culture dovetails with his metaphysics.<sup>82</sup> Blaga’s metaphysical system posits the existence of a single source of all other existents and that this source created the cosmos in such a way as to both perpetuate and preserve creation. It created humanity with specific abilities and limits that both motivate and enable humanity to approach mystery, but that also prevent humanity from eliminating mystery.<sup>83</sup>

Blaga’s philosophy of culture elaborates one of the devices that the originator of the cosmos put in place to accomplish these goals. That device is style, or culture understood as a collection of stylistic factors. Culture is key to perpetuating through humanity the creative act of the Great Anonymous, for culture is essential to human creativity. Culture is also key to preserving creation, for it prevents humanity from accurately revealing mystery through humanity’s creative acts, which (according to Blaga) could endanger the cosmos by allowing a cognitive rival to the Great Anonymous.

The Great Anonymous protects itself from the possibility of human rivalry by the stylistic limiting (“halting” or “braking”) of human revelatory acts. The Great Anonymous also prevents this rivalry by creating humanity in such a way that humans put a positive value on style rather than viewing style and culture as limits imposed upon humanity (Blaga calls this tactic “transcendent conversion”).<sup>84</sup> According to Blaga’s metaphysics, culture is a positive value, but it is also a necessary and useful limit upon human revelation of the mysterious.

The stylistic categories function both positively and as “brakes.” This positive/negative duality fuels humanity’s creativity—spiritual, mythical, religious, philosophical, scientific, and artistic.<sup>85</sup> The limits set on humanity are a source of both disappointment and of rejoicing: the former when the impotence and transience of all human creation is recognized, the latter because there is some success, some limited access to the absolute.<sup>86</sup> Thus the relativity that culture imposes upon all human creations has the perhaps tragic effect of isolating humanity from the absolute, but Blaga asserts that at the same time it gives humanity a dignity beyond comparison.<sup>87</sup>

According to Blaga, it is culture more than anything else that differentiates humanity from other living beings, and culture is essential to full humanness.<sup>88</sup> An “ontological mutation” took place at the very moment when humanity started down the path of creating culture. This mutation transformed humanity from mere animal to a higher form of being.<sup>89</sup> At the point when humans began to live with an awareness of and desire to penetrate mystery, humanity figuratively left the Garden of Eden and became what Blaga calls “luciferic man.” Up to this point humanity was incompletely human. With the inception of life in the horizon of mystery and for the revelation thereof and the appearance of the stylistic categories in the structure of humanity, humanity is completed.<sup>90</sup>

## Claimed Practical Benefits of Blaga’s Philosophy of Culture

A practical benefit of Blaga’s philosophy of culture is that it yields a number of

explanations to perennially vexing problems. For example, Blaga's theory provides an explanation of how styles are originated. Two views on the origin of style are widely accepted. It is often supposed that a particular style is initiated by an individual and then others imitate that style, causing its spread. Conversely, it is sometimes held that a style exists independently of any individuals and imposes itself upon individuals. Blaga rejects both of these views. Against the first view he points out that expressionist painters, Bergson's psychology, and Mach's physics all reflect the same fundamental style, but that they were ignorant of each other's work, therefore imitation cannot be the explanation of how they came to share the same style. Blaga's theory of a subconscious stylistic matrix, however, nicely explains this parallelism: the appearances of the same style in the works of people within the same culture who are not aware of each other's works are due to their shared stylistic matrices. Differences between their works are explained by variations between the particular secondary categories within the stylistic matrix of each individual.<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, Blaga's theory of style illuminates the nature of the relationship between an individual and a collective group. The problem involves questions such as, what is the relationship between an individual and a collectivity to which that individual belongs? What distinguishes an individual as belonging to one collectivity rather than another? What is it that distinguishes between different collectivities? Why are there differences between individuals within the same group? Is a collective group a real unit, or is it nothing more than a collection of individuals, the latter being the real existent? Or are individuals merely exponents of the group, and the group the real existent?

Blaga reviews and rejects the solutions proposed by romanticism, positivism, and naturalism. His own partial solution to the problem (he grants that there are other aspects in addition to the stylistic one) sees the collectivity as a community of individuals with a shared complex of abyssal categories (a shared stylistic matrix).<sup>92</sup> The individual, on Blaga's view, shares in these categories and has additional categories that are unique to that individual. Particularly individualistic people can, moreover, reject some of the categories shared by that individual's group. Therefore the individual is neither merely a component of the collectivity, nor is the community merely a conglomeration of individuals. When viewed through the lens of Blaga's philosophy of culture, the distinguishing characteristics and "familial resemblances" of both the individual and the group are seen to result not from one or the other being a "real existent" but from shared and not-shared abyssal categories.<sup>93</sup>

This explanation of the relationship between individuals and communities leads to an elucidation of a further problem: the problem of cross-cultural communication. The question of whether it is really possible to overcome cultural barriers and have effective cross-cultural communication is not a new one. Many have argued that cross-cultural communication is doomed to produce misunderstanding. Blaga takes it as evident that this is not always the case. He argues that any overlapping elements of two different stylistic matrices facilitate communication between the matrices. He states that points in common can be sufficient not only for communication between the two, but also make possible the influencing of one culture by another and the "contaminating" of one culture by another.<sup>94</sup>

A further benefit of Blaga's philosophy of culture, and in particular his view on the thwarting of the human aspiration toward the transcendent, is that it confers meaning upon the relativity of all human productions. That human creations are always of finite scope, limited duration, and mitigated success is often viewed as a human shortcoming. Blaga's philosophy of culture provides an explanation for these "shortcomings"

that shows their value and removes their condemnation. Humanity's aspiration toward the transcendent is laudable, and the failure to reach this goal is a result of important factors that are necessarily beyond the human reach.<sup>95</sup> The creation of humanity with an insatiable desire for the transcendent is, according to Blaga's philosophy of culture, an expression of the care that the Great Anonymous has for creation.<sup>96</sup>

## Blaga's Philosophy of Religion The Definition of Religion

Religion and religious themes are found throughout Blaga's works. He has two books specifically discussing religion (*Gîndire Magică și Religie* and *Curs de Filosofia Religiei*), and his writings on metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of culture also contain materials relevant to this topic.<sup>97</sup> In fact, his philosophy of religion should be seen as a corollary of his metaphysics and philosophy of culture.

Blaga seeks to define religion in such a way that his definition is in accord with the empirical phenomena that are conventionally labeled "religious" and with the previous conclusions of his philosophical system.<sup>98</sup> He discusses and rejects Schleiermacher's definition of religion as a feeling of unconditional dependence on the absolute, since there are religions that lack either belief in an absolute or a feeling of dependence on the absolute.<sup>99</sup> He rejects Max Scheler's and Paul Tillich's definitions, since the former could also describe poetry and the latter could apply to metaphysics.<sup>100</sup> He discusses problems with the psychoanalytic explanations of religion proposed by Freud and others, listing four attributes of religion that distinguish it from other psychological phenomena.<sup>101</sup>

The definition that Blaga settles on is the following: "Religion circumscribes, in any of its variants, the capacity of self-summation or self-surpassing of the human being in ideal correlation with all existence, but especially in ideal correlation with the ultimate elements or coordinates of existential mystery in general, which man both reveals and/or considers revealed through constructs of a stylistic nature."<sup>102</sup> Several aspects of this definition require further elucidation, especially the terms "self-summation" and "self-surpassing," and the state of "ideal correlation."

The capacities of self-summation (*autototalizare*) and self-surpassing (*autodepășire*) are described, respectively, as the lower and upper limits of religiousness. Self-summation approaches the revelation of the ultimate using all of the human faculties and aptitudes, cognitive, emotional, volitional, intuitive, and imaginative, in the effort to reveal the transcendent. Self-surpassing religion, on the other hand, attempts to transcend the inherent limitations of these human faculties and aptitudes. Although Blaga does not give a specific example of self-summarizing religion, he discusses mysticism as an example of self-surpassing religion. Most actual religious practice falls somewhere between these two extremes.<sup>103</sup>

The phrase "ideal correlation with the ultimate elements . . . of existential mystery" could be taken to suggest that through religion humanity succeeds in grasping the transcendent. That this is not Blaga's intent is clear from the subsequent reaffirmation that all revelation of existential mystery occurs through stylistic constructs. Immediately after giving this definition, Blaga reiterates his metaphysical scheme, according to which humanity exists in the horizon of mystery and for the revelation thereof, and according to which all human attempts at revelation of mystery are limited by the framework of style and therefore do not fully attain their goal.<sup>104</sup> According to Blaga, all religions are

constructs and are therefore subject to stylistic determinants. He draws this conclusion not solely on the basis of the dictates of his philosophical system, but also on the basis of his empirical analysis of world religions, which indicates that all religions are influenced by cultural/stylistic factors.<sup>105</sup>

What Blaga refers to as “ideal correlation with the ultimate elements or coordinates of existential mystery” is a state of reciprocity that exists between the subconscious elements that affect the processes of self-summation and self-surpassing and the manner in which humanity reveals ultimate mystery in religion.<sup>106</sup> According to this theory religion is a human creation, but humanity is also molded and shaped by religion. The influences are reciprocal, and because of this reciprocity, humanity and religion are matched to each other. Because of this reciprocity any metaphysical or mythical creation of religion corresponds (more or less) to the being of its human creator, while at the same time having the tendency to mold its creator to its own image.<sup>107</sup> According to Blaga, this reciprocity is unusually important to the understanding of religion.<sup>108</sup>

The specific abyssal categories that structure particular religions vary from region to region, epoch to epoch, and people to people. Therefore every religion is unique. Nevertheless, all share in certain core elements that are reflected in the definition of religion itself.<sup>109</sup> Blaga’s definition of religion is, on his own account, “algebraic,” meaning that it allows the particulars of religion (the stylistic elements) to vary from one religion to another while maintaining the immutable aspects central to the substance of religion (self-summation/self-surpassing in correlation with mystery).<sup>110</sup>

## Religion and Culture

It is sometimes thought that religion is not a part of culture or is not influenced by culture. It is supposed that religion is a direct product of God or that Divine revelation shelters religion from culture’s influence. Blaga argues (at length and repeatedly) that religion is influenced by culture, and that religion itself is a human cultural production.<sup>111</sup> This is one of the main purposes of the large number of chapters in his writings on philosophy of religion that are devoted to the description of various religions. His descriptions highlight the way each religion is *at least in part* a product of the culture in which it is found.

Blaga argues that mysticism is the form of religious experience most likely to be free from culture’s influence, since mystical experience is purported to involve direct experience of the transcendent or even a state of unity with the transcendent. In order to ascertain whether a religious experience free of the mediation of culture is possible, he analyzes a variety of forms of mysticism including Neo-Platonism, Sufism, Brahmanism, and Christian mysticism, as well as specific mystics like Lao-tzu in the East and Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, Meister Eckehart, Maximus the Confessor, and Pascal in the West.

Blaga does not question the authenticity of mystical experience, but questions whether they are unadulterated experiences of the absolute.<sup>112</sup> He points out that for a mystical experience to be unaffected by culture it would be necessary for the experience to be acosmic and suprahistorical. Since the ecstatic states and claimed unions of mystics with God that Blaga has reviewed exhibit the marks of style from the cultures in which they take place, they cannot be examples of escaping history into the Absolute.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, concludes Blaga, they are not an exception to the historical nature of human existence but rather are at least in part human cultural creations.<sup>114</sup>

## Religion and Metaphysics

The general outline of Blaga's philosophy of religion could be anticipated by anyone familiar with his metaphysical vision. According to this vision, all of existence is the result of a single cause, which Blaga names the Great Anonymous and the Anonymous Fund. This first cause has arranged its creation in such a way as to both preserve the original creation and perpetuate further creation. Two of the chief strategies employed in accomplishing this are "transcendent censorship" and "stylistic brakes." The former limits the cognitive capacity of created beings, while the latter limits their creative capacity.

Humanity is the pinnacle of creation, and has the greatest cognitive and creative capacity of any created species. The most notable attributes that distinguish humanity from other created forms of life are the aspiration to reveal the transcendent and the drive to create. However, even the human cognitive and creative capacities are subject to transcendent censorship and stylistic brakes. The Great Anonymous has limited humanity in this way in order to protect its own supremacy within the natural order of creation, and in order to perpetuate its own creative activity through its creations.

Religion is one manifestation of the human drive to reveal and create. As such, it is subject to transcendent censorship and stylistic braking. This limits the efficaciousness of the human attempts, entailing that religions remain culturally relative creations aspiring toward the transcendent, rather than achieving the status of suprahistorical revelations of ultimate reality.<sup>115</sup> Although all religion is relative, like any other manifestation of culture, and although it bears the mark of the isolation from the absolute caused by transcendent censorship, it can be viewed positively as a sign of the supreme destiny of humanity to strive to reveal mystery. Furthermore, religion is positive in that it is a response to permanent inner needs of the human being.<sup>116</sup> According to Blaga, religion remains one of the perennial manifestations of the human spirit because it circumscribes the human tendency of self-summation/self-surpassing in correlation with the supposed ultimate coordinates of existence, in the horizon of which humanity is permanently ontologically situated.<sup>117</sup>

Whether the great Anonymous of Blaga's metaphysics can be equated with the God-concept of monotheistic religions is debated. In light of Blaga's epistemology, it seems that the most likely conclusion is that it is not possible to know either that the Great Anonymous can or that it cannot be equated with God. This kind of knowledge of the transcendent is systematically blocked. Although Blaga's metaphysics gives an important place to the concept of the Great Anonymous, his definition of religion does not emphasize the existence of a deity or deities. Consistent with this, and also with Blaga's tolerant attitude toward world religions, it could be said both that belief in an ultimate existential entity is not important to Blaga's understanding of religion in general, and that belief in an ultimate existential entity is important to Blaga's own personal religion.<sup>118</sup>

Blaga's metaphysics yields a theodicy that combines an element of distance between the creator and creation and elements of the type of theodicy often referred to as a "greatest possible good" theodicy.<sup>119</sup> He argues, on the one hand, that the Great Anonymous does not exercise direct control over the creation process, but rather emitted the differentials of which creation is constructed and allows them to combine/interact almost randomly. On the other hand he argues that the existing world represents the best solution to a "grave impasse": how to create the greatest possible world without



endowing it to such a degree that it has the ability to destroy itself. The solution to this impasse opted for by the Great Anonymous, according to Blaga's metaphysical speculation, is the endowment of creation with creative and revelatory desires and abilities while at the same time limiting the successes achievable in response to these desires. Thus while the world may seem to be a very imperfect place, it is in fact the best world possible given the goals of the Great Anonymous: perpetual creation and preservation of that which is created.

## Revelation

The possibility of Divine revelation is an important issue in many philosophies of religion. Blaga views his ideas on this issue as direct implications of his metaphysical and epistemological systems. Blaga views the prevention of positive-adequate human knowledge of the transcendent as one of the primary purposes for the imposition of transcendent censorship and stylistic braking. Therefore Blaga believes that the Great Anonymous is oriented toward preventing human knowledge of the transcendent rather than abetting it. Because of this he has reservations about the likelihood of the existence of Divine revelation.<sup>120</sup>

If Blaga is reserved about the possibility of Divine revelation, he is skeptical about the possibility of any Divine revelation being unaffected by culture. In his writings on philosophy of religion he examines a variety of claimed revelations and finds that all of them exhibit cultural influences. Since culture is a transient human creation, the supposed revelations must also be at least in part transient human creations. Therefore religions based on supposed Divine revelation do not succeed in escaping the inherent historicity of the human situation.<sup>121</sup> This leads him to the conclusion that either the supposed revelations are not revelation or that revelation so adapts itself to the human condition that it is as variable as any completely human creation.<sup>122</sup>

Although Blaga sometimes demonstrates an appreciation of Christianity, it is clear that as a result of the forgoing considerations he rejects the traditional view of the inspiration of the Christian Bible.<sup>123</sup> However, he does embrace and frequently use the term "revelation" in his philosophical writings. The sense of this term when used by Blaga is quite different from the sense that it has when used by most theologians. Blaga uses the term to denote "any . . . positive display of an existential mystery in the spotlight of human cognition."<sup>124</sup> Considering how broad a realm of cognitive objects is circumscribed by the phrase "existential mystery" in Blaga's philosophy, it is evident that Blaga considers all human cognition to be revelation. Additionally, he considers all creative constructs to be revelations, whether they occur in the arts or in theoretical studies. In Blaga's writings the term revelation is a metaphor for any attempt at approaching external reality. He adds that none of these attempts is completely successful, but that this does not preclude partial successes within the limits of transcendent censorship.<sup>125</sup> On Blaga's analysis, "spiritual revelations" have nothing to do with Divine revelation, because the former are (at least in large measure) productions of the *human* spirit.<sup>126</sup>

In Blaga's schematization, human creative acts take the place of revelation in the conventional sense. Through creative constructs humanity grapples with and comes to a greater appreciation/understanding of mystery.<sup>127</sup> This *could* be viewed as an indirect revelation instigated by the Great Anonymous, since in Blaga's metaphysics human creativity is a result of the grand plan of the Great Anonymous for creation and is framed

by the cognitive/creative limits imposed therein. This brings Blaga's use of the term "revelation" somewhat closer to the traditional theological usage, but only infinitesimally so.

Blaga is not unaware of the possibility for contradictory revelations latent in his use of the term revelation. In the context of his philosophy of art he notes the polyvalence of nature, commenting that, "In reality, nature changes its appearance, somehow taking to itself the characteristic tendencies of the art of the time."<sup>128</sup> This is consistent with his implicit view that his philosophy of religion provides a better explanation of the phenomenon of religious diversity than does the traditional view of religion as being revealed by God.

There are differences between human creative revelation as it is found in religion and other types of human creative revelation of mystery (e.g., metaphysics, science, art). Most human attempts at revelation, such as those of art and the natural sciences, indiscriminately address any mystery whatsoever. Both religion and metaphysics focus exclusively on the ultimate mysteries of existence. As discussed earlier, however, religion aspires to reveal mystery through the means of self-summation and self-surpassing in correlation with the decisive coordinates of existential mystery.<sup>129</sup>

## Certainty

A sentiment of certainty regarding religious beliefs, sometimes referred to as a feeling of "conviction," is one of the more philosophically interesting aspects of religion. Blaga discusses certainty in the final chapter of *Gîndire Magică și Religie*. Mysticism in particular is often accompanied by an intensified sentiment of certainty, but many other forms of religiosity also involve conviction about religious beliefs. Blaga examines the basis of the claim to certainty on the part of the mystics, since it represents what may perhaps be the most extreme case. He concludes that although mystical certainty may be more intense than ordinary certainty, it is not more objective. He argues that the apparent subjectivity of mystical experience is an indication that it, too, is subject to transcendent censorship and stylistic braking.<sup>130</sup>

Blaga makes no argument against the feeling of certainty that often accompanies religious belief. On the other hand, it is clear that Blaga's epistemology and proposed metaphysical system leave no room for apodictic certainty in any religion or in any other sphere of human cognition.<sup>131</sup> Transcendent censorship and stylistic braking together thwart any possibility of human knowledge reaching a state wherein cognitive error is not at least a possibility. Using the terminology of Blaga's epistemology, "paradisaic" cognition is limited to organizing "the given world" through the employment of categories of understanding. These shape all paradisaic cognition, distorting its objects. Luciferic cognition, on the other hand, reaches beyond the given to creatively address other problems. Luciferic cognition employs stylistic categories, however, and these shape all luciferic cognition, distorting its objects as well.<sup>132</sup>

This lack of apodictic certainty pertaining to religious beliefs does not undermine the justification of religion, according to Blaga. The subjectivity of religious beliefs puts them on par with all other types of human belief. Religion needs neither objectivity nor apodicticity to be legitimate. According to Blaga, religion is legitimated by two other considerations: 1. its status as a cultural creation, an attempt at revelation of mystery in accord with human destiny; and 2. its status as a manifestation of the human tendency to self-summation and self-surpassing in correlation with the ultimate mysteries of existence.

tence.<sup>133</sup> Perhaps it could be stated that, according to Blaga, religion is not validated by its grasp of the transcendent but rather by its reach for it.

## Theology

Blaga's thoughts on theology, and on its uses, limits, and justification, reflect his conclusions regarding religious certainty. In one of his earliest systematic works, *Eonul dogmatic*, Blaga demonstrates great respect for some of the theoretical methods utilized by theology. He uses theological reflection as an example of how human cognition can reach beyond the given and explore issues that transcend the limits of empirical cognition and even human logic. For example, in *Cunoașterea luciferică* he argues that the theological understanding of miracles is a good example of minus-cognition and of the transcending of the laws of nature.<sup>134</sup> He writes that the difference between theology and philosophy is not doctrinal, since they sometimes arrive at the same conclusions, but rather methodological. While philosophy does not presuppose the truth of any particular ideological system, theology begins from the presupposition that some particular religion is revealed truth, and develops its ideas based on that premise.<sup>135</sup>

The very nature of the theological project necessitates that it be a creative enterprise, however, and this precludes the possibility of it attaining a state of apodictic certainty in any of its conclusions. Using the terminology of Blaga's epistemology, theology is luciferic cognition and is therefore subject to stylistic braking. Theological ideas are creations of the human spirit, creations that develop over time and are influenced by the culture in which they are found.<sup>136</sup>

Theological ideas are expressions of the creativity of the human spirit and show the potency of the human drive to reveal the transcendent. These expressions are found in the most ancient and the most modern of thought systems. The sense of the sacred that is expressed in theology is transferred from one object to another—from rock to tree to gods to God to morality and to other ideals, in the case of the West—but Blaga observes that it never completely disappears.<sup>137</sup>

## Blaga and Religions

In his writings on philosophy of religion, Blaga describes and analyzes a wide range of religions and religious phenomena. He treats all of the religions that he investigates fairly and evenhandedly. It seems likely that this is at least in part a result of his belief that a philosophical analysis should not presuppose the truth of any particular religion and should remain open-minded toward all theoretical possibilities.<sup>138</sup>

Blaga's attitude toward world religions seems to go beyond mere philosophical detachment, however. Blaga consistently displays a very great respect for every religion he investigates. This could be a result of his view that all religions are legitimate cultural attempts to reveal the transcendent.<sup>139</sup> It could also be related to his views that all human beliefs are relative, that all knowledge involves constructs that are at best tentatively validated, and that experience is subject to a plurality of legitimate interpretations.<sup>140</sup>

Blaga's own theology has similarities to deism, of a very philosophical sort,<sup>141</sup> though it must be said that the most theological of his statements are intended as metaphorical expressions of things that transcend human language, and perhaps there-

fore have more of an appearance of theology than Blaga actually intends. On the other hand, Blaga writes that the idea of God is “one of the most deeply seated of human ideas.”<sup>142</sup> At the same time, he does not utterly reject those religions (like Buddhism, for example) that do not affirm the existence of a single supreme deity, but rather sees in them an alternate interpretation of a reality that surpasses human cognition.

## Conclusion

It has been shown that culture is one of Blaga’s primary concerns. Culture plays a central role in Blaga’s epistemology, and it does so because of the central role given to culture in Blaga’s metaphysics. Culture is the product of the human attempt to penetrate, to reveal, the mysteries inherent in human existence.

It has also been shown that Blaga understands religion as the attempt to reveal mystery in accord with the human tendency to self-summation and self-surpassing in correlation with the ultimate mysteries of existence. Religion is a culturally-mediated attempt to penetrate mystery. Religion does not overcome culture, nor does it escape culture, but religion is a form of culture. For Blaga, this is a positive in favor of religion.

Taking these two points into consideration, it can be seen how closely culture and religion are related in Blaga’s philosophy. Both involve the human attempt to reveal existential mystery. “Culture” includes all attempts at revealing mystery; “religion” is culture focused on revealing the ultimate mysteries of existence.

Clearly, for Blaga religion is culture. However, in one sense it may also be said that culture is religion: culture, understood as Blaga understands it, is also a human attempt to reveal mystery “in accord with the human tendency to self-summation and self-surpassing.” Both are manifestations of the human drive to reveal and create. Both are responses to inner needs of human beings, and are perennial manifestations of the human spirit in the horizon in which it is permanently ontologically situated. Both hold positions of honor and value in Blaga’s philosophy.

## Notes:

1 Mircea Eliade, “Convorbiri cu Lucian Blaga,” in *Lucian Blaga: Cunoaștere și creație; Culegere de studii*, ed. Dumitru Ghișe, Angela Botez, and Victor Botez (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1987), 483. Mircea Eliade, “Rumanian Philosophy,” in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1967), 233-34.

2 In Blaga’s philosophy, “culture” refers to the collective product of human creativity actuated through a given “stylistic matrix” and within a particular set of concrete circumstances. This definition will be elaborated throughout this article.

3 Lucian Blaga, *Ființa Istorică* (Cluj-Napoca, RO: Editura Dacia, 1977), 406.

4 Lucian Blaga, *Orizont și Stil* (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă “Regele Carol II,” 1935), 102ff.

5 It is sometimes asserted that Blaga’s philosophy of culture is merely an application of Spengler’s philosophy to the particularities of Romanian culture. I believe this view to be mistaken. Mircea Muthu discusses the similarities and differences between Spengler and Blaga in the chapter “Prospecțiuni morfologice: L. Blaga și O. Spengler,” in *Lucian Blaga: Dimensiuni răsăritene* (Pitești, RO: Editura Paralela 45, 2000), 57-65, as

does Viorel Coltescu in “Lucian Blaga și morfologia spengleriană a culturii,” in Dumitru Ghișe, Angela Botez, and Victor Botez, eds., *Lucian Blaga: Cunoaștere și creație; Culegere de studii* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1987), 357–79. My own arguments for the difference between Spengler and Blaga can be found in my article, “Blaga’s Philosophy of Culture: More than a Spenglerian Adaptation,” *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, seria Philosophia*, 48, nos. 1–2 (2003).

6 See Dumitru Micu, “Lucian Blaga: Un sistem filosofic axat pe cultură,” in ed. A. Botez and A. Firuță, *Dimensiunea metafizică a operei lui Lucian Blaga* (Bucharest: Editura științifică, 1996), 231–38. Eliade also acknowledged the originality and systematicity of Blaga’s philosophy of culture; see Ghișe, Botez and Botez, 482–85.

7 Blaga’s philosophical methodology is discussed in Michael S. Jones, *The Metaphysics of Religion: Lucian Blaga and Contemporary Philosophy* (Madison, NJ, USA: Fairleigh-Dickenson University Press, 2006), ch. 3.

8 As Blaga points out, logical arguments are not exempt from the influence of culture and therefore must intimately involve a “stylistic field” if they are to avoid being mere tautologies. Therefore Blaga’s philosophy will only satisfy those who share a sufficient amount of his own structural affinity. *Lucian Blaga, Știință și Creație* (Sibiu, RO: Editura “Dacia Traiană,” 1942), 178–80.

9 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 498. On Blaga’s analysis, culture has two fundamental components: style and metaphor. See Lucian Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii* (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă “Regele Carol II,” 1937), 386.

10 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 292.

11 *Ibid.*, 498.

12 *Ibid.*, 371, 497.

13 Florica Diaconu and Marin Diaconu, *Dicționar de termeni filosofici ai lui Lucian Blaga* (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedia, 2000), 72.

14 Blaga, *Știință și Creație*, 151; Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 496–97, 510.

15 See especially Blaga, *Știință și Creație*, chapters 18 (“Câteva probleme de teoria cunoașterii”) and 19 (“Doua tipuri de cunoaștere”).

16 Blaga, *Știință și Creație*, 176; *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 407.

17 *Ibid.*, 184–85.

18 For an explanation of the Great Anonymous in Blaga’s thought, see Jones, *The Metaphysics of Religion*, ch. 4, “Blaga’s Metaphysics.”

19 *Ibid.*, 185–86.

20 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 101–2, 108, 136. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, see vol. 1, ch. 4, “Makrokosmos: The Symbolism of the World-picture and the Space Problem,” especially the subchapter “Spatial Depth as ‘Time Become Rigid’: The prime symbol.”

21 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 137–38.

22 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 402; *Știință și Creație*, 199, 211.

23 Blaga was a contemporary of Freud and Jung and interacts with their views on the subconscious, the existence of which is generally taken for granted today but was controversial in the early 20th century. Blaga views the existence of the subconscious as a postulate justified by the need to explain observed psychological phenomena. Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 97. Regarding the stylistic categories, see *Știință și Creație*, 174–76, and ch. 9 (“Doua tipuri de cunoaștere”); and *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, ch. 5 (“Categoriile abisale”). Vasile Muscă states that, with the introduction of the stylistic categories, “Blaga operates a transfer of criticism from the upper level of the conscience, the



seat of the cognitive activities the analysis of which preoccupied Kant, to the dark basement of the subconscious, the hearth of creative activity.” Vasile Muscă, “Specificul creației culturale românești în câmpul filosofiei,” in Lucian Blaga, ed. Ghișe, Botez, and Botez, 469.

24 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforie și Sensul Culturii*, 413.

25 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 109.

26 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 498; *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 409.

27 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 412–413.

28 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 133.

29 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 414.

30 *Ibid.*, 414.

31 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, ch. 7, “Teoria dubletelor.”

32 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 490, 502–3; *Știință și Creație*, 176 (footnote).

33 In his earlier systematic writings on philosophy of culture, the term “stylistic matrix” occurs and the term “stylistic field” (câmpul stilistic) is missing. In his later systematic writings the terms stylistic field and stylistic matrix are used synonymously, as in *Ființa Istorică*, ch. 5, “Câmpurile stilistice”; see also *Ființa Istorică*, 420, 485.

34 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 176; *Știință și Creație*, 177–78.

35 In some places (e.g., *Orizont și Stil*, 177) Blaga lists five factors, listing the spatial and temporal horizons of the subconscious separately. In other places he includes the spatial and temporal horizons under the single heading “horizon of the subconscious” (e.g., *Orizont și Stil*, 175). I follow this later practice in my enumeration of four factors.

36 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 175.

37 *Ibid.*, 177, 182–83; FI, 420–39.

38 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 178.

39 *Ibid.*, 177.

40 *Ibid.*, 184–85. The chapter “Interferențe stilistice” in *Ființa Istorică* discusses the different ways that stylistic matrices relate to each other.

41 Diaconu and Diaconu, 218.

42 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 179.

43 As an example of this Blaga discusses the coexistence of Saxon and Romanian culture in Transylvania. *Orizont și Stil*, 115.

44 This is the subject of the chapter “Durata factorilor stilistici,” in FI.

45 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 152ff., 175, 179; *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 410.

46 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 109, 179; concerning space see ch. 4 (“Cultură și spațiu”) and ch. 5 (“Între peisaj și orizont inconștient”); concerning time see ch. 6 (“Orizonturi temporale”).

47 *Ibid.*, 107 (footnote), 117.

48 *Ibid.*, 120–21.

49 *Ibid.*, 127.

50 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 127–28

51 *Ibid.*, 130.

52 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 498, 509. Blaga contrasts this part of his philosophy with that of Hegel, who sees “Ideas” as the basis of history.

53 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 141. Although this suggestion may sound somewhat odd, Blaga points out that there are numerous common examples of similar phenomena. For example, a person is intrinsically linked to his/her self, but this does not entail that s/he positively values all of his/her qualities.

54 *Ibid.*, 150.

55 *Ibid.*, 142.

56 Here Blaga is forced to make recourse to metaphoric language to express his concepts.

57 *Ibid.*, 152.

58 *Ibid.*, 152.

59 *Ibid.*, 153–54.

60 *Ibid.*, 154–55.

61 *Ibid.*, 157.

62 *Ibid.*, 158: modul individualizant, modul tipizant, modul stihial (elementarizant).

63 *Ibid.*, 158. See also Lucian Blaga, *Ferestre Colorate* (Arad, RO: Editura Librăriei Diecezane, 1926), 359.

64 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 161–62.

65 *Ibid.*, 159–63.

66 *Ibid.*, 163–64.

67 *Ibid.*, 164–70. Blaga remarks that the sense of a Byzantine painting is only appreciated when one steps out of the habitual mode of observation (individualized or standardized) and views it from its own, elementized perspective. *Ibid.*, 167.

68 *Ibid.*, 186.

69 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 414.

70 For a more detailed explanation of Blaga's epistemology, see Jones, *The Metaphysics of Religion*, ch. 5, "Blaga's Epistemology."

71 This does not imply that type I cognition is not interpretive—all human knowledge of this world is interpretive, even type I cognition, which interprets based on the cognitive categories. Lucian Blaga, *Experimentul și Spiritul Matematic* (Bucharest: Editura științifică, 1969), 657.

72 Blaga, *Știință și Creație*, 199, 211.

73 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 492–94.

74 "ecuație între idee și realitate" (*Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 417). Blaga is well aware that this definition of truth raises a critiriological issue, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

75 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 417–18. Both types of cognition attempt to reveal mystery. The former does so in a cognitive way that is subject to specific limits, and the latter does so in a cognitive-constructive way that is subject to additional limits. *Ibid.*, 447, 449ff.

76 *Ibid.*, 417–18; see also Blaga, *Știință și Creație*, 180.

77 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 418 (my translation).

78 *Ibid.*, 417–18. A brief but useful discussion of Blaga's writings on philosophy of science and culture is Mircea Flonta's article, "Analiza culturală a cunoașterii pozitive," in Botez and Firuță, 257–60.

79 Blaga, *Știință și Creație*, 160–61 (my translation). See also Angela Botez, "Campul stilistic și evoluția științei" in Botez and Firuță, 261–66, where Botez compares Blaga's philosophy of science to that of Thomas Kuhn and other recent thinkers.

80 Blaga, *Experimentul și Spiritul Matematic*, 685.

81 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 490, 502–3; *Știință și Creație*, 176 (footnote).

82 For a more detailed explanation of Blaga's metaphysics, see Jones, *The Metaphysics of Religion*, ch. 4, "Blaga's Metaphysics."

83 The Great Anonymous uses the cognitive categories to limit cognition and the stylistic categories to limit construction. When humanity tries to penetrate mystery, it turns to the immediate, but this way is blocked by transcendent censorship. Humanity therefore turns to creative constructs, but that way is blocked by stylistic braking. Therefore humanity never completely succeeds in penetrating mystery. In this way humanity is maintained in its permanently creative state. Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 450–51.

84 Lucian Blaga, *Diferențialele divine* (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă “Regele Carol II,” 1940), 179, and *Artă și valoare* (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă “Regele Carol II,” 1939), 631–32.

85 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 510.

86 *Ibid.*, 493, 503.

87 *Ibid.*, 293, 467 (“tragic and wonderful destiny” [destinul tragic și mareț]); *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 459.

88 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 441, 442. Blaga writes that culture is at least as essential to humanness as is the physical human form (*ibid.*, 443), and that it is the sine qua non of humanness (*ibid.*, 446). He insists that no other animal life-forms create culture, and that this phenomenon makes humanity unique in the world. See GMSC, ch. 11, “Singularitatea omului.”

89 *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 444–45, 353. Blaga states that there are few forms of existence in the universe (he lists inanimate material, plant, animal, and human) and therefore the appearance of this new mode of existence is very significant.

90 *Ființa Istorică*, 496 (omul luciferic), 498.

91 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 181–83.

92 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 439.

93 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 437–39; *Orizont și Stil*, 184ff.

94 Blaga, *Orizont și Stil*, 185.

95 This philosophy was perhaps of some comfort to Blaga himself, whose struggle to reach God or grasp the ultimate meanings of the universe is reflected in both his poetry and his philosophy, as is explained in Keith Hitchins’ introduction to Brenda Walker’s translation, *Complete Poetical Works of Lucian Blaga* (Iași, RO, Oxford, Portland, USA: Center for Romanian Studies, 2001), 45–48.

96 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 452.

97 Lucian Blaga, *Gândire magică și religie* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1987); *Curs de filosofia religiei* (Alba Iulia: Editura Fronde, 1994).

98 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 467.

99 *Ibid.*, 467–68.

100 *Ibid.*, 469.

101 Blaga claims that, contra the conclusions of many psychoanalysts, the basic characteristic of religion (the tendency toward self-summation and/or self-surpassing in correlation with the ultimate elements of existential mystery) is supremely normal for humans. *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 476–77.

102 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 470 (my translation). As Tănase points out, this definition is liable to be viewed as unacceptable by many religious practitioners, since it seems to humanize and secularize religion; Tănase, *Lucian Blaga: Filosoful poet, poetul filosof*, 142.

103 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 472.

104 *Ibid.*, 470.

105 *Ibid.*, 471.

106 This is also explained in Aurel Codoban, "Un Blaga ignorat: Filosoful religiei," 377-78. Aurel Codoban, "Un Blaga ignorat: Filosoful religiei." In *Eonul Blaga: Întâiul Veac*, ed. Mircea Borcila (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1997), 381-82.

107 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 473-74.

108 The eminent Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae has criticized Blaga for making style/culture more fundamental to humanity than religion (Stăniloae, *Poziția domnului Lucian Blaga față de Creștinism și Ortodoxie*, 13). This criticism may perhaps be guilty of overlooking the reciprocity between human religious creations and style. This reciprocity seems to indicate that religion and style influence each other, which is in fact consistent with Blaga's philosophy of culture. In several places Blaga indicates that religion is one of the basic expressions of the human soul (see, for instance, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 505). What is culturally relative is not the phenomenon of religion, but rather the particular form that this phenomenon takes in a given setting.

109 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 475.

110 *Ibid.*, 475, 480-81.

111 On page 352 of *Gândire Magică și Religie* Blaga states that religious phenomena inevitably have a stylistic structure. On page 478 of *Gândire Magică și Religie* he argues that religion, like any other cultural creation, is always under the influence of the stylistic categories, no matter how complex or intellectual the religion is. Even the extremely rationalist religion of Kant is subject to stylistic formation (*Gândire Magică și Religie*, 475).

112 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 426. At one point Blaga does write that an ecstatic union with God cannot take place except through the self-deception of the mystic, because there does not exist permeability between humanity and the Great Anonymous.

113 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 503; *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 373, 417, 439.

114 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 504; *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 426.

115 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 503.

116 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 480.

117 *Ibid.*, 474.

118 See Ioan I. Ica, "Filosofia lui Blaga din perspectiva teologică: Reconsiderarea unei polemici," in Mircea Borcila, *Eonul Blaga: Întâiul veac* (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1997), 383-95.

119 Lucian Blaga, *Diferențialele divine* (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă "Regele Carol II," 1940), 86, 154.

120 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 479.

121 *Ibid.*, 479.

122 *Ibid.*, 441.

123 In one place Blaga asserts that Christianity is a myth affected by the Greek synthesis of religion and culture. Lucian Blaga, *Eonul Dogmatic* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1931), 202-3.

124 Lucian Blaga, *Cenzura transcendentă: Încercare metafizică* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1934), 454 (my translation).

125 *Ibid.*, 454-55.

126 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 502; Ion Manzat, "Elemente de psihologia religiei," in Botez and Firuță, 283.

127 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii*, 457-58.

128 Blaga, *Ferestre Colorate*, 360 (my translation). Blaga is quoting or paraphrasing Oscar Wilde, but does not reference his source.

129 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 471–72.

130 *Ibid.*, 493–95.

131 The renowned Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae argues that Blaga's philosophy makes all knowledge relative and is therefore anti-Christian, since Christianity (and especially Orthodoxy) is based on the certainty of revealed truth. Some might argue that Blaga's view of the human predicament and the resultant epistemological modesty that this view suggests are in fact more in keeping with the Christian view of the inherent limits of created beings, the cognitive consequences of the fall, and the nature of saving faith than are the perhaps immodest epistemological views of theologians like Stăniloae.

132 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică*, 492; *Diferențialele Divine*, 184.

133 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 488–89.

134 Blaga, *Cunoașterea Luciferică*, 400–401. He also writes that the Christian doctrine of the two natures of Christ is an abuse of minus-cognition, 399–400.

135 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 342–43. Blaga states that the presupposition of the truth of a particular religion is totally legitimate for the theology of any religion (Blaga, *Curs de Filosofia Religiei*, 12). Some might object that philosophy's rejection of initial premises is itself a premise and an ideology, but Blaga does not comment on this possibility.

136 Blaga, *Eonul Dogmatic*, 209; *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 344.

137 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 486.

138 *Ibid.*, 342–43.

139 *Ibid.*, 180.

140 On the polyvalence of experience, see Blaga, *Ferestre Colorate*, 360.

141 Lucian Blaga, *Hronicul și cântecul vârstelor*, ed. Dorli Blaga. Vol. 6 of *Opere* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1979), 55. Blaga's theology is most similar to deism when it posits a supreme Creator who initiated creation in such a way that the Creator's continual intervention is not necessary. It is unlike classical deism in that it proposes that the Creator is continually creating by continually emitting additional "differentials." Săvulescu argues that Blaga held that God cannot be understood but can be "known," and that therefore Blaga was a theist. Geo Săvulescu, *Lucian Blaga: Filosofia prin metafore* (Bucharest: A. B. România, 2000), 50ff.

142 Blaga, *Gândire Magică și Religie*, 367.



ELVIRA GROZA

*Scrisorile către un  
provincial* ale lui Mircea  
Eliade. Răspunsul unui  
provincial din viitor  
*Mircea Eliade's Letters  
for a Provincial. The  
Answer from a Provincial  
from the Future*

**Abstract:**

The article analyzes *The Letters for a Provincial*, addressed by Mircea Eliade to a hypothetical provincial in order to prepare access to the capital city. The letters are written so as to dislocate the provincial from a cultural model built on fake values and prejudices. From a mere pretext, the letters are turned into a symbolic act through which the historian of religions assumes, on the one hand, the destiny of a messenger of a new humanism, and, on the other hand, transforms the modern areligious man into a destination point for whom the provincial is the archetype. Thus, in all of Eliade's works one can trace the same pattern of dislocation of the partial man, disconnected from archetypes and milestones, in order to re-install him on the road towards the Center, through anthropology structured on cosmic reintegration, alchemy or androgyny in the books of the Romanian period, recovery of the eternal recursion in the Western treatises, and also through the theory of the irecognoscibility of the miracle, in his last essays. The end of the article proposes an answer from the present provincial, who for Eliade was still in the future, an answer showing that the messages of the historian of religions are not reaching him, because he has lost the road towards the Center; moreover, he is situated in an ill-fated extraterritoriality, that is made possible through the great integrations at a horizontal level, and his chance would be the return to the story.

“suntem provincii, asta suntem, provincii nenorocite  
uite de dumnezeu, ocolite de catastrofă  
gelatinoase și omogene, fără trenuri, fără autobuze, fără șosele...”  
(Mircea Cărtărescu – Provincialii )

Dintre primele articole și eseuri ale lui Mircea Eliade, *Scrisorile către un provincial*, publicate în *Profetism românesc*, merită atenția noastră, întrucât efortul tânărului autor de a pregăti provincialul pentru accesul în capitală, ca topos al culturii anticipează strădaniile ulterioare ale istoricului religiilor de a-i arăta omului religios *drumul spre Centru*. În felul acesta, respectivele scrisori se transformă dintr-un aparent pretext, în actul simbolic prin care Eliade și-a asumat destinul de mesager al unui nou umanism, astfel încât textura operei sale e constituită din mesaje adresate unei umanități pentru care a stabilit ca arhetip, explicit sau implicit, provincialul. De asemenea, credem că o reverență potriv-

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**Key words:**

Mircea Eliade, modern man, sacred,  
Center

ită în fața lui Mircea Eliade ar fi ipoteticul răspuns al unui provincial din viitor care, într-o perioadă a maximei reintegrări, încearcă să descopere și să-i explice și lui Eliade de ce drumul spre Centru pare definitiv ratat.

## Scrisorile propriu-zise

La 20 de ani, între anii 1927-1933, Eliade scrie 13 scrisori unui provincial pe care îl numește „prieten necunoscut” și din răspunsurile căruia reiese că se vrea pe sine liber, „personal și intransigent”. Privite în ansamblu, scrisorile apar ca o sfătuire cu sine despre eroism și bărbăție, în ton cu înclinația autorului lor spre asceză, dar, dacă le luăm una câte una, descoperim că Eliade îi propune provincialului, și implicit generației sale, un *exercițiu de dislocare* cu sens dublu pentru a obține „minima luciditate” ca tehnică necesară pentru a identifica schemele și blocajele în care funcționează cultura din perioada interbelică. Astfel, pe de o parte, scrisorile atacă respectiva perioadă printr-o critică a valorilor „plate și prețioase” de care provincialul trebuie să se dezică prin eliberarea de maniera celor din „generația veche” de a consuma viața, de a trăi comod și superficial, instalați într-un cult aberant al trecutului individual care blochează viața și oprește crearea ei, dar și de a scăpa de sentimentalismul inutil al cărui emblemă este Moldova. Apoi, sub pretextul unor divagații despre eseu, despre eroism și despre compromis, Eliade avertizează provincialul că trebuie, mai ales, să se salveze de modalitatea de a gândi și de a scrie în stilul „notă de subsol” sau în „formă închisă”, așa cum fac „gânditorii paraziți” și „intelectualii de rasă” care „trădează un tip intelectual exaltat în mediocritate – sentimentală, morală, cerebrală – și o fază dureroasă a unei culturi”<sup>1</sup>. Pe de altă parte, scrisorile sunt tonice și constructive pentru că autorul îi propune provincialului să experimenteze compromisul, nespirtualitatea, nebunia, tinerețea și facerea nu doar ca noi valori, ci să aibă curajul să le asume drept altfel de căi spre adevăr. În felul acesta, promite Eliade, va ajunge la tristețea masculină a sufletului maturizat de experiențe excepționale, deci capabil să lupte cu nostalgiile și amintirile trecutului și, totodată, va fi apt pentru exerciții de umilință, pentru ridicol, în stare să concretizeze eroismul prin viața pe care o trăiește.

Scrisorile sunt reluate la un interval de patru ani, ca răspuns la ajutorul cerut de către provincial, însă aceste ultime scrisori fac în mod evident figura pretextului pentru că în ele deja transpar experiențe și evenimente din viața autorului. Surprins că provincialul nu a reușit să se vindece de „sentimentul catastrofic al vieții”<sup>2</sup> prin studii sau călătorii, Eliade îi explică, și e vizibilă influența spiritualității indiene, diferența dintre a fi viu și a fi mort în viață. Aceste ultime scrisori sunt și mai încărcate de sfaturi care tind să-l scape pe provincial de dogme și prejudecăți și să-l învețe să fie „viu” pentru a preveni „tragedia” pe care o pregătește „inflația de adevăruri inutile”.<sup>3</sup> Odată cu ele, în special scrisorile intitulate *De ce faci filozofie?* sau *A face...*, dar și atunci când propune recuperarea „momentelor nespirtuale”, devine clar faptul că pentru Eliade provincialul este un om parțial, prizonier al unui anume model științific, situat într-o perspectivă din care adevărul și frumosul sunt trăite „fără ritm” și „fără stil”. Deși autorul pretinde că face „simple presupuneri”, textul este tot mai plin de idei care trimit spre armonizarea omului cu cosmosul printr-o intuiție globală a lumii.

Scrisorile fac parte din itinerariul spiritual trasat de către Eliade generației sale pentru a o deschide spre „dorința de o sinteză completă și autentică”<sup>4</sup>. La această deschidere se ajunge, după tânărul autor, prin critica rațiunii suficiente, prin asimilarea culturii cu

experiența, dar și practicând un diletantism care trimite spre umanismul de tip renesanțist. Totodată, scrisorile sunt redactate, și așa trebuie percepute, în contextul mai larg al profețiilor referitoare la destinul culturii românești. Eliade era convins la vremea aceea că, dincolo de „teroarea istoriei”, este posibilă eternizarea României prin specificul spiritualității sale, respectiv perceperea vieții și a morții din perspectiva reintegrării în Cosmos. Luate strict, pe fondul profetismului și al itinerariului spiritual, scrisorile către provincial nu sunt decât simple provocări adresate, la modul rebel și vizionar, unei generații care își caută repere și unei culturi pe care urmărește să o deschidă spre universalitate. Însă, privite retrospectiv, în urma unui ocol prin opera lui Eliade, descoperim că scrisorile către provincial anunță preocuparea constantă de a-i conștientiza omului parțial statutul de ființă totală pe care îl face accesibil istoria religiilor.

## Instituirea provincialului ca arhetip al omului modern

Exercițiul de dislocare propus provincialului, în care se întruchipa generația interbelică, este miza întregii vieți a lui Mircea Eliade. La limită, toată opera sa poate fi considerată o scrisoare către un provincial izolat într-o paradigmă culturală, tributar unui anume model uman, pe care urmărește să-l deschidă spre Viață. Așa cum în primele sale scrieri dorea să-l ajute pe provincial să obțină minima luciditate necesară pentru a-l deschide spre cultura echivalentă cu capitala și, de asemenea, spre viață, cu toate formele ei, la fel descoperim cum lucrările sale se transformă treptat într-un exercițiu de conștientizare a dimensiunii simbolice, respectiv a faptului că suntem în drum spre Centru, spre ceea ce e universal uman. Este de ajuns să-l urmărim pe itinerariul parcurs prin textele sale ca să vedem că, după ce instituie la nivelul eseurilor autenticitatea ca „tehnică a realului”, Eliade este preocupat, încă din primele lucrări filosofice din perioada românească, să propună o antropologie structurată pe omologia și solidaritatea cu Întregul viu. De aceea, în lucrările de început este fundamental mitul reintegrării tocmai pentru că dezvăluie omul ca fiind marcat de nostalgia refacerii întregului dinaintea Creației. Pe măsură ce omul devine conștient de poziția lui în Cosmos, de faptul că ființa lui s-a constituit ca urmare a unei rupturi și că orice totalizare e aparentă., tot ce face este pentru a reintegra condiția omului primordial, dinaintea căderii. La vremea aceea Eliade considera că este posibilă o unificare care precede orice simbol, mit, cultură, prin tehnici de reintegrare cum ar fi yoga, alchimia sau androginia pe care le interpretează drept căi de refacere a Întregului despicat prin actul Creației.

Ulterior, pe parcursul lucrărilor occidentale, se conturează tot mai clar faptul că demersul practicat de Eliade are ca temei convingerea că religiozitatea este structură a conștiinței și, drept urmare, trebuie să înțelegem dialectica sacru-profan ca o mișcare de transcendere care înseamnă abolire a profanului și participare la sacru într-o mișcare simultană. Această mișcare adună omul din risipire și parțializare într-o „cunoaștere-trăire” prin care își deschide lumea și își reconstruiește permanent identitatea. În acest demers de recuperare a dimensiunii simbolice și, implicit, de întregire a omului, este paradigmatic omul arhaic, pentru că, în cazul acestuia, este intensă „predispoziția la transcendență”. Astfel, dependența de o origine arhetipală și dorința de a reveni in illo tempore care transpare din interpretarea faptelor religioase ne arată că omul arhaic este pentru omul religios arhetipul unei situații a vieții în Centru, ceea ce înseamnă o plasare la/pe limita dintre uman și absolut.

Angajamentul umanitar asumat de către Mircea Eliade este acela de a ne demonstra că a fi om înseamnă a fi în drum spre Centru, adică într-o *eternă reîntoarcere* la

începutul arhetipal, fără posibilitatea de a ne bloca la nivelul natural, profan sau de a trece în sacru. Ancorat în realitatea povestită de mit și pusă în scenă de ritual, omul religios se constituie ca ființă totală într-o lume pe care o transformă în peisaj cultural prin limbajul simbolurilor a cărui funcție este de a cosmiciza omul și de a antropomorfiza lumea. De aceea, istoria religiilor se transformă la Eliade într-o „hermeneutică totală” care, dincolo de înțelegerea și interpretarea faptelor religioase, urmărește unificarea experiențelor umane pentru a descoperi semnificații care schimbă însăși calitatea existenței. De altfel, în *Nostalgia Originilor* autorul își declară explicit situarea pe terenul istoriei religiilor pentru a deprovincializa cultura occidentală în numele unui „nou umanism”, axat pe recuperarea dimensiunii simbolice prin interpretarea situațiilor asumate de om în decursul istoriei. Cauza situației provinciale a culturii occidentale, construită pe premisele pozitivismului areligios din secolul XIX, este etnocentrismul. Eliade este convins că istoricul religiilor trebuie să facă posibil dialogul cu alteritatea pentru că „depășirea provincialismului cultural devine posibilă tocmai prin înțelegerea acestor situații, nefamiliaare, exotice”<sup>5</sup>. Așadar, lumea occidentală trebuie să iasă din provincialism pentru a intra în dialog cu Asia și lumea arhaică și, implicit, pentru a accede la o cunoaștere mai profundă a omului.

În numele „noului umanism”, istoria religiilor practică de Eliade își propune să deschidă calea unei antropologii filosofice. Într-o balansare de promisiuni și avertismente folosite ca argumente pentru a ne convinge să ne recuperăm dimensiunea simbolică și să ne asumăm ființa totală, de fapt autorul ne invită la o deblocare de sine, exact așa cum îl invita pe provincialul căruia îi scria în tinerețe să își construiască o perspectivă cosmică, deschisă spre viață. Avertismentele lui Eliade converg înspre ideea că omul modern, care se pretinde liber și creator, este în realitate un om parțial. Cu precizarea că „omul modern este cel care se vrea exclusiv istoric, adică înainte de toate «omul» istoricismului, al marxismului și al existențialismului”<sup>6</sup>, istoricul religiilor ne demonstrează că, prin asumarea istoricității și a individualității, modernul areligios s-a rupt de structuri simbolice și de arhetipuri. Această renunțare la repere echivalează cu o descentrare ale cărei consecințe inevitabile sunt relativismul și parțializarea. De altfel, în lucrările din perioada occidentală este tot mai evident efortul lui Eliade de a evita ruperea de Centru, deci provincializarea care instalează omul modern areligios în teroarea istoriei, în angosă și într-o percepție secularizată a timpului. Și mai interesant este faptul că în eseu *Homo faber și homo religiosus*, publicat în *Briser le toit de la maison*, pe fondul reinterpretării relației dintre om, muncă și timp, Eliade arată că omul modern, transformat într-un alchimist recent, prepară Viața sintetic, fabrică sănătate, tinerețe și nemurire. Iată că, la vremea aceea, autorul pune problema pervertirii conștiinței originare prin atitudinea raționalist-empirică în fața lumii golită de sacralitate și, în felul acesta, antcipa evoluția „glorioasă” înspre provincialul actual.

## Răspunsul provincialului din viitor

Figura din urmă a dialecticii sacru-profan este, așa cum știm, camuflarea perfectă a sacrului în profan, iar ultimul pas în exercițiul de dislocare a provincialului este teoria irecognoscibilității miracolului. În ultimele eseuri, despre permanența sacrului în arta contemporană, Eliade era conștient de distanța dintre omul religios ca ființă totală și omul contemporan care refuză spargerea camuflajului atât prin tehnicile de regenerare a timpului și, implicit a ființei sale, cât și prin starea de veghe ca exercițiul permanent de con-

stituire. și atunci, dacă tot ce e profan e sacru, se mai poate Eliade adresa unui arhetip al provincialului dintr-o perspectivă soteriologică sau omul contemporan este unul deja salvat printr-o totalizare progresivă? Mai clar: în perioada maximei integrări, a reintegrării secularizate, cine mai este provincialul? Provincialul nu mai poate fi cel aflat în exil; pentru el, exilul a devenit „figura ideală a teritoriului.”<sup>7</sup> Dimpotrivă, *provincialul din viitor* este omul actual, situat într-o extrateritorialitate funestă pe care o face posibilă epoca marilor integrări. Acest provincial din viitor, dacă ar fi să-i trimită un răspuns mesagerului Eliade, prin care să-i explice de ce nu mai ajung la el mesajele din lucrările sale, ar trebui, mai întâi, să-i spună că invers proporțional cu însumarea statelor și a continentelor în organisme tot mai ample, fiecare om rămâne o „provincie izolată”. Omul, transformat într-un atom închis în sistemul său ca într-o bulă transparentă, dincolo de istorie, fără șansa de a mai ajunge la el avertismente, sfaturi sau profeții, așteaptă doar să fie sedus în jocul aparențelor. Așadar, nu mai sunt șanse ca omul contemporan „să spargă acoperișul lumii” pentru că, deși absolutul nu dispăre, e pasibil de degradare prin „dublețele facile” despre care suntem preveniți în *Tratatul de istorie a religiilor*. Pe o planetă care se transformă într-un imens sat, omul a devenit un „subiect fractal care ... se difractă într-o multitudine de ego-uri miniaturizate”.<sup>8</sup> Omul contemporan a uitat esențialul pentru că și-a blocat dimensiunea simbolică, iar acum e obligat să își consume acest destin, de provincial, într-o pluralitate de centre, ceea ce echivalează cu o permanentă risipire la nivel superficial. Provincialul actual mai poate doar să constate că, în ceea ce privește simbolurile, reperele și semnificațiile, lucrurile se întâmplă pe dos: pericolul interpretării univoce a unui simbol a devenit pericolul excesivității simbolurilor, dar, în această revărsare de simulacre, în care s-au dizolvat simbolurile, Centrul sau centralizarea devine figura vidă într-o supra extindere orizontală care pierde verticalitatea. În fața invaziei violente a simulacrelor, întrebarea care survine este: în ce măsură este posibilă și cum ar mai putea funcționa pentru provincial dialectica camuflării sacrului în profan? Răspunsul pe care suntem tentați să-l dăm este următorul: în afara reperelor, și totuși în abundenta survenire a sensului pe care nu mai știe să-l gestioneze, provincialul de azi este iremediabil pierdut, înecat în sensuri și semnificații, „uitat de Dumnezeu și ocolit de catastrofă”, departe de a-și mai asuma exerciții de dislocare care să-l situeze pe *drumul spre Centru*.

Eventual, scriitorul Eliade mai poate să ne salveze de la iminenta întâlnire cu nimicul, dar și asta doar dacă noi înșine ne mai acordăm o șansă: aceea de a ne reinstala în poveste. Atunci rămâne ca literatura sa „să ajute omul să recupereze semnificația pierdută a existenței sale”<sup>9</sup> și să ne arate posibile ieșiri din timp, din lume și din noi înșine.

## Note:

1 Eliade, Mircea, *Profetism românesc*, volumul I, Editura Roza Vânturilor, București, 1990, p. 91

2 *Idem*, p. 106

3 *Idem*, p. 113

4 *Idem*, p. 39

5 Eliade, Mircea, *Nostalgia Originilor*, Editura Humanitas, București, 1994, p. 16

6 Eliade, Mircea, *Mitul eternei reîntoarceri* în *Eseuri*, Editura științifică, București, 1991, p. 114

7 Baudrillard, Jean, *Celălalt prin sine însuși*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj Napoca, 1997, p. 39



8 Baudrillard, Jean, *Celălalt prin sine însuși*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj Napoca, 1997, p. 30

9 Culianu, Ioan Petru, *Mircea Eliade*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2004, p. 292

DAVID PENSARD

## Yogacara Buddhism: a sympathetic description and suggestion for use in Western theology and philosophy of religion

### Abstract:

*A defense of Yogacara Buddhism in light of contemporary trends in Western philosophy and theology, this paper begins with an historical survey and proceeds with a comparative analysis. Yogacara was successful in addressing the same problems 1600 years ago that many in the West have failed to address, or even recognize today. With its metaphysical and epistemological implications, Yogacara may also be employed in the resolution of, or continuing investigation into, long-standing problems within Christian theology over and against the Greek metaphysics of presence.*

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### Key words:

Yogacara, Christian theology, philosophy of religion, nihilism, illusion, conditions of cognition, narcissistic self-referentiality

## Introduction

This paper intends to provide a defense of Yogacara Buddhism in the following manner. First, a basic history and description of the philosophy will present the problems it addressed and show how it successfully accomplished resolution of those problems. Second, a similar Western tradition will be compared to Yogacara and will be shown to be less robust and ultimately unsuccessful. Finally, it will be shown how Yogacara, especially its metaphysical and epistemological implications, may be capable of resolving long-standing problems in the West, especially within Christian theology. This particular Eastern tradition, through the tensions it creates with the West and the resolutions it may provide within Christian theology, will thus be apologetically vindicated and defended as a legitimate and viable philosophy.

## Historical Data

Yogacara developed late within Indian Buddhism.<sup>1</sup> It was founded by the brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu in the fifth century. Origins before this can be traced only through traditions in which Asanga is said to have been mentored by a man known as Maitreya who may or may not be historical.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, it is likely that Yogacara was already hundreds of years old by the time of Asanga.<sup>3</sup> Before being converted by his brother, Vasubandhu was a *Sautrantika* thinker and an expert in *Abhidharma*.<sup>4</sup> *Sautrantika* was a transitional school between *Theravada* and *Mahayana* Buddhism that emphasized the “representational and constructed nature of knowledge.”<sup>5</sup> The *Abhidharma* are scriptures that have systematized Buddhist teachings and have “focused

on the analysis of experience.”<sup>6</sup> As will be shown, this background was an appropriate preparation for Vasubandhu because Yogacara proceeds similarly.

The “foundational scripture” of Yogacara is Asanga’s *The Scripture on the Explication of Underlying Meaning (Samdhinirmocanasutra)*.<sup>7</sup> His brother, Vasubandhu, also produced important texts. The original texts of Yogacara no longer exist in their original Sanskrit but only Chinese and Tibetan translations.<sup>8</sup> Although new texts are constantly being written, the oldest surviving texts are from the third century.<sup>9</sup> This gap between the original teachers and the written tradition has fostered not a small amount of misunderstanding about Yogacara teachings. Only recently has textual criticism been able to piece together the original teachings and show how centuries of Yogacaran teachers have strayed from the original path the insights of which represent, perhaps, the greatest philosophical achievement of the east rivaling or surpassing the accomplishments of Western philosophy.<sup>10</sup>

Yogacara means, “The School that Practices the Way of Yoga.”<sup>11</sup> Yet, the practical methodology of yogic meditation merely gives us the name for the philosophy; it is wholly inadequate as its description. Meditation is merely a means of abandoning delusions about the self and about the world. Obviously, a great deal of context will be needed in order to fully understand the goal of this strategy.

## Background

In order to appreciate the Yogacara strategy, we must understand the setting in which the philosophy originated. This includes how fifth century Buddhists interpreted reality and the way in which they imagined their minds to operate with and as reality. Yogacara is heavily influenced by the *Prajnaparamita* sutras, scriptures of *Madhyamaka* Buddhism, or the *Middle Way*. As the first-known author of this tradition, Nagarjuna taught *sunyata*, holding that emptiness was the ultimate reality and that this insight destroyed all understanding. Thus, he rejected all theory and all philosophy as illusory, believing them to be definitively negated by the dialectic of emptiness.<sup>12</sup> Emptiness, or voidness, was intended to mean that the world is “empty of any imagined being, of any notion of an essentialist absolute.”<sup>13</sup> Yogacara is a reaction to the *sunyata* position, but while Yogacara is often seen as a complete break from the doctrine of emptiness substituting a new idealism in its place, this is not the way that they themselves described their relationship to their predecessor. Asanga believed that he was correctly interpreting Nagarjuna and *Madhyamaka* whereas his (Nagarjuna’s) followers had failed to do so.<sup>14</sup> Asanga wanted to “revive” philosophy by creating a robust view of the structure of consciousness through an investigation into meditation and use it to rethink the notion of emptiness so that it did not stop with the destruction of all views.<sup>15</sup> This was the goal of the first Yogacara philosophers, to move beyond the limits incorrectly believed to be set by Nagarjuna.<sup>16</sup>

Vasubandhu gives his definitive explanation of emptiness in the very beginning of his seminal writing, the *Madhyantavibhaga*. In the emptiness or voidness itself, something exists and persists. This conclusion is not found explicitly in *Madhyamaka*. Nonetheless, Asanga and his brother claim it was implicit.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the difference is not as great as was once supposed. They are reduced further when we consider that Yogacara was also a response to non-Mahayana schools including *Theravada* and *Sarvastivada*.<sup>18</sup> That is, Yogacara was a synthesis created in response to all existing schools of Buddhism at the time.

Yogacara drew from common beliefs in all these traditions to resolve the problems all of them were facing. Its key epistemological and metaphysical insights, being only somewhat new, drew from the common Buddhist belief that knowledge comes only from the senses (*vinapti*). With a new insight, Yogacara proposed that the mind, itself, was an aspect of *vinapti*. Asanga further recognized that, while the mind can sense its own objects, which are known as thoughts (apperception), it cannot verify its own interpretation. So, because the senses are constantly misinterpreted, it follows that apperception is as well. In other words, we cannot perceive correctly the perception that we do not perceive reality correctly *and* we cannot verifiably engage in apperception. These misconceptions are instinctive and nearly universal because they are caused by the desires, fears and anxieties that come with animal survival. This results in an automatic assumption of substance for self and objects (*atman* and *dharma*). These are created to suppress our fears. Throughout life, we construct working theories to explain what we experience. These are always in error.<sup>19</sup>

Accordingly, Yogacara departs from the common Buddhist understanding not only in its view of the problem, but also in its view of the solution. From a perspective known in the west as *process metaphysics*, Yogacara talks about “grasper/grasped” rather than “subject/object” respectively. Yogacara, with a unique and decisive move never made in the west, also introduces a causal relationship. We grasp *because* we desire; desire *comes from* a sense of need. What we fundamentally lack is a self, thus we seek to preserve what we do not have. Because we strive to survive, we do not naturally challenge the assumption of our own being. The solution is to disown the phenomena within our minds as our own. Sensations of pleasure and pain, belief and willful ignorance, language and reason, these are all strategies employed to preserve the self but come at the expense of this unending sense of need.<sup>20</sup>

## Beyond Nihilism (Nastivada)

*Madhyamaka* was taken to be completely destructive, offering no positive argument in place of what it rejected. Nagarjuna, through his understanding of emptiness, had rejected all views as invalid.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, Asanga did not assert that Nagarjuna was wrong. Instead, his basic position was that, “the emptiness of things is not their nonexistence but their perfect (or absolute) existence.” In other words, he claimed that Nagarjuna was not wrong, but had merely been misunderstood; he was never promoting metaphysical nihilism.<sup>22</sup>

The Yogacara departure from *Madhyamaka* comes as a critical focus upon the nature of the mind, seeking to explicitly describe the structure of consciousness as a way to reveal the path toward enlightenment.<sup>23</sup> This “turn toward conscious interiority” came more than one thousand years before Kant’s *Copernican revolution* and the *subjective turn*. It came as a response to the effective squelching of all truth claims by *Madhyamaka* philosophers after Nagarjuna, which resulted in paradox and confusion. If every view is challenged as illusory, this must include even the fundamental Buddhist teachings such as the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold Path! Moreover, this constant denial of all truth claims was “constantly in tension with the affirmative value of dependent co-arising.”<sup>24</sup> Instead of seeing an *end* to meaning, Asanga interpreted voidness as a different kind of meaning.

While *Madhyamaka* denied nihilism (*nastivada*), they *also* denied being. This

caused an intolerable tension that many were beginning to resolve through monism, the belief that a reality exists in higher, non-defiled states leaving only the lower physical reality as void. While some followed this path away from strict *Madhyamaka* teachings, Asanga and Vasubandhu were attempting to stay true to the *Prajnaparamita* sutras of Nagarjuna. To resolve the problem of how to teach and even understand doctrine without participating in illusion they argued that consciousness itself is dependently co-arising and must exist in illusion before awakening. Thus, “insight and doctrinal formulation” are valid “conventionally,” but not ultimately.<sup>25</sup> Because Yogacara rejects both the object that is known as an independent substance *as well as* the reality of the knower, it is not idealism. Instead, it is a “critical awareness of the other-dependent relationships that condition all human thinking.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, it is a process metaphysical view of self and physical reality without reliance upon the notion of substance in either.

Asanga’s concept of “things” took on three aspects: First, there is the nature of a thing that the mind imposes in its attempt to know it. Second, there is the relational nature of things as they inter-depend. Third, at the highest level of understanding, there is absolute perfection of all things as relative, that is, as co-arisen.<sup>27</sup> In order to achieve enlightenment, one must understand what this emptiness of non-being entails, how it effects one’s view of one’s self (as “non-personal”) and of the rest of reality.<sup>28</sup> This is the insight that allows us to see beyond our delusions.

According to Vasubandhu, things are not the creation of consciousness and they are not illusory. However, things are only known as they affect consciousness. The concept of substance is the illusion.<sup>29</sup> This distinctive perspective on what is happening in our minds allows for the resolution of many otherwise intractable problems. It indicates that untainted thought, free from all error, is attainable. In addition, by coming to appreciate that cognitive activity is more complex than previously thought, it allows for a realistic pursuit of its mastery while permitting a wide variety of strategies for success.<sup>30</sup> Vasubandhu’s insight is actually a methodology for accomplishing this realization and the mastery that comes with it; we know this methodology as phenomenology.<sup>31</sup>

At this point, it is important to distinguish between phenomenology as a methodology and idealism as a metaphysical theory. Despite the analyses of D. T. Suzuki, Edward Conze, and others, Yogacara is not idealism. Classifying Yogacara as a form of idealism ignores the fact that it focuses upon a methodology and not a metaphysical view. Moreover, idealism is too vague a term in that idealism simply reduces to “not materialism.”<sup>32</sup> Western philosophers distinguish between the metaphysical idealism of Berkeley, in which non-material yet substantive minds create phenomena and interact with one another, and the epistemological idealism of Kant (transcendental idealism), in which the subject becomes the ground for knowledge but only about the phenomena. To split finer hairs than this, however, there is also an important difference between Kantian epistemology and phenomenology, which produces both metaphysical and epistemological implications. Yogacara had recognized from its beginnings this blurring of the boundaries between the science of knowing and the science of reality-behind-appearances and did so more than one thousand years before Kant. It was phenomenological from its inception.<sup>33</sup> Yogacara rejects both materialism and idealism. All is not substance *and* all is not mind.

Buddhist phenomenology reached its greatest and most complete formulation with the Yogacara school. The problems that Gautama first recognized find their context in the phenomena. Thus, *karma* functions within a system of loss and need driven by appropriational habits within the mind.<sup>34</sup> It is an elegant and dense concept that requires



psychological, metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological categories to fully describe.

## How Yogacara is Correct or Insightful

Theodor Stcherbatsky (1866-1942), a Russian student of Eastern philosophy, was the first to notice a similarity between Yogacara philosophy and the metaphysical system of Kant. Both systems recognized the way in which the mind somehow *constructs* the phenomena of the sensible world.<sup>35</sup> However, Yogacara does not make the same mistake that Kant made (along with the tradition he inspired). Yogacara claims that the thing-in-itself, the *ding-an-sich*, is not permanently unknowable. In fact, not only is it completely knowable, but this is the goal of Yogacara, to pierce through the erroneous conceptions that keep us from seeing things as they really are. Like the speculative idealism before Hegel that sought to know God by looking at the mirror image of the divine within ourselves, Yogacara teaches that we are to look within and see a mirror image of reality. Because we are part of the network of reality, we can see reality within ourselves. Those who can see this image clearly have been awakened (*bodhi*).<sup>36</sup>

Ironically, at the same time that Stcherbatsky was comparing Yogacara to Kant, phenomenology was taking western philosophy in a direction that matched Yogacara much more closely. This is most clearly seen in the work of Husserl.<sup>37</sup> The Yogacara concept of consciousness, *alayavijnana* (storehouse of consciousness), *alaya* for short, possesses a persistence through time that makes it real for all practical purposes despite its lack of eternal substance. This is the solution that overcomes the nihilism and skepticism created by various misunderstandings of Nagarjuna's voidism. Some have likened alaya to Freud's unconscious and others to Jung's collective unconscious. While these similarities may be strong, a connection with Husserl's inner-time consciousness appears to be stronger, and thus early Husserlian phenomenology as a whole is a much closer match to Yogacara.<sup>38</sup>

Phenomenology in the West was concerned with noetic constitution (the make-up of the mind), modes and means of cognition, and the way in which meaning is constructed. Going beyond Kant's categories of the mind and his unity of consciousness in consciousness of unity, phenomenology was and is the investigation into meaning in a complex interplay between epistemology and metaphysics. This field of study has overcome various problems and has progressed into the well-systematized theories of Derrida.<sup>39</sup> This notwithstanding, Yogacara had long since moved beyond the place in which the continental tradition now works. Thus, it is actually more advanced.

Despite the absence of concepts like the universality of text and the sign-signified relationship within thought and construction of phenomena, Yogacara has made progress in finding a way beyond our basic limitations in accessing the thing-in-itself, that is, to the *Yathabhutam* whose nature is voidness. It is an emptiness in the sense that it is not a substance to which we are forbidden access. Instead, Yogacara makes the claim that emptiness has reality in itself. Yogacara avoids the nihilism of its predecessor but does so by realizing that each element of reality gains its essence only from its relationship with the rest of reality, that is, context.<sup>40</sup> As part of the context ourselves, we have access to it. In this way, Yogacara does not just mirror phenomenology in its grasp of the nature of human consciousness, it also mirrors deconstruction with its metaphysical claim that there is nothing apart from the play of differences between concepts. The only difference is that it does not fixate upon writing as a perfect archetype for the larger picture

Yogacara buddhism: a sympathetic description and suggestion for use in western theology and philosophy of religion of group-consciousness.

## Superiority of Yogacara Over the Continental Tradition

Yogacara analyzes causation and noetic-noemic interaction, to use Husserl's terms for knower and known respectively, in far more detail than Western phenomenologists have. Within its analyses of cognition, Yogacara has an extremely rich vocabulary that includes terms for fine distinctions that continental philosophers have never independently recognized.<sup>41</sup> Central to Yogacara goals is an idea of deconstruction that seeks to conquer the conditions of cognition that lead to the delusion of the self. This is the very same "narcissistic self-referentiality" that has been correctly identified by Western philosophers since Kant. But this closing off of the world that makes our minds a prison is the trap that Yogacara has avoided by making the mind itself the problem rather than the means of recognizing and solving the problem. The doctrine of *Vijnapti-matra* is not intended to proclaim what is and is not available; it is merely an epistemological caution. The mind must recognize its own delusions in order to proceed.<sup>42</sup> In this, we see a move similar to the one made by Derrida, but with more optimism.

For Derrida, the *Khora* is that which is and is not, but which allows for the possibility of everything else. In some sense it is the basis for more complex things in the same way that paper and ink are essential for the written word and the way that dimensionality is required for the distinction between positions (as with coordinate systems).<sup>43</sup> Yogacara philosophy sees this as the *absolute* of universal reason. The subject does not create the object, as in idealism, rather both the subject and the objects are created by the absolute.<sup>44</sup> This absolute is the *sunya* (void). It is the matrix in which the dual opposites in tension, like subject-object, can exist.<sup>45</sup> Derrida has formulated a nearly identical concept with respect to the text, but he does so by throwing reason into question when he identifies it with the ancient Greek tradition of philosophy. Ironically, a fully independent philosophical tradition has arrived at the same concept, indicating that it may not be logocentric (arbitrarily closed-minded with delusions of full objectivity) after all. It seems that the Yogacara teaching that the absolute is actually absolute, and therefore universal, is likely to be the better teaching.

The key insight that Yogacara added to Buddhism was the "deconstruction of identity into alterity."<sup>46</sup> Alterity is the Western postmodern term for the otherness of the other, i.e. self-alienation.<sup>47</sup> Since its beginnings, Buddhism has taught impermanence, discontinuity, and difference. The problem was that the experience of every-day life did not bear this out. Alterity resolves this problem of the apparent continuity of the self and the immutability of identities in general by providing a way for the self to exist (i.e. persist) *without* being. Like the process metaphysics of the West, the self is defined by processes instead of substances. But, going beyond the west, in both process metaphysics and phenomenology, Yogacara conceived of alterity in causal terms. Alterity is not inherent; it is caused by misconceptions. Therefore, it can be fixed!<sup>48</sup> While noting many similarities and parallels between Yogacara and phenomenology in the West (along with the Continental tradition beginning with Husserl and running through Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Lyotard, and Derrida), and while noticing that Yogacara has apparently overcome the obstacles that have stalled the progress of the Western tradition, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Yogacara is far superior, far more advanced, as Lusthaus confirms.<sup>49</sup>

## Utility for Christian Theology

The Christian tradition has employed the philosophy of the ancient Greeks since its beginnings in the first century. It seems that this fact is a mere historical coincidence. Yogacara can be employed instead of or in addition to Greek philosophy in order to gain insight into the study of special revelation within the Christian tradition. Yogacara is “an insightful group of interlocking insights into the deepest level of meaning” that can be used to unlock latent concepts and even provide new insights.<sup>50</sup> This vindication reveals that Yogacara may be a powerful tool for excising the gangrenous delusions about the nature of the self that, if truly erroneous, stand as obstacles between ourselves and the ultimate goal of all human pursuits, adequation, which is the need to access the other, the ultimate, God. The Hellenized theology of the early church fathers should be critically analyzed from an alternative philosophical perspective in order to ensure that the traditional views of scripture are as robust as possible and free from ambiguity. Multiple perspectives have a decentering effect upon all knowledge; theology is no exception. If the object of study is the divine, then it is truly transcendent and of a completely different nature. Perhaps the Yogacara philosophy is better equipped to handle this notion than the essentialism of the Greek philosophical epoch.

## Subjectively

Instead of focusing upon faith as an essence or upon a tradition, the implications of Yogacara demand that Christian theology focus upon the converted mind.<sup>51</sup> With its passive picture of the consciousness, this has significance within soteriology including a potential resolution of the tension between predestination and responsibility. Perhaps more importantly, Yogacara may shed light on the nature of sanctification as a process that transforms the mind by means of interaction with another, the disagreeable other that demands a wrestling match.<sup>52</sup>

## Ontologically

The Trinity has been a mystery from the perspective of Greek philosophy. Accordingly, it is rarely recognized that the being of Jesus is never defined (as such) in the words of the New Testament. He is described only through his relationship to others and most fundamentally in his awareness of the Father's presence. As a relational being, Jesus is transparent like a window that reveals something else. From this perspective, He is truly “The Way” and he *is not merely* a thing that shows the way. As such, Jesus can be seen as a relationship instead of a substance. Perhaps this is one possible resolution to the apparent contradiction of the Trinity made available through Yogacara. Rather than one substance also being three substances (the paradoxical tension between “nature” and “substance” notwithstanding), perhaps Jesus is the relationship we have with the Father. In this way, our identity and Jesus' identity both consist entirely in our relationships to one another.<sup>53</sup> This seems to make intelligible some otherwise mysterious statements made by and about Jesus.

From the Yogacara view, we persist by means of the relationships we have with others: beneath us hierarchically (from our parts), among us (with our community), and above us (with our moment-by-moment Creator). Our reality is a process reality and our goal should be to eliminate the delusions that keep us from understanding and accept-

ing our insubstantiality. But, does this mean that this is the only reality? Clearly, this would be a *non sequitur*. This is not, and I would argue should not be, our conclusion about ultimate reality. This is where Yogacara, other Eastern traditions, and Western versions of process theology err. This is because if we extend this view to the other members of the Trinity (or even to Jesus *qua* God) we immediately deviate from all scriptural propositions about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *qua* God. Because of this, it seems that process theology is necessarily a heterodox divergence from the declarations of Christian scripture. Process theology makes the same move with God that Yogacara insists we make with ourselves. Perhaps the Greek notion of substance and eternal essence is the best method for describing God while the Yogacaran notion of process-appraised-through-phenomena is the best way to see created beings and things as well as the relationships and communications between the two (the Christ and the Holy Spirit as they interact).

In conclusion, Yogacara is not only robust in itself, and superior to its cousin in the West, but it has potential, as a philosophy, for resolving theological dilemmas. Thus, we arrive at the conclusion that, philosophically, Yogacara is vindicated and deserving of careful study.

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## Notes:

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52 N.b. the translation of the name "Israel" as "wrestles with God."

53 *Ibid.*

**SANDU FRUNZĂ**

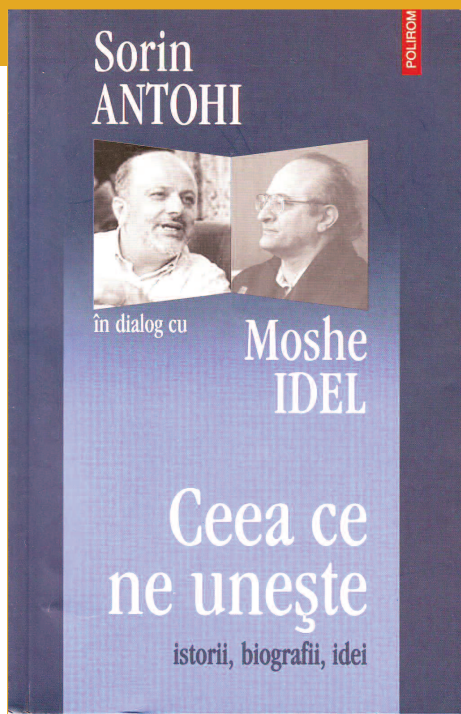
**Ceea ce ne unește:  
istorii, biografii, idei. Sorin  
Antohei în dialog cu Moshe  
Idel**

**Those things that bind  
us: histories, biographies,  
ideas. Sorin Antohei in dia-  
logue with Moshe Idel**

**Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2006**

Cu Moshe Idel intrăm în lumea fascinantă a gândirii iudaice, a filosofiei și a regândirii misticii evreiești. În același timp, ajungem la întrezărirea unei lumi românești pe care nu o mai percepem decât sub forma mitologiilor personale sau comunitare și a textelor care evocă punctual și literar lumi ce aparțin unei utopii plasate într-un trecut pe care îl percepem ca pe ceva aparținând unui *illo tempore*, în ciuda faptului că este, de fapt, trecutul bunicilor noștri. Filosofie, mistică, literatură, arte plastice, muzică și tot ceea ce poate fi pus sub semnul creației spirituale sînt părți ale unui întreg ce se reconstruiește continuu ca univers al unei personalități unice cum este cea a lui Moshe Idel.

Este greu să elogiez o asemenea personalitate fără să dai semne de idolatrie. Ori, trebuie să ne ferim de așa ceva deoarece este știut că de la idolatrie pînă la ridicol nu este decât un pas. Cu atît mai dificil devine un asemenea demers din momentul în care îl întâlnești personal pe Moshe Idel. O astfel de întîlnire te copleșește în primul rînd prin umanitatea și simplitatea debordantă afișate de gînditor. Mai apoi, totul se transformă într-un spectacol în care Moshe Idel se mișcă cu o uluitoare lejeritate în orice cîmp al ideilor este explorat în dialog. De fiecare dată el poate să aducă un element de noutate, un gînd nedus încă pînă la capăt sau o sursă



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thought, Moshe Idel, Sorin Antohei,  
Mircea Eliade

bibliografică în aparență obscură, dar care în economia discursului devine centrală și decisivă. Mai mult decât atât, un dialog cu Moshe Idel te supune unui exercițiu de gândire în care ideile tale capătă contururi pe care nu le puteai întrezări înaintea acestui efort hermeneutic de adaptare la logica interioară a propriului tău mod de a gândi.

O încercare de a surprinde câteva aspecte ale acestei personalității complexe ne este oferită de Editura Polirom prin cartea de dialoguri cu Moshe Idel realizată de Sorin Antohi, la rîndul său o personalitate culturală complexă. În acest moment nu mai este trendy să spui ceva pozitiv despre Sorin Antohi, datorită unor accidente majore ale biografiei sale pentru care nu este cazul să i se găsească scuze și în care este greu să îl vedem jucînd rolul de victimă. Cu toate acestea, e de remarcat știința intrării în dialog pe care Antohi o stăpînește cu multă dibăcie, dublată de arta dialogului care ține de modul natural de a fi al lui Moshe Idel. Miza cărții fiind familiarizarea cititorilor cu personalitatea lui Moshe Idel și cu modul său de gândire, Sorin Antohi știe foarte bine să își pună în valoare interlocutorul, să stea în penumbră și să intervină doar pentru a nuanța și pentru a muta discuția exact pe palierul care îi permite partenerului de dialog să se exprime cel mai bine.

Dialogul, desfășurat în cadrul ospitalier al Central European University de la Budapesta, urmărește traseul biografic al lui Moshe Idel, de la anii copilăriei cu atmosfera românească de la Tîrgu Neamț, cu emigrarea în Israel în 1963, cu cariera didactică și cea de cercetător al cabalei, pînă la contextul contemporan al activității lui Moshe Idel, care ne apare ca un gînditor care nu mai aparține nici României, nici Israelului, ci spiritului european capabil să fecundeze ideile oricărui spațiu cultural.

Două personaje însoțesc o parte semnificativă a biografiei spirituale prezentate în paginile acestei cărți de dialoguri: Ioan Petru Culianu și Mircea Eliade. O empatie totală și o regăsire de sine comună caracterizează fraternitatea lui Moshe Idel cu Ioan Petru Culianu. Lucrurile par simple în acest caz deoarece totul pare să se desfășoare sub semnul unor afinități care depășesc deopotrivă raționalul și iraționalul. Mult mai complicate sînt lucrurile în ceea ce îl privește pe Mircea Eliade. Acesta este mai degrabă utilizat ca un instrument intelectual care îi prilejuiește autorului o întîlnire cu universul unor idei majore în cercetarea religiilor, dar mai ales cu contextul cultural al României interbelice.

Moshe Idel nu uită nici un moment trecutul legionar al lui Eliade, dar nu face un obiect de cercetare din această temă considerînd că gînditori precum Leon Volovici și alții au lămurit în mod convingător acest lucru. Însă, după mai mult de 15 ani de studiu al operei lui Eliade și al receptărilor majore ale acesteia, Moshe Idel nu poate accepta improvizațiile pe care unii autori le publică cu privire la substratul ideologic al operei lui Eliade.

Moshe Idel este unul dintre puținii profesori din Israel care propun opera lui Eliade ca bibliografie pentru studenții lor. O dată ce problemele ideologice au fost clarificate, opera lui Eliade rămîne una de referință în cercetarea fenomenului religios, în ciuda faptului că Idel constată că analizele privitoare la iudaism sînt fie bazate pe surse neconvingătoare, fie sînt limitate în înțelegerea complexității fenomenelor. Mai trebuie subliniat că nu atât Eliade ca cercetător al religiilor este important pentru Idel, ci mai degrabă faptul că pornind de la opera acestuia ajunge să descopere un context cultural, cel al perioadei românești interbelice, și imediat după aceea, în care exista o nebanuită efervescență spirituală evreiască. Eliade este o parte, care treptat devine tot mai puțin importantă, a unui univers în care Benjamin Fundoianu, Ion Călugăru sau Ury Benador devin personaje principale ale unei istorii a evreilor români ca cetățeni și oameni de cultură români. Eliade devine în acest context „un fel de probă-martor, un termen de com-

parație” în înțelegerea unei lumi care nu este îndeajuns cunoscută și care așteaptă să fie cercetată.

O parte mai puțin cunoscută și explorată cultural este cea legată de locul de obârșie a lui Moshe Idel, Țîrgu Neamț, care face parte dintr-un ținut privilegiat, care a dat naștere mai multor figuri marcante ale culturii române. Ținutul din care face parte acest târg a fost perceput în geografia simbolică a mentalității magice și mistice a oamenilor locului de altă dată drept Ierusalimul României.

Ca episod biografic, dar și ca fenomen cultural mi se par importante cele câteva elemente orientative privind polemica iscată de apariția primei cărți a lui Moshe Idel, carte ce marchează despărțirea de Scholem și de maniera de interpretare impusă de acesta în studiile iudaice și mai ales în studiul misticiei evreiești.

Un alt element semnificativ mi se pare faptul că Moshe Idel a participat ca militar activ în situațiile de război ale Israelului. Poate părea pitoresc pentru noi, dar e o realitate ce ține de tragedia continuă pe care tînărul stat evreiesc o trăiește în condițiile foarte complexe ale necesității de conviețuire și de stabilire a raporturilor de forță și a regulilor privind neatingerea libertății și demnității celuiilalt.

Editura Polirom ne propune, astfel, încă una dintre cărțile pasionante, care îți mențin viu interesul de la început pînă la sfîrșit. Este o carte care poate fi oricînd amendată și completată cu alte istorisiri și mărturisiri, dar în același timp este surprinzătoare prin farmecul personalității pe care o dezvăluie și prin filosofia de viață asumată ca mod de a fi de către Moshe Idel.

ANDREI-DRAGOȘ GIULEA

Bradford F. Hinze și Irfan  
A. Omar (eds.)

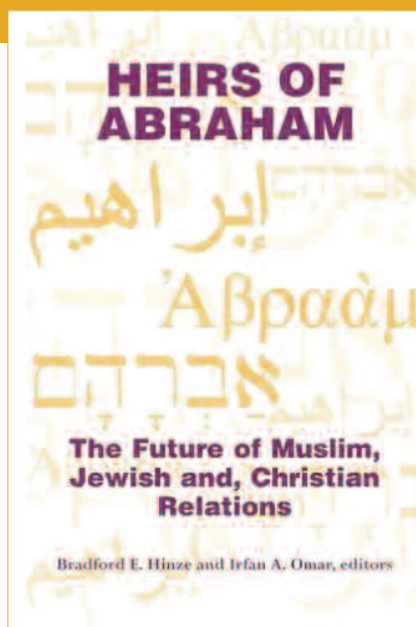
Heirs of Abraham. The  
Future of Muslim, Jewish,  
and Christian Relations

Maryknoll, New York, 2005.

Într-o epocă în care principala tensiune politică internațională se reconfigurează de la ceea ce s-a numit “războiul rece” la ceea ce deja se numește “războiul împotriva terorismului”, iar relațiile dintre musulmani, evrei și creștini se agravează, problema care se pune cel mai stringent este aceea a modalității în care tensiunea poate fi deconstruită și construit, în schimb, dialogul. Cartea de față, bazată pe o conferință organizată de universitatea Marquette din Statele Unite, încearcă tocmai acest lucru, prin punerea în contact a trei universitari americani, reprezentanți totodată ai celor trei comunități religioase, care au acceptat să vorbească despre semnificația lui Avraam în propria lor religie. Îi vom menționa în continuare, subliniind în același timp pozițiile lor.

În deschidere, Dr. Bradford Hinze, de la Marquette (din toamna lui 2005 la Fordham), face mai întâi un excurs asupra istoriei trialogurilor de după cel de-al doilea război mondial și conchide afirmând dificultatea cu care cele trei comunități pot începe un dialog, trebuind să depășească nenumărate elemente psihologice înainte de a împărtăși propriile credințe și practici religioase într-o atmosferă în care să existe respect autentic și chiar recunoaștere a erorilor. Ceea ce Hinze mai observă este că, datorită conflictelor și războaielor dintre cele trei comunități, dimensiunile socială și morală ar trebui să joace un rol însemnat în discuții.

Cel dintâi vorbitor este Reuven Firestone, profesor de iudaism medieval și islam la Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion din Los Angeles și rabin. Pentru că Avraam este întâi de toate simbol al monoteismului, profesorul Firestone își centrează discursul asupra acestui fenomen. Discuția devine foarte interesantă chiar de la început pentru că Firestone nu introduce numai perspectiva religiei iudaice, ci, în plus, o perspectivă academică minimalistă. Fie această poziție acceptată universal sau nu, propunerea este importantă metodologic pentru că perspectiva academică este plasată în discuție și poate juca un rol important în impunerea unui dialog rațional și deschis.



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Triologue, Judaism, Christianity,  
Islam, Abraham, monotheism



În acord cu o pleiadă de universitari, Firestone prezintă poporul israelit ca unul dintre popoarele canaanite, locuitoare ale ținutului numit Canaan, anume hitiți și gherghesei, amorei, ferezei și hevei, toate fiind politeiste. Iudeii, la rândul lor, sunt la început politeiști, iar reforma regelui Iosea a reprezentat un prim pas important în trecerea de la politeism la monoteism printr-o campanie puternică de distrugere a templelor politeiste din regatul său. O perioadă intermediară între politeism și monoteismul exclusivist ulterior a fost probabil aceea a unui monoteism inclusiv, care accepta existența altor divinități în afara celei supreme. Exprimându-și poziția în termenii economiei de piață, Firestone afirmă că monoteismele se văd amenințate de la început de existența politeismelor. Chiar și între acestea din urmă au existat confruntări sângeroase, însă religia învingătoare a uniformizat cu timpul panteoanele. Între monoteisme se pare că nu există concurență la început, ci abia o dată cu ieșirea pe piața religioasă a Imperiului Roman, atunci când cetățenii imperiului au devenit interesați de monoteisme. Firestone însă nu menționează că între esenieni și saducheii nu era nici o punte de legătură, precum și faptul că între creștini și celelalte culte monoteiste iudaice a existat un conflict extrem de radical începând cu ultimii ani din viața lui Iisus Hristos.

Primul răspuns a fost acela al arhiepiscopului Michael Fitzgerald, președinte al Consiliului Pontifical pentru Dialog Interreligios, care a expus poziția oficială catolică, potrivit cu care monoteismul nu poate fi privit ca evoluând din politeisme, ci Dumnezeu a sădit dintotdeauna în sufletul uman o atracție către El. În plus, nu se poate respinge ușor, nici la nivel academic, ideea existenței exodului și a monoteismului iudaic de dinaintea prezenței iudeilor în Canaan.

Al treilea vorbitor a fost Mahmoud Ayoub, profesor de studii islamice la Temple University, în Philadelphia. Răspunsul său privește două dimensiuni. Întâi de toate, este necesar ca dialogul să aibă un efect social, pentru că tensiunile interreligioase au loc în primul rând la acest nivel, iar teoria profesorului Firestone ar trebui să probeze un efect dincolo de speculația academică. În al doilea rând, există specialiști de istoria veche a Israelului care susțin poziția opusă, a unui monoteism mai vechi de perioada exilică.

Arhiepiscopul Fitzgerald a continuat oferind perspectiva catolică asupra lui Avraam, “părintele nostru întru credință” și model al credinței și speraței. Chemarea lui reprezintă un element pivotal în planul economiei divine pentru salvarea umanității, iar faptul că Iisus a acceptat circumciderea reflectă acceptarea de a fi parte din legământul lui Avraam.

Răspunsurile au ridicat probleme importante între cele trei religii, precum reunoașterea cărților sfinte ale celorlalte ca inspirate, numărul de legăminte acceptat și dacă, de fapt, credința cu care una dintre religii se raportează la propria Scriptură și la legământul lui Avraam nu respinge în consecință celelalte două religii.

Cel de-al treilea invitat, profesorul Ayoub, a subliniat în prezentarea sa perspectiva musulmană, conform cu care Avraam este “fondatorul arhetipal al religiei adevărate”, “părinte al celor ce cred”, “profet și părinte al tuturor profeților” și prototip al ființei umane perfecte. În plus, el este întemeietorul pelerinajului musulman, hajj, prin care orice practicant reface de fapt pelerinajul arhetipal al lui Avraam. Dar, dincolo de micile diferențe de viziune, Avraam este personajul care trebuie să unească în dialog cele trei religii și un prim pas spre acest scop ar fi depolitizarea lui. Ayoub mai sugerează că, dincolo de curtoazia necesară inițierii dialogului, cele trei religii ar trebui să conceapă un “dialog al vieții”, împotriva crimei, războiului și in justiției. În plus, Ayoub mai propune un “dialog al doctrinei” și unul al “credinței”, în care cunoașterea celuilalt ar trebui să adâncească cunoașterea de sine.

În încheiere, Dr. Irfan Omar, profesor de tradiție islamică și istoria religiilor la Marquette, a menționat faptul că cele trei religii și-au creat identitatea printr-o interacțiune istorică, fie respingând, fie adoptând caracteristici ale celuilalt. Dincolo de anumite perioade istorice și zone geografice de coabitare eirenică a celor trei religii, ideea de dialog explicit apare în contextul umanismului, fie el secular sau creștin, al secolului al nouăsprezecelea. În fapt, toate cele trei religii au nevoie de introspecție și reexaminare a propriei istorii care, în fiecare dintre cazuri, prezintă momente lipsite de glorie. Există apoi mai multe tipuri posibile de dialog, dar probabil că cel mai autentic este acela în care intenționezi să înveți de la celălalt și, prin el, să înveți despre tine. Reluând o idee a lui Hans Küng, dialogul ar trebui să fie o deschidere mentală care transcende toleranța. El ar trebui apoi extins din mediul universitarilor și dispersat cât mai larg posibil în toate mediile sociale.

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C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*,  
HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2001.

In the context of present-day economic, political, informational and demographic dynamics, few still have the disposition – and even fewer the time – to raise the issue of human rights and duties with respect to the preservation of the global cultural heritage. Two questions arise at a first glance. One is about the very definition of culture, or, rather, the ideas about what culture is. The other concerns the possibility of distinguishing, beyond the models and fashions propagated at one time or another, a primordial nucleus of values whose destruction would mean the destruction of the human species itself.

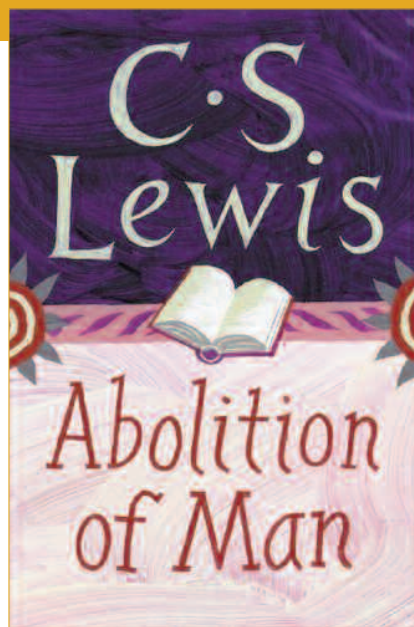
An indirect – and partial – answer to the first question is given by Dan Sperber (*Explaining Culture*, Blackwell, 1996, p. 1), who states that

“... an idea, born in the brain of an individual, may have, in the brain of other individuals, descendents that resemble it. Ideas can be transmitted, and, by being transmitted from one person to another, they may even propagate. Some ideas – religious beliefs, cooking recipes, or scientific hypotheses, for instance – propagate so effectively that, in different versions, they may end up durably invading whole populations. Culture is made up, first and foremost, of such contagious ideas. It is made up also of all the productions (writings, artworks, tools, etc.) the presence of which in the shared environment of a human group permits the propagation of ideas.”

To explain culture, then, is to explain why and how some ideas happen to be contagious.

This calls for the development of a true *epidemiology of representations*.

The second question starts from the fact that, at present, cultural fashions succeed each other at a stunning speed, directed by forces that are involved in acts of cultural policy, whether they are aware of that or not. Under these circumstances, there is an obvious risk that the abolition of traditional values may annihilate the very ability of human beings to distinguish values from non-values and that the very concept of *value*<sup>1</sup>



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**Key words:**

culture, abolition of man, value, wisdom, love, C. S. Lewis

may disappear from the vocabulary of the international jargon. This will be preserved as a “heritage object”, that is, a piece in a museum, lacking that spirit that animates active concepts and representations.

I would like to bring back to public attention a set of three academic lectures delivered by the English professor C. S. Lewis, known to the Romanian reader through the translations that have come out in the last few years<sup>2</sup>. Lewis’s writings, pervaded by what Clad Walsh would call “classical Christianity”, that is, neither fundamentalist nor modernist, operate with three major concepts: (1) that of *nature*, that is, the system of all phenomena in time and space; (2) *God*, the creator, the saviour and the supporter of nature and humankind; and (3) *man*<sup>3</sup>, in his relationship with nature, with God and with other human beings. The three lectures I mentioned above were delivered at Oxford during the Second World War and were published in 1943 as an essay in three parts entitled *The Abolition of Man*.

The three lectures that were delivered in the midst of war and that sprang out of a consciousness marked by responsibility to the human species are highly topical since they raise the issues of human affections, values, cultural policies and of the overall risk of moving away from the very essence of human nature. The lectures deal with all these aspects in a way that makes them be contemporary with our own times.<sup>4</sup>

The first lecture is entitled *Men without Chests* and starts from a school manual of English language and literature and from the tripartite structure of man, which includes a cerebral component, a visceral component and, between the two, the affective component, which unites and harmonizes the first two. The author demonstrates how contemporary<sup>5</sup> education (at school level but not only) creates imbalance in the tripartite structure of man by manipulating the school child in the direction of ignoring – or even annihilating – the connection between the “cerebral man” and the “visceral man”, that is the very core of the human being, the “Chest-Magnanimity-Sentiment” By drying out the sensibility of our students we turn them into easy prey in the hands of the propagandist when this comes out – says Lewis. Through currently “demythicalising” and levelling the worth of a piece of art and of a piece of advertising, for instance, one comes to annihilate traditional hierarchies of values. This “levelling” of values through demythicalising does not need to spring out of an evil spirit. It may be a way of fortifying the minds of the students confronted with emotions. Lewis’s belief is, however, that the only form of defence against false feelings is the very cultivation of feelings. through educating the affective centre of the human being<sup>6</sup> (*Inklings* 2004: 92) in the direction of acknowledging the existence of certain objective values, with the firm belief that some attitudes are really true and others are really false, with respect to what is universal and to what we are (Lewis 1999: 95). Lewis believes that emotional states can be in harmony with reason (when we perceive pleasure as something that ought to be approved of) or out of this harmony. Our approvals and disapprovals thus represent ways of acknowledging certain objective values and ways of responding to an objective order. In support of this ideas the author invokes Plato, Aristotle or St. Augustin, Indian, Chinese or ancient Jewish wisdom on equal terms. They speak of “the way of the universe” (*Tao*), the true Law (ancient Jewish tradition), harmony with nature (Confucius) or *ordo amoris* (St. Augustin).

The second lecture, *The Way*, is a demonstration with logical instruments of the fact that the upper part, that part within us that can be called “the cerebral man”, is more and more often set to work with a view to satisfying the lower, visceral, part. This is done by directly encouraging this type of approach or by launching incentive slogans,

slogans that take one away from what has been called Traditional Morality, Natural Law, Primordial Principles or, with a term that Lewis finds most convenient, *Tao*. That is the only source of value judgements and subsumes written and unwritten laws, (still) present with all peoples, such as the duty of children and descendants to parents and ancestors, and that of duties to children and posterity, good faith and respect of what is true (veracity), the law of justice, the law of general beneficence and the law of special beneficence, the law of mercy and the law of magnanimity.

The lack of education in the sense of observing these fundamental laws for the human species turns against the human species itself. “What purport to be new systems or (as they now call them) ‘ideologies’, all consist of fragments from the *Tao* itself, arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation, yet still owing to the *Tao* and to it alone such validity as they possess. If my duty to my parents is a superstition, then so is my duty to posterity. If justice is a superstition, then so is my duty to my country or my race. If the pursuit of scientific knowledge is a real value, then so is conjugal fidelity.” (Lewis 1999: 17)

If the Innovator (a generic name which in 1942-43 could be associated with Hitler but which can refer to a certain aspect within each human being), in his otherwise praiseworthy concern with Posterity, aims at getting “people fed and clothed” this could be a great end, but if he places economic value first and sets aside any scruples about justice and good faith, then he no longer acts from within the Law. Thus any conceivable aspect conceptually marked by value is rejected, the great purpose and the great triumph being the “conquest of Nature”. What is forgotten in this process is the fact that Nature also includes “that final and toughest bit of ‘nature’ which has hitherto been called the conscience of man” (Lewis 1999:31).

The third part, *The Abolition of Man*, starts from “Man’s Conquest of Nature”, “an expression often used to describe the progress of applied science”, and demonstrates the real possibility that power may be exercised by a minority of fewer and fewer individuals, and that each power that is won by man can be – and actually is – a power over and against man. “And all long-term exercises of power, especially in breeding, must mean the power of earlier generations over later ones.” (Lewis 1999: 35). Thus with each victorious battle, man is both “the general who triumphs” and “the prisoner who follows the triumphal car” (Lewis 1999: 36).

The de-humanizing process begins to affect human language as well. Lewis remarks that “once we killed men; now we liquidate antisocial elements. Virtue has become *integration* and diligence *dynamism*, and boys likely to be worthy of commission are ‘potential officer material’. Most wonderful of all, the virtues of thrift and temperance, and even ordinary intelligence are *sales-resistance*.” (Lewis 1999: 46). “Man’s conquest of himself means simply the rule of Conditioners over the conditioned human material, the world of post-humanity which, some knowingly and some unknowingly, nearly all men in all nations are at present labouring to produce.” (*Ibid.*) said and wrote Lewis sixty years ago – speaking to our age as well.

It has been normal in all times for food and education to be means of exercising power. But the situation that Lewis anticipated is new in two respects. First, power has increased and will increase enormously. However, “the plans of educationalists have achieved very little” and we still may have to thank every true mother and true nurse for “preserving the human race in such sanity as it still possesses” (Lewis 1999: 37). Second, in the older systems “both the kind of man teachers wished to produce and their motives for producing him were prescribed by the *Tao* – a norm to which teachers them-



selves were subject to and from which they claimed no liberty to depart. [...] They handed on what they had received: they initiated the young neophyte into the mystery of humanity which over-arched him and them alike. *It was but old birds teaching young birds to fly.*" (Lewis 1999: 37-8; emphasis added – R.A.) Now Conditioners "know how to produce conscience and decide what kind of conscience they will produce." So they are to choose "what kind of artificial *Tao* they will, for their own good reasons, produce in the Human race". (*Ibid.*) They know how to produce a variety of different conceptions of good in us. "The question is which, if any, they should produce. No conception of good can help them to decide." (Lewis 1999: 39)

We live in a world in which "stars lost their divinity as astronomy has developed and the Dying God has no place in chemical agriculture" (Lewis 1999: 43) The progress rate is so high that "the final stage is come when Man by eugenics, by pre-natal conditioning, and by an education and propaganda based on a perfect applied psychology, has obtained full control over himself. *Human* nature will be the last part of Nature to surrender to Man. The battle will then be won. [...] But who, precisely, will have won it?" (Lewis 1999: 36-7). Stepping outside the *Tao*, the Conditioners have stepped into a void. "Nor are their subjects necessarily unhappy men. They are not men at all: they are artefacts. Man's final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man." (Lewis 1999: 40) And if the new technology (to which cloning has now been added) proves efficient enough, there will be no rebellions any longer and Earth's inhabitants will place themselves comfortably in the shadow of their Conditioners until the life cycle of this planet is concluded.

In his successful attempt to conquer Nature man has tried to see 'through' things, forgetting that the joy of seeing 'through', through a window, for instance, is that of seeing the garden... "The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it." (Lewis 1999: 50) But if everything becomes transparent, everything turns invisible. "To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see." (*Ibid.*) This will include losing trace of the First Principles.

Actually Lewis does not try to support *Tao* with arguments, because *the validity of the Law cannot be demonstrated in a deductive manner*. But he cannot refrain from noticing that civilizations took shape in different parts of the planet, seemingly independently of each other, and are marked by distinct religious beliefs. However, they do acknowledge the same fundamental moral principles, which may – primarily, ultimately and eternally – have risen from a single centre and have been propagated "like an infectious disease<sup>7</sup> or like the Apostolic succession." (Lewis 1999: 52) To prove this, Lewis adds an appendix with "Illustrations of the *Tao*", a collection of instances of the Natural Law from "such sources as come readily at hand": writers like Locke and Hooker, who wrote within the Christian tradition, the New Testament, the ancient Jewish tradition of the Old Testament, the sapiential tradition of the Ancient Chinese, Roman, Egyptian, Greek, Indian and Babylonian, of the old Germanic peoples and of the Australian Aborigines.

This demonstration and warning is not necessarily pessimistic. If it were so, it would be superfluous. Lewis's core objection is that "if man chooses to treat himself as raw material, raw material he will be; not raw material to be manipulated, as he fondly imagined, by himself, but by mere appetite, that is, mere Nature, in the person of his de-humanized Conditioners." (Lewis 1999: 45) The English sage reminds his readers that the purpose of education – and of human existence – is the harmonious development of the physical, emotional and spiritual components, without neglecting any of them.

As for Lewis's view of the creative act as a value-generating act, it is explained and illustrated in such writings as *The Allegory of Love*<sup>8</sup> and *The Discarded Image*, which suggest his option for a "religious" theory of creation, opposing the Narcissistic cult of the "genius". Lewis believes that an author does not give birth to such an embodiment of beauty or wisdom as has never existed before. What he does is an attempt at using the means of his art to reflect a glimpse of Eternal Beauty and Eternal Wisdom. Therefore, a Christian theory of literary imagination would have affinities with the ancient theory according to which the Poet is just the Muses' fancy man. That can also be placed in relation to Plato's theory of transcendental forms, partly reflected in the material world on Earth, which could have no connection with the idea that literature or any other form of art may be a modality of expression of the individual genius.

By creative activities, human essence is objectified in various artefacts or products, whether cultural (in the narrow sense of the term), material or spiritual. If patterns are created which block the activation of the Law (for which Lewis uses the term *Tao*) within man and which, at the same time, activate negative attitudes, that jams the access to the fundamental moral values inscribed within ourselves, to the Primordial Principles and orients mankind towards an artificial, inevitably destructive kind of *Tao*. Lewis also states that "in defending value I defend *inter alia* the value of knowledge, which must die like every other when its roots in the *Tao* are cut."

Re-discovering the "middle element"<sup>9</sup>, the moral-affective centre of the human being ("Chest-Magnanimity-Sentiment"), in its correct relation to reason, means re-creating the balance between the "visceral man" and the "cerebral man" and, hence, reactivating the ability to intuitively establish the best hierarchies and priorities of values. This involves the full recognition of the fact that natural existence is holy and that free will is a universal right which involves immense responsibilities regarding the preservation of fundamental values. Thus, the itinerary of the human being in this world can be described as optimum as long as it evolves in harmony with the Natural Law, which Lewis concisely refers to as *Tao*, and not in accordance with the slogan "man defeats Nature", which involves self-destruction. "The rebellion of new ideologies against the *Tao* is a rebellion of the branches against the tree: if the rebels could succeed they would find that they had destroyed themselves. The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary colour, or, indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in." (Lewis 1999: 17) This message, launched as a warning during the great world-wide conflagration in the early forties, has preserved its validity untouched.

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## Notes:

1 "Had we lived one hundred and twenty years ago we would not have heard the plural noun "values," meaning the moral beliefs and attitudes of a society. Until then the word "value" was used only as a verb meaning to value or esteem something or as a singular noun, meaning the measure of a thing, for example, the economic value of money, labour or property" writes John Heenan. "Values, as we now know them, can be either preferences or principles, which represent the opposite ends of the moral spectrum." (<http://www.teachingvalues.com/valuesense.html>)

2 These are:

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3 Lewis naturally uses the term man as the generic archlexeme for the "human species" - his writings were produced long before the restrictions required by political correctness...

4 Lewis's secretary and editor Walter Hooper enthusiastically commented on the published set of lectures: "If someone were to come to me and say that, excepting the *Bible*, everyone on earth was going to be required to read one and the same book, and then ask what it should be, I would with no hesitation say *The Abolition of Man*. It is the most perfectly reasoned defence of Natural Law (Morality) I have ever seen, or believe to exist. If any book is able to save us from future excesses of folly and evil, it is this book." Owen Barfield considered the publication of the book "a real triumph. There may be a piece of contemporary writing in which precision of thought, liveliness of expression and depth of meaning unite with the same felicity, but I have not come across it." (Lewis 1999, back cover)

5 Related to his time.

An operation performed by school books and the like is that of producing "what may be called *Men without Chests*. It is an outrage that they should be commonly spoken of as Intellectuals. This gives them the chance to say that he who attacks them

attacks Intelligence. It is not so. They are not distinguished from other men by any unusual skill in finding truth nor any virginal ardour to pursue her. Indeed it would be strange if they were: a persevering devotion to truth, a nice sense of intellectual honour, cannot be long maintained without the aid of a sentiment which Gaius and Titius could debunk as easily as any other. It is not excess of thought but defect of fertile and generous emotion that marks them out. Their heads are no bigger than the ordinary: it is the atrophy of the chest beneath that makes them seem so.

And all the time—such is the tragedy-comedy of our situation—we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more ‘drive’, or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or ‘creativity’. In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful. (Lewis 1999: 15)

6 The importance of this centre of the human being is rediscovered by our contemporaries, who are beginning to speak not only of an intelligence quotient (IQ) but also of an emotional quotient (EQ) (See Daniel Golemann *Emotional Intelligence*).

7 Through this statement Lewis anticipates Dan Sperber’s epidemiological model of cultural representations (cf. Sperber 1996).

8 *The Allegory of Love* – a substantial study of medieval literature from the 11th century (Languedoc) to the English 15th century, with particular insistence on *Roman de la Rose* and *The Fairie Queene* and on the work of poets like Chaucer, Gower and Thomas Usk.

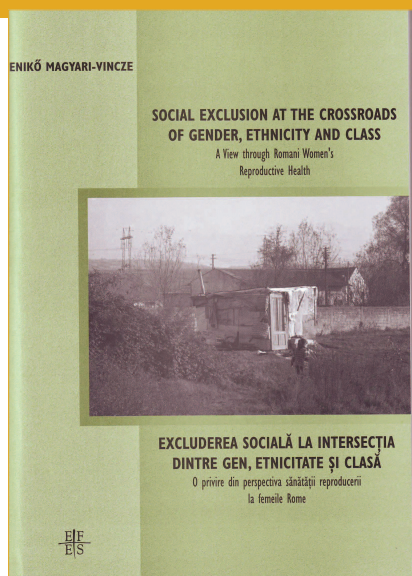
9 According to Lewis, “it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal. (Lewis 1999: 15)”

Eniko Magyari-Vincze,  
Excluderea socială la intersecția dintre gen, etnicitate și clasă. O privire din perspectiva sănătății reproducerii la femeile Rome / Social Exclusion at the Crossroads of Gender, Ethnicity and Class. A View through Romani Women's Reproductive Health

Cea mai recentă lucrare a lui Eniko Magyari-Vincze reprezintă o punere laolaltă a unor teme deja cercetate din bogata bibliografie a autoarei. De mai mulți ani, autoarea studiază, cu instrumentarul oferit atât de antropologie, cât și de studiile de gen, diversele ipostaze în care diferențele – de gen, de clasă, de etnie – se transformă în inegalități (de exemplu, în volumul *Diferența care contează. Diversitatea social-culturală prin lentila antropologiei feministe* – 2002). De altfel, autoarea este inițiatoarea programelor de studii de gen la universitatea clujeană, unde, din 2003, conduce programul de master în *Gen, diferențe și inegalități*.

Volumul de față reprezintă finalizarea unor cercetări realizate sub egida unor prestigioase programe internaționale, de la Universitatea Central Europeană din Budapesta și Institutul de Studii Umaniste din Viena. Tema este una de interes atât pe agenda instituțiilor europene, cât și pentru contextul românesc – respectiv, problema accesului femeilor Rome la sănătatea reproducerii, bazându-se pe o cercetare empirică a autoarei în două comunități de Romi din Orăștie.

Ațât tema, cât și metodologia folosită recomandă lucrarea ca fiind una interdisciplinară. Astfel, cercetarea empirică de factură etnografică este analizată prin intermediul antropologiei feministe, fiind însoțită de complexe recomandări și sugestii de politici publice. Ineditul volumului este furnizat de filmul antropologic care îl însoțește, de aseme-



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**Key words:**

exclusion, women, Roma, gender, reproductive health, policy studies



nea în regia (în premieră) a autoarei: *Flori de mac/ Red Poppies*. Filmul prezintă secvențe din interviurile luate pe teren, întărind vizual mesajul transmis de lucrare. Așa cum își propune de altfel autoarea, filmul este gândit ca un instrument de *video advocacy*, menit să „sensibilize opinia publică față de situația particulară a femeilor Rome”.

Substanța volumului – și a filmului atașat – o reprezintă radiografierea situației socio-economice, a diverselor instituții și politici care reglementează accesul femeilor Rome la sănătatea reproducerii. În urma cercetării și a analizelor subsecvente, autoarea concluzionează că: „politicile de sănătate reproductivă din România și politicile pentru Romi existente nu au reușit să servească interesele și condiția particulară a femeilor Rome și – intenționat sau nu – le-au transformat într-o comunitate subservită și multiplu discriminată”.

Volumul are un caracter novator, atât în contextul studiilor despre Romi – prin introducerea variabilei *gen* în discuția despre etnicitate și discriminare, cât și în contextul studiilor feministe din România, prin propunerea unei teme destul de puțin discutate în literatura de specialitate de la noi (sănătatea reproducerii la femeile Roma). Acest fapt o obligă pe autoare să folosească mai multe tipuri de discursuri, a căror folosire simultană nu este facilă. Astfel, limbajul (în esență universalist) al drepturilor omului, reclamat de analiza politicilor publice, se întâlnește cu limbajul și metodele antropologiei culturale și al antropologiei vizuale, de regulă deschise spre observarea particularităților și specificului. Soluția pe care o propune autoarea este situarea pe tărîmul antropologiei feministe, situare care îi permite să combine cele două tipuri de discursuri și să evite capcanele și limitările fiecăruia din ele în particular.

Un rol important în economia volumului îl ocupă latura sa civică și aplicată. Astfel, pe de o parte sînt prezentate organizațiile non-guvernamentale ale femeilor Rome, cu specificul și contribuția fiecăreia, pe de altă parte este inclus la final un capitol de recomandări de politici publice. Ceea ce este deopotrivă nou și util într-o lucrare altminteri de înaltă ținută academică este particularizarea acestor recomandări în funcție de „destinatar” – fie că acesta este o organizație non-guvernamentală sau o agenție susținută de stat. Faptul că autoarea le-a gândit și formulat în mod separat pentru fiecare din ele atestă caracterul lor aplicat și potențialul lor de a funcționa dacă ar fi transpuse în practică.

Volumul lui Eniko Magyari-Vincze este deschis deopotrivă publicului român cât și celui internațional (prin oferirea în același volum a două versiuni, în română și engleză), avînd adresabilitate atât pentru specialiști cât și pentru publicul larg (prin includerea filmului antropologic), atât pentru cercetători cât și pentru practicieni.

LUCIAN-ZEEV HERȘCOVICI

Sandu Frunză

Filosofie și Iudaism /

Philosophy and Judaism,

Ed. Limes, Cluj-Napoca, 2006

Recent am primit o carte nouă: "Filosofie și Iudaism. Un răspuns la întrebarea: ce este filosofia evreiască?". Autorul cărții este doctorul în filosofie Sandu Frunză, conferențiar la Catedra de Filosofie Sistematică din cadrul Universității "Babeș-Bolyai" din Cluj. Cartea a apărut în anul 2006 la editura academică Limes, care a publicat studii de istorie și filosofie iudaică și în trecut. Printre lucrările precedente ale autorului menționăm și o altă carte, "Iubirea și Transcendența", apărută în anul 1999, care tratează problema experienței religioase în iudaism și în creștinismul ortodox, în mod comparativ. Doctorul Sandu Frunză este unul dintre analiștii contemporani importanți ai filosofiei iudaismului. Printre instituțiile academice în care a studiat se numără și Universitatea Ebraică din Ierusalim, unde am avut plăcerea de a-l cunoaște personal. În acea perioadă se arăta interesat în a cunoaște și a cerceta filosofia și teologia iudaică și pe cea românească, creștin-ortodoxă, în mod comparativ, vorbind cu venerație despre savantul teolog Dumitru Stăniloae, asupra căruia a publicat o carte ulterior. Sandu Frunză a studiat lucrările profesorului Moshe Idel de la Universitatea Ebraică din Ierusalim originar din România, devenind elevul acestuia și fiind influențat de tezele sale.

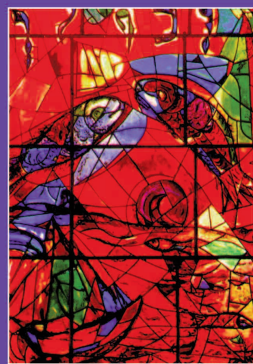
În lucrarea de față, doctorul Frunză caută să dea un răspuns original la întrebarea dacă există o filosofie evreiască. El folosește în acest sens un limbaj simbolic, evidențiat și de profesorul Moshe Idel într-o analiză a lucrării. Este vorba de relațiile dintre cele două centre cognitive care domină toată istoria gândirii evreiești: Atena, ca metaforă a unei atitudini reflexive – și Ierusalimul, ca metaforă a tradiției.

Autorul analizează filosofia evreiască antică și modernă. El pune întrebarea asupra a ceea ce reprezintă "filosofia evreiască": simpla origine evreiască a filosofului și relația lui cu comunitatea sa de origine, sau prezentarea apologetico-filosofică a tradiției iudaice? După părerea autorului, "filosofia evreiască presupune, drept conduită generală, o raportare reciprocă cu demnitate a locuitorilor din cele două cetăți", respectiv Atena și Ierusalimul. El adaugă că "forța integratoare a tradiției este cea care asigură această situație de echilibru. Ea este potențată de forța integratoare a gândirii mistice".

Dar ce este iudaic în filosofia evreiască modernă? Răspunsul lui Sandu Frunză este

## FILOSOFIE ȘI IUDAISM

Sandu Frunză



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### Key words:

Jewish philosophy, Jewish tradition, Athens, Jerusalem, Philo, Maimonides, Sandu Frunza

că "filosofii evrei moderni sunt locuitori ai Atenei care trăiesc ca pe o lumină interioară nostalgia Ierusalimului și utilizează această nostalgie ca pe un element ce fecundează creația lor filosofică". Autorul se străduiește să reunească teze filosofice evreiești contemporane, respectiv pe cea a lui Abraham Joshua Heschel ("ce presupune o situație clară a filosofiei evreiești între Ierusalim și Atena") și cea a lui Colette Sirat ("care se axează pe căile specifice de întâlnire între Ierusalim și Atena"). Autorul analizează și alte teze ale filosofiei iudaice. Premisa de la care pleacă este diferența inițială dintre tradiția iudaică (numită aici "Ierusalim") și filosofia greacă (numită aici "Atena"). Aceste două denumiri sunt împrumutate de la filosoful evreu Leo Strauss. Calea spre filosofia iudaică ar fi: de la Ierusalim la Atena și de la Atena înapoi la Ierusalim. Deci: de la tradiția iudaică spre filosofia greacă și de acolo înapoi spre cultura iudaică, după reunirea între cele două elemente cultural-religioase. Acest fenomen a avut loc în epoca elenistică.

Pentru reconstituirea acestui tablou, autorul consacră analize amănunțite tezelor filosofice ale lui Philo și ale lui Maimonide. Pentru analiza filosofiei lui Philo (care a influențat filosofia creștină medievală, deși a fost trecută cu vederea de către evrei), autorul se referă la comentarii biblice existente în opera acestuia. De exemplu, "pentru a arăta situarea filosofiei față de Scriptură", Philo folosește simbolul oferit de cadrul biblic în care Sara, soția lui Abraham, îi dă acestuia pe Hagar, sclava ei, pentru a-i fi soție credincioasă. "Acest simbolism este unul al dreptei slujiri și al dreptei făptuiri. El aruncă o nouă lumină asupra modului în care trebuie să înțelegem raporturile religiei cu filosofia și ale acesteia cu înțelepciunea. Așa cum religia este o treaptă spre un înțeles mai profund al filosofiei, la rîndul său filosofia este o treaptă spre atingerea înțelepciunii".

Alt exemplu interesant citat de Philo și preluat de Sandu Frunză se referă la relația între Moshe Rabeinu (=profetul Moise) și Betzalel ben Ury. "Moise construiește arhetipurile ca un expert, iar Betzalel execută doar copiile lor... Spre deosebire de filosof, care are acces doar la o cunoaștere cauzală, care percepe realitatea ultimă doar prin perdeaua de umbră care îl desparte de aceasta, Moise are de la însuși Dumnezeu cuvîntul, adevărul și lumina ce vindecă boala cea grea a sufletului care este patima de orice fel". Înțelepciunea înglobează filosofia și tradiția.

Autorul analizează și filosofia lui Maimonide (=Rambam), pe care o vede ca pe un "demers rațional și instrument mistic de cunoaștere". Maimonide este influențat și de filosofia islamică. "Această dublă sursă de autoritate stă la baza unui alt aspect important în înțelegerea filosofiei evreiești: întâlnirea dintre filosofie, mistică și tradiția iudaică", afirmă autorul. Sandu Frunză aduce în discuție și disputa asupra tezelor lui Maimonide din lucrarea sa "Moreh nevukhim" (autorul traduce acest titlu cu expresia "Ghidul ratăciților", deși nu neagă și alte posibilități de traducere).

Ajunși aici nu putem face altceva decît să recomandăm cartea doctorului Sandu Frunză ca pe o carte care trebuie citită cu atenție.